

Farewell, Berkeley Square!



OCTOBER JUNE
1939 - 1946

*A Survey of the Work
of*
**THE ROYAL AIR FORCE
COMFORTS COMMITTEE**

42 · BERKELEY SQUARE · LONDON · W.1

With the Compliments
of
The Royal Air Force
Comforts Committee



VICTORY PARADE, LONDON, JUNE 8TH, 1946
The Royal Air Force Contingent marches past Their Majesties
The King and Queen at the saluting base in The Mall.

FAREWELL BERKELEY SQUARE



A SURVEY OF THE WORK
OF THE
ROYAL AIR FORCE COMFORTS COMMITTEE

*Presented to the Air Council
June, 1946*

AIR MINISTRY
42 BERKELEY SQUARE
LONDON, W.1

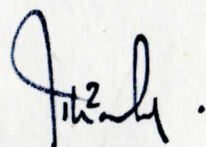
OCTOBER 1939 TO JUNE 1946

THIS BOOKLET IS SENT TO YOU WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE COMFORTS COMMITTEE

..... In compiling this it has been possible to include references on general lines only to the work which has been undertaken through the generosity and goodwill of the host of contributors and wellwishers of the Royal Air Force. Space does not permit mention of the multifarious welfare activities of the Committee which have affected directly or indirectly the lives of the men and women of the Royal Air Force. A reference to the figures given in the appendices will give a more detailed idea of the extent of the work undertaken, although here again the figures have been limited to the numbers of main items issued.

In order that both the donors of the gifts and those who have benefited by them may be aware of the extent of the contributions and gifts received and how these have been distributed, it is hoped that this booklet will receive as much individual publicity as possible. Party Organisers are asked to circularise it amongst their workers and Officers Commanding R.A.F. Units to ensure that either the Report itself, or extracts from it, are brought to the notice of all R.A.F. personnel under their Command.

It has been an honour to me to be entrusted with the position of Officer-in-Charge, R.A.F. Comforts Department through the war years, and I wish to take this opportunity to record my deepest gratitude to all those ladies and gentlemen, both at home and overseas, with whom my duties have brought me into contact. Throughout the seven years I have received from all that perfect co-operation and assistance which ensures a successful organization, run under the most happy circumstances.



Officer i/c R.A.F. Comforts Dept.

The Royal Air Force Comforts Committee

CHAIRMAN :

Air Vice-Marshal R. D. Oxland, C.B., C.B.E. ...	...	October, 1939—November, 1940
Air Marshal D. Colyer, C.B., D.F.C. ...	...	November, 1940—April, 1942
		and
		November, 1942—August, 1943
Air Vice-Marshal A. L. Fiddament, C.B.E., D.F.C. ...	...	April, 1942—November, 1942
Air Vice-Marshal D. Harries, C.B., A.F.C. ...	...	August, 1943—June, 1946

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN :

Air Vice-Marshal F. C. Halahan, C.M.G., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.V.O.	January, 1940—June, 1946
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REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AIR MEMBER FOR SUPPLY AND ORGANIZATION :

Air Commodore F. H. Sims, C.B.E.	October, 1939—February, 1946
Air Commodore H. D. Jackman, C.B.E. ...	...	February, 1946—June, 1946

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERMANENT UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR :

J. Healy, Esq., M.B.E.	October, 1939—June, 1946
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REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CHAPLAINS DEPARTMENT, AIR MINISTRY :

The Rev. A. McHardy, C.B.E., M.C., D.D., M.A., K.H.C.	October, 1939—June, 1946
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DIRECTOR OF AIR FORCE WELFARE :

Air Commodore H. Peake	February, 1942—September, 1943
Air Commodore S. Graham, M.C., G.M. ...	...	September, 1943—February, 1946
Air Commodore J. A. Boret, C.B.E., M.C., A.F.C. ...	...	February, 1946—June, 1946

LADY MEMBERS :

Lady Newall ...	...	October, 1939—March, 1940
The Viscountess Portal ...	...	February, 1941—June, 1946
Lady Babington, O.B.E. ...	...	February, 1941—June, 1946

The Royal Air Force Comforts Department

OFFICER-IN-CHARGE :

J. Healy, Esq., M.B.E.	October, 1939—June, 1946
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OFFICER-IN-CHARGE, STORES :

Miss S. Fass	October, 1939—September, 1944
Mrs. N. Heath	October, 1944—June, 1946

INTRODUCTION

AT the outbreak of war in 1939 no organisation existed within the Air Ministry for the purpose of the collection and distribution of gifts made to the Royal Air Force, or for the co-ordination of the voluntary effort under which large numbers of workers could be given an opportunity for developing their work on lines which would secure the greatest measure of economy and efficiency with maximum benefit to the Royal Air Force.

With this object in view, the Air Council brought into existence the Royal Air Force Comforts Committee in October, 1939.

THE R.A.F. COMFORTS COMMITTEE—COMPOSITION

Chairman—Director General of Personal Services—Air Ministry.

Deputy Chairman.

Representative of the Air Member for Supply and Organisation.

Representative of Chaplains' Department, Air Ministry.

Representative of the Permanent Under Secretary of State for Air.

The Director of Air Force Welfare.

Lady Members—Two.

FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

- (a) To ascertain the requirements of the Royal Air Force in both patterns and quantities of comforts required from time to time.
- (b) To arrange for the collection and storage of all gifts in kind made to the Royal Air Force and to expend to the best advantage cash received for the Royal Air Force.
- (c) To supervise the distribution of "Comforts" within the Royal Air Force so as to ensure fairness and economy.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE COMFORTS DEPARTMENT

To carry out the work of the Royal Air Force Comforts Committee the Royal Air Force Comforts Department was formed in 1939. This was under the control of an Officer-in-Charge, assisted by a small Air Ministry Staff, both Clerical and Industrial.

Accommodation and general expenses were provided by the Air Ministry, and railway vouchers issued to working parties to cover cost of railway carriage for parcels sent to the Comforts Depots.

The Headquarters was situated at Berkeley Square, London, W.1., with Packing Depots at Albermarle Street, W.1. and Berkeley Street, W.1. In addition Storage Depots were maintained at Wealdstone, Stanmore, Bushey and Droitwich.

VOLUNTARY WORKERS

The bulk of the work at Headquarters was carried out by Voluntary Workers who at times numbered up to two hundred persons, and many of whom served throughout the



THE OFFICER-IN-CHARGE: MR. J. HEALY, M.B.E.

whole of the war period on a full-time basis. The Committee fully acknowledges the indebtedness of the Royal Air Force to these helpers, who, in their enthusiasm and willingness to help, gave long hours of work under the most trying war-time conditions. A most happy fellowship developed among all the workers, which greatly helped the efficiency of the whole Comforts Department.

At times of special pressure during the war, when comforts had to be quickly prepared for detachments under sudden orders to move, we got most valuable expert help in packing from employees of Messrs. Selfridge Ltd. in Oxford Street after their day's work was over. This was typical of the support we received and the spirit of war-time London.

BANKING

Lloyds Bank Ltd., Berkeley Square Branch, were appointed Bankers to the Fund. The Account was operated on the signatures of two Members of the Committee.

An extract from a letter received from the Manager of Lloyds Bank Ltd. is as follows:—

Lloyds Bank Ltd., Berkeley Square House,
6th February, 1945.

I would like to take this opportunity of mentioning how much we appreciate the efficient manner in which the banking account has at all times been conducted. I can truthfully say that we have experienced no trouble whatsoever in any of the numerous transactions passing through the books. My predecessor, Mr. W. Kitchen, wishes to join me in paying this tribute . . .

(Signed) H. A. Jacobs, Manager

AUDIT

Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths & Co., 1 London Wall Buildings, E.C.1, were appointed Auditors to the Fund. An extract from a letter received from this firm is as follows :—

DELOITTE, PLENDER, GRIFFITHS & CO.,
1 London Wall Buildings,
E.C.1,
21st March, 1946.

As the Fund's Auditors we have always found the books and records to be well kept, and we should like to place on record our appreciation of the assistance and courtesy we have received throughout from the Officer-in-Charge and other officials with whom we have come in contact.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF GIFTS

All gifts received were acknowledged by a suitable letter. In addition it was found advisable in many instances for a personal letter of thanks to be sent either as encouragement, advice or general information.

TREASURY GRANT

In 1941 the Treasury agreed to grants for welfare provision. This became particularly necessary for, as the war proceeded, the demands of the Service increased and the sources of charitable donations tended to dry up. It was therefore not possible to provide for all requirements against voluntary contributions from the public.

During the war period the following grants were made :—

- (a) for issue of free wool—£245,000.
- (b) for purchase of radio equipment—£110,000.
- (c) For miscellaneous items, games, etc.—£140,000.

These grants necessitated the setting up of sections within the Comforts Department to deal with the placing of Air Ministry Contracts and the accounting necessary in connection with them. With the concurrence of the various Branches of the Air Ministry concerned the normal financial accounting and contract procedure was modified to meet the special circumstances of these grants, and a simple system introduced to obtain requirements of suitable items with a minimum delay in supply.



The work of the Royal Air Force Comforts Committee has been divided under two main headings

- Provision of (a) Woollen Comforts.
(b) General items—wireless sets, games, books, cigarettes, etc.

WOOLLEN COMFORTS

WORKING PARTIES

At the start of the Department it was agreed to register Working Parties throughout the country provided they consisted of not less than ten members and undertook to send their completed work to the Department for central distribution. Each party so recognised was sent an official registration certificate. The number of parties so registered was 6,147.

BADGES FOR INDIVIDUAL WORKERS

As a slight acknowledgment of the work done the Committee decided to issue R.A.F. Comforts Badges to those individual workers who qualified. The scheme for issue was as follows :—

- (a) One badge was issued free to each registered Working Party. Additional badges were issued at a charge of 1/- each, i.e., the cost price.
- (b) Badges were issued on the recommendation of the heads of the Working Parties, but the Committee notified its desire that a high standard should be set for qualification. The basis suggested was that each member of a party to qualify for a badge, should make at least four items for the Royal Air Force Comforts Committee. During the war period 75,000 badges were issued.

WOOL SUPPLIES

The issue of free wool had the advantage that the Committee was able to regulate the items made from it to meet their requirements and, furthermore, that as most free wool was issued during the summer period it checked the tendency of Working Parties to cease their activities during this time.

Shortly after the beginning of the war wool supplies in retail shops became scarce and those available were of inferior quality. In addition, prices had risen nearly threefold. The Committee therefore undertook to supply wool direct to Working Parties, and this necessitated :

- (a) obtaining a direct release of raw wool from the Wool Control,
- (b) arranging with spinning firms for the manufacture of this wool into yarn of suitable types and quality,
- (c) the setting up of a wool section within the Department to issue wool and to arrange for the necessary stock records and accounting procedure.



BUNDLING WOOLLEN COMFORTS FOR DESPATCH

It was arranged that the cost of wool to parties would be approximately the same as that paid by the Comforts Department and this procedure has been carried out throughout the war. The total of 780 tons of wool has passed through this Department. Furthermore, with a small adjustment of price and the obtaining of discounts on bills payable within a stated time, a working profit on the Wool Department throughout the period has amounted to £25,454.

The Committee is also able to report that it was found possible to maintain a high standard of quality of wool throughout the whole period, which met with the full approval of all workers.

WOOL FUND

Quite early in the war period it became evident that many of the organized parties, who at the outbreak of war started knitting for the Royal Air Force with wool bought with money raised locally, had reached the stage where they could continue to work only if the Committee was able to assist them by supplying wool free. Most of these parties were particularly keen to continue the work, and the Committee therefore decided to open a Wool Fund and invited subscriptions from the public. The sum received in this Fund throughout the war was £26,080.

From 1941 onwards free issues of wool were increased from the Treasury Grant, and no party desirous of working for the Royal Air Force was deterred from doing so because of lack of money to purchase wool.

W.A.A.F. WORKING PARTIES

The Committee was concerned that woollen garments for issue to the Women's Auxiliary Air Force were not forthcoming as gifts from the public. In order to meet the necessary requirements for this Service the following scheme was introduced :—

- (a) W.A.A.F.'s to form Unit Working Parties amongst themselves,
 - (b) wool to be issued free to these parties,
 - (c) each party to retain the garments made up to the number required at their station.
- Items in excess of the number required were to be returned to the Comforts Department for issue to the W.A.A.F. generally.

This scheme proved a very great success and 947 parties were formed. The amount of wool issued under the scheme was 236,419 lbs.

INDIVIDUAL KNITTER SCHEME

Owing to a falling off in the number of garments being produced for the Air Force in 1944, the Committee in July of that year introduced a scheme to register individual knitters. This covered people who were desirous of helping and who were not in a position to join Working Parties. The scheme was taken up with great enthusiasm throughout the country, especially among the aged and infirm who were eager to help the airmen, and the success of the scheme was beyond all expectation, as some 8,500 ladies were registered and over a quarter-of-a-million garments received. Many of these workers qualified and received Voluntary Workers' Badges.

CLOTHES RATIONING SCHEME

With the introduction of the Clothes Rationing Scheme in 1941 the Board of Trade took the opportunity to consider the general question of the provision of wool, coupon free, in Service shades to those members of the public who were knitting woollen comforts for the Services. After a good deal of consideration the President of the Board of Trade came to the conclusion, with regret, that it was not possible to arrange for the continuation of the link between Service men and their towns, villages or places of work, and that in future organizations and individual parties would have to work for a central pool for the Service concerned instead of for local men or members of their firms, etc.

This decision was based upon the view that the overlapping which had occurred in the past must cease, as this was a matter of considerable gravity in the supply position, since wastage



SORTING GARMENTS



SIR KINGSLEY WOOD INSPECTS SOME WOOLLEN COMFORTS

of wool meant a drain upon the country's sources of shipping space, exchange, production capacity and labour.

The Royal Air Force Comforts Committee was made the authority responsible to the Board of Trade for the control of issue of wool, coupon free, for the knitting of comforts for the Royal Air Force, and also to ensure that the wool so issued actually reached the Royal Air Force. Furthermore, it was required to give the undertaking to the Board of Trade that adequate steps would be taken to ensure that supplies were made to units against needs only, and that overlapping would not take place. The ruling that parties were required to work through the Royal Air Force Comforts Department as the central authority for the Royal Air Force was accepted by the majority of the existing organizations, but special arrangements had to be made to modify the control in regard to Scotland and Northern Ireland.

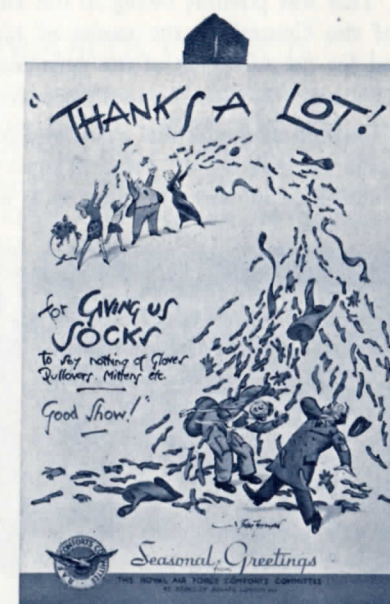
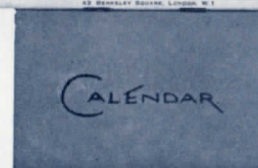
WORKING PARTIES—ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FROM ROYAL AIR FORCE PERSONNEL

With the introduction of the Clothes Rationing Scheme the Committee felt that a more personal contact between Working Parties and the Royal Air Force personnel should be introduced and maintained. Experience had shown that personal letters of appreciation direct from the recipients of gifts to parties was greatly appreciated and acted as a strong incentive for them to continue their work. The Committee therefore decided to issue to

these parties "Acknowledgment Slips" to be completed with the name and address of the party and attached with the gifts forwarded. This proved to be a great success and it was evident from the numerous letters received from Working Parties that it was very much appreciated and that our airmen had entered into this scheme with the utmost goodwill and cheerfulness and sent suitable letters of thanks.

WORKING PARTIES—PAMPHLETS, CALENDARS, ETC.

Throughout the war period the Committee issued various pamphlets, calendars, news bulletins, etc. to their Working Parties showing how the work of the Committee was progressing, and notifying how their comforts were appreciated by the Royal Air Force. These met with general approval. Indeed many Church halls and other working-party rooms in towns and villages have the pictures of the old calendars adorning the walls to this day, and recalling happy memories.



COMFORTS DEPARTMENT CALENDARS

ISSUE OF WOOLLEN COMFORTS

In order to avoid wastage and overlapping of issues, the Committee arranged that issues of woollen comforts should be recorded in the Service documents of the recipients. Woollen comforts were, however, issued as a personal gift for which no charge was raised either as a payment, returnable deposit or voluntary subscription.

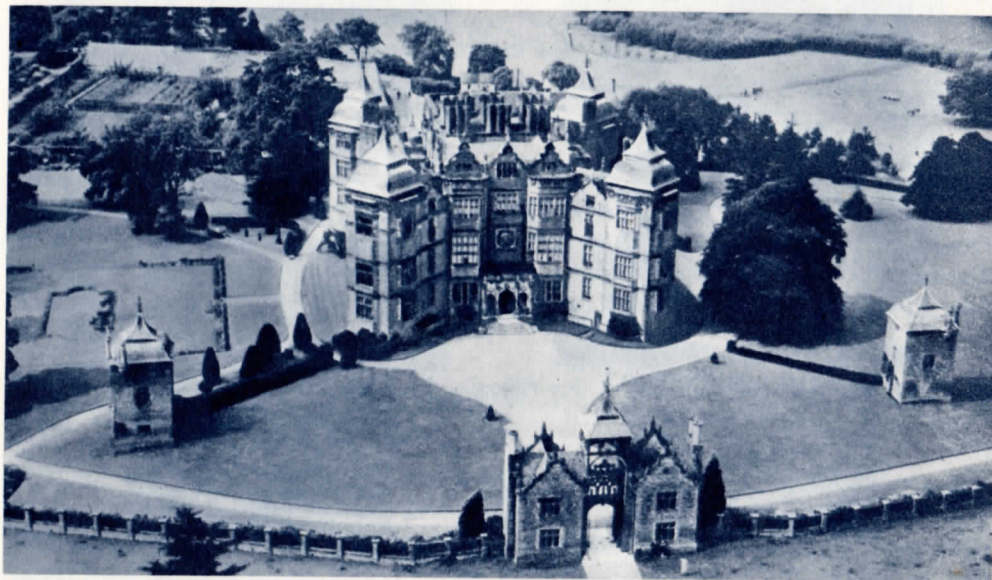
MENDING AND DARNING OF WOOLLEN COMFORTS

The Royal Air Force Units at home were encouraged to associate themselves with local R.A.F. Working Parties who were prepared to undertake to do darning and mending of woollen comforts. The R.A.F. Comforts Committee supplied the wool necessary for this work, free of cost and non-coupon. The scheme was much used and great benefit derived by the airmen concerned. They took pride in and care of their comforts knowing that these had been made by well-wishers, often at great sacrifice of time and labour and money.

SUMMER STORAGE

The Committee was able to arrange for the packing in air-tight containers and storage of woollen items received during the summer season against the possibility of danger by moth. This was possible owing to the kindness of Lord Doverdale in placing at the disposal of the Committee the vaults of his country estate. These vaults were specially prepared for the reception of the garments, and fires maintained throughout the summer to avoid damp. No loss by moth occurred throughout the whole period.

The Committee gratefully acknowledges its indebtedness to Lord Doverdale for his kindness in undertaking the personal supervision of this storage work and also for arranging for the despatch of items to units each winter season.



SUMMER STORE AT WESTWOOD PARK, DROITWICH

ACCOMMODATION AND STORAGE

Owing to the large quantity of goods which were passing through the Royal Air Force Comforts Department it was necessary at an early date to arrange for storage and also for the dispersal of stocks against enemy action. In addition to the two stores which were arranged in the West End of London and to the summer storage for woollens at Droitwich, storage space was taken at Wealdstone and Stanmore.

SUMMER WITHDRAWAL OF WOOLLEN COMFORTS

The Committee introduced a scheme under which woollen articles provided to units as comforts were handed in by personnel during the summer period, cleaned at public expense, and held in readiness for re-issue the following winter. Very full use was made of these facilities.

THE WOOL CONTROL

The Committee is much indebted to the Wool Control Department for their assistance in supplying wool for knitting parties. This Department was most helpful throughout the whole period, and in addition gave the benefit of technical assistance in the placing of contracts and on the questions of quality.

THE SCOTTISH WOOLLEN COMFORTS COUNCIL

In order to meet the desire from Scotland that a measure of local control should be given, the Scottish Woollen Comforts Council was set up in June of 1942 as a national body charged with the duty and function of correlating the activities of all voluntary associations in Scotland so far as these were concerned in procuring and providing woollen comforts for serving personnel of His Majesty's Forces, and to arrange for the distribution of items in Scotland. A further duty was to hold surplus stocks to provide for overseas requirements. The Royal Air Force Comforts Section of this Council did remarkable work throughout the war and arranged for three regional depots to be set up in Scotland. All woollens required for the Royal Air Force in Scotland were provided through this source, and, in addition, supplies for overseas were drawn by Headquarters as required.

The Royal Air Force Comforts Committee acknowledges its indebtedness to the late Sir John Watson, K.C.—the first Chairman of this Council; to Lady Watson and also to Mr. W. Thow Munro, C.B.E.—Chairman of the Executive Committee.

THE ULSTER GIFT FUND; THE MANX WOMEN'S GUILD

These bodies were set up under a similar scheme to the Scottish Woollen Comforts Council to control the receipts and issues of garments in Northern Ireland and in the Isle of Man. Both schemes worked very satisfactorily, and the Committee is indebted to both these bodies for the work they performed.

THE ROYAL OBSERVER CORPS

In order to meet the need of this Force for woollen items, the Committee were able to arrange for supplies of wool at wholesale rates against the surrender of coupons. Very full advantage was taken of this scheme.

GENERAL ITEMS

DONATIONS TO THE FUND

From the outbreak of war to the end of April, 1944, cash donations to the Fund amounted to £152,452 4s. 2d., made up as follows :

General Fund	...	£113,348	8s.	7d.
Wool Fund	...	£26,080	14s.	od.
Cigarette Fund	...	£13,023	1s.	7d.

Donations were received in both large and small amounts from various organizations at home and abroad from all classes of people.

The Committee refrained from making a public appeal for funds as it was felt that to do so might affect contributions to the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund which had to provide for post-war liabilities.

DONATIONS FROM OVERSEAS

Consignments of goods have been received from all parts of the Empire and from British communities in foreign countries. These have consisted of food supplies, cigarettes, woollens, etc., in large quantities. This has necessitated special handling through the Customs and Transportation of distribution to various units.

The generosity from these overseas sources has been further evident in the munificent monetary donations which have been sent and which represent approximately one-third of the total donations received by the Fund.

VALUE OF GIFTS RECEIVED

A detailed valuation of the retail value of the comforts received has been undertaken in connection with this Report, and the total value of the items received throughout the war period at this Headquarters may be stated as approximately £7,200,000. It is difficult to give a very accurate valuation owing to the numerous types of items received, and the varying qualities of each type, but the sum stated may be taken as a conservative figure.

HIS MAJESTY THE KING

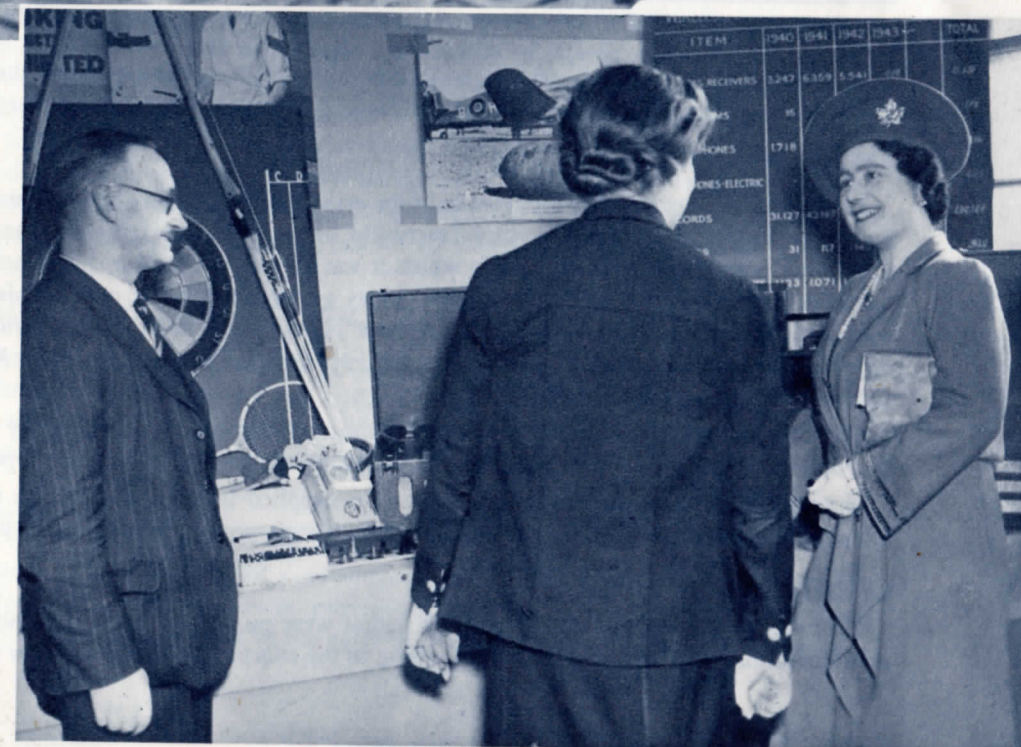
His Majesty The King has been most graciously pleased to send an annual donation to the Fund of £100.

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

Her Majesty The Queen was graciously pleased to honour the Committee by visiting the Headquarters of the Fund on two occasions during the war, and showed how sincere was her interest in the work and her knowledge of the aims to be attained. The Committee acknowledges its deep gratitude to Her Majesty for these visits, and for the encouragement and incentive to further tasks which they gave to all concerned. The Committee was pleased to receive from Her Majesty's Lady-in-Waiting the assurance that Her Majesty was most pleased with all she saw and commended the work of all helpers.



H.M. THE QUEEN INSPECTS THE COMFORTS SECTION



H.M. THE QUEEN IN THE GAMES SECTION



H.M. THE QUEEN IN THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT DEPARTMENT

In addition to these visits regular consignments of woollens were received throughout the war period from the Buckingham Palace Working Party, presided over by Her Majesty.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

In response to a general demand from units for assistance in obtaining musical instruments for dance bands, as these items were practically unobtainable on the open market, the Committee introduced a scheme under which it was agreed to obtain musical instruments for units and also in special cases to make money grants towards the cost. This scheme was particularly successful, and during the war period 1,414 units were provided with instruments at a cost of £85,000. Of this sum £25,000 was given by the Royal Air Force Comforts Committee as grants.

The Committee considers this scheme one of the most successful undertaken by it during the war, as these bands did so much to maintain and improve the morale of all personnel.

Gramophone records of good music were also supplied in large numbers to the great joy of music lovers throughout the Service where Gramophone Recitals are so popular.

GAMES SUPPLIES

In the early days of the war supplies of games were purchased in large numbers from manufacturing firms. In 1942, however, owing to the shortage of labour and raw materials

the Board of Trade had to control the manufacture and make issues under priority certificate. The Air Ministry—in common with other sponsored users—had to accept the Board of Trade allocation of these ex-quota supplies for the rationing period. The supplies allocated to the Royal Air Force Comforts Committee were from that date limited, but owing to the fact that large stocks were built up in the early days of the war it was found possible to meet all requirements of Royal Air Force units throughout the whole of the war period.

SNOOKERETTE TABLES

The Committee was able to procure at a very favourable rate 600 second-hand snookerette tables. These were fully re-conditioned and sold to units at the very low cost of £15 each. Great care was taken to ensure that these tables were assigned to isolated units in spite of the individual transportation difficulties of this procedure.

GARDENS AT R.A.F. STATIONS

In order to meet a general desire for units to join in the National Wartime Production Scheme by cultivating their own vegetable gardens, the Committee has assisted by providing the necessary seeds, plants and implements. As a result of this help, especially in the early days of the war, a considerable amount of production has been accomplished and the keen rivalry between stations to produce the best gardens stimulated.

OVERSEAS LEAGUE TOBACCO FUND

This Fund was inaugurated at the commencement of the war to provide cigarettes for the Forces, and has been able to maintain a continuity of supply in spite of shortages in production. This Fund was contributed to by well-wishers all over the world who desired to show their sympathy to the Allied Cause. The Fund was run most efficiently and the benefit to the Royal Air Force of these issues cannot be measured in words. The Chairman of the Fund—Major Pither, M.C., and the Organiser—Mr. Janes, worked assiduously throughout the whole period, and the arrangements entered into for distribution through the Royal Air Force Comforts Committee proved very satisfactory in all respects.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE FUND

The Committee acknowledges the great assistance which the Royal Air Force have received from the South African Air Force Fund. Owing to the activities of this Organization the Royal Air Force serving in South Africa, and those in training there, received adequate supplies of comforts from this source.

NUFFIELD FUND

In the early days of the war the Committee received considerable assistance from The Nuffield Fund for the Services in the provision of wireless sets, games and similar items. Without this assistance the work in the early days would have been very much limited.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

Messrs. Raphael Tuck & Sons, Ltd. offered to produce Royal Air Force Christmas Cards for sale on behalf of the Fund. During the war period the sum of £10,000 has been made available to the Committee under this heading. The Committee placed on record its gratitude to Messrs. Tuck for their interest in the Royal Air Force, and in particular to Mr. Desmond Tuck, the Chairman, for taking a personal interest in forwarding this scheme.

MASCOT DOLL

In order to raise funds in the early days, the Committee put into production a Mascot Doll of attractive design. The sales of this mascot were very satisfactory and the sum of £1,750 was realised from this effort.



MASCOT DOLLS

PRISONERS-OF-WAR

Although the responsibility for supplies to prisoners of war was that of the British Red Cross & St. John's Organization, the Committee has been able to assist by the supply of special items such as musical instruments, and also by sending supplies to the Red Cross Organization to assist that Organization in their responsibility to supply standard parcels to prisoners. In addition it was possible to make a monetary grant to the International Y.M.C.A. in Geneva to be spent on communal requirements at prisoner-of-war camps.

CANTEENS AND HOSTELS

In special cases the Committee have been able to help in the equipment of hostels and canteens which have been set up by outside organizations for the benefit of the Air Force personnel in isolated parts of the country.

R.A.F. TROOPSHIPS

Supplies of comforts to meet requirements of personnel travelling on troopships were maintained throughout the war period. This consisted mainly of musical instruments, games and books, etc.

MEMBERS OF THE ARMY SERVING ON R.A.F. STATIONS

The Committee decided that members of the Army serving at R.A.F. stations should be treated in all respects as if they were Royal Air Force personnel, and comforts items were issued to them as required.

AIR TRAINING CORPS

The Committee agreed to provide the Air Training Corps with Marching Band instruments on repayment, which was necessary as these were in very short supply. Over three hundred units of the Air Training Corps availed themselves of this concession.

DOMINIONS AND ALLIED FORCES

Throughout the whole of the war period the Committee refused no application for assistance from any of the Dominion or Allied Forces associated with the Royal Air Force. In addition, in the early days it was possible to assist the United States Army Air Force before their own supplies arrived in this country, and a letter of acknowledgment for this assistance was received from General Eaker of the United States Army Air Force.

SUPPLIES MADE DIRECT TO UNITS

In addition to the figures given in this Report the Committee was able to make arrangements for considerable supplies to be sent direct to units from sources where it was more convenient for this to be done, or to stations to which the donor particularly desired that the gifts should be sent. This was particularly so in the case of pianos, billiard tables and items of this nature.

A CORNER OF THE
PACKING ROOM



PACKING A
CONSIGNMENT OF
COMFORTS
FOR OVERSEAS



LOADING COMFORTS FOR SHIPMENT

PURCHASES ON BEHALF OF UNITS

The Committee maintained a policy of helping units to purchase items from their own funds in the best markets. This was proved necessary owing to the great shortage of certain items throughout the war period and proved of great assistance, especially in the case of units serving abroad and Allied Forces.

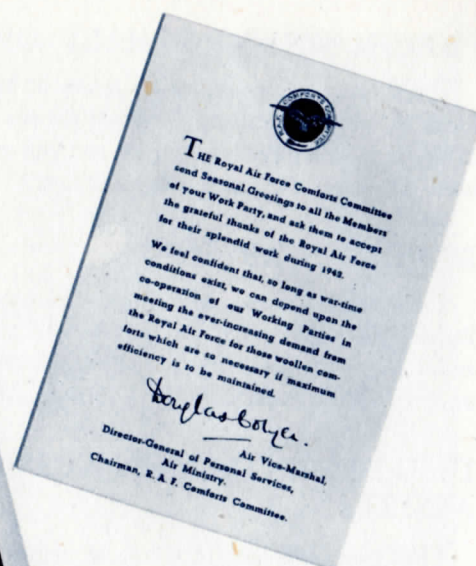
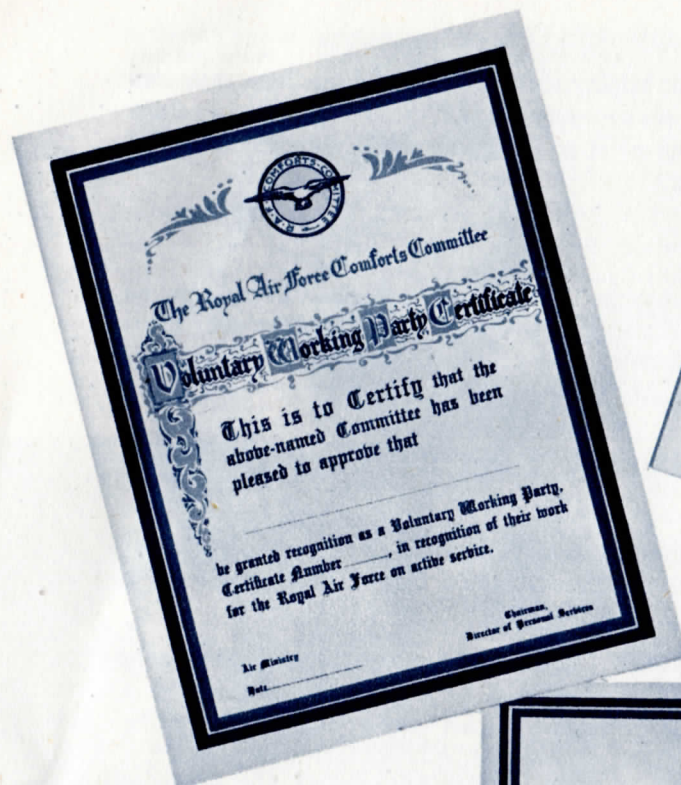
BONDED WAREHOUSE

The Commissioners of Customs and Excise approved the Committee's depot at the Bonded Warehouse for the deposit and re-export of dutiable goods—other than wines and spirits—without payment of special duty. The necessary Bond and Stock Accounts under Revenue supervision was introduced.

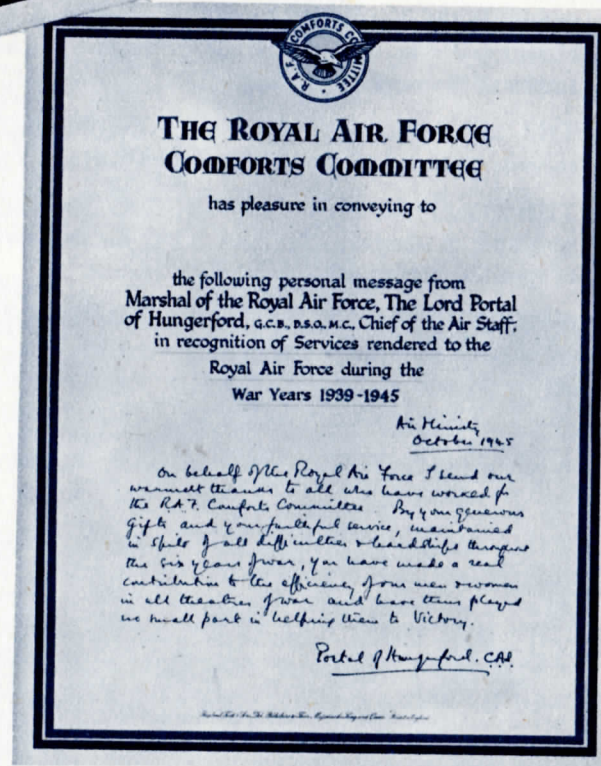
DEPARTMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS WHO GAVE ASSISTANCE

The Committee have received the utmost assistance from all branches of the Air Ministry and from outside organizations with whom it has come into contact. In particular, it is indebted to :—

- (a) THE R.A.F. MOVEMENTS DIRECTORATE, for always being most anxious to help in the movement of goods to all parts of the world. The consignment of billiard tables to West Africa and icecream machines to North Africa are two examples of the work undertaken.
- (b) THE AIR MINISTRY PRIORITY OFFICER, for his assistance in obtaining material to complete the various contracts placed for supplies.
- (c) THE STAFF OF THE AIR MINISTRY FINANCE DEPARTMENT, for their assistance in obtaining Treasury grants for the work, and for facilitating the work of spending and accounting for these monies.
- (d) THE CUSTOMS AND EXCISE DEPARTMENT, for their sympathetic treatment of all the work connected with the Royal Air Force Bonded Store, and also for very considerable free grants of tobacco and cigarettes made from supplies coming in to the King's Warehouse for distribution.
- (e) MRS. BEAUMONT, for her work in raising money and supplies for the Czech Air Force.
- (f) THE BRITISH WAR RELIEF SOCIETY INC., NEW YORK, for funds supplied—particularly in the early days to meet requirements.
- (g) THE DAILY SKETCH FUND, for its co-operation throughout the whole of the war period, not only in arranging for large supplies of woollens, but for meeting requests for general items from funds at its disposal.
- (h) THE PUNCH WAR COMFORTS FUND, for grants of money for free wool.



SPECIMENS OF CERTIFICATES
AND BADGES ISSUED



CHAPLAINS

In the early days of the war an arrangement was made under which the Chaplaincy Service of the Royal Air Force was directly associated with the Comforts Committee to ascertain needs and to distribute comforts allocated to units. The losses of comforts in our stores in France in no way daunted them, for after Dunkirk the work was taken up with added determination. The Chaplain-in-Chief and Principal Chaplains have given considerable assistance and instructed their Chaplains that they regarded their co-operation with the Comforts Committee as a most important part of their normal duties.

The Committee acknowledges this assistance which was willingly given and carried out with energy and interest. The many visits of Chaplains to the Comforts Department gave opportunity for helpful discussions in requirements, and permitted these officers to visualize the scope and aim of the work undertaken. Indeed, great good to our work came from visits of members of Welfare Committees of the stations.

LIAISON WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

It is with gratitude and pleasure that the Committee acknowledges the happy and close relationship which has existed between it and the other organizations with whom it has come into contact. It has been a pleasure to work with them.

GENERAL

The magnitude of the Committee's activities are reflected in the figures of supplies given in the appendices. This result was made possible by the sacrifice of time and money and by the personal services rendered both by the Members of the Committee and by the host of workers, both seen and unseen, who gave continuous help throughout the war period under most trying circumstances. It is evident from the letters of appreciation received that the Committee was able to provide welcome and timely relief both for the Royal Air Force and for the Allied Air Forces serving in all the war areas. All concerned in the work will certainly be remembered by the Royal Air Force with affection and gratitude.

CONCLUSION

The time has come for the Royal Air Force Comforts Committee to finish its wartime task. It sought to supplement wherever possible the amenities provided by the Services, and it is hoped that this object was attained. All Members consider it to be a privilege to have taken part in the work, and feel that wherever there was a request created by war conditions an endeavour was made to supply it.

It is difficult to give a comprehensive picture of the work undertaken as the Committee had such a wide range of activities. It is hoped, however, that the results shown will prove a source of satisfaction to all those who contributed. The help given, whether in goods, money or assistance was not given in a charitable sense. It represented a spontaneous outburst of sympathy, admiration and affection for the work performed by the Forces, and all supporters can take a pride in their share of the results achieved.

The Royal Air Force Comforts Committee

WOOL ISSUED TO WORKING PARTIES to April 1946

Item	1940 lbs.	1941 lbs.	1942 lbs.	1943 lbs.	1944 lbs.	1945 lbs.	Jan.- April 1946 lbs.	Total
4-ply	93,150	227,841	391,815	256,360	188,875	152,078	11,075	1,321,194
Double Knitting ...	17,502	46,725	48,648	24,705	47,228	16,722	919	202,449
Oiled	29,613	27,420	32,766	46,558	44,531	30,187	3,201	214,276
3-ply	—	—	2,705	2,295	—	—	—	5,000
White	—	3,568	1,432	—	—	—	—	5,000
Total	140,265	305,554	477,366	329,918	280,634	198,987	15,195	1,747,919

WOOLLEN GARMENTS RECEIVED to April 1946

Item	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	Jan.- April 1946	Total
Helmets	187,176	263,143	196,142	179,218	118,074	63,486	4,534	1,011,773
Gloves	72,850	142,457	155,737	315,784	144,264	436,030	14,537	1,281,659
Mittens	57,347	187,786	352,246	332,807	80,258	240,568	5,025	1,256,037
Pullovers	110,218	265,371	437,851	285,627	286,173	489,068	45,364	1,919,672
Scarves	203,337	269,427	348,372	318,598	178,361	419,458	30,051	1,767,604
Socks	275,861	370,376	463,641	215,550	113,037	201,281	32,841	1,672,587
Oversocks	39,247	62,341	55,887	71,657	102,142	194,173	8,630	534,077
Miscellaneous ...	28,127	56,442	76,315	152,683	53,608	349,541	4,545	721,261
Total	974,163	1,617,343	2,086,191	1,871,924	1,075,917	2,393,605	145,527	10,164,670

The Royal Air Force Comforts Committee

Particulars of Main Items Issued to April 1946

GAMES, ETC., ISSUED

Item	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946 to April	Total
Dartboards ...	8,330	6,834	8,258	11,247	12,525	13,863	610	61,667
Dominoes ...	1,891	4,281	4,237	5,569	8,428	4,555	375	29,336
Draughts ...	2,349	4,537	5,840	8,502	9,543	5,779	446	36,996
Chess ...	140	869	2,663	4,819	7,647	4,707	222	21,067
Table Tennis ...	670	921	858	3,560	1,824	2,528	116	10,477
Shovehalfpenny	1,647	4,041	3,444	4,532	3,143	1,603	218	18,628
Skittles ...	673	737	428	964	357	362	—	3,521
Bagatelle ...	520	1,660	1,216	318	—	—	—	3,714
Quoits ...	1,251	1,674	1,094	862	604	662	—	6,147
Badminton ...	16	102	44	87	56	59	—	364
Cards ...	13,173	32,447	67,127	87,086	41,876	66,037	33,242	340,988
Footballs ...	65	5,018	2,888	834	738	71	—	9,614
Billiard Tables ...	13	55	83	72	23	8	—	254
Miscellaneous ...	3,721	6,176	11,173	33,205	22,818	32,614	1,214	110,921

WIRELESS, GRAMOPHONES, RECORDS, ETC., ISSUED

Item	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946 to April	Total
Wireless Receivers ...	3,247	6,359	5,541	4,065	2,621	1,032	76	22,941
Radiograms ...	15	41	109	121	136	130	3	555
Gramophones ...	1,718	1,517	1,723	1,931	1,153	281	12	8,335
Gramophones—Electric ...	—	213	367	386	114	47	—	1,127
Records ...	31,127	43,147	55,526	51,223	38,410	47,287	1,342	268,062
Pianos ...	31	117	143	60	64	20	3	438
Musical Instruments ...	1,123	1,071	1,665	6,895	8,238	8,014	123	27,129

MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES

Item	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946 to April	Total
Books	112,413	77,858	83,172	121,469	128,255	84,890	3,587	611,594
Magazines	99,142	57,123	46,857	51,745	27,478	40,211	1,513	324,069
Cigarettes	6,617,400	10,973,300	22,179,420	35,618,020	40,012,648	40,403,620	4,240,386	160,044,794
Foodstuffs	173,147	67,462	38,171	45,432	61,610	16,642	270	402,734
Gift Boxes	13,173	7,432	6,841	6,680	13,755	2,670	1,124	51,675
Toilet Items	37,847	15,147	4,789	7,272	10,184	25,432	3,470	104,141



Headquarters of the Royal Air Force Comforts Committee
42 BERKELEY SQUARE, LONDON, W.1

POSTSCRIPT BY THE CHAIRMAN

AS I had the privilege of being Chairman of the R.A.F. Comforts Committee from August 1943 until its closing down in June 1946, I think I may fairly claim the right to add a short postscript to this brief history of its activities. It is impossible—much as I feel the obligation to do so—adequately to express my admiration of all those kindly people who contributed so freely and generously to R.A.F. Comforts in mind or in deed or in both. It has not been possible in this Report to mention more than a very few.

Perhaps I may be allowed to add my tribute particularly to those with whom I was more closely in contact at the Headquarters in Berkeley Square. I was always impressed and touched by the willing and kindly spirit of service which actuated everyone there. It never failed and the work went on through

many difficult and trying times, including flying bombs and rockets. The voluntary workers and the small permanent staff were beyond all praise. I wish too to acknowledge with deep gratitude the work of the members of the Committee who without exception showed such a deep interest in all that went on. Their efforts and co-operation made the Chairman's job a very simple and pleasant task.

I cannot write this postscript without mentioning the work of the Officer i/c R.A.F. Comforts. I can only say that the choice of Mr. J. Healy was the happiest and best that could possibly have been made. His humanity and sympathy with the objects of our work, his organizational powers, his energy and ability and his personal efforts and success in getting all that he could for Comforts made him outstandingly the right man in a post round which all the activities of the organization centred.

The Royal Air Force and W.A.A.F. owe a great deal to him and I can only try to express their deep gratitude.