HOW TO USE THIS ‘Interactive’ PDF:-
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If you can’t ‘jump’ from this CONTENTS list (right):-
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ALLIED FORCES AT ALL WW1 BATTLEFRONTS DEPENDED ON THE VOLUNTARY AID DETACHMENT (VAD)
The Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) was a voluntary organisation founded in 1909 with the help of the Red Cross and Order of St John. They cared for wounded soldiers, mainly in hospitals in the United Kingdom and some other countries in the British Empire. By the summer of 1914 there were over 2,500 VADs in Britain. VAD members also acquired knowledge of local resources, semaphore, outdoor cooking and other relevant knowledge. It was exciting for young ladies straight out of Edwardian drawing rooms, accustomed only to very genteel activities around the house. By 1914 there were some 74,000 VAD volunteers, two thirds of which were women and girls.
First World War VAD
Recruitment Poster
At the outbreak of the First World War VAD’s offered their services to the war effort. As most VAD’s were upper or middle class women and unaccustomed to the hardship and tradition of hospital discipline, the Red Cross were reluctant to send them to the overseas hospitals. However as the war continued a growing shortage of trained nurses opened the door for VAD’s in overseas military hospitals. Women over 23 and with 3 months hospital experience were accepted for overseas service. Many were decorated for distinguished service.
VAD Hospitals in Bromley

Kent Voluntary Aid Detachments, which operated throughout the period of the First World War, set up and ran over eighty auxiliary military hospitals in houses, church halls and schools, to receive wounded and sick soldiers brought home from the battlefields. The first Voluntary Aid Detachments in Kent were formed in 1910 following the publication by the War Office in 1909.

On the outbreak of war in August 1914 they combined their efforts to form ‘Kent VAD’. Headquarters were at the home of Dr Yolland, the Chief of Staff, at 53 Bromley Common, Bromley.

The eighty or more VAD hospitals in Kent provided accommodation for 4,730 patients. In addition to the members of the VADs, local surgeons and physicians gave their advice and long hours of service together with other medical professionals, nurses and masseuses. Kent accommodated far more wounded soldiers than any other area of the country and by the end of the war the VAD hospitals had cared for 125,000 patients - 30,000 more than any other county in England.

In the District Times Friday August 14, 1914 it was reported that ‘there had been generous offers in Bromley and district – the offer of accommodation for wounded and sick passed on by the base hospitals is a most encouraging one. Should need arise a large number of houses will be thrown open for their recept-

Note mobilising the Kent /50 VAD Bromley Common on the 5th August 1914 Beckenham

Kent/96 VAD
•Balgowan Road Schools (November 1915 - March 1919)

Kent/86 VAD
•Christ Church Schools (October 1914 - October 1916)
•Kelsey Cottage (October 1914 - October 1916)
•Girls Secondary Schools, Lennard Road (October 1916 - December 1918)

Bickley Kent/78
•Southwood (14 October 1914 - 31st January 1919)

Bromley Kent/52
•Bromley VAD Hospital opened in October 1914 and closed at the end of December 1918. It was accommodated in various buildings:
  •Bromley Palace
  •Elstree, 88 Hayes Road
  •21 Holwood Road
  •Holy Trinity Convent Sanatorium
  •Langley Wood
  •Masonic Hall
  •Quernmore
  •South Hill Wood

Kent/168 VAD
•Church House (18 September 1915 - 31 March 1919)

Kent/174 VAD
•Springhill (November 1915 - February 1919)

Kent/54 VAD
•St Marys Church Hall (October 1914 - December 1918).
•Canadian Convalescent Hospital (Bromley Park Hotel from 20 April 1915 - 31 August 1918) (This was the first Canadian Convalescent Hospital in the
Country.
• Dainton Nursing Home, Upper Park Road, Bromley (Autumn 1914)
• Lady Margaret Hospital, 31 & 33 London Road, (this was a fruitarian hospital and was offered to the War Office especially for Indian soldiers. Some Belgians accommodated here c. 1915.
• Holy Trinity Convent (used for a fortnight for wounded Belgians, October 1914) Phillips Memorial Hospital (24 beds offered Autumn 1914)
• Bromley Cottage Hospital (accommodated wounded Belgians in Autumn 1914)
• The Domestic Economy College building was used as a VAD hospital

Bromley Common Kent/50 VAD
• Lodore, 22 Mason’s Hill (7 beds, October 1914 - May 1915),
• The Rookery (18 beds, October 1914 - May 1915),
• Primitive Methodist Schoolroom, Bloomfield Rd (25 beds, October 1914 - May 1915), Oakley (50 beds, May 1915 - December 1919),
• 36 Bromley Common

Chislehurst Kent/60 VAD
• Abbey Lodge (October 1914 - March 1919),
• Lomas (mentioned as being auxiliary of the Ontario Hospital at Orpington, along with Abbey Lodge, March 1918,
• Brooklyn, Lubbock Road (used until January 1915),
• Christ Church Hall (October 1914 - ?),
• Coed-Bel School Sanatorium (October 1914 - March 1919),
• Hillside (September 1918 - March 1919) Lamas (September 1915 - March 1919) Parish Room.
• Kent/66 VAD ran their hospital at Holbrook (October 1914 - July 1916), Hollington House (1915 - ?), Hornbrook (October 1914 - 25 September 1918), The Gorse (July 1916 - 25 September 1918)

Farnborough Kent/80 VAD
• Wesleyan Church Hall VAD Hospital (October 1914 - December 1918)

Hayes Kent/82 VAD
• Hayes Grove (October 1914 - May 1916)
• The Warren (October 1914 - May 1916) Coney Hill

Orpington Kent/108 VAD
• Village Hall VAD Hospital (October 1914 - March 1919)
• Sherlies (used temporarily for a small number of VAD patients in Spring 1915) Crofton Grange School hall (provided some emergency accommodation in October 1914)

St Mary Cray Kent/108 VAD
• The Institute (opened later October 1914, 25 beds, closed in December 1914) Staffed by, Orpington VAD.

Shortlands Kent/164 VAD
• Valley Road Schoolroom (October 1914 - July 1915)
• 2 Valley Road (July 1915 - end of 1918)

West Wickham
• Oak Lodge (considered by the Canadians in mid-1915 but not taken)
Wood Lodge (offered/planned but never used, the detachment used buildings
Histories of Selected VAD Hospitals in Bromley
Balgowan V.A.D. Hospital
Address: Balgowan Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 4HJ
Dates in Existence: 1915-1919
Medical Character: Military auxiliary

History
In November 1915 Beckenham Urban District Council lent the Balgowan Road Schools, which had just been completed, to the British Red Cross Society for use as an auxiliary hospital linked to Beckenham Hospital.

The Balgowan V.A.D. Hospital opened in December 1915 with 100 beds. It provided care to soldiers of the Eastern Command and was staffed by the Kent/96 VAD, with Dr Reginald Maurice Henry Randell as its Medical Officer.

By 1917, when the Hospital had 200 beds, it was affiliated to the Royal Herbert Hospital in Woolwich. Later, when two marquees were erected in the grounds, it became the largest auxiliary hospital in the area, with 240 beds. After the war the Hospital continued to provide treatment, and had an Out-Patients Department for discharged soldiers or for those on leave or stationed in the vicinity. By the time it closed in December 1919, it had treated some 5,257 servicemen.

The buildings finally became a school in 1920. Today the Balgowan Primary School occupies the site. A memorial commemorating the use of the school buildings as an auxiliary military hospital is located in the main hall.
Balgowan VAD Hospital, Beckenham

Balgowan VAD Hospital was based on Balgowan Road, where Balgowan Primary School is today. The Primary School was built by the local authority at the start of the First World War to provide more school spaces for the children of Beckenham. When the war broke out the school buildings were identified as ideal for a hospital. The local authority delayed the opening of the school and allowed the buildings to be used by the Kent 96 (Beckenham) VAD as a hospital.

The hospital opened its doors in December 1915 and had space to look after up to 100 wounded soldiers. Over the next few years the hospital expanded to treat up to 240 wounded soldiers. This made Balgowan the biggest local VAD hospital.

After the war ended in 1918, the hospital continued to function treating local wounded soldiers until it closed at the end of 1919. During the four years that the hospital was open it treated over 5000 wounded soldiers.

In 1920, the primary school was opened.
Abbey Lodge VAD Hospital, Chislehurst
Abbey Lodge VAD hospital was based on Lubbock Road. Abbey Lodge was a domestic premises and had previously been used as somebody’s home. Local campaigners managed to persuade the owner to allow Abbey Lodge to be used as a hospital by the Kent 60 (Chislehurst) VAD.

The hospital opened its doors in October 1914 and had room to look after up to 50 wounded soldiers. The first patients were wounded soldiers from Belgium. By September 1915 the hospital was full up and another local house (called Lamas) was used as extra space for the hospital. By 1918, this too was full up and a third and final local house was used (called Hillside) meaning that up to 140 wounded soldiers could be treated.

All three houses closed in the spring of 1919. During the five years they had been open, they treated over 2500 patients.
Oakley VAD Hospital, Bromley

Oakley VAD Hospital was based at a house called Oakley House in Bromley Common. The house had been lent by its owner to be used as a hospital for the Kent 50 (Bromley Common) VAD.

The hospital opened its doors in 1915 and could treat up to 50 wounded soldiers. It also had equipment such as an operating theatre and an x-ray machine. A year after the hospital was opened, more beds were added allowing it to treat up to 60 wounded soldiers.

The hospital closed in 1919. During the four years it was open it treated over 1000 patients.
Village Hall VAD Hospital, Orpington

The Village Hall VAD Hospital was based at the old village hall on the High Street in Orpington. It was run by members of the Kent 108 (Orpington) VAD.

The village hall opened in 1914 and had enough space to provide 30 beds for wounded soldiers. Like many local VAD hospitals, some of the first patients to be treated were from Belgium.

The hospital closed in 1919 and in the five years it was open over 1300 patients has been treated.
Quernmore VAD Hospital, Bromley

Quernmore VAD Hospital was based in Plaistow Lodge in Bromley. The building was originally a school for boys. The buildings were offered by the school to the Kent 52 (Bromley) VAD.

Quernmore was only used as a hospital for a short period of time before it returned to being a school.

Above: Quernmore House School

A Nurse attending injured soldiers of the time.
The Warren VAD Hospital, Hayes

The Warren VAD Hospital was based at Warren House in Hayes. The owner of Warren House had offered it to be used as a hospital. This offer was gratefully accepted by the Kent 82 (Hayes) VAD and the hospital opened in October 1915.

The hospital originally had enough beds to treat 55 soldiers.

Like Abbey Lodge in Chislehurst, some of the first wounded soldiers to receive treatment were from Belgium. The Warren was set in large grounds which provided a nice setting for the wounded soldiers.

The hospital closed in May 1916 and during the two years it had been open it treated over 600 wounded soldiers.
Activity

Imagine you have been asked by the Red Cross to design a recruitment poster to encourage women to join the Voluntary Aid Detachment.
Elsie Harvey was born to wealthy parents in Montevideo, the capital city of Uruguay in South America on the 12 December 1886. Her father William Harvey worked as a Banker in Montevideo and was married to Josephine. We know little about her life in Uruguay, but we do know that Elsie left Buenos Aires, the capital city of Argentina, with her mother and their servant sometime in early April 1912 on board the Royal Mail Ship (RMS) Avon.

RMS Avon
During the 8,679 mile journey from Buenos Aires to Southampton the RMS Avon called in at the following ports: Montevideo, the Brazilian ports of Santos, Rio de Janeiro, Bahia and Pernambuco, then across to the island...
of Madeira, then on to the Portuguese capital, Lisbon; then Vigo in Spain, before calling at the French port of Cherbourg, then finally arriving at Southampton, on the on 18th May, 1912.

Caring for the Wounded in Beckenham

By 1916 Elsie Harvey was living at 36 Fox Grove Road, in Beckenham and had become a VAD Nurse working in the nearby Balgowan Road VAD Hospital.

As a volunteer nurse Elsie would have undertaken a number of duties that did not require the knowledge and skills of a professional nurse. Elsie would have changed wounded soldiers’ bandages, made their beds, taken them for walks and helped feed them at meal times if they were unable to feed themselves. VAD nurses would also comfort the wounded soldiers by engaging them in conversation about home life or about their experiences in the trenches.

Nurse Harvey’s Autograph Album

During the First World War it was fairly common for VAD nurses to collect the signatures, sketches, poems and messages from the soldiers they cared for in small autograph albums. Some soldiers chose to even put in a lock of their own hair in the nurse’s album. This autograph album was kept by Miss Elsie Maud Harvey whilst a VAD at Balgowan Hospital, Beckenham, Kent during the First World War. It contains drawings, signatures, published and original verse in the form of contributions from the servicemen on her ward, most of whom had been wounded on the Western Front, 1916 – 1918.
Soldier’s Messages to Nurse Harvey

Nurse Elsie Harvey’s autograph album presents the reader with a wonderful insight into the lives of the service men who were recovering from their wounds and the nurse that cared for them. Some soldiers such as Private MaGee of the Seaforth Highlanders chose to write short messages of thanks, with a sketch of their regimental badge.

Message of thanks by D Magee of the Seaforth Highlanders

Many of the soldiers recorded the place and date of where they were wounded. While most of the soldiers fought on the Western Front in France and Belgium, some such as A Bradley of the Royal Field Artillery saw action in the Eastern Front - Salonika (Macedonia), the Dardanelles (Turkey) and Serbia.

In addition to the one verse poem thanking Nurse Harvey, Sergeant Hinett of the 1st Notts and Derby Regiment tells Nurse Harvey that he was wounded whilst fighting near the Belgian town of Ypres in April 1916. Hinett also includes a news cutting about the Distinguished Conduct Medal he received for gallantry during days of heavy bombardment. Whilst under fire Sergeant Hinett tended to the wounded and rebuilt the gaps in defences in full view of the Germans.

A few of the soldiers had a talent for drawing. Gunner Lock of the Royal Horse Artillery used coloured pen and ink to draw a picture of Nurse Harvey and a wounded soldier dressed in his blue ‘invalid uniform’.

Private T. J. Stephens of the Kings Liverpool Regiment chose to write a short poem expressing his gratitude for the care he had received from Nurse Harvey at Balgowan.

A number of soldiers wrote short funny poems in gratitude for the care they received from Nurse Harvey such as Bombardier J.T. Bloom of the Royal Horse Artillery.
Some activities to carry out:
Activity One: Write a poem for Nurse Harvey

Write your poem here. Use the examples of poems and messages written to nurse Harvey to give you some ideas. Think about the different styles of poems. You accompany your poems with pictures – some that depict the war, the nurses or your home town.
Some activities to carry out:

Activity Two:
Create your own Autograph book,
Soon after the outbreak of the First World War, the government of Ontario, in Canada, sent a member of staff to look at the possibility of building a military hospital for injured Canadian troops in Britain.

Some land in Orpington was chosen for its proximity to the main railway line from Dover and the good standard of sewage control. Building works began in October 1915 and within 4 months it was completed. The hospital consisted of hutted wards able to accommodate 1040 patients in total. The patients were mainly Canadians, but some Australians and New Zealanders were also admitted.

The staff was fully trained and efficient and provided with plenty of first class equipment and stores. Specialists in every kind of injury and illness including mental health, plastic surgery and even dieticians were present.

Entertainment was provided for both patients and staff, with film shows, cricket and football matches, and concerts. Craft and wood carving were taught to the patients who could also enjoy painting and needlework.
A group of ladies from the Canadian and Australian Red Cross along with local women who wanted to make the soldiers less homesick used to visit to help the patients write letters to their families back home, or bring them little treats like sweets.

An exciting event was the visit of King George and Queen Mary to the hospital on 5th June 1919. They chatted with the men and had tea with the nurses.

The monthly journal, The Ontario Stretcher, was produced for patients by Captain Fox, the Quartermaster who was one of the main forces behind the organisation of the hospital. He and his team oversaw the feeding of patients and staff, and the provision of stores such as coal and laundry facilities. The magazine informed the men of the progress of the war effort, and also entertained them with amusing anecdotes and articles.

Another positive step to keep up the wounded men’s spirits was the formation of The Soldier’s Club. This was set up at the suggestion of some local clergymen, in a nearby Church Hall in 1916 and consisted of recreation facilities such as billiard and bagatelle tables, games and books and a canteen for refreshments. Each afternoon wounded soldiers on crutches and in wheelchairs would go to the club and spend pleasurable hours along with other troops who were stationed nearby.

An interesting mural has been put on the wall of the present Orpington Hospital, which stands on the site of the old military hospital, showing facts and stories of the experiences of the men who were admitted to the military hospital. It is worth a trip to see. The clock tower, the only surviving structure of the Ontario Military Hospital, is in the courtyard there. Formerly it stood above the delousing baths! Perhaps you could try to find out what these were?

Hopefully the people of Orpington were of help in supporting these men from far countries and forming a strong bond with them in their difficult times.
Billiards
Billiards is an indoor game played on a table. The game is played on a billiards table, a table which is the same size as a snooker table. The game involves two players and there are two cue balls, one for each player. Points are scored for pocketing the balls (either potting the red ball, or the other cue ball) and for cannoning (hitting both the red ball and the other cue ball in the same shot). Points would be deducted if you pocketed your own cue ball.

Bagatelle
Bagatelle is a game played indoors on a table. The aim of the game was to use a cue to hit balls past wooden or metal pins which acted as obstacles into holes. Bagatelle is similar to a pinball machine.

Left:
Clock Tower of Original Hospital today.
Some activities to carry out:

1. Write a letter home as if you were a recovering soldier, eager to hear how his wife and children are back in Canada. You may wish to include information about what the hospital was like.

A LETTER HOME
Some activities to carry out:

2. Write a short article, or poem which could appear in the hospital magazine for patients to read.
At All Saints Church, Orpington there is an extension to the original churchyard and part of this area was called Ontario cemetery, but it was known locally as ‘Canadian Corner’. This was because the majority of the war graves were Canadian. These graves can be identified by the Canadian emblem of the maple leaf, which is also on Canada’s national flag.

The cemetery has 116 war graves; 88 Canadians, 5 Australian and 23 soldiers from the United Kingdom. The majority of the soldiers buried, died from their wounds or illness at Ontario Hospital. 11 of the Canadian soldiers originally came from Britain and one Australian soldier was the son of Mr and Mrs E. Bearman of Orpington.

A photograph of Charles Henry Bearman appeared in the local newspaper together with a report of his funeral.

In 1917 the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) was established. It was originally the idea of Mr Fabian Ware, who was with the British Red Cross in the war. He started recording the whereabouts of as many soldiers’ graves as he could. He felt that the graves, wherever they were, should be looked after and maintained.

PHOTOGRAPHY: KEN SINYARD ZYGO DESIGN LTD
It was decided that each man or woman from the Commonwealth, who was in the services, should be remembered by the name on a headstone or if the body was not recovered on a memorial.

Today the CWGC cares for graves and memorials in 150 different countries, including Britain. Consequently ‘Canadian Corner’ eventually became to be looked after by the CWGC. Besides the war graves in ‘Canadian Corner’, a monument was built called ‘the cross and sword of sacrifice’. Such a cross can be found in most war cemeteries that are looked after by the CWGC which have more than 40 graves. The memorial was unveiled on 6th November 1921.
Activity
Find the names of these soldiers who are buried in ‘Canadian Corner’ on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website.

Bert Brain
Joseph Patrick Ryan
Edwin Bryan Pulham
Eugene Rondeau
Lawrence Grant Abrams
John Angus Macgillwary
Charles Henry Bearman
Frank Bromley
John Lewis Dickens
Herbert Dunton Paisley

Make a table to include the following if stated; their given name, rank, service number, date of death, age, regiment/service, service country and cemetery.

Hint: Try only putting in the surname of the soldier when searching.

Hint: Select First World War

Hint: If the cemetery stated on the CWGC website is in Orpington (All Saints) you have the correct soldier.

When you have found the correct name, click on it to see if you can find out any additional information.
When the First World War started in 1914, initially there was panic buying and hoarding of food. Long queues developed outside shops and food prices increased.

In 1917 German submarines or U-boats as they were known, destroyed many merchant ships that were bringing supplies of food to Britain, especially from Canada and the United States of America.

Due to food shortages the Government appointed a Minister of Food Control, as food production needed to be increased. Local councils were given the powers to have green spaces, such as parks, turned into allotments. These allotments were small areas of land that were rented to grow produce. Today allotments can still be rented by the public.

In early 1918 food rationing was introduced, so no one starved. West Wickham parish council were particularly concerned with the loss of food due to rats and sparrows. The council decided that rat traps should be provided to older children of the parish and that they should be paid half a penny (1/2d) for each rat’s tail and a penny (1d) for a sparrow’s head!

Old money, which was known as pre-decimal money had 240 pennies to one pound. There were 20 shillings in a pound and 12 pennies made one shilling.

Therefore to earn one pound, the children needed to catch 480 rats or 240 sparrows.

One penny today would be worth 0.42 of an old penny and an old half penny 0.21.
Allotment facts

In 1908 the Small Holdings and Allotments Act came into force placing a duty on local authorities to provide allotments according to demand. Towards the end of the First World War more land was made available as a way of helping returning servicemen.

Food during the First World War

There was a scarcity of fruit and vegetables and some foods were rationed. People were asked to do without potatoes on certain days. Flower growing was banned and at one point in 1916 Britain only had enough wheat for the next six weeks before it ran out of supplies.

First World War allotments in Bromley

According to the Bromley Times, the town council approved of arranging for land to be used by local people who asked for it. By April 1917, 558 plots had been allocated after 582 applications were made. One local allotment was the Southlands Road allotments, established in about 1910. It is still in use today and is the largest site in the borough.

First World War allotments in Britain

Before the First World War there had been 600,000 allotments in Britain. During the war this had risen to 1.5 million.

Sources:
History learning site, IWM, BBC website, West Wickham history book
Activity ideas
Some activities to carry out:

1. Design a poster encouraging people to rent an allotment, to grow their own food.

2. Make a plan of your allotment and show what you would grow.

3. Have you any recipes or ideas as to what you would do with the food you have grown on your allotment?
PLAN YOUR OWN

ALLOTMENT
DESIGN A POSTER
RELATED WW1 LINKS - CLICK ANY TITLE BELOW TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE

- BROMLEY FIRST WORLD WAR
- IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM
- WAR MEMORIALS IN THE UK
- WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION
- GALLIPOLI ASSOCIATION
- COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION
- AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL
- FRENCH DEFENSE
- AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION
- ACES & AIRCRAFT OF WORLD WAR 1
- NATIONAL ARCHIVE
- WW1 BRITISH ARMY
- WW1 BRITISH ARMY UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT
- PIERRES WESTERN FRONT PHOTOS
- CANADIAN VETERANS

Further links

- Imperial War Museum’s Film Frames Collection
- Great War forum for sharing information
- For German Research