**Temple Newsam Hospital Soundscapes  
Ten imagined scenes throughout a day in the wartime hospital**

**Scene 1: Breakfast**

Our first ‘visit’ to Temple Newsam is at the start of the day. The patients who can get out of bed are assembled in the Great Hall for breakfast.

*Tom is coughing.*

Netta: Are you all right there, Tom? (*more coughing*) Do you need anything? Let me get you a cup of tea.

Fred: Blimey Tom, you’ve got it sorted there mate. He’s only after a bit of sympathy, Nurse! He was hardly coughing at all before breakfast.

Brendan: Are you coming at all, Taff? I’ll have finished my porridge and be starting on yours if you don’t hurry yourself.

Alun: You wouldn’t be so fast out of bed if I hid those crutches of yours, now would you boyo? It’s quite a trek from our dorm to the Hall...

Netta: Sister says you are doing very well, Alun. We’ll have you back with your pals in no time.

*This comment changes the mood a little.*

Alun: Well, I’d like to know how they all are keeping. I’ve heard nothing.

Fred: I should be getting my moving orders too any day now.

Alun: They won’t put you back on the frontline, Fred. You can’t get that arm up high enough to hold a bloomin’ rifle.

Tom: He’s right - you might even get a posting back in England. Maybe near your family. That would be alright, wouldn’t it? You could marry that lovely fiancé of yours?

Fred: (*Trying to change the mood)* Don’t go telling the Nurses about my fiancé! It’ll break their hearts. (*Calls out*) Are we getting any scrambled eggs today? I’m starving here.

The hubbub fades into the background and we have a few moments of background clatter (simple sound effects of eating - scraping plates, pouring tea, etc).

**Scene 2: Patient Handover**

Sister McGowen: Both Private Williams and Lance Corporal Ryder had a tough time with it last night so they should be left to sleep a little longer.

Kathleen: What happened to them?

Sister McGowen: Lance Corporal Ryder woke up in great distress… he is very much on edge at the moment, which is understandable in the circumstances. And Private Williams’ leg wound has become re-infected.

Kathleen: Oh no! But he was doing so well… and I was so careful with his dressings.

Sister McGowen: It has nothing to do with his care, Nurse Boyle, and you have been doing an excellent job. We’ll make a nurse out of you yet.

Kathleen: That is kind of you, Sister.

Sister McGowen: There’s no substitute for experience but you’ve done well to learn so much in such a short time. Now, what about this new Belgian soldier… he seemed a little out of sorts last night. We could perhaps ask Lady Wood to speak with him?

Kathleen: Lady Wood?

Sister McGowen: Yes, he doesn’t speak much English but I believe Lady Wood’s French has never been better, she says it’s from having all these French-speaking Belgians to chat to.

The nurses return to their busy morning schedule and the soundscape dips to ambient noises of bustling around the ward (brisk walking, shaking and folding sheets, scraping chair legs on the floor, scrubbing and washing of equipment, etc.)

**Scene 3: Dr Bean’s Rounds**

Matron is waiting at the far end of the ward for the local GP, Dr Bean.

Dr Bean: Good morning, Matron. How are you today?

Matron: I am well, thank you Doctor. A little tired though, we had a busy night last night.

Dr Bean: Really? I’m sorry to hear that. Well we’d better run through what’s what before I do my rounds. (*He shuffles some papers, looking through his notes)*

Matron: Private Cartwright’s leg is still thin but the muscle strength is starting to return. The massage programme you requested for him seems to be working well. And Sergeant Pothergary is persevering with the handwriting exercises, although of course it is very frustrating for him.

Dr Bean: He was lucky they managed to save his hand. Who was it had a bad night then?

Matron: Lance Corporal Ryder… he was calling out for the men in his unit again. Whilst his physical wounds are nearly healed, he has been left with major physical disabilities as well as mental scarring.

Dr Bean: The Doctor at Beckett Park warned me about this when Ryder transferred here. I am afraid that all these ‘post wound’ disabilities – mental and physical – will take a long time to heal, if ever I am afraid. Keep going with the exercise and the fresh air. Don’t let him dwell on things too much.

Matron: Of course, Doctor. Shall we begin your rounds... perhaps the Russia Ward?

The dialogue fades down as the sound of the ward takes over (trolley wheels, pills being tipped out, clattering of metal utensils into metal bowls etc).

**Scene 4: Dressing Wounds**

Netta is changing the dressings on the new French soldier, who takes a sharp breath as she cleans his wound. Sister McGowen is offering guidance. Fred is lying down in the next bed reading.

Netta: I’m sorry, did that hurt.

Sister McGowen: He can’t understand you. He doesn’t speak any English.

Netta: I’m sure he understands my meaning.

The patient moans in pain.

Sister McGowen: Please concentrate, Nurse Chambers. The most important thing is to make sure the wound is clean. There will always be some discomfort for the patient but you must not let that distract you.

Netta: Yes, Sister Pattison.

Tom: You can bet he’s happier lying here with you angels taking care of him than ducking German bombs.

Sister McGowen: Thank you, Tom. That will do. Now Netta pack the wound carefully and apply the clean dressing. (*She watches Netta as she finishes up*.) That’s right… Well done. That’s a fine job.

Netta: Thank you. I feel more confident here... some of the professional nurses at my first hospital didn’t think us VADs were really up to it.

Sister McGowen: Well I always say the most important quality for a nurse is compassion and you certainly have that. Now go and get this chap his tobacco allowance and rolling papers. That should cheer him up.

**Scene 5: Lunchtime**

We hear the sounds of food being served and the scraping chairs as the men sit around the table.

Brendan: Mary Mother of God, not mashed potato again?

Fred: I thought you Paddies liked your spuds. Home from home for you, mate.

Brendan: What you don’t know about the Irish, Fred Davies, could fill up a few books. Nurse Boyle, will you not ask Mrs Brownlie to see about a cabbage from the garden? Perhaps she could make up some *colcannon* for her special guests in the South Wing?

Kathleen: I’m sure Cook is doing her best, Brendan. Think yourself lucky - if you had a stomach injury you would be getting nothing more than chicken broth! That potatoes and mince will build up your strength.

Brendan: I tell you, Nurse, they’d get the job done quicker with a tasty bit of mutton or ham for a change, and that’s the truth.

Fred: If you’re after a cabbage, Brendan, you should try giving them Belgian refugees a hand in the veg garden.

Brendan: I will not, thank you. I’ve seen enough of the mud and the dirt to last me a lifetime.

The dialogue fades down and we are again left with the simple sound effects of eating - scraping plates, pouring tea etc.

**Scene 6: A Game of Tennis**

We hear the scraping of a large door and, as it opens, we are outside on a summer’s day. Netta is wheeling a patient in a bath chair onto the terrace to enjoy the fresh air and the sunshine. This patient has been ‘a bit down’ and she is trying to encourage him. But he does not want to talk.

Netta: There you go. All settled out on the terrace. I’ll just tuck that blanket around your legs. *(Beat)* We’ll soon have you walking down to the old chestnut tree near the Lodge gates.

Alun: (*Calls over to her*) Are you playing bowls with us, Nurse? It’s too nice a day to be working inside.

Netta: Tennis is my game! Sorry.

Brendan: Grand idea. Let’s play tennis instead!

Alun: You’re crazy, bach. How will you play tennis on them crutches?

Netta: I’m sorry to disappoint but I really can’t play again. I was in trouble for not getting everything done yesterday. All that wood in there doesn't polish itself you know.

Alun: Fair enough, we’ll let you alone. Brendan and I can take Fred on, two against one. That should even things up.

Netta watches them go and we hear the sound of the game starting up.

**Scene 7: The Gardener & Afrikaans**

As the tennis match fades away we hear the sounds of the gardener, John Barber, digging the vegetable patch; the sharp tang of a metal shovel hitting a stone, soil being thrown, etc. He is whistling quietly.

John: (*To himself*) Never known weather like it. Wetter than a Whit Monday then blazing sun the next. (*He bends to pull out some roots).* Bloomin’ weeds! They’re growing faster than me carrots and…

He stops abruptly as he hears two men talking. They walk towards him along the path.

Viktor: (*Speaking in Flemish*) It would be good to join in with the British soldiers but I do not know what they are saying.

Emile: Indeed.

John: (*To himself)* Hmm, that sounds familiar. Dutch I’d say. Haven’t heard the like since my fighting days in South Africa...

Viktor: Sometimes it is so frustrating.

John: *(To himself)* I’m sure they said they’ve having trouble making ‘emselves understood over here. I’ll have a go m’ self...clears his throat... (*continues in a halting Afrikaans*)

Good morning. It is a fine afternoon.

Viktor: Uhhhh... Yes… it is.

Viktor and Emile both laugh in surprise. They recognise the words but they can tell this man is not Belgian.

Viktor: Forgive us, we did not expect to understand you. And your accent is… it is not Dutch exactly?

John: ‘Well at least they can understand me... I’ll try a bit more... I learned a little Afrikaans… when I was fighting the Boers...

Viktor: Well it is wonderful to hear someone else speak our language

They laugh again.

We leave this scene as the two parties continue in their awkward dialogue and the sounds of a warm summer day (insects, etc) take over the soundscape.

**Scene 8: The Lecture**

Kathleen is reading out an invitation from The Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society.

Kathleen: The lecture will be followed by coffee, kindly paid for by Mr Bedford, and then there will be a tour of the Society’s museum.

Groans from nearly all the soldiers at the thought of a tour around a museum.

Fred: You must be joking! The Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society? I can’t see how that’s going to be a bundle of laughs.

Alun: I’d rather have a quiet pint down the pub, if I’m honest.

Kathleen: I’m sure it will be jolly interesting. And it’s a chance to visit Leeds.

Fred: I’m with Taff. Let’s slip out for a pint.

Kathleen: There will be no slipping out anywhere for a pint. Or Lady Wood will be confiscating all your trousers again! (*Raucous laughter, shouts and whistles).*

Fred: I don’t care, I’ll go down in me nightshirt! It’s warm enough. (*More* *laughter*). Couldn’t we have a dance here? We’ve got the gramophone player. Go on. Stick a song on, Tom.

Tom: What do you fancy?

Cyrille: (*In French*) Why don’t you play La Madelon?

Tom: What’s Cyrille on about?

Fred: He wants you to play La Madelon… you know, that *romantic* French song he keeps on about. I keep trying to tell him we don’t have a copy of it. Just stick on something cheerful we can all sing along to...

We hear Tom setting the needle on the vinyl and the strains of the popular song spring into life.

**Scene 9: Letter-writing**

The music fades down. We hear the noise of the trolley running along the wooden floor, growing steadily louder as it approaches.

Fred: Heads up lads! Post is here.

We hear cheers and the sound of letters being opened.

Netta: Nothing for you, Tom. Sorry.

Tom: I was hoping I’d get something from my Mum.

Alun: Well if you write to her a bit more then maybe she’ll write you back more often?

Tom: No, I don’t think so. I’m no good with words.

Netta: Well your hands are probably still a bit shaky. I tell you what, you tell me what you want to say and I will write it for you.

Tom: Would you, Nurse? That’d be great.

Netta: We’ve got some paper here somewhere. (*She opens some drawers and finds the writing paper. She pulls up a chair*) … Now then, you just tell me what to put.

Tom: Oh right… erm… Dear Ma… hope you are all well… I’m doing champion... *(now warming up a little)* and you wouldn’t believe how grand this house is...

Nurse Boyle comes bustling in with the local paper.

Kathleen: I’ve got the newspaper here. It says there’s been an explosion at a factory in the north – maybe it’s over at Cross gates, that Barnbow place? Apparently two young women have been killed.

Alun: It’s dangerous work they’re doing there and no mistake.

Fred: You don’t expect it to happen over here. (*Suddenly angry*) Haven’t we got enough people dying over at the front!

The men go quiet and we just hear the newspaper being thrown down, following by the more gentle sound of pencil on paper as the men go back to their letter writing.

**Scene 10: Planning the Concert**

The patients are now back inside, having finished their tea and the final round of medicine. They are spending the last few hours before bedtime preparing for their upcoming concert.

Alun: Well I’d quite like to sing in the concert but you lot can’t even hold a note, let alone a tune.

Brendan: How do y’ fancy a comedy sketch? We could all do with a laugh.

Fred: Maybe we could get the Nurses to join in. Nurse Chambers! Fancy doing a song with us for the concert?

Netta: I can guess what sort of song you’d have me singing, Fred Davies. I don’t think Matron would approve.

Brendan: Let’s ask Lady Wood to sing with us! Matron won’t be telling *her* off.

Tom: Don’t talk like that, Brendan. She’s a Lady. Show some respect.

Brendan: She gets the same respect I give anyone else, Tom. Just because she has herself a fine house changes nothing for me.

Fred: Sounds to me like you’d have been out on the streets of Dublin with them Fenian rebels, Brendan.

Brendan: Well , aren’t we all just standing up for what we believe in?

Kathleen: All right now. I think we are all on the same side. Let’s not argue over politics, it just upsets everyone. (*Beat*) How about a game of billiards? Alun?

Alun: Now there’s a good idea. Come on, Brendan, I’ll take you on.

Netta: And I’ll get the cocoa ready.

Fred: Sound like a plan, Nurse. (*Quietly to Tom)* If I play my cards right maybe she’ll tuck me in as well. (*He laughs at the idea.*)

Our soundscape is taken over by the boiling kettle and the slow stirring of a spoon in a cocoa cup. In the background we hear the clunk of the billiard balls.