 MAV 01263

A proposal in 1916 to send Christmas parcels to local soldiers was eagerly adopted. Through the local paper names and gifts were solicited; seventy-seven parcels were despatched.

By 1918 the Branch held a licence from the Director of Munitions "to collect second-hand empty kerosene, petrol and turpentine tins and cases". Apparently they were of some use in the making of armaments.

And so with a large fete each year, concerts, American teas, socials, knitting and sewing the good work went on until peace came in November, 1918. Socks remained the chief product but there were other articles - shirts, woollen helmets, vests, scarves, bandages, armlets, kneecaps, pillow slips and kit bags were made in large quantities. After the war interest began to fall away and early in 1919 the Committee proposed to donate their credit balance (the amount is not given) to the Moorabbin Branch of the fairly new Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia "to assist them in purchasing a hall for their members". This however the Red Cross central body would not allow.

In July a meeting decided that the Branch should not disband but should direct its activities to charitable work - making articles for the Talbot Colony of Epileptics and the Homoepathic (now Prince Henry's) Hospital. Between the two wars members worked for these institutions as well as the Women's Hospital, the Convalescent Home for Men and the local Baby Health Centre. In 1939 its energies were again directed to war. Knitting, sewing and fund raising began again; by 1944 membership had risen to 260. A new activity was the collection of waste and scrap material. By this time the Junior Red Cross had come into existence; the Branch distributed toys and gifts which the young ones sent to the children who suffered in the Heatherton bush-fires in 1944. Convalescent soldiers were entertained; at the end of the war soldiers were welcomed home. When peace came the Branch assisted in organizing a local collection of clothing as part of a world movement to help refugees of the war. By the 1950's membership had again dropped but the Branch continued its charity work; rag drives, street stalls and button days went on; the Branch supported the Blood Bank Appeal and helped to organize the suburban mobile blood collection. Its activities were becoming more closely integrated with the work of the central body of Red Cross.

There is a phrase, interesting today, in a letter from the Central Committee to the Branch in 1957 - "in order that the activities of the Red Cross may become widely known among its country members" Cheltenham was not yet a suburb.

By 1950 the Branch was forty-five years old; many members had received long service medals given by the Australian Red Cross Society to those who had served well for twenty years or more. And later some of these received a bar to their medals.

(over)