

NUTLEY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE WARTIME CANTEEN

1939-1945


Transcribed from the annual written report of the Hon. Secretary, Miss Riley.

The canteen was started in June 1939 in the Memorial Hall Club Rooms. About 25 members and their friends have organised a shift system to oversee the project. Games, books, papers and writing paper are provided and light refreshments are sold. The Hall Committee have allowed the use of the billiards table and in the summer months the two tennis courts. Racquets and balls were provided. Lady Simmons most generously donated a radiogramophone which is in continuous demand and most of the latest records have been bought for it. Recently the room used for the canteen was entirely renovated.

There are four caterers who take a week at a time and no praise high enough is too high for the way they carry out their job, in some times very trying circumstances. The ladies are Mrs. Allen, Mrs. Appleby, Mrs. Holman and Mrs. Kirby.

The soldiers thoroughly appreciate what is being done for them and what is more say so. A Commanding Officer who has left sent a letter of thanks to the members and said that the whole company would look upon their stay in Nutley as a happy memory of the war.

No. 8 Motor Coach Company, R.A.S.C.
Spilsall Court,
STAPLEHURST. Kent.

Ref. No: 2013 29
4 December, 1941.
Miss T. Riley,
Hon. Secretary,
Nutley W. I.
The Orchard,
NUTLEY. Sussex.
Dear Miss Riley,
Captain Smee has passed to me the letter and cheque, which Nutley W.I.C. have so generously forwarded for our Unit's Sports and Recreation Fund. I need hardly say that everyone in the Company is delighted and would like you to pass on our thanks to your Committee for their most generous gesture.
Our stay in Nutley was a most happy one, and without a doubt your splendid canteen contributed in no small way to the general happiness and well-being of the men, who, I know are most grateful for your efforts. It is generally agreed throughout the Company, that we shall have a long way to travel before we find another canteen to come upto your high standard.
Please convey my personal thanks to the Committee for all they did for us.
Yours sincerely,

Major, R.A.S.C.
Commanding No. 8 Motor Coach Company, R.A.S.C.

1941

The canteen continues to be a great success. From Good Friday members had to cope with ever increasing numbers. It was nothing to serve 500 cups of tea every night and they must have dreamt of making sandwiches. The caterers have as usual performed miracles reminiscent of the seven loaves and a few small fishes.

The canteen does seem to fill a want, being a link between civilian and military life for the men. Letters of appreciation have been received from both officers and men, and old friends never fail to look in when they are in the neighbourhood.

Helpers will not forget the avalanche of returning Buffs in July. The Canadians were here for just two days and said

that Nutley was the friendliest village that they had come across.

1942

For the last year the troops using the canteen have been almost entirely Canadian. They have been very interested to see that it is run by the W.I. since the W.I. was founded in Canada and they have family as members at home.

The year has been difficult for the caterers, who deserve the highest praise.

A little idea of what they have to contend with is shown by the fact that on one Sunday afternoon and evening only 1s.3d. was taken and the next evening nearly £6.

From the canteen fund in addition to giving £8 to the parcel fund and buying the knitting wool, £5 each was sent to Mrs. Churchill's Red Cross Fund, the local Air Training Cadet Corps, the Shipwrecked Mariner's Society, the Royal Fusilier's Sports Fund and the Sports Fund of the No. 8 Motor Coach Company. By request of the Welfare Department of the War Office 3 per cent of the gross takings is now forwarded every quarter to the Sussex Welfare Association.

1943

The past year has been a very busy one. During the summer an influx of British troops brought an even greater activity resulting in our record week to date.

£5 each has been sent to three British Units, and £10 to the Sussex Army Welfare Association in addition to the obligatory 3 per cent of the gross takings.

The billiard table has been recovered, a double paraffin burner stove purchased and the old radiogram converted with a loudspeaker so that it can be used for dances. This can be hired out for a small charge to recover the cost of the conversion.

We have had exceptionally nice letters from the Commanding Officers thanking the helpers, and we think that the Canadians must appreciate the work that is put in as they come miles to look us up again if it is at all possible.



QUEENS OWN DORSET YEOMANRY,

141ST FIELD REGT. R.A.

376 Fd Bty
24/9/43

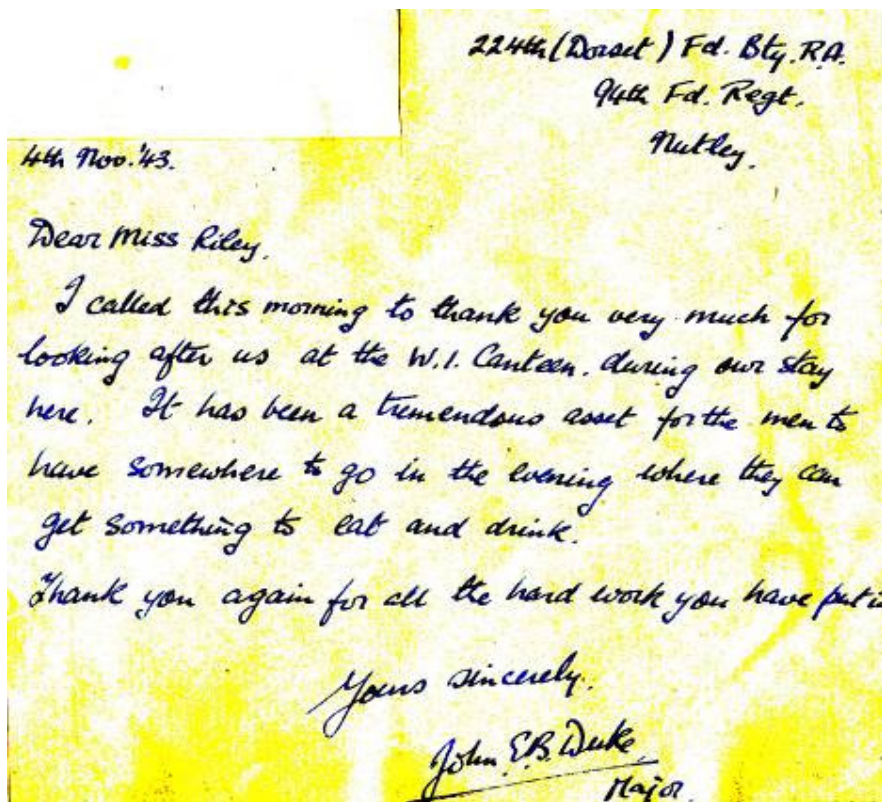
In conjunction with the W.V.S. a sock darning service was operated for one regiment and dozens of flashes and badges were sewn on.

Dear Miss Riley

Can I also take this opportunity of expressing the gratitude of the battery for the way the Women's Institute has looked after us since our arrival in Nately. I hope all who take part in it realize how much

1944 Most of the past year has been very busy. The last of the Canadians left in July and

judging by the number who return to see us and the appreciative letters they write, we feel that we have done something to put Nutley on the map for them.



We had our longest holiday in four and a half years when we closed in the middle of July until the middle of August. We opened occasionally for dances. During the lull under the energetic supervision of Mrs. Kirby a much needed spring clean took place, with painting and distemping. The canteen opened again in October.

1945

The canteen remains open as there are still a few British and Canadian troops here. The beginning of the year was very busy with a British Regiment in the village. That has now reduced to a skeleton staff. Unfortunately the early records of numbers of cups of tea and food served required by the War Office were not retained. Assuming a low estimate of 500 each a week for five and a half years it makes a very large amount.

Only four of the original are still helping. We learned with interest from a friend returning from India that our fame had reached there.

