

WW1

Fact Sheet 1A

UK Aid



Home Visits

Soldiers leaving for war were often worried about the family they had left behind. Often they asked a Salvation Army officer - officer is the name given to the church leader in The Salvation Army - to look in on their family. A popular story of the time was of one soldier saying how worried he was to be leaving his family with no one to look after them. The Salvation Army officer replied, 'My missus will look after your missus. And they shall all come to our house for tea every Sunday.' Visiting the homes of servicemen was a weekly task undertaken by many Salvationists. It was a source of comfort to many servicemen according to their letters. This was expanded to include counselling for widows.

Station Patrols

The Salvation Army often did station patrols at busy train stations. Soldiers were often found stranded there after missing connections when on leave or returning to camps. They would be found trying to sleep in the station. They were collected and directed to a Salvation Army hostel, where they would be woken up early enough to get the earliest train possible and so be able to return to the camps without being in trouble for arriving late.

Homes and Hostels

Many soldiers travelling in the UK were in unfamiliar surroundings, and could quite easily find themselves being overcharged for accommodation, and sometimes even drugged and robbed. The Salvation Army provided clean safe places for servicemen to stay in while travelling, often near train stations and naval ports. The prices were at cost, and free if the serviceman had no money. There they could find clean bedding, washing facilities and a cooked breakfast. The homes and hostels could be used for longer stays but rooms were also available on an emergency basis. The station patrols would bring in a lot of servicemen and it could become quite crowded and noisy as they arrived throughout the night. The homes and hostels were advertised for the Navy and military, but they were not solely for the use of the men. The homes often had family rooms so wives and children could stay and meet up with family in the forces. Relatives journeying to France to visit wounded soldiers could also stay there.

Will Writing

A free will writing service was available for servicemen before they left for war. To ensure that if the worst happened, loved ones would be able to inherit with ease.

Books for Servicemen

A 'soldier's guide' and other books were printed for soldiers to read. They were filled with advice on how to cope with the stresses of war.



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Clothes for Servicemen

Soldiers based near a Salvation Army corps - the name for a Salvation Army church - could take their clothes in for washing or repair. Sewing classes were set up and sewing groups formed to help provide servicemen with new clothes. New clothes were needed for a variety of reasons: they were worn away, cooler clothes were required for the country the soldier was in, they were blasted off because of an explosion, or they needed altering to cope with any injuries.

Parcels

Care parcels were sent to soldiers and to prisoners of war. A parcel might include clothes like a new shirt, underwear or socks, chocolate, soap, paper and envelopes, a handkerchief. A note of support and encouragement was often included.

Fundraising

Fundraising meant that money was raised to help support the aid given to servicemen and to raise the funds to buy ambulances. One way of raising money was selling little flags - little pins.

Munitions Canteens

Canteens were created to help support the workers in the factories creating the weapons required for war.

Missing Soldiers

A 'stranger bureau' was set up to help support the finding of missing soldiers. Enquiries were helped by using the network of Salvationists and the Salvation Army newspaper *The War Cry*.

Public Kitchens

Public kitchens were set up to help feed people. A good meal could be bought at cost to feed the family. This became necessary for a variety of reasons. For example, some parents did not have the time to cook full meals for their families due to the hours they were working for the war effort. Food was becoming harder to find and to afford. Towards the end of the war, bread was becoming scarce and it was recommended that only the poorest should buy it.

Emergency Response

Whenever there was an explosion - for example, at a munitions factory, or because of an air raid - from zeppelins or aeroplanes, there would be an emergency response from The Salvation Army. People who were made homeless were fed and shelter was found. Practical help was offered - from moving saved possessions to carpentry for repairs. During raids shelter was offered in halls with concrete floors. The public kitchens meant food could be given in a timely fashion both to the community and to the workers dealing with the emergency.



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