

THE HOME FRONT IN SURREY IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR A GUIDE TO SOURCES AT SURREY HISTORY CENTRE

Part 7. Financing the War, relieving Hardship

The Lord Lieutenant of Surrey's Fund was inaugurated in Aug 1914 to raise money for the National Relief Fund (Prince of Wales' Fund); the Surrey Branch of the British Red Cross Society for support of war hospitals and homes; the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association (Surrey); and the needs of the county in connection with the County Committee for the Prevention and Relief of Distress caused by the War; and for other local purposes at discretion of executive committee (such as a recreation hut at Witley Camp, the Queen's POW Fund, war hospital supply depots and needlework guilds). The Fund grew out of a meeting in Piccadilly convened by the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Ashcombe, on 7 Aug 1914, to establish a committee to deal with war-related emergencies in the county. The encouragement of recruiting and the actual relief of cases of hardship were soon dropped from the committee's remit when it became apparent that other agencies were leading on these functions. The Fund's minutes, 1914-1920 (SHC ref 608/9/1), detail its activities, until it was wound up in 1920 when remaining funds were distributed to homes, disabled servicemen's charities and related causes.

In the early months of the war, 103 local parish emergency committees were also set up to raise funds for the same causes, some of which distributed by the local committees and some sent to the Lord Lieutenant's county fund. One such committee was the Lingfield Area Emergency Committee, whose records, 1915-1919, detail its efforts on behalf of local hospitals and convalescent homes and in support of Belgian refugees in the area (SHC ref 685/1-6).

The County Committee for the Prevention and Relief of Distress in the War was established in 1914 under the authority of the Cabinet Committee and Local Government Board and included representatives from Surrey County Council, Boards of Guardians, District Councils, the Territorial Association, the County Branches of the Soldiers and Sailors Families Association and the British Red Cross Society, Labour Exchanges, employers, trades unions and philanthropic agencies. It was originally feared that unemployment would rise because of the war but in fact this was not the case. For records of the Committee see SHC refs CC7/1/1-5, (including a letter book with some discussion of individual cases of hardship) and CC28/267A.

Pylisier Family, Formerly Cherrahurst,
Pine Grove,
now Milston

M. Louis 53
Mme. Marie 52
Irma 25 F.
Julomaine 23 F.
Prudence 20 F.
Godelieve 18 F.
Rachel 16 F.

Have they been receiving assistance? Yes
From whom? Rent & board from Committee but he
Have they private means? a very little
Are they earning anything? he runs a little
as gardener

Am all working & paying for themselves at Milston
Mar 10/15

Index card detailing Belgian refugee family in
Weybridge (SHC ref Ac1321/7/11/6)

The fullest set of papers documenting a local Surrey district's relief of local war distress and the reception and support of Belgian refugees relate to the Weybridge area and are held as SHC ref Ac1321/7/1-31. They were accumulated by Dr Bramley Taylor, secretary of the Weybridge War Distress Emergency Fund, and include minutes, statements of account, a card index of Belgian refugees, communications from the national War Refugees Committee in London and further

papers relating to the establishment of the County Committee for the Prevention and Relief of Distress in the War. Dr Taylor's papers also include minutes, correspondence and reports of the British Red Cross Society (Surrey Branch, Chertsey division, later North Surrey and Kingston Division), 1914-1915 (including relating to the setting up of a hospital in St George's Hills Golf Club house, with list of stores, 1914).

Other brief references to the local reception of Belgian refugees and the administration of relief will be found among the records of local districts such as **SHC ref 1736/BR/20** (Guildford Borough, 1918, 1920-1921) and **SHC ref Ac1363/1/103/2** (Haslemere, 1914). Church records may also contain references, for example the minutes of the trustees of South Street Mission Chapel, Wandsworth, 11 Nov 1918, which record the departure of Belgian refugees after 4 years residence (**SHC ref 3097/7/1**). The admission register of Grayshott CE School, Hindhead, includes Belgian refugee children (**SHC ref 8163/2/3**). Published directories can also be useful; for *Woking Year Book and Directory*, 1916 (digital copy held by Surrey History Centre; original at The Lightbox) lists Belgian refugees at several addresses.

Under the War Charities Act 1916, local charities had either to be registered with Surrey County Council Local Charity Committee and the Charity Commissioners, or obtain an exemption. Records of the County Council's committee are held as **SHC ref CC7/3/1-7**.

The county also looked to the needs of the men of the local regiments at the front and those taken as prisoners. At the Depot of the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment a Comfort Fund was established to support the 1st and 2nd Battalions under the direction of Mrs Elias Morgan, whose husband commanded the depot, with the support of wives of other officers and locals. The Fund soon extended its efforts to support the regiment's prisoners of war. For scrapbooks created by Mrs Elias Morgan, 1914-1921, see **SHC ref**



Packing parcels for Queen's Regiment Comfort Fund set up by Mrs Elias Morgan (SHC ref (QRWS/30/ELIAA/1-2)

QRWS/30/ELIAA/1-2. In 1916 the organisation of the comforts fund was taken over by a county committee, including the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Middleton, Sir Charles Walpole, MPs, the mayors of Guildford, Godalming and Reigate, and officers of the regiment. In Nov 1917, to raise more money for the many prisoners of war, The Queen's Regiment and the East Surrey Regiment Prisoners of War Relief Fund was created, the money raised being allocated according to need to the regimental committees responsible for care of prisoners.

Alongside fundraising for the relief of local cases of hardship and the support of the county's war hospitals, communities across Surrey were also exhorted by the authorities to purchase war bonds and participate in national fundraising drives and local committees were formed across Surrey to further this cause.

In 1916, a Surrey Central Committee for War Savings was established to oversee locally the work of the National Organising Committee for War Savings in promoting economy and investment in government war securities. A file relating to the setting up of this committee, chiefly the selection of representatives from local authorities, churches, labour organisations, friendly societies and trade councils, and to the organisation of a children's essay competition on thrift, 1916, is held as **SHC ref CC28/267B**.

For a receipt issued to Glosters Ltd of Woking, seed merchants, for the firm's subscription to a War Loan, with related correspondence, 1915-17, see **SHC ref 7655/3/12**; a circular letter from Chancellor of the Exchequer Andrew Bonar Law inviting subscriptions to a War Loan, 1917, see **SHC ref G173/77/5**. For a certificate issued by Guildford Division War Savings Committee to Mr James W Wright, honorary secretary of the Farnham Local Committee, for 'the valuable services rendered by him in connexion with the War Loan scheme', May 1918, see **SHC ref 6660/1**.

In Mar 1918, Guildford pledged to raise £62,500, enough for 25 planes, as its contribution to a national campaign to raise £100 million in a single week by sale of war bonds and war savings certificates. In fact £69,000 was raised in 2 days and a telegram was sent to King George V informing him that the town was now going for 50 aeroplanes and asking permission to then provide tanks at £5,000 each. The King's encouraging response was posted all over the town and an example of the poster (HM The King "... warmly welcomes the further efforts that the Citizens of Guildford desire to put forward in providing TANKS") is held as **SHC ref 5305/11/1**. Ultimately the town raised £237,000. In October 1918, the town staged a 'Feed the Guns' Week', to raise money for guns and ammunition. Canadian soldiers constructed a tableau representing 'Flanders by Moonlight' in the burnt out ruins of John Reeks and Co, drapers, in the High Street, complete with 6 inch howitzer, sandbags and a Red Cross dressing station. £280,197 was raised and the *Surrey Advertiser* published an illustrated souvenir for which see **SHC ref 1946/box 7**.

For examples of some original fundraising lapel flags (eg. 'Help Russia') see **SHC ref ESR/25/GILLH/1**.



*Poster proclaiming Tank Day in Guildford, 1918
(SHC ref 5305/11/1)*



*Fund-raising tableau of Western Front in Guildford High Street with German Howitzer, 1918
(SHC ref 1946/Box7)*