

WAsc 2110

RSAC Welfare  
Dept. Report

5-3-1917

# REPORT OF THE WELFARE DEPARTMENT.

R. S. A. F.

When I was appointed the head of the Women's Welfare Department R.S.A.F. on April 2nd 1916, there was no Department, and I had neither Office to sit in, or chair to sit on! Within a few days I was shewn an unused wooden building just outside the Factory, and asked if I could make temporary use of it, until proper accomodation could be built for the Department. As it was a roof over our heads and I was anxious to get to work, I was ready to make the best use I could of the space available. One end of the building was partitioned off and made into two small rooms, one to be used as my office, and the other as a room for my typist, and for my Matrons to keep their stores of overalls etc in. This last room I was obliged to give up to the A.M.O. when she was appointed, as the medical Department had made no accomodation for her when she took up her duties. Owing to the good nature of my Matrons, who realised that in time we should all have comfortable quarters, and putting myself to the discomfort of having my office ( which was small) piled up with stores, and my typist working there, we were able to make room for the A.M.O. The far end of the building was turned into a Shift Room to accomodate about 350 women, and the rest of the available space was used as a Canteen, which I saw at once was the most neccessary part of the work of my Department.

Towards the end of April we took on our first 50 women for day work, and have gradually grown in number, until we now number 1155 (including 24 women taken on for the A.I.D. but exclusive of girl clerks, with whom I have nothing to do officially) working on alternate day and night shift. Until the Lady Doctor was appointed the Factory Medical Officer examined the women, and at his request, I attended these examinations although with all my numerous duties, I found it difficult to spare the time. I understood that as soon as women were started at the Factory a nurse for the women only, would be appointed for day and night work by the Medical Department, but the Day nurse was not appointed until the 8/9/16, and the night nurse was only engaged in Dec: 8 last. My Welfare Matron had a great deal of work to do at night on this account. I did not think it waise that women should go down to the Men's Surgery alone, and perhaps have to wait amongst the men there, until the nurse could attend to them, so it was arranged that when a woman was going to the Surgery, the foreman should ring through to the Matron who immediately went up and stayed there until the woman was ready to go back to her shop.

## CANTEEN.

We started our Canteen at the end of April by simply supplying tea, and bread and butter, which was all we could do until we got some equipment. Within a few weeks we had three ordinary gas cookers, and two small hot closets fixed, and bought enough plates etc to enable us to serve dinners for 300 or so women, it was a difficult job in the small space, but we did it. It was interesting to note how the women gradually gave up bringing cold sausages etc, with them and bought the hot dinners we supplied. We now have a splendid canteen equiped with everything we can possible need, and capable of serving 500 women at a sitting. We have made a great point of finding out from the women themselves what they like in the way of food, and have always when

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possible cooked any special dishes they may fancy. I feel that the great point is to stop the bringing of cold food, which had probably been packed up overnight, and kept in a bag in the shop during the morning, and gradually educate the women to eat a freshly cooked meal. As our numbers in the canteen are increasing daily, I can but feel that the method used to cater for the women has been the right one. We have daily a choice of four or five meat dishes, fish, fruit tarts, stewed fruits, milk puddings, pastries etc.,  
In Women who prefer lighter food, there is always a plentiful supply of Lentil, and other soups, eggs, rice balls, and a variety of four or five vegetables.

RECREATION ROOM. Our Recreation Room was opened with a Dance on February 10th which was attended by 500 men and women. We are now able to arrange classes and lectures for the women, and here again we are asking the women to say what classes they would like, and we will do our best to arrange them. Lectures on First Aid and Hygiene are given by the A.M.O. these we have not been able to arrange for before as I did not think it wise to have lectures of any sort in the Canteen ( which was the only available room) during the dinner hour, as the women who did not wish to listen to a lecture, had no where else to go until the Recreation Room was opened. We can now arrange all our classes and lectures at any time during the afternoon and evening in the Recreation Room, and no woman need be present who does not wish to be. Gymnasim, dancing, and embroidery classes have already been arranged. The women have subscribed together and bought a Piano. We hope to have constant dances and entertainments.

SHIFT ROOM. A Shift Room has been built to accomodate 2000 women. Joined on to this is a Sewing Room, where overalls are made and repaired. As this room is not used at night, and is next to the women's Surgery. I have a fire burning all night, so if the night nurse thinks it advisable for a woman who is feeling ill to rest for  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour and wishes to help her under her own eye during that time, she can make her comfortable in there, instead of sending her down to the rest room.

HOSTEL. A Hostel to accomodate 32 women has been opened, and is gradually filling up; the women much appreciate the quietness and comfort provided for them there.

The work that has been done in my Department during the last 11 months could never have been accomplished in the way it has without the loyal co-operation of all my staff, from my Welfare Matron to Scullery Maid, and I should also like to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the firm support I have received on all matters concerning my Department from the Superintendent, and the willing help that his staff have given me at all times.

L. B. Brand  
J. S. E.

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