

# Of Men and Money: the Home Front

*Anne M Bartlett*

Circular Head is located on the far North-West Coast of Tasmania. Stanley and Smithton are the two towns in the district. Throughout the municipality, there are a number of smaller farming communities such as Forest, Mengha, Irishtown, Scotchtown, Montagu, Marrawah, Trowutta, Leesville, Black River and Rocky Cape. During the early years of the twentieth century these smaller, semi-isolated communities were comparatively much more close-knit and most likely had a larger population than today. Each had its own shop, school, post office, church, shop and community hall; facilities now practically disappeared.

A small weekly newspaper, *The Circular Head Chronicle*, was and still is published in the district each Wednesday. During the War it consisted of four pages with a two-page literary supplement. While its offices are located at Smithton now, originally it was printed at Stanley. Although at that time news from this community tended to dominate the paper, there were correspondents as far away as Rocky Cape on the north-west coast and Balfour to the south.

Prior to the outbreak of World War One in 1914, *The Chronicle* contained only brief paragraphs on the unrest in Europe during that time. Once War was declared, however, much of the content of the newspaper was devoted to the various communities' responses to the War effort.

To wage war successfully, large quantities of two items are absolutely necessary: men and money. In an editorial shortly after the declaration of War, the editor compared the size of the armed forces on either side of the conflict and the amount of money accessible to each with those of conflicts in Europe during the nineteenth century. With fewer resources, France under Napoleon kept Europe at war for twenty-six years and the Crimean War lasted for three years. He concluded that (despite the common belief that 'it would all be over before Christmas') given such immense forces and vast sums of money to command on both sides, it was quite possible that the War could last for at least a few years. The editor then went on to say that:

it is therefore our bounden duty as members of the greatest and noblest empire the world has ever known to practice self-denial, and to be prepared to make great sacrifices, if not of blood, in time, energy and money, to assist in crushing an empire that by its mere aggressiveness has plunged all of Europe into the present trouble and caused such an amount of bloodshed, the evil consequences of which there is no one able to adequately compute.<sup>1</sup>

The people of the Circular Head municipality rose to the occasion.

At a meeting in Smithton, called by the Rifle Club, the need for preparation for war was stressed and many men volunteered to undergo a course of military training by drill and instruction in the use of the magazine rifle. Drills were to be held twice weekly. The Stanley Rifle Club was re-formed and a similar program was instituted. Soon another group was established at Forest, while one of the doctors at Stanley offered to run first aid classes for those interested. Some of these initiatives were short-lived – as soon as the instructor of the Forest group left, the drills discontinued. The drill classes at Smithton were re-introduced towards the end of 1916.

The Warden called a public meeting in Stanley to consider ways and means of assisting soldiers called to the Front. The meeting was well-attended and those present:

moved that it was the opinion of this meeting, now that the British Empire has been forced into a great war, it is the imperative duty of all of us, as British citizens to prepare for the performance of such duties civil or military, as we are capable of undertaking for the safety of our country, the honour of our flag and the glory of our King.

Despite this highly patriotic motion, no committee was formed and no plans for fund-raising were made. A similar public meeting held in Smithton appointed a committee to receive donations to the Patriotic Fund and to distribute these funds.

A second public meeting in Stanley saw the formation of the All for Empire League. The objects of the League were: 'To foster practical patriotism to the British Empire' and 'To educate public opinion regarding the causes and issues of the war'. These objectives were to be achieved through lectures, social reunions and correspondence between schools or individual children all over the Empire. Children from the local State School were corresponding with children from the Falkland Islands, Dover, Malta and other places.<sup>2</sup> A letter was published from the daughter of the head keeper of the lighthouse at Port Stanley in the Falklands. In it she wrote of going to the camps with her mother and sisters as the Germans were expected. She wrote of the 'awful feeling of going away from our fathers and not knowing if we should ever meet again'. They travelled to the camp at Darwin, 90 miles away and remained there for several weeks only to have the German fleet visit them four days after they had returned home. By a stroke of good luck the English fleet was present and destroyed all but two of the Germans.<sup>3</sup>

The ways of raising money were many and varied. Balls, dances, street stalls, social evenings, fetes and bazaars, lectures, games nights, popular baby contest were all tried. American teas became popular after America joined the War effort. Concerts by school children were given in many settlements. Often songs such as *Rule Britannia*, *Sons of the Sea*, *Soldiers of the King* and *Lads in Navy Blue* were rendered at these functions, particularly in the early part of the War.

One bright spark suggested that that the gate money from the football final be donated to the Red Cross and that the central umpire should take his abuse at half price for the same cause. While nothing came of this suggestion, patriotic football matches were organised between teams from the various towns.

Sterling silver war badges and Union Jacks were advertised for sale, although whether the profits went to the War effort or the local jeweller is not made clear.

Often profits from annual fixtures were often donated to the Patriotic Fund. The Irishtown Athletic Club's annual sports became the Irishtown Patriotic Sports for the duration of the War. Similarly the proceeds from the Sunny Hill Sports were donated to the Patriotic Fund as did the proceeds from IOOF Lodge annual ball held in Stanley. Both the Stanley and Smithton Racing Clubs held Patriotic Race Days. In some instances the money raised was being held to help wounded soldiers on their return to Circular Head.<sup>4</sup>

Groups of girls in the various centres banded together to form concert parties; they gave performances in several centres in the district. Hence there were The Khaki Girls and The Girls They Left Behind from Stanley,<sup>5</sup> the Cheerio Girls from Smithton and the Forest Fireflies.

Each group met with considerable financial success and the profits of their performances were donated to either the local Red Cross branch or the Patriotic Fund.

Many individuals supported the War effort in various ways. EH Edward made toasting forks; the proceeds from the sale of these were to go to the Patriotic Fund. At least 173 were sold. E Smith appealed through the columns of *The Chronicle* for feathers to be stripped and used to make feather pillows to send overseas 'to ease the heads of our poor suffering soldiers in the hospitals at the front'.<sup>6</sup> ER Bampton collected local newspapers to send to the troops in Egypt and later in Europe as they were always eager for news of home. A sheet of writing paper and an envelope was included with each newspaper that was sent.<sup>7</sup>

Clem Gray, a local poet, who wrote under the *nom de plume* of "Daybreak", was unable to enlist because of his physical disabilities. A number of his patriotic verses were published in a booklet which was sold to raise funds. A thousand were printed and, after expenses had been deducted, £27 was raised.<sup>8</sup> One of his patriotic songs was used as a fund-raiser at concerts throughout the district. As the song was sung or recited, a flag or tarpaulin was carried amongst the audience for them to throw in pennies. Considerable amounts were raised by this means.<sup>9</sup>

Not only those who man the guns	Now help, for the greatest heroes
Heroic and serene	That e'er the world has known,
But ev'ry one a part to play	Who stuck to their guns and honor
To keep right's banner clean;	Steadfastly and alone;
A mite – for the Red Cross lassie,	Come! Give to the Belgian lassie,
Come, give then, while you may,	A mite to smooth their way,
For she it is who comforts them	For think! Had they shirked resistance
Who fight for you today!	Where you'd have been today!
Just a little, little, little,	Just a little, little, little,
Our soldiers love to win,	To aid the kith and kin,
For the bonny Red Cross lassie -	Of the bonny Belgian lassie -
Throw in, throw in, throw in	Throw in, throw in, throw in

A branch of the Red Cross was formed at Stanley in September 1914. Shortly afterwards a branch was formed in Smithton and gradually branches were formed in most settlements in the district

The Stanley branch held sewing meetings every afternoon in the upstairs room in the Town Hall and at the end of the first week 40 flannel shirts and 50 handkerchiefs were ready to send on to Launceston. Gradually these sewing circles were reduced to twice weekly but the output did not diminish. By March 1915 four consignments of goods had been forwarded to Central Committee in Launceston. The latest consignment consisted of 60 undershirts, 50 service shirts, 11 helmets, five pairs of socks, seven bandages, four cushions and five cholera belts. As well a quantity of old linen had been collected to send to England.<sup>10</sup> The branch had ordered 750 yards of flannel so that there would be no break in the output of garments. But more needed to be done.

The following list of items required by the British Red Cross for the month of May 1915 was published in the hope that it would encourage the women who so far had not helped to join in the War effort.

10,000 suits of flannel pyjamas;	200 yards of flannel;
10,000 pairs of single grey blankets;	1,000 cotton shirts, full sleeves, with collar band;
15,000 flannel shirts, full sleeve, with collar band;	1,000 suits cotton pyjamas;
20,000 pairs of socks;	20,000 face washers;
5,000 undershirts;	2,500 knitted cardigan jackets;
5,000 pairs of underpants;	1,500 vests or waistcoats;
2,000 dressing gowns;	2,500 pairs bed socks;
2,000 towels;	2,000 pairs ordinary trousers;
2,000 sheets;	2,500 mufflers;
2,000 pairs flannel hospital pyjama trousers;	1,500 mittens;
3,000 pairs slippers;	1,000 pairs of gloves and
3,000 cholera belts;	large quantities of old linen and bandages. <sup>11</sup>

Items forwarded to England often included a card giving the origin of the article and throughout the War *The Chronicle* published some of the letters received by the Red Cross from the soldiers who received the articles.<sup>12</sup> Despite the fact that depressing black articles usually were not sent away to the hospitals, some continued to be sent to headquarters. Where black items were sent, workers at the central depot would introduce a bright touch with stripes and bands of vivid colour. These alterations involved the expenditure of additional time and effort.<sup>13</sup>

All donations to various branches of the Red Cross were listed in the columns of *The Chronicle*. Many women made weekly collections for the organization and each donation would be listed separately, even if it was only a penny, along with totals collected by each person. Each week, up to a column of the newspaper could be devoted to these donations. Most of the families in the district would have been on low incomes so many of the donations were in kind: a pair of fowls, a pig, a bag of potatoes, a bag of swedes, a bag of chaff, a dozen eggs, a case of apples, butter, fruit and vegetables in season, cheese, pickles and jams, cakes, a roast of beef were all donated at various times. My own grandfather periodically donated a case of apples and for Australia Day donated eight dozen cordials; he owned the local cordial factory. These items would be sold or auctioned and the proceeds of such sales often exceeded the sum of the cash donations. In this way people were able to donate substantially more than if they had made a cash contribution. Weekly street stalls were held at Smithton to sell items donated to the cause.

The Stanley Red Cross undertook to send Christmas gifts to the local boys. These presents were packed in billies. One recipient located in Cairo wrote to Miss Ford at *Dovecote* that:

I received the billy you and Miss Terry sent. The billy was all right. We all got one in this camp. We enjoyed the cake, cocoa and chocolate very much. It was fun to see all the men opening their billies. We got them on Christmas morning. They were like a lot of children looking in their stockings. I must thank you for the billy very much. The contents were very well thought out and very highly appreciated.<sup>14</sup>

Another wrote to his parents that:

we are getting a billy can tomorrow, also a present. I believe it contains a little plum pudding, cigarettes and a few more things.<sup>15</sup>

While the British Red Cross undertook the sick and wounded, it was the Australian Red Cross who provided comforts for the men in the trenches at the front line. As well as the appeals for clothing, there was a need for foodstuffs, especially loaf sugar (in tins), condensed milk, cocoa, coffee and tea, boiled lollies (in tins), tinned fruit, fish and cheese. Donations of these items were forthcoming from the locals to be shipped to England. In 1917 Tasmania was allocated twelve cubic tons of shipping space monthly; six were allocated to the north of the state and Circular Head residents provided their fair share of items.<sup>16</sup>

Late in 1915 a number of Circular Head farmers dedicated an acre of their cultivated area for the benefit of the Patriotic Fund. The sale of produce from these acres was expected to raise a considerable sum of money. The farmers' names were published and in the ensuing years the money realised from the sale of items was published also, albeit not from all the patriotic acres. Possibly some farmers fell by the wayside, forgetting they had made the promise.

In early 1915 some fund-raising events for the Belgian Fund had been organized including a Grand Belgian Ball at Stanley and a Belgian Fund Dance at Smithton. But by March the urgency to raise money had dissipated. One patriotic citizen wrote to *The Chronicle* asking 'if some united effort could not be made in Circular Head to raise money for the poor Belgians. We should do more than we are doing'.<sup>17</sup> Along with some suggestions, they enclosed a donation for the fund. This appeal did not fall on deaf ears – the All for Empire League took up the cause of the Belgians and fund-raising became much more systematic. A system whereby people could make a regular weekly or monthly donation was introduced. This idea was taken up by some of the local schools and for several months long lists of school children who had made donations to the Belgian Fund were published in *The Chronicle*. The lengths of the lists however gradually diminished until only the children from better off families were continuing to donate.

Australia Day was declared on 30 July 1915; it was a day set apart throughout the Commonwealth to raise funds for wounded Australian soldiers. The All for Empire League undertook the arrangements for the celebration of the day in Stanley. A monster carnival was organised. The day began with a service at St Paul's Church, followed by a grand procession of decorated cars and wagons through the town to the local showgrounds. Here a variety of amusements was provided. Included were a football kicking and tug-of-war competition, a shooting gallery, fishpond and Aunt Sally. Refreshments, lollies and bouquets of flowers were available in the show pavilion and the local band provided a selection of music. In the evening an entertainment in the Town Hall attracted a full house. In all £550 was raised in Stanley during the day. Similar celebrations were held in other centres. Smithton raised £230, Irishtown £130 and Rocky Cape £52. A total of £980 was raised in the district; probably more when all the accounts for the day were finalised. That was a large sum of money for the time; the people of Circular Head had played their part nobly.<sup>18</sup>

Gradually the patriotic zeal began to diminish; donations to the Belgian Fund were reduced considerably, the Red Cross lists of acknowledgements were decreasing gradually and the sewing circle was not so well attended.<sup>19</sup> An appeal by the Lord Mayor of London for funds for the starving children of Belgium rekindled the zeal. Another monster carnival was organised which raised in the vicinity of £300. A week later the appeal for funds for the French Red Cross raised over £200.<sup>20</sup> The period from 15 to 22 July 1916 had been designated a fund-raising week for this cause.<sup>21</sup>

Verdun Day was held at Stanley on 28 February 1917, and a grand Patriotic Sports meeting at the showgrounds was organised to support the French Red Cross.<sup>22</sup> Towards the end of 1917 the British Red Cross was spending £8,000 a day caring for the sick and wounded. Major fund-raisers were organised at both Smithton and Stanley to support this cause.<sup>23</sup> And although the profits were not as large as similar events earlier in the War, the community still could raise large sums of money quickly when needed.

While the main recipients of all the fund-raising were the Belgian Fund, the Patriotic Fund and the Australian, British and French Red Cross, other causes were supported also. The paper published a letter appealing for funds for the White Cross League 'to enable booklets warning men against the dangers of sexual immorality, to be distributed freely amongst our Australian soldiers'.<sup>24</sup> At various times the Sailors' Comfort Fund, the Servian Fund and the Destitute of London were supported.

The Soldiers' Tobacco Fund was another cause supported by the residents. Donations of packets of tobacco and cigarettes as well as money were made by the locals. For every shilling donated to the Fund, fifty cigarettes and two ounces of tobacco along with matches and a postcard were sent to a soldier at the Front. Each package contained the name of the donor of the items. These tobacco comforts were distributed by the Overseas Club to soldiers from all nations serving with the Imperial Army, and *The Chronicle* of 10 November recorded seven postcards from British soldiers expressing their thanks for the gift, one writing that:

I am sure not only myself, but other Tommie appreciate your kindness very much, as a smoke is the only comfort we have out here. I am proud to think that the British subjects abroad think of the homeland.

Another from the Royal Engineers wrote that:

I can assure you that these packets are greatly appreciated by us especially when we are so far away from everything and not able to purchase any.

This appeal was supported by the singer Nellie Melba and in July 1917 *The Chronicle* published an appeal from her for residents to support this cause.

Several Government War Savings Schemes were made throughout the War. Individuals were encouraged to buy War Savings Bonds, no matter how small an amount they could spare. In 1917 the Director of Education came up with a scheme for children to raise £20,000. The scheme met with considerable success at the local schools. Stanley promised to raise £150; two days into the scheme they had banked £182. Mengha, which had only a few pupils, promised £60; they banked £162 within a few days. Irishtown offered to raise £60, Forest £130 and Smithton £200; they were all well on the way to achieving these goals.<sup>25</sup>

Recruiting was slow in the beginning, with some even suggesting that it was, 'to say the least, on the slack side',<sup>26</sup> but it improved considerably in the second half of 1915. Recruiting meetings were held in all centres during July; and by the middle of August Mr Charles Tatlow of Tatlow's Coaches reported that he had taken 75 volunteers from the district to Myalla, *en route* for the Brighton training camp.<sup>27</sup> Tasmania required an average of 240 recruits a month to reinforce those at the Front. So the districts felt they were doing their bit. However the recruiting campaign in Stanley caused considerable ill-feeling amongst some of the townspeople. Despite being successful for the most part, a group of well-known residents took it upon themselves to send anonymous letters containing a white feather to most of the young men of the town.<sup>28</sup>

As the War worsened more recruits were needed each month. Circular Head needed to provide thirty-four men for the new army and fourteen per month as reinforcements.<sup>29</sup> A local recruiting committee was set up.<sup>30</sup> To begin with only the names of those who enlisted were published in the paper each week; later the list was extended to include those who passed for Home Service only and those who did not pass the medical examinations.

Farewell socials were held for each soldier when they came home from training camp on their final leave before sailing overseas. The first reported send-off for a soldier was held in Stanley in September 1914. Committees were formed in Smithton and Stanley to organise these events. Early farewells often included several very patriotic speeches by men prominent in the local community; probably in the hope that other men would be encouraged to enlist. Later they became more social events with euchre tournaments and other games, concerts and dancing. Common farewell presents included wristlet watches, safety razors, gold mounted fountain pens, khaki covered bibles and a purse of sovereigns. Watches were so popular as presents that throughout much of the war, the local jeweller in Smithton advertised soldiers' wristlet watches for sale in the local newspaper.

The first reports of a local soldier killed in action appeared on 23 June 1915. The columns detailing the farewell socials for newly-enlisted men began to include details of those killed and wounded overseas. At the height of the conflict details of the deaths of three, four or five soldiers appeared each week. This did not deter the local men from enlisting. Reports of the killed and wounded were not limited to the residents of Circular Head. The paper reports included relatives, some of whom were from interstate or New Zealand, or people who at some time had worked in Circular Head.

The local football association decided to discontinue matches; at first it was felt it discouraged men from enlisting. Later it was because the various clubs would have difficulty in mustering a team and many had lost heart for the game as a result of the precarious way the War was going. Roster games ceased towards the end of 1915 and were not resumed until 1918 when the Wellington Football Association was re-formed.<sup>31</sup>

The widespread hatred of anything German spread to Circular Head. So much so that local resident Carl Jaeger, who some asserted was German, felt compelled to write a letter to the editor to deny this. Carl was born in Switzerland, with Swiss parents, and had lived in Canada for twelve years where he had become a naturalised British subject before arriving in Tasmania.<sup>32</sup>

Both referenda regarding conscription (compulsory enlistment) passed quietly. *The Chronicle* reported on meetings only in favour of the 'Yes' vote although meetings against the proposal were held in the district. Perhaps this was showing the bias of the paper. The only exceptions to the above were the meetings at which Joseph Lyons spoke; a native of Stanley he was Leader of the State Opposition and later became Premier of Tasmania and Prime Minister of Australia. On both occasions, however, the district voted against the proposal. On the first occasion the voting was very close with 715 voted 'Yes' and 736 'No'.<sup>33</sup> The results in the district for the second referendum were more decisive. The negative vote increased considerably; 580 voted 'Yes' and 701 'No'. The voting at both the Smithton and Stanley polling booths was very even with only a few votes separating the two sides. At Forest and Irishtown, however, the negative vote far outweighed the positive vote. At Irishtown 44 voted 'Yes' and 122 'No', while at Forest 40 voted 'Yes' and 118 'No'. The voting at Irishtown

probably reflected the large Irish Catholic population there who would have been influenced by the stance against the proposal by some church officials.

By mid-1916 some locals were thinking of ways to show the community's appreciation to those who enlisted. One suggestion was to strike a medal to present to each of the servicemen.<sup>34</sup> Actually this was done by some of the centres at the end of the War. Rolls of Honour began to appear all over the district. The Loyal Wellington Lodge in Stanley had a polished blackwood cabinet made with the names of members enlisting on the Front. An Honour Roll was unveiled at the Stanley Town Hall on Anzac Day and another at the Smithton State School in December 1917. A public reception at Stanley was tendered to all returned soldiers of the district in June 1918. Held on the King's birthday, over 450 people attended the function to express their appreciation of the sacrifices made by the soldiers.<sup>35</sup>

Suggestions of Avenues of Honour were made in Stanley, Smithton and Irishtown. While these suggestions were greeted with enthusiasm they were not always carried through. The people were war weary and once the War ended their energies were directed elsewhere. In fact it was not until several years after the conclusion of the War that a War Memorial was erected in Stanley.

On occasion local events were considered more important and so details of the War effort almost disappeared from the columns of *The Chronicle*. In 1916 disastrous bushfires occurred throughout the district and fund-raising was directed at bushfire relief for those most affected rather than for the War effort. Again at times of Federal and State elections the coverage of the War effort diminished. By the beginning of 1918 the newspaper was reporting more on local events than on the War effort. Reports of weddings, social and sporting events gradually began to appear and the columns of lists of donations disappeared. Like everyone, everywhere, the people of Circular Head were weary of the War and so it was with great jubilation that they celebrated into the 'wee small hours' the signing of the Armistice and cessation of hostilities on 11 November 1918.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 19 August 1914.

<sup>2</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 34 March 1915.

<sup>3</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 21 April 1915.

<sup>4</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 31 January 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 12 July 1916.

<sup>6</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 23 June 1915.

<sup>7</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 18 August 1915.

<sup>8</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 3 June 1917.

<sup>9</sup> *The Circular head Chronicle*, 26 May 1915.

<sup>10</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 24 March 1915.

<sup>11</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 12 May 1915.

<sup>12</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 3 November 1915; 24 January 1917.

<sup>13</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 29 March 1916.

<sup>14</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 16 February 1916.

<sup>15</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 23 February 1916.

<sup>16</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 11 July 1917.

<sup>17</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 10 March 1915.

<sup>18</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 4 April 1915.

<sup>19</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 24 May 1916.

<sup>20</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 9 August 1916.

<sup>21</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 21 June 1916.

<sup>22</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 14 July 1917.

<sup>23</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 12 September 1917.



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- <sup>24</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 24 March 1915.  
<sup>25</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 1 August 1917.  
<sup>26</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 2 June 1915.  
<sup>27</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 18 August 1915.  
<sup>28</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 28 July 1915.  
<sup>29</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 12 January 1916.  
<sup>30</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 19 January 1916.  
<sup>31</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 10 July 1918.  
<sup>32</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 25 October 1916.  
<sup>33</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 27 September 1916.  
<sup>34</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 29 March 1916.  
<sup>35</sup> *The Circular Head Chronicle*, 5 June 1918.