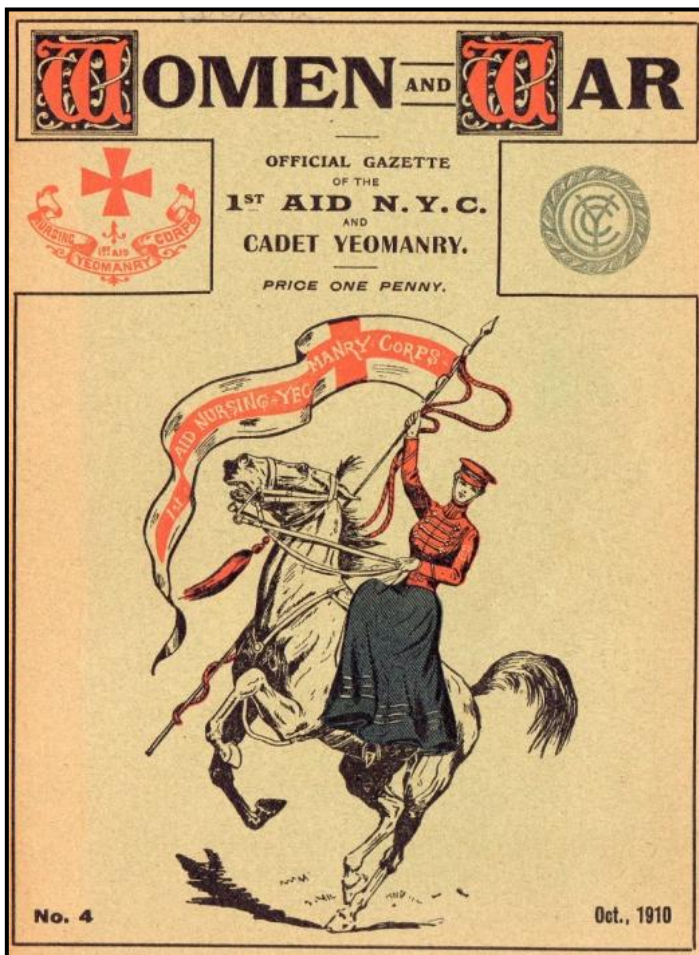


FANY at the Western Front

An overview of the role of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry Corps in WW1: 1914 – 1919



On my return from active service I thought out a plan which I anticipated would meet the want, but it was not until September 1907 that I was able to found a troop of young women to see how my ideas on the subject would work. My idea was that each member of this Corps would receive, in addition to a thorough training in First Aid, a drilling in cavalry movements, signalling and camp work, so that nurses could ride onto the battlefield to attend to the wounded who might otherwise have been left to a slow death.

Captain Edward Baker 1910

During my period of service with Lord Kitchener in the Soudan Campaign, where I had the misfortune to be wounded, it occurred to me that there was a missing link somewhere in the Ambulance Department which, in spite of the changes in warfare, had not altered very materially since the days of Crimea when Florence Nightingale and her courageous band of helpers went out to succour and save the wounded.

76 WOMEN AND WAR.

PARTICULARS
OF THE

First Aid Nursing Yeomanry Corps.

THE FIRST AID NURSING YEOMANRY CORPS was founded for the purpose of rendering "First Aid" to the wounded and their services will primarily be at the disposal of the British Government in the event of hostilities breaking out.

Members must qualify in First Aid and Home Nursing, and in addition go through, and pass, a course of Horsemanship, Veterinary Work, Signalling, and Camp Cookery, and must provide their own Uniform, and the necessary "First Aid" outfit, which latter must be always carried when in uniform; also pay for all horse hire

Members joining must be not less than 5ft. 3in. in height, and between the age of 17 and 35 (unless otherwise at the discretion of the C.O.).

Members must join for a period of at least 12 months, and are to attend drills as notified to them by their Troop Officers.

The enrolment fee for ordinary members is 10/-. Riding School and Headquarters Subscription, 6/- per month.

Members must be prepared to turn out for active service at 24 hours' notice, unless they have joined for Home service only.

Members must definitely state on enrolment whether they belong to, or have belonged to, any other organization.

Members changing their address must communicate immediately to Headquarters, giving new address, together with Telegraphic Address, or Telephone Number, if any.

The Staff is headed by the Commanding Officer, assisted by an Adjutant, and a council of officers to be appointed from time to time. All appointments are honorary.

The Headquarters of the Corps are open during Office hours to members desiring information.

The accounts and books of the Corps are audited by a leading firm of Accountants, and a Statement of the Receipts and Expenditure will be available at Headquarters, 118, Holborn, E.C., for inspection by the members.

TELEPHONE: HOLBORN 2899.

"F-A-N-Y" spelled a passing Tommy as he leant from the train. "I wonder what that stands for?"
"First anywhere?" suggested another.

A Women's Nursing Yeomanry Corps at Work.

The women of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry Corps spent Whit Monday in camp in field practice with the Army Service Corps at Pollard's Hill, Norbury, and did excellent work in the field. Dressed in tight-fitting khaki regimental coats, with peaked caps and loose astride skirts, they brought up the rear of a procession headed by a band and about eighty members of the Army Service Corps. No women have so nearly approached the soldier in physical fitness and technical knowledge. Mounted on horses, they rode from their headquarters in London on Saturday, taking with them all their kit. They pitched nine tents without the help of any man and installed themselves in a field adjoining one in which the officers and men of the Army Service Corps are encamped. Stretchers were improvised and carried, waggons for the wounded were driven, and flag-signalling—in which the women are particularly adept—was carried out. First



The Yeomanry Corps in Camp at Norbury

FRENCH SCHOOLBOYS IN LONDON

London's little guests of forty French boys have learned that the metropolis is a very pleasant place indeed. The children managed to crowd quite a number of visits in one short day, the Sunday outing including Buckingham Palace, the Albert Hall, Hyde Park, and Hampton Court. In St. James's Park the lads stood at attention and saluted as the Guards passed with the colours. In the meantime a party of eighty English boys and girls have been visiting Paris. For both parties it is an event in a lifetime



The Mascot Bulldog of the Ladies' Yeomanry Corps

aid was rendered to a number of "wounded" men, and the women conveyed them with remarkable speed to an improvised field hospital which they had themselves erected. The tents, all lit with electric light, were models of neatness and cleanliness, and the women, not having a mess of their own, and being free of all diffidence made themselves at home in the officers' mess. A few hours in the afternoon were given over to rest, and the women entertained to tea a number of their friends. A little before five o'clock preparations were made to strike camp. The women folded their tents, and mounting their horses rode out from Norbury back to their headquarters in London. The bulldog seen in the view below is the mascot of the corps and has been specially trained for sentry duty. Reading from left to right we see Lieutenant Franklin, Sergeant-Major Walton, and Lieutenant C. A. Smith.



The Nursing Corps Tending the "Wounded"

The small group of spirited women that Edward Baker gathered together in 1907, (which included his daughter, Katy), was to evolve into one of the most decorated of women's units ever. He named them the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry Corps. These early FANYs did indeed become proficient in the art of swooping down upon a wounded soldier at high speed, scooping him up behind the saddle and delivering him to the First Aid Post. Perhaps Baker himself finally found their spiritedness too much. In 1910 a discontented group, led by Mabel St Clair Stobart, broke away from the FANY to form the Women's Sick and Wounded Convoy. Flora Sandes,¹ who was later to be the first female member of the Serbian Army, was one of these. In 1912 the W.S.&W. Convoy went to Serbia in the 1st Balkan War. Baker soon after disappeared from the scene, and the Corps came under the control of two determined and distinguished women, Lilian Franklin and Grace Ashley-Smith. They transformed the FANY, acquiring a horse-drawn ambulance; replacing the elaborate uniform with more practical khaki; introducing astride riding (and divided skirts); making the all-important contacts within the British military that were to prove vital to their success in 1914. Although often subjected to scorn and hostility from the wider general public, they succeeded in gaining support from the Brigade of Guards, the Army Medical Corps (RAMC) and the Surrey Yeomanry, all of whom helped to train them at their annual camps. The task which faced the FANY at the beginning of the war in August 1914 was to find a military body which would recognise them and give them work. Grace Ashley-Smith and Lilian Franklin were by now effectively running the Corps. Surgeon-General Woodhouse had inspected them in their camp in July 1914 and had been so impressed that he sent Ashley-Smith to the Director-General Medical Services to ask for official recognition. The Chief Commissioner of the British Red

¹ Her own autobiographies 1916 & 1927 and The Lovely Sergeant, Alan Burgess 1963

Cross Society (BRCS) had also promised to give the matter thought. Yet, when war broke out and Franklin officially placed the Corps at the disposal of the War Office, British military opinion was still that the Front was no place for a woman:

"My dear, you are overwrought and not seeing things in the right perspective. There are enough nurses to attend to the Army. Amateurs will be neither wanted nor welcomed, either as soldiers or nurses."



Ashley-Smith, who had spent two years at school in Belgium, was en route to see her sister in South Africa when war was declared. She immediately set sail for home. On board she met Louis Franck, the Belgian Minister for the Colonies, who suggested the Corps' services would be welcomed in Belgium. (She had spent two years at school there.) Somehow obtaining permission from the War Office to cross the Channel, she set off for Antwerp where she offered the services of the Corps. It was to be the fulfilment of Captain Baker's plan. By September 10th she was nursing the wounded at l'Hopital de Boulevard Leopold in Antwerp. In her memoirs², Ashley-Smith wrote:

Whilst waiting, I registered at the Belgian Red Cross as ambulanciere and worked from morning to night with a motor ambulance, bringing wounded in from outposts and trenches near Lierre and Buchout. There were hundreds of wounded to be attended to and I worked in a ward of sixty-five beds for three weeks and in my off-duty hours I interviewed the Belgian Red Cross and various other people. I was offered first an empty house in Avenue Marie Therese for convalescents. A few days later they asked me to get the Corps over to staff a hospital of three hundred beds, fully equipped, in the rue de Retranchements. I sent frantic telegrams to Miss Franklin.

The first contingent of FANYs was at Fenchurch Street station waiting for the boat-train when the news of the fall of Antwerp came through. As the British and Belgians retreated to the coast Ashley-Smith stayed in Ghent. In a letter home, the spirit, audacity and determination which the FANYs came to embody shows vividly:

Dearest Mother,

Institut Moderne pour Malades, Ghent

Another chance of getting a letter through. My last went with the Consul's daughter when they left suddenly on Sunday night. I met a Miss Sinclair³, an authoress, who is acting as secretary to an Ambulance Corps run by a Dr. Munroe (Hector Munroe) and consisting of six women and about ten men including ten doctors, chauffeurs, a clergyman and four motor ambulances. It was a chance meeting- but that night I was doing night duty as well, as they were short-handed at the Convent. Miss Sinclair came round about 2 am to say they would be able to take me and my two English wounded with them as they were fleeing almost at once. At 3am the motor ambulance called for us - and a long bitterly cold ride followed. I was so dead tired I actually slept for about an hour - despite the cold and the cramped position etc. Luckily we found a station and a train just starting for Ghent, so I jumped aboard and came back. It was a hard frost

² Five Years with the Allies, Grace McDougall

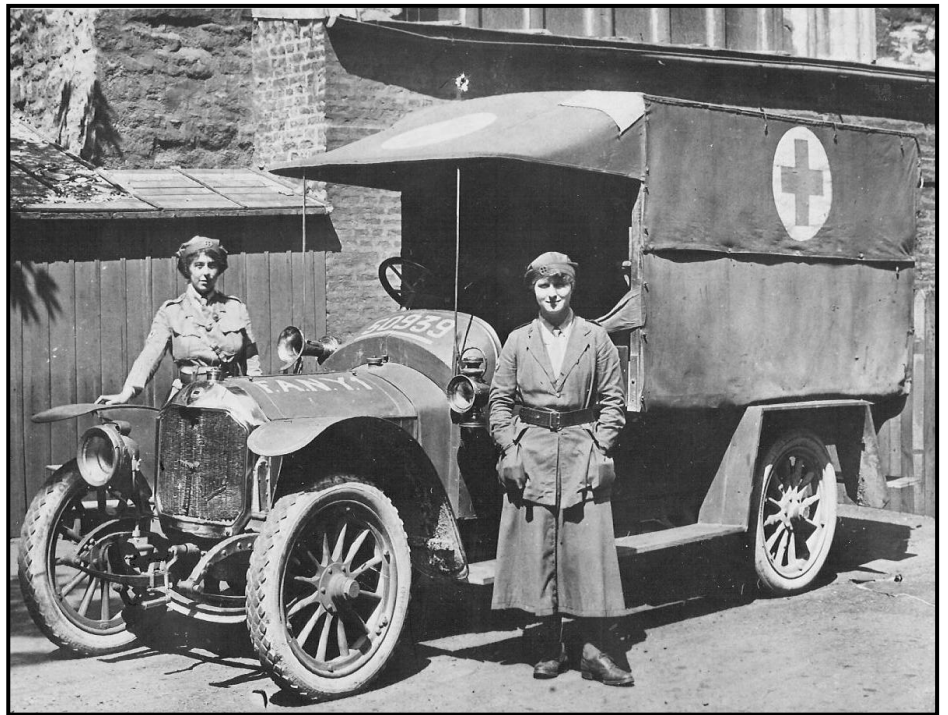
³ May Sinclair

and bitterly cold and I must confess my heart was somewhere about my boots because as far as I know the English had all fled. Crowds of Belgians surrounded me in astonishment on my arrival! I think they began to wonder if the English army had really fled. Poor boy! He was so thankful to see an English person again, he had no idea they had left him to the Germans. He is in the Royal Marine Light Infantry. He is dreadfully weak. We have seven Germans billeted here and I sat by him in terror at every sound - there are such awful tales of their barbarity but we have much to be thankful for as the ones here were very civil I can't bear to leave Mr Foote until he is either out of danger or gone. I haven't had any luggage since I left Antwerp. It is lost. Today I washed all my clothes in my bath and they are drying now to be ready for night. I only brought one suit with me and the blouse was filthy. This is a very selfish letter. I may of course be taken prisoner by the Germans. I hope they leave the wounded alone. German aeroplanes go about all day. Brutes! I am going to try to blow up their aerodrome with dynamite. It is quite near here, it wouldn't be such a chance as getting near their big guns, but I fear that is hopeless. I suppose if this falls into their hands I shall be shot!

Much love to you all, Gracie

PS. Poor Mr Foote - it will all be over in an hour or two. I have been with him all night I shall probably be made a prisoner or something now as I shall certainly see he gets an officer's funeral - that at least he has the right to and he shall have it somehow. Goodbye Mother - I feel very miserable - it is so easy to be brave when there are horrid wounds to do up but to sit helpless hour after hour and just watch and be able to do nothing. He is dead! I shall try and leave here tomorrow after the funeral.

Grace Ashley-Smith did manage to escape and got back to England. Realising how the FANY's services would be enhanced by having their own transport, Ashley-Smith went immediately to Scotland to raise money to buy a UNIC motor ambulance. The first small troop of six FANYs left for France on October 27th 1914. They took with them three nurses, two orderlies and Ashley-Smith's brother, Bill.⁴ They set off with only £12 of Corps funds in the bank. In Calais they found hundreds of wounded men on stretchers on the quayside awaiting boats to England, and crowded into hangars where they lay on straw. The hospitals were overflowing. On October 29th they took over a dirty and decayed convent school opposite the Church of Notre Dame. This was to be Lamarck hospital. The wounded were being brought in before the FANYs had time to unpack.



The wards at Lamarck were in the charge of Isabel Wicks, who was a trained nurse and had served in the Boer War. The FANYs mostly assisted with the patients, often wearing a version of

⁴ Lt W.G.R. Smith is the only man officially listed as a FANY in his obituary. In The Times on 4th February 1916, he is described as having driven an ambulance with the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry on the Belgian Front, before being commissioned in the King's Own (Yorkshire) Light Infantry.

nursing uniform. There were three wards in the main building for wounded. Across the yard they set up a separate ward for typhoid cases. The conditions which greeted them were daunting. Isabel Wicks remembered:

The school was dirty and decayed-looking. We found forty-five desperately ill men in three wards lying on plank beds with a thin bag of chaff as mattresses. The only other furniture was two chairs and a very insecure table made of planks balanced on iron bedsteads. A few of the beds had sheets and some even had pillow slips, but the majority of patients were lying in blankets with something like a small carriage cushion by way of a pillow. In the circumstances it was not surprising that there were severe cases of bed sores. At one time we had eight wildly delirious in a row. Franz, a gunner who had been through the siege of Antwerp, would go over and over his experiences, counting his ammunition and lamenting his comrades as they fell around his gun. Every now and then he would puncture his recital with "BOOM". If he took us for comrades it was all right, but occasionally he mistook us for Germans and then it was awkward. One day he caught (Margaret) Hall by the throat and there might have been a tragedy had not the orderly sprung to the rescue. By degrees, and with the help of kind friends at home, we got sheets, pillow cases and soft

pillows; then chairs, tables and after a bit even pink bed spreads which brightened the place up wonderfully. The B.R.C.S. gave us narrow spring beds with good mattresses. The point that gives me most satisfaction is that although our death rate is high, (we lost forty out of one hundred and seventy-five cases), those who recovered were not invalids and were able to 'do their bit' once more on active service.



The FANYs quickly learned to cope and the hospital eventually had one hundred beds. More than four thousand patients were

treated between 1914 and 1916. Beryl 'Betty' Hutchinson wrote:

For the first fortnight I was put in No. 1 Surgical Ward. Knowing nothing of nursing beyond animal and theoretical first aid, it was considered wise for us to have some practical experience. My record of fainting was eleven times in one morning. Sister White sent me on messages up and down two flights of stairs as a cure for nonsense.

However, their greatest appeal turned out to be their motoring skills, rare in women at that time. Vehicles were scarce in Calais and in those early months the FANY ambulance was in much demand. All Belgian supplies had to be brought from Gravelines, 15 km up the coast. The Belgian doctors needed transport to and from their medical HQ at La Panne. The FANYs also carried the wounded and injured for other French and Belgian hospitals, and, until the arrival of a Red Cross convoy in Calais, unofficially for the British. Hutchinson already knew how to drive:



I collected an old Flemish woman on my own. She was bundled into the ambulance by her family who could not spare the time to come with her. I was quite at the back of the Line so all should have been well but a German pilot saw what he took for an armoured car on the road. There was no cover anywhere for about



four miles and I slowed and raced and generally tried to get out of the way. When the plane had gone I looked in and thought my old lady had passed on. I inquired in my best French, no response; bad Flemish, still no movement. Then, in desperation, I tried rich, broad Lancashire at which she lent up on her elbow and, cutting out all unnecessary words, we established that she was quite comfortable, had not been frightened, and I was not to worry about her.

Back in London FANY HQ was busy both recruiting and fundraising. More FANYs and more vehicles arrived. Amongst them was Muriel Thompson, a very experienced driver who had won the very first Ladies' Race at Brooklands in 1908. She kept a diary throughout her war service:

Feb 8th Left Victoria at 12.30pm with Gwen Strutt for Calais. We had Passports and had to pass through a room where we might have been searched, but as we were in uniform they did not worry us. Reached Folkestone about 2.15 and got on

the boat for Calais. It was very rough indeed, but Gwen and I sat on deck all the time and looked for submarines. It was dark when we got there. We went straight into the kitchen where we have our meals and found a lot of the Corps sitting having tea, also some Belgian doctors and orderlies. Had tea, saw over the hospital. Looked at the cars, which have been standing for weeks in the pouring rain without any shelter at all; a Ford, a UNIC ambulance, and a Ford Soup Kitchen. Went to the flat where the Corps sleep. Eight of us in one room and two small basins - Active Service so we don't mind!

Feb 9th Got up at 6.30 and walked to the hospital, about one and a half miles. Had breakfast there and started to clean the UNIC. Worked till 12.30 in the rain. Gwen was in the typhoid ward, and had a trying time for an untrained person. It is a Belgian Military Hospital and we get our letters stamped free because we are on Active Service.

Feb 11th Up at 6.30. Went with Chris Nicholson on Ford⁵ ambulance. We made trips backwards and forwards all morning taking men from our Hospital to the Hospital Ship. They were all stretcher cases. We carried the stretchers into the ward and helped the men get on them, then took charge of their bundles while the orderlies carried them out and put them into the car. Then we drove to the Gare Maritime up alongside the hospital ship Leopold II. We helped to get them out. They were then carried below into the saloon. It

⁵ 'Flossie' the Ford

was awful, dozens and dozens of men sitting round, all smoking - nowhere for them to be. The worst stretcher cases were simply put on the floor.

In those early months a much coveted job was taking supplies up the line. It was a chance to experience the war at first hand. Muriel Thompson in her 1915 diary again:

Feb 23rd Left Calais with White and Waite. We were to go beyond Peroyse to take bundles of shirts, socks, etc. the Belgians being very badly in need of supplies. We started early on a glorious morning and motored through a flat, ugly country towards Gravelines, a pretty, unfortified town which reminded me of Banbury. Then on to Dunkirk, a strongly-fortified place and so into Belgium. We stopped at Furnes, a very quaint little place with a lovely old church⁶. It is like a city of the dead, every house was shuttered and only a few soldiers were to be seen walking about. The beautiful old square is damaged in places but this was nothing to what Peroyse is like. It is simply in ruins: church, houses, shops, all destroyed. The road had got very bad after Furnes, narrow pavé in the middle and deep mud ruts on each side, awful if a back wheel slipped off. A long way after Peroyse, we reached the second line trenches.⁷ We went one at a time and left about one hundred yards between us so as not to draw the German fire. As I was walking along I heard the whizz of the shrapnel for the first time. There is no mistaking it, first a bang, then a curious whistling, swishing sound. Then another bang, then a white smoke cloud bursting and lingering some time. All the time the larks were singing and the shrapnel was going on. We ploughed along in the most awful mud I have ever seen. Every now and then we would stop and a head would appear out of a hole and a man would dive out on all fours. "How many are you?", and then we would give as many packets of cigarettes as there were men and hand out shirts, socks, etc, and newspapers. A number of men had been wounded in the bombardment. We helped them back as fast as we could to a little hut where there were stretchers and then to the car.



March 30th Had the shock of my life. Was very tired and had headache so stayed in bed when woken by Chris Nicholson banging on the door and saying "Get up at once, you've got the Leopold II, and you must go to La Panne to get it." I did not know what she was talking about. At first I thought she was talking about the hospital ship and that I must get up and take some men there. I dressed in a hurry, rushed to the hospital and found an order had come for us to present ourselves at the Royal Villa at La Panne to be decorated by King Albert.

It was the first public recognition of their work.⁸

⁶ The village was almost completely obliterated one month later by German bombardment from Dixemude

⁷ Belgian 11th Line Regiment

⁸ Mary White and Margaret Waite were also awarded the Leopold II on the same day

Lamarck Hospital was the foundation of the FANYs' tradition of learning to do whatever job came to hand. Seven miles from Lamarck at St Ingelvert was a Belgian convalescent home with twenty beds. The F.A.N.Y. sent a trained Sister and two FANYs to look after the men. Muriel Thompson was sent south with supplies:

Feb 11th After dinner drove in the Mors to St. Inglevert, the convalescent home. It is about eight miles out in the country, and we had to pass three different barriers at which everyone is stopped by soldiers with fixed bayonets. The home is run by two members of the Corps. There is one big, bare room, the village hall, with a stage at one end with three beds on it. The floor was quite bare, and there was just a strip of matting by each bed. The beds were tiny, low ones. The girls sleep in a tiny room in the farm house nearby. We went over to the little church and then came back, and a photo was taken of a baby and its mother, to send to the father in the trenches. The curé came and posed the group and the old grandmother came up and there was much laughter and all the malades⁹ came and looked on. Drove back in tons of mud.



Five miles from the Front Line at Oostkerke, the FANY set up a Regimental Aid Post with the Battalion doctors of the 3^{me} Chasseurs à Pied, 5th Division, Belgian Army. It was an advanced dressing station. Three FANYs at a time were stationed there. Edith Walton was one of them:

We are within three miles of Dixemude, with rough fare, consisting for the most part of coffee and black potatoes, sleeping on straw, having a cupful of water to wash in, treating wounded brought from in the trenches.

A Motor Kitchen was brought over from England on January 1st 1915 by Beryl Hutchinson. In a post-war account she wrote:

I arrived complete with the Ford soup kitchen, upon which Grace McDougall had insisted as the price of my being allowed to go to France. In appearance it was rather like a hen-house mounted on a Ford chassis. The door was at the back and it had a little window high up on each side and a trap-window, as in buses, to communicate with the driver. Inside was an 'Ideal Home' sort of dresser with gilt canister sets, fastened firmly by rubber bands made from inner tubes. Behind the driver's seat were big urns over the largest size of Primus. When being driven, the urns were made inaccessible by the stern end of the driver.

In April, she, Ida 'Tommy' Lewis and the Motor Kitchen were attached to 7^{me} Regiment d'Artillerie Montée¹⁰ which was to join the British 5th Division in the Ypres salient. She recalled how difficult it was to drive the Model T Ford so slowly:

We set off with the Battery on a long trek which a fortnight later landed us just behind Ypres on the Furnes road. The endless low gear, the horse-pace driving, the people who covered our hen-house with lilac; even now the scent of lilacs brings back the French and Belgian lanes.

On May 24th they experienced one of the first uses of gas.

⁹ Sick rather than wounded (blessé)

¹⁰ Horse-drawn artillery unit

The 7^{me} had been attached to the British and, as usual then, the British wanted to know - "How the? Who the? Women near the Line...!!!" Arguments, passes shown, the Intelligence Officer came over to see if we were spies, but FANY luck held; he knew Lewis in her private life. But we were to leave. The I.O. made it the day after tomorrow to let everyone make plans. At dawn I woke to a very queer noise and an even queerer smell. The Belgian Quarter-Master came round with gas masks. All our men had had gas masks already issued and were firing for all they were worth. Out of the mist came a procession of British, staggering up the lane or just lying in a groaning, gasping heap. They had the silliest bits of chewed cotton wool fastened to their faces. We had the idea that hot black coffee, being so very good for asthma attacks, might help so we had those primus going as hard as they could lick. Of course being young and enthusiastic, we gave our masks to some we thought were dying. Then we remembered we had gone up provided with enough 'Mr Southall's conveniences for ladies' for some time. Also at that time one used Rimmel's toilet vinegar for cleansing one's face, etc. We cut each pad in half, poured the vinegar on and lashed it to our faces. We found it so good that we made them up for the men and it certainly got them along the road to the dressing station. We always wondered if the staff there recognised our first aid 'equipment'. The I.O. turned up again and said would we go to G.H.Q. We were shown into a room where five or six figures in 'red flannel and gold lace' were seated round a table. They were disappointed we had not our Belgian gas masks with us but we described them as well as possible, as well as our own efforts, though being nicely brought up Edwardian girls we were too shy to say what we had really used and it became 'specially medicated cotton wool'.

The FANYs also operated a mobile bath vehicle, nick-named 'James'. This had been brought over by Marion and Hope Gamwell. James the Motor Bath was a 1907 Daimler:

James was seven years old when he came to me, sound in wind and limb but self-opinionated. His limousine body had been replaced by a bulky caravan-like object - the 'Incubus' - containing ten canvas baths, a cold after tank, a disinfecting cupboard and two huge Primus-stoves. He was chain driven and specially selected for his strong chassis. He had both low and high-tension ignition, a governor and a curious bicycle-pump stowed away under the steering box, the function of which was to produce pressure for the oil and petrol systems. Another of his peculiarities were two gear-levers, a handbrake which moved in a vertical line, and the absence of an accelerator. The 'Incubus' was, if possible, even more intricate. Built of wood, it had a tent which rolled up on either side and a hot-water tap protruding from each flank. When stationary and prepared for work, these tents were let down to form lean-to's in which were placed the baths - five in each tent - and a length of hose was fixed to each tap. A supply pipe similar to that of a steam wagon was placed in the selected source of water and it then became the painful duty of one of James's satellites - he, alas, had two - to pump the tank full. Meanwhile the second satellite was fully but not always agreeably occupied in starting the primuses. Paraffin was always provided by the 'bathees' and was frequently very dirty, with the result that the unfortunate who had the care of the lamps spent most of the time flat on her face coaxing them with petrol-soaked waste. We arrived at our destination and found our 'hosts' had selected a site in the middle of a bridge - they had not previously seen James. As we did not want to hold up all the traffic we got James down into the field beside the stream, the water supply, though with difficulty. The officer in charge of the bathing operations was a modest young man and asked if we should 'be going for a walk'. We pointed out James's inner workings and he agreed that we should have quite enough to do to keep us out of mischief. The troops were splendid and kept up a constant stream of bathers. One of their latest activities has been to devise and work a peripatetic bath. By ingenious contrivances, tents and ten collapsible baths are packed into a car which circulates behind the lines. The water is heated by the engine in a cistern in the interior of the car and offers the luxury of a hot bath to forty men per hour.

Over the years the FANYs learned to drive a wide variety of vehicles. As well as the bulky, hard-to-manoeuve Motor-Bath and the Ford Mobile Kitchen, there was 'Unity' the Unic ambulance, 'Flossie' the Ford ambulance and 'Kangaroo', Muriel Thompson's Cadillac. There were Napiers, a Hotchkiss called 'Ann', Siddeley-Deaseys, the Crossley ambulance, an Armstrong Whitworth ambulance, a Vulcan lorry, a Mors car, a Mors box lorry, early Vauxhalls and Wolseleys. With the French, they drove Peugeots, Berliots and Delahayes. They came to Flanders with a mixed range of driving experience. Muriel Thompson adopted



a pragmatic approach to maintenance:

Flossie's carburettor flooded after lunch. I hit it with a spanner and it revived. Parcels arrived from England - joy! A cake from Buzzard, also a lovely oil pump and pliers, just what I wanted.

On the later convoys, they were required to pass the B.R.C.S. driving test but in the early days they learned on the job. Beryl Hutchinson remembered:

After initiation, I was allowed a car, dear friendly 'Unity' the UNIC ambulance. She had broken her axle falling off the platform onto the railway line and had a large splint at driver's seat level. The other side started to tear so she was promoted to a splint each side and served me faithfully for the eleven and a half months we worked together.



The Front Line moved backwards and forwards several times during the course of the war but many towns and villages remained within bombardment range, from the air, land and sea, throughout. Air raids were a new form of warfare. On March 16th 1915 there was a Zeppelin raid on Calais. Every window in the hospital was smashed and splintered over the patients' beds. The railway station was also hit. Beryl Hutchinson described the scene:



The casualties were dreadful, heads, all mutilated, hands and feet torn off. The keys of the station ambulance were missing so Chris (Nicholson) and I fetched ours and made many horrible journeys with the living and the dying amid a haunting smell of burnt flesh.

In August 1915 the FANY were asked to open a canteen at Camp du Ruchard, a Belgian holding camp in the middle of the countryside in the Loire. Some of the 'old' hands were sent there from Lamarck. It was a long way from the Front and took them into a different world. Adela Crockett (who was Australian) and Muriel Thompson were sent there. Thompson, who had been driving for over 10 years, much savoured the drive south:

Sept 6th Great excitement; found my pass had actually arrived. Got ready, said good-bye and collected 100 litres of petrol, 5lbs of grease and 10 litres of oil, for all of which the adjutant gave me a voucher. Crockett and I left Calais at 12.45pm on a glorious day, and drove via Boulogne, Montreuil and Abbeville to Rouen. Saw a lot of Indian troops near Abbeville. There were English troops and camps all along the road. We reached Rouen at dusk having done 133 miles. Went to the Hotel du Vieux Palais. Very quiet and nice.

Sept 7th Up at 6.30am and cleaned the car from 7 till 8am. Found our coffee laid in room with three British officers. They talked to us and were very interested. Went to Belgian Etat Major who at once gave me a bon¹¹ for 50 litres of petrol. Rouen looked lovely - we did so regret having to go without seeing it.



Kangaroo¹² ran beautifully. Stopped at Louviers and took snapshot of the car outside the cathedral. We lunched by the roadside, in a wonderful empty world, and lay on our backs beneath a haystack, with blazing sun, and miles and miles of empty country, blue sky and not a human being. Lovely drive, but got very tired - mile after mile. Passed Evreux, Dreux, Chartres, Vendome and reached Tours at dusk. The screen of the car broke, and it took us about half an hour to unship it. For miles the road lay as straight as a ruler, and quite empty, and I sighed for Pobble¹³ in his stream-line days. Got to Azay in the dark and arrived at 8pm. Did 178 miles.

Sept 9th All went up to Camp du Ruchard. Lovely big building in the middle of the camp. Paintings all around walls, Allies' coats of arms and mottoes. Place of honour occupied by F.A.N.Y. Badge. Unpacked

¹¹ a coupon

¹² Thompson's Cadillac car

¹³ The racing car with which she had won the race at Brooklands

and put away stores all morning. Tried to find a garage for Kangaroo in Azay - it got stuck in the stable and five French soldiers came to the rescue. They nearly pulled the stable down and finally I got out with a flat tyre and a torn hood. Jacked up and left it for the night.

Sept 13th Great day - opening of the Canteen. At 1.15pm the men were admitted, and at 2.00 the French General Chêne arrived with the Belgian Colonel Van Dyck, followed by about twenty officers.



There were about 3,500 Belgian soldiers at the Camp, some in hospital, some convalescing, some maimed men waiting to be distributed to special training centres. The canteen was an immediate success, boosting the men's morale. Margaret Cole-Hamilton wrote to HQ in London:

The hut has been open for a month. At first the men were not quite sure what was going to happen. Now they crowd in, especially in the evenings, thump the piano vigorously, consume enormous quantities of liquid, eat cake, and write hundreds of letters, just like our Tommies.

A mobile cinema was started which gave performances every evening. They also provided a trained nurse, Sister Lovell, whose salary they paid.

As a voluntary organisation, money was always a problem. Back at HQ, fund-raising was a major preoccupation. One fundraising leaflet of 1915 read:

The members of the Corps give their services voluntarily besides paying for their own uniforms, laundry and travelling expenses. In addition to this, those working at Lamarck Hospital and Camp de Ruchard contribute towards their board. With the exception of rations, medical and surgical attendance, and the majority of hospital stores, all the expense of the Hospital and the Canteen at Camp de Ruchard, including the salaries of trained nurses, are met by the Corps.

Later in the war, when the Belgians decided to close Camp du Ruchard, it was agreed that the Camp could not moved as one unit. However all the sections wanted the FANYs to go with them. Adela Crockett made the decision that they should stay with the two hundred nervous convulsives. They moved to a monastery in Soligny-la-Trappe. Crockett wrote:

Things are very tranquil. Nothing much to report till yesterday when a patient from Ruchard became more violent, and had to be confined. When taken food, he escaped on the roof three stories up. Nearly all the men gathered in the courtyard watching him lustily declaring his views on the iniquities of the Armée Belge. There are about 20 German prisoners working at a farm for the Monks. Well content to be there instead of at the Front. We got up a party in the afternoon. Tables and benches and cigarettes, followed by games (bobbing the onion etc.) and races. A Belgian Trappist Monk, a great admirer of the English, is often at the hospital. The French Trappists are stricter than the Belgians who may drink beer, smoke and sing, so, knowing he hankered for mild dissipation, we asked him to the party.

Meanwhile the FANY was still trying to persuade the British military authorities to make use of their services. In the summer of 1915 the British made Calais a Military Base and turned Calais Casino into a Military Hospital. Fortunately for the FANYs, the Director of Medical Services at the

Base was Surgeon-General Woodhouse who had been so impressed at that last pre-war F.A.N.Y. Camp. Beryl Hutchinson recollected:

Trains came in, ships came in, a lovely hospital was created out of the Casino. But the promised ambulances just did not arrive. Naturally the FANYs did the honours of the new Base and we heard of the troubles of our new R.A.M.C. friends. We did some wangling and as we were not then busy for the Belgians, the Line being very quiet at our end, they kindly lent us to the British on condition that we did our Belgian work as first priority. So for three weeks we did the whole work of the new Base. General Woodhouse sent for Boss¹⁴ and McDougall. It was decided that a driver in F.A.N.Y. uniform would look good, and 'Unity' was chosen, with me as driver. So, tidy and washed, we set off. He asked what reward we would like for having done such good work, and with one voice McDougall and Boss replied, "Work for the British, please". "I feared you would say that!" he said. "Now how are we going to manage it? You're not B.R.C.S. You're not St. John's. I know, alas, that you are not Army..... You're neither fish, flesh nor fowl, but you're damned good red herring!"

On January 1st 1916, the ambulance drivers replaced the B.R.C.S. men. They were the first women to drive officially for the British Army. The weather was not good. Lilian Franklin, 'Boss', wrote candidly to HQ:

The Camp is situated on a high sandy hill behind the Casino and consists of four bell tents and a canvas hut, the sides of which are not on speaking terms with the roof and floor. There are also some good size rents in the sides thus enabling the wind to blow through in every direction. The Mess tent consists of an Indian-pattern marquee heated by an iron stove, but as the ground is sand, the pegs do not hold well and it is not considered safe to light this stove if there is a wind blowing; which there generally is. There are also several bathing huts. One of these is used as an office, and the others as sleeping quarters. The vehicles are: 8 ambulances, a 30cwt lorry, a small box lorry and a small bus. These are not exactly in their first youth. The ambulances have all done a turn at the Front and it taxes our driving skill to keep them on the road.



They did their own repairs with the aid of two male mechanics. The FANYs were very proud of their triumph over British military hostility and were not at all daunted by their new role. Muriel Thompson recorded in her 1916 diary:

Jan 1st We have started the first woman's M.A.C. (Motor Ambulance Convoy) ever to work for the British Army. Our camp is on a little hill near the sea, behind the Casino. Most of us live in tents and bathing machines. I share a small chalet with three others. The weather is fiendish, gales and torrents of rain. The cars are old and in a bad state, and we are short of drivers. We mess in a big tent, all together. Lots of work but are all so very pleased to be here.

¹⁴ Lilian Franklin's nickname

Jan 2nd Got up at 5.45am and sat down for the first time, except for meals, at 7.30pm. We took over from the B.R.C. men yesterday. The cars stand in the open always, and the weather is awful. Suddenly word came that the Barges were there - every car goes at once, and the men are taken off to the hospitals. These are bad cases, and one has to go very slowly.

Jan 14th The Quarter-Master Sergeant tells us we are a great improvement on our predecessors! Last night we had a raging gale which howled over our little plateau and blew a tent right over. The unlucky possessions were blown all over the place. This morning all cars had to be at the Casino at 6am so we got up at 4.30am. The first lot of wounded arrived on the quay in pitch darkness. Calais is a healthy place. I have lost the cough, and the pain in my back I had when we came here

Jan 28th Eighteen of us went to dine at the mess of a regiment which is here resting. They drank our healths and cheered us; I had to reply for the Corps.

The drivers were divided into two sections, with Section Leaders holding the rank of sergeant. They were responsible for the girls turning out punctually. The FANYs did not observe full army compliments. 'Boss' was saluted first thing in the morning but not again. A roll-call was held before breakfast to ensure that everybody was up.



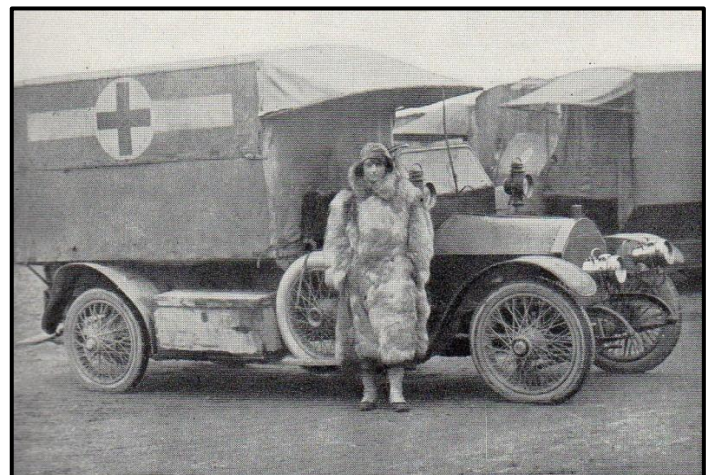
Now the Calais Convoy was officially attached to the BRCS, FANY HQ tried to ensure that rules about uniform were adhered to, (not always successfully), issuing a rare order in 1916:

The khaki tunic is to have four pockets with F.A.N.Y. buttons and badges and made with plain sleeves. There will be a Red Cross circle on each sleeve, the centre of the cross to be seven inches from the shoulder. The bottom of the khaki skirt is to be ten inches from the ground and for footwear, khaki puttees and brown shoes or boots, or long brown boots, are to be worn.

However as the FANYs supplied their uniforms themselves, they often varied in material if not in pattern. It was considered smart to

wear linen 'spats' when off-duty.

A long navy blue coat with red piping was introduced for the drivers to wear in their open-cabin ambulances, but many managed to get hold of the goat-skin coats so beloved of the French taxi-drivers in the region.





to bring the name of the Corps into disrepute, always conscious that they were trailblazers for women and very much in public view. Extracts from a poem by Diane Paynter made fun of the criticism that came their way from some quarters:

*Oh you criticize the clothes,
Or lack of them, as worn
By members of the female sex
Who rise at early dawn,
And carry on throughout the day
To help this stinking war.
Just try to think, a thing I feel
You've never done before.
We're sorry if our garb offends,
We do not like your smile
When you observe a skirt that reaches
To the knee only of our breeches.....*

However, there was one rule concerning men friends, known as 'persuitors'. The rule was that FANYs were only allowed to dine out in pairs. 'Boss' however did not ask who else would be there, merely the name of the other FANY. Dining out was only permitted once a week. Tea however was a different matter. Beryl Hutchinson humorously recalled:

No FANY could be seen dining with a man alone. One had to take another FANY when dining at The Grand or any other restaurant. We got round that rule a little by teaching a tea shop in the rue Royale to serve a sort of high tea with omelettes but somewhat later. This could be counted as tea and one could go with one's boyfriend.

The mechanics wore breeches and smocks, the cooks wore overalls. The pith helmet, which the drivers complained hit the canvas roof of the ambulances, had by 1916 been largely replaced by a soft bonnet-style hat, designed at Lamarck by Chris Nicholson.

In fact, rules were few and therefore rarely broken. Relations between those who gave the orders and those who executed the orders relied more on respect than military style discipline. FANYs were trusted not



Keeping a sense of humour as well as keeping one's head was important.

The War Song of the FANY (to the tune of The Road to Mandalay)

*On the sandy shores of Calais
Looking Blighty-wards to sea,
There's a FANY camp a'sitting
And it's all the world to me.
For the cars are gently humming
And the 'phone bell's ringing yet,
"Come you up you British Convoy,
Come you up for omelette."*



*For 'er uniform is khaki
And her little car is green.
And her name is only FANY
And she's not exactly clean.
And I see'd her first a'smoking of a ration cigarette,
And a'wasting Army petrol
Cleaning clothes, when she's in debt,
On the road to Fontinettes,
Where the Red Cross trains are met.
And the cars come up in convoy
From the Camp to Fontinettes.
Come you back, you blighter FANY,
There's another carload yet.
And the dawn comes up like thunder
To find the convoy coping yet,
On the road to Fontinettes,
On the way for omelettes.*

The winter of 1916-1917 was hard. On very cold nights, the FANYs had a night watch which stayed up all night and fired the engines of the cars every hour to keep them warm and ready for the morning's work. Those on night watch still had to do a full day's work. Muriel Thompson noted in her diary:

Feb 5th Did night guard, cold awful. Cranked the Vulcan and three taxis every hour. Sat in cook-house and boiled water to thaw the petrol filters of the Napiers in the intervals. The filters were full of water from the petrol and were frozen solid nearly every time. Started day at 5 am and was about six hours on the quay. It snowed hard towards morning. We are consoled by hearing that everyone else has burst their radiators and some, their cylinders. The girls are bricks, it is very hard work.

In July General Woodhouse inspected the convoy and was pleased with what he saw. He said that the good work done by the FANY drivers "*was making a name for women's work at the Front*".

DAILY SKETCH.

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 LONDON: Shoe Lane, E.C. MANCHESTER: Withy Grove.

BRITAIN'S BEST PICTURE PAPER.

Thursday 906th Day of the War.
25 Sun Rises 7.51 a.m., Sets 4.34 p.m.
 Moon Rises 8.39 a.m., Sets 8.4 p.m.
 JAN. Lighting up 5.4 p.m.
 Heavy fighting in Artois, 1916.
 Zeppelin brought down at Libau, 1915.
 Germans attacked Givenchy, 1915.

BRITISH HEROINES AT THE FRONT:

Women Who Share The Cold
And Dangers Of Tommy's Life



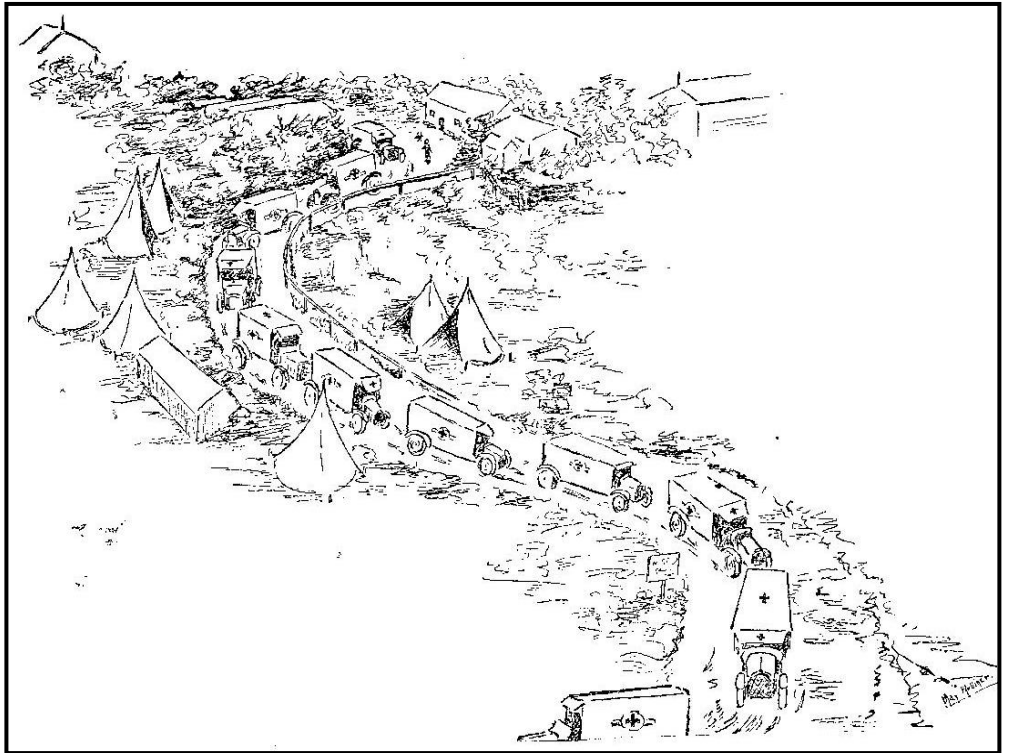

These fair motor drivers of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry are glad of the warmth of their heavy fur coats in the bitter weather now prevailing on the Western Front.

The mascot of their cookhouse is petted by every member of the Nursing Yeomanry staff.

One of the FANY's jobs was to meet the barges using the St Omer and other canal systems. Seriously wounded soldiers were moved by barge to save them from the unavoidable jerks of a hospital train and the bumps of the roads. The 'phone would ring and a moment later up would go the cry of "*Barges! Barges!*" when all the FANYs would run out to their cars and drive down to the canal. The drivers were aware of all the dips in the war torn roads and went to great lengths to try and avoid them. After driving several car loads of men a FANY driver would have backache, knee pains, sore eyes and a special strained expression which came to be known as 'stretcher' face. The strain of such journeys was tremendous. Their public faces were calm and

competent but in private, the anguish sometimes showed. One night the convoy was called out in the middle of a very bad air raid on an ammunition dump. In her 1916 diary Muriel Thompson described one terrible journey:

April 25th A terrible day. Were just starting for the evacuation when orders came to go at once, as fast as possible, to Audricq. I went, and three others. We went to the E.M.O.'s and drew four stretchers, twelve blankets as usual, and four pillows for each car. We arrived at eleven; they never expected us so soon. It was terrible. Railway trucks full of burnt and blown up men. We took the fifteen worst. I helped with some of the stretchers. There were not enough bandages for all;



their faces were skinless and awful. They were mad with pain, their puttees were charred and black, where they had any left. We got these poor awful things into the cars, and started. One kept calling, "Sister! Sister! I can't bear it, I can't bear it!" and then he broke off and began to try to sing with half his mouth gone. I was fortunate - my four were unconscious till we nearly reached Calais when they all began to cry out. I had a R.A.M.C. orderly with me. We drove those awful miles to Calais and luckily we could go at a fair pace as the road wasn't bad and there were no fractures. Got to the hospital and had our men taken out; one was dead. Returned to Camp and cried. Played four terrific sets of tennis in the middle of which we saw an aeroplane fall into the sea. The pilot was all right. Went to a concert at the Ordnance place. After it was over we had coffee and sandwiches. I had prayed all the way to Audricq that my tyres should not puncture.

April 26th The fourth man is dead, poor soul.

In fact one way the FANYs had found of relieving the anguish was going to, and giving, parties and shows. Concert parties for the troops, patients, and for private pleasure, became a FANY speciality. In Calais there were the 'FANTastiks', and later, in St Omer the 'Kippers'. Going on to a concert, after her harrowing drive from Audricq, was Thompson's way of coping, as she knew from past experience:

March 1st Went with seven girls to Beau-Marais. They gave a splendid concert to 800 Guardsman who were down the Line resting. The girls were rehearsing all the way in the car and the applause nearly blew the tent away - never heard such an audience in my life.

Dec 1st Intense cold, half the Convoy had to tow the other half this morning, and it was an awful struggle to get out of bed. We have started a Pierrette Troupe - 'The FANYtastics' - Dickie, Quin, Lowson, Pat, Heasie and Winnie; black sateen dresses and huge tango bobbles. Very pretty and smart. Archie¹⁵ has a big orange bow. They threw oranges to the men in one song, and a corporal came up after it was over and said, with a delighted grin: "You didn't 'alf cop the sergeant in the eye, Miss!"

¹⁵ 'Archie' was a ventriloquist's dummy.

Another duty was to take those who had 'Blighty' wounds to the hospital ships which then took them to England. The layout of the Calais waterfront made it difficult to turn the large ambulances. When they could use the quay it was not as difficult but when restricted to the platform, an inch either way could mean a nasty drop. The only access to the quayside was across the rail lines and down the frequently crowded station platform. On one occasion, after depositing her patients, a new girl made a fractional miscalculation and paid for her error with a nose dive of about 30 feet into the harbour. Thompson described the process vividly in her 1916 diary:

Oct 6th The evacuation is complicated by hundreds of men and officers who are going on leave, coming down onto the quay and embarking across the hospital ship. The cars back down the quay, and the leave men fly in every direction!



Nov 7th Black darkness all around, the smell of the sea and the rain - just in front a semi-circle of light thrown by the ship's lamps, showing up the wet rails on the quay and shining on the deck space below.

Twinkling in the distance other lights, and at regular intervals, ambulances arriving and stopping by the gangway, while slowly, carefully, four limp forms on stretchers are drawn out one after the other, lowered for a moment to the ground, then raised and carried on board. The light shines on the MO's face; his clerk steps to the stretcher, cuts a white label from the patient's coat, calls briskly; "Gunshot wounds, left thigh, Sir!" "Ward B" says the MO, and the bearers carry on. Not even the darkness hides the white head on the next stretcher, it shows up startlingly as the lamp strikes it - no particle of human face is seen - only holes in a white mask. "Severe burns, Sir" intones the orderly. "Ward A" is the reply - and another load of bitter human suffering, heroically endured, goes silently away.

The next ambulance stops, the driver looks around and calls through the little window behind her: "All for Blighty, boys. Out you get," and they stumble, limping, slipping on the wet quay, painfully yet ever cheerily - six 'C and D cases' as the R.A.M.C. puts it - able to sit up, and sometimes to walk. They hop, limp, hobble and crawl up the gangway and take their place in the semi-circle of light, showing up the black darkness of the early winter morning. 4am on a chilly November day, with a Channel crossing before them,

and, like as not, a Boche souvenir inside them. At last the stream of cars comes to an end, and the driver of the last car hands a strip of paper to the Section Leader on the quay; "Last car," she says - the gangway is withdrawn, and the ship pulls out for home.

Not always tho! "All cars back to the ship!" comes the order sometimes, and every girl flies to her starting handle, and the Convoy goes sadly back. Poor boys, how disappointed they'll be.

"Why mayn't we go, Sister?"¹⁶

"Because it's so rough, you see."

"We don't mind as long as we get to Blighty! We don't care, we've been over the top!" with a downward glance at bandaged arm, and a touch of pride.

"I bet you have" says 'Sister', "but that's no reason why you should go to the bottom!"

At this feeble joke they laugh, and ask to be taken for a joy ride. Sometimes a gramophone is unearthed by the drivers, and taken down to cheer the dreary hours of waiting, and this produces a fervent letter of thanks some weeks later, and apology for some small damage inadvertently done to the machine, signed 'Yours till Hell freezes over'.

The FANYs had a large Vulcan lorry which was used to collect equipment and rations, It also took all the blankets and stretchers needed for the movement of men from hospital train or barges to hospital. In May 1917, the Vulcan was in for servicing and the FANYs were sent a Wyllis-Overland, which they nick-named 'Little Willie'. It was very old and very dilapidated and the male drivers refused to drive it. It was chain-driven and very noisy, and once on the move, it was impossible to hear anything. Pat Beauchamp Waddell was driving this lorry when she had an accident at a set of particularly difficult level crossings. A sentry was usually posted as look-out, for a driver could not see an approaching train. On this occasion the sentry was not there. Waddell was half-way across the lines in her noisy lorry before she saw the train. She described what happened in her autobiography:¹⁷:

Unbeknown to us, arrangements had been made by the British to take over a certain part of the railway line, including a dangerous level crossing hitherto held by the French. The French were very meticulous about this crossing and always placed a sentry at the opening. It was impossible to see if a train were coming unless you were actually on the line itself owing to a high wooden palisade. The British for some reason did not see the necessity for putting a sentry there as "only the ambulances used it". As we bumped over the crossing I saw with surprise that there was no sentry (I always used to throw him a packet of cigarettes). I was just on it now and automatically looked into the opening. My blood froze. A train was coming – it was only a few feet away. Little Willie's thunder had drowned out any outside noise. My mind worked like lightening. Odd that at the Court of Enquiry later they should suggest that I lost my head. I knew in a flash there could be no real escape. It was just a question of whether it would be better to be caught in the front or the rear. If the former it meant reversing, and the reverse took up badly. I pressed the accelerator. "Oh God, make Little Willie go quickly for once, please." There was a frightful crash as the train caught the back of the lorry, spinning it round so that it was facing the direction from which it came. I was hurled into the air, to fall and be swept along by the train, my face on the ground. At last, after what seemed an eternity, it stopped and I was left in a crumpled heap. Oddly enough, my first thought was of the car. "There will be a row though I have never had an accident before." I tried to move but how my legs were aching. The stretcher bearer behind had been killed instantly but I did not know this til later.

She lost her leg but within a year she was back driving again wearing an artificial limb.

¹⁶ courtesy title sometimes used by soldiers to drivers

¹⁷ FANNY Goes to War by Pat Beauchamp

Calais was attacked many times. The FANY camp was in an exposed position and even if they were not called out, it meant the loss of precious sleep. During one raid nine aerial torpedoes fell around the Camp and exploded. A tenth fell right in the middle of the camp but did not explode. It made a huge hole in the earth seven feet deep and when extracted, weighed 100 pounds, standing higher than most of the FANYs. After being made safe, the torpedo was proudly placed in their mess room. Muriel Thompson, who was 2i/c, experienced several raids:

Dec 10th Woke out of a profound sleep to hear a certain familiar droning noise overhead; turned on light and saw the time, 5.10 am. At that moment 'Mournful Mary' raised her voice and the menacing drone continued. Then the light went out and a gun went off. Hurriedly jump out of bed, shove on knickers, sweater, gum boots and trench coat, not forgetting

thick gloves and a tin hat, then complete with torch, raid the cubicles turning out unwilling people and sending them to the dug-out. All having gone, go round the cubicles once more to see no oil-stoves have been left burning, and then go to the office. Sit and freeze in the dark for an hour and a half; no calls this time. The orchestra is not pleasant; bang! thump! whee-ooo! crash, bang, whee-oo-oo, I hate those! At intervals everything shakes and things fall down in the adjoining cubicles, and persistently the horrible droning noise continues. At about 6.30am it stops suddenly and all is quiet. We have a big evacuation on but give the hospital ten minutes grace, as they will hardly be ready.



There was an outpost of the Calais Convoy at Marquise which served the R.A.F. at the nearby aerodrome. There was a small camp hospital for immediate post-crash treatment, very seriously injured pilots then being transported to Wimeureux. The FANYs also transported prisoners-of-war from the camps at Beaulieu to the British Military Hospital.

In the summer of 1916 Lamarck hospital was being closed down and the FANYs were asked to drive ambulances for Belgian Military Hospitals. Back in London, HQ had restarted a Corps

magazine, The Gazette. Grace Ashley-Smith was now Mrs McDougall, and known as 'Mac', having married Captain Ronald McDougall in 1915. She wrote:

I am glad to announce that in the recent orders for Calais Base the Belgian Minister of War states that he has accepted F.A.N.Y. Chauffeuses "nécessaire à la conduite des Ambulance Militaire Belges.



As well as driving for the hospitals, the convoy served both the French and the Belgians on air-raid duty throughout the Calais area, dealing with civilian and military casualties. One of the Belgian Convoys was based at the Hopital Militaire in Hoogstadt. The FANYs lived in tents which were both cold and wet, and alive with rats. Some of the work was very trying, especially the 'coffin cart', transporting to the morgue bodies of soldiers found drowned in the canals and docks. Hours were very long, from 7 am until eight at night. Another convoy was attached to the Hopital de Passage at the Gare Centrale in Calais. Conditions were rather better there. McDougall reported back:

The mess hut is beautifully built and painted cream with oak coloured beams, while the cubicles are double lined, each one being furnished with a good spring iron bedstead; mattress, blankets and sheets were provided. The china has not yet arrived but each cubicle, when complete, will have a basin, jug and hanging cupboard. We had a bad go here the other day - baths and kitchen gone. (Margaret) Robertson had a very narrow shave. A piece of bomb came through the wall, passed across her bed and tore her skirts to ribbons and is now firmly embedded in her door. (Muriel) Cadell got her wall pierced and a bit of bomb under her bed. Moses (Marguerite Mosely-Williams) was thrown down on the ground and I got a bit of bomb in my coat.

During raids one FANY was always on duty at the telephone, while another was in the courtyard giving directions. The work load for the convoy was irregular. There were times when they were out in their cars for 18-20 hours a day, followed by a quiet period when there were few air raids and no heavy casualties arriving from the Front on the hospital trains. Violet O'Neill Power, 2i/c of the Convoy wrote in an article for the FANY Gazette:



We started the day by getting up at 5.00 am and working all day at the hospitals round here. At 8.00 pm the same evening the order came that three cars were to leave at 10.00 pm that night for Virval to unload the train there. (Marjorie) Wood and (Dorothy) Clayton were as game as possible when told they were chosen to go. In spite of the fact that they had been working hard since 5.00 am. At 1.15 am the next morning they started to unload the train. They did not get off their cars till 10.30 am at which time they had some coffee and rested for about twenty minutes, after which they got on their cars and drove back here, arriving in the garage at 2.00 pm having been driving for about thirty-six hours, some of the time in pitch darkness.

In 1916 the Belgian Calais Convoy became officially part of the Belgian Army. The British War Office, having resisted the idea of women drivers for so long, now decided that all British women working in France, (except under their auspices), must be under the control of the British Red Cross. They were determined to get rid of the rather free-spirited FANYs. Rumours reached the FANYs and Norah Cluff wrote to Margaret Cole-Hamilton:

I cannot make Mac understand that the British Military Authorities as well as the Red Cross are very jealous indeed of British women working for the Belgian or French even outside the area of the B.E.F., and within it they will prohibit it except those units already in existence.

All FANY units other than the British Calais Convoy were under threat. The story goes that, tipped off, the Commandant General of the Belgian Forces, seeing no benefit to his regiments of the loss of so many willing drivers and nurses, arranged for all members of Unit V to be weighed, measured, fingerprinted and sworn in as Soldats of the *Corps de Transport de Calais* early one morning.

The Red Cross delegation arrived shortly after – too late! All FANYs working for the Belgians thereafter wore Belgian military ranks on their uniforms.

A Performance will be given by the
GUILD OF FORMER PUPILS
of the
Central Newcastle High School,
ESKDALE TERRACE.

Two Strings to Her Bow,
and
The Kleptomaniac,
in the School Hall, under the direction of
Miss G. M. Easten,
on
Friday and Saturday Evenings,
Dec. 17th & 18th, at 6'30,
and Saturday Matinee, at 2 o'clock.

In aid of the
Nursing Yeomanry Corps
on Active Service at the Front.

The Cast will include—

Miss Doris Batey.	Miss Oonagh O'Brady.
" Doris Copland.	" Gladys Reid.
" Flossie Copland.	" Gertrude Squire.
" Stella Clark.	" E. Temperley.
" M. Minton-Senhouse.	" Nora Winship.

TICKETS which may be had from members of the Guild, or
from Miss G. Squire, Hon. Sec., 3, East Parade, Newcastle,
2/- each. Children 1/- at Matinee only.

At the end of 1916 the French Société de Secours aux Blessés Militaires (SSBM) asked the FANY to take over a hospital on the Marne. The FANY were to supply nurses, chauffeurs and cars, beds, bedding and stores. The SSBM were to provide the rations, light and heating. It was an expensive undertaking. McDougall went on an appeal tour of England:

My little trip to the North has been satisfactory. Baxter Ellis arranged for me to say a few words to the Woman's War Relief Committee in Newcastle and the result was a most generous grant of hospital supplies and surgical instruments, mattresses and sterilising drums, to the value of £140.

The hospital was in at Port à Binson in a Priory belonging to the Order of White Fathers. The buildings turned out to be very dirty and neglected and the advance party spent a month cleaning. On March 19th

1917 the first wounded from the fighting around Verdun arrived. In response to McDougall's appeal, Mrs Rose Allen, not a FANY herself but a patron of the Belgian Hospital Fund, delivered a de Dion Torpedo car. She wrote an article for the Gazette describing her trip:

At last we came to the end of our journey, and passed through a little village where whole streets are in ruins and every remaining house is labelled with the number of men billeted there. A little way from the

village, perched on the hillside, is a Priory, now a hospital. Our arrival was unexpected, but we received a warm welcome from the English matron, nurses and chauffeuses, and the new addition to their equipment - the car we had brought - was greatly admired. After a certain amount of time spent on tea and giving and hearing all the news, I was taken round the hospital. The old Priory with its large airy rooms, its cloisters, and the huts which have been built to make extra wards makes a capital installation for two hundred French patients. It was difficult to believe that just over the hill yonder men were killing and being killed. At first the incessant roar of the cannons was unpleasant, but after a short time one became accustomed to it, and only remarked on it when a specially loud burst came. The patients, many of whom were lying out on the grass slope enjoying the sun and the lovely view across the valley, seemed unaware of anything disturbing.

The FANY was by then well-known, winning both fame and notoriety. But not all sectors of British society approved of women being so near the Front. FANY activities had been widely reported in the press from the beginning of the war. Nevertheless at HQ in London, there was the perennial problem of finding enough recruits. Recruitment leaflets were regularly printed. Not all recruits proved to be suitable. Muriel Thompson, now O/C of the St Omer Convoy, described one incident in her diary:

March 30th Contretemps with new FANY who appeared in a low neck and on being reproved, relapsed into tears and announced that she wished she could go home. I wish she could.

June 11th B..... gave much trouble, and defied me to my face, saying she would go to Boulogne as she pleased, and not in one of our cars. However, I was determined, and finally got (Phyllis) Lovell who was a policewoman¹⁸ to remove her to the car. Betty (Beryl Hutchinson) went too, and they saw her on board for England.

In the summer of 1917 McDougall, fresh from her triumph over British G.H.Q. and the British Red Cross, offered the Corps' services to the French Bureau of Motor Sections. The first convoy was for Amiens. It consisted of twenty cars:

Aug 20th Faulder and I left Calais in Valky (a Vulcan). Spent night at Villers in air raid. Arrived Amiens, found Gordon, Good and Birkbeck and we settled in the house allotted by French authorities - Russell Allen and Anderson came from Binson. Hopeless ambulances, but now have been changed to Berliets and Peugeot in good condition and filled with spares and tools. French very pleased at the way we keep cars. 36 hours consecutive duty, nothing unusual.

TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP:	
1.	Members must be 23 years of age.
2.	Intending members must be interviewed by the O.C., F.A.N.Y. Headquarters, to whom they must supply references, medical certificates, &c.
3.	Members serve on four months probation. At the end of that time they are eligible for permanent membership of the convoy.
4.	Members provide their own uniforms, which must be worn on duty.
5.	No furlough may be taken on service.
6.	Members must be experienced drivers able to do their running repairs; they must pass the B.R.C.S. driving test.
7.	Members when in France must obey the orders of the O.C., F.A.N.Y. convoy, or they are liable to immediate dismissal.
8.	Except when on duty, or by special permission, members must be in camp by 10 o'clock.
CONDITIONS OF SERVICE:	
1.	Free first-class tickets from England to France and <i>vice versa</i> .
2.	Members have their own camp with barracks, mess hut, cookhouse, and space for parking cars.
3.	Each member has her own cubicle, 10ft. by 8ft., lighted with electricity and warmed by central heating.
4.	Bathrooms are attached to the barracks.
5.	Members are entitled to a fortnight's leave every six months.
EXPENSES:	
Uniform and Outfit	£15 to £20 approx.
Entrance fee to F.A.N.Y.	10s. 6d.
Identification disc	4s. 6d.
Mess subscription per calendar month	9 francs
Laundry per week	3.50 francs approx.
Subscription to tennis court and piano	optional

It was to last only one month. The BRCS and GHQ took their revenge. The French military authorities had not asked for British permission before sending the FANYs to Amiens and this time there was to be no 'joining the French Army'. They were ordered out of the British zone. The French asked for them to go further east. Joan Bowles was one of them:

Sept 26th Left for Villers- Cotteret. Allen went on ahead by road in Valky and the rest by train. Horrible journey taking entire day. Scottish Women's Hospital acted good Samaritans, were kindness itself. Spent three days with them then moved into empty butcher's shop. Intensely uncomfortable. No furniture, very eerie and overpowering smell. Ghost who groaned and played violin 'cello all night. It sometimes

¹⁸ Phyllis Lovell was a prominent suffragette who became one of the first policewoman in the UK (Birkenhead) in 1917.

mysteriously hung a sack over attic window. The loft had German writing on the door, and remains of three ropes with slip knots from a beam. A pile of old clothes huddled in the corner. Glad to leave for Chateau Thierry. Good house here but the cars are very decrepit.

Nov 23rd This unit is now settled and is working hard. We have an imposing house standing in what house agents always optimistically describe as park-like surroundings, meaning a small garden. This we certainly do possess though we never have time to go into it. Our cars live in the goods yard where the hospital trains come in. We have a strange apartment very like a loose box, erected with great triumph and trouble at one end of the long shed, in which are beds. Here we sit when not working on the car or out; the night guard sleeps here and as there is a good stove and electric light, it is quite comfortable.

The FANYs received 10 francs a day messing allowance in addition to their rations. They got a weekly washing allowance, and the French military authorities issued each driver with a fur coat. The weather was bleak and bitter; the roads were completely iced over and the FANY cars had trouble getting up the hills. In early Spring 1918 the Unit moved to Bar Le Duc. Another convoy was based at the Hopital d'Evacuation in Epernay. Doris Russell Allen¹⁹, who had been a driver with the Calais Convoy wrote:

Jan 8th One of the drivers was sent on a long journey to bring in a blessé; on the high part of the road the going was very bad, the ice not having melted, and finally the car was held up, quite unable to proceed; the driver, however, was not daunted, and, having nothing else to use, she took off her petticoat, (which she always persists in wearing, presumably for some such occasion) and put it under the wheel which was then able to get a grip on the road, and she triumphantly finished her journey and brought her blessé safely to hospital.

In the Spring of 1918 the Germans launched a massive counter-offensive. Doris Russell-Allen, now O/C (officer Commanding) of all the French convoys wrote:

May 27th Called at midnight to go to Bouleuse to evacuate the hospital there as the Germans were approaching. It is about 24 km away. The roads were crowded with refugees, convoys hurrying up reinforcements, stragglers coming back from the line as they were being forced to retreat all the time, wounded men begging to be picked up. I picked up five badly wounded stretcher cases that had been carried about all morning; one slung over a gun and another being carried by his comrades.,

May 29th Wounded simply pouring in (to the hospital), in all sorts of conveyances, hundreds waiting to be received - situation appalling - not enough staff to deal with them. Wounded were lying all over the ground. We were on duty moving them for thirty hours from when we started. Then in shifts we took four hours rest.

May 31st Two bombs fell on Marguerite (an evacuation hospital,) killing and wounding many. While we were still evacuating an enormous bombardment started, bombs dropping all the time. Everyone stuck to their cars. The horses stampeded and nearly upset my car.

June 1st Germans getting nearer all the time.

Ida Lewis, who had witnessed the gas attack back in 1915, was also there:

After a hard day's work we were all very tired but we were not allowed to sleep as at 10.30 pm a bomb raid started and we all had to go to the abri.²⁰ The noise was terrific, as well as bombs we were still being shelled, to say nothing of the noise of the '75s and the machine guns which were defending us. We were busy all day with a large evacuation, carried 253 cases.

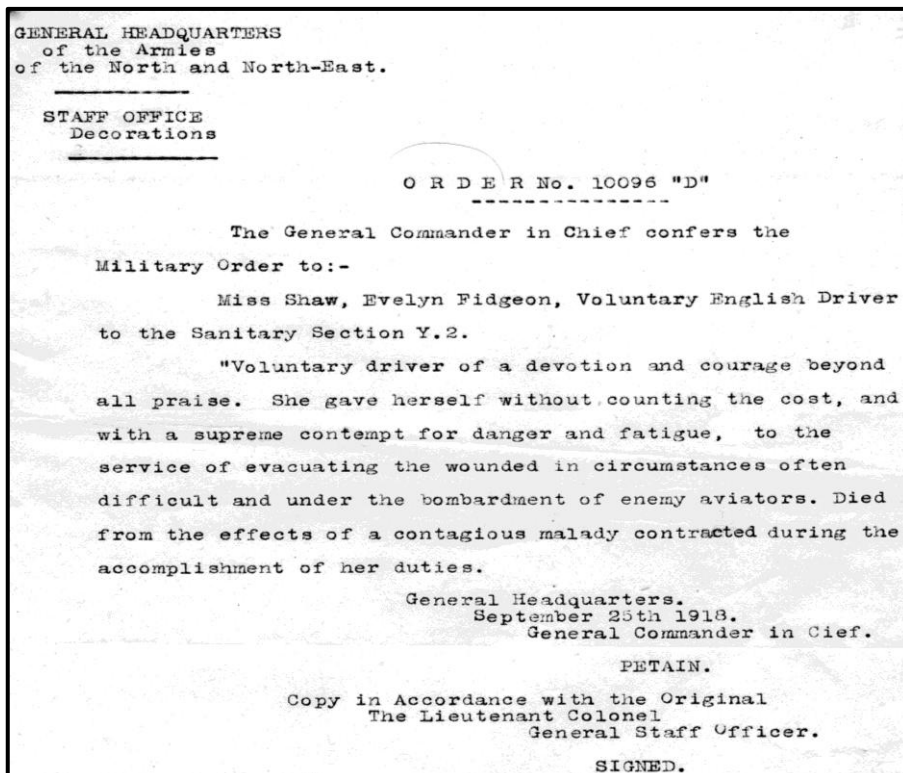
¹⁹ Her sister Geraldine later also joined the Convoy.

²⁰ Bomb shelter

Some weeks later she received a letter from Lieutenant-Colonel R. Burgess of 24 Field Ambulance: *Dear Miss Lewis, Will you please let me know the name of one of the members of your detachment you especially wish to be put up for a Military Medal, one of those who were there with their cars on the night of May 30th during the time there was a visit by some Hun planes? We all admired the simply splendid way in which the Motor Drivers of the F.A.N.Y. behaved, and, although the majority of the French stretcher bearers disappeared into dugouts, every one of your drivers remained with her car and calmly assisted in getting the patients into shelter or kept them quiet and reassured by their admirable coolness and example.... I wish I could put them all up for the same honour.*

In fact, four FANYs, Mary Marshall, Rachel Moseley, Ellen Russell and Christine Urquhart were awarded the Military Medal for that night's bravery. Several FANYs were awarded the Croix de Guerre, including Doris Russell-Allen and Henrietta Fraser, who also got the Legion d'Honneur for rescuing the wounded under fire, although herself wounded by the shell which had wrecked her car and killed the French orderly.

A Convoy of fifteen cars and forty drivers was stationed at Chalons-sur-Marne. They were also very near to the Front Line. Another small convoy of six was based at Sezanne. The FANYs lived in an old cowshed, but took great pains with it and made the place quite comfortable. Eveline Shaw was a driver with this convoy. On August 24th 1918 she died of dysentery. She was given a full military funeral by the French and awarded the Croix de Guerre avec Palme.



A further convoy of seven drivers was based at St Dizier. All the F.A.N.Y. units which worked for the French formed part of the Sections Sanitaires.

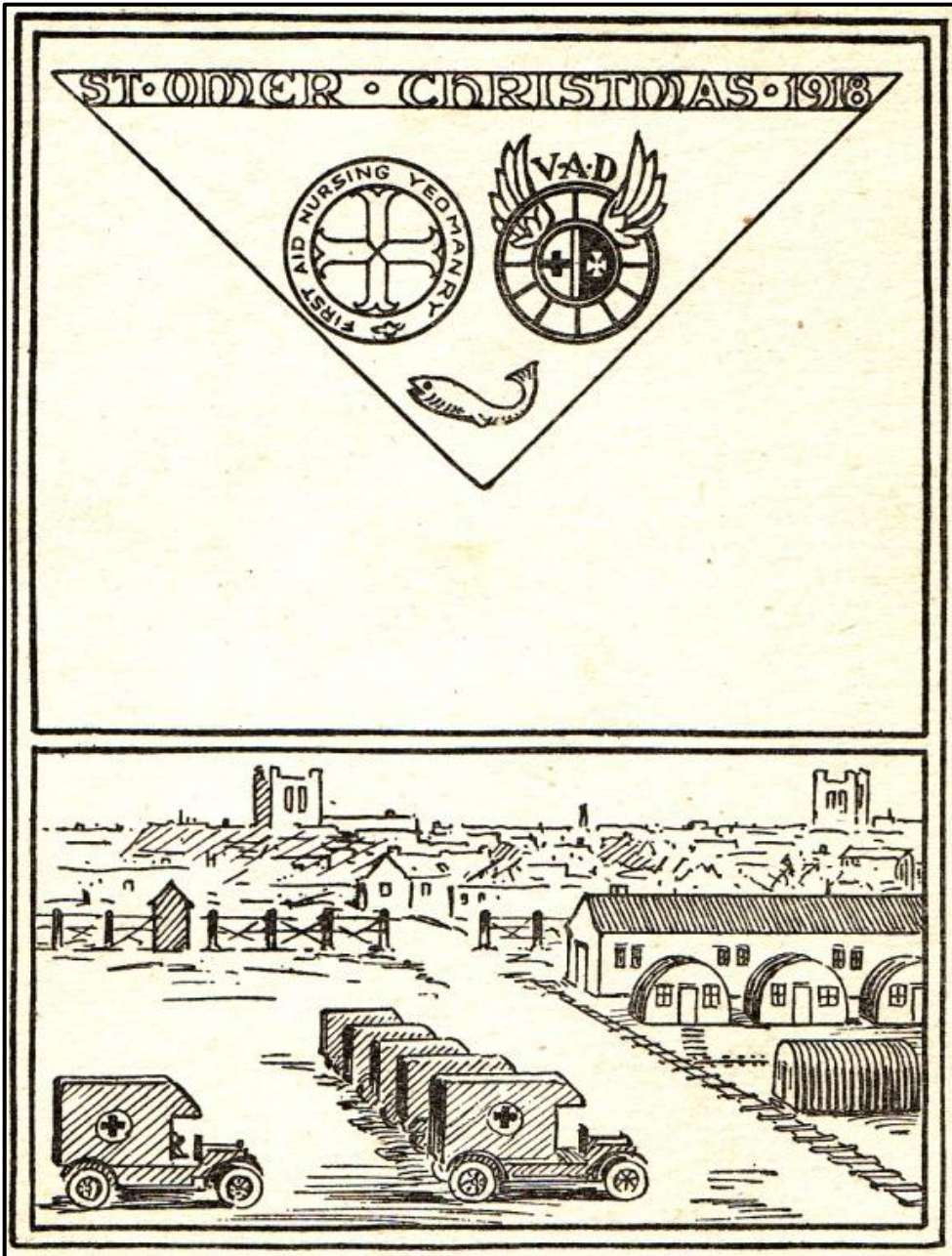
Back in the summer of 1917 the British Convoy in Calais had heard rumours that the men drivers of the M.A.C. in St. Omer were to be replaced by women from the Voluntary Aid Detachment, the VADs. McDougall's coup with the Belgian Calais Convoy had been neither forgiven nor forgotten. Not everyone in the FANY agreed with McDougall's methods. 'Damn good red herrings' the FANYs may have been to some in the British military, and appreciated, but with others they were not popular. In her diary of 1917, Muriel Thompson wrote:

May 4th To Boulogne to see Captain Paget about St. Omer -no go, great objection in London to giving work to F.A.N.Y. - all for V.A.D.

May 10th F. (Franklin) went to St Omer and heard it is not the Army who object to us - rather amusing, it is the London Red Cross.

Oct 13th Owing to Mac's Amiens Convoy, the A.G (Adjutant General). refused to have any more FANYs and so we can't have St. Omer.

Oct 14th Captain Paget came over and told us the A.G. will allow us to go to St. Omer if Mac is placed under control.



The St Omer Convoy was eventually formed with twelve FANY drivers and twelve VAD drivers and VAD cooks, although the number of FANYs was to increase over the next few months. The women formally took over on January 1st 1918. Muriel Thompson was in command, with Beryl Hutchinson as Workshops Officer and 2i/c. The camp was well equipped; the women lived in huts, with a separate Mess and Sick Bay. The garage section was extensive, with a stores shed, mechanic's hut and workshop with a forge and anvil. This was the only joint FANY/VAD Convoy and was to become one of the most decorated for gallantry.

Beryl Hutchinson recalled in a post-war account:

We had our ups and downs like any other community but

*never was there any division or strained feeling between V.A.D. and F.A.N.Y. once we were working together. The duties were meeting the trains and taking the wounded to hospitals or trains or barges. The very seriously wounded travelled by canal barge which was very gentle. We used to meet them in Calais and knew they needed the most skilled and careful driving. We had competitions as to who could balance a bell on a stretcher for the longest distance.*²¹

²¹ 'Red Herring of 1918' by R J Tennent tells the story from the VAD angle

There was one problem with the VADs. The Red Cross imposed many more social rules on 'their'



women at the Front, so unlike the more casual approach of the FANY. Thompson and Hutchinson came up with a solution to one problem.

Muriel Thompson wrote:

Jan 21st A crowd of Fusiliers want to get up a dance for us. The VADs are a nuisance as they mayn't dance.

Jan 24th Betty and I cudgelled our brains and arrived at this: the VADs will dance in our own mess-hut, which they are allowed to do. Colonel Carter will send a fatigue party to

polish the floor and bring a piano and a man to play it. The rest of us shall dance in the Y.W.C.A. hut. They have also invited the Convoy to dinner first. This is a fearfully gay place!

The German Spring counter-offensive brought an end to any thought of dancing. The Convoy worked twenty-four hours on twenty-four, for days, transporting the wounded between the Temporary Ambulance Trains (TAT), and the Casualty Clearing Stations (CCS), where emergency treatment was carried out, including operations and amputations. The change in tone in Muriel Thompson's diary is striking:

Mar 29th Another train from the Front in the middle of the night. We had our 31 cars out. Got back to bed at 5am. The news is terribly serious. Seventh day of the great offensive, we are just holding them. 10pm: I hear the troops marching along the Arques road singing 'Good-byyyy' - poor boys. Now they are cheering.

April 9th The most terrible bombardment has been going on all day. The guns have never ceased, though it is midnight as I write - we hear them very clearly and see the flashes in the sky.

April 10th The 37th Division were entraining, it was a wonderful sight. These men had just come out of the Battle of Amiens for a few days rest. They were lying down in their first deep sleep when the order came through for them to go into the Line once more immediately, and there they were, marching away. As we got back to Camp the bombardment grew louder - it is terrible to think of what is happening a few miles away.

April 11th All day the guns have been going furiously and all night. We have given a lot of ground and the Germans are in Armentieres.

April 14th The train got lost and we never started loading until 2.15am. We were repaid by a wonderful sight, first Lancers, then Artillery, then more Lancers, and then other Cavalry. They took over an hour to pass and looked splendid. The war is really coming home to one again as it never has since my first three months here in 1915.

April 15th "Stand by for a T.A.T. anytime between midnight and 3am" comes the order to the Convoy, over the 'phone, and provision is made accordingly. The Cookhouse staff are warned for the nights are cold, and hot drinks will be in great request. The question of lamps is debated.

"May we use lamps?"

"No" comes the stern reply. "No lights allowed on cars."

"But I saw a big car pass with a huge headlight just now," argues the new arrival.

"Must have been a Staff car," replies a senior. "Then can't the Bosches see the Staff headlights....?" begins the innocent. She is told not to argue, and collapses wondering how on earth she is going to get round the twisty corners that lead to the C.C.S. without lights. The wise driver goes to bed, probably secures a useful spell of sleep before the call to action comes over the 'phone, for trains are more uncertain just now, and it will quite likely be three or four in the morning before the cars are wanted. At last the 'phone rings, the order comes, and every driver dashes out of bed, into her clothes, and off to her car, as fast as her legs will carry her. At the last moment side lights are allowed; these are useful to avoid hitting other cars in the dark, but useless for seeing the road; so the ambulances file slowly out of the park, each with their little twinkly side lights, on and away over the lonely, deserted French roads, to the little station where the T.A.T.s come in. Londoners have seen the wounded arrive at Charing Cross, the police on guard, the arrival platform swept and garnished, the rows of beautiful cars each with its driver and orderly, the wounded men all nicely and tidily bandaged. When I see the T.A.T.s come in, the torn ragged blood-stained uniforms and utter, utter dead-beat appearance of the wounded men; the make-shift trucks in which they travel, their blood-stained bandages. The contrast. Tonight there is a shortage of stretcher bearers and one offers one's services in a temporary capacity. We look to the future and think, "How long? How much longer must men be mangled, day in, day out?"

For their courage and coolness under fire during bombing raids on Arcques on May 18th 1918, the FANYs and VADs of the St Omer Convoy were awarded sixteen Military Medals and three Croix

de Guerre. Beryl Hutchinson described their coolness under fire:

At the Veterinary Hospital next to the station, they had just loaded up the victims of the first wave of bombs trying for the railway line when another raid came over. The men had their orders to take shelter but the FANYs could not leave prostrate men unable to move so they put the ambulances in the deep shadow of one of the buildings and stayed with the men, chatting and smoking until the bombing was over. There was an Army ambulance with its driving cab, complete with driver, blown right off and four stretcher cases left inside.

They pulled up closely beside

MILITARY MEDALS FOR WOMEN



A group of plucky women motor-drivers who received the M.M. from General Plumer.

the wreck so the stretchers could be transferred. Noting that the spare wheel was still intact, they gave it shelter and ever after had two precious wheels for long runs. They got the Military Medal but we told them the citation was really for the theft of a spare wheel. Thompers took three cars out to a French appeal and they were rewarded with the Croix de Guerre for their night's work. All the decorations were questioned as there were too many for one small unit but each one was so strongly supported for their cool example that all

were allowed. There was no glamour in starting up engines but the girls said I should have been awarded a mangle handle rampant!!

The medals were presented to the FANYs and VADs in the field by General Sir Herbert Plumer, GOC 2nd Army²².

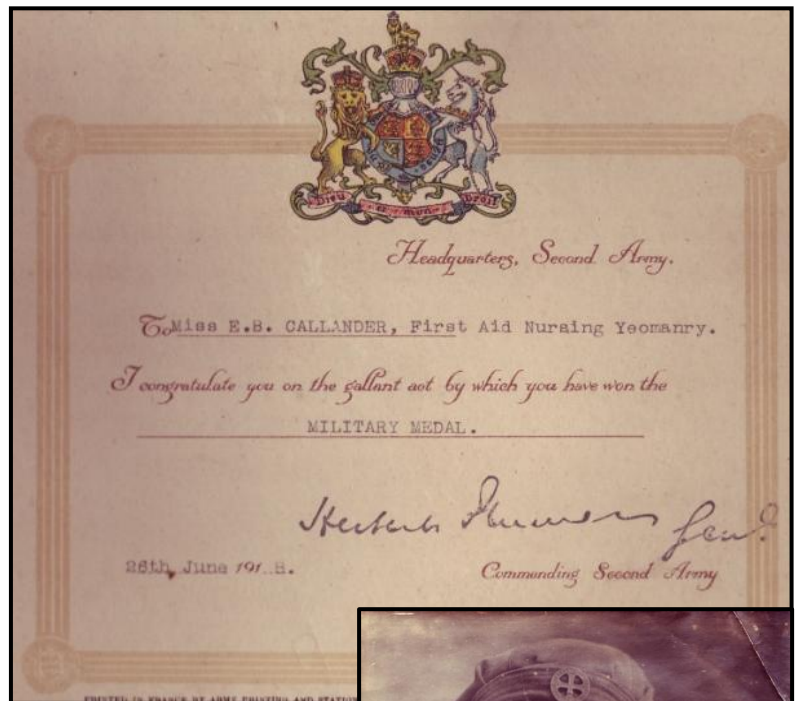
As the fighting drew nearer, some military minds thought that women driving so near the Front not acceptable and that the Convoy should be moved out. Hutchinson recalled how the FANYs tried to assuage those fears: Thompers (Thompson) and I had various evacuation schemes which we typed out and pressed into the red flannelled hands²³. 'Immediate'; 'four hours'; 'next day'; and so on, according to the degree of 'flap'. It gave them a lot of confidence while we could get on with our really urgent job. There was not another ambulance for miles and, after all, we were in the best position to get ourselves away if we had to.

However, in just six months the FANYs had gained many supporters who most certainly did not want to be rid of them. On May 4th. 1918 the St. Omer Convoy was placed under the D.M.S. (Army Medical Services) and was formally attached to the 3rd (Mobile) Repair Unit, 2nd Army. Hutchinson continued:

Thanks to the recommendation of Colonel Browne A.D.S. & T. (Supplies & Transport), when the 2nd Army moved back they took us over. We were very proud. All army units had to have symbols and not names on their vehicles so when we were told to register a device we remembered General Woodhouse and his 'damned good red herring'. This was duly designed for us with his tail well up, and a very pretty picture we thought he made. Also being red it was at least in part FANY colours.

The German counter-offensive failed and by Autumn 1918 the Allied Armies were advancing eastwards all along the Front. The FANY *Soldats de Corps de Transport Belge* were amongst the first to taste victory. Advancing with the Belgian Army, the FANYs entered Bruges as the Germans were being driven out of the other side of town. 'Mac', four years after she had first gone to Belgium to offer the services of the F.A.N.Y. to the Belgians, led them in:

Am in Bruges! The Grande Place was one mass of Belgian flags - the Belfry is intact and the Cathedral towers - and of a sudden hundreds of people, half laughing, half crying, were round our car, clinging to our hands, patting our cheeks, kissing us, sobbing and smiling together.



²² A film in the IWM collections shows General Plumer presenting the medal ribbons to the FANYs and the VADs. The actual medals were later presented by the King at Buckingham Palace

²³ Staff officers

Queen Elisabeth of the Belgians had long been a supporter of the FANYs, first meeting them when she and King Albert were in exile in La Panne. On arrival in Brussels the FANYs were royally entertained by her at Laeken Palace and several were awarded the *Medaille de la Reine Elisabeth*, to add to the Belgian *Ordre de la Couronne* and *Ordre de Leopold II* already held by some. On November 11th, at the eleventh hour, the war ended. Ivy Smith wrote to her parents:

There were tremendous celebrations yesterday – joy, bells ringing, everyone getting zigzag, flags hanging out of every window and on all the cars. On the way back we went via Rheims and saw the cathedral, which is still topping but awfully knocked about. As for Rheims itself – well, after four years of practically incessant shelling..... they say not a single house is untouched. There was one spot we passed where the British got it very badly, and where the battle swayed backwards and forwards- and there's plenty of evidence. Heaps of pathetic little graves with Englishmen's names on and English colours. I don't think I shall ever get over the 'lump in my throat' feeling that I always get when I pass those graves.

After the Armistice, a convoy of thirty FANYs drove east to work with the returning prisoners of war. Phyllis Puckle was one:

Last week nine cars went to Karstadt, 10 miles into Germany to fetch prisoners. It was 60 km each way, rather dull country, and we crossed the Rhine on a pontoon bridge with lots of French sentries but no German ones because they have had to retire and leave 10 miles of neutral country. Some of the men we

took were very ill and one was only moved because he begged to be allowed to die on French soil, he had been practically starved to death. He died next day in Strasbourg.

Joan Bowles was another:

*It seemed strange at first, never to hear the guns nor the humming of the Boche avions, to go down roads which were no longer under shellfire; life has lost some of its salt and there is a certain flatness in the runs now; no more orders for *casques et masques*²⁴, no more being told not to loiter at certain places, but also, mercifully, no more trains of suffering men.*

The convoys were demobbed one by one over the next few months. However their skills were much in demand and many FANYs stayed in France and Belgium. They worked for the British Red Cross in Boulogne; for the Belgian Military Automobile Service in Brussels and Paris; for the Reparations Committee; for the Imperial War Graves Commission based at St Omer; for the French Red Cross *Service des Blessés et Réfugiés* throughout eastern France; for



**We wish you a Christmas - -
of excellent cheer. - -
We're keeping it up - - - -
in the mud over here;
And do not intend - - - -
to turn back, but to try
To drive to the Rhine - - - -
with the F.A.N.Y.**

²⁴ helmets and gas-masks

the French Army *Regions Libérées* at Versailles; for a British Officers' convalescent home in Cap Martin and for the Empire Leave Club in Cologne. While with the *Service d'Exhumation* in Brussels, they provided a Guard of Honour when the body of Edith Cavell was exhumed for reburial in England.

Some years before, the FANYs had chosen as their motto *Arduis Invictus*, loosely translated as *In difficulty, undaunted*, and unofficially as *'I Cope'*. They had lived up to it.

"The courage of a lion, the hide of a rhinoceros and a capacity so great that it could nurse the worst form of typhoid or start a frozen car."

Sir Arthur Stanley, Head of British Red Cross Society

F.A.N.Y. Honours and Awards in WW1

British Decorations:

M.B.E. (Civil Division)

Franklin Lilian A M	Commandant FANY Calais Convoy	07 June 1918
Hutchinson Beryl B	O/C FANY/VAD Convoy St Omer	02 November 1920
Lean Janette W	Secretary FANY HQ	30 March 1920

See also footnotes ²⁵ & ²⁶

Military Medal

Bonnell Sara (Sadie)	08 July 1918
Faulder Evelyn	
Faulkner Aileen M	
Gordon-Brown Evelyn	
Callender Elizabeth B	30 July 1918
Courtis Elsie A	
Dickenson Hilda M	
O'Connell Bianconi Mollie	
Richardson Mary	
Thompson Muriel A	
Stubbs Mary	18 October 1918
Cridlan Evelyn M	25 November 1918
Marshall Mary D	
Moseley Rachel G	
Peyton-Jones Gwendolyn G	
Russell Ellen (Dolly)	
Urquhart Christina M Calder	

See also footnote ²⁷

Mentioned in Despatches

Baillie Marion de Lacy	29 May 1917
Franklin Lilian A M	

²⁵ Jean Anderson Morris, who served with FANY in France was also awarded the MBE on 07 June 1918, gazetted as Private Secretary to Head of Finance Section, Foreign Trade Department.

²⁶ Christabel Nicholson who served with FANY in France from 1914 until 1917, was awarded the MBE on 03 June 1919. She was gazetted as 'Women's Legion'.

²⁷ Winfred Elwes was awarded the MM on 30 July 1918 but incorrectly gazetted as FANY. She was British Red Cross/VAD serving with the joint FANY/VAD St Omer Convoy. Nelly Dewhurst, Sheila Dickson, Katherine Fabling and Josephine Pennell, also VAD with the St Omer Convoy, were awarded the MM on the same date. The last three joined the FANY after WW1.

Thompson Muriel A	
Gamwell A Marion	24 December 1917
Hutchinson Beryl B	
Mordaunt Winifred	
Quin Grace M D	
De Wend Muriel C	25 May 1918
Gamwell A Hope	
Heasman Diane	
Mordaunt Winifred	
Quin Grace M D	
Reynolds Dorothy P	

Mentioned In Despatches (cont)

Baillie Marion de Lacy	30 December 1918
Paynter Diana M	
Sprot Nancy M G	
Fairhurst Amy	10 July 1919
Gordon Dorothy N B	
Lowson Eleanor M	
Norma Flowden	
Perkins Jessica M	
Rowe Constance L G	
See footnote ²⁸	

Belgian Decorations:

Order de la Couronne

Baird The Lady Constance B
McDougall Grace Ashley

Ordre de Leopold II

Thompson Muriel A	30 March 1915
Waite Margaret ²⁹	
White Mary	
Ellis Mary Baxter	24 October 1919
Marples Gladys H	
McDougall Grace A	
Moseley-Williams Marguerite	
O'Neill-Power Violet	

Croix Civique

Cole Hamilton Margaret S	07 June 1918
Hutchinson Beryl B	
Joynson Lucy B	
Marshall Mary D	
Waddell Pat Beauchamp	
Walton Edith F	
Wicks Isabel	

Medaille d'Yser

McDougall Grace A

Medaille de la Reine Elisabeth³⁰

²⁸ FANYs also received the following Service Medal: the 1914-15 Star; the British War Medal; the Allied Victory Medal (with oak leaf for Mentioned in Despatches).

²⁹ Decorated alongside Thompson and White at La Panne by King Albert (Muriel Thompson diary 1915 p.39)

Russell Allen Doris
 Anderson Grace
 Baird The Lady Constance B
 Bond Margaret
 Cadell Muriel McC
 Clayton Dorothy C
 Cluff Norah

Medaille de la Reine Elisabeth (cont)

Cole Hamilton Margaret S
 Crockett Adele L
 Dewar Anna C K
 Ellis Mary Baxter
 Faulder Evelyn
 Franklin Lilian A M
 Hoole Margaret A M
 Joynson Lucy Brenda
 Lewis Ida M
 Lloyd Joanna M
 Lowson E M Norma Flowden
 McDougall Grace A
 McDowell Isabel
 Marples Gladys H
 Hutchinson Beryl B
 Marshall Mary M
 Mason Winifred
 Meade Celia G
 Moody Doris
 Moseley-Williams Marguerite
 Robertson Margaret I
 Spikins Kathleen M
 Strutt Gwendoline I
 Thompson Muriel A
 Waddell Pat Beauchamp
 Walker Georgina
 Walton Edith F
 White Alison M
 Wicks Isabel
 Wood Marjorie G

French Decorations:

Legion d'Honneur

Fraser Henrietta Mordaunt

23 August 1918

Croix de Guerre

Lowson E M Norma Flowden
 Meade Celia G
 Mordaunt Winifred
 Thompson Muriel A

With Palm Leaf

Shaw Evelyn (Eveline) Fidgeon

With Bronze Star

Russell Allen Doris
 Asheton Bennett E
 Berry Nan

³⁰ Various awarded 23 August 1919 and 24 October 1919.

Croix de Guerre with Bronze Star (cont)

Birkbeck Isabel
 Birkett Mary H
 Blacker Winifred E B
 Bowles Joan
 Cousins Monica
 De la Mare Evelyn R
 Drabble Gladys B
 Ford Helen
 Luther Winifred
 Moody Doris
 O'Connor Madeleine E
 Peyton-Jones Gwendolyn G
 Russell M Hope
 Stubbs Mary

With Silver Star

Cadell Muriel McC
 Calder Dorothy L
 Fraser Henrietta M
 Hoole Margaret A M
 McDougall Grace A
 McDowall Isabel
 Marples Gladys H
 Moseley-Williams Marguerite
 O'Neill-Power Violet
 Wadell Pat Beauchamp

Medaille de Soci  t   aux Bless  s Militaires

Russell Allen Geraldine
 Anderson Grace
 Brown Joyce M
 Cole Hamilton Margaret
 Crosfield M Ruth
 De la Mare Evelyn R
 Ferguson Marion M M
 Hunter Dorothy E
 Lewis Ida
 Lloyd Mary A E
 McDougall Grace A
 McDowall Isabel
 Marshall Mary D
 Moody Doris
 Murray Dorothy
 Osborne Sadie
 Peyton-Jones Grace G
 Pounds Eileen
 Robinson Cecile B
 Sidebottom Mary F

Serbian Decorations:**Order of St Sava**

Wicks Isabel³¹

³¹ Isabel Wicks served at the Serbian Relief Fund Hospital in Salonika in 1916. She later rejoined the FANY and served in France again.