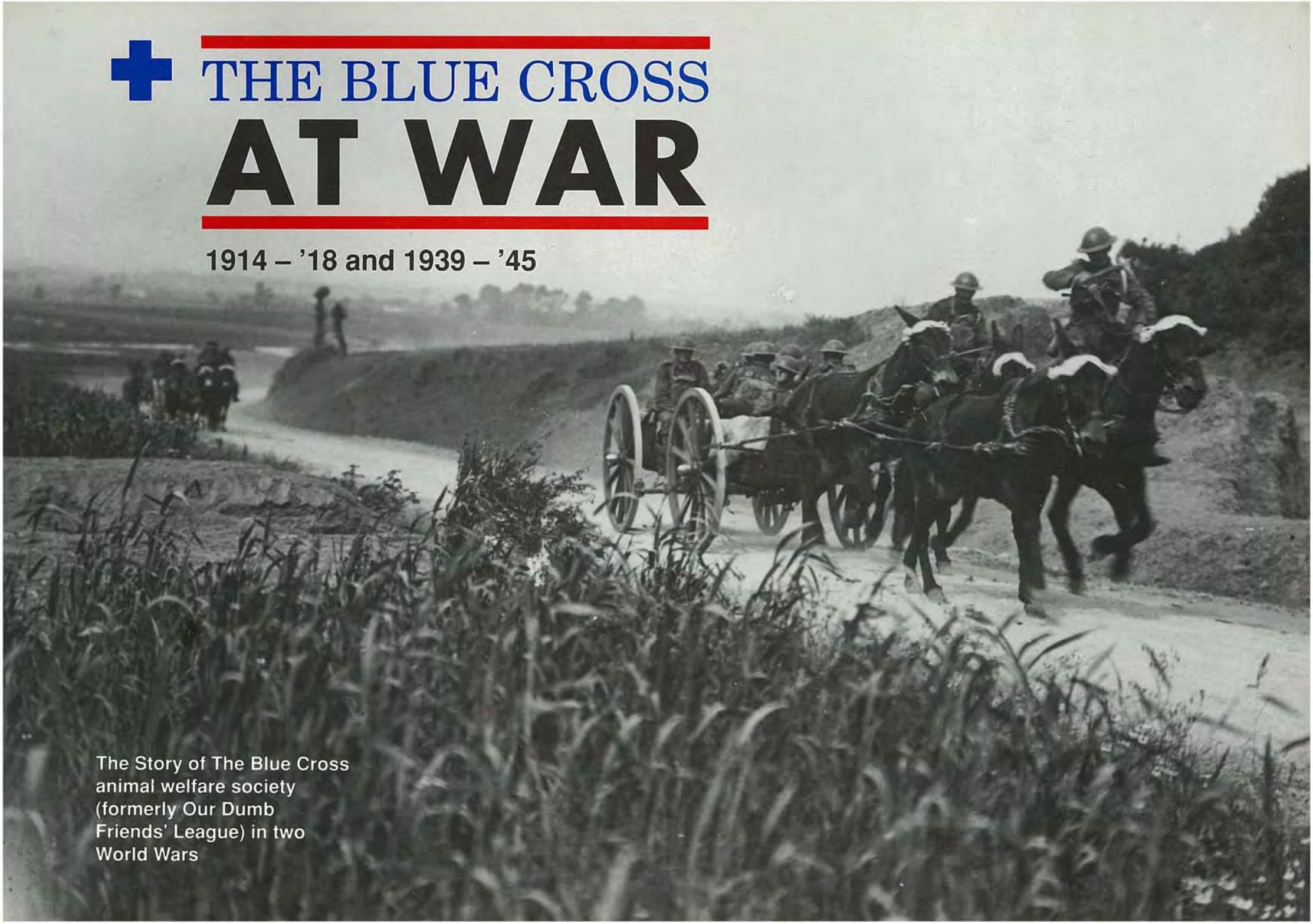
THE BLUE CROSS AT WAR

1914 – '18 and 1939 – '45



The Story of The Blue Cross animal welfare society (formerly Our Dumb Friends' League) in two World Wars

'Goodbye, old man', by Matania. Men and their horses formed a close bond during this appalling war, soldiers often sleeping next to their horses at night to keep warm.

The Blue Cross at War

Part One: 1914 – 18

The Gift of a Horse Shoe Nail

Part Two: 1939 – 45

Picking up the Pieces

Based on the Annual Reports of
"Our Dumb Friends' League" and
written by Carmen Smith B.Ed., Press Officer of The Blue Cross

Other Blue Cross literature and information may be obtained from:

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● *Cover picture shows Machine Corps guns and limbers galloping along a road near Rombly on May 13, 1918.*

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—CS, May 1990

Preface

Before the advent of the motorized vehicle, the horse was a vital component of any army. "For the want of a horse-shoe nail," so the old rhyme goes, "the battle was lost."

Horses were necessary and indispensable — both for the cavalry and as the motive power for gun carriages, wagons, ambulances and munitions trucks — but they were also flesh and blood, and therefore extremely vulnerable. It was estimated after World War I that 225,856 horses drafted into the British Army lost their lives, and that by 1917 there were 869,931 horses on active service.

An army's success thus depended on how well it could maintain and conserve its horse power. The dogs of war, too, played an important role as lookouts, messengers and carriers of ammunitions and first aid packs — and they also deserved proper care. The Red Cross existed to bring relief to the human victims of war — why not a similar service for its animal victims, under the Blue Cross flag, as used by the old cavalry lines?

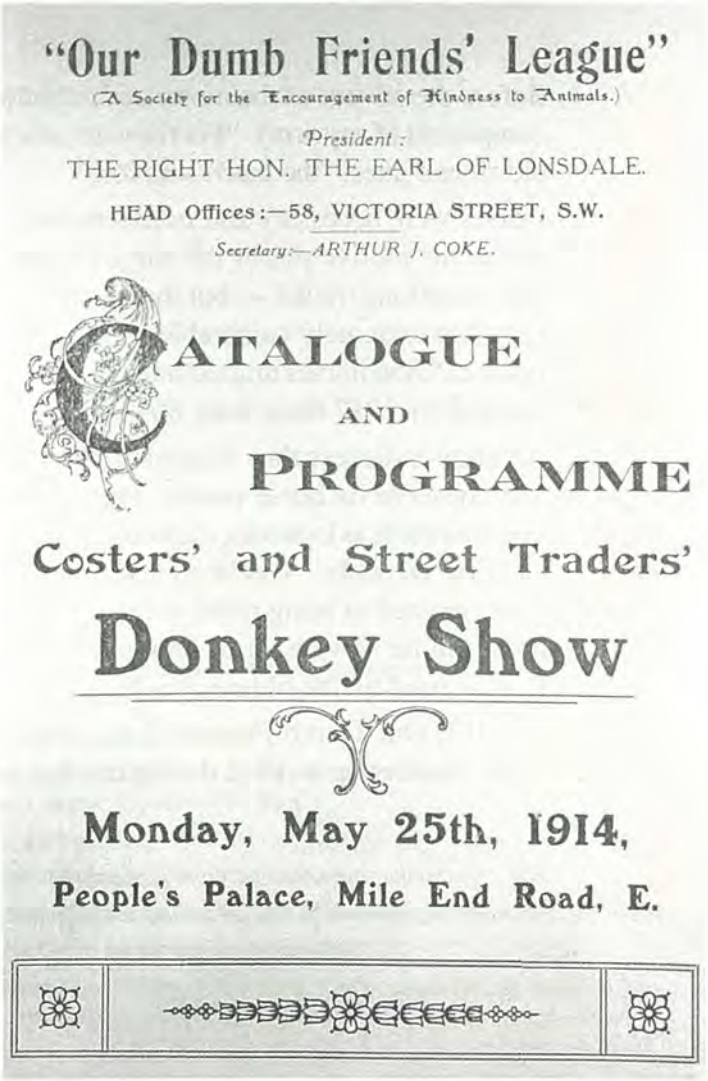
In 1914, Our Dumb Friends' League re-opened its Blue Cross Fund, first set up in 1912 during the Balkan War. The League's offer of help to the British Army was turned down, but was gratefully accepted by the French. By setting up hospitals for horses and dogs, and by supplying many comforts for the animals, made an incalculable contribution towards the efforts of the French Army and (more indirectly) to those of the British Forces in Europe, in holding the enemy at bay.

In the 1939–45 conflict, the League's operations were restricted to the home base after the fall of France in 1940, but there was still a huge challenge to face.

Panic as war began and people queued up to dispose of their pets in case they had to leave the capital....the enormous problem of stray cats in London..... animals buried in the rubble of their homes.....the boarding of pets of refugees and those of men who had been called up to serve their country .....the quarantining of dogs which had shared the food, the fears and the lives of returning soldiers who could not bear to leave their canine friends behind....all these were tackled with courage and care by the staff and volunteers of the League.

This photograph of a Blue Cross procession in Tonbridge, in 1915, was contributed by Mrs Betty Hope, of Chichester, whose mother's trap appears top right, just coming into view behind the donkey group. She writes: "I remember well being bewildered and grieved that horses had to go to the war and get killed, and what would happen to our Ruby? And the huge plough horses working in the fields around our home? Why? Children showing interest and love of animals should have responsibility towards animals explained to them at an early age, though at that period of wholesale slaughter of man and beast it was hardly possible. I supppose this procession in Tonbridge High Street was quite an event. Certainly so for me as a small child."

The Costers' and Street Traders' annual donkey show, initiated by Our Dumb Friends' League to encourage the good treatment of working horses, ponies and donkeys, had to be abandoned at the outbreak of war but was resumed in the '20s.



"Our Dumb Friends' League"

(A Society for the Encouragement of Kindness to Animals.)

President:

THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF LONSDALE.

HEAD Offices:—58, VICTORIA STREET, S.W.

Secretary:—ARTHUR J. COKE.

CATALOGUE

AND

PROGRAMME

Costers' and Street Traders'

Donkey Show

Monday, May 25th, 1914,

People's Palace, Mile End Road, E.

Introduction

On the outbreak of war in 1914, thousands of men and horses who had known only the peace and leisurely pace of English rural life — or at the most, the busy commercial life of the town — were suddenly and unceremoniously transported into a living hell on the other side of the English Channel. The haycart was exchanged for the munitions truck, the plough for the heavy gun, the point-to-point for the cavalry charge.

Screaming shells, machine gun fire,rats, deep holes of stinking mud which swallowed up horses and men alike were daily hazards; pain and death were daily companions.

Under such terrible conditions in the trenches, men and animals alike became prey to wounds and disease. Mange, flies, ill-fitting shoes, a lack of clean food and water and dry sleeping quarters — these were only some of the discomforts for horses; apart from the miseries of the freezing cold and wet and the constant fear.

On the outbreak of war, Our Dumb Friends' League immediately offered help to the British Army, but it had already set up its own veterinary corps to keep its animals in as good shape as possible, and politely rebuffed the offer. The French Army, however, was not so well equipped, and welcomed with open arms the League's efforts, through its Blue Cross Fund.

Our Dumb Friends' League had been founded in 1897 as a society for the encouragement of kindness to animals, and was well established by 1914, and ready to help.

Its Animals' Hospital, believed to be the first of its kind in the world, had been opened in London in 1906 to provide a veterinary and nursing service for the animals of poor people. And its Drivers' and Horsekeepers' Branch had achieved a great deal towards improving the conditions of working horses in London. It had provided big, strong trace horses to help weaker animals pull their loads up the worst of the City's hills, supplied oatmeal-and-water drinks for hot and weary animals during the summer, loin cloths for the horses and donkeys of poorer owners to protect them from the rain, and they had organised Horse and Donkey Shows to promote the better care of animals.

The last Costers' and Street Traders' Donkey Show to take place before the war put an end to this colourful event for seven years, was held on May 25, 1914, at the People's Palace. It attracted a record entry of 195 donkeys, and was opened by the Duchess of Somerset.

Later, the League's President, the Earl of Lonsdale, arrived to inspect the animals and to present the prizes in the Queen's Hall. A man with an appropriate name — Mr W.J. Orsman, Honorary Superintendent of the Hoxton Costers' Mission — was presented with a silver inkstand bearing a model of a donkey and barrow, in recognition of his 50 years' work on behalf of the costers and street traders and donkeys.

The achievements of ODFL in its first 17 years had been considerable, but its meagre finances, culled from dozens of little support groups all over the country and from the subscriptions of individual members (one guinea minimum), were scarcely capable of coping with the needs of animals involved in warfare.

The war thus presented an enormous challenge to a small organisation like the League. By 1914, ODFL consisted of a Grand Council of 86 distinguished members, whose President was the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Lonsdale, and Chairman Mr Charles Forward, and a number of other committees administering separate funds within the League.

These included the Horse Ambulance Fund, whose President was the Duke of Portland, the Animals' Hospital Fund (President: HSH The Duchess of Teck), the Drivers' and Horsekeepers' Branch (Chairman: Mr Evan Collinson), the Receiving Shelters for Stray Cats, the Children's Branch — and the dormant Blue Cross Fund.

Executive Committee.

Chairman:

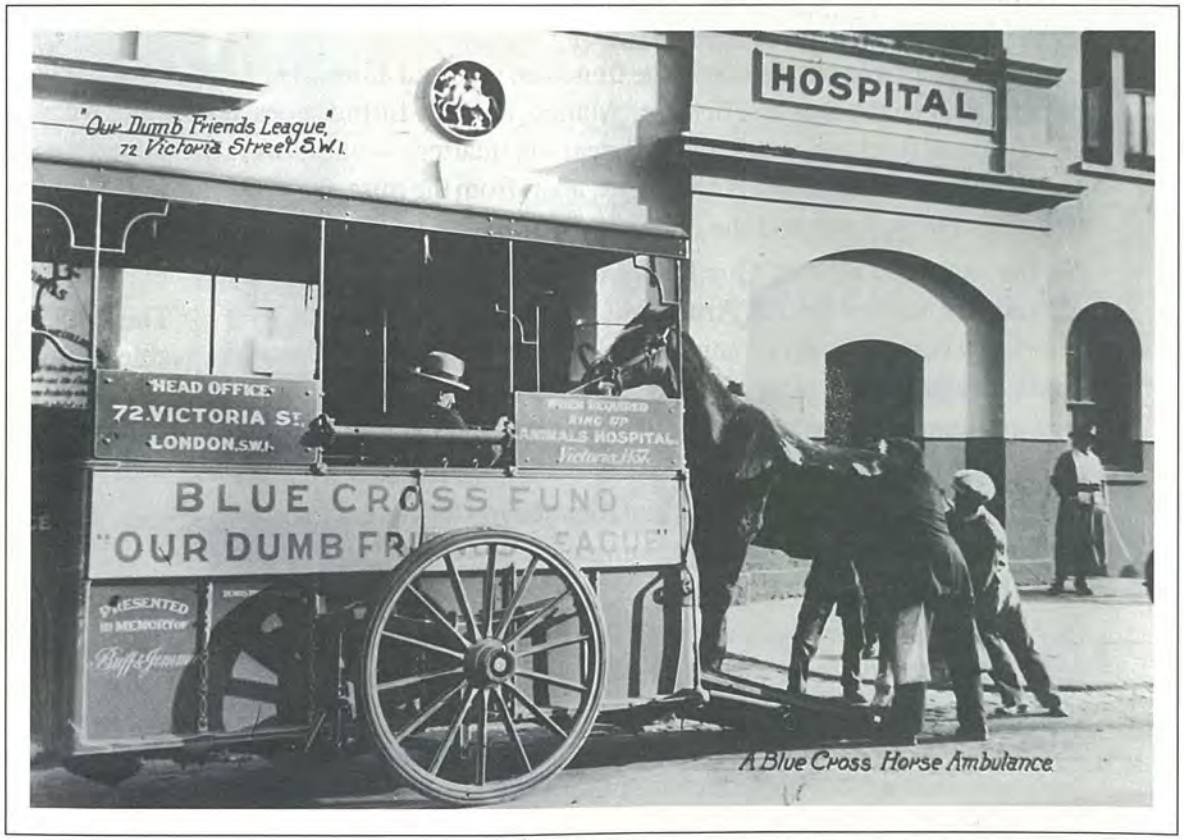
THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF LONSDALE.

HER HIGHNESS THE RANEE OF SARAWAK.
THE DUCHESS OF HAMILTON.
THE DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE
THE MARCHIONESS OF DUFFERIN AND AVA.
THE MARCHIONESS OF ELY.
THE MARCHIONESS TOWNSHEND.
THE COUNTESS OF CARNWATH.
THE COUNTESS OF CLANCARTY.
THE COUNTESS OF KILMOREY.
THE VISCOUNTESS PARKER.
THE LADY THEODORA GUEST.
THE LADY ALICE MAHON.
AMY, THE LADY COLERIDGE.
THE LADY MALCOLM OF POLTALLOCH.
THE LADY ST. HELIER.
THE HON. MRS. WALTER YARDE-BULLER
LOUISA, LADY MORRISON-BELL.
LADY DUCKWORTH.
LADY LEVER.
LADY ALEXANDER.
LADY COLLEN.
LADY SMITH-DORRIEN.
LADY FALLE.
LADY LAWRENCE.
MRS. CLAUDE WATNEY.

Hon. Treasurer:
SIR ERNEST FLOWER.

Secretary & Organizer:
ARTHUR J. COKE.

The Executive Committee of "Our Dumb Friends' League" at the outbreak of war in 1914



An injured horse is persuaded into an early Blue Cross ambulance

Part One:

The Gift of a Horse-shoe Nail

The great horse round-up

The supply of horses to the British Army alone had to be raised from 20,000 to 140,000 before the first expeditionary force was ready to leave for France in 1914. Most of these were bought or commandeered from owners throughout the country — indeed, horses were sometimes bought virtually out of the shafts as a cart was being driven along a country road.

But even in 1914 Britain's supply of horses was limited and soon special commissioners were sent to Canada and the United States, where they enlisted the help of the great stockyards there to buy thousands of horses. Enormous pains were taken to choose good, healthy animals, to check their health, to get them supremely fit to withstand the long sea journey to Britain, to make sure that losses at sea were minimal and to give them time to recuperate in England before being sent to the Front.

Not least of the problems of those responsible for shipping the horses was the activities of German agents who attempted every conceivable means to destroy the horses, from pouring disease bacteria into their water supplies to mixing small barbed steel spikes with oats intended for horse feed. The 'chigoe boys' who looked after them — skilled riders and horse handlers — showed little mercy to anyone strongly suspected of such outrages. Sometimes German submarines tried to sink British horse transports and the ships had to be armed with guns and gun crews.

The Blue Cross Fund goes into action

The Fund had been set up within ODFL during the Balkan War in 1912, especially to bring medical help and comforts to war horses in the way that the Red Cross administered to sick and wounded men. So the machinery was already in existence when the war began, and ODFL was able to swing into action almost immediately, in the hope that funds would follow.

"Its first efforts were directed to the sufferings entailed upon horses by the hurried mobilization and the Committee of the Blue Cross Fund speedily made it known that it was in a position to provide Horse Ambulances, Medicaments, and other requirements for the horses which it was not easy to obtain quickly through the usual official channels," reads the 1914 annual report.

"The first request for help came as early as August 20 from the Camp of the Surrey Yeomanry at Maidstone for a Horse Ambulance which was immediately despatched."

Other similar requests followed, and by the end of the year seven camps had been supplied with ambulances for speedily and humanely removing horses.

But it was the horses already shipped out to France and enduring the horrors of the battlefield which really touched the hearts of the British public, and the Blue Cross Committee decided to write to Field Marshal Earl Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, putting its services at the disposal of the authorities.

Amongst the practical suggestions made were the provision of fully equipped and staffed horse hospitals and of a voluntary veterinary corps to supplement the military veterinary department.

Their well-meaning offer was, however, politely turned down by the Army. In a letter from the War Office signed by B. Cubitt, the Army Council said they fully appreciated ".....the value of the good work being done by your Society, but as ample provision has already been made for the care of sick and wounded horses at the Front, the Council regret that they cannot see their way to accept your very kind offer."

Determined not to be put off, the Blue Cross Committee continued to supply materials and comforts for the horses to individual regiments throughout the war and these were highly prized and appreciated by the men who had the horses in their care. Every annual report contains examples of letters received from the Front, some of which will be quoted later.

Recognising that horses have no nationality, and that there were more ways of helping them than via the British Army, the Blue Cross sent an envoy to France with offers of assistance to the French Army.

His reception there was rather more enthusiastic, and the Minister of War, M. M.A. Millerand, wrote:

"I will add that instructions will be given so as to give this Society every facility for the

Horses above their knees in mud an ammunition limber takes ammunition forward along the Lesboeufs Road outside Flers, November 1916, during the Battles of the Somme.

One of a pair of horses pulling a water cart has gone over the edge of the brushwood track. Battle of Ypres, St Eloi, August 11, 1917.

Limbers from the Australian 1st ANZAC Corps loaded with ammunition proceeding to the front along the Ypres road. September 25, 1917.

organisation of depots behind the firing line, where horses will be trusted to its care....When you inform the Society of the Blue Cross of these arrangements, will you also kindly express the lively gratitude of the French Government for the offer of its precious help in the work undertaken to cure the horses which have already rendered such great services, and in this way to reconstruct a material which represents one of the prinicipal elements of strength of the armies."

First hospitals in France

ODFL acted quickly to open its first Blue Cross hospital in France. Establishing and provisioning took some weeks, but by the end of the year the Blue Cross flag was flying over four depots — at Serqueux, Provins, Troyes and Vernon — with English veterinary surgeons giving the finest treatment to the "poor stricken and affrighted creatures which reach the haven of the Blue Cross hospitals direct from the battlefield."

Some horses were beyond treatment, but those with a chance of recovery were given every attention, though it must have been demoralizing for the medical workers to get horses fit and well, only to see them sent back to the dangers of the battle zone once more.

Sometimes, horses came back for a second time, and one which was wounded again in 1917 after being treated in 1916, escaped from his attendant and, with another horse tied to him, ran to the stall he had occupied the previous year!

By the end of 1914, between 300 and 400 horses were being treated, the hospitals having opened some three weeks earlier.

Work was seriously handicapped by an outbreak of "glanders", and only horses free from this infection would be treated at the hospitals, glanders being a highly contagious and sometimes fatal disease to horses, asses — and even man — affecting the mucous membranes of the nose and lungs, and the lymphatic system.

Financial swings and roundabouts for ODFL

At the end of 1914, the League's general finances showed a turnover of £4,195, and an overdrawn balance of £472 0s 1d. By contrast, the Blue Cross Fund had a turnover of £18,162, including French money totalling £308 9s 7d, and a credit balance of £13,253 10s 5d. This diversion of funds was to

The 'Venture' ambulance, presented by Mr Alfred Vanderbilt

make life very difficult for those trying to scrape money together for work at home. As the war progressed, most of the home funds showed varying deficits, although individual provincial branches managed to keep their heads above water.

In the 18th annual report, at the end of 1915, the Council declared that in spite of the war and the very extensive operations of the Blue Cross Fund for War Horses, the ordinary work of the League had been carried on with the same energy and enthusiasm as hitherto, but regretted that many members of the Council, some of whom had been connected with the Society almost since its foundation, were serving on the battlefields and some of its most ardent supporters had been lost through death.

Because the Horse Ambulance Fund was suffering financially from the effects of the war, and because eight of the 16 pre-war London ambulances had been commandeered by the military, £800 was transferred from the Blue Cross coffers (one-third of the value of the ambulances); but the Ambulance Fund still ended the year £25 12s 4d in the red. It also lost one of its most generous supporters — Mr Alfred Vanderbilt, who donated and maintained the 'Venture' ambulance — in the Lusitania disaster.

The Blue Cross Committee was finding unlimited scope for its work at home and in France. Finance was directed from London, with monthly accounts being sent to a firm of Parisian accountants to meet the bills. Maintenance of the Blue Cross work was now amounting to £3,500 a month.

Even a 10-horse team has problems extricating this ammunition waggon from the mud on the track leading to High Wood, October 1916.

Necessities and Comforts

Although the British Army's Veterinary Corps had been largely increased, Blue Cross saw to it that where horses' sufferings could be alleviated and comforts increased, this was done. Up to December 1915, 359 units of the Army at home and abroad had been supplied with parcels of drugs, bandages, humane killers, horse salts and dressings, medicines and ointments, tooth rasps, clippers, antiseptic tabloids, wither pads, brushing boots, ear caps, fever balls, fringe nets, Stockholm tar and even portable forges. Letters of thanks from the grateful recipients are touching:

"... I beg to acknowledge the receipt of horse salts and dressing, which arrived safe and intact. The Commanding Officer is very grateful for them, and I might say they were received by our Farrier as if it was a great gift for himself..."

"I have today received a Portable Forge from you. I can assure you it will be a blessing. The horses, which have been subjected to nothing but cold shoeing, are in a very bad way in the feet now, and the local forges are always crowded with British farriers trying to get away from the difficulty...."

"... I thank you very much for your letter of the 24th ult., and for your parcel containing the fringes and 36 ear caps. They are without doubt of very great comfort to my horses, as flies swarm here in thousands...."

During 1915, there were four groups of hospitals operating in France, at:

Moret (4 hospitals, 15 wards, 200 horses)
Ste. Mammes (1 large hospital, 5 wards, 200 horses)
Provins (4 hospitals, 7 wards, 180 horses) and
Troyes (3 hospitals, 4 wards, 125 horses).

Troyes closed in September 1915, work being transferred to Ste Mammes; Serqueux had already closed because of its unfavourable position.

By the end of the year, the hospital work having been going on for about 13 months, 2850 horses had been received for treatment, 2218 had been returned to the field of battle, 92 had died and 540

were still being treated. Many were put out to grass for a long rest after their wounds were cured before being sent back into service.

'Horses have no nationality'

An eye-witness account of the sorts of problems being faced in the hospitals is provided by Mr John Ashton, an assistant vet. at one of the hospital depots. He writes:

"Without dwelling on the technical side of the subject, I might say that almost every disease and wound known to veterinary science found its way into these hospitals. Shrapnel wounds (principally in the back and croup) were numerous. Bullet wounds in various parts of the body were frequent; many horses had an eye shot out without being otherwise injured. Bayonet wounds and wounds from darts dropped by aviators were met with occasionally. Fearful wounds in the limbs were often met with. These injuries made one reflect on the great number of horses killed outright, or those so severely injured that human aid would avail nothing.

However, the mortality was very low on the average. The most deaths occurred subsequently to the retreat from Belgium and the battle of the Marne. Oh! what poor skeletons I saw at Serqueux! Some of the poor beasts had been galloped about for days and days without hardly anything to eat and drink.

Later, after the trench mode of warfare began, there was a great diminution of such extreme anaemic run-down cases.

Every type and breed of horse in Western Europe passed through our hands; also horses from North Africa were brought by the French Colonial troops, such as Barbs and Arabs — beautiful small horses. I saw many Percheron mares and geldings, and Nivernais, Ardennais, and Boulannais. Occasionally we got a shire or a Clydesdale gelding — some horses that had escaped from the British and got into the French lines. Many thoroughbreds were seen that had been requisitioned from racing stables. We also had a few wounded mules, and once in a while we got a German horse. But horses have no nationality; a horse is a horse and equal care and attention are lavished on all.

We have a fair number of American and Canadian horses under treatment. Some of them do not make the most tractable patients, especially when in the blacksmith's hands.

Many horses arrive so weak that one can do almost anything with them, but regaining

Mules being used to draw a variety of vehicles as a Battery's transport moves up during the Battle of Polygon Wood. There are camps in the background. Poperinghe, September 30, 1917.

strength often imparts a friskiness more than interesting.

All the equine patients in a convalescent state are regularly given the freedom of large pastures for a few hours daily, weather permitting; in other cases the horses are walked in fours, two or three miles on the road.

A register of all the animals is carefully kept at every hospital, giving the military matriculation (stamped on the hoof), stall, number, age, colour, height, markings, and nature of injury or disease, as the case might be. In some cases horses have been recognised that have sojourned in the same hospital on two or three separate occasions."

Another item of news from France was that the French sculptor and lover of horses, Jacques Froment-Meurice, had thrown himself wholeheartedly into the Blue Cross cause, putting himself and his car at its service, and financing hospital equipment. As Director General of Blue Cross work in France, it was hoped that his example would have a lasting effect in promoting the welfare of animals in France beyond the duration of the war.

The Blue Cross in Italy

With the service running well in France, the Blue Cross turned its attentions to Italy after being approached early in March by Mr Leonard Hawkesley, of the Rome Society for the Protection of Animals. What would happen, it was being asked, if Italy became embroiled in the war — because no regularly organised army veterinary corps existed which would be capable of coping with such a situation? Mr Charles Forward, a member and former Chairman of the Blue Cross Committee, was sent to investigate the possibilities. But the British people had already given so much, it was felt, that it would be unfair to ask them to support an Italian operation as well. So it was arranged that the Blue Cross in Italy should become more or less the official veterinary organisation of the Italian Army, so that hospital sites could be obtained free and such veterinary materials and vehicles as existed could be commandeered. On that basis, the Committee sent the Italian Blue Cross a grant of £1000.

The British Ambassador in Rome, Sir Rennell Rodd, took a personal interest in the operation, helping them to make sure that money and goods got through to the horses for which they were intended. He wrote to the Blue Cross President, Lady Smith-Dorrien:

"Of course, in a country like Italy there is a long uphill way to go in such matters. The first elements of kindness to animals have to be taught, and those who are interested in it are doing their best....meantime the Blue Cross is doing really good work, and winning great approval from the Military Authorities.

All may not be perfect, and may not be so for some time yet, but it has done a great deal of good, and will do a great deal more.... We have to recognise the difference between the work in a Latin country and in an Anglo-Saxon community, and must be content with less rapid and definite results. But even so, the work is worth doing and results are considerable."

They were also quick. From Mr Hawkesley's approach to the Blue Cross in March, only four months elapsed to the opening of the first Italian hospital on July 1 1915, and by the end of August there were three — at Udine, Trenno (near Milan) and Piara. Already 634 horses were being treated and 248 had been sent back cured. A fourth hospital opened at Pietole in September, two more in October (Torsa and Volpares). Piara hospital was moved to Castelfranco Veneto. By the end of October, 1872 horses were in hospital and 400 were restored in that month to the Army.

'To kind folks who work for the Red Cross — Oh, please help the Blue One as well!'

Money and goods for the Blue Cross fund came from hundreds of different sources. The League had always had friends in the highest of places, and this is illustrated by a catalogue for a mammoth Christmas Fair held late in the war at the Royal Albert Hall, where there were dozens of high-class stalls, refreshments, a "Thé Dansant" (tickets price 2/6d) an historical costume exhibition, sideshows, entertainments and a Caledonian Market (white elephant stall). The Band of the Royal Horse Guards ("The Blues") played each afternoon, and visitors were permitted to laugh as much as they liked in the Freak Art Gallery. Also on display was a "Full-size Section Model of the British Trenches

at Ypres, by kind permission of the Proprietors of Bovril and Shand Cocoa, Milk and Sugar." "Character Readers", under the direction of Mrs Melville, were also there to entertain.

The list of stall patrons reads like Debrett's with, at its head, Her Majesty Queen Alexandra, HM Queen Amelie of Portugal, HRH Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, HRH Princess Henry of Battenburg, HRH The Duchess of Connaught, HRH Princess Arthur of Connaught, HRH Princess Patricia of Connaught, HH Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein, HH Princess Marie Louise of Schleswig-Holstein and HSH The Duchess of Teck. Following on this august list come over 100 Duchesses, Marchionesses, Countesses, Lords, Ladies, Baronesses, the Honourables and Knights.

A drawing by Mabel Lucie Attwell decorates the front of the Christmas Fair catalogue, which also contains a warning of what to do in the event of an air raid. There are photographs of animals treated by the League, and a few sample case histories, along with items of information about the different aspects of the League's work, including the Blue Cross Fund. Under a photograph of a French soldier keeping a wounded horse company while it waits for the ambulance is a piece of doggerel verse:

"I'm only a cavalry charger,
And I'm dying as fast as I can
(For my body is riddled with bullets —
They've potted both me and my man);
And, though I've no words to express it,
I'm trying this message to tell
To kind folks who work for the Red Cross
— Oh, please help the Blue One as well!"

Yet amongst all this benevolence towards animals there is one item which strikes a discordant note in the collective ear of the modern animal welfare fraternity — an advertisement by Swan and Edgar for fashionable furs: Skunk, Opossum, Sable and Stone Marten. Graceful models are illustrated holding armsful of skins — a sable stole and muff costing 35 guineas, or 29 guineas for a similar set in Stone Marten.

Not all the fund-raising was done at home. The Colonies and the USA were becoming involved in with branches being set up in Canada, Australia, India, New York and many other places. Subscriptions and donations formed the solid core of the income for 1915, but substantial amounts came from flag days, shop window displays, entertainments and sales of badges. A sum of £1,273 came from subscriptions and donations in France and the sale of manure from three French hospitals raised £55!

The sale of postcards was another form of raising money, and the subject of one of these was a reproduction of the famous painting by Matania called 'Goodbye Old Man', which shows a soldier taking sorrowful leave of his mortally wounded horse, while a fellow soldier urges him to come away. Such a scene was in reality enacted over and over again on the battlefields. The original painting still hangs at the Victoria Hospital.

The branches had their own individual ways of raising cash, and children were in the thick of it. At Cambridge, the boys of St John's Choristers' School all joined ODFL and raised money at their annual concert and prize-giving. The active Great Amwell (Herts) branch took up an idea of one of their young members who saved all his farthings, and put collecting boxes in all the shops. Customers were asked to put in a farthing or more from their change. Great Amwell children's branch now had 762 members, of whom 446 had joined in 1915! The pupils of Belvedere High School, Leyton, held a schoolroom sale of their needlework, crochet work, Japanese novelties, sweets, apples and household goods and raised £4.15s. "Animal Days" and Christmas collections, entertainments and sales of all kinds were all little streams flowing into a great river of aid to the Blue Cross war effort.

The League now having been in existence for 19 years, many of its former child members were serving their country in the battle zones, and the 1916 report of the Children's Branch says that they had ".... displayed a great keenness to befriend the animal victims of war."

Just as useful as money were the gifts in kind — so many bandages had been sent in that there were enough to supply all the hospitals and requests from regiments without having to buy any! Also stable rugs, wither pads, knitted swabs, fly nets and brushing boots arrived in large quantities.

The 1917 annual report pays tribute to the Blue Cross Guild at Ipswich which had been an unfailing source of supply, to Miss Small's working party at Southminster, to Mrs Harley Butt for a regular supply of swabs, and Mrs E.T. Ward of Folkestone "for a continuous supply of exceptionally useful surgical bandages perfectly rolled and sterilised which won the admiration of an officer in the field who was fortunate enough to receive a supply at a needy moment."

While the General Fund showed a turnover of £4657 at the end of the year, and a credit balance of £307, the Blue Cross Fund had a turnover of £52,283, and a credit balance of £12,317!

The Horse Ambulances, Animals' Hospital, Drivers' and Horsekeepers' Branch, Receiving Shelters for Cats, and the Children's Branch funds all showed deficits, although again the provincial branches managed to stay in credit.

A French soldier waits with a wounded horse.

Problems on the Home Front

This imbalance of public sympathy was causing problems by 1916. While the Council well understood the public's enthusiasm for supporting the war work, on the other hand, the parent society was of the utmost importance because everything else depended upon its existence. The only answer was to recruit more members, and thus an appeal went out in the 1916 report.

Not only was the war a drain on resources, it also made difficulties for ODFL's operations at home. Eight horse ambulances had been given over to the war horses, leaving eight in London and one in Cheltenham. Expenses had gone up, while the fund had been deprived of many of its usual sources of income, and contractors were having problems finding adequate horses and men.

The failure of borough councils to grit road surfaces, in order to give horses a better grip, continued to concern the League, while the Drivers' and Horsekeepers' Branch had to withdraw the Piccadilly night trace horse because of lack of support. These hefty horses which could help pull heavy loads up the worst London hills were a service provided by the branch; people using the trace horses were expected to pay a small fee, although really poor tradesmen were helped free of charge. The service always cost more to maintain

A trace horse wearing its "Our Dumb Friends' League" rug helps to pull a coal waggon

than the fees and donations brought in, and the Piccadilly night horse was always the worst off because it worked in the early hours of the morning, helping to bring heavy loads of food into the markets, and was not seen by the general public.

The Stanmore Hill horse was also withdrawn because his attendant had joined the Army. But on Wimbledon Hill, "Wimbledon Jack", the most famous of all the trace horses, helped between 7000 and 8000 poor struggling animals to reach the top that year. The constant stream of traffic became too much even for an exceptional horse like Jack, and it was decided, rather than pay for another horse under contract (at £100 a year), to substitute the second horse by a motor costing £100. This cost another £78 to adapt for its special duties, but even then it was no match for horse power, and was scrapped in 1917, to be replaced by a second horse. The Drivers' and Horsekeepers' Branch ended the year of 1916 £280 in the red.

With so many costers and hawkers now enlisted, and with the general disorganisation caused by war, the annual Donkey Show at the People's Palace had to be abandoned from 1915. Often the League was consulted over the rehoming of donkeys whose masters had gone to fight for their country, so that the animals would fall into good hands.

The Animals' Hospital was equally under financial strain, closing the year with a deficit of over £7000. Its Committee appealed for a great effort to raise 2000 new annual subscriptions. In 1916, it dealt with 7995 out-patients and 1222 in-patients, the vast majority of them dogs (4955), followed by cats (2483), birds (238), horses (139), donkeys (49) and 131 assorted monkeys, rabbits, chickens etc. In addition, 1153 diseased or injured animals were put down.

Supplying the battle zone

Blue Cross receipts were also down — by £4500 — in 1916, a decrease which was blamed on increased taxation and the high cost of living. Over £28,000 was spent on the care and treatment of wounded horses in France, £3000 of that on supplying comforts and veterinary items to British units.

From the start of the war to December 31, 1916, supplies had been sent to 831 units, excluding many repeated orders or regular help. Very popular were the new Veterinary Chests, costing 10 guineas each to put together, and containing a carefully selected supply of the instruments, bandages and rugs most frequently needed away from field or base dressing stations.

Among the more expensive items supplied on request were portable forges, clipping machines, chaff cutters, poultice boots, pocket veterinary cases, special waterproof rugs for winter use, canvas water troughs and fomenting (mixing) pails.

These are extracts from some of the letters of thanks received from the Front, including some from Colonial troops serving with the British Forces:

B.E.F.
8/2/16

"Many thanks for the grand lot of stuff you so kindly sent me from the Blue Cross, which I can assure you is most useful and most acceptable.
I am sorry not to have acknowledged it before but have been away on leave."

From O/C
Reserve Brg.
R.F.A.
February 27, 1916

"I have today received a hamper containing liniment, iodium, boracic ointment, and powder, also day or two ago a pair of leather poultice boots.
I beg to thank you very much for these articles, as I very much appreciate the good work your Fund is doing, and I can hardly over-estimate the value of these things sent me from time to time from this Fund."

B.E.F.

"All these will be very useful indeed, and I am truly thankful to your Society. I sincerely trust that the two pairs of plates will come to hand, as these are at present almost unattainable through the usual channels, and the clipping of the horses is being seriously curtailed.
I should add that the work you are doing is greatly appreciated out here, and I trust that you will be enabled to carry it on as successfully in the future."

From Canadian Divisions.

"Many thanks for the thermometers and syringes which I have received, they were very badly needed and are greatly appreciated by us.
I should like to mention here how much your kind help to the _____ Field Company, Canadian Engineers, in France (my late unit) was appreciated."

"Please accept my most sincere thanks for your three most acceptable parcels, which contained priceless articles for the horses.
Every teamster, with myself, wishes to thank the Blue Cross League for your generous gift for our Dumb Friends."

FORT GARRY HORSE
HOME CAMP.

"On behalf of the Officers and NCOs and men of my command, and also on behalf of our most faithful servants, 'Our Horses' I beg to extend to your Society our appreciation and thanks for the Stewart Horse Clipping Machine and parts which recently came to hand through Lieut._____ from the Blue Cross Society. I have seen many 'Aids and Helps' from your Society whilst in France to the horses there, but your assistance to us also relieves unnecessary suffering caused by heavy work when heavy coats are on the horses, and as we are supplied with good horse rugs, no cold is suffered by the horses when clipped, but relief is given to them, and it enables them to be kept in much better condition."

From Australian Divisions —

"A few lines to let you know I received the iodine and four metal syringes sent to me from the Blue Cross Fund, for which many thanks. I might mention that neither of these items is on issue to V.O.s, so they are very welcome gifts."

"I have to acknowledge with thanks receipt of one pair of horse clippers which arrived yesterday.
The contribution is greatly appreciated. I also desire to take this opportunity of thanking you for your kind attention to Sergt. _____, Vet.Sergt, of this brigade, while on leave in England, and also for providing him with many necessary articles to carry on with."

Even more costly was a Motor Horse Ambulance needed for Salonika, which set the Blue Cross back by £1000. It had accommodation for two horses, a forage store, and sleeping berths for two men. It was named the "Lonsdale" ambulance in recognition of a generous contribution from the Earl of Lonsdale, and was inspected before leaving, at Buckingham Palace, by the King.

The 'Lonsdale' ambulance for two horses, built by Dennis Bros. at their factory in London, W10.

Accolades

Work was still progressing in Italy; a grant of £250 was sent and the hope was expressed that more money would be forthcoming to enable further grants to be made. Sir Rennell Rodd, the British Ambassador, said that "the Italian Government realise that the Blue Cross is now indispensable."

The Commandant's report for 1916 on the horse hospitals in France gives the Blue Cross the highest praise for its good organisation, standards of hygiene, medical care, and feeding and grooming of horses. It reads:

HORSE HOSPITALS IN FRANCE

By the side of the official organisations of the Allies there exists an important concourse of private and collective efforts, perfectly organised Societies, which have rendered the most prominent services; amidst the latter the Blue Cross deserves quite a particular mention; it is necessary to continue its work and to strengthen it.

The aim looked for, and reached by this Society, is of the utmost importance; considering the capital usefulness of the horses, its purpose was to decrease in the fullest measure the losses sustained by our armies, and to relieve the sufferings of these precious auxiliaries, by taking sick or injured horses into hospitals created and kept by this Society.

The material organisation of the depots is always the subject of the greatest attention, the rules presiding over their installation being first of a hygienic, then of an economic order.

The premises, altered according to needs include comfortable stables with plenty of light and air, which are two of the indispensable elements conducive to health and a speedy

A Blue Cross Fund field ambulance picks up a wounded animal

cure; wherever sun and air are found, the ratio on nutritive exchanges is increased, the swarming of morbid germs is stopped and their deadly power attenuated.

The ground is laid in such a way that hygienic cleaning is rendered easy and efficacious; it is slightly sloping backward so that liquids may quickly run out; the ground is always covered with a plentiful litter which is renewed twice a day.

Oats and other food, of an excellent quality, are distributed in stone or thick board mangers, located low enough to allow the horse to feed in the normal horizontal position of its entire spine.

The greatest attention is paid to grooming and other cleaning tasks, and the horses are always treated gently.

Drinking water is coming from streams running by the stables; its good quality has been proved by chemical analysis.

In the neighbourhood of the depots are large natural meadows, in which the hospitalised horses can freely graze with the benefit of both green pasture and of beneficent exercise in the open air.

Up to the month of January last all depots were forming three central groups, viz. Moret, Provins and Tournau; at that time, the Hartley-Wintney, Fleet, and Philadelphia hospitals of the last group, were transferred to Ste. Colombe, of the Provins group.

The alteration, which was caused by circumstances, had the obvious advantage of placing all the services of the Blue Cross in the same Army group, and to give us likewise a single military direction, which is a very favourable condition for a steadier and more methodical work.

With the exception of Ste. Mammes, the organization of each depot is identical. It includes a surgery and a pharmacy room, inside the largest hospital, where are grouped all the injured horses requiring serious operation and constant care.

A second hospital is exclusively devoted to sick horses, and these are in very limited number.

Contaminated animals are thoroughly isolated in special places. This category is chiefly composed of mangy horses, other catching diseases being practically unknown, thanks to the prophylactic measures taken by the veterinary military services and by your technical service.

Lastly, to each depot is annexed a simple farrier's shop, which is well understood and perfectly sufficient. Here is a scheme describing the speciality of each hospital.

MORET

Birmingham — Horses in good form.
Margaret — Suspected, Isolation
Huddersfield — Surgery and pharmacy.

Inspection taking place at a Blue Cross hospital

Above left: Blue Cross hospital staff dress the wounded leg of a mule and (right) the sore withers of a horse.
Below: Exhausted horses have just arrived from the battle front, March 1918.

PROVINS

Alexia — Surgery and pharmacy.
Victoria, British Columbia — Gravely wounded and over-driven.
Ogden — Parasitic diseases.
Tournau, Great Amwell Branch — Wounded, Over-strained.
Ste. Colombe, Hartley Wintney — Lameness, fatigue.
Fleet — Knocked up.
Philadelphia — Surgery and pharmacy.
Post Card Guild — Parasitic diseases.
Ste. Mammes — Edith Cavell Hospital. Epizootic Lymphangitus.

Parasitic diseases, such as skin itching, have exacted considerable effort from us, and greatly delayed the return to fitness of the sick horses, but we remained masters of this situation, and for the present this disease has disappeared from our depots.

As to internal illnesses, one can say they hardly exist, thanks to good hygienics and devoted care.

In short, the results obtained are above par; this fact, which proves the value of our work, is regularly admitted at each visit of our inspectors.

Here is the note from the manager of the Veterinary Service to which the Blue Cross belongs:

"…. remarkably well kept depots, excellent results. Nothing but congratulations can be

A Pharmacy at a Blue Cross Hospital

addressed to the Veterinary practitioners. At the present time five thousand horses have been provided by the Blue Cross in France, and sent back to their duties."

The annual cost of the horse hospitals in France reached £13,500 in 1917, covering the care of sick and wounded animals coming direct from the battlefield, through their convalescence until they were fit again for service. It also included curing nearly 10,000 horses of mange, which had been rife, by sulphur baths.

British horses had received £5835-worth of extras, and every need, at home and abroad, which had been brought to the committee's notice had been met. Thanking all the supporters and fund-raisers, the Committee pleaded for the public's continued generosity because the work was 'unlimited'.

A further 783 units of the British Army had been supplied with extra comforts for the horses, bringing the total to 1614 since the beginning of the war. Not one request had been refused.

"This work does not reflect any discredit upon the official organisation of supplies," the annual report hastens to add, but the public will readily understand that 'extras' mean as much to the comfort of the horses and alleviation of suffering as they do the men, and the method which your Committee has adopted of sending these supplies to the individual units according to their needs has been deeply appreciated by many Commanding Officers."

On the entry of the United States into the war, the Blue Cross contacted the US Veterinary Corps and the offer to supply certain veterinary material was "approved with much appreciation". As a result, hay nets to the value of £125 were supplied, and more help was promised if required.

New Blue Cross medals for distinguished service to horses, designed by Spink and Son, were awarded to two men — an officer and a soldier — but the latter was killed before it could be presented to him. It was sent on to his family. The men were Major (later Lt.Col.) Methuen, King's Royal Rifles, who

'Monti' the Regimental Dog

Recuperating horses enjoy a paddle in a cool stream in the grounds of a Blue Cross hospital

rescued horses under shell fire, and Driver Frederick Butcher RFA, who had driven the same team of horses from the start of the war, bringing them safely through several actions.

The friendly working arrangement between Blue Cross and the British Army is described by the Commandant in his 1917 report, together with the method of dealing with horses arriving for treatment. He says:

"It is a matter of regret that the distance does not permit the generous givers to the Blue Cross to inspect and judge for themselves the humanity of this work, but as this cannot be we must give, as exactly as possible, some idea of the way we treat our sufferers.

As soon as convoys arrive the horses are placed, according to their disablement, in special hospitals.

At EDITH CAVELL, AMWELL and HARTLEY WINTNEY are grouped the wounded horses.

HUDDERSFIELD, POST CARD GUILD, PHILADELPHIA, OGDEN and WATSLER are entirely devoted to sick and contaminated horses.

Each military kennel from Dunkirk to Belfort had been supplied with Blue Cross Veterinary cases for giving first aid.

Later on, when the animals are quite convalescent they are sent to BIRMINGHAM and WALMESLEY if they are fit for Cavalry Service; Artillery or draught horses will go to ALEXIA, VICTORIA (British Columbia) and FLEET.

The treatment commences with hygienic care, such as baths, antiseptic washings, and general disinfecting, after which wounds are examined.

In every operation the strictest aseptia is the rule, and in every case anæsthesia is used for reducing pain, according to the case, chloroform, ether, chloral or morphia and for local operations cocaine and derivatives.

Almost all the horses we receive are gravely wounded and sores are always infected before our intervention can take place. Owing to the difficulty of keeping wounded horses quiet we are deprived of very many means of humane surgery which can be adopted for humans, such as radioscopy, radiography, and we have very often to overcome real difficulties in extracting projectiles, but the horses are given such devoted care and kindness that very soon the fear shown on their arrival direct from the battlefield is changed into real calm and confidence to such a degree that many of them show a real affection for their attendants.

Here is a typical case:

A beautiful mare from an Artillery regiment was wounded by a bomb which burst quite close to her, blinding her for the time being and sprinkling her head to tail with seven shell splinters, all the wounds deep and painful. To extract these several operations were necessary and in spite of local anæsthesia the mare was

during the first few days quite wild. Soon, however, she became quite tame and so attached to her attendant that she neighed when he called her, followed him step by step to the infirmary like a dog with its master! A caress told her when treatment and dressings were finished when she would run gaily to the meadow. When cured she was released from the Army and under our supervision was given to a farmer who appreciates her in every way."

Figures for the four years of war speak for the success of the hospitals: 6058 horses received — 5612 cured, and 236 dead.

"These results are beyond compare and the number of dead horses is very small. This is entirely to the credit of the Hospital Staff, as the sick and wounded horses are sent in such bad condition that many of them would die but for the untiring devotion shown by the Staff," says the Commandant.

The achievement of the Blue Cross Fund is acknowledged in Chapter CXC of a 13-volume work called *The Great War—The Standard History of the All-Europe Conflict*, edited by H.W. Wilson and J.A. Hammerton. The chapter is contributed by Basil Clarke, who says that Blue Cross hospitals were models of their kind, which the French themselves admitted had set a new standard to the French Army in the humane treatment of horses.

More than a thousand British Army units also had to thank the Fund for their extra supplies of veterinary requisites which made such a difference to the comfort of the horses. Deserving of special mention was the provision of fly nets for horses serving in the Near East which brought

"an incalculable relief to stricken animals. Thousands of flies swarmed in the open wounds of horses injured in battle, causing an agony of restlessness which often resulted in the horse's death from sheer exhaustion."

The dog ambulance presented by Mrs Walter Eager "from the Dogs of Connecticut"

The Dogs of War

A new undertaking by the Blue Cross in 1917 was the sole veterinary care of the War Dogs used extensively by the French Army as sentinels, patrols, watchdogs and messengers. These numbered some 18,000! Care of sick and wounded dogs was costing £350 a month — and an increase was expected as more dog hospitals became necessary.

An American sympathiser, Mrs Walter Eager, presented a splendid dog ambulance from "The Dogs of Connecticut". This was done through the USA representative, who rejoiced in the name of Mrs Elphinstone Maitland.

The ambulance was used to ferry sick and wounded dogs to and from the front line — others travelled by rail — and it was possible to give first aid during the inward journey. Up to the end of 1917, 1604 dogs had been received and 1088 sent back cured.

In particular

While the Blue Cross was dealing with horses by the thousand, the General Fund and local branches at home were still dealing with individual cases of many different kinds.

In Birmingham, an old pony belonging to a "very poor but exceedingly hardworking and humane old man" had to be destroyed. Meanwhile, a man who

The Dogs of War

Above: A messenger dog showing the tin cylinder in which the message was carried. Etaples, August 28, 1918.

Above: Messenger dogs were kept and trained by the British Army at huge kennels like the the GHQ Central Kennels at Shoeburyness.

Left: A messenger dog leaps a trench while taking back a message, attached to its collar. Near Sedan, May 1917.

had been called up for the Army had a pony which he wanted to see out into good hands. The Blue Cross happily bought the pony and loaned it to the old man. And all before the days of computer dating!

Another act of kindness was the taking on of the quarantine fees for "Monti", a regimental pet dog who had seen action at Suvla Bay and saved the lives of two soldiers. A Sergeant had undertaken Monti's care on return to England but could not afford the four months' quarantine fees at 8s 6d a week. ODFL paid the total bill of £8 0s 3d through special donations (£5 16s 6d) and a grant from the general fund.

Aftermath of war

With the hostilities over, ODFL began in its 21st annual report to take stock of its achievements at its "coming of age", which it summed up in these words:

> *"Commencing its existence with only one back room of a private house in the Buckingham Palace Road as an office, its aim was to "make the world a better place for animals, on the supposition that prevention is better than cure." It came to public notice through bestowing awards upon those who distinguished themselves or often risked their lives for animals; by the means of good entertainments in the poorest districts it gathered together vast audiences of the poorest owners of animals, and strove to interest and educate them in their responsibilities and duties to the lower animals.*
>
> *From this the League progressed towards the means of alleviating unnecessary suffering. In 1900 it inaugurated the Horse Ambulance Fund and placed upon the streets the first public conveyances for the humane removal of horses, ponies and donkeys injured in street accidents, worked in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police.*
>
> *In the same year the South African War gave the League the opportunity of identifying itself with the needs of the fighting forces, and a Dog Licence Fund was opened to enable our brave men to retain the dogs which they left behind. Later the needs of poor working animals were provided for by the opening of an Animals' Hospital at Hugh Street, Victoria, for the free treatment and nursing of the animals, particularly the costers' ponies and donkeys, and up to the present year no less than 100,000 animals have benefited by this Institution, to say nothing of the immense help rendered to their owners in keeping together their means of existence.*
>
> *The problem of dealing with stray cats next occupied the attention of the Society, and even this difficult matter was so practically dealt with that those who ridiculed the effort and despised the cat were at length forced to acknowledge that the unpleasant and insanitary diseased cats which had hitherto*

Patients and their owners wait for attention at the Animals' Hospital, Victoria, before 1914.

Veterinary surgeon and nurse operate on the abnormally long beak of a Japanese cockatoo during the early years of the Animals' Hospital.

lurked in squares and quiet thoroughfares were being reduced. Today the League maintains several Shelters and deals with an annual average of 10,000 unwanted cats.

This work developed later into the well-managed Institutions which exist under the control of the League in many English towns — Bedford, Bournemouth, Birmingham, Southampton, Portsmouth, Canterbury, Folkestone, Ramsgate, Southend, Dublin — and which provide in each of these towns for Stray Dogs received through the Police, Stray Cats, the boarding of pets, and in the case of Dublin, a splendid Horses' and Donkeys' Rest.

From another formation of the League — the Drivers' and Horsekeepers' Branch — emanated the Trace Horses, which have assisted thousands of horses on some of the busiest hills.

Of the thousands of children who have passed through the Children's Branch, and have learned a lifelong lesson of humanity to defencless animals, too much cannot be said — some indeed had scarcely ceased their connection with the Children's Branch ere they were called upon to lay down their lives for their country, whilst others have been conspicuous for their care and thought for the suffering and derelict animals of the war zones.

But the War of 1914 brought to the League a great opportunity of proving its worth, and without hesitating as to the vastness of the undertaking, it promptly re-established its Blue Cross Branch....and before the first month of war had elapsed the Blue Cross was supplementing the needs of our Army horses, and was actively engaged in mitigating as much suffering as possible.

How during the four and a half war years the Blue Cross established its work in one form or another in almost every zone of its operations; how it co-operated with the Allied Armies; how it took under its care the whole of the 18,000 French War Dogs; how by persistence in doing good it overcame numerous difficulties and obstructions is fresh in the minds of the public.

A horse with an injured knee being treated at the Animals' Hospital at Victoria.

But that the Blue Cross has played a most important part in the Great War is the crowning glory of the twenty-one years of work of Our Dumb Friends' League, and one that should earn for the Society the adherence of the public whose generosity has made possible the accomplishment of so much good for animals during so short a period."

There was a desperate need in the early part of the century for free treatment for the animals of the poor.

Post war finances were in a poor way, with the Ambulance Fund £104 in deficit and the hospital fund over £600 in the red. But optimistically looking ahead, the Horse Ambulance Committee was planning to buy a couple of light running motor ambulances — if some generous person would supply the cash!

The Hospital Fund Committee, appealing again for 2000 annual subscribers of one guinea each, said that if the individual amount was small, the result to the animals which would benefit was almost incalculable. The hospital had in 1918 treated 7379 animals, and the year had been marked by the "increased number of horses and ponies in such poor condition that the Veterinary Surgeon could only recommend merciful despatch." Other cases were the result of poor feeding due to inferior forage and the high cost. What would have become of these animals if the hospital had not existed, questioned the report?

The Drivers' and Horsekeepers' Branch was also overdrawn by nearly £200 at the end of 1918. The oatmeal-and-water feeds supplied at various points in London had been discontinued because of food regulation, with the exception of those for barge horses on the River Lea.

Somehow the Branch managed to keep four trace horses going — the most expensive feature of the branch's work. An amusing report on the Wimbledon Hill problem reads:

"It will be remembered that your Committee experienced considerable difficulty in regard to the motor which was tried to replace the horse, but which was not successful, and was finally dispensed with. Then some trouble was experienced in obtaining a horse but eventually your Committee were fortunate in securing the services of an admirable local Hon. Secretary in Miss Gladys Bruce, through whose efforts all is working satisfactorily."

It is with some relief that we go on to read that it was "Jack" who made the 1803 arduous trips up the hill between June and December, and not the new workhorse Miss Bruce.

In 1919, Jack pulled 3891 loads up the steep and trying hill, of which about 200 were free to poor owners. His takings amounted to £76. After each week's work, Jack was allowed by Mr John F. Swann JP to graze in his fields — a real pleasure and treat for Jack, and makes a delightful rest and change. "Tommy" was the horse on Kingston Hill, and he did 2017 trips in 1918; "Ginger", on Haverstock Hill, helped 1456 of his "fellow toilers" and the Kensington (Church Street) horse about 1000, the number varying according to the weather.

The last year of the war had put extra pressures on Blue Cross resources, particularly between the launching of the German offensive on March 21, 1918, and the Armistice. Much material was destroyed or abandoned and needed replacing quickly, and the Finance Committee had to keep a

A damp and misty late autumn day and well-to-do patrons of Our Dumb Friends' League prepare to distribute collecting boxes for the Blue Cross Fund.

close watch on expenditure month by month, but through the public's generosity, every request was met. A total of 1436 units were supplied with veterinary comforts in 1918, making 3050 since the war started.

The Blue Cross Fund's Chairman, Sir Ernest Flower, and its Treasurer, General Sir Leslie Rundle, made the trip to France in May 1919 to report back to the Committee on the current situation. But first, he summarises the huge achievement of the Blue Cross in its war effort:

"The principal work which your Committee undertook at the commencement of war was the establishment of the Blue Cross hospitals in France. You established, equipped and maintained, six centres for horses, divided into ten hospitals and three hospitals for war dogs. The staff in your employ consisted of about 80 veterinary surgeons and orderlies, and, in addition the services of some 150 French soldiers. Towards the maintenance of this work money was remitted each month to France. I notice that the largest monthly expenditure amounted to £3,800 and that this month we have spent £1500. In winding up the hospitals, we were anxious that the Blue Cross should leave no debt behind it, and....we took care to have inserted in the official papers before our arrival a request that any claims made against the Blue Cross should be sent in by the 5th of this month. It is gratifying to find how carefully our finances have been administered since only about 200 francs of unpaid debts have been applied for. [A further £1500 was also needed to make good damage to buildings during their use as hospitals.] *The large hospital for dogs is situated in the Jardin d'Acclimation which was rented from the Municipality of Paris. It afforded, practically, unlimited accommodation and we were able to provide separate cages for 400 dogs. Each cage was marked, as in an ordinary hospital, with a hospital chart. Dogs of all breeds formed part of the French Army Service of dogs and one dog which we were particularly interested in was a German dog which strayed into our lines. Since her stay in the Hospital she has presented the world with two puppies and it will be interesting for some Jurist in the future to determine the International status of these two pretty little animals. We were particularly interested in examining a 'first aid' packet which was used at the immediate front. The packet contains bandages, drugs etc.; 25 different articles in all. The kitchen, which is a feature of the hospital, was scrupulously clean with its concrete floor. The dogs fetched their own food in a small*

dog-cart in which we were told Lady Smith-Dorrien [President of the Blue Cross] had had a ride. The operating theatre contained two tables, and there was every facilitiy for administering anæsthetics by means of a chloroform mask or by cocaine injection. The baths were admirably fitted with a hot air system for drying sulphur on the dogs with mange. The dogs are put into this hot air chamber, the sulphur dries on their bodies, and is afterwards gently brushed out. The water supply was excellent, and the general air was that of a modern up-to-date hospital.....

....The Blue Cross dog hospital at Guyancourt is now closed. It had, evidently, been of very great use and seemed to be thoroughly well adapted for its work. The total number of dogs treated to date is 10,169. Of these, 8586 were cured, 673 were returned to friends. The owners of each dog were invited, when the dog had been treated for wounds, to have it back if they so desired, 32 dogs were missing and 879 dogs died.

A very important branch of your work for dogs was in connection with the dog camp at Satory where the French war dogs are trained. We were welcomed there by a musical reception of hunting horns which was sufficiently noisy to express the cordial feelings of our friends, backed up, as it was, by the barking of the dogs. All the sick and injured dogs at Satory are treated by the Blue Cross organisation, The dogs are trained for trench work, to act as sentinels and watch dogs, and to carry messages. In the trenches, they convey carts where it would be dangerous to use horses and men, and bring up food and first aid dressings to front trenches. One dog-cart can bring up as much ammunition as eight men can carry to the firing lines.

The dogs are specially trained to draw wounded men on ambulances through the trenches to the first aid dressing stations. In winter, in Alsace, a sledge draw by six or eight dogs could pull a load of one ton. The dogs are harnessed to the carts without reins and driven by the voice. The leading dogs, specially selected for their intelligence, obey with perfect accuracy the driver's orders, whilst a powerful brake brings the vehicle to an immediate stop when required. Another feature is the special training of dogs to lead blind men. The sanitation of this camp has been carefully attended to, and the health of the animals regularly supervised by our Veterinary Surgeon and Orderlies."

The officials also visited all the horse hospitals — at Senlis, Claye-Souilly, Tournan, Meaux, Tavers and Moret — the headquarters. *"Meaux"*, writes Sir Ernest, *"like Senlis, bore terrible marks of the ordeal through which it passed. The old cathedral —a building which has played a memorable part in French history happily escaped. I do not suppose it ever witnessed a scene more interesting than when, after the first battle of the Marne, the Archbishop of Paris hastened to Meaux to hold a service of thanksgiving for deliverance from the enemy. Standing in that grey old church one felt very near to the heart of France which never beat more proudly than in those days of difficulty and danger."*

Sir Ernest and Sir Leslie went on to visit M. Froment-Meurice at his home in Epinay-sous-Senart to present him with a cup. It was a reproduction of a fine work by Paul Storr, a "typical English goldsmith". The inscription read:

Presented to Monsieur Jacques Froment-Meurice by the Blue Cross Fund of England, in grateful recognition of his devoted labours on behalf of wounded and suffering Horses and Dogs during the Great War.

Lady Smith-Dorrien, DBE, (President)

Sir Ernest Flower, JP (Chairman)

General Sir Leslie Rundle, GCB (Hon. Treasurer)

"He had not lived in vain, whose teachings tend
To human sympathy with our Dumb Friends."

1919

The following day, M. Meurice met with an accident which confined him to the house. But he was still able to pen an ornate letter of thanks, which was translated as follows:

"I am much moved, for, if before the war my hands were never weary of perpetuating in bronze or in marble the beauty or the tragic misery, the joy or the sadness of our dumb friends, it is thanks to the "Blue Cross'" that

my artist's heart has, during the war been still to occupy itself with these martyr friends.

And now the 'Blue Cross', its highest representative, have covered me with honours and with handsome presents!

It has been thus greatly facilitated by the constant collaboration of those old supporters of our Formations, namely Aleonard, a model of activity and self-sacrifice; Bessant, Brown, Hargraves. Bodger — so gravely wounded — Gusjean, Bonnefon, alas! disappeared, and also Sovet, returned to his dear Belgium; who have all worked tirelessly at all hours, conquering all difficulties...

..... I am bashful and ashamed at seeing my humble work thus glorified.

But may I let fall a few of the beautiful laurel leaves which you offer me on the heads of the brave soldiers and our dogs, who have without doubt contributed largely in this victory of which the Allies are so proud.

Permit me, Sir Ernest Flower, permit me, my General, to thank you from the bottom of my heart, you and your Committee of the 'Blue Cross' which you represent here, for the honour which you have shown me during this war in allowing me to command the splendid establishments of the 'Blue Cross' working with the French Armies, and for the only too flattering indulgence with which you have rewarded my services.

The 'Blue Cross' has opened the heart of the French people to charity towards the most noble assistants of man. France will always be grateful to it. Long live the 'Blue Cross!'

(Signed) JACQUES FROMENT MEURICE"

As further recognition of the *entente cordiale* which had existed between the Blue Cross and the French Army, the Society presented it with all the stores, surgical instruments, drugs, medical comforts, hospital appliances and implements, ambulances and all the various other materials left over at the end of hostilities.

In a letter to the French Minister of War, Sir Ernest said:

".... my Committee desire to make this gift to the grand French Army, as a slight mark of their affection for the bravery of the French soldier, and in the hope that the efforts which my Committee have made to help suffering animals may, through the agency of the troops of France continue."

He also pointed out that the British people in the United Kingdom, the Dominions beyond the Seas and in the Empire of India had given funds enabling the Blue Cross to invest more than three million francs in its work in France.

In reply, the Chief of the War Cabinet paid a tribute to the work of the Blue Cross which Sir Ernest felt was in itself a reward for all the trouble the Society had taken: the Chief said that it had fallen to the lot of the Blue Cross to teach the Army of France the lesson of kindness to their animals.

The ending of the war brought new problems for Blue Cross. Over £20,000 had been spent in 1918 on horse and dog hospitals, and when the fighting ceased there were still many animals under treatment. Then, many soldiers had acquired doggy friends during the war and wanted to bring them home. It was only natural that they should turn to the Blue Cross for help, and that the Blue Cross did not want to let them down. In response, the Committee took over the Charlton Kennels, Shooters Hill, in London, as a Dog Quarantine Station. As well as an act of mercy, it was also seen as a practical measure — to discourage animal smuggling. The kennels were ably run by Colonel and Mrs Burden.

During 1919, 285 dogs came in from war zones in France, Italy, Salonika, Constantinople and Mesopotamia. Amongst them were dogs which had been on active service as despatch carriers and sentinels, and many bore the scars of wounds received whilst carrying out their duties.

"It is needless to say, " reads the 1919 annual report, "how greatly this work appeals to the men and how frequently they visit their chums during the quarantine period, and how great the delight of both master and dog when the day comes that they can be reunited without restriction."

Any doubts as to the value of the Blue Cross service must be dispelled by the the moving letters written by Service men who had benefited from it:

SUNDERLAND 5/1/20

"Blunt arrived here safely to-night. We went down to the staion to meet him. Took him out of his box and put his lead on and brought him home.

Poor dog, he was just beyond himself with excitement and is still. He knew his master at

once and they've had a great old time together.

My husband wishes me to say that he is delighted with the way he has been cared for, as he is in such splendid condition and in such splendid spirits too."

GLASGOW 27/1/20

"I hope you got my wire saying Queenie arrived. Yes, I was waiting for her at the station, and as soon as I could, I opened the box to have a look at her, thinking she would be stiff and cramped after coming so far in the box. But as soon as the box was opened she sprang out, and when she smelt me! well, I thought she would have gone mad; she was pleased. I gave her a little drink and some cooked liver which I had with me on the station and then took her home. When she saw Mrs Thomas she went properly daft for a few minutes; she could not seem to believe it was true and kept smelling one and then the other and kissing us all over. I can assure you ours was a happy house last night.

Really I don't know how to thank you enough for all the trouble you have taken with Queenie; she is in perfect health, and we can see she has been really well looked after, and if at any time I can do anything at all for you or for the Blue Cross I shall only be too pleased. No trouble would be too great. I only wish I was in a position to do the Blue Cross Fund some material benefit, but I am sorry to say I am not, but if at any time I can do work of any kind to show how grateful I feel—well, please try me. In the meantime please accept my very best thanks for all your kindess."

LIVERPOOL 24/10/19

"You will be pleased to know that Basil arrived at 7 p.m. and that he was in beautiful condition after his long journey. Did he know me, ----------! I approached the hamper containing Basil without speaking, and in a few seconds he had scented me. He barked, and howled, and made such a noise that soon a little crowd of spectators gathered. A porter carried the hamper to the goods office, and when I had signed the receipt I commenced to release Basil.

I just managed to open one corner and Basil scrambled out and jumped on to my shoulder, barking and licking my hands and face. It was a revelation to me, and I shall never forget Basil's greeting. After giving him a drink of water, I took him home in a taxi, and he soon settled down to his new surroundings.

Old times, places and adventures came flooding back to me as I watched Basil, and my heart is full of gratitude to you, and the Blue Cross Fund, for all the kindness shown to me and Basil.

Through the help of the Blue Cross Fund, I have had restored to me a faithful companion, Basil, who has shared with me the few pleasures and comforts, also the perils and hardships of a soldier's life, during the great war.

Please accept the heartfelt thanks from a lover of all animals and birds."

FOLKESTONE 7/11/19

"Thank you so very much for the great trouble you have taken over dear old Cherie. I am very pleased to tell you she has arrived quite safe, and Mrs Inkson went to the Central after receiving your wire to meet her when the train arrived, and you ought to have seen the great fuss Cherie made of me when I arrived home from work to-night and now she is laying on the hearthrug between Mrs Inkson and I and is quite comfortable."

SHOREHAM 12/10/19

"Tiny arrived safely — very fit and well and knew me at once! I am extremely grateful for all your kindess; he has never looked better, and several of my men who knew him very intimately in the B.E.F. are grateful to you as well. He has 'bedded down' here in my bungalow and is thoroughly at home."

LEDBURY 8/10/20

"Just a line to let you know that Rags arrived safely by the 6 o'clock train yesterday. My friends have been telling me that she would not remember me after all these months, but when she heard my voice on the platform she went almost frantic to get out of the box. She is looking quite fit and is, I think, a great credit to your care and attention. She thoroughly enjoyed her walk home and has quite captivated all the good people here and they received her kindly. She is merely tolerated by the cats so far. The hens and pigs are subjects of great

interest. Every time she catches sight of one she does her best to wag her tail off.
Both Rags and I thank you very much for your good wishes and past kindnesses."

BOLTON 12/10/19

"Just a few lines to let you know how pleased I am at the arrival of my dog, and the splendid condition she has arrived home. It reflects great credit on your kennels and the persons in charge who look after the dogs and feed them. I might say it is nine months since I left her in France, and when I spoke to her she simply went frantic with joy, and I cannot express how thankful I am to you for your trouble and expense incurred in looking after them. After all this war has been worth winning, knowing that we have people in England who look after Our Dumb Friends whilst we were doing our bit out there, I shall never forget the Blue Cross and its Fund."

LONDON 25/10/19

"I am very grateful to you for the care taken of my best friend, and hope to call at 58, Victoria Street, and hand them a donation and personally thank the Blue Cross."

STOCKPORT 17/10/19

"Jim arrived safely last night on the 2.35 train. He didn't want the drink I got for him at the station, but he ate some biscuits. He knew me before he was out of the crate—I put on my khaki uniform on purpose — and he made a great fuss all the way home.
We are delighted with his condition; he looks splendid and his coat is so glossy. He was just a bit stiff in the legs, but that was soon remedied once out of the crate. The railwaymen concerned were most interested in the 'French' dog.
Thank you for all the trouble you have taken. You have been most kind and we shall always have pleasant memories of the Blue Cross.
Poor Jim is afraid to let me out of the room!"

Order of Merit

At the suggestion of the Editor of *John Bull* magazine, the Committee issued an Order of Merit

to distinguish horses which had served in the war.

"It is hoped," says the report, "the Badge will serve as a reminder to their owners and drivers to treat them well in view of the services they have rendered to their country."

And the Blue Cross also got in touch immediately with the Army as the war ended about what to do with the demobilised horses: "realising how keen is the interest of the public as to the fate of these war torn veterans your Committee are resolved to make every effort to protect them in civil life," says the 1918 report.

Unfortunately, the long-term reality makes these good intentions sound hollow. While soldiers sadly parted with old horse friends and came home to victory celebrations, thousands of horses stayed behind. Sold on the open market, most went into service on farms, others into the mines or into businesses. But the treatment of animals abroad left even more to be desired than some of the worst cases at home, and cruelty was much more widespread. As the years passed, realisation dawned in Britain that many of these horses had been been betrayed into unbelievable slavery. Those which lived on into their 30s were being worked until they were pathetic, semi-starved bags of bones, crippled and deformed by hunger, disease and ill treatment.

Alerted by representatives in Belgium in the early 1930s, the League acted to save as many old war horses as possible. Mrs Dorothy Brooke, a member of the the League's Grand Council, and wife of General Geoffrey Brooke, launched a desperate appeal for funds to rescue them. She had already

worked tirelessly, and sometimes in personal danger, for similar horses left behind by the British Army in Egypt, and the Brooke Hospital in Cairo stands to her memory today, with her grandson, Richard Seabright, working on for the protection of horses, mules and donkeys.

Many of the ex-Army horses in Belgium were humanely destroyed after being bought back at an average price of £10–£20 each. Horse dealers tried to cheat by selling horses which were not old war horses at all, and an Army expert had to be brought in to verify brands and marks which could identify them. Mrs Brooke had rescued 3072 horses and mules in Egypt between 1932 and '34, and added 4000 more in Belgium through ODFL. She raised and spent some £40,000 in the operation.

As the war drew to a close, shortages were a big problem; even the barge horses on the River Lea lost their hot weather oatmeal-and-water drinks this summer (1918): permission could not be obtained from the Food Controller by the Great Amwell branch which supplied them, but the Committee hoped to be able to reinstate the service the following year, as it was "of great benefit to the horses in their heavy work."

The 1919 report of the Great Amwell branch shows that the refreshments were indeed begun again as soon as restrictions were lifted. But soon one steam barge was at work on the Lea, which it was hoped would be the precursor of many more.

Things were slowly getting back to normal, and the League was able to redirect all its attentions to horses and other animals at home. The Blue Cross Fund was to be continued as a permanent branch of Our Dumb Friends' League to alleviate the suffering of horses and dogs in time of peace, though a small sum was set by as a nucleus in the event of another outbreak of war.

Providing oatmeal-and-water drinks for hot and tired horses was one of the earliest services provided by Our Dumb Friends' League.

Money for the work at home, however, continued to be a problem, and the 18th (1920) annual report of the Drivers' and Horsekeepers' Branch made an eloquent plea:

"This Branch of the League's work amongst carters, drivers, and poorer class of horse, pony and donkey owners has made steady if somewhat slow progress. 1920 has been a specially difficult year for this Fund. For more than five years the dumb pleading of the horse from the battlefields stirred hearts all the world over, then came the gradual return to civil life, and the same horse toiling up the slippery incline, straining every muscle, sliding here are there over a greasy roadway, drawing in place of a gun the homely material which provides food and comfort for the population, naturally evokes less sympathy. Yet those who are in close touch with all matters affecting horses at the present day, know how increasing and unrelaxing must be the exertions of those who would protect them.....

.... Perhaps the financial difficulties which menaced all charitable undertakings during 1920 accounts for the lowered receipts, otherwise it would be difficult to comprehend why such a valuable helper to mankind as the horse has appealed so inadequately to the public purse, and that a work which so essentially saves these faithful servants from

suffering receives such small voluntary assistance.

The trace horses on hills, the loin cloths for the street ponies and donkeys during the winter, and grants in genuine cases of distress in which a horse or donkey is involved are the main expenses of this Branch during the past year. The great need for 1921 is an increased number of annual subscribers. That the work has been continued without limitation is due to a grant of £500 from the Blue Cross War Fund, after that Fund had closed down its war work under the War Charities' Act."

First Aid and ambulance work for horses in London and other parts of the country were now the subjects of schemes being formed by the Committee, although finance continued to be a worry. The Horse Ambulance Fund was incorporated into the Blue Cross Fund and by 1921 another great cause was taken up — the "iniquitous traffic" in worn-out horses, against which the Fund launched a vigorous campaign. When it called a protest meeting in the Albert Hall in 1921, nearly 10,000 people crammed in to show their approval of the stand being taken by the Fund and other animal welfare societies.

One war might have ended, but another had just begun.

Mr J. Arthur Coke

From the earliest days of Our Dumb Friends' League, and for almost a quarter of a century, its Secretary was Mr Arthur J. Coke, whose name became synonymous with the welfare of animals, particularly horses, in London. He was an indefatigable writer of letters to the Press on subjects ranging from the cruel use of the bearing rein on carriage horses to the exhausting of donkeys giving chidren's rides on bank holidays, and the abuse of a frog by a group of youngsters which he witnessed in Epping Forest on a Bank Holiday in 1903.

When he died in 1921, the Society published in the annual report the following obituary:

"Your Council have to announce with the deepest regret the death of Mr Arthur J. Coke, the first and only Secretary to 'Our Dumb Friends' League' since its foundation twenty-four years ago. Mr Coke's death took place quite suddenly on May 1, 1921, at a time when, with his usual enthusiasm, he was full of projects for the the benefit of the League during the coming season.

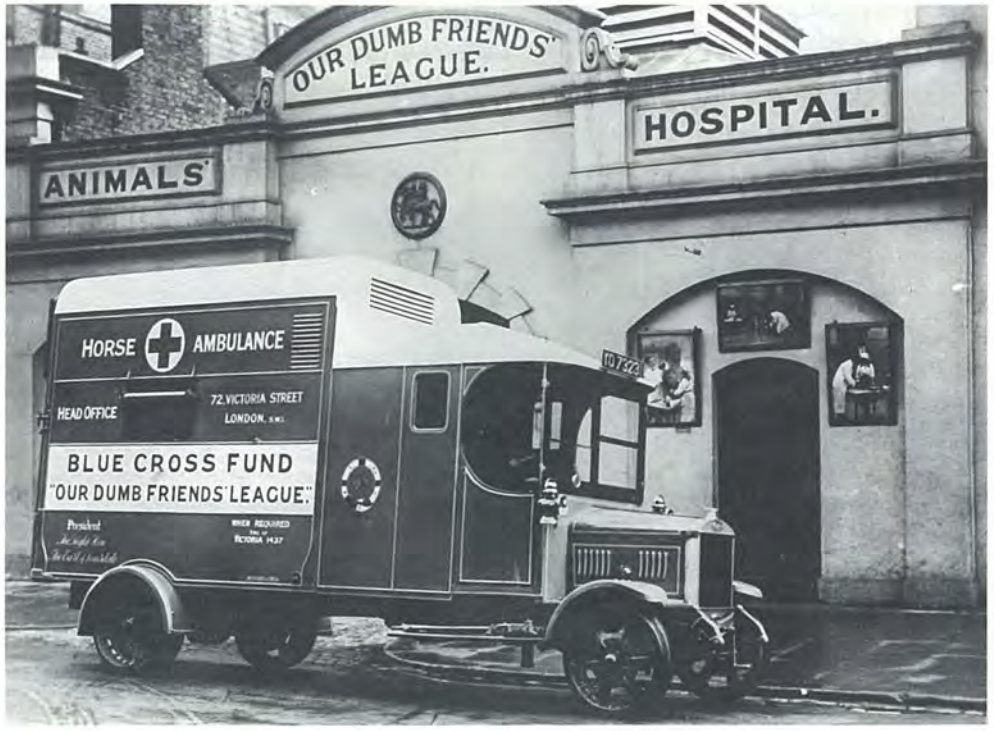
The secret of his success lay in his great personal charm; he was the life of every social movement in which he took part. His happy nature loathed all strife and petty dispute, which he dispelled with his cheery smile and the rare gift of saying the right thing at the right moment. His motto in life was ever to help, never to blame, and to the many schemes which he originated for helping the animals of the poor is greatly due the improved condition of animals in this country today.

In every Fund of the League the late Secretary took a personal interest and he was never without ideas for increasing the scope of the League's activities. The Blue Cross for the Horses in the War and the Blue Cross Quarantine Kennels — to which numbers of soldiers will be ever grateful for the present possession of their pets — will ever be associated with his name, but the happiest day in his career came but a fortnight before his end, when, at his suggestion, a Conference of all Animal Protection Societies met at his Headquarters to devise means to put an end to the Worn-out Horse Traffic. Then for the first time did he acknowledge that his service to the animal world had been worth while."

Looking after all creatures — great and small

Early cat and dog ambulances were based on the "stop me and buy one" type of vehicle.

This ambulance is post-World War I but still has solid tyres.



The Phyllis Broughton ambulance, here lovingly polished for the photographer, had pneumatic tyres.

BETRAYED!

Many of the old war horses and mules sold abroad after the war were put to work on farms, but as they grew older and their value decreased they changed hands and eventually fell into the ownership of the very poorest people — people whose own lives were hardly easy. During the 1930s a supreme effort was made to rescue as many of these old warriors as possible. These pictures are reproduced from a leaflet prepared by Mrs Dorothy Brooke, the war horses' champion, and Our Dumb Friends' League, appealing for funds. (See pp. 32–33).

Between the Wars

During the 1930s London County Council launched a massive slum clearance programme. Tenants were moved into new blocks where pets were banned. When moving day came, many of them simply left their pets behind, either to starve in boarded-up buildings or to scratch a living from the refuse left in the deserted streets.

The League begged the LCC to let them know when a street was going to be cleared and **when** they were told, one of the League's collectors would go along in advance and put cards through the door, giving residents information about where they might take their animals, and telling them that a van would call before they left.

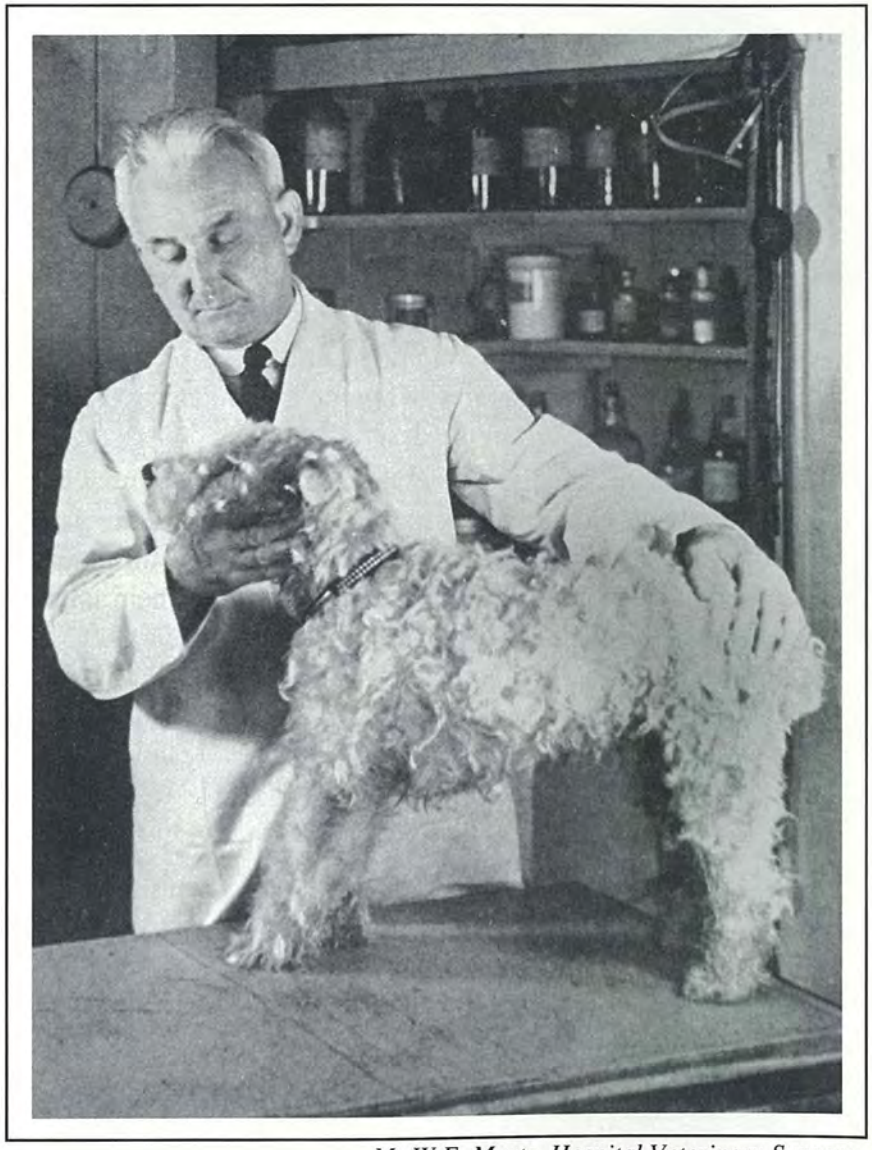
But immobilised in its own bureaucracy, the LCC often failed to tell the League and sometimes weeks would pass by before they found out that a street had been cleared. By then, animals would become virtually wild and difficult to catch.

Even worse, there were unscrupulous characters going from house to house, buying animals for a few pence, for unknown purposes.

Medical Officers of Health for the boroughs were found to be more communicative than the LCC and the League offered its thanks to them.

Other causes important to the League in the '30s were the plight of worn-out working horses, those being shipped abroad for slaughter and the conditions and moral aspects of animals in zoos and circuses. These continued to exercise the League, but in 1939, even more urgent matters came to the fore.

Young clients of the hospital



Mr W.E. Murts, Hospital Veterinary Surgeon during World War II, attends a patient

Part Two:
Picking up the Pieces

Introduction

By its very nature, war affects the innocent. When the bombs fell in the Blitz on London, reducing thousands of homes to rubble, many animals were left ownerless and homeless, some in desperate need of medical help, others starving and semi-wild. While for human beings in such dire need there are generally agencies to help them, animals are driven back on their own resources – or on those of voluntary or charitable institutions.

In 1939, as in 1914, Our Dumb Friends' League was ready to take positive action, although even before war broke out the League's resources were at full stretch, and it was £1000 overdrawn at the end of 1938. But, again as in 1914, it received a polite rebuff from the British Government when it offered its help in the event of hostilities.

In that year, the 12 Animals' Shelters and one Dispensary in London collected a staggering 76,905 stray cats and 8,684 stray dogs. This fact alone is enough to illustrate the main problem facing the League on the eve of war in Europe. In addition to those, a further 23,934 cats and 2,717 dogs were received by the London Institution for Lost and Starving Cats and Dogs (one of the League's branches) in Camden Town.

Constant appeals in the annual reports — to the public, to be responsible owners and have their animals neutered, and to the Government, to raise the status of the cat and license it — fell largely on deaf ears.

"The League has been in existence for 40 years," reads the 1938 report of the Animals' Shelters Branch, "the shelters have been in existence for over 30, and in presenting this report our Committee feels that it has justified its existence, but cannot congratulate the English public that it should have to continue this work.

It is difficult to write year after year of the terrible sufferings inflicted on cats without repeating the same remarks—perhaps it is as well to do so—it is possible that, by constant repetition, it may wake up the men and women who vote at Parliamentary elections to insist, at long last, that the status of cats should be increased....

The League is tempted to wonder what would be the attitude of the authorities if it, and all the other societies, banded themselves together and refused to collect any further cats. It realises that it would create a great deal of suffering, but it realises also that the cats that suffered would be suffering in a good and just cause, because the authorities would have to take some action, and having been forced to take this action, would have to legislate in order to protect the public from an increase in stray cats throughout the country."

The Animals' Hospital in Victoria, which opened in 1906, was continuing its sterling work, treating 15,982 animals during 1938, and putting down a further 12,850 which were too old or ill, or not wanted. The work was growing so fast (these two totals were both 1000 up on 1937) that the Hospital Committee was hoping to open a new branch somewhere in London if and when there were the money to do it.

Cruelty to animals in many forms kept the League on its toes, and attempts were made to educate the public while putting pressure on the authorities to introduce new laws and properly to enforce the existing ones. The conditions and training of circus animals, the plight of battery hens (even in 1938), dog-fighting, ritual killing, pigeon culls, bull-fighting in Spain, the docking of animals' tails, branding of pigs, trapping of birds, the stealing of cats for their fur, and the working of horses unfit for labour — all these issues came within the League's practical concern.

It fought indifference, too. The BBC regularly felt the sharp edge of the League's tongue for failing to be fair in its broadcasts, particularly with regard to the screening of circus acts, while refusing to expose the cruel methods by which, it was alleged, performing animals were trained. During the war years, the League was also in conflict with various Government ministries over the supply of animals (especially horses) for meat.

The League, by 1938, comprised a General Branch, Animals' Hospital Branch, the Blue Cross and Drivers' Branch, War Horses Section, Investigation Section, the Shelters' Branch for Cats and Other Animals, the Junior Branch, and the London Institution for Lost and Starving Cats and Dogs. There were other institutions and shelters, including the Blue Cross Kennels in Shooters Hill and local branches in Bedford, Bournemouth, Cambridge, Cork, Folkestone, the Isle of Thanet, Southampton, Southend-on-Sea and Weston-super-Mare.

With the advent of hostilities, the number of these local branches, run by volunteers — often from their own homes — increased dramatically to 50 in 1943, dotted about the Midlands and Southern England, with two in Wales.

The volunteers rescued stray animals, put down incurable cases, rehomed and arranged for neutering — all this often after a day's work elsewhere. Several of these are still permanent branches of the Blue Cross: Mrs Slater's branch at Harborne in Birmingham became the Bromsgrove branch as a result of her legacy; the Cambridge branch is still as the same address at 20 Garlic Row; the Chalfont St Peter branch is still at Grassingham Road, the Grimsby branch, then in Victoria Street, has become the hospital in Cleethorpe Road, and the Southampton branch is still today in Warren Avenue, Shirley.

Between them, in 1939, these different parts of the League dealt with a phenomenal 150,000 animals — this was to be gradually exceeded throughout the war until, in 1945, a record 208,437 animals were helped.

It had been hoped that the Blue Cross Fund would be able once more to establish hospitals in France for war horses and dogs, as it had done so successfully during the 1914–18 conflict. Negotiations with the French authorities were in train: the League's Secretary, Mr E. Keith Robinson, had paid a visit to France during the summer of 1939 and in January 1940, and preliminary details had been worked out between the League and the French Army, but he was told that not many horses were being used at this time, as the war was static, and he found Paris not seriously affected so far. Then came the collapse of France in 1940 and the horse hospital plan had to be shelved.

The Horse Scene

Although by the late 1930s horse traffic in London was diminishing, conditions were in some ways harder for the remaining horses, and there was still plenty of work for the two horse ambulances. When in 1939 a horse-drawn van went out of control down a steep hill into the Finchley Road and the horse crashed through a plate glass window and was seriously injured, the branch was soon in touch with Hampstead Borough Council, suggesting that the hill in Netherall Gardens be closed to horse traffic and an alternative route taken. No action was taken, however, until the Ministry of Transport stepped in and erected notices. The dilatory borough council was roundly condemned by the League as "uncaring".

"Although the Committee cannot blame motorists as a whole for many accidents that occur, there is, unfortunately, a certain proportion of drivers who, quite frankly, should not be in charge of a car; they cause unparalleled suffering to horses through accidents in which they are involved. This type of motorist should remember that an animal is flesh and blood and not mechanical, an injury to a horse may be painful whereas a car feels nothing when dented," says the report.

Other problems faced were the advent of more traffic lights, causing more stopping and starting for horses, and that many thoroughfares had been closed to horse traffic during certain times of the day, causing lengthy detours.

There were two trace horses still in operation where, in 1913, nine had been working in London. The trace horses were large animals which were stationed by the Blue Cross and Drivers' Branch of the League on some of London's worst hills to help weaker horses pull their loads to the top. "Wimbledon Jack" was now nearly 20 and had become a celebrity, with children of the district visiting him

'Wimbledon Jack' and his attendant

"as though he were a half-holiday outing." He died in 1939.

The Costers' Pony and Donkey Show was still being held on Kensington Palace Field, and in 1938 took place on July 4. The Lord Mayor of London was there to present the prizes and delighted everyone by driving round the field on a coster's cart. Another visitor was the well-known jockey, Fred Fox, who was a Vice-president of the branch. The pony class was well attended, but the days of the working donkey were already numbered and entries had dropped.

Bampton Fair

Every year since 1933, Major H. Hume Pollock, the Blue Cross and Drivers' Branch treasurer, had attended the big horse sales at Bampton, in Devon, and had gradually over the years made suggestions for improving the system by which the animals arrived, were processed and eventually transported to their new destinations. In 1938, he reported that he had persuaded the organisers to charge an entrance fee to discourage people who came only to "see the fun" and poke the ponies. Little boys with sticks were a particular problem. The arrival of batches of ponies was now staggered, and the RSPCA had arranged for hay to be available, and two large water tubs were placed in the open. About 400 ponies were sold on the field and a further 60 at the outside sale, with RSPCA Inspectors and a Police Superintendent and four Constables from Cullompton helping to ensure that the animals received the best treatment possible.

"Ponies started going to the station about 6.00pm but about 200 were left in the pens overnight: all properly hayed down night and morning," wrote Major Hume Pollock. It was too dark properly to see the entraining of ponies. It was an intensive day and one was 'at it' from 9.00am to 6.30pm except for small feed intervals.

On the Friday morning it was necessary to go and see the 200 disposed of. I could see at once that more help for assisting the ponies would be necessary for 1939 and I have already taken steps for this. The necessity for supervision at the entraining station is imperative: some of it was rough but it will not occur again. I only saw one pony slightly lame, and one tired, during the entraining on the two days. Both were fit to travel. This was a great improvement on 1933."

Cast horses

The buying up of old, tired and sick horses was in the hands of a member of the League's Council, Miss Hayes — a caring but hard-headed woman. Each year she provided a report on her activities and how she had spent the money allocated to her from the General Fund. Mostly, the old horses were put out to grass in the summer and stabled warmly in winter, well fed and tended for the rest of their lives. Some poor old fellows, however, had to be put down.

In some of the case histories from her 1938 report, the personality of Miss Hayes comes across strongly:

"January 31st. Bay cob from a greengrocer at Park Royal. A report was made that the cob was lame and an Inspector visited it during the autumn of 1937. I was told that the case was not bad enough for prosecution, so I got in touch with the owner by telephone and he said directly he could get another he would let me have the cob. I constantly kept in touch with the man and was each time told that he could not find a suitable one and that those he saw in the Repository were much more lame than his. At last I made time and went over and saw the cob. I was amazed to find it was a very bad case. On one hind foot the poor cob could only touch the ground with the tip of the toe and it ran very lame and with great effort. Yet an [RSPCA] Inspector failed to see that he could stop the man from working it. The man tried to bounce me and demanded £10, but I pretty soon told him that he should be stopped and charged if he dared bring the cob out again in the shafts. I was very angry at the whole affair and showed it, and the man toned down and accepted less than half of what he had demanded. I at once rang up for a float and took it straight away. I also bought another from him, which was destined for the mines, and the two came away together."

Other cases included that of a pony, turned out to graze on the marshes, which had injured its head on a concrete bridge and the wound had become infested with maggots....a broken-winded war horse, his body covered in sores and yet who a month before had been bought by a man for work in his riding school....another old war horse, pitifully emaciated and unable to eat, whose owner had been

charged through an RSPCA prosecution and yet the magistrate had not ordered its destruction. The law pertaining to horses was in itself good, said Miss Hayes — but it was not carried out as it should be.

"It seems as if every facility is given to the owner of a horse to wriggle out of his responsibilities and many magistrates show an absolute want of feeling for the suffering animal, while the owner is pitied and his cruelty condoned.....did the Inspector make a big enough effort to get the horse destroyed by order of the court? and if he did, why did the magistrate not make the order which would relieve such an aged horse, which was past all recuperating, from a weary and painful existence? Instead of that, I had to send a float all the way to Romford to fetch it here. Poor old horse! I can see him now — his once beautiful body reduced to skin and bone, and his poor old legs bent with hard work, and yet an English magistrate permits it to be brought away alive. I daresay he never gave a thought to the poor old dear. I had the horse destroyed quickly and I candidly admit here that, when the RSPCA Inspector enquired if I had had it destroyed I felt inclined to refuse to tell him. I paid more than the carcase was worth and as the magistrate so failed in his duty, I felt that, with the immense financial resources at the disposal of the RSPCA they should have bought the horse, not let somebody else lose money on it and then practically demand to know of its end! However, I concealed my indignation and replied civilly.

August 11th. Two donkeys came from a woman of Plaistow, in shockingly poor condition. They were quite as poor as the worst I saw in Naples last May, and much poorer than the majority I saw there. The woman said her father had had them a good many years and had let them out for riding in the forest, but he had recently died and she was unable to keep them. Unable to keep them forsooth! They were so old they could not eat. A couple of shillings a week would have kept both.

Then there was a 30-year-old grey in poor condition who was transformed after a month in Miss Hayes' care. "...the spirit of her! She eats her sliced carrots, her bran and her oats, with the best and, being a girl, keeps the boys in order; but, poor mite, what a life she's had. She had been driven by a lad with a wooden leg and people had shouted at him in the streets for his cruelty to horses. He had been employed by the 'Co-op.' in the stables and had been so cruel, a horse turned on him and kicked him. He tried for compensation but got nothing, as it was his own fault! A nice beauty to be in charge of a dear old pony."

The year of 1939 was not a good one for Miss Hayes, for she fell and broke her thigh in the autumn and three of her rescued horses were stolen from a farm where they were spending the summer months. They were not traced, despite her own efforts and the co-operation of the police, and it was worrying for her not knowing what their fate had been.

She managed to buy five horses from one of the biggest and wealthiest contractors in London which let out horses on hire. "There is no doubt they would have been worked until they actually dropped had it not been for Miss Hayes," says the report. "No doubt there is a great debt owing to Miss Hayes for her selfless work in saving so many unfortunate animals."

One victim put out of his misery that year was a bay cart horse, "old and miserable looking, in a verminous condition, with large sores on one hip — in fact, the animal, from the post mortem examination, proved to be dying on his feet. It is perhaps extraordinary that this could happen in England, but unfortunately it is not an uncommon occurrence."

The fact that she did not prosecute bad owners, or pass on their names to prosecuting societies, enabled her to hear of worn-out horses which might otherwise have been sold for even further work in the country.

Yet excellent though Miss Hayes' work was, it was to be a victim of war-time priorities. Her monthly grant of £75 to buy worn-out horses was reduced to £25. There must have been criticisms of this decision, for the League sought to justify its action: "It should here be said that £25, with the carcase money that Miss Hayes receives, amounts to a little over £1000 a year, although the net loss is still £25 a month. It was felt that as many societies exist almost exclusively for this type of work, the League could use this money to better advantage, leaving the purchase of horses in capable hands."

It was said that Miss Hayes also received money

from other sources, and that this needed to be pointed out because "certain statements have been made which do not present this matter in a correct light." Up to August 1940, Miss Hayes had bought 141 horses, and she then told the League that she was moving out of London for the time being and would not be able to continue the work.

War horses

As the Second World War was about to break out, the League was still trying to pick up the pieces of the last dreadful conflict. As outlined above, thousands of surplus horses were sold abroad in 1918 — particularly in Egypt, France and Belgium. Many of these had been worked — often semi-starved, maimed and sick — until they could barely stand. When this state of affairs was brought to the attention of the League, an appeal was launched through the newspapers to raise money to buy back as many as possible, either to be put peacefully to sleep or to be pensioned off in comfort. A prime mover in this great mission, whose progress reads like a detective tale*, was Mrs Dorothy Brooke, wife of General Sir Gerald Brooke, who was Commander in Chief of the British Forces in Egypt after the First War. As already mentioned on page 33, she was responsible for helping to raise and spend some £40,000 in the attempt to track down and buy these poor old horses.

In 1938, other League representatives were continuing their efforts in Belgium, and so far 128 horses and 343 mules had been bought up by them. There was even enough money to complete the task, and the League stopped advertising early in the year. However, the threat of war made it more difficult to get hold of these old war horses because owners were frightened that all good horses would be mobilised and they would not be able to replace them. It had also been planned to launch a similar effort in France, and the French Government had supplied a list of 311 known British war horses which were still alive, but they were scattered throughout 46 Departments from Finisterre to the Pyrenees, and only six had been tracked down and purchased before the outbreak of war postponed the plan indefinitely. A few ex-Army horses were also bought from bad owners in England.

Medals were presented to a number of Belgian owners who had retained the war horses they had bought and had given them good treatment, and one of these, M. Peterkenne, became a regional agent for the League.

"But what will happen this time to Army horses after the war?" This was the question being posed by interested MPs in the House of Commons who did not want to see a repeat of this affair. Government ministers gave repeated assurances that it would not happen again, that no Army animals would be sold but would either be brought back to Britain or shot under military supervision. The League offered thanks to the International League for the Protection of Horses for its strenuous efforts to obtain this assurance.

Panic!

Even before hostilities broke out, war was already in the air and the Munich crisis, from which Neville Chamberlain returned with Hitler's worthless promise of no further aggression, caused panic among many Londoners who fled the capital to take their children to a place of greater safety. Knowing, or fearing, that there would be no welcome for their pets, hundreds of people brought their animals to ODFL Shelters and kennels for boarding or for destruction.

The report of the Blue Cross Kennels at Shooters Hill, Blackheath, for 1938 reads:

"We urged all these enquirers not to be stampeded into premature action, but often without success. Many were hastening into the comparative safety of the country in cars piled high with their belongings and only stopped long enough to hand over their dogs or cats to be kept until either the situation improved or the worst happened, in which case they were to be destroyed forthwith. There seemed to be little of that spirit of unruffled fortitude which kept the public carrying on as usual without fear or panic in 1914."

The Committee of the London Institution for Lost and Starving Dogs also reported in 1939:

"Had it not been for the panic, a panic that was unnecessary as it was cruel, there would have been a substantial decrease in these animals

**For Love of Horses*, The Diaries of Mrs Geoffrey Brooke, edited by Glenda Spooner, available from The Brooke Hospital for Animals, 1 Regent Street, London SW1Y 4PA.

who, through no fault of their own, had to be put to sleep..... Although the staff pleaded with the owners not to have their animals destroyed these people were adamant and threatened that unless they were taken in they would go away and leave them. Unnecessary as this destruction has proved to be, these people were kindlier than many others because the staff of the Institution have continually been called to the houses which have been evacuated, to rescue some wild, starving cat who has been left behind. The details that are recorded are too pitiful, and in some cases, very terrible."

Phyllis Brooks's account

One person who well remembers that panic is Phyllis Brooks, who was newly married when war broke out. Her husband Bill, who later became manager of the Victoria Hospital, was working with the League at the Wandsworth Shelter, where the work mainly involved picking up cats and neutering them and trying to educate people at a time when kittens were frequently drowned in a bucket.

"Bill was driving an ambulance," Phyllis recalls. "War was in the air, and we knew that if war was declared he had to report to the shelter. It came on a Sunday morning, and I went with him. The sirens had gone, which had upset people. We caught the trolley bus and by the time we reached the shelter there was already a queue of at least 50 people with their animals, as well as protesters trying to dissuade them from having their animals put down. People were intending to leave London — they were concerned for the safety of their children, and wanted to get out, but could not take their animals with them. Many were broken hearted about it. This went on for quite a while — some lovely animals were put to sleep. It was the younger people who left London; the attitude of the older ones was "we've seen one war through and we'll stay to see this one out." Of course, lots of people did go off and leave their animals behind to fend for themselves.

Bill and Phyllis Brooks today

Bill was called up into the Army early in the war and saw service in Egypt, North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, Belgium, Holland and finally Germany itself. I joined the League in 1941 when the bombing started — I was working at a store in Kensington at the time and that wasn't considered war work. I worked at Hammersmith with Bill's sister, who was the superintendent there. She was always known as 'Miss Brooks' and, living on the premises, she was on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as they all were in those days. They went in on that understanding. People wouldn't do it now. The branch was bombed out three times — not a direct hit, but the railway ran close by, and

that was bombed and we caught the blast. She drove the ambulance and I went out to help her.

We had lots of voluntary people in those days — there were many well-off women at home who did charity work. Wherever we went to rescue animals there was always somebody close by who would have a basket handy. A lot of people cared.

When there were lulls in the bombing people drifted back to London, then some would come and offer a home to a cat. We had a clinic three times a week, but drugs were scarce; we survived in the main on aspirin. We had tablets of different colours for the animals and we called them important-sounding names like LPT or LBT, but all this meant was 'Little Pink Tablets' or 'Little Brown Tablets'. Mostly we tried to talk common sense to people to help them nurse their animals back to health.

We were the last of the rescue people to get on to a bombed site and we had to carry an identity pass issued by the National Air Raid Precaution Animals' Committee.

Quite often there would be animals wild with terror and it would mean many visits to the site to set traps. There were people who would feed the strays, but we were kept very busy.

We were "zoned" because of petrol rationing, which meant that we could cover only an area within a certain distance of Hammersmith. But Victoria covered such a vast area that we were sometimes asked to help out, so we would get everything settled at Hammersmith and go off to help. Mr Hutchings, the manager, gave us the extra petrol.

Some animals were boarded at Hammersmith, but only when we knew for sure that the owners were coming back, for instance if they were injured and in hospital. The accommodation was quite small and we couldn't do the terrific job they can today.

There was a lot more space to keep animals at the Victoria hospital, because the accommodation there was entirely for the animals — there was no administrative section as there is today. Head office was then in Grosvenor Gardens, and the Secretary was Mr Keith Robinson. There was only a duty vet. and the nightwatchman on the premises at Victoria; they lived in two tall old houses which were demolished later and the staff flats were built on the site.

When Bill came back from the war we were asked to take over the Richmond shelter, and I eventually took over myself when Bill was made Visiting Superintendent. Later he became Victoria Hospital Manager.

The Richmond shelter was a beautiful Georgian house — No. 3 Church Terrace — in a high-class residential area. I had a dentist to one side and an antique dealer and a Swedish masseur to the other. The Council limited us to six cats at the back and none indoors, but we did break the rules at times. The old lady who had been there before me had had the house full of cats and she'd kept all the toms in a room on the top floor. It took months to get rid of the smell. I kept creosoting the floorboards, and the dentist next door asked me whether I was using strong disinfectant. It was years later, when I got to know him better, that I learned he suffered from asthma.

I had just cats at the Richmond shelter — dogs, as licensed animals, were taken to the North London Dogs' Home. There was a huge cats' home in Camden Town. They must have done a terrific job there — Miss Cook, the superintendent, was elderly then. But you know, we were so hard up as a society. After the war Mr Stuart Gelder became the publicity officer and we had to provide stories for him to help get us known; then people responded by sending in money.

They closed me down in 1960 because the Richmond house couldn't be turned into a hospital — this happened to a number of the shelters, which were actually properties which had been left to Our Dumb Friends' League in people's wills. There was a lovely house, I remember, tucked away in a corner of Bywater Street, Chelsea, but that wasn't the kind of property which could be converted, either. Hammersmith, on the other hand, was a big property with outside runs, so that was kept on and developed as a branch.

We were all described as cranky, you know — we animal welfare workers."

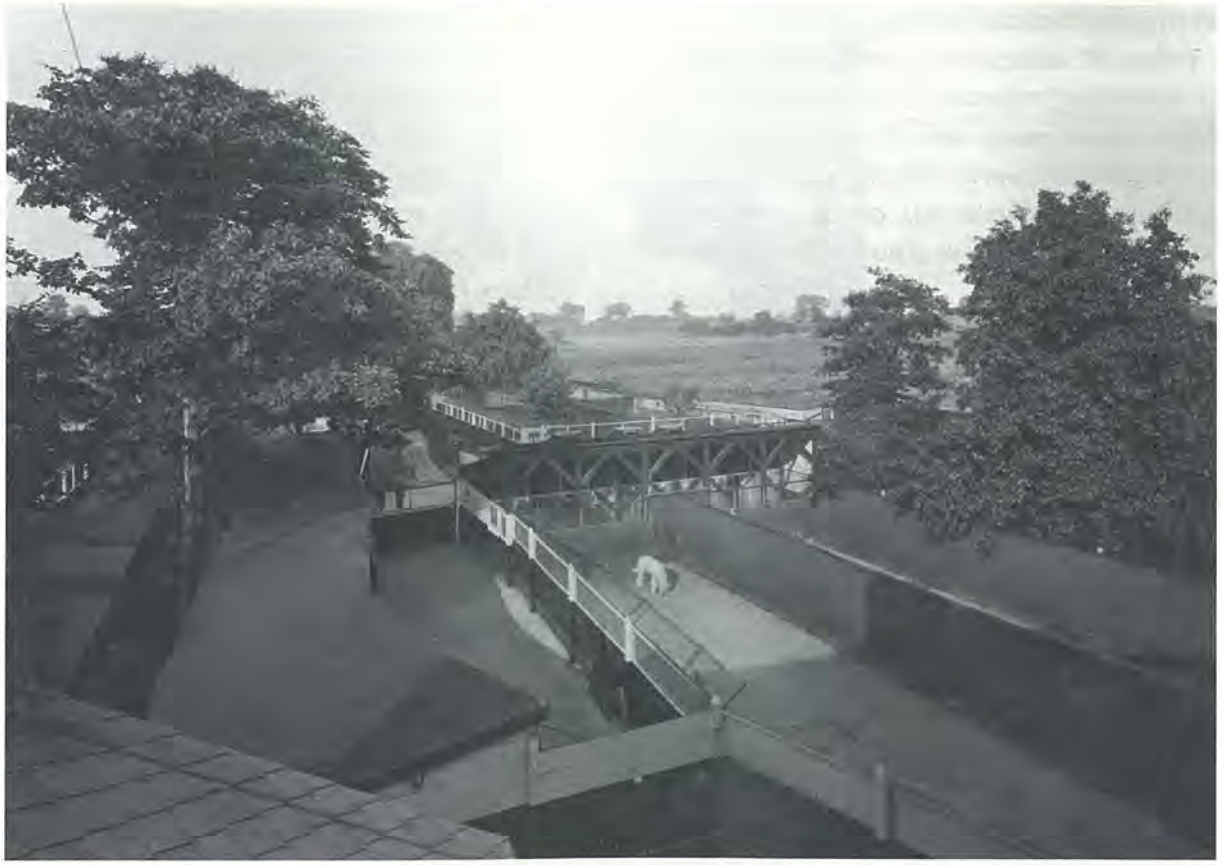
The Scene in 1939

War-time economies and shortages were already making themselves felt by the time the 1939 report was published. It contained no photographs and ceased to publish the usual long lists of subscribers, saving both paper and expense. Reports of the various sections were kept short and to the point.

Supplies of old linen or cotton articles for use in the clinics and hospitals were requested, and various large restaurants and firms were approached, the only useful response coming from Selfridge's.

Playing cards were being sold for funds, and subscribers were asked to collect stamps, silver paper, tin foil, bottles and milk bottle tops.

In conjunction with the PDSA, the League published posters showing people how best to hold and treat an injured animal, and Lady Hannon, a member of the League's Council, sponsored a supply of white saddle cloths for dogs to enable them to be seen better in the black-out.



Blue Cross Charlton Quarantine Kennels at Shooters Hill, Blackheath

Quarantine kennels

The Blue Cross quarantine kennels at Shooters Hill, Blackheath, acquired at the end of World War I to house the dogs being brought back home by returning soldiers, began to play a new role in 1939. A 'Local Institution' within the League, run by Colonel and Mrs Burden, the kennels began to take in the animals of European refugees — free of charge, because these people rarely had any money.

By the end of 1940, 95 dogs and one cat had been kept in quarantine free of charge. The League sympathised with people who had left everything they owned behind, and had often sacrificed something of value to keep their pet, and it seemed hardly fair to offer them only the option of having the animal put down.

Apart from which: "Although this action has received anonymous criticisms, the League felt that this country which prides itself on its love for animals and seeks to better the lot of animals abroad, could not lower its prestige in the eyes of so many foreigners by deliberately killing their pets; not only was it a national, but an international duty to save them. When, after the war, these people return to their homes, the remembrance of this kindness on the part of English men and women would help to improve the lot of animals in their own countries."

The "sharp end" of this service can is illustrated by

Cat house and run at the Blue Cross Charlton Kennels

Runs for boarder dogs at the Blue Cross Charlton Kennels

an appeal received from two children, Elizabeth and George Mayer:

"We two children.....have got a permit to emigrate to England. But we can't come because we must leave our dog 'Barbara' alone. It was a present to us for our birthdays two years ago. At that time Barbara the dog was only two weeks old. We have brought her up and she has been accustomed to us in such a way that she would fret if we would leave her. But also we are not able to live without her. We know that Barbara must be quarantined for the first half of the year but we have not sufficient money to pay for her keep. We are very poor Refugee children and we love Barbara who would die if we abandoned her. Therefore we ask you if you would keep her for six months free of charge or if you have a good friend who would pay the expenses. We can show the papers that the ancestors of the dog was born in Scotland."

The kennels became home for another refugee in 1942 — a Setter called Whiskey who had escaped with his owners from occupied France in a small boat. The owners, a married couple, were trying to join the Free French forces and had been picked up by an English destroyer after several days at sea. The family eventually went to Free French territory overseas. It was quite an international company at the kennels at this time, for there had been dogs from France, Norway, Holland, Denmark and many other countries, including an internee from Germany.

The kennels also took in the pets of Service men and women who were called up, could not afford kennel fees, and had no-one with whom they could leave their pets. By 1943, the kennels were reporting animal guests from America, Canada, Norway, Germany, France, Belgium, Holland and many other countries. During 1943, 123 dogs belonging to men and women in the Forces were being looked after, and the owners could visit their animals while on leave. The League later received the official thanks of the Ministry of Agriculture for its efforts on behalf of refugees and Service men.

A dog called Peter who had an abcess, and who was treated for a month in 1942 as an in-patient at the Blue Cross Kennels was so happy there that after being cured and taken home, he came back the next day and scratched at the kennel maids' door to be let in.

Judy was a little dog who, while accompanying her sailor master, had been torpedoed twice. When she came to the Blue Cross kennels in 1942, she was described as "a frightened young lady"; within a few days, however, she had made friends with the staff and was happy and contented by the time she went off to rejoin her family. "Now she waits on shore with her mistress to greet her master on his leave."

Pets' clinic

The Salvation Army, well known for its work amongst the poor, approached the Animals' Hospital to ask it to set up a pets' clinic at a Goodwill Centre in Hoxton on one evening a week. There were already similar clinics for eye and foot treatment. The Hospital was pleased to comply, and a free clinic, under the direction of the hospital's veterinary surgeon, was begun in 1939.

At the hospital

The Animals' Hospital in Victoria worked throughout the war day and night to relieve suffering and give free treatment to sick, injured and frightened animals, and these years saw a phenomenal growth in its activities from only 3000 animals treated in 1935 to over 45,000 a year treated, put down or boarded by 1945.

The 1939 report shows that 15,000 animals received treatment at the hospital that year, and a further 13,198 were put down. Among those treated were an Airedale with a stone in its stomach and a canary with a growth covering the whole of its right eye. The operation to remove it and stitch the upper and lower eyelids was intricate and there were fears that the bird would lose its sight, but with constant care it was returned to its owner perfectly fit. A young brown mare with a badly cut fetlock, with an exposure of the joint as large as a man's hand, was successfully nursed back to health and sent to the Home for Rest for Horses, where she continued to improve. Such cases were rarely cured, says the report, but she was given a chance because she was young.

By 1944, the hospital was even acting as a boarding establishment, for which it was never intended, but animals whose homes had been destroyed, or whose owners had been called up, or who spent the nights in air raid shelters, had to go somewhere. During 1944, 74 cats, 46 dogs, 12 birds and three horses belonging to civilians were boarded, 37 dogs and four cats belonging to Service personnel and eight dogs and 24 cats belonging to refugees were all given a temporary home.

Costers' show

The annual Costers' Pony and Donkey Show had been held in July, and since then its hostess at Kensington Palace Field, Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, had died. A letter received by the chairman the previous July, when the Princess had been unable to attend, showed how much she had enjoyed receiving her flowers from the Pearly King and being present at the fete. The Costers' Show, together with the summer oatmeal and water drinks for horses, had to be abandoned in 1940.

Much of the League's support came not only from the nobility but also from the world of the theatre, and that year the famous entertainer Lupino Lane, "Father of the Lambeth Walk", distributed the prizes and led the costers in the dance.

The Shelters' Branch

Because of the overwhelming number of cats they dealt with, the Shelters' branch was renamed in 1939 "The Shelters' Branch for Cats and Other Animals". The figures for that year were another 62,669 stray and unwanted cats either brought into branches or collected, and 7668 dogs as well as 48 other animals. These were down on the previous

year, and the League was hoping that its earlier work was beginning to bear fruit, although a number of shelters put the reduction down to evacuation of the area. This was certainly so at Whitechapel where, despite a reduction of around 7000, the shelter collected 23,699 stray cats in 1939.

"The stray cat problem is one which causes probably more suffering and more misery than any other phase of animal work," reads the shelters' report. *"The cat, particularly, is an animal that loves warmth. The hardships that he undergoes, when abandoned, are all the more terrible."*

The report follows with yet another call for the Government to make it obligatory for all cats to be registered and to carry identification. Meantime, the public could help by taking all male cats to be castrated. A total of 6068 cats were neutered at the shelters that year, 914 at the hospital and 745 at the London Institution for Lost and Starving Dogs and Cats, which declared: "The value of the cat is so small in the eyes of the public — kittens can be bought for as little as one shilling or less — that they are not appreciated."

The report went on: "Should the Institution have to close its doors at any time there would be, at the end of one year, 100,000 stray cats in the area it covers, and at the end of two years, nearly half a million. That is the work that occupies much of its support."

An appeal to borough councils for a reduction in rates because of all the good work done by the shelters was sympathetically heard and acted upon by Tottenham council; others replied they would consider the matter at the next quinquennial valuations, and others said they could not help at all.

After careful consideration, the Fulham shelter was closed because the National Canine Defence League, the RSPCA and the PDSA also had shelters there, and there seemed little point in duplicating the service, particularly since the Fulham shelter needed a lot of repairs. Also, Hammersmith and Chelsea shelters were quite close.

"Poverty is no excuse for cruelty": this was the strong opinion expressed by the Customs House and Plaistow shelter staff, when a League representative found a cat deliberately jammed on to the spikes of some railings. The unfortunate animal was still alive when rescued. In another case in the same area, a dog was found in a kennel half full of water, with the drinking tin covered in slime and only raw potatoes for food.

Freedom from fear of prosecution, the Edmonton shelter believed, was encouraging people to bring in unwanted animals rather than just turn them out on to the streets, while at Leytonstone, Mrs Thornton went out on to the streets at night, looking into churchyards and derelict houses for the victims of callous owners. She tells the story of one of her 'finds':

"I noticed a large, old, black gaunt cat. He was starved and neglected. He sat upon a roof where I could never possibly get at him. I began to throw food out to him, and then I found that somehow he came into the factory at night, and I fed him secretly. Of course, he found the food and would wait hours for me to feed him."

Mrs Thornton was, after some time, able to catch him.

The benefits of cat collars for identification were proved at the Paddington shelter in 1939 when a cat wearing one of the League's collars was brought in. He had come a long way from home and had it not been for his collar he would have become just another stray. Paddington also took in two guinea pigs belonging to a man who had been called up and who did not want to part permanently with his pets in case new owners neglected them. And a swan from Regents Park, which was brought in after falling exhausted in the Harrow Road, was reunited with his keeper, whose voice he recognised immediately and showed pleasure at the sight of him.

Tottenham shelter's figures were considerably down on those of 1938 (which had shown a 300 per cent increase over the previous year!) But evacuation of the area was causing many cats to lose their homes and again some people had left without making provision for their animals.

"It would seem not to be too much to ask that people who cannot keep cats might at least bring them to the nearest animal shelter. It is little to ask and it means so much to the animal," says the report. One example quoted was that of a fishmonger who closed his shop due to lack of business and left two cats inside without food or water.

Tottenham too was inundated with people as soon as war was declared, wanting their pets destroyed. "During these days many hundreds of animals were destroyed despite the pleas of the staff that they should at least keep them to see if there was any necessity," reads their report. "The majority of

people refused, some were kinder. Those who refused said that if the League did not take the animals they would turn them into the streets as they would not accept responsibility."

There were more sad stories from Wandsworth shelter, which told of an old lady going into hospital indefinitely, who asked that her 12 Persian cats be put down. She would not leave them behind or give them away as she feared they might be neglected. It was distressing for the staff, but they understood, and carried out her wishes.

Another animal released from her misery was a black Chow which had been seen scavenging in the gutters. After a three-and-a-half hour pursuit which took staff into West Norwood, they found that she was hairless on her hind-quarters and down one side, her mouth and tongue were swollen from starvation and her eyes were running with matter.

As the enemy attacks lessened during 1942, the Shelters' Branch reported a drop in the numbers of stray cats, yet a shocking total of 24,070 animals were humanely destroyed in the shelters alone — over 19,000 of them cats. The majority of these were strays, but others were brought in by their owners for various reasons.

The numbers of stray cats taking refuge in factories was highlighted by the Hammersmith shelter in that year. "Periodically Hammersmith is called in to reduce the number," the report reads. "Kittens have been found under floorboards, cats are heard scampering behind the pipes and along the beams. Still these people will keep male and female animals together and then wonder why there are so many cats."

One evening in 1942, the Wandsworth superintendent was crossing a piece of waste ground when she heard a cat mewing. She found a female cat in a sack, suffering severely with milk fever, but there was no sign of her kittens and these were presumed to have been drowned. The Tottenham superintendent had taken to visiting the local swill bins and refuse dumps because she had found that when it was quiet, many stray animals congregated there.

The case for cat licensing

The 12 animals' shelters in London were in a way the victims of their own success. Between 1936 and 1938, £2000 was spent on improving them, by equipping them properly, decorating them and installing refrigerators to minimise the wastage of food in hot weather. Economies were made by cutting down on advertising and in employing fewer collectors of animals, since the shelters were now so well known.

The enormous endemic problem of stray cats (76,905 handled in 1938) could become manageable, as far as the League could see, only by legislation. It was argued that cats were loving and lovable animals and should have the same status as the dog. If they were licensed and had to wear identification, strays could soon be identified and put down or rehomed. At the moment, people could abandon a cat in an empty house, ill-treat it or turn it out — and get away with it. So many people got rid of a female cat when she became pregnant, and her progeny added to the problem. Owners of full toms should either keep the animal in or get it neutered. If it were not for charities such as ODFL, the stray cat problem would be much worse, and the Government would have to do something, for there would be more disease spread by the sick animals and the subsequent higher rates people would be made to pay would soon induce them to put pressure on the Government.

The indignation and distress felt by the staff of the shelters can be understood in the light of the stories of some of the animals which came into their care in 1938 — even before war aggravated the problem:

....At Customs House and Plaistow, a cat deliberately saturated in petrol, another with the flesh of both hind legs eaten off by acid; another with his breast raw from the same cause...there was also a man in the district who was making a habit of cutting cats' throats: he was a breeder of pigeons; four cats had come into the shelter in this condition.... various cats had been brought in with an eye gouged out or with broken jaws obviously caused by a kick from a heavy boot, but with no identification to go on, it was impossible to catch the perpetrators of these crimes.

... at the Edmonton shelter the story was the same; an unidentified cat was brought in with a rusty stair rod thrust through its body. Others had been run over by cars. Another was rescued and brought in by a kindly person who had found him in great agony after being soaked in creosote: it appeared possible that someone had intended to amuse themselves by setting fire to the animal, said the report.

.... The Fulham shelter reported the case of a cat which had been tied by the leg to a fence; the knot

was so tight that the animal had almost bitten through his own limb in his efforts to get free. And they rescued a female cat with four kittens who had almost starved to death in an empty shop.

.... Into the Hammersmith shelter came a full tom who had been found having convulsions near a water pipe where he was trying to lick some drops; he was blind and emaciated and almost entirely covered in sores.....in the same place, another tom was found, hairless through mange.....a cat which collapsed in the yard of a neighbour was reported to the League; the vet. said it was one of the worst cases he had seen: the animal was suffering from an advanced stage of liver disease and must have been in pain, with no treatment, for over a year. The owner of this one was actually identified, and was prosecuted, but at the hearing the case was dismissed under the Probation of Offenders Act.

.... At Leytonstone, a well-meaning person had brought in a stray kitten which would not eat and mewed continuously; it was later found to have no place in its head for eyes and it was surmised that someone had dumped it in the roadway, tired of the noise it made. A female cat, wild with many months' exposure and constant pain, was caught and found to have a broken leg. It looked as though someone had thrown a hard object at her and smashed the limb. (Leytonstone was a new branch of the League which had been opened under the auspices of Mrs J. Thornton).

Cats were not the only victims of cruelty: the Customs House branch reported a Dalmatian which had returned to its owner with a poker thrust into its side; it had to be put down. The Hammersmith shelter reported the case of two monkeys left behind by a pub licensee for the new owners to look after, but they could not get near the animals. They had been used as an advertising gimmick and had been teased and tormented by customers, some of whom had taken delight in making them drunk. Someone had also thrown in a lump of hot tar and one of the monkeys had caused himself intense pain by getting it all over his body. The bottom of the cage was about a foot deep in droppings. In the end, the only way of dealing with the situation was the use of chloroform vapour to put them to sleep.

Clients queue at the Walworth Clinic, a local institution of the League, which was run entirely by volunteers, working closely with the Hospital and Blue Cross Kennels. Open in the evening, the clinic treated hundreds of sick animals and put thousands of unwanted ones and strays painlessly to sleep.

Blitzkrieg 1940 – 41

The effects of Hitler's 'blitzkrieg', or 'lightning war' are all too evident from the 1940 annual reports. Enemy action caused enough damage to the Customs House, Eastbourne and Walthamstow shelters to necessitate their closure. Alternative quarters were found within 24 hours and the work continued. Hampstead, the Blue Cross Kennels and Portsmouth branches were also hit but managed to carry on after temporary repairs.

Damage to the branches at Hammersmith, Pad-

dington, Southampton, Tottenham, Edmonton, Camden Town, Brighton, Ramsgate, Southend, Wandsworth, Weston-super-Mare, the North London Dogs' Home and the Animals' Hospital was also reported, but the work did not suffer. Fortunately, no-one at any of the branches was killed or injured, although two dogs at the Blue Cross Kennels and one at Portsmouth lost their lives.

Piteous tales of cats seen roaming the ruins of their homes reached the League, reports the Shelters' Branch in 1940. Some people could not understand why the League did not collect them at once, not realising that this was impossible, with so few staff and vehicles. Everything possible was done, but as darkness fell the staff reluctantly had to wait for another day, bringing with it fresh problems.

Throughout the war, the League's staff worked long, exhausting hours, wherever and whenever needed, and the superintendents were on call 24 hours a day. The London shelters — 14 of them including the Walthamstow Dispensary — were not intended as long-term homes. Their main purpose was to "rid the streets of homeless animals, but not keep them for a lengthy period without the prospect of future homes." Sick, diseased or maimed animals, or those in pain, were immediately put to sleep.

Neutered cats and those in good condition which had obviously come from a good home, were kept for at least seven days. And the shelters advertised the League's free neutering service as well as advising the public on how to keep their animals in good health and condition, and on how to safeguard their cats with an elastic identification collar.

Extricating a dog from the rubble of its home was dangerous work. Animal welfare workers were the last of the rescue services to be allowed on to bomb sites.

Cats are well known for their ability to find their way home even from many miles away, and through the local papers in London, the League appealed to people to look out for cats which were known to have returned to the ruins of their bombed homes. They asked them to look after the animals until the League could collect them, and their expenses would be defrayed. A number of people responded, although not as many as had been hoped.

Another appeal made through the Press in 1940 was for people living in "safer" areas to volunteer as foster-owners for dogs from inner-city areas. The response was "magnificent", and although some applicants had to be turned down because they were obviously looking for a dog for breeding purposes, hundreds of dogs were found safe homes until after the war. Other people wanted to offer permanent homes, and suitable ones were given dogs.

Strangely enough, dogs did not seem to be too badly affected by the noise of the barrage and the whistle of falling bombs during the Blitz.

"Animals are very sensible," says the report of the North London Home for Lost Dogs for 1940, "and dogs have apparently got used to the noise. There have been cases of hysteria, there have also been cases of shock, due to close proximity to a bursting bomb, there have been lost dogs, but...some are lost due to carelessness. The League appealed to all owners of dogs when giving them their last nightly exercise to do so on the lead owing to the severity of the blackout, yet time after time, dogs are taken out in built-up areas, not on the lead, consequently the sudden shining of a torch, the bursting of a shell, has frightened the dog, and he had run away, not to be found and maybe not to return."

Owners of cats and dogs who left their animals at home when they went down the air raid shelters were asked to leave a means of escape, should the house be hit. Better still, they should find somewhere safe to leave the animal at night or until after the war. White collars, leads and coats were also advocated.

It does not require a great deal of imagination to guess at the kinds of cases which began to find their way to the Victoria hospital. A few cases which illustrate the animal suffering which can result from man's inhumanity to man were picked at random to include in the annual report: two horses buried alive under debris at Stepney, suffering from severe burns and shock, one so badly maimed that he had to be put down; a dog buried under debris for five days; eleven horses trapped in a bombed building in the Victoria area — bombs were still falling as staff and police managed to save eight of them; two had been killed outright and one, trapped under heavy beams, had to be destroyed. Another example of how staff were constantly in personal danger is the story of how a dog and a canary were rescued from a house where, one hour later, a delayed action bomb exploded.

The two ambulances stationed at the hospital were kept very busy in 1940 attending horses injured in the bombing, and were also used to evacuate many animals from the capital to places of greater safety for people who had been called up into the Services or for those whom war had put out of business.

The Blue Cross Kennels at Shooters Hill, Blackheath, were hit four times during the autumn of 1940. On September 14, an oil bomb caused a fire which got a good hold before firemen, ARP men and staff managed to get it under control. Only one dog lost its life, suffocating before they could reach him. At the same time, there was a heavy barrage and one big explosive fell, partly destroying a house next to the kennels. Two kennel maids and eight dogs in the house all escaped injury.

On October 4, a high explosive bomb wrecked the Superintendent's house and on November 14 the kennels and what remained of the house took the blast of a land mine which exploded 150 yards away. Many of the kennel walls and run fences collapsed. Despite the noise of the guns and the crump of falling bombs, the staff managed to round up loose animals — while at the same time more people were arriving with cats and dogs, asking for them to be looked after till daylight, when they could make arrangements for their permanent care.

Staff from Camden Town branch dealt with the case of a dog which was found after being buried for six weeks in rubble; it was thought that he had managed to survive on rain which trickled through. He was a pitiful wreck, and they did not have many hopes of saving him, but with devoted care he got stronger and pulled through.

Wandsworth shelter had a close shave when staff rescued four cats and six chickens from a house containing a delayed action bomb. Police had refused the owners admission. The bomb went off soon after the League's staff had left with the rescued animals.

In the East End, which suffered badly from the

It would sometimes take weeks of patient work to coax homeless cats out of the ruins of their homes before they could be treated for injuries, illness or starvation.

bombing, the staff of the Whitechapel shelter had to deal with some particularly horrible cases. A dog was brought in by the police in 1940 with a piece of shrapnel through an eye; a cat was found in some ruins having lost one hind leg and the lower half of his jaw; another dog, rescued after being buried for two days, became hysterical and had to be put down. "The East End has been the scene of many tragedies, but few in the opinion of the League are so great as the number of deserted animals that are found daily; their owners have gone away with no thought at all for the creatures living with them," ends their report.

Things were no better by 1943, when the Customs House shelter superintendent reported that 80 per cent of the animals with which she had to deal were strays, or so badly neglected they they had been forced to stray. Some of the cases were too dreadful to print. An example of the kind of thing she faced was a half-grown pup, found in a gutter: "... too scared to move, quite blind, so shrivelled with starvation that the normal pointed features of the dog had taken on the flatter features of a monkey, and so riddled with mange that, in parts, the skin had rotted from the bones."

A black cat called Ralph was found lying against the wall of a house. His owners had been killed nine months previously and no-one knew how he had managed to survive. He would let no-one near him, but Mrs Francis of the Norwood local branch, with enormous patience, tempted him out gradually with food. Eventually, he gained enough confidence to come into the house and rub against her legs — he allowed himself to be stroked and

from that day he did not look back.

The Chelsea shelter's superintendent was called in 1944 to the Embankment, where she waded through mud to rescue a cat shut in an old basket, weighted with iron and left to drown as the tide rose — a "refinement of cruelty", as the report describes it.

Many dogs were brought into the League's institutions after road accidents, which became particularly numerous during the blackout — the League blamed thoughtless owners for letting their animals roam or taking them out for walks at night without using a lead.

Eastbourne branch reported that the callousness, or carelessness or just plain ignorance of some people was appalling. The story which provoked this indictment was that of two old ladies who were travelling by train with a spaniel. They reached Brighton, but something frightened the dog and she shot under one of the seats behind the hot water pipes and would not come out. The porters, instead of trying to coax her out, poked her with crossbars, causing horrible injuries. One wound was six inches by five. The two ladies were unable to afford a vet., and not knowing what to do, kept the dog for a week before hearing of the clinic in Eastbourne. With daily dressing, she slowly mended.

This was one of 3,366 animals treated at the clinic, although the shelter was completely wrecked in an air raid, and new accommodation had to be found very quickly. After the air raids, says the report, every corner of the shelter was filled with animals — in the Superintendent's sitting room and even in her bedroom. Sleep was out of the question, except for the odd snatched hour.

Bomb damage at the Hampstead Society for the Protection of Animals, which had joined the League as a branch in 1939, destroyed all the veterinary records, but six cats which had been in the Shelter all survived unscathed after the bombing, apparently having sensed trouble and sought shelter, although not a window, door or ceiling was left standing. Another example of an animal's sixth sense came from the North London Home for Lost Dogs in 1940, which received a letter from a woman who eight years previously had taken a dog from the home. She said that the cross-bred collie was sitting on her bed when he pricked up his ears, tugged at her skirt, jumped down and crawled under the bed. She took the hint and also crawled under the bed — seconds later the ceiling fell in as a result of blast.

Animals injured by bombs, left wandering in ruins, emaciated and diseased, run over in the street and on the railways, shut up to starve in empty buildings — with so many stories like this coming from Shelters, Branches and Institutions alike, no wonder the Cardiff branch cried: "There must come a day when the Government will make some endeavour to lessen the suffering amongst animals."

The reports of the Shelters' Branch make harrowing reading. The superintendent of the Chelsea branch was called by the Royal Engineers to a school which had been partially demolished in an attack. In a classroom was a "very wild bitch" which had become separated from her puppies in the turmoil and the milk secretion had driven her mad with pain. She had also been wounded and it took several days of coaxing before she could be caught.

Seventy-two chickens and 12 rabbits running around in a bombed convent were rounded up by the League. The superintendent told the Mother Superior that the quarters they had been kept in were not big enough, and fortunately she took her advice to move them, because a few days later their old accommodation received a direct hit.

The Customs House and Plaistow District shelter tells the story of eight cats, trapped in a woodyard, which had been there for some time before the League was notified. It took the staff two months of patient feeding and building up of confidence before they managed to catch them, discovering that the cats were all suffering from mange and some had received wounds in which there were maggots. In one East End street it took three months to round up 100 cats during early morning and late evening visits.

The Hammersmith shelter staff expressed disbelief that anyone could take away a female cat's kittens, put them in a paper bag and callously dump them in the gutter, but someone did. The League was called to put them out of their suffering. Staff from Hammersmith also managed to catch and put out of his misery a wounded Alsatian trapped in a bombed house.

Some people, when they were going down an air-raid shelter during an attack, brought their animals to the Hammersmith shelter so that they could be found new homes if the owners were killed. Sixteen such animals had been placed, and to these was added a little fox terrier which police brought in

after he had been blinded and injured by the blast of a bomb.

The war had its lighter moments, however, and Bournemouth branch tells the story of Bob, a large black Labrador, who was brought to the home in Limited Road, Moordown, as a stray. He settled in nicely and in a few days was found a new home. After about a week he turned up again, looking very pleased. He was taken in again as a stray and rehomed — this happened three times in all and on the last occasion he brought with him three other dogs who had apparently been roaming the town. Once more he was rehomed, and this time settled down with his new lady owner, who in warm weather swam each morning in the sea; she was finding this extremely difficult, however, as Bob insisted on trying to rescue her!

In Portsmouth, the ambulance was called by the police to a very small boy who was weeping bitterly because his kitten was buried in the rubble of a house where he had taken refuge. The superintendent succeeded in extricating the tiny kitten, the boy's tears dissolved into a very wide smile and he scampered off up the street to find his parents.

A cat which had been buried in his basket in the ruins of a house in Pont Street was rescued by Chelsea shelter staff in 1940. Despite the dirt which had seeped into his basket, he had managed to wash himself consistently and was spotless when rescued.

Reuniting lost animals with their owners was one of the happier aspects of the shelters' work during all the upheaval caused by the war. In 1939, three weeks after an elderly wire-haired terrier had gone missing from his home in Bromley, Golders Green police brought in such an animal to the North London Dogs' Home. The superintendent was able to contact the dog's owner, and he was taken home. A curly-haired bitch also reunited with her owner after 12 months away, was taken back home and immediately went upstairs and curled up on her favourite armchair as though she had never been away. It was presumed that someone else had been looking after her until she was brought to the Home.

Patricia Lowther-Brown's memories

Miss Patricia Lowther-Brown, who today still lives in London, first went to work at the Animals' Hospital as a volunteer during the war, although she cannot recall in which year.

"A lot of the bomb damage actually in Hugh Street outside the hospital had been repaired, but I am sure air raids were still in progress because I always took my tin hat, and frequently had to do a dash from Victoria Station when the siren went.

I went to see Keith Robinson at Grosvenor Gardens and told him I was doing a full-time job but would help when I could. He sent me to Hugh Street and I stayed in my voluntary capacity, also working my holidays (one week per year then). It was such a contrast from my sedentary job at the War Office.

First the personalities. When I went there, Mr Murts was the senior vet. and Miss Margaret Bentley his assistant. They were both extremely nice to me and I like to think I was a help. I felt very grand dishing out cards and filing them in the index system which was quite basic at that time. Later, I was allowed to stand by in the surgery, but only of course in a very minor role.

Mr Murts had a dashing son in the 'Wavy Navy' in Motor Torpedo boats, and must have been stationed at Appledore, because he married the pretty school teacher in charge of the local school. Later, she came to collect his posthumous decoration and said how interested the children would be to hear about her trip to the Palace. I didn't actually see her, but they all felt that she was a very courageous young woman.

Mr Murts also had a priceless Staffordshire Bull Terrier who was always stealing meat from people's shopping baskets and I think he was also known at the local butcher's — he was a splendid animal and with his powerful hindquarters he could jump on the table from a standing start.

Miss Bentley was a great personality and very keen on ballet. A good contrast after the down-to-earth business of being a vet. I also remember well an old man called Mr Minty. He walked rather awkwardly and I imagine he may have had hip troubles which were not so easy to deal with in those days. He was such a gentleman, a dear old boy and he reminded me of the leading character in T.H. White's 'Farewell Victoria'.

As for the building — this was an old stable block and was most impressive with a spacious yard, all under cover. There were sloping ramps

up which the horses were led to their loose boxes and stalls. The top tier had a long passage to the hay loft. The surgery and reception was a small room to the left as you entered the yard.

On my first evening, some detectives came to look in the body room. Some man had murdered his wife and they thought he might have fed her to the dog and then brought in the dog to be put down. In fact, I don't think that had happened, as she was later found under the cellar somewhere at a house in Lambeth.

During the course of my time there, I met a number of vets., including Margaret Boreham (later Mrs Peter Hall-Patch), and Ruth McLelland, who replaced Miss Bentley. Years later, Miss Bentley became our vet. in Kensington!

There were some amusing and some sad incidents. I remember a monkey at the clinic called Chippie. I was told that if I were to feel along the chain on the wall she would appear (she sat outside in summer, going through the hay loft window onto the roof). I was to give her a bowl of cherries. What they did not tell me was that she hated anyone touching the chain, and when this angry face appeared and came flying towards me, throwing everything she could lay hands on — water bowls, discarded banana skins and the like — I just threw the bowl of cherries and ran for my life. Everyone was at the bottom of the ramp laughing their heads off.

On another occasion when working with Mr Murts, I managed to get out of a dog's paw a small stone which was firmly wedged between

Pat Lowther-Brown with 'Barty' and 'Pip'

the pads. Mr Murts said it was well done, and being rather in awe of him, I fairly bristled with pride.

Another monkey incident — Miss McLelland said that the 'wee thing' was too small to have an anæsthetic, so if I peeled a banana and kept him occupied she would whip out his loose tooth. This we did, and he put his little paw up to his mouth and gave us both such a look when he saw a bit of blood on it! He was quite adorable.

I joined Miss M. while she was still operating on a Chow early one evening. The lights failed and the siren went and we carried him downstairs to a rather Dickensian room in the basement where the food was cooked. Unfortunately, the dog died quite suddenly and it was thought he might have had Anthrax. "What will happen if it is," I inquired. "We shall both be dead by tomorrow morning" was the reply. I was most anxious until the next day dawned. All was well, but the Min. of Ag. were so busy it took them a week to reply to Miss M.'s note.

Quite the saddest thing I ever had to deal with was three little boys who brought in a pet duck. Her feet were cracking up and it was explained to them that even by letting her swim in an old bath in the back yard, they were not providing the mud and proper conditions needed for her well being. The feet were already curling up. It was my job to carry the duck up to be put to sleep, and all the way up the ramp she nuzzled her head under my chin and round my neck, so was obviously used to being loved and handled. I couldn't eat my food when I got back to my digs — those tear-stained faces followed me everywhere. It was months before I got over it."

Tales of devotion and friendship

The Tottenham shelter had a poignant story to tell in 1940 of an animal's sixth sense:

"Had an old lady in the Tottenham district heeded the warning of her Alsatian, both she and her dog would have been alive today. The dog seized her shopping bag and ran with it into the street. When she did not follow, he came back and repeated the

performance several times. Finally, he went out with the bag and the old lady sent her eleven-year-old grand-daughter to fetch him back. Whilst the girl was out the dog came back once more in an endeavour to persuade the old lady to leave, but as he entered the house a bomb struck it. The Tottenham branch rescued the animal's body; the child, being out of the building, was saved."

There are a number of such stories of animals saving other animals or people by their instinct or intelligent behaviour. The Paddington shelter was called out by ARP men to collect an injured dog. When they got there, they found a perfectly healthy dog standing guard over the injured one. He had apparently gone to the ARP post and barked until one of the men followed him to his injured friend. He then followed the League staff to the shelter and when he was satisfied his friend was in good hands, asked to be let out and went home.

The war also produced many touching stories of friendship, and the North London Home for Lost Dogs told one in 1942:

"A cross-bred Labrador and a cross-bred collie arrived at the home and whilst there they made friends and only seemed happy together. One day a visitor took a fancy to Nigger, the Labrador, and offered him a home. The superintendent told him the story of the friendship and the man went away. Next day he returned and told her that his neighbour would give a home to the collie and that a hole was to be cut in the adjoining fence so that the two dogs could visit each other."

From the local branch in Weston-super-Mare came two cases of companionship. A mongrel puppy was taken into a home where there was already a resident parrot which became jealous and did its best to make the pup's life a misery. But it suddenly decided to change its tune, became much more friendly and whenever the puppy was about, said: "Good morning, come right in." And a stray kitten which found a good home went off and fetched a friend from its earlier life to share his food and bed.

Another stray kitten — this time from the Ramsgate branch — went to a new home where there was a wire-haired terrier. The apprehensive owners need not have worried about its reception, for the two became great friends, washing each other thoroughly every morning and both accompanying their owner on shopping expeditions. A sadder story, also from Ramsgate in 1942, concerns a cat and an Alsatian who were good friends. The cat was taken ill and died, despite every care, and was buried in the garden. The dog was inconsolable, roaming the house in search of his friend. Finding the grave and unearthing the body, he went indoors to fetch his owner to the scene. Finally, after six weeks of mourning, he died of grief.

Animal BCs

Many stories of animal bravery were recorded during the war years, and some were awarded the BC — the Blue Cross Medal. The first of these was the "Meknes" dog, La Cloche, whose story appears in the 1940 annual report:

"When the Meknes carrying repatriated Frenchmen was torpedoed by a German submarine, a French marine was thrown into the water. He could not swim. His dog, left on board, dived into the sea, swam to his master and supported him for a considerable time in the water until the man was hauled out unconscious, and so saved. The dog sheered off the boat and could not be pulled out of the sea owing to the swell, it was thought that he was lost, but managed to find a log of wood on which he clambered and was later found riding the seas waiting patiently for his own rescue. That dog was taken care of by the League and will be returned at the end of his quarantine period."

"La Cloche"

A further award of the BC went in 1940 to Fluff, a little family dog who was described by the Daily Mirror as a "modest little dog with the heart and courage of a lion." Fluff was buried with her family in the rubble of their home when a bomb demolished it. By continuous scratching, she managed to make a hole big enough to scramble through, which also acted as an airway for the people still trapped. Then she stood outside the hole and barked until help arrived and her family was safe.

A 19-year-old cat called Jim saved his owners, Mr and Mrs Coffey, of Malden, when their house caught fire in the night. He ran upstairs and woke them up so that they were able to control the fire before it got a hold. And Billy, a 10-month-old puppy belonging to Mr and Mrs Yerby of Kentish Town, persistently barked until they too woke up and realised the house was on fire. They received their medals in 1942.

The 1944 annual report lists the following awards:

"The Editor of the Bristol Evening World presented, on behalf of the League, its Blue Cross Medal to Juliana, a great dane, who saved the family of Mr W.T. Britton from being burnt. This was the second time Juliana had saved the family, on an earlier occasion she had, unaided, put out an incendiary bomb.

This Medal was constituted as an award to animals who had saved the lives of human beings. The League gives this decoration sparingly as it feels it would lose its value were it to be given indiscriminately.

It was given to 'Sergeant Fleabite', attached to the US Army, who was rescued originally by Private Roy L. Mantooth after D-Day. During the battle of St. Lô the dog persuaded his master to leave the spot in which they were lying. His instinct was sound as, shortly afterwards, an 88mm shell burst on the exact spot. It was through the intervention of Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery that when Private Mantooth was subsequently wounded, these two friends were not parted, but were sent back to England together.

The Blue Cross Medal to Pussy Wake who saved her family when a fire broke out in a downstairs room. He ran upstairs and awakened them by scratching at the door where they were sleeping.

The Blue Cross Medal was given to Rex who, when he heard a flying bomb approaching, dashed up the stairs to the room of nineteen year old Rosene Mason, warning her in time for her to reach safety before her room was wrecked.

To Nigger, who was on board a tanker in the Atlantic when she was torpedoed. He found his master in the water, unable to swim, and gripped him by the collar, keeping him afloat for two hours until both were rescued.

The Managing Director of London Borough Newspapers Ltd., arranged to present the Blue Cross medal to Ruff. When a flying bomb wrecked his home, he attracted the attention of the Rescue Party to the debris, under which his mistress and her baby were lying trapped. He actually gripped the napkin and nightdress of the infant pulling the child to safety.

The Blue Cross Medal was presented to Queenie. A small boy, 3 1/2 years old, fell into the River Clyde and was carried some distance. Queenie jumped into the river and held the baby above the water until both were rescued.

Ten year old Horace Griffin got out of his depth while paddling in the River Ouse, Spot's mistress went to his rescue and also got into trouble. The dog dived into the river and swam to Mrs Yallop who, grasping his tail with one hand and Horace with the other, was dragged to safety by the dog."

Six further medals were presented in 1945.

"Sam and Bess Mayhew, Newfoundland, were each given the medal for the great assistance they have given to all animals by making collections for them.

"Bruce Easy who rescued his mistress after her house had been demolished by enemy action. Rip of Poplar, himself blitzed, attached himself to the Wardens' Service and was instrumental in saving many lives: Rex, a retriever, saved the life of a women in East India Dock Road, trapped by the explosion of a flying bomb; Whiskey, a cat, who saved Corporal Witcomb's family when fire broke out in the house."

Animal politics

There was by the end of 1940 a tremendous financial burden on the Society. During that year it had received, collected, treated or cured, found new homes for or painlessly destroyed a total of 152,236 animals — including 106,392 cats and 43,923 dogs. Increased taxes and rising cost of living were adding to the difficulties, as well as the growing competition from so many war-time charities for funds. The League had had to draw on its reserves, and in appealing to its supporters for continued help, felt justified in remarking that "....it has not been neglectful of the work for which it was founded."

Co-operation between the animal welfare societies took some steps forward and some back at this time. In 1939, representatives of the various societies had begun to meet under the chairmanship of Mr Robert Spurrier as the National Council for Animal Welfare, and it was felt that the conferences would help national problems to be dealt with more efficiently, and that the interests of animals could be better represented to Parliament.

Also, the Lord Privy Seal had formed a committee to formulate and carry out an air raid protection scheme for animals. Representatives from the leading animal welfare societies, the veterinary profession, the Ministries of Home Security and Agriculture, New Scotland Yard and the National Farmers' Union were invited to join it. Mr H.E. Dale CB was

Miss Bradley, who was in charge of the Blue Cross Charlton kennels in Blackheath, where many Service men's animals were cared for during their absence abroad.

appointed chairman and Col. R.J. Stordy CBE, DSO, MRCVS was made chief executive officer.

Soon, animal guards were being appointed to register all animals to save them unnecessary suffering and possible loss and it was hoped that the scheme would be as comprehensive as possible. Arrangements were made for first-aid posts, under regional veterinary officers, to be put under the control of the committee, operating through Col. Stordy. Members of the League carried a National Air Raid Precaution Animals' Committee (NARPAC) identity card to enable them to enter bombed sites from which the general public would be excluded for reasons of safety. Yet by 1940 disagreement was hampering the work of NARPAC. The annual report sets out the problem:

"An appeal was made at the commencement of hostilities for all co-operating animal societies to sink their individualities with regard to publicity and work for the common cause, not attempting to make capital out of war-time efforts to the disadvantage of other Societies, in which all were working equally strenuously.

The League and the PDSA offered to guarantee any deficit on the working of NARPAC, although they were in a perpetual minority on the Committee. Only the PDSA was willing to join it in this guarantee — the two societies have actually expended several thousand pounds towards animals in war through NARPAC. Other societies for various reasons were not prepared to assist financially, and in fact urged that the Government should be pressed to grant money. An exception must be made in the case of the RSPCA which made a token payment of £500, but could not see its way to go further.

The two societies felt that they could not rightly expect His Majesty's Government to finance this work when every penny was needed to prosecute successfully a war which meant so much to the world. It is clearly obvious, that were England to be conquered, Animal Societies would cease to exist, being absorbed as they

have been in Germany into a State Department, and would have been exploited if it seemed good to those controlling the destinies of the country."

The League believed that money collected during peace time for animal welfare should be used for their benefit during war. But when the issue came to the vote at a meeting of Regional Veterinary Officers, attended by representatives of the Animal Societies, the League's rep. (acting also for the PDSA) was a lone hand raised against a motion asking the Government to finance the operations of the Committee.

By 1942, all the animal welfare societies except the League and the PDSA had abandoned NARPAC, which the League regretted as it had seen NARPAC as a forerunner of closer co-operation between them.

'Adolf' became a prisoner of war when a German ship was arrested on the high seas — his owner was the ship's mate.

Battles with the Men from the Ministries

As the shortages of food began to gnaw in 1942, people began to eat more horse flesh and wild animals — particularly birds. The League told the Ministry of Food that they thought it unfair that anyone who wanted to eat horse flesh was entitled to any quantity, over and above their ration of other types of meat. Animals, on the other hand, had to rely solely on available supplies of horse flesh which, in the League's view, should either be allocated for animal feeding only, or should be rationed for human beings in the same way as other meat. The League was also worried about the quantities of wild birds — plovers, sea birds, rooks and other fowl — which were appearing for sale in shops and markets. The population of these birds was being so depleted that there was a danger of extermination.

Another danger the League foresaw was the upsetting of the balance of nature. As crows, jackdaws, sparrows, starlings, pigeons and the like were being trapped or shot in their thousands, insects would increase and adversely affect vegetable and fruit supplies. The country was not starving, said the League, and there was no need to go to these lengths. But the Ministry saw no reason to prohibit sales of wild birds.

Neither would it listen to the League when it protested that whereas there was a fixed maximum price at which poultry could be sold after slaughter, there was no such upper limit on live birds. Increasingly, birds were travelling long distances in crates, with delays on the railways, and with no food or water available when they reached market. Could the Ministry allow only birds intended for breeding purposes to travel live, and then only to recognised breeders or those guaranteeing they they had a backyard run? But the Ministry gave the 'thumbs-down' to this suggestion.

Outbreaks in animal thefts were worrying the

League. Cats — in particular those with fine coats — were the main target, and it was suspected from advertisements which appeared from time to time that these animals were being stolen for their fur. But a further disturbing trend was the disappearance of more small cats and kittens, which it believed were destined for the pot! As the League pointed out, in a pie or stew cat can taste very much like rabbit. An extensive dossier was compiled and given to the MP Commander Richard Tufnell, a cousin of the League's chairman, Mrs Blanche Beauchamp Tufnell, who originally raised the matter in the House; but he was unable to get far because animal welfare was taking a back-bench position as the Government pursued the war with a more implacable enemy.

Dogs, too, were disappearing — in some districts, con. men had toured the streets suggesting to owners that they were from the local authority, and taking away their dogs. No-one knew what happened to them after that, except that resale prices were high. The League was trying to compile more information on this horrible trade.

The local branch scene in 1942

By 1942, local branches of the League numbered over 40 dotted around the country, and staff were working quite as hard as those in the capital.

At Battersea branch a small boy one day brought a dog called Peter to be destroyed. He told the staff that the dog belonged to an old blind man in their house. He was asked to bring the man to see Mrs Bray, who was in charge of the branch. It appeared that the old man was fond of the dog, who took him walking in the park, but the dog had been scratching his ears for a long time and the old man could do nothing about it. After six weeks' treatment, the condition was cured and the old man and Peter were able to return happily to their morning walks.

"When are you going to take me home, Dad?" While on leave, Service men and women were able to visit their pets at the Blue Cross Charlton Kennels.

Bedford branch kept for two months, free of charge, a cat which had belonged to a couple in the Home Counties whose house was bombed. The man was killed and his wife severely injured, but the cat and the widow were reunited when she was better and had found a new home.

Staff from the Clapham branch were called to examine a cat which was supposed to be suffering from canker of the ear, but it discovered that both ears were full of maggots, driving the animal almost frantic. In another case, a cat alleged to have pneumonia was found to have a needle and darning thread well embedded in its throat. The needle was removed and the cat recovered.

A sad story was told by the Grimsby branch of a dog belonging to a member of the League which was under treatment at home for bronchitis. One day he got out and went for a walk in the park. A soldier on leave was smoking by the side of his child's pram when it broke loose and careered down the hill into a pond. The dog rushed into the water and rescued the baby and then tried to bring out the pram. The baby was soon well but despite the nursing efforts of the League, the dog's bronchitis grew worse and he subsequently died.

Mrs Hawkins, of the Hitchin branch, was appalled when she was called out to see a cat that was "ill" at the bottom of someone's garden. It was during a hot spell in July, and she found the cat with his head wedged through a hole in the fence, where he had been for two days without food or water. As if this were not enough, some children had been stoning him. He was released and put out of his misery.

The need to educate the public, and children in particular, against animal cruelty was an issue

taken to heart by the Southgate (London) branch. Much of its work was with children, and the branch told a story which, although humorous, illustrated the fact that children are alive to animal suffering. During a scripture lesson a child was asked: "Who was sorry when the prodigal son returned?" She answered: "The fatted calf."

A wry sense of humour is revealed, too, in the Newport local branch report, which tells of its first feline prisoner of war. A German bomber was brought down in Monmouthshire and a tabby cat aboard was taken prisoner. "Tiger, on arrival at the shelter, showed several characteristics of the Hun, but — perhaps it is an augury of the future — after living under the care of the League he has become a docile, well mannered and well behaved animal."

Animal-lover Mr C.J. Searle, a business man in Petts Wood, Kent, approached the League about opening stations both at his home and at his place of business, and during the year rescued and put down three stray cats, lethalled a cat whose owner could not longer keep him, and two birds, returned one dog to its owner and arranged for a dog to be sent to a temporary evacuation home. In addition, he took into his own home one cat and one dog which he had rescued from bombed premises. And at "The Small Hut", on Chinnor Hill, near Oxford, Miss Friend, who had earlier represented the League in Leytonstone, continued her work from her new home, preventing as much animal suffering as came within her scope. In such small ways did many caring people help the work of the League.

The trouble that branches would take to find lost pets is illustrated by an incident at Regents' Park, where Mrs Lane, who worked single-handed from her own home, was approached by the distressed owner of a lost black and white male Persian cat who had no address disc. Mrs Lane pressed the owner to try and think of some real identification mark that would help her in her search. Eventually she remembered that he had a black spot as well as a mole mark on his pink nose. For weeks and months Mrs Lane searched in vain. Her story goes on:

"One day, very recently, a sweet-natured woman, who feeds all hungry cats in the district, told me about a black and white Persian she was feeding. I made several journeys to the feeding spot but did not see him. However, one Saturday I spotted him — and his nose — and there was the black mole mark. I went and fetched the owner who was overjoyed and they are all happily reunited."

One of the oldest branches was that of Great Amwell, near Ware, in Hertfordshire, where Miss Violet Harvey had established it in the early 1900s and was still going strong throughout the war. She was responsible for encouraging hundreds of children to become members of the Junior Branch of the League and to raise funds in many imaginative ways.

A few branches even transplanted offshoots of the ODFL in Canada, South Africa, the West Indies and the Gold Coast!

The Scene in 1943

That year saw a continuation in the League's battle with the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry had broadcast a suggestion that schoolchildren should use any instrument or brickbat to knock down sparrows — a suggestion which the League found not only offensive but senseless. After protests from other animal welfare organisations as well as the general public, the Ministry countermanded it. The League took the opportunity to say that, in its opinion, the present shortages of green vegetables and damage to root crops by insects were due, as it had forecast, to the upsetting of the balance of nature by so many birds being needlessly killed for food or sport.

It offered a further warning to the Ministry that when soldiers returned home after the war there would need to be plans for the adequate quarantining of their animals to guard against rabies. There were practically no muzzles available, and a muzzling order would in any case be ineffective. Failure to face the problem might mean the wholesale slaughter of domestic animals.

The League was not popular with the Fur Trade Export Group which, while admitting that cat skins were used in the making of cheap fur coats, maintained that these were obtained legitimately. The League produced evidence it had collected of cats being stolen for the fur trade and challenged the Group to prove that no stolen skins were used. If it could do so, the League offered to issue a public

statement saying that it had been satisfied that the loss of cats was not due to this cause. The meeting took place in January, and by the end of the year there was still no word from the Group.

While Service men and women were earning medals and awards for bravery in the face of the enemy, Our Dumb Friends' League was awarding medals for bravery to people who had rescued animals despite danger to themselves. A one-armed man called G.W. Todd, of Ministry of War Transport, who rescued a sheep from 30 feet down a vertical cliff face, was awarded the Bronze Medal. So too were Arthur Marsh and H.W. Perry, also of MoW Transport, for rescuing a goat and a dog respectively from similar circumstances; and a Land Girl called Doris Adams, who rescued saved two lambs from an infuriated bull which had already tossed the ewe, received the Silver Medal.

Left-hand drive military vehicles were making life even more difficult for horse-drawn vehicles in London, and a number of bad accidents took place in 1943 which were put down to lack of care on the motor vehicle driver's part and forgetfulness on the other side. These animals were treated at the hospital, where another patients that year was a mare who was brought in suffering from extensive burns. She had been trapped in some burning stables when part of the roof collapsed across her back. Pain and fear made her difficult to approach — she did not want anyone near her to feed her or dress her wounds — but gradually the staff built up her confidence and in five weeks she was cured.

Staff at the Shelters continued to see life in the raw. The Chelsea Superintendent was called by the local Sanitary Inspector to a flat where the tenant was keeping mice, He was allowing them to run loose, and was very fond of them — although there were over 70, he knew them all by name! Unfortunately, the report says, they had to be taken away.

Answering a knock at the door late one evening, the Wandsworth Superintendent found no-one there, but a note was pinned to the door. It said that if she went along the river which ran behind the shelter she would find some cats. She found a sack containing two female cats and eight kittens which had apparently been fished out of the river. Fortunately they were still alive and were taken back to the shelter.

The sheer grinding hard work of looking after sick, frightened and hungry dogs through all weathers and with fewer and fewer staff, is reflected in the report of the North London Home for Lost Dogs in 1943. It was so hard to replace staff because of the unsocial hours and conditions, but Miss Elliot and her remaining staff struggled on, taking live dogs and trying to reunite them with their owners, finding new homes for the unwanted ones, disposing of the dead dogs brought in by the police and destroying the ones beyond help. Many dogs died through carelessness, the report says; in their anxiety to find their way home, they grew frantic and lost their traffic sense. In 1943, these totalled 198 brought in by, or collected from, the police.

Touching Tales

For all the stories of cruelty and callousness, there were as many incidents of individual kindness and compassion. The League's representative in Galway, Connemara and the Islands, Mr Michael O'Connor, gave much of his own time to overseeing donkeys used for drawing peat, teaching the owners how to straddle the animals, making use of baskets of equal size and weight, persuading many of them not to use donkeys that were too old or too young, making sure that tail bands were not too tight and that new straw mats were used under the baskets.

A member of the ATS in 1943 brought a pigeon to the Paddington shelter whose toes were solidly stuck together with some hard substance so that it could neither walk nor fly. After an hour's careful work on the feet, he was free and the ATS took him away to be a pet, promising to let him go if he wanted to. She called in three days later to say he had stayed until a few hours ago and then had flown off.

A badly injured dog belonging to an American officer was brought to the Duxford (Cambridge) branch after a road accident and presented a big problem to the League's vet. there, Mr Seymour. The only way of saving its life was to get it to the Veterinary College in London. Burning the midnight oil, he made a stretcher on which the dog was taken to Cambridge and then in the guard's van to London and on by ambulance to the College. X-rays showed a complicated fracture, but the dog was successfully operated on.

In 1944, a small boy brought his dog to the Hampstead branch after a road accident. There was no injury, only shock, and the boy, obviously fond of his friend, was delighted. Soon afterwards, the

boy's mother returned the dog with instructions for its disposal, as she was moving to a flat. But remembering how fond of him the boy had been, the superintendent hung on to him. A few days later, a not-very-hopeful small boy returned to say that his aunt would keep his dog for him, and was overjoyed to find his friend still alive and waiting.

In Newport and in Portsmouth, the branches held on to cats and dogs belonging to sailors who had had to sail in a hurry before being able to findtheir pets and put them in safe keeping. In one case, a goat was found straying and kept for several months before members of the Naval Boom Defence turned up to claim it. They had been drafted elsewhere.

Mrs Lane, of the Regents Park local branch, was a lady given to "weak moments". She had had five of them — in the form of five stray cats, all of them adopted "in a weak moment". In 1944 another cat called Bunty wandered in and out of her house for six weeks, coming to play with the "weak moments". One day his owner came to collect him but he had disappeared. Sable, one of Mrs Lane's cats, led the women across a busy main road to a church, where he tried to climb a ladder which had been left propped against a wall. Then Bunty's face was spotted, looking out from the gutter. He was retrieved with the help of the National Fire Service.

The 1944 report from Crewe local branch challenges those who said animals could not reason, and quotes the story of Prince, a noisy dog who was given to barking at the slightest provocation. His woman owner was looking after her elderly sick father and was told the old man must have complete quiet. Torn between her sick father and her beloved dog, she did not know what to do. But Prince solved the problem — for three months, until the old man died, he did not bark once. He lay by the kitchen door and eyed any newcomer curiously but silently. On the day of the funeral he remained quiet, returning afterwards to his usual self!

The Scene in 1944

The fifth full year of war brought more demoralising air attacks and the advent of flying bombs put a great strain on the overworked staff of ODFL. During the raids of January and February 1944, Battersea branch had to be temporarily evacuated because of severe damage. The Blue Cross Kennels and Chelsea branch suffered blast damage and Paddington was slightly damaged by incendiaries.

Hammersmith and Wandsworth came off worst; in the middle of the year Hammersmith was so badly damaged that operations could continue only from the basement, and all the records were lost. The entry for Wandsworth is poignant, for its address is given as "Late of 82 Garratt Lane," and the report begins: "This branch has ceased to exist; not that the work has ended for it is being carried on by the original staff from the Hospital, but because it has been completely bombed; fortunately the animals were mainly at the back of the building and suffered little hurt other than shock."

It was a miracle that no staff were injured, and only a few animals were killed outright at Hammersmith.

The ambulances of the London Institution in Camden Town were out constantly following these air attacks. Twice during the year, they were blasted while out on mercy errands, and each time the driver carried on, using a spare ambulance. On many occasions, the staff risked their lives tunnelling for animals, climbing over debris and entering shattered houses in imminent danger of collapse.

Four weeks after a bomb had dropped, a demolition squad found a cat buried, still alive, under the debris and took it to the Institution. Although not holding out much hope, staff gave it a warm drink and within three hours it asked for food and was on the way to recovery. In another incident, a cat was discovered trapped by an iron stanchion across its body and the ambulance driver had to crawl back with chloroform to put it out of its misery.

Winding down

The final year of war – 1945 –s saw a record number of 208,437 animals helped by the League nationwide.

Amongst these were two cats aged 15 and 12 who were buried alive when the original Birmingham shelter was bombed. Mrs Ivy Slater persevered with her digging and after nine and eleven days respectively, rescued them both. While the last few salvoes of the war took their toll, the League was finding new problems to tackle — as well as old ones which repeatedly cropped up.

NARPAC was disbanded, having been thanked by the Ministry of Home Security. The plight of the old British war horses was looked at once more, and embassies were contacted, but the Belgian and French ambassadors pointed out that practically no animal was left alive by the retreating Germans and

Joyful reunions were often taking place at the Blue Cross Charlton Kennels, and Press photographers were sometimes on hand to record the event.

any that remained had probably been used for food.

An appeal was made in January over BBC radio to the public asking them not to turn out their dogs if they could not afford the licence fee but to take it to a vet or local animal charity.

The Political Section was quickly revived and the main political parties were sent a questionnaire on their attitude to animal welfare and legislation, and before the General Election a personal letter was sent to every candidate asking if they were in favour of remodelling existing Acts of Parliament and whether they were in favour of legislation that would enable a proper authority to inspect premises of persons trading for profit, in which animals are used either for sale, hire or work.

A conference of animal societies was organised in October to discuss the best means of improving legislation, but both the RSPCA and the National Canine Defence League refused to attend, preferring to 'go it alone'. But it was attended by representatives of the Cats' Protection League, the National Equine Defence League, the National Council of Women, the Kennel Club, Central Women's Advisory Committee, the Guide Dogs for the Blind Assocation, the Metropolitan Drinking Fountains and Cattle Trough Association, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the National Veterinary Medical Assocation, the Pit Ponies Protection Society, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Birds, the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, the Liberal Party, Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Council of Justice to Animals, the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals of the Poor and the National

Federation of Women's Institutes.

The League hoped that the combined weight of all these bodies would persuade the Government to bring laws up to date, remove obsolete and contradictory regulations and co-ordinate all matters affecting animals, and it wanted to get to work on a draft Bill to put before Parliament.

The fate of dogs belonging to Service personnel returning home caused the League concern, and pressure was put on the War Office to help them. In 1945 came the announcement that the military authorities had set up a quarantine station to receive them, asking each owner to pay a nominal fee of £5. Some people had criticized this as being too high, but the League disagreed, considering the cost of travel, feeding, housing and providing veterinary treatment for an animal for six months!

Conservation and what we now call "green" issues began to assume importance in the League's thinking at this time, some of the issues including an "orgy" of rook shooting at Nettlecombe, the protection of wild birds, the capture and training of elephants in Ceylon, the wholesale slaughter of wild animals in various parts of the Empire in an attempt to eradicate the tsetse fly and an endeavour, through the Board of Trade, to ban the use of plumage from Birds of Paradise and the Osprey for the decoration of hats.

The American atomic bomb experiment on Bikini Island, using live animals, aroused a vociferous protest from animal welfare organisations, but it fell on deaf ears. The British Government said it could do nothing, and the American military authorities simply kept quiet.

Lovely to be home — for both dog and owner.

"Subsequent reports in the Press were very voluble at first that few animals had been injured but when it was discovered that these animals were mostly dying from the after-effects, it was noticed that there was a strange silence."

But apart from these bigger issues of national and international importance, the staff of the League got on once more with its primary function of educating the public and operating a caring, first-class welfare service for animals.

Bronze and silver Medals continued to be presented to people who, at personal risk, had rescued animals from dangerous situations. Major Hume Pollock continued to attend Bampton Fair, where his efforts had, over the years, immeasurably improved conditions for the horses being sold there and transported away. In 1945, he made recommendations for better crowd control.

Oatmeal and water drinks for tired horses and ponies in the City were to be resumed as soon as supplies became available. The League's Investigator continued to patrol the streets, giving advice and keeping an eagle eye for incidents of ill-treatment of horses or small animals, examining backyard poultry pens, investigating reports or cruelty.

The local branches produced the usual mixed crop of heart-warming and heart-rending stories from the "sharp end" of animal welfare.

Hearing from the London, Midland and Scottish Railway that a cat had been injured on the line, Mrs Owen, the League's honorary representative in Camden Town, went into action. The cat had been flung by the train down a deep hole and porters had refused to go down a rope ladder to rescue it, so she went down herself. The poor animal was still alive but so bady injured, with its legs severed and one side ripped open, that she put him to sleep immediately.

Mrs Harding, at Crewe branch, took in Peter, an old Irish terrier who had been injured by a car and left at the roadside. He was obviously cared for, so she reported to the police and made enquiries, to no

avail. She had no room to keep him with her own dogs, and the vet. advised her to have him put down. She decided rather to take him to Shrewsbury branch, where Mrs Rice Oxley had offered to have him. But Peter didn't want to stay, so back he went to Crewe. Eventually, through an acquaintance, Mrs Harding heard of a woman whose dog had been run over and killed and his body taken to the town incinerator. But the description fitted Peter....soon Peter and his rightful owner were reunited, although Peter was then torn between his two "mums", so he was brought for visits and soon learned to find his own way to the branch to play with Mrs Harding's dogs, have a chat, a bone and a biscuit before trotting off home.

Speaking of the "sharp end" of animal welfare, Miss Newland, of one of the three Hampstead branches, was called out to help a cat whose tail had been badly bitten by a duck living in a neighbouring house. The cat had been in the habit of teasing the duck but was now reported to be giving it a very wide berth!

The task of educating the public, especially after six long years of fear and violence is illustrated by a report from Chelsea branch, which blames lack of parental supervision for this incident. "A cat was discovered swinging from a tree and enquiries disclosed that two boys, after tying string round the animal's neck and swinging it about, had hanged it. A serious talk to the parents and to the boys themselves, has apparently led to a marked improvement in their behaviour towards animals."

And Hammersmith reported that a cat left behind in an empty shop was discovered by the local Surveyor. By this time it was virtually a skeleton and on the point of death. The guilty owners could not be traced.

One morning at Newport station in South Wales, a supporter of the League saw a woman hurrying for a train, carrying a basket. "In some inexplicable manner", it opened and a Persian blue cat jumped out. The woman caught the train and the cat disappeared, but the League's friend got the station staff to help her catch the cat and take it to the Newport branch in Grafton Road. Eventually the owner was traced, but she did not want the cat, so it was found a good home. In the same area, a workman going on night duty tripped over a cord and found a cat on the one end, tied to a lamp-post. It was terribly thin and miserable, so he took it to the branch.

Also deliberately abandoned was a terrier about 12 years old which was found trapped in branches in a wood. Luckily, he was found by Mrs Williams, of the Pontnewnydd branch, Pontypool, who discovered that he was totally blind. No owner could be found.

Conclusion

In the animal welfare world, the issues change very little, and today The Blue Cross is still picking up the pieces: the beautiful dog found tied to a branch gate during National Pet Week; the litter of puppies dumped in a box in a farm gateway on a rainy night; the cats left behind when their owners move.

At its three hospitals and one clinic, as well as with the mobile clinic in Dublin, the Society continues to serve the pets of people who cannot afford veterinary fees.

At its 12 branches throughout England, unwanted animals are taken in and, wherever possible, are found good new homes, carefully vetted by experienced staff.

Welfare boarding facilities are offered for the pets of those who have to go into hospital suddenly or who lose their home as a result of fire or some other emergency.

Horses whose owners can no longer keep them are taken into the Horse Protection Scheme for life, those who are sufficiently healthy being loaned out to good homes, under supervision.

Wars might eventually come to an end, but the battle against ignorance, irresponsibility and cruelty towards animals is never completely won — and poverty is still a reality in our society.

To quote an earlier Blue Cross slogan: ***There is no welfare state for animals.*** It is this gap which The Blue Cross does its best to fill, by helping people and their pets to stay together, and by encouraging kindness to animals — the aim with which its founders first set out in 1897.

Mr E. Keith Robinson

The hard-working Secretary of Our Dumb Friends' League during the war years was Mr E. Keith Robinson. He had joined the Society in 1934 as Assistant Secretary to Arthur Goodiff, progressed to the Joint Secretaryship in 1935 and took over the reins in 1936.

Perhaps one of his hardest times came in 1940, when Mr Robinson laid his job on the line. It had all started in 1938 when a magazine, ironically called ***Truth***, attacked the League — and the Secretary in particular — in a scurrilous article saying that it was not a fit charity to receive subscriptions, and that the then editor intended to place all the information he had before the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Secretary sued for libel, coming to a financial arrangement with the League to finance the case.

After a nine-day trial in June 1941, the League and Mr Robinson were vindicated. Judgment was given in their favour, ***Truth*** was ordered to pay £2000 damages with costs, and the Judge said that the libel was about as serious an accusation as it was possible to make, and the defendants had not got within measurable distance of proving any conduct by the League, or Mr Keith Robinson, which justified the attention of the DPP — and this after two years' investigation into the League's books and preparation of the case!

When he died in 1953 at the age of 50 from heart trouble, Mr Robinson's great achievements over nearly 20 years were acknowledged in many newspapers and journals. The Veterinary Record published the following obituary:

"We record with deep regret the death of one of the best-known workers in the field of animal welfare in Mr Evan Keith Robinson, Secretary of Our Dumb Friends' League, which took place on the night of Thursday of last week after a long period of ill health, at the age of 50 years. Some three months ago he was obliged to give up work, and for the last two months was in St Andrew's Hospital, Dollis Hill, courageously bearing a long and painful heart trouble.

"Mr Keith Robinson was appointed to the League in 1935, and his able and devoted service has done much to foster the influence and promote the well-being of a great organisation. His loss will be mourned by many members of our own profession who had practical experience of co-operating with him in seeking the solution of problems common to animal welfare societies and ourselves.

In this connection, Mr P.J. Quigley, MRCVS, Chief Veterinary Officer of the League's hospital at Victoria, writes:

"'E.K.R. has very suddenly left us. To the members of the profession who had association with him this is a severe loss. In the very difficult liaison between the welfare societies and the profession he showed admirable understanding and justice. As a man, all who worked with him knew that when he died something very important in their lives had gone.'"

"Mr Keith Robinson's last public appearance was as a witness before the Duke of Northumberland's Committee on Horse Slaughter, returning to his bed after giving evidence. He was indeed not to be deterred by physical or any other form of difficulty from giving of his utmost to fulfil the foundation conception of the League as 'a society for the encouragement of kindness to animals.' Two years ago he inaugurated the 'Horse Protection Scheme,' designed to save horses from cruelty and unnecessary slaughter and, at the same time, to draw public attention to the rapid diminution in the horse population. During this period the League has bought up at ports of entry and at sales in every part of the country over 500 horses, loaning them out to farmers etc., under an agreement which stipulates qualified veterinary care. Another of his highly successful projects was the institution of the educative National Children's Dog Shows, which have been held to date in 34 different centres, attracting big en-

tries from the young owners of 'any kind of dog' ready to participate in a competition having only two objects — the promotion of the health of the animal and of a good relationship between the dog and the child. The entries are judged by veterinary surgeons, exemplifying once again Keith Robinson's insistence that the oversight and treatment of animals are primarily the concern of members of the veterinary profession.

"Mr Keith Robinson's activities were by no means restricted to the successful functioning of "Our Dumb Friends' League". He became Vice-President of the World Federation for the Protection of Animals and Chairman of the British Federation for the Animal Welfare Societies, this latter being the continuation of many years of work in an endeavour to unite the movement for the advancement of the well-being of animals.

"The funeral service took place at Golders Green on Tuesday, last, when there was a large and representative attendance. Mr Keith Robinson had asked that there be no mourning, or flowers sent, but that if any of his friends wished, a gift should be sent to Our Dumb Friends' League."

The Isle of Thanet Gazette reported that although warned by doctors to relax his efforts, Mr Robinson carried on as usual, expanding the work of the League until it cared for 30,000 animals annually. ***"He literally worked himself to death — for the animals."***

Clockwise from top left:
Boarders at the Blue Cross Charlton Kennels line up for the Press photographer.

A sailor visits his shaggy friend.

Another seaman seems to be restraining his bulldog from 'having a go' at Hitler.

"Don't worry—he'll be back."

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