

CAMDEN RED CROSS SOCIETY – MEN’S BRANCH

By Julie Wrigley

Not many people know that during World War One there was a Men’s Branch of the Camden Red Cross, but Camden Library has digitised the *Camden News* for the years 1914 to 1918, and on 6 July 1916 there was the following entry:



Camden School of Arts, now Camden Library,
where the Men’s Branch held their business meetings in 1916.

“Considerable amount of good useful work has been done by the Men’s Branch of the Camden Red Cross Society, which meets in the old Public School building every Tuesday night, and which more assistance by the young men could be given to advantage.

On Thursday evening last a meeting of this Branch was held in the School of Arts, [now the Camden

Library] and was attended as follows:—Mr. G. F. Furner in the chair, Messrs. E. H. Street, F. P. Brigstocke, H. J. Asher, A. F. Stone, T. Thornton, S. H. Woodhouse, P.C. Butler, G. Sidman, Miss Onslow, Mrs. E. H. Street, Mrs. G. F. Furner, officers of the Society, and the hon. secretary of the Men’s Branch, Mr. F. W. Sluman.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read, and confirmed on the motion of Messrs. H. J. Asher and T. Thornton. The hon. secretary, Mr. Sluman, read a report showing the amount of work that had been completed by the Branch to date, as follows:—

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I have much pleasure in reporting to your committee the progress made by the Men’s Branch of the Camden Red Cross Society.

The first instalment of articles has been completed, and consists of the following:— 5 bedside cupboards; 3 folding tables; 6 folding chairs; 7 pairs of crutches; 4 bed rests; 6 trays (wood); 1 camp stool; 18 hot water bottles; 12 trays (metal). Approximate value £29. (Signed) Fred. W. Sluman, Hon. Sec.

The report was received with gratification, as it showed valuable work was being done by the branch. It was decided on the motion of Messrs. Thornton and Woodhouse that the completed articles be handed to the Camden Red Cross Society for distribution.

Mrs. G. F. Furner, as president of the Society thanked the gentlemen for the work done, at the same time assuring them that the articles made were much needed by the soldiers both abroad and in convalescent

hospitals in Australia. Special thanks were due to Messrs. T. Thornton, S. H. Woodhouse, P. C. Butler and the hon. secretary for the practical work put in by them. Miss Macarthur, as hon. secretary of the Society, and Mrs. Street, as hon. treasurer, endorsed the remarks of the president, and expressed their pleasure in knowing that the Men's Branch was now firmly established and were turning out good useful articles. Miss Onslow referred to the metal work, saying the Camden branch was the only one in N.S.W. to take this line up, and for it they were particularly grateful to Mr. R. Gordon. The executive in Sydney are anxious that this metal work be kept going as much as possible.

The President, Mr. G. F. Furner, offered to make arrangements to have the articles displayed in a window in the main street of the town, on the suggestion of Mr. F. P. Brigstocke, so that all persons interested might have the opportunity of seeing what is being done by this branch, and at the same time invite other helpers. This has been arranged, and a few of the articles are now to be seen in a window at the Foresters Hall [now Treasures on Argyle].

Mr. T. Thornton proposed that book-binding or rather book-covering with brown paper be added to the work of the Men's Branch. This is a work that young men who are unable to lend a hand at the carpentry bench, might well find themselves useful, as each book, magazine, etc., collected for distribution among the soldiers has to be covered in a uniform style. There is a large stack of these books, magazines, etc. waiting to be covered, and it will be useful work for the young members of the Men's Branch to take in hand.

On the motion of Mr. E. H. Street, seconded by Mr. Asher, that the meetings of the Men's Branch be held on the last Thursday in each month. Agreed to. A donation of eleven shillings by the Football Club was handed to the President, and the meeting decided that it be devoted to the purchase of a rip saw for common use for the members of the branch.

The secretary of the Branch was requested to report to the meeting of the Red Cross and produce samples of the work done for exhibition at the meeting on 4th inst.

The meeting then adjourned.

Some of the articles made by the Men's Branch were sent to the camp at Menangle and some were sent to Red Cross headquarters. It is interesting that the men had their own office-bearers but the Branch was organised by the women office bearers of the Red Cross - Mrs. G. F. Furner as President, Miss Sibella Macarthur Onslow as Secretary, and Mrs. Margaret Street as Treasurer, who all attended the meeting of the Men's Branch. It seems as though the Red Cross women were the driving force, but the men wanted to play their part. The Camden Men's Branch was at its peak in 1916-17.

The Historical Society's exhibition, 'The story of the Camden Red Cross in war and peace' is on display until September 2014 at the Camden Museum, open Thursdays to Sundays, 11a.m. to 4 p.m.