

YMCAs OF ENGLAND, IRELAND, SCOTLAND
AND WALES



The Forgotten Angels (part one)

History of the YMCA Women's Auxiliary
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THE HISTORY OF THE WOMEN'S AUXILIARY OF THE YMCA MOVEMENT



INTRODUCTION:

The founder of the Young Men's Christian Association was a man called George Williams. He was born in Dulverton, Somerset and eventually made his way to London. He was inspired to the extent that he founded the YMCA on the 6th June 1844. This International Christian Movement is now to be operating in 127 countries of the world with a membership of over 60 million members. This remarkable force for good continues as strong today as it ever was.

Great men such as Baden Powell, founder of the scout movement and General Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, were both involved in the YMCA. Women were not allowed into membership until the early 1960's but through their determination to support the work of the YMCA, the Women's Auxiliary (also known as the WA) was started in December 1914.

It has to be said that in those early days, as the new century was forming, the YMCA Women's Auxiliary's played a huge part in helping to raise finances to grow and increase the work of the YMCA throughout the British Isles. The expansion of the YMCA in Britain would not have been so rapid without the tremendously valuable work that so many women did for the early years of the YMCA.

It has been a privileged to be involved with the formation of this short history of a largely forgotten Women's Auxiliary, which I hope, clearly shows the unfailing support to the YMCA Movement of these all these wonderful women. They clearly recognised that the YMCA could play a beneficial role in formulating a good grounding for young men through the generations.



THE EARLY YEARS

By the outbreak of the First World War (1914-18) the YMCA was a growing, well organised, international male dominated Christian organisation.

It had already involved itself caring for the returning soldiers in several wars, indeed the first recorded instance of YMCA personnel operating with servicemen on a national basis is that of a canteen which served both sides in the American Civil War (1861-5). Some activity also took place during the war between the United States of America and Spain in 1898, and in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5. The British YMCA operated during the South African war under the name of "Soldiers Christian Association", a pseudonym for the military department of the YMCA.

From the summer of 1901 the British YMCA provided tented centres at annual camps for volunteers - a scheme tried out in Canada in earlier years. This formed the experience which enabled the YMCA to operate 250 recreation centres within 10 days of the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

It was at this time that the famous Red Triangle first became widely used as a symbol for YMCA work. Red Triangle Clubs were set up to concentrate on the support of the troops. At this time women had always taken a diminutive role in the YMCA movement, as in many other male dominated organisations of that era. Women were aggrieved by the fact that in many Red Triangle Clubs they found the same experience - that women seemed to be doing all the drudgery. Women, recognising their strength, were in no mood for this to continue.

In December 1914 the YMCA Auxiliary Committee for Women's work was formed with the illustrious Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein as its President and the Countess of Bessborough as its Honorary Secretary.



HH Princess Victoria made a personal visit to France in August 1915 which confirms her commitment to the YMCA's war effort. It was in the spring of 1915 that the Germans introduced poison gas in an attempt to regain the initiative in the West. The dead lines of the gas lay in its method of scalding and destroying lung tissue. Full recovery took a long time. Morale within the battered troops was at an all time low. Therefore, Princess Victoria's visit to the hospitals, ordinance works, YMCA huts, bakeries and field support units was of paramount importance.

Included below is HH Princess Victoria's report, which sometimes belies the great carnage the armies of the King were suffering.

VISIT OF HH PRINCESS VICTORIA OF SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN TO FRANCE COMMENCING 12 AUGUST 1915

Thursday 12 August 1915

H.H The Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein, Lady Londonderry, Lady Rodney, Mrs Bertram Corbett, Sir John Cowans, KCB Quarter Master General and Mrs Evelyn Fitzgerald, arrived on mail from England at about 12.30 p.m.

Luncheon at Folkestone Hotel, Boulogne, to which General Sir Frederick Clayton, KCMG, C.B., Inspector General of Communications, Lord Londonderry and H.H Prince Leopold of Battenberg came. After luncheon inspected the Boulogne and Wimerieux Hospitals and in the evening went to a most excellent concert at the Queen Mary Hut (YMCA).

Friday 13 August 1915

Started at 10.30 a.m. and first went to the Ulster Hut, then the Convalescent Camp, Ostrobove Tent and finished the morning at the Saint Martin's Camp (Indian). Lunched at Folkestone and in the afternoon motored to Calais, and saw a YMCA Hut, where we had a Cinematograph display, then another YMCA Hut and finished up a most interesting afternoon by a visit to the Ordnance Works. Motored back by a very much longer way by the seashore to Wimerieux.

The Governor of Boulogne, Colonel Count Darn, dined with HH.

Saturday 14 August 1915

Made an early start for Camiers where we met the Commandant - Colonel Graham Thompson, C.B. - and inspected the Camiers Hut and American Hospital, also a Hospital at Estaples, and then motored on to La Touquet, where we lunched at the Hotel d'Angleterre.

Motored afterwards to Estaples and visited the Gordon Memorial and Good Comrade Huts, and then another English Hospital.

Having got through the afternoon very quickly, motored back to the Station at Boulogne and visited the "Princess Christian Ambulance Train" - a most interesting visit - and dined at the Folkestone.

Sunday 15 August 1915

Started a long day's work by motoring to Abbeville, and visiting two YMCA Huts and a Soldiers Institute, also a YMCA Tent and **The Triage**.

Lunched at number 10 Grande Rue Notre Dame with the ladies of the YMCA.

Started about 2.15 p.m. and motored by Eu and Dieppe to Fecamp, where H.H visited Lady Guernsey's Hospital and had tea there. Finished up by motoring to Havre, where we put up at the Continental Hotel and met the Commandant, Brigadier General Asser, who dined with H.H.

A long and tiring days work having motored 150 miles.

Monday 16 August 1915 - Havre

Began a very interesting morning's work by seeing the wonderful Hangars, Bakery and Ordnance Works on the Quai, also seeing two YMCA Huts at the Bakeries and Cinder City.

Lunched at Hotel, and afterwards visited the Hospitals at Palais des Regatos, Casino and Officers Hospital - then continued our journey to No 10 Camp (Woodbine Hut) where H.H met several Officers and had tea.

Afterwards visited No 2 Infantry Base Depot - No 19 YMCA Hut - also a new Hut, and finished up the evening by an excellent concert at the Woodbine Hut, where H.H and Lady Rodney made speeches.

Tuesday August 17 1915 - Havre

Started early and went first to the Central Training Camp, where we saw all the latest things in English and German trenches, wire entanglements etc - including the throwing of a hand grenade - afterwards the Remount Depot and the YMCA Hut at the Base Horse Transport Depot. Then walked over to the Veterinary Hospital, where the flowers and grass pots were much admired as well as the work of the Hospital. This was followed by a visit to the YMCA Hut (Queen Mary's) at the Convalescent Depot.

After lunch visited the General Hospital the Qua d'Escalo - the YMCA stores and then attended a meeting of the YMCA workers at the Wesleyan Chapel.

Returned then to Hotel, and started again at 5.45 p.m. to see the three YMCA Huts at 'Q' Hangar - Old Fort Hutments - and at Annex "J". Then the Sports at Camp 5 and finished up by hearing an excellent entertainment given at Camp (Cinema) where there must have been at least two thousand men present. A long day's work, followed by dinner at 8.30 p.m. at which Mr and Mrs Austin and General Asser joined.

Wednesday 18 August 1915 - Havre

Started the day by a visit from Admiral Beard (The Governor of Havre) to H.H, followed by a visit to inspect the nurses at the French Hospital at Hotel Frascati. Started then for Rouen and did a lovely drive by the River all the way, arriving about 12.50 p.m.

Had luncheon at the Hotel de la Poste, where the Commandant - Brigadier General Marrable -joined us.



Y.M.C.A. Work at the Front.

After luncheon visited the following:-

No 10 General Hospital
No 4 Infantry Base Depot
The YMCA Hut Route Madrillet
The YMCA Hut Cavalry Camp
The Remount Depot
The YMCA Hut top of Camp
The Expeditionary Force
Canteen Shop
No 6 Hutted Hospital
The Convalescent Depot
And the YMCA Hut 27th and
28th Infantry Base Depots

Thursday 19th August 1915 - Rouen

Started the day by a visit to the Railway Ruffet, from where we saw some German Prisoners at work under a French Guard. This was followed by visits to the following:-

- YMCA Hut Bakery Field
- Field Bakery
- Base Mechanical Transport Depot and YMCA Hut
- No 2 Red Cross Hospital
- No 8 General Hospital.

Lunched at the Hotel, to which Brigadier General A.G Marrable and Captain R.P Braithwaite joined.

After luncheon visited the following:-

- Veterinary Hospital
YMCA Hut near the R.E Camp

Then attended a reception in the Territorial Hut, where some excellent speeches were made by H. H and Mr Yapp. At 6.50 p.m. H.H opened the Gare du Nor YMCA Hut. Came back to dinner at 8.00 p.m. and at 9.30 p.m. attended a concert at 27th Infantry Base Depot.

Friday 20 August 1915 - Rouen



Lady Rodney left us
for Paris.

Friday 20 August 1915 - Rouen

We started for Dieppe and on the way, stopped at a village called Totes where we went into a very curious Hotel called the Hotel Cygne, full of most interesting curiosities, and then continued our journey to Dieppe.

Just outside, we met Colonel Lye and The YMCA officials and visited the YMCA Huts at the Remounts, the Canadians and the town. The last is especially up to date.

We then went to lunch at the Grand Hotel, our party consisting of H.H Mrs Corbert, Colonel Lye, Miss McCarthy, and Colonel Jenkins.

After lunch, inspected the Canadian Convalescent Home on the seafront and then continued our journey to Treport, where H.H inspected no. 3 Hospital and the Camp Hospitals. After which we went to Lady Gladstone's Hospital and had tea there.

Finished the day by going down to the Treport Hotel where we stayed the night, and found everything most comfortable, good food etc.

Saturday 21 August 1915

Started off very punctually at 10.00 am and motored straight through to Abbeville, where H. H saw the Inspector General at I.G.C., after which we continued our journey straight through to Boulogne, arriving just in time for lunch.

After lunch we went to see No 8 Stationary Hospital where an afternoon party was being given for some French wounded and at which a French band attended.

We had great excitement through the reported appearance of a submarine or mine which blew up a lather. Then we went to see Lady Dudley's Hospital and returned to the Folkestone Hotel afterwards.



TO HER HIGHNESS PRINCESS VICTORIA

**On visiting the hospitals in France,
convey to the sick and wounded men of
my gallant**

**Army, my sincere hopes of their recovery
and warmest wishes for their future
welfare.**

**|
My thoughts are always with my Army in
France.**

GEORGE R&I.

AUXILIARY LADIES' WORK AMONG OUR SOLDIERS IN FRANCE
THE COUNTESS OF BESSBOROUGH WITH OUR SOLDIERS IN FRANCE

1ST AUGUST 1916.

SUMMARY OF THE WORK

A short account of three weeks Tour in France as Hon. Secretary of HH Princess Victoria's Auxiliary Committee, 23 Bruton Street, to inspect YMCA Recreation Huts for our Soldiers at the Base Camps - By the Countess of Bessborough

Early in March, on a bitterly cold morning, with snow on the ground, I and my daughter Lady Irene Congreve, started from Charing Cross station at 11am. We travelled via Folkestone, arriving at Boulogne punctually at 5.30 p.m. There were 1,000 soldiers on board, all with lifebelts on. We also wore safety waistcoats.

We had tea, and at once began our inspection of the huts at that centre. The first we went to was at the Convalescent Camp. It was delightful to see it thronged with soldiers, writing or playing games at little tables, and the refreshment counter with rows of men, five or six deep, waiting to be served by our ladies.

These ladies must explain, go out from England entirely at their own expense to make a home for the men. Many of them have lost fathers, husbands and brothers at the Front. They give their services free, shut up their houses, leave friends, relations and children, to show their gratitude to our brave soldiers by offering them comforts and welcome in a foreign, though allied, country.

From Boulogne, we motored to Abbeville. At this centre the YMCA ladies live in a charming French house, near the beautiful old cathedral, which by a stroke of genius, Lady Ponsonby, pioneer of our work in that town, secured for them. When Lady Ponsonby left to take up work in England the Hon. Mrs Arthur Coke took her place as lady superintendent, and all speak in the highest terms of her devotion and tact.

From Abbeville we visited Treport and Dieppe, besides those huts in that town; and from Le Touquet we were able to motor to all the huts at Estaples Camiers, Boulogne, Wimereux, Calais, Beaumarais and Peuplinques. We attended a concert of lecture every night, and conferred with over one hundred ladies working in the huts, suggesting improvements and additional comforts, as required.

The feature which struck us most was the appreciation of the work amongst the men, who accorded us a wonderful welcome of cheers, and seemed to adore the sympathy and encouragement of the lady workers.

At the end of each hut there is a platform for concerts and lectures, and also attached to it in some cases are billiard rooms, quiet rooms and baths for the men. The work of providing stores and organising concerts, lending books, lectures and religious services, is arranged by the male secretary in-charge of the hut. The counter is in charge of the unit of each hut and is managed by a senior lady. A lady superintendent is overall in charge of the whole of the huts in each centre. There is also a male hut leader, who works in conjunction with the senior lady.



At Le Touquet we stayed at Les Iris - a hostel which is run by the YMCA to give free hospitality to relations of wounded officers. Les Iris is within easy reach of many of the principal military hospitals at Paris Plage and Estaples. This hostel is managed by three Misses Chapman, who have motors of their own, which they drive themselves. They are most helpful and energetic.

Miss Lena Ashwell's concert party, which gives entertainment at the huts for the men, is lodged at Les Iris. Some of the lady workers also stay there, and the Misses Chapman drove them in their motors to and from the camps at Estaples.

Les Iris is a comfortably furnished house, in the style of an English country house. It has beautiful grounds, and is in the forest of Le Touquet, where the Duchess of Westminster's Red Cross hospital is situated. This hospital is between Paris Plage and Le Touquet in what was formerly the casino, and is a fine large building.

The most wonderful thing we saw was the Hospital Camp at Estaples, about four miles from Le Touquet forest. It is situated on a sandy plain with a road through the centre. On each side of this are the hospital huts, which are built on a plan so as to allow all to converge towards the operating theatre in the centre. The whole camp, with its kitchens and outfitting depot and store huts, is splendidly organised, and the grounds beautifully laid out with little gardens and paths around the huts, which give them an air of home comfort. The nurse's quarters are conveniently grouped near the particular hospital in which they work.

Lady Greenall, our lady superintendent at Estaples, besides the duties this office entails, works with untiring energy in a hut presented by her called the "Walton" Hut. She has entire charge of this hut, and personally assists with the cooking. I shall never forget seeing her with sleeves tucked up, mixing custards in huge barrels, with her own hands preparing the soldiers' favourite dishes.

Lady Baden Powell's Scout Huts at Estaples and at Calais are a great feature. The young ladies in charge of the counter are mostly scoutmasters, who have taken an active part in the movement, and look most picturesque and business like in their khaki uniform.

At Camiers we were greatly interested in the YMCA hostel for the relations of Tommie's a hut built specially for this purpose and furnished with taste and simplicity by the Auxiliary Committee. This hostel is managed by Mrs Ballantyne and Miss Brown, who in succession have as many as twenty relations at a time from England, who come and cheer and visit the poor wounded men. The doctors place great value upon this branch of work, as a means of recovery in very many hopeless cases, so strongly does the mind affect the body. The hostel is well run and extremely popular.

We did the whole of our tour by motor, in a covered car, which held us and our luggage, and was skilfully driven over snow roads by the YMCA. Organising Secretary for France was Mr Oliver Mc Cowen, who was most kind in making all arrangements for our comfort.

We visited the YMCA hut at Treport on a cold, bright morning, and found the hut preparing for a Red Indian play given by some Canadian soldiers from Dieppe. The play was well done and said to be true to life, especially the dresses, dances and war cry's.

The Military Hospital on the top of the hill at Treport, overlooking the sea, is a fine building. We got there just as a batch of men were being discharged. There were forty to fifty stretcher cases lying in the hall, waiting to be sent by ambulance cars to Dieppe to the hospital ship - a distance of about twenty miles. Our YMCA lady superintendent at Dieppe, Miss Playfair, meets the steamers to take the patients refreshments, which, after the fatigues of the long motor drive, they badly need. As we drove into Dieppe, which we reached at about five o'clock, we saw the poor men being carried on to the steamers - a truly sad sight.

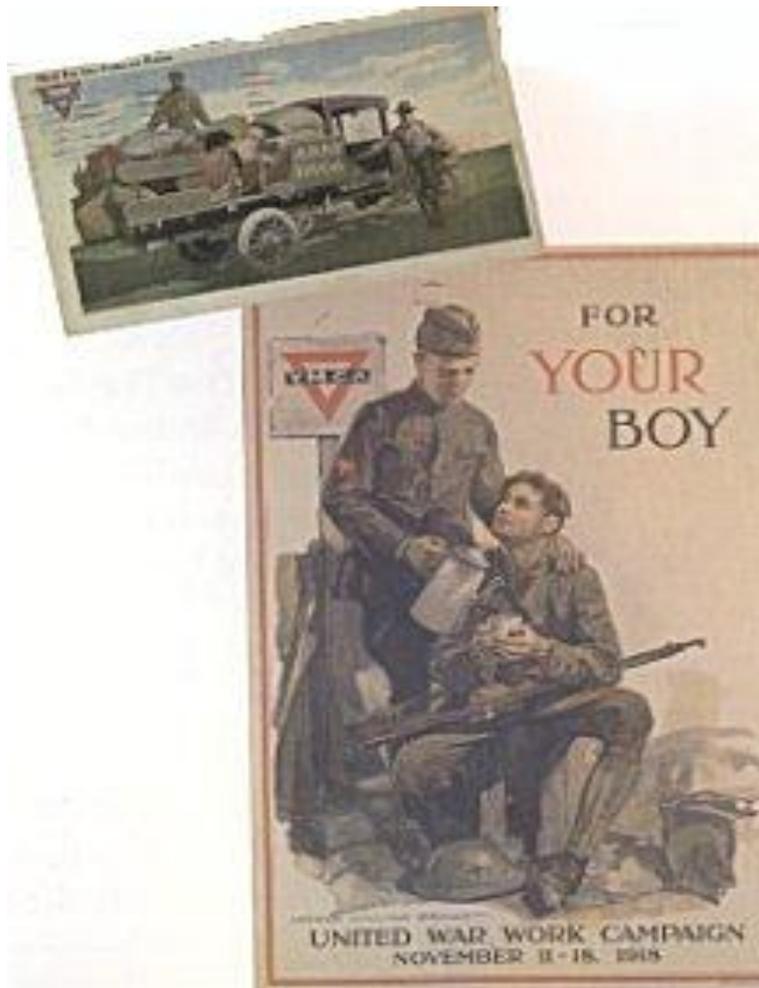
After a tea to meet the YMCA lady workers and visiting various huts, we ended up the day with a really first-class - almost professional - concert at one of the huts, organised by Miss Playfair. The hut was packed; the ladies who acted played different instruments, and, dressed as 'Follies', sang the most amusing songs, to the great delight of the soldiers. I have never enjoyed a concert more.

We were only able to spend two days at Dieppe, and had to give up going to Rouen and Havre, being called back to England on urgent private affairs.



It is impossible in this short sketch to enumerate all the ladies and their excellent work, but Mrs Manton and Mrs Langridge at Boulogne, Mrs Waggett at Calais, Madame Gabain at Rouen and Miss Winter at Havre, deserve special praise for the long service they have so nobly given us from the very commencement of the War.

We returned home on March 20th , after three weeks' tour, delighted with all we had seen of the magnificent work of the YMCA and the devotion of the ladies sent out by H.H Princess Victoria's Auxiliary Committee. Besides local assistants, who give their voluntary help, we interviewed over 100 ladies in the thirty-five huts we visited, and found all enthusiastic in praise of the gratitude they received from the men, whose respectful behaviour and welcome made their fatiguing work a pleasure instead of a burden.



**A SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE YMCA AUXILIARY COMMITTEE FOR
RECREATION HUTS IN FRANCE AND OVERSEAS
DECEMBER 1914 TO JUNE 1920**

When Corisande, Lady Rodney, went to France with Mrs Henry Webley in the early days of the War, she was greatly struck by the sad condition of the British Soldier, who had no place to which he could go for wholesome amusement and recreation in his leisure moments. The towns were full of temptation, and it was not advisable that men should be left to the tender mercies of the various Cafes and Estaminets, and it was at the suggestion of Lady Rodney that the YMCA considered the building of Recreation Huts in France on the same lines as those in the British Camps. Under the auspices of Her Highness Princess Helena Victoria the Ladies Auxiliary Committee was formed in December 1914, with a view to providing voluntary lady worker to staff the Huts at the Base Camps in France, and at the same time to provide games and comforts for the men frequenting these Huts.

From that beginning the work grew into a large and useful organisation for the purpose of supplementing the work of the National Council for the Young Men's Christian Association in the various theatres of war.

Between the end of December 1914 and the month of June 1920, when the committee was dissolved.

1, 870 Women Workers, passed through the Committee's hands for service abroad.

The Office has been responsible for passports, military permits and other papers required for the journey of each worker crossing the channel, and every applicant was interviewed and personally judged by the Hon. Secretary or her deputy before being accepted for the work. This necessitated constant attendance at the office, and the most wholehearted and self-sacrificing service of the part of the Hon. Secretaries - Comelia, Countess of Wimborne, the late Countess of Bessborough, and Lady Malcolm.

The President, H.H Princess Helena Victoria, has taken from the beginning the most intense interest in the work, and her constant presence at the office has inspired and helped both the members of the Committee and the staff. Her highness has received many of the ladies who have given their services abroad, and has followed their work with a closeness and personal sympathy which has bound them with ties of friendship to the Committee at home. Every effort has been made to keep in touch with the women workers, and to appreciate the quality of their work.



Up to the end of June 1917 the lady workers were entirely voluntary, paying their own living and travelling expenses. From this time onwards, as the need increased and voluntary workers could not be secured in sufficient numbers, a certain small proportion had their expenses paid, while the secretaries and motor drivers received a small salary in addition. It is estimated that the ladies who paid their own living expenses saved the Association in board and lodging alone, the sum of £1,200 a week.

The Huts were supplied by the Committee with gramophones and all kinds of musical instruments, indoor and outdoor games, pictures, decorations, woollen comforts, cigarettes, writing Materials and countless other things to add to the equipment and comfort of the Huts.

In addition to the articles supplied out of their own funds the Committee received gifts in kind, in answer to appeals in the press, to the extent of 7,000 games, 10,000 woollen garments, 16,000 books, 6,000 magazines and large quantities of cigarettes, pipes, towels, combs, soap, musical instruments and writing materials.

The work of receiving and acknowledging these gifts, and despatching them to France, was undertaken by Lady Elizabeth Dawson, and was also dealt with for a time by Lady Mackay Edgar.

Each Christmas Her Majesty the Queen sent large cases of gifts to the two 'Queen Mary' Huts - one at Havre, the other at Boulogne. Her Majesty also graciously visited these Huts and inspected them. Her Highness the President also paid two visits at the Base Camps, to see the Huts and encourage the workers.

Each Christmas money was sent out by the Committee to be used for providing extra entertainment for the men, the sum of £3 being allocated to each hut. There were usually from 130 to 150 Huts in which ladies were working.

In 1916 a uniform was adopted, consisting of a dark grey coat and skirt, the butcher blue facings, together with a black straw or velour hat, according to the season. Workers who wished to do so could apply for a grant of £3 to help towards the cost of this uniform, but this involved the Committee in no greater outlay than £318 during a period of more than three years. The motor drivers and secretaries received a special grant from Headquarters.

For the first two years the Committee made grants for the upkeep of motor cars for the use of the Association in France, and in many cases a lady worker could take out her own car and drive it voluntarily.

The upkeep of hostels for the relatives of the wounded formed a large part of the work of the Association, sixteen of these being opened, and they were nearly always full. Each hostel was superintended and staffed by voluntary women workers, who gave unstilted help and sympathy to the unhappy relations who came to visit their men in hospital.

Up to June 1920 the sum of more than £20,000 passed through the Committee's hands in donations and subscriptions, and of this £7,350 was spent in actual comforts for the men, while large amounts were spent on the upkeep of motors - used chiefly for the conveyance of the relatives of the wounded - and in various grants and expenses overseas. The office was run with the utmost economy, with the smallest possible staff.

The 'Concerts at the Front' organisation was amalgamated with the Auxiliary Committee. until the month of June 1919, the responsibility for the finance of this undertaking, fell with the Hon. Treasurer, Mr A Barnard Cowtan, who sacrificed the whole of his leisure to the affairs of two organisations, He gave the most invaluable help and co-operation, supporting both the Committee and the office with his advice and experience. More than £108,000 was raised and passed onto the committee during this period of time.

In 1918, through the untiring efforts of Her Highness and Lady Malcolm, permission was obtained from the War Office to employ the wives and near relatives of interned prisoners of War in Holland, and in this way 60 wives of officers and N.C.O's were enabled to obtain passports for Holland. These wives were able to remain with their husbands for four months. They would not otherwise have been able to procure permits to cross to that country.

In the devastated area, through the agency of the committee, the men have been regularly supplied with socks and woollen comforts through the winter, with games and magazines, Christmas presents and free food. Voluntary lady workers have done invaluable work in the labour camps, making the huts comfortable and homelike for the men, and keeping them free from drunkenness by supplying wholesome recreation and music as a counter attraction to the numerous estaminets within reach of the camps.

For some time the education of the army was in the hands of the YMCA, and about 150 women teachers passed through this office, thus greatly increasing the work and the responsibility. The Committee was able to make several substantial grants towards the Educational Work at the Base Camps, and further sums were allocated for the purchase of books for this purpose.

In connection with the work further afield Mrs Henry Webley has done a large amount of pioneer work in India, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Palestine. Her contribution to the work of the YMCA has been most valuable, and she has been successful in obtaining several large gifts of money for use of the Association.

Lady Rodney paid several visits to France on the business of the Committee, and she, with Lady Cooper, supervised the general work of the women in France. Lady Cooper, since her return from Germany, has shown great interest in the work of the Committee, and her personal experience of the work abroad has been of great assistance.

In Germany, since the Armistice, many of the Huts have been staffed by women, and at one time nearly 140 were working in the Rhine Army Area. It is expected that approximately 70 women will remain to work with the reduced Army of Occupation.

In Cologne a Hostel was opened in connection with the central canteen, for the wives and children of British soldiers, and a most flourishing school was opened, under Dr Francis, the teachers being women. More than 120 children at a time received education in this way. The Committee were also responsible for arranging the passports and journeys of wives of soldiers travelling out to join their husbands in Cologne.



It is impossible to over-estimate the value of the work done by the late Countess of Bessborough and Lady Malcolm, as Joint Honorary Secretaries, at a time when the work was continually increasing and developing fresh difficulties.

The final meeting of the Committee was held on Monday, the 31st May, 1920, at which the responsibility of the Women's Work overseas was handed over to the National Women's Auxiliary, together with their assets, which amounted to some £80, and their liabilities, which were nil.

The Women's Auxiliary of the YMCA became increasingly important in the British movement during the war years. It was supported by the cream of British Society women who acted as its leaders, drawing on local women's support throughout the kingdom.

There were many women working in YMCA centres in England providing food and Hostel services.

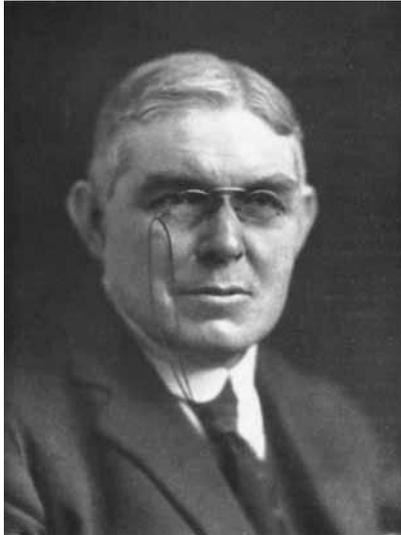
The Women's Auxiliary became so important within the YMCA movement that by mid 1918 it was given its own identity and constitution within the YMCA movement becoming the National Women's Auxiliary. The mission statement issued at that time reads as follows:-

"The Women's Auxiliary of the YMCA is a membership of women, believing in the principals and ideals of the YMCA banded together to work for and further those principles and do whatever lies in their power to co-operate with the leaders of the YMCA movement, first of all in their town, then in their country and in the national and world-wide work."

Membership of the National Auxiliary consisted of local WA's in England and Wales who were affiliated to it through the Regional WA's, through the local YMCA network.

An Executive Committee was to be formed from Officers together with one member from each Regional WA and Welsh National WA who were to be elected and proposed at the Annual Business Meeting.

There were also powers given to the Executive to co-opt a maximum of three persons.



The first meeting of the National WA' was held at the YMCA in Tottenham Court Road, London on

Monday July 15" 1918.

The meeting was chaired by

Sir Arthur Yapp KBE.

The committee consisted of **Her Highness Princess Helena Victoria, Lady Rodney, Mrs Water Long, Mrs Bertrum Corbet, Mrs Winston Churchill, Mrs Henry Ramsden, Mrs Stuart Wortley, Mrs G Hatfield and Mrs F J Chamberlain.**

The auxiliary cordially welcomed HH Helena Victoria as its first President.

The **Hon Mrs Stuart Wortley** was appointed Chairman. The Vice Chair was **Lady Rodney.**

The NWA was to consist of 6 representatives chosen by the war Emergency Committee together with 2 representatives nominated by each Divisional Council of the YMCA and 2 from the Munitions Committee.

The functions of the Auxiliary were decided as being:-

- To co-ordinate and confer on all matters relating to women's work for the YMCA and to further the work of the Association.
- To co-operate in work not only for soldiers but for discharged men and in the YMCA programme generally.
- That an annual conference shall be instituted at which the officers for the year shall be elected, plans for the year discussed and necessary business transacted.
- The immediate recognition and representation shall be given to existing Divisional Women's Auxiliaries and that when none exist the necessary steps shall be taken for their formation.

The Paris basis was submitted to the meeting and the ladies nominated to the National Council individually expressed their agreement with the terms of the basis as the basis of the national auxiliary.

Paris basis - "Young Men's Christian Association seeks to invite young men, who regarding the Lord Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour, according to the Holy Scripture desire to be His disciples in their doctrine and their life and to associate their efforts for the extension of His kingdom among young men."

A full meeting of the new committee and executive was arranged for 31 July 1918.

The programme for the 31st July 1918 was very interesting:-

2.45pm -3.45pm	Business Meeting Statement from the Chair Resolution for adoption of the Paris Basis Some accounts will be given of Women's Work in France, Munitions Department and Salisbury Plain Conference
3.45pm	Visits to London Huts - Tea at the Huts
5.00pm	National Women's Auxiliary Conference

Chair H.H Princess H Victoria GBE
Chairman's Address Lady Rodney
Song by Effie Mann

Address by Miss J Street of the Teacher's Christian Union

Song by Effie Mann
Distribution of the Order of the Red Triangle by HH Princess H Victoria GBE
God Save the King

Wednesday 31st July 1918

On the day the Chairman the Hon Mrs Stuart Wortley CBE said,

"The formation of the NWA is a new departure of no small importance in the YMCA organisation. Members will realise that it is an expression of appreciation by the National Council of the part women have played in the War work; it shows also that the National Council is desirous of establishing the co-operation of women on a permanent basis admitting the principle that men and women must combine their efforts in a programme of social reform."

"It is hoped that by linking up local committees to divisional committees as with NWA, members of which will have representation at the National Council, a complete system will be built up by which all women's workers will be kept in touch with HQ thereby greatly strengthening the Association, stimulating loyalty and arousing fresh interest."

Local management is of course encouraged and local responsibility respected in the work, freedom of action based on sympathy in ideals and principles. The attention of numbers is drawn to the many departments:-

The Arts Department, 24 Great Russell Street;
Lady Workers Department, 13 Russell Square,
Hospitality League, 18 Charing Cross Road.

And Hotels together with a programme of work now being drawn up to meet after war conditions.

The meeting went on to discuss war work which was continuing. It is interesting to read an account of work in Munitions Centres which I have summarised:-

"With the establishment of the Ministry of Munitions there followed a considerable increase in factories, necessitating a scheme for feeding the workers engaged upon night work and for those placed in situations away from their homes.

The YMCA offered to serve these workers and Mr Lloyd George accepted the offer.

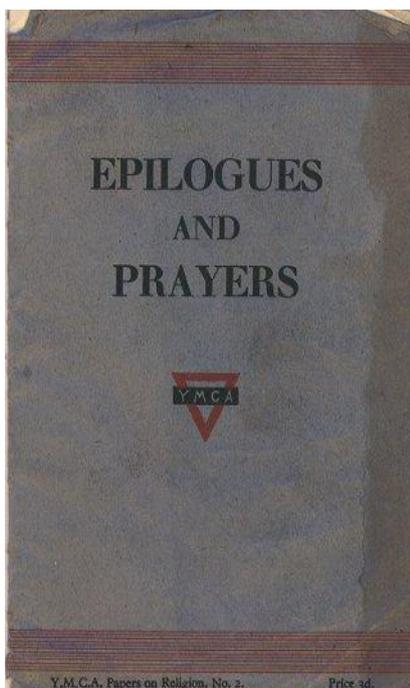
In view of the pressure in Military Camp work upon divisional secretaries and workers, it was found necessary to create a new working force by asking ladies to undertake voluntary work and an influential committee was formed by HH Princess Helena Victoria. A lady was appointed as president for each of the various divisions throughout the country. In response to a public appeal £30,000 was raised which enabled the YMCA t



There are now (in 1918) 120 centres. Apart from the initial outlay on experimental centres, most of the canteens have been erected and equipped by the firms concerned. Hostel service and other forms of work being provided by the YMCA for the last year a sum of £500,000 has been taken in workers' canteens and hostels, the wages bill amounting to £95,000. Of the total sum received from munitions' workers no less than 70% was returned in actual foodstuffs, leaving 30% as the cost of administration. The work of the YMCA is in operation at most of these hostels.

Education, recreation, concerts and entertainment, lectures and current events, libraries, religious services, cricket and football leagues.

Mr Winston Churchill is President of the cricket league with 42 clubs taking part.



So it can be seen the huge task that the women of the auxiliary had taken on in supporting the munitions workers, many of whom were dissatisfied with their conditions of work.

The meeting closed but was followed by a gathering of women workers held in King George's Hall under the presidency of H.H Princess Helena Victoria, mostly they were YMCA workers from London and the provinces.

In opening the proceedings Her Highness expressed her pleasure in being present at the first meeting arranged by the NWA. The newly formed auxiliary would serve to bring the large number of women workers of the Red Triangle into closer co-operation and to link up the various women's efforts in all parts of the country. The splendid efforts of the past 3 years had been a source of untold encouragement and help to the men of the armed services and they greatly appreciated the self-sacrificing work which the women of Britain had done during the stress and strain of the war period.

HH afterwards distributed the badges and certificates of the Order of the Red Triangle to about 200 workers. The meeting was closed with the National anthem

By the time of the next meeting of the NWA in October 1918 the war seemed to be coming to an end and with it would end the many forms of activities, which had occupied ladies for many years. The YMCA programme on the other hand was set to increase. Therefore it was felt that the women could still have a strong, influential force throughout the movement. Committees were encouraged to jump at opportunities in their neighbourhoods to set up boys clubs, village institutes, hostels for the discharged men, Information Bureaux for discharged men and to co - operate with other agencies wherever possible.

The formation of Boys Clubs was to be taken seriously as it was expected that in Birmingham alone 18,000 boys would be unemployed in 1919 following demobilisation. It was a serious problem, which the Women's Auxiliary discussed at length. It appeared in Birmingham there were 'gamblers schools' in which young boys were taught to gamble, cheat and steal. The YMCA was working in five centres, the number of which would increase yearly. The Women's Auxiliary members saw a great opportunity for their members to get involved and to use their influence in this work.

There were also opportunities in setting up Girl Guides - **Lady Baden Powell** was a keen member of the Auxiliary.

So it can be seen that the Women's Auxiliary was already determined to be a major force once the Great War was over.

They did not have to long to wait. At 4.05am on 11th November 1918 Germany signed an armistice that the allies thought would render impossible further hostilities. At 11am a general cease - fire was sounded.

THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR 1 1920 -1925

Thursday 23rd June 1921

Mr Chamberlain reported on the World Conference at Utrrecht. The position of the Anglo – Belge YMCA had been discussed and he regretted having to state that it had been found absolutely inevitable that the Association with the Belgian Movement should terminate – the Belgian Committee having stated that their work was purely secular and admitted of no religious work had found the Catholic party quite irreconcilable and it had not been possible to find a compromise without sacrificing the main principles of the YMCA. The YMCA however insisted on their right, if funds permitted, to carry out the work on the usual lines of the Movement, for British and American young men resident in Brussels.

In the following years the ladies threw themselves into developing the Red Triangle Clubs in YMCAs gymnasium classes, lectures, cinema shows, orchestra and libraries. Their presence in the clubs created an altogether different atmosphere than that was usually found in men's clubs and this helped to maintain an excellent standard of politeness and manners.

Princess Helena continued to be an active president throughout the movement opening new clubs regularly the clubs were very successful - a new branch of the NWA was formed in October 1920 with a membership of 150. With more and more men home from demobilisation in the army unemployment was becoming a big problem.

The Mayor of Nottingham called the local NWA committee in consultation to assist in organising his relief fund for the Nottingham unemployed.

An appeal to ladies was made by Miss Leveson Gower who was base in Cologne, Germany for volunteers to work in the 18 YMCA centres there. The city was alive with temptations for the troops based in the major German cities and it was seen as a high priority for the WA to help keep the troops away from temptation.

As well as upgrading the hostels in France the WA opened a branch in Constantinople under Lady Rumbold.

1921 saw the NWA celebrate the centenary of **Sir George William's** birth in Dulverton. The honourable Mrs Stuart Wortley, Chairman, laid a wreath at his tomb in St Paul's Cathedral and had the honour of unveiling a tablet at the farmhouse where he was born.

The NWA was still proving attractive to women across the country, with work continuing with the army and navy, particularly in places like Plymouth where the Red Triangle was as popular with HM forces as it was during the war.

The heavy workload of the WA was pushing the finances to the limit and the strain was being felt. The women redoubled their efforts in fundraising which led to better financial results. There were now 150 centres for boys with 13,000 members.

In 1922 **Lady Wortley** resigned as Chairman of the NWA as she was moving to the country. She had worked hard from the beginning of the NWA and through her strong leadership from 1899 had made the WA a well respected part of the YMCA proving that women were invaluable in the delivery of many programmes launched through the Red Triangle Clubs. **Mrs Norrie** replaced her.

The barriers were beginning to fall and the old idea that women and men had to be kept as separate as possible was changing. There was now a realisation that the women's influence through the NWA had a profound effect on attitudes within the YMCA. Dr Helen Wilson advocated dancing in mixed clubs - an idea that would have been considered shocking in YMCA circles not so many years before!

The NWA had 'made things happen' in the YMCA and had encouraged working together with other agencies for the common good. It was accepted that the NWA had opened doors where the YMCA would not have otherwise done so.

WELSH NWA

In 1924 upon the initiative of **Princess Helena Victoria** the Welsh NWA was formed to further the needs of the YMCA in Wales and raise enthusiasm amongst Welsh ladies. The need for NWA involvement was particularly needed in the heavily underdeveloped south Wales area which could be monitored better from a base in Wales



In the review of 1925 it could be seen that the work of the NWA was proceeding well. **Princess Helena Victoria** continued her visitations around the country, visiting Stafford, Wolverhampton, Hanley, Kidsgrove, Newcastle (Staffs), Cardiff, Worthing, Hove, Brighton, Wellington, Shrewsbury, St Albans, Aldershot, Rugeley and Hertford. Raising £8,179 for the YMCA. The **Princess Mary Louise** (Helena Victoria's sister, (pictured left) had visited Liverpool, Southport, Newcastle, Whitley Bay, South Shields and Darlington raising £3981.

The Auxiliary was still growing with several new WA's being formed in the provinces.

In Wales the boys clubs continued to flourish, a typical one being in Aderaran, South Wales which had a membership of 265 of which 200 were under the age of 15.

There were various activities organised for the members including sports and lectures, there was a choir of 30 and a troop which gave concerts from time to time. 35 women ran the club very successfully.

March 18th 1925

H.R.H Princess Helena Victoria called upon Mr Lockhampton of the Migration Department to speak. Mr Lockhampton outlined the Inter Church Nomination Scheme in which he requested the cooperation of women. Under the scheme, positions in the dominion for young women to occupy positions as domestic helpers, probationers in hospitals, nursemaids, were coming particularly from Australia. The Department needed help in requisitioning more women, therefore asked for the WA to make the scheme wider known and to forward likely names.

Miss Hope Wadsworth put the following resolution before the meeting.

“The committee of the Northampton Branch of the NWA view with apprehension the immigration of so many of the physically most fit of the population of Great Britain to the Dominions. They requested that the committee of the NWA consider very seriously what will be the effecting years to come, of helping the best to leave this country and thereby lowering the physical standard in England”

The general feeling of the meeting was in favour of cooperating with the Migration Department. Her Highness asked the meeting to signify by show of hands whether the NWA should cooperate in the work and the result was practically unanimous.

Lady Grisborough talked about a new scheme called “Empire Community Settlement” it was to help people with small fixed incomes that have children to educate. A suggested place for resettlement is Grahamstown, South Africa, where there is a University. The Government have promised to give support to the scheme.

16th December 1925

Mr Heald gave a most interesting account of the 1st International Camp Conference for Boys organised by the YMCA World Committee held at Vaumareus, Switzerland in Aug 1925. 19 nations, including Germany and Austria, sent representatives. For a week those boys lived and played together and discussed freely and openly the vital things in life.

YMCA IN COLOGNE ON THE MOVE

The army of occupation in Cologne, which had been heavily supported by the YMCA and a loyal band of NWA workers, was moving to Wiesbaden. The army regiments begged the YMCA to move with them. This was agreed and £1000 was quickly raised to facilitate the move.



The general strike caused the original meeting of the NWA in London set for May 12 to be cancelled. The meeting convened on June 22 where it was reported that "During the recent strikes or industrial dispute, the greatest the world had ever seen, the YMCA was able to show its worth. The Government asked the NWA to organise Canteens in Hyde Park for lorry men. YMCA canteens were open day and night during the whole period of the General Strike".

Although there was evidently no support voiced for the strikes, particularly the miners, NWA's throughout the land gave support to miners wives and families and extra activities were laid on in many villages and towns during the period.

Reports submitted showed growing support for the NWA in all areas of work with new WA's being formed in most regional areas.

Princess Mary Louise had spent a week in the Northeast visiting Sunderland, Newcastle, Ashington, Bedlington and Blythe raising £1140 for the Association.

A concert attended by **Princess Mary, Princess Beatrice, Princess Helena Victoria, Princess Marie Louise and the Sultan of Zanzibar**, held at the Park Lane Hotel raised £1010, which was used to further the work of local boys clubs.

By the end of the 1920's the NWA was as strong as ever. It had seen strong leadership throughout the 10 years, but also a solid commitment by women in every part of the country. The emergence of the NWA in Wales had brought much needed influence at a time when it was most needed.



NATIONAL WOMEN'S AUXILIARY.

SUB - COMMITTEE FOR DEALING WITH UNIFORM AND BADGES.

HELD AT Y.M.C.A. 13 RUSSELL SQUARE, W.C.I.

13 SEPTEMBER AT 2.30 P.M

Present (Chairman) Mrs G. F Hatfield, O. B. E; Hon; Mrs Stuart Wortley, C.B.E;

Mrs Doig, M.B.E; Mrs Norrie, M.B.E and Mrs Williams, M.B.E.

In accordance with instructions from the Executive, this Committee met and discussed the following questions in regard to uniform.

1. Rules on wearing the uniform

- a) The wearing of the uniform is optional - full time workers are entitled to wear it after 6 months' service. Part time workers after a year's service with a minimum of 12 hours per week.
- b) Uniforms must not be worn on holiday and all workers on leaving the Association must immediately remove blue facings and badges.
- c) The standard designs must adhered to in all respects.
- d) Names of ladies entitled to and desirous of wearing the uniform must come through the Lady President or Heads of Departments to the Lady Workers Department, Russell Square.
- e) The uniform is registered.

2. Prices etc.

The Uniform can be obtained from the following shops:

Harrods at £6. 18. 6,

Selfridges at £6. 16. 6,

Debenham & Freebody at £7. 10. 6,

D. H. Evans at £7. 17. 6.

The Winter Overcoats from the same shops from £6. 16. 6. The Coat Frock from about £2. and grey and blue Overalls (price to be ascertained). Please note these are not fixed prices, but liable to go up any day.

Patterns and sketches of the completed uniform to be seen at the Lady Workers Department.

3. Service Stripes.

A blue service stripe for each completed year's service to be worn just above the wrist strap of the right sleeve and should be 3" long, 1/4" wide and 1/4" apart.

The embroidered red triangle badge for the right sleeve (6" from top of sleeve) can be procured also at the Lady Workers Department.

4. Coats.

A collar of suitable fur (excluding white furs) may be worn with the overcoat - no muffs. A grey woollen scarf may be worn with the coat and skirt. Long fur coats may be worn if they cover the uniform entirely.

Buttons. These should be four holed black bone in preference to cloth.

Skirts. These should be white with black tie.

Footwear. Black boots, or shoes and stockings must be worn.

Gaiters (optional) in grey or black.

5. Hats.

Black cloth winter hat to be worn by all workers, with special white badges for Lady Presidents. Lady Presidents have the option of wearing the three-cornered hat in straw or felt. Arrangements being made with shop to supply these. The black cloth hat can only be produced at Scott's, 1, Old Bond Street.

6. Bars and Badges

It is recommended that the Order of the Red Triangle be worn attached to a ribbon (black or red) with a bar to be added for each year's service.

7. A Communication.

A letter is being addressed to the Divisional Secretaries asking for the names of the ladies in charge of their huts, to whom information can be sent on the above.

1933 - 1939

The meeting of the Executive committee held on Thursday 26 January 1933 shows that it was still being supported by the top names in Society such as **Lady Edward Spencer Churchill**.

The Chairman was now the **Honourable Mrs Sydney Marsham**; the President was **HH Princess Helena Victoria**.

Boy's work which had continued since the war was struggling. It was felt that the National Council of YMCA's was grudging in its monetary allocation, although to be fair the main problem was in London.

Elsewhere local YMCA's were fully supporting Boy's Clubs from their own finances. Many of the old buildings used by the clubs now worn out and needed rebuilding. The National Council were considering spending £2500 on a site for the buying of a permanent campsite for boys at Windermere (YMCA Lakeside). The funding of new buildings was to continue as a problem throughout the 1930's.

In 1935 a concert sponsored by **Princess Royal** raised £1045 6s 8d. At the same meeting Mrs Hatfield read a letter from the divisional secretary of the north eastern area appealing for clothing for a jumble sale which the WA of Coundon YMCA in a distressed part of Durham was organising to raise funds to repay a miner who had loaned the Association £100, whom the women felt should be repaid. The committee sent £5 towards the effort, as it was not feasible to send clothes.

HH Princes Helena Victoria Visited Coundon Tynemouth and York to raise funds and to visit areas of deprivation, she also visited the Anglo - German boys' camps held near Dorking in August 1935. Her interest in the NWA had not diminished over the years. The death of **King George V** in 1936 cultivated her work somewhat, only managing to visit Reading to collect £1523 presented by the Mayoress of Reading.

Present at the 1936 bi - annual meeting at the YMCA Headquarters in May were many more 'ordinary' women, as opposed to those being from high society such as **Princess Helena Victoria. The honourable Mrs Sydney Marsham (chairman), The Lady Ammot, Lady Machon, Lady Blane, Lady Cohen, Lady Chadwick - Healey and the Countess of Lichfield.**

For the next three years, the work of the NWA continued but the clouds of war were gathering and there was soon to be a great need of the NWA's service by the armed services.