



Quaker relief work

Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee (FWVRC)



This committee, established during the Franco-Prussian War, was revived by London Yearly Meeting in September 1914.

Altogether, 1,800 men and women worked in nine European countries, and many supported the work at home, including people of all faiths and none.

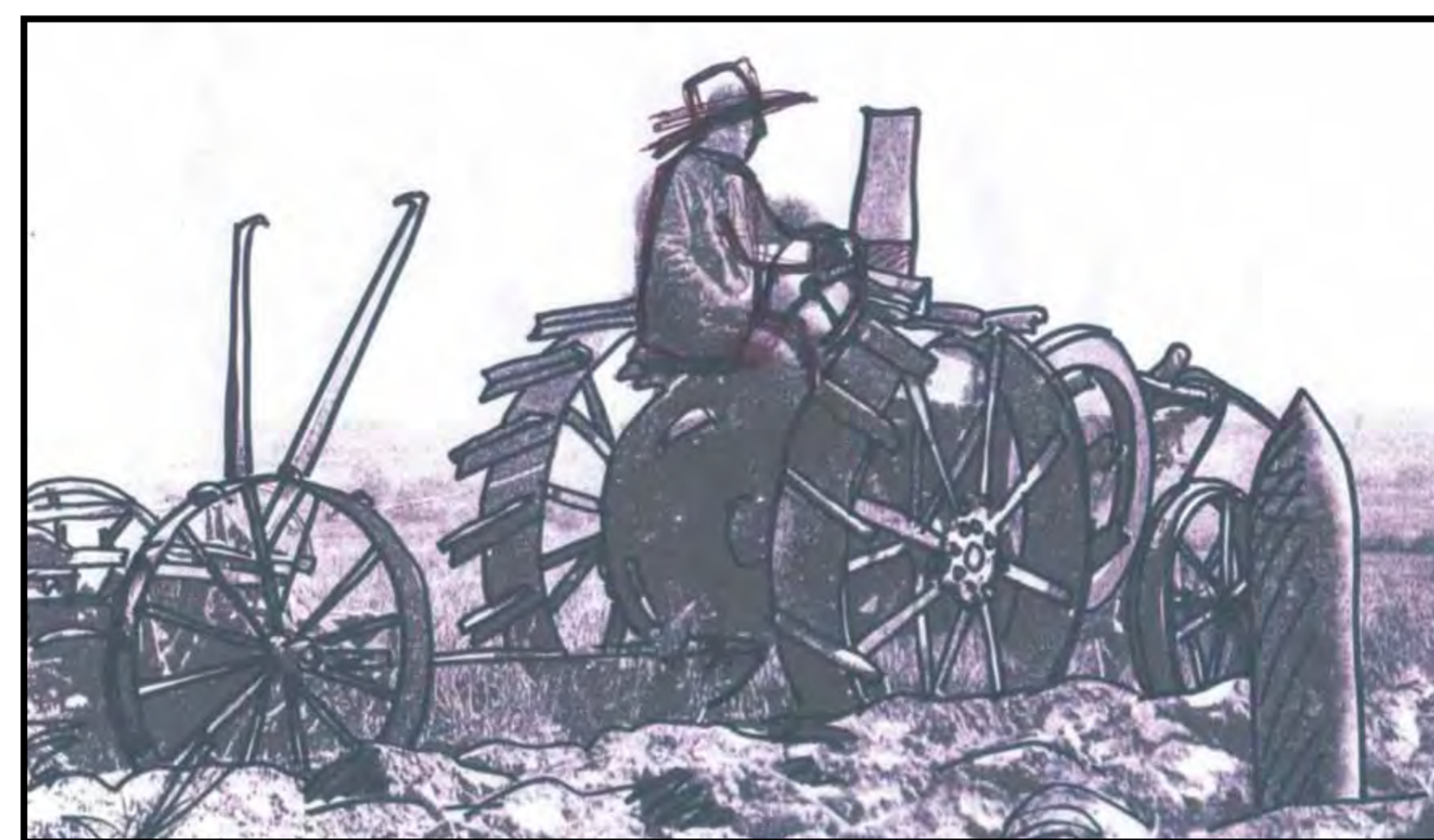
The volunteers cared for refugees and orphans, constructed housing, ploughed and harvested, built hospitals and provided health care.

From 1917, the relief work was carried out jointly with the newly-formed American Friends Service Committee and continued for some years after the war.

“Friends’ approach to relief work is underpinned by the belief in ‘that of God in everyone’, and ... this has meant assisting everyone in need.”

www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action

Relief work in post-war France



Ploughing while on lookout for bombs, Brabant-en-Argonne, Verdun region, France, January 1919.

‘It has been wet and cold but in spite of it Baker has been ploughing all the week. The paddock we began on was too wet and stony so we went to a drier part.

There are lots of craters about and I dare say there are yet unexploded bombs and shells about. Hand grenades and aerial bombs are the worst. Baker had to move several grenades...’

Martin Walker, Brabant, 1919

‘This lonely, desolate valley (of Brabant) full of ruin and munition dumps, has now become peopled with thirty families amicably arranging their crops on the seventy-three acres of ploughing already accomplished there.’

A. Ruth Fry, *A Quaker Adventure: The story of nine years’ relief and reconstruction*, 1926

With the Friends Ambulance Unit in France

‘On Easter Sunday we arranged a meeting [for worship] in one of our wards, but it was hard to concentrate one’s thoughts with the continual booming of the guns...

The last trip ... we were travelling up to the lines during the night, when we heard several loud reports not far off. The engine immediately put on full speed, and at the station we received orders to put out all lights...

Next morning motor ambulances came up, and we had to start loading rapidly...’

Joseph Thorp in letter home 1916

Friends Ambulance Unit

Within weeks of the outbreak of WW1, a group of young Quakers set up the volunteer Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU). The Unit worked mainly in France, establishing the Queen Alexandra Hospital in Dunkirk, staffing and running ambulance convoys (Sections Sanitaires Anglaises) and later ambulance trains and two hospital ships.

By the end of the war, over 1,700 men had worked with the FAU, including conscientious objectors who accepted non-combatant duties.

The volunteers often worked close to the front and 21 died during their period of service.



Friends Ambulance Unit – Herbert Lester, Britain (at the wheel) with other FAU volunteers in France.



Australian supplies for war victims in Europe post WW1 – Melbourne Meeting House.

Australian Quakers who served with the Friends’ War Victims Relief Committee (FWVRC) or the Friends’ Ambulance Unit (FAU)

NSW	Alfred Allen jun.	FWVRC	Holland
	Howard Cooper	FAU	England, France
	Eric Cooper	FAU	France, Belgium
	William L. Cooper	FAU	France, Belgium
	Bevan Neave	FAU	France
QLD	Norton Neave	FWVRC	France
	Joseph H. Thorp	FAU	France
	Douglas Allen	FWVRC	France
VIC	Frank Fryer	FWVRC	France
	Martin Walker	FWVRC	Holland, France
	Alfred Clemes	FAU	France
TAS	Arthur Gray	FAU	France
	Hugh Wells	FWVRC	Holland, France
WA	James Muschamp	FWVRC	France
	Thomas Muschamp	FAU	France

After WW1, some volunteers stayed on to assist with the reconstruction and relief work in Europe and others, such as Margaret Thorp, worked with the FWVRC and the Friends Service Mission for varying periods of time.



Principal Centres of Friends’ Relief Work in Europe, 1914–1923.

