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CITY OF MOORABBIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Affiliated with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria
and the Cheltenham Arts and Crafts Society

President
Mrs. N. Blackman
93-6232

Secretary
Mrs. F. Neville
57-2965

N E W S L E T T E R

Volume 8, No. 2 March, 1968

The Society meets at the State School, Charman Road, Cheltenham on the third Thursday in each month. Next meeting Thursday ~~March 21st~~. APRIL 18th

THE STORY OF THE CHELTENHAM BRANCH OF THE AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

Red Cross is over a hundred years old. It began when a young Swiss, Henri Durant, horrified by the sight of thousands of dead and dying soldiers after the Battle of Solferino in North Italy in 1859 decided to organize people who were willing to assist the wounded in time of war. It has always been associated with war; and in wartime Red Cross was born in Australia. A few days after Britain declared war on Germany in August 1914, the Victorian Branch of the British Red Cross was formed in Melbourne. Within a few months branches were formed all over the state. The Cheltenham Branch began on April 23rd, 1915 when a meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Gulliver, the house still standing at Southland - but doomed soon to go - where the Lewis Construction Company has its headquarters. The office-bearers elected were - President, Mrs. Scantlebury, Vice-President, Mrs. Gulliver, Secretary and Treasurer, Miss Vail- Committee - Mrs. Davey Sr., Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Crotty, Miss Erwin.

Since then the records of the Branch have been carefully preserved. Mrs. Vera Allnutt, a former President of the Branch for several years has kindly made them available to the Historical Society. They make interesting reading today.

At the first meeting it is recorded that "the object of the Branch is to make socks for our soldiers". Does it seem now aggressively patriotic? or just rather sad? At any rate the object was pursued with enthusiasm. At a public meeting a week later more than thirty members enrolled, wool was distributed and prizes offered to urge the knitters on. Members were to pay "from 3d. a week upwards, there was to be a house-to-house canvass for members and meetings were to be held weekly". Subscriptions and donations rolled in, distributors of wool and packers were appointed, a rooster, two cases of fruit, a motor cycle, and two nightgowns were given to be raffled, collection books arrived from headquarters, the Branch acquired its own mark to sew on the socks.

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