members of the League attending with every seat in the Cathedral filled. At the end of Mass, to mark the 65th Anniversary of D Day, a crucifix made from the wood of the original crucifix at the Forces hut next to the Cathedral was carried in procession to the great door and rededicated by Mgr John Walsh, Principal RAF Chaplain.

It has found a permanent home on a wall opposite the lift in Westminster Cathedral, close to where the original crucifix stood, outside (see front cover).

Later that year, on 14th July, a bench was dedicated at the National Memorial Arboretum to commemorate the work carried out by the Ladies of the Catholic Women's League during both world wars by Bishop David McGough, Auxiliary Bishop in Birmingham. He also celebrated the first ever Sacrifice of the Holy Mass in the Millennium Chapel there. Our National President, Doreen Pooley, was present together with members of the National Executive Committee and the Chairman and Secretary of the Services Committee.

The Bench is located on Millennium Avenue in front of the RAF Benevolent Fund Memorial and opposite the Forever Remembered Poppy Garden. It is close to the Visitor Centre.

The Wayside Shrine stands alongside the B6265 road between Ripon and Fountains Abbey, about a mile and a half from Ripon on the right hand side opposite the sign to Studley Roger village.

If you pass that way, spare time to stop, visit and pray a while.

The Catholic Women's League CIO
www.catholicwomensleaguecio.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 1173138
The Catholic Women's League is a world-wide organisation

The Catholic Women's League

Services Committee

A History

Prayer for the Armed Forces and Chaplains

Father of us all,
whose Son uncovered faith in a soldier
under obedience,
keep close to you the serving sons and
daughters of this country
who put themselves in harm's way for
the sake of others.

Be a shield around them and a courage within.
Invest them with persistence in duty and a thirst
for what is right.

Be the words of their Chaplains and the
touch in their hands.
Inspire these pastors to be channels of your
grace.

We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen

Committee formed to dispense the income from it to those in need, such as needy ex-servicemen and their families. In 1966 the last clubs were closed in Germany as they were no longer viable.

The Services Committee then worked closely with the Catholic Bishop to the Forces and the Principal Chaplains. They relied on them as well as the members of the League to inform them if they were aware of someone, connected with the Services, in need of help. Requests were welcomed from anyone, serving or retired, or their dependents. They need not be Catholic, only have a relative who served in the Forces. Some referrals were made through SSAFA, Social Services or the Royal British Legion, asking for help to purchase larger items of equipment such as a special bed or wheelchair. Money was given only for specific items eg, a cooker, washing machine, fridge, bed linen or help with household repairs and redecoration. Requests were also received from young people needing help with a 'one-off' grant towards books for course work or special equipment. ALL applications were checked and verified, and then agreed by the Committee; but in an emergency a request could be dealt with by the Committee swiftly. All requests were confidential.

A consignment of flip flops and shorts with drawstring waist was sent to Afghanistan for wounded servicemen with leg injuries that did not need repatriation to UK (other than their boots they had no footwear and flip flops were found to be fine). A donation was made to Headley Court Rehabilitation Centre and the Chairman of the Services Committee with the National President were invited to visit there to see the wonderful work being done. In 2008, the Chairman and Secretary of the Services Committee were privileged to be invited to take part in the 50th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes as representatives of the League. Bishop Burns, the then Bishop to the Forces, told them "it was great to have you with us, but before you come again, we must improve your marching skills"! Participants on the Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes have also been sponsored by the Services Committee. Also Services groups of the HCPT have been helped to take children to Lourdes. A donation was made towards the refurbishment of St George's Chapel in Westminster Cathedral .

On 6th June 2009, the 65th Anniversary of D Day, the Catholic Women's League held its National Pilgrimage to Westminster Cathedral. This proved extremely popular with over a thousand

A book entitled 'The CWL from the Beaches of Normandy to Berlin, 1944 to 1946' by Mary Critchley-Salmonson OBE, Controller General of the CWL Huts and Canteens in North West Europe, reads as if the whole affair were a joyous adventure. It is a story of personal experiences and contains many shrewd and amusing comments in the general situation as she saw it on her numerous journeys across France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. It provides a factual narrative and a wealth of historical interest. She was entirely fearless, often going where angels feared to tread, and it is due to this gift that she was able to get things done when it seemed an impossibility to others. We owe much to her tenacity and ability. She was Mentioned in Despatches and awarded an OBE in 1946.

As one of the approved philanthropic bodies, the CWL had to work on an undenominational basis and provide welfare amenities for all who might come to the Clubs. But from a purely Catholic organisation something extra was expected, both by the Catholic Service personnel who visited the Canteens and Clubs and by the public who so generously contributed to the funds of the League. To remain officially undenominational for general purposes and yet provide that indefinable something which Roman Catholics expected, was no easy matter. Yet it was done, and with a fine discernment by the ladies who worked so devotedly.

In 1955 the name of the committee was changed to the CWL Services Club Committee. It was invited to join the official body of the Council of Voluntary Welfare Work and, within the Council's charter, the CWL was permitted to organise clubs where there was a predominance of Catholic troops, in any country. In this way welfare work was undertaken for the children of the Army of Occupation, as well as providing books and games and the first Services' Branch of the League was started by the wives of Catholic servicemen. These groups ran Repositories (for ecclesiastical requisites, rosaries, etc), cared for the altar linens, catered for First Holy Communion and Confirmation classes and gave religious instruction to the children attending the Forces' schools. In 1968 a plaque portraying the League's badge was presented to the Chairman of the Services Branch in recognition of the work done in BAOR (British Army of the Rhine). However, monies for the clubs became limited and work had to be reduced. The remaining assets of the Services Clubs were invested, and a

On 31st July 1914, the Catholic Women's League offices closed as usual, and the staff dispersed for the welcome August holiday. The secretary alone remained for a conscientious 'clear-up', The Hon Organising Secretary also happened to be lingering on in Town, when on 4th August war was declared. On the 6th she asked HE Cardinal Bourne if there were any services the League could render. His answer was definite 'But, of course, I am at my post, you ought to be at yours—re-open the office and recall the secretaries'. This was immediately done.

An appeal was made for a Catholic recreation hut for the Forces in Boulogne and the immediate and generous response from members of the public made it possible for the League to obtain and open a hut there. The earliest hut in England, opened in 1916, was at St Peter's Hall, Westminster beside Westminster Cathedral. This was a canteen open twenty-four hours, organised by members of the League, for troops passing through London. By 1917 it had become necessary to form a special committee to plan and organise the work of the growing number of huts. This was called the ''Huts and Canteens Committee'.

ENTRANCE TO HUT.

The West Riding Branch of the League, which became Leeds Branch, opened a large hut and chapel for the Northern Command Depot transit camp at Studley Roger, west of Ripon, North Yorkshire. It was staffed by CWL members who worked round the clock to provide over a thousand meals a day for the troops camped there. This became known as the 'English Mother Hut'. At the end of the Great War, the hut was sold and the Branch erected a Wayside Crucifix on a site nearby, bequeathed by the then Marquis of Ripon who had become a Catholic. The huge plinth on which there is a memorial dedication, was also a gift from the Marquis. Every year since 1920, members organised a pilgrimage there, on a Thursday nearest to the feast of Saints Peter and Paul (29th June) and 1st July, the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme.

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE. Soldiers' Recreation Hut, Ripon Camp.

There were many other huts opened during WWI and by the end of 1918 the League had 35 huts, not only in England but on the war fronts in Europe as well, all staffed by League members. They were outstanding in that, though they provided meals, the Forces spiritual needs were also catered for. Holy Mass was celebrated on Sundays, some huts having permanent altars. The friendly and Christian atmosphere was appreciated by British, Belgian, French and Canadian troops and Chaplains returning to their own countries were instrumental in urging the founding of the League there. In 1919, Cardinal Mercier started the League for Belgian women and in 1920 the Canadian League was formed.

Canteen, Catterick Garrison

Entrance to Hut.

When Peace came in 1918, the League began the adoption of ruined villages and churches in Europe and the huts in France were donated for use in shattered areas and vestments were provided for use in those churches still standing. Of course, there were other organisations running canteens for the Forces, notably the Church Army, Church of Scotland, the YMCA and the Salvation Army.

In November 1916 Mrs Baynes, Director of the Huts in France, was Mentioned in Despatches, awarded the MBE in 1918 and the OBE in 1920 for services in connection with the war. The campaign medal roll for the CWL shows only 36 names, each receiving a British War Medal as sole entitlement.

When the Second World War broke out in 1939, the Committee sought and obtained permission from the War Office to resume the

running of the Canteens. A new appeal was launched for financial aid and by December 1939 there were 3 canteens working. A few months later, no less than 11 huts had been established, including 3 in France and there were more requests coming in.

The first Mass Hut was opened at the Army Apprentices College by the Harrogate Section of the then Leeds Branch of the League with funds raised by sections of the Branch and dedicated in October 1940.

The League members, now in uniform, under the auspices of the Council for Voluntary Welfare Work (CVWW), went where the war went, with the Eighth Army to North Africa, Italy, Jerusalem and were in Vienna, Athens, Iceland, Malaya, Burma and Singapore.

The Rome Club was in the grand surrounds of the old Scots College and Pope Pius XII paid many unofficial visits there. He admired the work of the staff and once asked where the League managed to find such people?

A branch of canteen work which was an immediate success was the mobile canteen. This was in service in the war stricken areas, manned by a team of 8. Besides tea, the mobile canteen provided cakes, pies, doughnuts, chocolate and Woodbines! An entire journal could be devoted to the work carried out by the stalwart volunteers who when the war became more vigorous, were repeatedly exposed to bombing raids. In the Middle East conditions were often hazardous and unpredictable as the fortunes of war fluctuated and at times it was expedient to evacuate within a few hours from the Army authorities. This theatre of war was no simple task for the Leader and her staff but it is worthy of note that no fatal casualties were suffered among our brave and fearless young women. In 1945 the League was asked to send mobile canteens and set-up clubs for the Services in India and Burma.

By the end of 1945, no less than 80 Canteens and Huts were operating simultaneously at home and abroad. The commitment demanded efficient management and an army of members to staff each individual Canteen. All Chaplains spoke highly of their value to the morale of the Forces who were sustained by the homely atmosphere which was the predominating feature of CWL establishments. 12 days after VE Day in 1945, League members were in Berlin!