The idea of composing a special tune for the QARANC march past originated from Lt Gen Sir Neil Cantlie, then Director-General AMS. In June 1948, during a Drumhead Service at the QAs Depot and Training Establishment at Anstie Grange, Dorking, Surrey, he suggested that the song and former RAMC Quick March *Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still* be adopted.

Col Dyson, the Colonel Commandant of the QARANC Depot, informed Capt Lewis Brown, Director of Music of the RAMC Staff Band, that Professor Anthony Lewis of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham University, had suggested the theme be taken from a chorus of the opera *King Arthur* by Purcell (AMS Magazine, January 1951). She got together with two other QA officers, a pianist and Capt Brown to play the intended tune. Later he was asked to incorporate the old Irish Air *The Gentle Maiden* into the march. He played this tune on the piano but found the signature and rhythm was not suitable. However whilst working on the band arrangement for the tune *King Arthur* his mind kept returning to *The Gentle Maiden*, and he found that he could incorporate the tune by making slight alterations. Capt Brown sang the new tune down the phone to Col Dyson the next morning and *Grey and Scarlet*, named after the colours of their uniforms, was conceived.

Capt Brown finished the musical score and the proposed new Regimental March was vetted by the DGAMS, the Matron-in-Chief and the Director of Music at the Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall. The Colonel-in-Chief, Queen Mary, then gave her gracious approval for the adoption of *Grey and Scarlet*. It was added to the list of Corps and Regimental Marches authorised for use by the British Army, promulgated in September 1950 with Army Order 120/1950:

“*Queen Alexandra’s Royal Army Nursing Corps – Regimental March* - A regimental quick march for the Queen Alexandra’s Royal Army Nursing Corps, entitled "Grey and Scarlet", has been approved and copies can be obtained from the publishers, Messrs. Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 295, Regent Street, London, W.1.”

*Grey and Scarlet* was first performed in public by the RAMC Staff Band at the opening of the QARANC Depot and Training Establishment at Ontario Barracks in Hindhead, Surrey on 13 September 1950. It was described thus:

“The brisk martial theme of Purcell’s "King Arthur" is followed by the quiet, peaceful note of the traditional air, "The Gentle Maiden." The sharp contrasts of tune illustrate the dual role of the Q.A. within the Army structure, woven inextricably by history into the pattern of our life.”
The march was recorded by the AMS Volunteer Band in 2005 and subsequently released on their inaugural CD, *Medics in Concert*.

LCpl T Hissey
November 2012