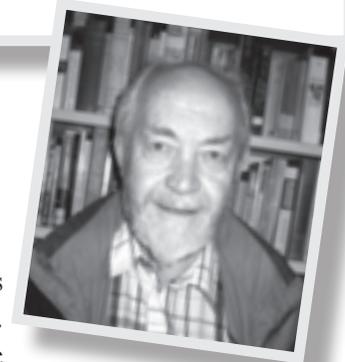


WAR HOSPITAL SUPPLY DEPOT, 53 HIGH STREET

by **Bob Hakewill**



The Lads had marched off to war. The Dads had formed the Volunteer Training Corps to defend the land and their families from the invading Hun, by Force of Arms if needed.

The Mums decided to do their bit and formed the War Hospital Supply Depot in the whole of 53 High St. This is now the uphill of Joule's three shops. It consisted of three storeys including a basement, all then owned by the Town Charity.

When this opened in Sept 1915, the local paper announced who was in charge of which departments. This gives us now a clear picture of the industrious ladies and what they were achieving. As a work depot it lasted until Feb 1919 with a few changes of volunteer ladies. [MH Advertiser 5 Sep 1915]

On the ground floor was the Enquiry Office and a spacious Stock Room, both being in the charge of Miss Isobelle Flint. On the first floor was the office of the Hon Organiser (Mrs H T Mills, followed by Viscountess Downe) and Assistant Organiser (Mrs C J Handcock, followed by Mrs WW Wartnaby) and the Hon. Secretary (Miss Tonge Smith, followed by Miss Angela Flint). A room for the making of splints was under the management of Mrs Winter Johnson; Lady Agnes de Trafford was in charge of a room devoted to the making of surgical dressings; a needlework room was under Mrs Crisp's management and Mrs W Flint was in charge of the department and room where slippers, dressing jackets and frostbite stockings were made. All the rooms were light, roomy and airy and were doubtless the centres of much whole-hearted and sympathetic work.

The Depot was under the auspices of Queen Mary's Needlework Guild and overseen by the British Red Cross. All the workers were volunteers who popped in when they could to assist with the tasks. Slippers and plain garments were sometimes

made by outworkers at home and sent in. The Depot would be open 10.30 to 1 pm then 2.0pm to 6 pm every day. Late nights Tuesday and Thursday from 6 to 8 pm in addition.





AN AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER AT WORK, High Street, c. 1915. Here Viscountess Downe of Dingley Hall is taking a photograph of the War Worker's Depôt in the High Street. The Depôt was the centre for the women's voluntary work in Harborough during the First World War.

War Hospitals were spread around Harborough, at Cottesbrooke, Rushton Hall, Park House, Knighton House, Evington, and the St Johns Ambulance Commander and VTC member George Green, was at 51 High St. The Bishops Palace in Peterborough was turned into a war hospital and the Bishop came to Gt Bowden for the duration. Viscount Downe turned his other seat at Wykeham Abbey into a war hospital.

In 'Around Market Harborough in Old Photographs', (1989, Stef Mastoris) on page 124 is a picture of Viscountess Downe photographing the War Workers Depot on High Street.

Mrs Mills died in 1916 during its first year at the young age of 52 and Lady Violet Downe took over the role of Hon Organiser.

After a year a report was published.

"During the first 43 weeks at the Depot, the total number of attendances has been 5,619 and the total number of hospital requisites made in the Depot 11,449. Varied needlework and knitting has been received from the Gumley Guild (Lady Head, The Hon Mrs Murray Smith) 276, the Foxton Guild (Lady Head, Mrs Edmonds) 215, and from other outside workers 450, making a grand total of 12,390 articles. This is we think, a

remarkable tribute to the zeal of the workers, and all connected with the Depot.

The Depot has despatched the articles made to the following hospitals

Clopton War Hospital, Stratford on Avon	144
Cottesbrooke Auxiliary Hospital, N'hants	210
Dallington House Hospital, N'hants	265
Hylands Hospital, Chelmsford	258
Knighton VAD Hospital, Evington, Leics	126
Leicester Royal Infirmary, New Military Ward	451
Military Auxiliary Hospital, Isleworth	189
Northampton War Hospital, Duston,	984
Uppingham Red Cross Hospital	18
Wykeham Abbey Hospital	56
No 8 Red Cross Hospital, B. E. F.	102
Capt J Thomas, RAMC,	
1/1 N Midland Clearing Hospital	416
Central Depot, London,	
for distribution at home and abroad	119
In hand	52
	<u>12,390</u>

There have been on the books of the organisation 227 names, and the average weekly attendance of

workers has been 170. Since the Depot opened approximately 60,000 articles have been made there, consisting of slippers, splints, surgical dressings, and plain garments. [MH Advertiser 12 Sep 1916 p 5]

I have been trying to work out how there could have been 170 persons a week in the rooms of 53 High St beavering away. Just go into Joules or Andrew Grainger which is about the same floor size and imagine.

When the time came to cease making splints, bandages and comforts for the wounded the Chairman of the UDC, Howard Symington, as President of the Depot, presented Lady Downe with a folding writing table of inlaid mahogany,

which bore upon a silver plate the inscription; "A souvenir from the workers of Queen Mary's Needlework Guild, Market Harborough, 1915-1919." Lady Downe presented keepsakes in the form of engraved silver salvers to Mrs Crisp and to Mrs Wm Flint; to the Misses C & M Battams, gold hat pins inscribed with their initials; to Miss Angela Flint, of whose secretarial work Lady Downe spoke in high praise, her ladyship presented a gold curb chain bracelet.

The War Hospital Supply Depot and the Volunteers Training Corps and the VAD Hospital at Park House all closed down at about the same time. Everyone went back to peacetime roles, but the memories lingered.

HISTORY'S ODD SHORTS

FOOD RATIONING

By the beginning of 1917, the Government was finding it difficult to ensure it would be able to obtain sufficient food to satisfy both military and civilian needs. Both the Harborough Advertiser and Midland Mail reported how the local authorities reacted.

24 April. Harborough Branch of the National War Savings Committee organised a food economy meeting, aimed especially at women, to discuss 'the absolute urgent necessity for economy in food'. The Government did not want to enforce rationing if possible but said it would do so if necessary. If everyone saved 2 ounces of bread per day, it would mean a saving of four tons per week in Market Harborough district.

By June, the papers quoted new economy recipes. 'Maize meal and oatmeal makes delicious fritters when fried'. Rice, beans or lentils were said to be 'equally good and save bread without lowering the nourishment of meals'.

17 August. Government was concerned to ensure that the whole country would support rationing. The Food Controller sent a letter to all Rural District Councils saying that local Food Control Committees must include at least one woman and one worker.

21 August. Market Harborough Food Control Committee was established with an office a No.4 High Street. Sugar will be the first item to be rationed. It was expected that the allowance would be half a pound per person per week. By October local committees were instructed to reduce the consumption of all food. Price of butter was controlled. Bread and meat were expected to follow.

24 December. Food queues in some towns were reported. Sale of potatoes in Market Harborough had been voluntarily controlled by the merchant in Market Harborough.

First queue for margarine appeared in the town. Police were called to control the crowd. A scheme has been approved by the Divisional Food Commissioner for local committees to ration the sale of margarine and butter. Ration tickets will be available on a weekly basis – the amount per person will depend on the quantity the Council can obtain. Because of the great demand this week, the amount available next week will be no more than 2 ounces per person. Each family had to declare the name of its preferred retailer.

It appears that rationing did not apply to 'out of town shoppers'. Retailers were told to supply them with the same amount as they did to local residents.

**Market Harborough
Co-operative Society, Ltd.**

**REGISTRATION
FOR SUGAR.**

Members' attention is called to the fact that at an early date National Sugar Cents will be issued through the post to all Householders.

You are requested, in filling up the particulars, to

**Be sure and state the Branch
Shop from which you wish to
obtain your Sugar.**

When the Scheme is in operation you will only be able to get Sugar from the Shop for which you have registered.

The Co-operative Society will be able to supply the same amount of Sugar to each person as any other trader. They will receive the same amount per head from the Government as others.

Be sure and register at your own Store and secure the full advantage of loyal trading.