

N.B. BRANCH OF ST. JOHN A.A.

Progress Reported at Annual Meeting on Thursday.

MUCH GOOD WORK WAS DONE

Officers Elected – Additions to Executive Committee – N.B. Nurses in England

The annual meeting of the New Brunswick Branch of the St. John Ambulance Association was held on Thursday at the residence of Dr. Skinner. Reports were discussed and adopted. Much interest was expressed in the varied activities of the association, and a vote of thanks tendered to the officers for their faithful work during the year.

Major Skinner was elected president; Col. E. T. Sturdee, vice-president, and Miss Lillian Hazen continues in the office of secretary-treasurer. The names of Mrs. Skinner and Mr. James Harrison were added to the executive.

Report of the New Brunswick Branch of the St. John Ambulance A.A. for 1916:

Ladies and Gentleman – In presenting this sixth annual report of the N.B. Branch of the St. John Ambulance Association, I beg to outline the work under three principal heads:

First. At the close of 1915 an arrangement was entered into with the Department of Militia and Defense for conducting a campaign of education in first aid among the troops of the C.E.F. in training in our midst. In each military district a number of men, graduates in first aid and capable of giving instruction, were chosen to join the Canadian Army Medical Corps, with the rank of Quartermaster Sergeant in that unit.

I quote from a report received from Major Skinner, Senior Medical Officer N.B. command:

October 4th, 1916

Miss Lillian Hazen, Secretary, new Brunswick Branch, St. John Ambulance Association:

Dear Misses Hazen, – The two first aid instructors: Q.M.S. Wm. John Sibson, and Q.M.S. Wm. Redfern, nominated by the Council of the New Brunswick Branch of the St. John Ambulance Association, have been continuously on duty since the first of the year. These men have proven to be most capable and efficient instructors. They have sent regular weekly reports to me regarding their classes, which were duly forwarded to the Assistant Director of Medical Supplies, 6th Division.

The following troops of the Canadian Expeditionary forces were given instruction on the prescribed syllabus: 69th Battalion, 104th Battalion, 140th Battalion, 115th Battalion, 4th Siege Battery. In addition, the instructors have been detailed with the troops at Aldershot Camp.

It gives me great pleasure to state that I have received many favourable comments on the value of the work done by the first aid instructors. The men took great interest in the classes and the progress made by them was most satisfactory.

I have instructed Q.M.S. Sibson and Q.M.S. Redfern to forward you a report stating how the instruction was taken by all ranks and with what success.

Yours very truly,

S.S. SKINNER

Senior Medical Officer,

New Brunswick Command.

[. . .]

In April, Lt.-Col. Birdwhistle, of Ottawa, was invited to speak at the Canadian Club on the subject of the St. John Ambulance Association, as a result of this lecture and in accordance with other instructions received from Ottawa, it was decided that the members of the Voluntary band of helpers who, under the auspices of the Canadian Club, had been given such splendid service at the Convalescent Home – of whose faithful work too much praise cannot be given – should be formed into the Regulation Voluntary Aid Detachment according to a general plan being carried out in the Dominion, conforming to the same scheme in England. In June, therefore, the Secretary of the Ambulance Association, sent to Ottawa a letter received from Miss Mary MacLaren, secretary of the new detachment, announcing the formation of this unit, now known as the V.A.D., NO. 5, St. John Ambulance Association . . .

NOVEMBER 10, 1944

Great Need For Additional Help In St. John Ambulance Brigade Overseas Vividly Described:

Miss Margaret MacLaren Tells of Varied Duties of Members

“Those of us who are fortunate enough to be able to come overseas see more and more what a great need there is for additional help over here and also a steadily enlarging picture of the field of service for the nursing divisions at home now, and particularly in the peace-time program ahead,” writes Mrs. Margaret MacLaren of Saint John, lady staff officer, Canadian Headquarters, London, of the St. John’s Ambulance Brigade overseas. She was reporting to Mrs. Hugh Mackay, vice-president of nursing division of the brigade in New Brunswick.

“Even though at times recently we have dared hope the war might soon be coming to an end, and while now that optimism fades, there is not the slightest thought of our work being able to ‘let down.’ Over here nursing assistance will be required for many months – these new 125 Civil Nursing Reserve nursing auxiliaries from S.J.A.B. of Canada are asked to come for a minimum of one year – at home the military hospitals and the department of pensions and national health hospitals and other will, only too unfortunately, need help for years, and in the welfare of the civilian community the needs are boundless.

Marvellous Challenge

“It is a marvellous challenge for vision and perseverance to direct to its fullest use all the powers of unselfish service and trained effort built up in the war years. Rather than thinking in terms of ‘war work’ we must keep before us constantly the search for opportunities for help, and the need that will mean for adding to our ranks and attracting young enthusiastic people of ability. Much as we look forward to the years of peace and return to ‘normal life’ whatever that may mean – we’ll hope ‘progress towards more normal life’ – the uncomfortable though like a pricking pin persist that there can be demobilization in our branch of service.

“In addition to all this, is the prospect of the work to be done by S.J.A.B. and others in Europe and in the East. Many are already engaged in it, and there are British S.J., members serving in France, Belgium, Greece, Italy, and North Africa, besides those who have gone out to India . . .

“I won’t go into an account of our summer’s experiences, but life was real, life was earnest and if we slept in unconventional places under tables, or grand piers or staircases, we seem none the worse for it and have all been most fortunate – touch wood. Even in the office there was never a dull moment as there were days when we were no sooner well-settled at some piece of work or at a letter, when we had to scamper, standing not upon the order of our going, into the corridor away from glass, or to plunge under our desks . . .

“I don’t know whether I have told you about the interesting trips three of our members have had since coming over in February. One went to Gibraltar, accompanying repatriates to their home another went out to Lisbon as part of a ministry of health medical and nursing unit to accompany civilian internees returning to Great Britain and lately Mrs. Martin of B.C. has returned from Sweden where she went as a member of the J.W.O. unit, to accompany, as welfare officer, returning prisoners of war and civilian internees to Great Britain.

“Since I last wrote a detachment of 12 has arrived (from Canada). Eight for transport of wounded and four were for the Civil Nursing Reserve. There was an article in The (London) Times not long ago of the excellent work being done by the transport of wounded drivers in meeting planes returning from France with wounded. Our members will be doing some of that work, or will be doing equally useful work with the English military commands in various parts of the country. Later, they look forward to being sent to the continent. We are expecting to hear of one of our members being there already.

[. . .]

“All the nursing auxiliaries are in emergency medical services hospitals, some are maternity hospitals, some orthopaedic and others are general. Most of them look after civilians and in many cases, members of the forces. In addition, we have found V.A.D.s with St. Dunstan’s. The girls are doing a splendid piece of work and we have excellent reports.

“The work in some hospitals is rather different than it is in Canada and certainly anyone should come prepared to be adaptable and to leave behind them any preconceived ideas as to what type of work they will be doing. As with the thousands of women over here engaged in nursing, undoubtedly if they had their choice they would ask to nurse the wounded although the need of the civilians, men, women, and children, is just as great. Those of our members who are here realize that whatever their work may be, it is a real job to be done and one of the things that makes one most proud of them is the way the task is undertaken with no more picking and choosing than members of the forces stipulate when, and where, they will fight.

“The girls are full of interest in the country and the people and are making the most of their experience.”