

The Great War  
Our Community Commemorated

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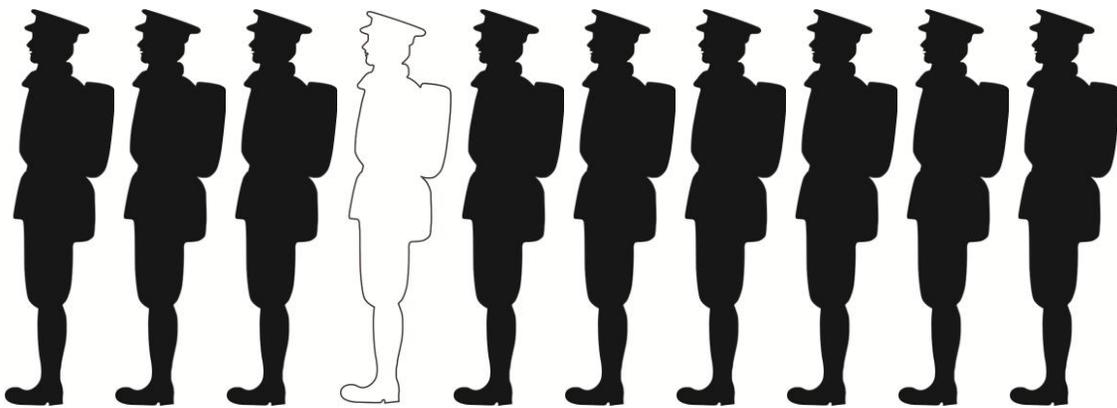
# The Community Response

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Booklet 6: Gwen Hayhurst, Cath & Rod Cameron

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Holmes Chapel and District U3A Local History Group

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This booklet, sixth in a series about the effect of the First World War on Holmes Chapel and Cranage, describes the reaction of the residents of Holmes Chapel to the War. Unable to volunteer for a number of reasons such as being too old, or female, we look at what they actually did to support the War effort:

- The Holmes Chapel and District Sewing Guild
- Nursing, VADs and Somerford Hospital
- The Local Volunteer Defence Corps (Home Guard)
- The War Savings Association
- Appendices – Statements of Accounts relating to Sewing Guild and Somerford Park Hospital

*The photograph on the Front Cover is of Patients and Nurses taken in front of St John's Auxiliary Military Hospital, Somerford Park between 1915 & 1919. Sir Walter Shakerley in uniform is seated in the front row*

# 1 The Holmes Chapel and District Sewing Guild

The Sewing Guild was formed under the auspices of Mrs. Carver almost as soon as the War started in order to make bandages, shirts, coats and socks for all those suffering in the War. Initially Mrs. Carver had undertaken to provide all that might be necessary in the way of clothing for the proposed hospital at the Agricultural College if it should ever be required. When all of those garments had been made, she proposed to send contributions of clothing etc. to other places where they were most needed. Initially, the members of the guild met at the Cranage Club three afternoons a week. The organising committee consisted of Mrs. Carver as President and Secretary, Mr. Carver as Treasurer, Mrs. Dickinson, Mrs. G.F. Jackson, Mrs. E. Massey, Mrs. T. Massey, Miss Howarth and Mrs. F.A. Howarth.

**ENTERIC SHIRT** (Show all down, Back)

**HEEL-less Operation Stocking**

MEASUREMENT OF STOCKING.—When finished, 15 inches in length.

**MATERIALS REQUIRED.**—For 2 pairs.—No. 9, bone needles.

Cast on 68 stitches, placing 14 on two needles, and so on the other.

Knit one round plain. Then knit 2 and knit 2 for 34 inches. Knit one round plain; next round decrease 2 stitches evenly; the center of each of two needles and the beginning and end of third needle. Knit the next round plain. Then—

Knit 6, take 2 together; repeat to end of round. Knit 6 rounds plain. Knit 5, take 2 together; repeat to end of round. Knit 4 rounds plain. Knit 4, take 2 together;

**Day Sock**

MEASUREMENTS OF FINISHED SOCK.—Length from top of sock to bottom of foot, 14 1/2 inches. Length of foot, 11 inches. Length of instep, 11 inches. Length of leg to commencement of heel, 14 inches.

The 12-inch sock is the size mostly required, but it is recommended that the feet be made fully large to allow for shrinkage. Socks are issued to the Army in the following proportions:

Regiment	Stock	Heel	Per Pair
Shoulder Arm's	10 1/2	10 1/2	100
Other Arm's	11 1/2	11 1/2	100

**MATERIALS REQUIRED.**—Six ounces, 3 ply Worthing or 4 ply

**THE BRITISH RED CROSS SOCIETY**

PICK UP and knit 28 stitches down the side of the heel piece. Knit the 31 stitches of the front needles on to one needle; Pick up and knit the 15 stitches at the other side of the heel piece. Divide the last stitches on to the two side needles, and knit right round right to the center heel.

**First needle.** Knit to within 3 stitches of the front end of side needle; knit 2 together; knit 2.

**Second needle plain.**

## The British Red Cross Society

:: NEEDLEWORK AND ::  
KNITTING INSTRUCTIONS

**PRICE SIXPENCE**      **83, FALL MALL, LONDON, S.W.**

**PATIENT'S OPERATION GOWN**

**Woolen Slippers**

MEASUREMENTS.—Length from tip of toe to heel, 11 inches. Circumference around the ball of the foot, 11 inches.

**MATERIALS REQUIRED.**—For 2 pairs.—No. 10, bone needles.

Cast on 68 stitches, placing 14 on two needles, and so on the other.

Knit one round plain. Then knit 2 and knit 2 for 34 inches. Knit one round plain; next round decrease 2 stitches evenly; the center of each of two needles and the beginning and end of third needle. Knit the next round plain. Then—

Knit 6, take 2 together; repeat to end of round. Knit 6 rounds plain. Knit 5, take 2 together; repeat to end of round. Knit 4 rounds plain. Knit 4, take 2 together;

**THE BRITISH RED CROSS SOCIETY**

1 slipped stitch over base of the heel, knit other knit needle plain knit needles 40 needles 2 plain 4 needles plain 20, then decrease again 3 rows, which have

Picture: Patterns taken from the Red Cross Instruction Manual

By September 1914 the members of the Guild had already made a good supply of garments and bandages and people's willingness to do their bit for the war effort was reflected in the large number of volunteers for the Guild. During the school holidays children helped out as well. In October 1914, a list was published of how supplies produced by the Sewing Guild had been distributed so far:-

To the <u>French Red Cross Hospital in Paris</u> : 30 Night Shirts, 8 Handkerchiefs, 20 Flannelette Shirts, 10 White Calico Nightshirts, 1 Operation Coat, 24 Day Shirts, 44 Handkerchiefs, 4 dozen Eamark Bandages, 20 Red Flannel Bed Jackets, 8 pair Bed Socks, 2 pair Mittens
To Mrs. Moberly for the <u>Lancashire Regiment (Soldiers in Camp)</u> : 8 Day Shirts
To Mrs. Glazebrook for the <u>Cheshire Yeomanry</u> : 24 pair of Socks
To Mrs. Bulkley for relief of the <u>Distressed in Liverpool</u> : 7 pair Flannel Knickers, 4 Chemises, 6 Flannel Petticoats, 8 pair Socks
To the <u>Belgian family living in the Girls' Club Cottage</u> : 2 Flannel Knickers, 2 Women's Nightdresses, 2 Girl's Nightdresses, 2 Men's Nightshirts
To <u>Dr Picton</u> in Calais / Ostend: 6 Calico Nightshirts, 4 Red Flannel Bed Jackets, 6 Operating Coats, 1 dozen Handkerchiefs and 1 dozen Eamark Bandages
To Lady Shakerley for wounded Belgian soldiers at <u>Somerford Military Hospital VAD</u> : 1 dozen Shirts
"Mrs. Carver is just on the point of sending a parcel containing Shirts, Socks, Cuffs, etc to W. Street and J. Harrop who are both at the Front with their regiment, the Royal Field Artillery. Altogether, some 800 garments have already been sent from our local Society, and as time goes on that number will be very largely increased."

In the December issue of the Parish Magazine, the Sewing Guild reported that they had supplied all manner of clothes and other essentials throughout the autumn and early winter of 1914 for the above mentioned destinations and also:-

To the Military Hospital in Manchester

On 16<sup>th</sup> October to the Commanding Officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment at the Front: 10 Day Shirts and 10 pair Socks

To Mrs. Meadows for the Cheshire Brigade RFA

To Private Carver for his roommates

Teachers and Children were also busily engaged in producing garments. In response to an appeal by a nurse working with the British Field Hospital for Belgium stationed at the time at Furness, the children collected a special parcel of articles, which was dispatched on 1<sup>st</sup> November and had already collected another parcel ready for dispatch. In January 1915 it was noted that the £74 collected had been spent by the Sewing Guild and additional funds were needed to purchase further raw materials. Lady French pointed out the need for the continual support of warm garments at the Front.



Daily Mirror Cartoon about Knitting  
25<sup>th</sup> February 1915

Additional destinations and recipients were included by September 1915 when the number of garments produced had risen to 1896, ranging from Pocket Handkerchiefs to Operating Coats:

To the <u>Belgian Families in Holmes Chapel</u>
To E. Crossfield Pearson Esq for <u>Belgian Refugees</u>
To <u>Lady Smith Dorrien</u> : Kit Bags
To the <u>Marylebone War Hospital Supply Depot</u>
To the <u>French Wounded Emergency Fund</u>
To Mrs. Corrington Wilde for the <u>Serbian Relief Fund</u>
To Dr. Atkinson for the <u>Serbian Relief Fund</u>
To <u>Lady French's Fund</u>
To Mrs. Kay for <u>Men at the Dardenelles</u>
To <u>Miss Tyler</u> : Sandbags
To <u>individual soldiers of our parish</u> : Parcels with socks, shirts etc

Progress continued at a great pace. On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1916, Mrs. K.B. Carver reported that since the beginning of the War the Sewing Guild had distributed over 3000 garments.

Funds for the Sewing Guild were often raised by entertainments such as that held on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> October 1916: "An Entertainment, consisting of two amusing plays was given in the Assembly Rooms in aid of the funds for the Needlework Guild for Soldiers. In addition, music was supplied by our local Orchestra, and Musical Sketches and Songs were rendered by Misses Maudesley of Manchester. The room was packed on both nights, and the splendid sum of £18 8s 0d was collected."



**Pictures: Punch Cartoons from the First World War about Gifts for the Front.**

“Our best thanks are tendered to Mr. Carver who paid all the expenses, and so freed us from taxation, Mrs. Potts who kindly lent a Piano, Mrs. W. Plant who supplied refreshments, Mrs. Marshall for loan of a room for rehearsals, and to all others who so kindly lent lamps and furniture, and so helped to make the Entertainment a success. Our takings were £28 3s 0d.”

In March 1917, Mrs. Carver provided a Statement of Accounts for the Sewing guild from 15<sup>th</sup> August 1914 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 1916. In her attached notes, she reported that the Guild had been meeting twice weekly and 1501 garments had been made and sent during the past year to destinations as noted above, together with the following additional:

To the British Red Cross: To the British Expeditionary Force

She also stated that now Britain was in the third year of the War, there

was greater demand than ever for supplies. As Mrs. Carver stated “When one thinks of all the voluntary work that is being done in the sewing parties in the United Kingdom one wonders how the government would have done without them”. She also appealed to as many women as possible to join the guild and wrote “There are very many who have sons at the front who nevertheless never come to help us to sew for them”.

In December 1917 it was reported that the Guild had sent garments and supplies in previous months to a number of destinations noted above. From these Mrs. Carver said she had received grateful thanks and had been told how valuable and well made the gifts were. She wrote “our Sewing Guild must be the oldest in the world as we began three days after War was declared , and we have been working ever since”. She reported that the Guild was not nearly as large as it should be, again implying lack of patriotism by those women who were absent from its ranks. In the 40 months since War had been declared about 5,000 garments had been made. She exhorted, once again, those women who had not joined the Sewing Guild to do so. Mrs. Massey and Miss Evans had organized a house to house visitation, raising £33 whilst Mrs. Howarth had donated numerous pieces of material and the women at the Sunday meeting had collected several pounds in their collecting box.

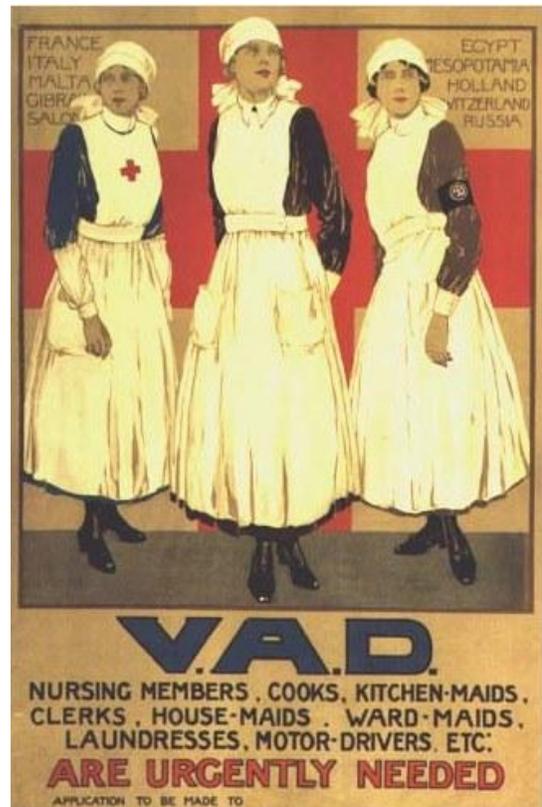
The work of the Sewing Guild throughout the War is testimony to the industry and determination of the women of Holmes Chapel and Cranage.

## SOURCES

Parish Magazines 1914 – 1918

## 2 Nursing, VADs and Somerford Hospital

Founded in 1909 with the help of the Red Cross and Order of St. John, the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) was a voluntary organisation providing field nursing services, mainly in hospitals, in Great Britain and various other countries in the British Empire. By the summer of 1914 there were over 2,500 Voluntary Aid Detachments in Britain. Each individual volunteer was called a detachment, or simply a VAD. Of the 74,000 VADs in 1914, two-thirds were women and girls. Initially they were trained to provide meals at railway stations and nurse the wounded while they were being transferred between hospitals.



Picture: First World War VAD Recruitment poster

At the outbreak of the First World War VADs eagerly offered their service to the war effort. The British Red Cross was reluctant to allow civilian women a role in overseas hospitals, because most VADs were of the middle and upper classes and unaccustomed to hardship and traditional hospital discipline. Military authorities would not accept VADs at the front line. But as the War progressed, the growing shortage of trained nurses opened the door for VADs in overseas military hospitals. Female volunteers over the age of twenty-three and with more than three months' hospital experience were accepted for overseas service. VADs were an uneasy addition to military hospitals' rank and order. They lacked the advanced skill and discipline of professional trained nurses and were often critical of the nursing

profession. Relations improved as the war stretched on: VADs increased their skill and efficiency and trained nurses were more accepting of the VADs' contributions.

The location of hospitals in the vicinity of Holmes Chapel can be determined from a "Hospital Sunday", a Special Service that was held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1914 in the Parish Church at the request of the Holmes Chapel and District Friendly Society, where an appeal was made on behalf of Manchester Royal Infirmary, Winsford Cottage Hospital and the local Nursing Society. The offertory collected £17 7s 4d, which was distributed to Winsford Hospital £6 6s 0d, MRI £5 5s 0d and the balance to the local Nursing Association (£5 16s 4d). The Nursing Association paid for the Salary, Uniform and Cycle of Nurse Owen who during the period July 1913 – July 1914 assisted at 30 confinements and made a total of 2,644 house visits. The Nursing Association must have been continually in the minds of the villagers as they contributed to the support of Nurse Owen. And is likely to have been an inspiration to the local girls and women who became VADs.

It was reported in the Parish Magazine that a Voluntary Aid Detachment was formed in Holmes Chapel and District soon after the start of the War in August 1914. The Officers of the Detachment were Mrs. Reiss – Commandant, Mrs. Glazebrook – Asst. Commandant, Mrs. Carver – Quartermaster, Mrs. Young – Asst. Quartermaster, Mrs. Picton (a qualified Nursing Sister) – Lady Superintendent, Dr Picton – Medical Officer, the Revs. E. & J.H. Armitstead – Stewards & Asst.

Quartermasters. In addition, a staff of 19 nurses, cooks etc and a staff of stretcher bearers were enrolled. The Detachment immediately offered the Military Authorities the use of the Agricultural College as a 40 bed hospital for sick and wounded, and volunteered to take charge and provide all necessary requirements for 40 patients. Possible opposition to the College being used as a hospital were reported in Cheshire Education minutes of November 1914. "Steps were taken by the Director of Education and the Principal of the College in connection with

the attempt to obtain the use of the college for Hospital purposes”

The Crewe Courier reported that on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October, 18 wounded Belgian soldiers arrived at Somerford Hall the residence of Colonel Sir Walter Shakerley, Hon Colonel of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cheshire Battalion. For a week they had been treated in Manchester, and now by the generosity of Sir Walter they would spend their period of convalescence in beautiful countryside. The journey was made in motor cars from Manchester. Mr. J Monaghan who was in charge of The Holmes Chapel Red Cross, attended the soldiers and was said “to have rendered excellent service”. From the ladies section, Mrs. F. Lee and Miss Bolland were on duty the first night.



**Photo: Somerford Hall (St John’s Auxiliary Military Hospital, Somerford Park)**

In November 1914 the Parish Magazine reported that “Lady Shakerley and her willing assistants, among whom are some of our nursing staff” were attending to the convalescence of the Belgian soldiers. The VADs had been preparing to render service at Somerford or at the College should they be required. Below is a photograph showing the Nursing staff and the Belgian soldiers taken October / November 1914.



**Photo: Patients and Nurses taken in front of Somerford Hospital. The “non-standard” uniforms could indicate that these are the Wounded Belgian Soldiers who left early November 1914.**

On 7<sup>th</sup> November 1914, the Crewe Courier reported that “Nine of the Belgian wounded soldiers at Somerford Hall have recovered and have gone to Folkestone. Their beds have been taken by nine British soldiers. Col. Sir Walter Shakerley who has been placed on the active list again, has presented each soldier with a photograph of the Hall.”

In March 1915, the VAD reported that Somerford Park was now being used as an Auxiliary Hospital rather than a convalescent home – this was a hospital which was only used when there were sudden increases in the numbers of sick and injured which could not be coped with using regular Military Hospitals such as Manchester. They went on to report that the Hospital was requiring daily attendance by Dr Picton, the Medical Officer, and almost daily supervision by the Lady Superintendent in addition to the constant employment of part of their nursing staff and ambulance men. The offer to run the Agricultural College as a hospital had also had to be withdrawn due to the commitment to Somerford Hospital.

Dr Picton started a series of lectures and ambulance classes, and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1915 an exam was held at his home where candidates were examined in military sanitation by Dr Meredith Young of Stockport, the County Medical Officer. A new series of classes was started on 30<sup>th</sup> July. On 8<sup>th</sup> October 1915, the Winsford & Middlewich Guardian reported the names of those successful in ambulance exams held on 24<sup>th</sup> September at Dr Picton's house by the examiner Dr Christian:

Ladies First Aid: Misses Booth, Bright, Evans, Glazebrook, Hindson, Holtham, Kidd, Kettle, Lund, Preston, Thornycroft, Walker, Young and Mrs. Voss. Medallion – Mrs. Duckworth, Mrs. Howarth, Mrs. Tomkinson, Mrs. Reiss, Miss Reiss, Miss Winders & Miss Vernon.

Men's First Aid: G. Maybury, G. Williams, W. Carson, S. Tomkinson, P. Pickstock. Medallion – Messrs Bolland, Rev E. Armitstead, H. Venables, F. Lee, J. Swain, N. McDowell.

There is a strong possibility that some of those listed above volunteered as VADs, and are shown in the photographs of nurses and patients.

On 18<sup>th</sup> October 1915 a meeting was held at Dr Picton's house in Sadler's Close to consider the formation of a VAD Supply Association, the object of which would be to supply roller bandages, dressings, swabs etc to the Military Hospitals.



**Photo: The Staff of Somerford Hospital 1914 – 1919**

Weekly meetings would be held at Sandyford Cottage and a committee was formed comprising:

Miss Evans – Treasurer, Miss Young – Secretary, Miss Behrens, Miss Young and Miss Walker. The Holmes Chapel VAD Supply Association official number 1722 was in the name of Mrs. Frank Howarth of Sandyford Cottage. By March 1918 the Association had been meeting every Monday evening and had sent to St John's Warehouse in London 18,491 articles for use in St Johns' Hospitals here and abroad.

On 29<sup>th</sup> October 1915, there was a public meeting at Holmes Chapel School to review the work done at the VAD Hospital at Somerford Military Hospital and also to raise funds for further work. Mr. Reiss

presided over the meeting. A sum of £60 per month was needed and voluntary subscriptions were invited. The Parish Magazine reports: “Several influential gentlemen at once responded handsomely” and nearly £500 was raised at the meeting.



**Photo: A group of nursing staff from Somerford Hospital. This is a Reiss family photo and is titled: “Mrs. Picton, Lady Shakerley, Irene (Reiss), Rhoda Reiss, Constance (Reiss), (Mrs.) Peel”**

On 15<sup>th</sup> December 1915, the Hospital re-opened for 40 Typhoid Fever patients. Two had come from France, the rest from Gallipoli. “Many had weak hearts and were wasted, but improved out of recognition with ‘Somerford Air & Somerford Fare’. Thanks for eggs during the past month and to the Holmes Chapel & District Needlework Guild & Holmes Chapel and District Supply Association for shirts, surgical dressings and to the Parish of Goostrey for turkeys and geese for the soldiers’ Christmas dinner.”

In February 1916, the Sunday School complained of a shortage of Sunday School teachers as a number of them have volunteered to be nurses (VADs) at Somerford Hospital. There is also a reference to a shortage of teachers in early 1918.

In March 1916, the patients were reported to be doing well. A St. John's Somerford Hospital stall in Holmes Chapel on 17<sup>th</sup> February received the following donations: "9 sacks of potatoes, 230 eggs, a 35lb ham, a large cheese, a tongue, 2 rabbits, tea, sugar and other parcels plus groceries and baskets of vegetables. Children at school, through Mrs. Oakes contributed 30 eggs costing 3s".



**Photo: Wounded Soldiers from Somerford – A Day out at the Hermitage June 1915**

On 4<sup>th</sup> April, Constance Reiss reported that the Typhoid scourge was over and that their wards were no longer needed for that purpose. Her orders were to “clean down and disinfect”. Having given the staff a much needed rest, it was planned that the Hospital would re-open for the care of wounded at some future time.

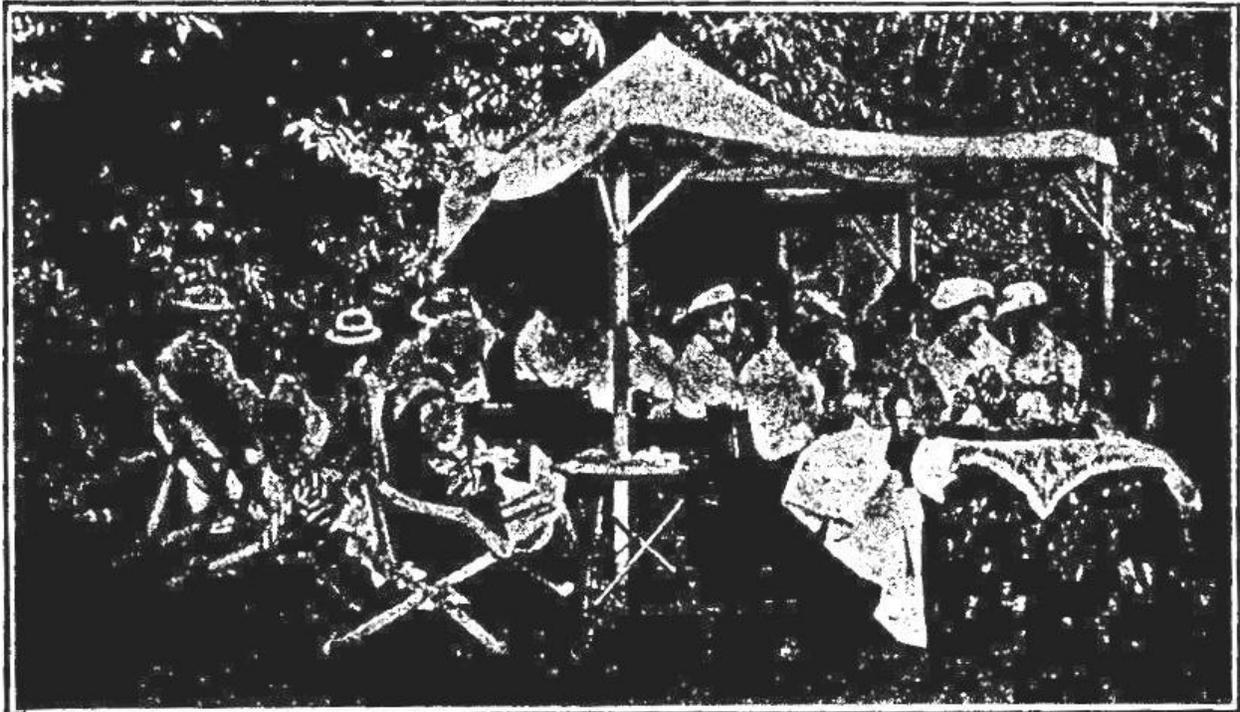


**Photo: Nurses on the day out to the Hermitage June 1915.  
This is a Reiss Family photo titled “Constance (Reiss), (Mrs.) Peel and Rhoda Reiss”.**

On 14<sup>th</sup> June 1916 Mrs. Carver held an American Tea (each person brings some contribution towards the food) at the Cranage Club to raise funds for the VAD Supply Association. Admission was 6d, and the grounds were thrown open to visitors, and races and competitions, of various kinds to provide amusement. The day was gloriously fine and the substantial sum of £13 11s 6½d was realised.

In July, a statement of accounts for the hospital was provided from December 1915 to May 1916. It was reported that on 8<sup>th</sup> July they had received an urgent appeal for them to re-open to care for the wounded,

and at two days notice they had made 40 beds ready. However, on 14<sup>th</sup> July they were asked if they could take additional men, and a new ward of 20 extra beds was created. At this point, Mrs. Reiss resigned as Commandant and Sir Walter took her place, with his wife standing in for him, in his absence. The Colonel had been placed on the Active List and was presumably away on duty. Lady Shakerley proposed to have a View Day when anyone would be allowed to come and see the hospital. This was arranged for 15<sup>th</sup> September and between 1500 and 2000 people attended, paying a small charge for entry. Fodens Band gave two concerts and everyone had an enjoyable afternoon.



**Photo: Nurses sewing whilst caring for patients in the garden of Somerford Hospital.**

In October 1916, Sir Walter reported an “approximate balance sheet” for 10<sup>th</sup> July to 3<sup>rd</sup> September. In connection with which he asked for the following letter to be published:

“Dear Armitstead,

Mr. Behrens is sending you a Statement of the Monthly Expenditure, etc of this Hospital for publication in your Parish Magazine, but I think in future we shall be unable to arrive at any accurate statement, and must perforce cease to publish any. Since my return home my family are again living here, and it is impossible to disentangle our household accounts from those of the Hospital, especially as I frequently have friends calling or staying a night. The solution I have come to is to subscribe such sums as equalise matters, but to make out any statement in these circumstances is hopeless.

Yours sincerely,

W SHAKERLEY”

In May 1917, according to the Cheshire Education Minutes, a letter was sent from the Agricultural College to Lady Shakerley for the return of six beds loaned for the hospital. This was at the time the College was to take in women for training in the Women’s Land Army.

Following on from Sir Walter’s letter, there is much less information about the VADs and Somerford in the Parish Magazine. In fact, the best source is the annual Sunday School statement. In September 1917, the Sunday School Annual Service was held. “We were very pleased with offerings of fruit, vegetables, eggs etc made by the children at the Afternoon Service for the benefit of Somerford Hospital, and, as will be gathered from the following letter from Lady Shakerley, the Hospital authorities were equally well please with our children’s effort.

St John Auxiliary Military Hospital, Somerford Park

Dear Mr. Armitstead,

Will you please thank all your kind people who sent us such a splendid supply of fruit, vegetables and eggs on Sunday, September 19<sup>th</sup>. All the good things were most gratefully appreciated by the patients, and not less so by the Quartermaster, who finds housekeeping anything but a joke in these war-days.

I sometimes wonder if Holmes Chapel realises what a help their weekly gifts are; nothing comes amiss and everything is useful and used.

With very many thanks.

Yours gratefully, HILDA SHAKERLEY, Quartermaster”

The following year in 1918, the Sunday School report only provides a brief sentence: “The Children’s offerings of Fruit, Vegetables, Eggs, etc for Somerford Hospital were quite good, and Lady Shakerley asks me to say they were appreciated at the Hospital”.



**Somerford Hall — dynamited. This picture was taken when it was in use as a military hospital during the First World War, and some of the wounded soldiers can be seen taking the air by the entrance gates.**

The Hospital closed in 1919 and Colonel Sir Walter & Lady Hilda Shakerley sent a letter to the Congleton Chronicle which was published on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1919 saying that the Hospital was now closed after four and a half years and 1424 patients. They thanked everyone for all the assistance that had been given.

After the War, Somerford Park returned to a family home until the death of Sir Walter. Sir William Shakerley was forced to sell the estate due to crippling death duties, on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1926. On that day 2,177 acres of land went up for auction. Fortunately most of the tenants were able to buy their properties and the majority are still in the same families today. The house was purchased by Brigadier-General Grenfell who on finding the cost of repairs to be enormous, sold it for demolition, and it was demolished in 1927. The parkland was returned to farming. The chapel, ice house and 18<sup>th</sup> century stables survive. The butler's residence which formed part of the original hall is also now a private house.

## SOURCES

1. Holmes Chapel Parish Magazines 1914 – 1918
2. Wikipedia – Voluntary Aid Detachment
3. Crewe Courier
4. Cheshire Education Minutes, Agricultural Subcommittee
5. Winsford & Middlewich Guardian
6. Congleton Courier

### 3 The Volunteer Training Corps



Play a Man's part, and enlist to-day.  
You will learn the address of the nearest Recruiting Office at any Post Office.

If YOU  
are too old  
or  
Physically Unfitted  
for the Front  
join the  
LOCAL VOLUNTEER  
TRAINING CORPS



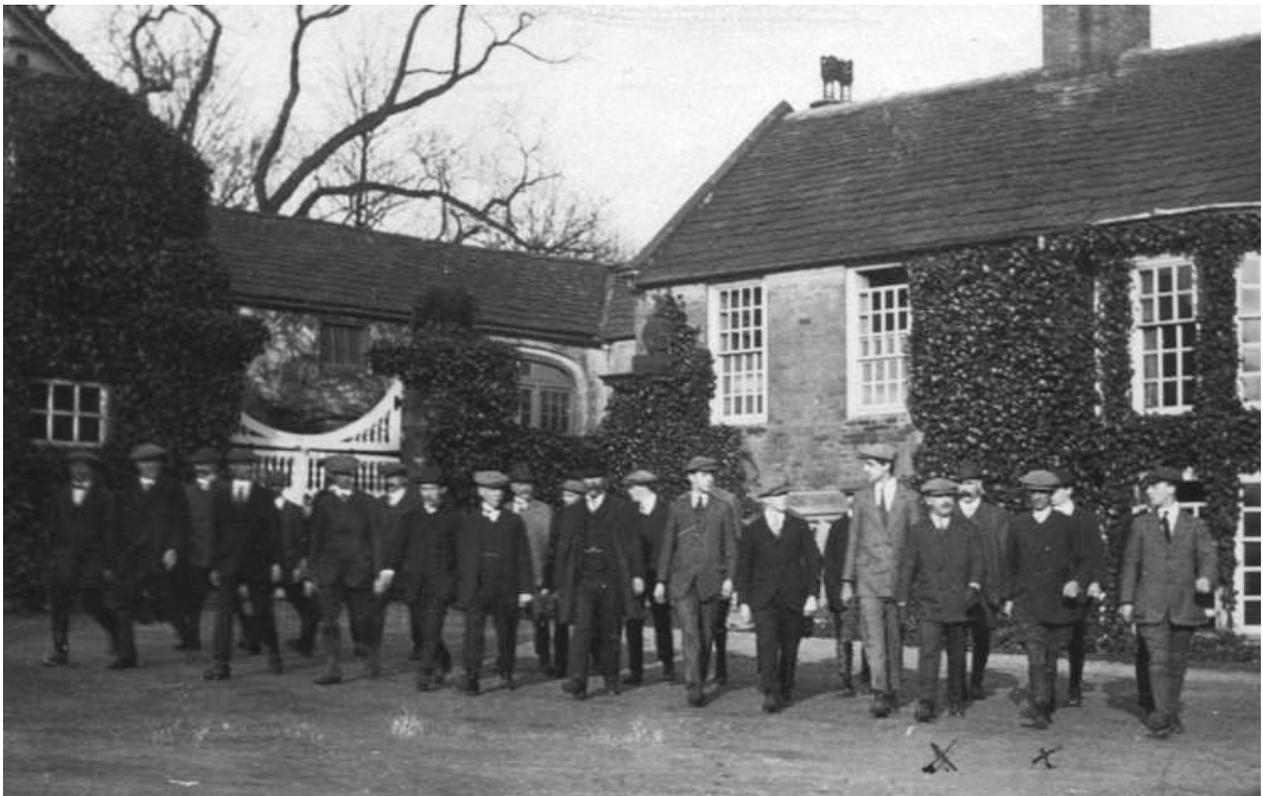
Picture above:  
Proficiency Badge  
of the Volunteer  
Training Corps,  
depicting the war  
goddess Bellona

Picture left:  
Newspaper Ad.  
for the VTC

In 1914, after the outbreak of the Great War there was a call for men who were unable to enlist into the military to join Volunteer Training Corps units, to train and be available should there be a German invasion. In the Second World War the organisation was renamed the Home Guard.

A Holmes Chapel and District unit was formed on 21st January 1915. A meeting was held at the school, Macclesfield Road, presided over by Mr. Reiss of the Hermitage. A committee was appointed, consisting of Mr. Reiss; The Vicar Rev. J.H Armitstead; Mr. W.O.Carver of Cranage Hall; E.Massey; C.Ellison; W.Brendrit; W.H.Hulse; J.T.Young; F.A.Howarth; S.Stubbs and A.Hodgkinson. A.E.MacLeod was appointed as treasurer and W. Simms, secretary, all local dignitaries at that time. Mr. Simms offered his private miniature rifle range for use by the Corps.

The local unit was to form part of the Knutsford Division Battalion under the command of Col. Alan J. Sykes M.P. with its headquarters at The Hollies (*A house on the site of Bernard Court*). Such was the enthusiastic response of volunteers, that the first drill took place only 10 days after the formation of the Corps on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1915 under the instruction of Sgt. Major Swinney. Further drills took place on Monday and Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoons. The first drill was attended by twenty nine members. By April they had had twenty five sessions with 33 hours of work. Mr. J.T.Young, the principal of the Agricultural College, was their commander and was described as being capable and enthusiastic.



**Photo: An early (February / March 1915?) drill of the Holmes Chapel Volunteer Defence Corps.**

Col. Sykes visited Holmes Chapel in April to inspect the local contingent of the Cheshire Volunteers. There were 35 men on parade and the Colonel was satisfied with what he saw.

Orders were given to the commandant to prepare the men for a route march to Tatton Park on Whit Monday and assemble there with other Corps. Since its formation four members had joined the colours.

The Corps attended church parade on 18<sup>th</sup> July along with the local VAD, Ambulance Brigade, Cadet Corps and Boy Scouts. They assembled at the Hollies, and headed by a band, marched round the village via Back Lane (*Chester Road*) and Middlewich Road to the Square where they were joined by the VAD and then filed into the church. As a result of the parade, membership of the Volunteer Defence Corps considerably increased. Thanks went to Sergeant Swinney for securing the services of the band free of charge.



**Photo: An early (February / March 1915?) drill of the Holmes Chapel Volunteer Defence Corps.**

On the August Bank Holiday of 1915 the Cheshire Volunteer Regiment attended a review which took place on the Roodee at Chester. The Corps were taken to Northwich station by cars and then travelled by train on to Chester. The weather was poor and one of the members had to be

removed by stretcher after fainting with exhaustion.

By December numbers were up to fifty three, and of those, thirty one had put in the required forty drills and passed the musketry test. Ten of these passed as first class shots, eleven as marksmen. The scores of some of the men were, T.Walker 196; F.A.Howarth 194; A.S.MacLeod 192; F.GT.de Arango 192; F.G.Howarth 191; U.Plant 189; W.Simm 188; J.T.Young 187; J.B.Howarth 186 and F.H.Bishop 186. The instructor was Sergeant Swinney.

A parade took place on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1916 for Holmes Chapel, Knutsford and Chelford Volunteer Corps outside St. Luke's Church, headed by Crewe Locomotive Works Military Band. This must have been quite an event. "Later the men were entertained to dinner. In the afternoon they reassembled in the gardens of Sandyford Cottage which had been opened to the public by Mr. F.A. Howarth and the band entertained everyone throughout".

On a Sunday in late July 1917 the volunteers went to Northwich where lunch was provided at the Town Hall. They were afterwards joined by other detachments and marched to Vale Royal and Hartford. They returned to Holmes Chapel about 8.30 the same evening.

A statement, reported on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1918, from the War Office said no more enrolment should be undertaken for the Volunteer Force, training was now voluntary and that there was to be no further discipline as under the Volunteers Act 1916 when attendance had been made compulsory. The Corps was suspended in December 1918 and officially disbanded in January 1920.

By all accounts, the Holmes Chapel and District Volunteers were a well run unit and the men appeared to enjoy their membership. Although the men were not in the military they gave their time and did their part by being prepared should they have been needed.

## SOURCES

Holmes Chapel Parish Magazines 1914-1918

Winsford and Middlewich Guardian 1914 - 1918.

## 4 The War Savings Association



Picture above:  
A British publicity label from  
World War One

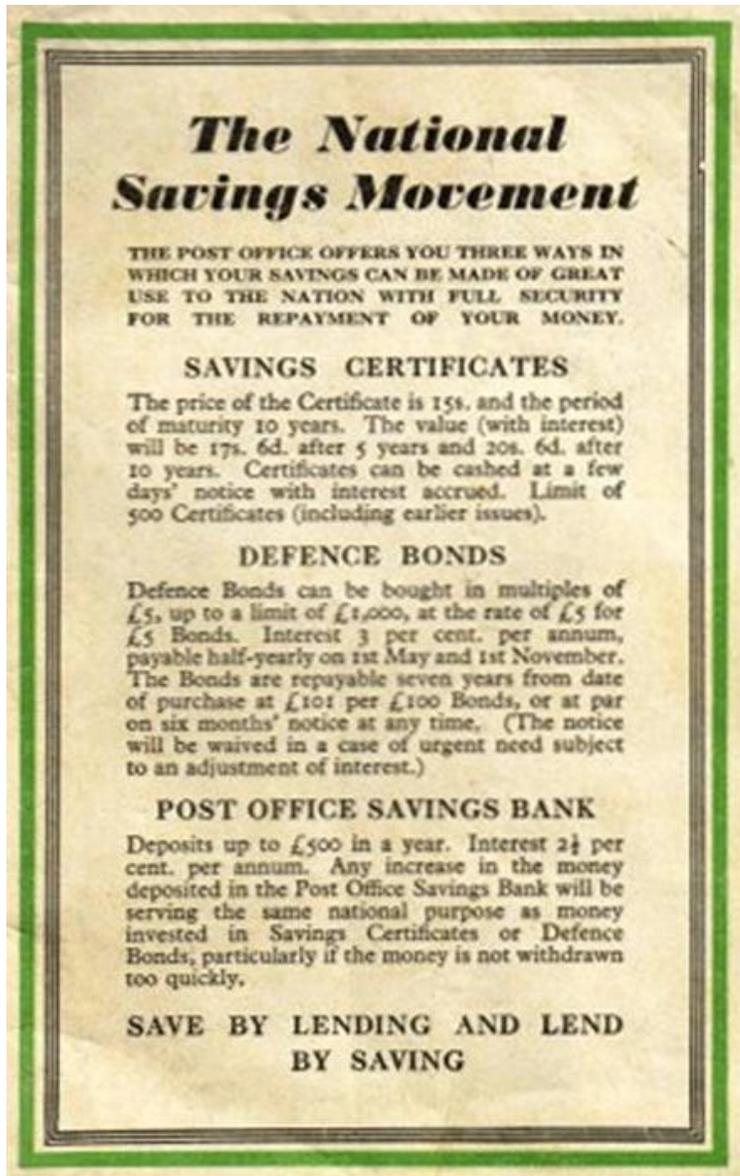


Picture right:  
A British National War  
Bond advertisement from  
First World War

As the war progressed the government needed to both reduce borrowing and to raise funds for the war effort. Consequently, the National Savings Movement was established in 1916 to encourage the British people to “Save and Prosper”.

As usual, the residents of Holmes Chapel and Cranage were not slow in forming a committee to set up a War Savings Association.

On 18<sup>th</sup> July 1916, a public meeting was held in Holmes Chapel School with the object of forming a War Savings Association, for the purchase of War Savings Certificates. At the meeting it was unanimously decided to form a War Savings Association for the Parish, and the following officers were appointed:- Rev J.H. Armitstead – Chairman, Mr. C. Ellison – Treasurer, Mr. F.A. Howarth, Mr. A. Hodgkinson & Mr. A. Oakes (Headmasters of Holmes Chapel & Cranage Schools) – Secretaries. In addition to the Parish War Savings Association, a similar association had been started in connection with the Holmes Chapel and Cranage Schools.



A National Savings Movement poster from WW1

In order to encourage school children to save their money and purchase War Savings Certificates, Mr. Carver generously promised to pay the last shilling for every certificate purchased by the children attending the Schools; in other words, as soon as a child had saved 14s 6d, Mr. Carver added the final 1s, and the child was immediately able to buy a Certificate. Mr. Howarth promised to do the same for any children in the

Parish who were attending other schools.

In September, the Association reported that 120 members had joined, mainly through the children in the schools. In order to facilitate members paying in their contributions regularly each week, Mr. Hodgkinson and Mr. Oakes offered to open Holmes Chapel School each Tuesday evening from 7 to 7:30 pm for this purpose. The report finished with a barbed comment “We hope that now that the Association has got properly started, the number of members will be very considerably increased”.

On 21<sup>st</sup> December, according to Cranage School Log, “Mr. W. Carver gave 21s to children who had bought War Savings Certificates making a total of 45s that he had contributed. The total certificates bought by the School Association was 75 up to date.”

In March 1917, the “Cranage and Holmes Chapel Schools War Savings Associations” reported that a special effort had been made during the last fortnight of the War Loan – presumably a national campaign. In the final fortnight the Cranage Association bought 60 Certificates bringing the total amount subscribed to £124 14s 9d, with 160 Certificates in total. The Holmes Chapel Association was able to purchase about the same number of Certificates bringing their total to about 150.

## SOURCES

1 Parish Magazine 1914 – 1918

2 Cranage School Log

## **5 Conclusions**

From the outbreak of War the entire population and resources of the country were harnessed to the War Effort in one way or another, so most people came to feel involved in the conflict. Holmes Chapel and Cranage were no exception. Within days and weeks, committees had been organized; the knitting and sewing of garments started; parcels full of “troop comforts” packed up and preparations made for the support of a 40 bed military hospital in the parish. All these activities and more were backed up by an army of volunteers whose support never wavered. Volunteers who not only worked hard at their daily occupations but also often had to cover for their “missing menfolk”.

From the distance of 100 years it is relatively easy to understand the debt that we owe to those “at The Front”. It was less easy, but equally satisfying to have uncovered the enormous efforts of the villagers who stayed behind, demonstrating their resilience, their steadfastness and above all, their patriotism.

### **Appendices – Statements of Accounts**

1 – Holmes Chapel & Cranage Sewing Guild

2 – St John’s Auxiliary Military Hospital, Somerford Park

## Appendix 1: Holmes Chapel & Cranage Sewing Guild

### Statement of Accounts 15<sup>th</sup> August 1914 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 1916

RECEIPTS	£	s	d	£	s	d	PAYMENTS	£	s	d
By Subscriptions:	40	0	0				To Purchase of Materials	166	11	0
WO Carver	13	0	0							
Mrs. Carver	10	0	0				To Carriage of Parcels to	11	4	1
FA Howarth	5	0	0				Soldiers			
Mrs. Howarth	5	0	0				To Cleaning Rooms	17	0	
Mrs. Reiss	5	0	0							
Mrs. Simm	3	3	0				To Cheque Books	7	6	
Mrs. Brander	2	2	0							
Mrs. Eason	2	0	0				To Balance in Bank	11	19	9
Rev JH Armitstead	2	0	0							
Mrs. T Massey	2	0	0							
Mrs. E Massey	1	0	0							
Mrs. Oliver	1	1	0							
Mrs. Hulme	1	0	0							
Mrs. Bolshaw		15	0							
Sums under 10s	1	2	0							
				→	92	3	0			
Goostrey Branch	7	17	0							
Holmes Chapel Church	7	10	0							
per Mrs. Howarth	1	8	6							
per Mrs. Carver's women	1	0	8							
per Mrs. Simm: Sewing	1	0	0							
guild		11	5							
per Mrs. Pennell		10	6							
per Mrs. Carver's Class		10	0							
Per UMFC School										
				→	20	2	0			
Entertainments: Miss Evans	32	7	7							
Jumble Sale: Rev Armitstead	25	0	0							
Dance: Mrs. Lee	2	5	0							
				→	59	12	7			
Sale of Goods & Materials					17	5	2	Examined and found correct.		
Hire of Room: WO Carver					1	11	0	BS BOLLAND 30 <sup>th</sup> January 1917		
Bank Interest						4	10			
					198	19	4			
								198	19	4

# Holmes Chapel & Cranage Sewing Guild

## Statement of Accounts to Year End 31<sup>st</sup> October 1917

RECEIPTS	£ s d	EXPENDITURE	£ s d
By Balance in Hand	11 19 9	To Purchase Materials	89 3 1
By Subscription:			
WO Carver	10 0 0	To Carriage of Postage and Parcels	8 10 8
In Memory BA Carver	8 0 0	to Men	
Hire of Mr. Carver's men	10 4	To Cleaning Rooms	1 8 0
Ms Bolland	1 0 0		
Mrs. Sharrock	1 0 0	To Stationery	12 0
Girls' Club	1 0 0		
		To Registration Fee	5 0
By Collection			
by Mrs. Massey & Miss Evans:		To Cheque Book	2 0
Mr. & Mrs. Simm	5 0 0		
Mrs. Walker	3 3 0	To Balance in Hand	12 5 4
Mrs. Reiss	3 0 0		
Mrs. Eason	2 0 0		
Mrs. T Massey	1 1 0		
Sandbach Co-op Society	1 0 0		
Mrs. Behrens	10 6		
Mrs. Hulme	10 0		
Mrs. Stubbs	10 0		
Mrs. Ramsden	10 0		
Mrs. MacLeod	10 0		
Mrs. Bolshaw	10 0		
Mrs. E Massey	10 0		
Rev AJ Armitstead	10 0		
Sums under 10s	14 10 6		
By Entertainments:			
per Miss Evans	28 8 0	Examined and found correct	
per Girls' Knitting Club	8 0 0	W SIMM. 24 <sup>th</sup> November 1917	
By sale of Goods by Rev Armitstead	18 15 0		
By Bank Interest	8 0		
	112 6 1		112 6 1

## Appendix 2 – St John’s Auxiliary Military Hospital, Somerford Park

### Statement of Account, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1915 – 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1916

RECEIPTS	£	s	d	EXPENDITURE	£	s	d
Transferred from VAD	18	15	6	Food	531	15	1
Donations	529	5	0	Heat and Light	137	14	5
Lady Shakerley’s Jumble Sale	14	12	1	Salaries and Wages	121	6	1
Red Cross Penny Fund	3	15	0	Equipment	70	1	7
				Laundry	37	4	0
				Medical Stores (Woolley’s etc)	32	13	6
				Tobacco	18	11	6
				Cleaning Materials	17	12	1
				Postages	16	0	7
				Sundries	32	19	5
				Unpaid Bills (September)	16	11	9
				Balance in Bank	157	16	11

Army Allowance:	£	s	d
September	51	2	6
December	67	2	6
January	86	7	6
February	135	7	6
March	149	10	0
April	125	15	0
May	3	5	0

	→	618	10	0
Bank Interest			4	5

£1190 6 11 H M SHAKERLEY August 1916 £1190 6 11

Breakdown of Donations:	£	s	d		£	s	d
Mr. Harold L Behrens	60	0	0	Mrs. W F Peel	25	0	0
Mr. W O Carver	60	0	0	Holmes Chapel Churchwardens	8	0	0
Mr. Frank Howarth	60	0	0	Mrs. Beattie, Bidulph	5	0	0
Holmes Chapel per the Vicar	60	0	0	Miss Bird, Congleton	5	0	0
Goostrey per the Vicar				Visitors’ Board	4	5	0
(incl Mr. Egerton Leigh £30)	60	0	0	Sandbach Ramblers	3	0	0
Mr. H Reiss	60	0	0	Football Club			
Mrs. Tootal Broadhurst	30	0	0	Mrs. Done, Kermincham	1	10	0
Mrs. Glazebrook	30	0	0	Sandbach per Rev H Green	1	5	0
Mr. W Simm	30	0	0	Smallwood, per Rev H Green	1	5	0
Mr. C S Hoare	25	0	0				
					£529	5	0

St John's Auxiliary Military Hospital, Somerford Park

Statement of Account, 8 weeks 9<sup>th</sup> February – 4<sup>th</sup> April 1916

RECEIPTS	£ s d	EXPENDITURE	£ s d
Balance	260 16 10	Food	226 5 3
Donations	20 10 0	Heat and Light	66 10 3
Grant Paid and due	266 0 0	Salaries and Wages	48 5 2
		Medical Stores	8 11 2
		Laundry	13 4 2
		Tobacco	7 8 4
		Postages	6 5 2
		Equipment	4 6 9
		Sundries	20 4 6
		Balance in hand	151 6 1
	£547 6 10		£547 6 10

CONSTANCE E REISS,  
Commandant May 1916

Approximate Balance Sheet, 8 weeks 10<sup>th</sup> July – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1916

RECEIPTS	£ s d	EXPENDITURE	£ s d
By Balance in hand	157 16 11	To Food	325 12 9
By Sir W Shakerley	103 9 8	To Heat and Light	37 11 10
By Mr. FA Howarth	100 0 0	To Equipment	68 7 7
By Mr. W Wimm	30 0 0	To Salaries and Wages	53 12 0
By Rev. AL Royds	25 0 0	To Medical Stores (Woolley's)	34 15 7
By Mrs. Glazebrook	20 0 0	To Laundry	24 0 0
By Mr. FS Heath	20 0 0	To Tobacco	16 4 0
By Miss Heath	10 10 0	To Postages	7 15 0
By Mrs. Hodgson	3 0 0	To Cleaning Materials	4 10 3
By collected by Mrs. Howarth	2 0 9	To Sundries	11 2 9
By Mrs. Percival Maxwell	1 0 0	To Board, Wages while	
By Rebate on Petrol	2 10 0	Hospital was closed	9 7 0
By Army Allowance (July)	132 15 0	To Balance in hand	15 11 5
By Bank Interest	7 10		
	£608 10 2		£608 10 2

Booklets in this series produced by the Holmes Chapel U3A Local History Group:

1. Holmes Chapel before the War
2. Village People 1914 – 1918
3. The Men Who Went to War
4. Refugees come to the village
5. Beating the Drum – Recruitment and Communication
6. The Community Response
7. Feeding the People
8. Rationing During the War
9. Rules and Regulations
10. Education
11. Life Goes On
12. Holmes Chapel at the End of the War

For copies of booklets see web site  
[www.holmeschapelhistory.co.uk](http://www.holmeschapelhistory.co.uk)

*First Published August 2014*

*Revised August 2018*

# WW1 and Holmes Chapel & District U3A

In 2011 the Holmes Chapel & District University of the Third Age (U3A) was set up in the village and one of the activities under its umbrella was a local history group. This attracted people who had been involved in research in the past as well as some new volunteers eager to learn more. After an initial period of encouragement and training for the newcomers it was decided that the group would work together on a topic - The Story of Holmes Chapel and district during the First World War.

This is one in a series of booklets describing different aspects of life in Holmes Chapel and district before and during the First World War. A full list of the booklets is given on the inside of this back cover.

Research Group Members: Bill Barber, Cath Cameron, Rod Cameron, John Clowes, Peter Cotton, John Cowburn, Stella Freer, Gwen Hayhurst, Barbara Jackson, Lynda Kappes, Val White, Janet Yarwood.



Supported by

**The National Lottery**<sup>®</sup>

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