

The ladies of the Wagga Red Cross League Committee, including Miss Sly, Mesdames Meads, Juppenlitz, Muir, Downie, Carpenter, Ellis Anderson, and Henningham. [RW1647]

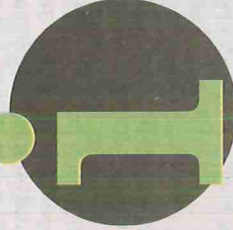
Red Cross calling for Wagga women

what you need to know

- The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue. Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with enquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight-forward enquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information, phone 02 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au or visit our website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.



at the archives
Wayne Doubleday



It was nine days after World War I was declared in August 1914 that the governor general's wife, Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson, formed the Australian Red Cross as a branch of the British Red Cross.

After an appeal from Lady Ferguson for local branches to be involved, a very successful meeting was organised by Wagga's mayoress, Mrs Margaret McDonough, at the council chambers on August 15, 1914.

Mrs McDonough presided and Mrs GH Kelsey was appointed secretary. Mrs Kelsey had been in South Africa at the time of the Boer War and had experienced similar distress needs. It was agreed that a guild of patriotic women would join together and establish the Wagga Red Cross League and a strong committee was appointed.

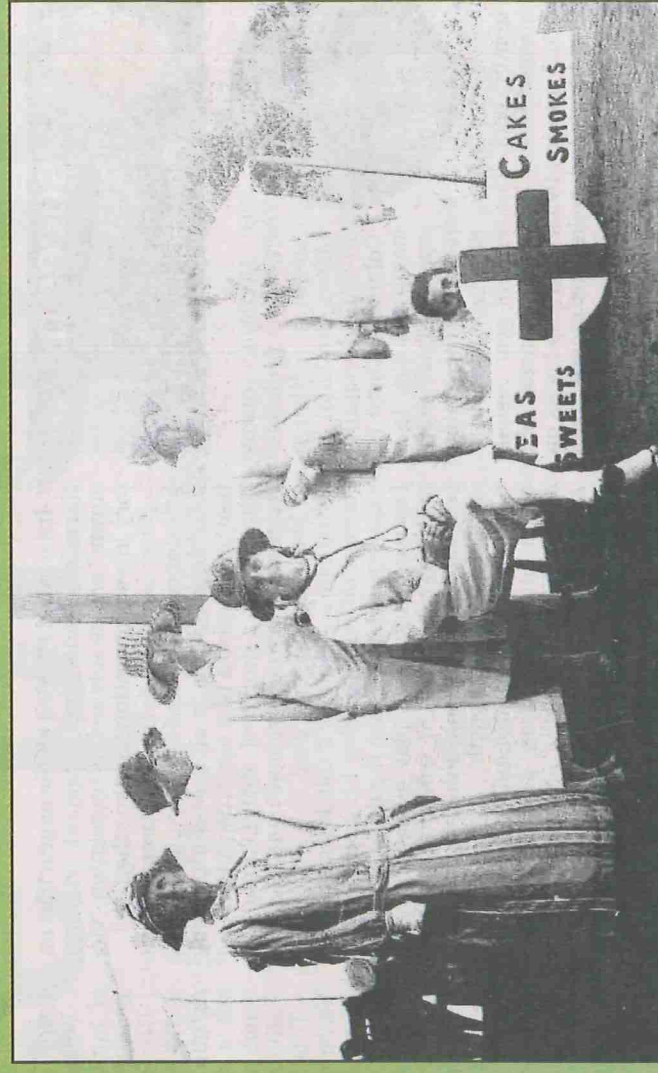
Membership subscriptions were 1/- and a sub-committee was elected to draw up a constitution and rules. Members were enthusiastic and there were 80 or 40 middle to upper-class women attending meetings on a fortnightly basis.

The aim of the Wagga Red Cross League was to provide funds for military hospitals, convalescent homes and rest camps as well as assistance for the preparation of clothing and any requisite for the Australian soldiers forming the expeditionary force.

The Wagga Red Cross League became exceedingly competent in raising funds and the collective support from local people was very much appreciated.

Because of such involvement from the community, the ladies could immediately support the Belgium Orphans Fund and other aims of the Red Cross, including the Battalions' travelling kitchens.

When war was declared, the Calliope Club decided to take up the knitting and making of garments for the soldiers. Readings and study of Shakespeare was postponed as members met each week at "Hillside", the home of Mr David Copland and family; by November 1914, two large parcels containing knitted socks, mufflers, cholera belts and caps had been handed to the Wagga Red Cross League.



The ladies of the Wagga Red Cross League Committee, including Mesdames Juppenlitz, Muir, Meads (seated), Downie, and Carpenter. [RW1647]

In July 1916, owing to the generosity of the management and staff of State Stores Ltd in Gurwood Street, one of the most enterprising functions the Wagga Red Cross League held when all of the departments of the store were controlled and conducted by the ladies. A sum of 150 pounds was forwarded to the French Red Cross.

At a committee meeting in July 1916, a decision was made to install a bed in Randwick Hospital, and supply furnishings to one of the Sydney convalescent homes.

Money was also sent to the men's section of Red Cross after receiving their request to supply 20 bed screens, 20 bed rests, 20 tables and five sets of quilts, all suitably branded with name of the Wagga Red Cross League as donors.

In August 1916, notification was received with regard to sending Christmas presents to the men serving in the "firing line".

In 1915, the Wagga Red Cross League had sent 480 Christmas billy-cans to individual soldiers, so it was decided that the league would send Christmas gifts to sick and wounded Australian servicemen and the Messrs Cadbury were asked to make special boxes of chocolates with greetings

from the Wagga Red Cross League.

These gifts were distributed by an Australian committee to Australians in hospitals in Egypt, France and England.

The first president of the Wagga Red Cross League, Mrs McDonough, resigned when her husband retired as mayor; Mrs Oates became president until Isabella Mitchellmore accepted the position in 1917, when it was no longer automatically the role of the mayor's wife.

The Wagga Branch of the Red Cross was officially registered with the Australian Red Cross in 1917. The women proved to have incredible business and organisational skills which were so successful in their money raising activities.

For the young Australian servicemen at war it was apparent the women of Wagga assisted in making exhausted troops feel appreciated and remembered at home.

■ References: *Wagga Wagga. A History*, by Sherry Morris pg127-129; *The Daily Advertiser*. Aug 17; 1914, Nov 14, 1914; July 11, 1916; July 31, 1916; August 16, 1916

■ Compiled by: June Dietrich