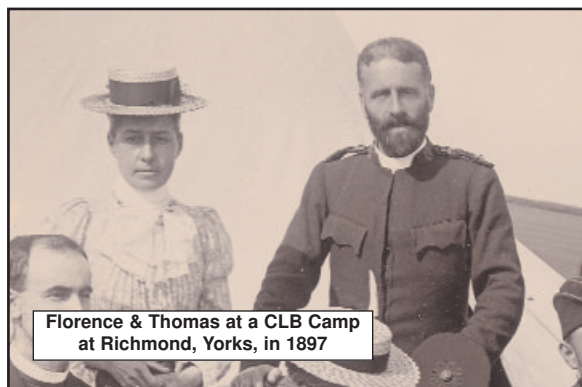


# Factsheet

## NUMBER 18: THOMAS & FLORENCE MILNER

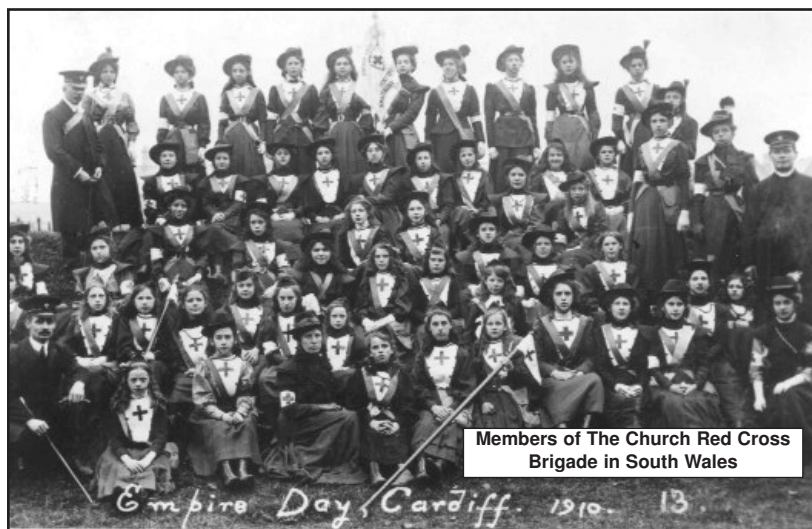
It was the enthusiasm and vision of two people which led to the birth of the Church Red Cross Brigade - the Rev. Thomas Milner and his wife Florence. Thomas's working and family life seems to have been divided between the Northeast of England and London. He was born in Wandsworth and his wife, daughter of Alderman George H. Dexter J.P., was born in Jarrow on Tyne. Alderman Dexter was described, in 1894, as being from Jarrow and 'Springfield' Gateshead.

Milner became a Deacon in 1892 and was a Priest in 1893 in Newcastle on Tyne. His position as Curate of Holy Trinity, North Shields lasted from 1892 - 1895. He married Florence on 1st April 1894 at Christ Church Gateshead. He was married by Rev T.C. Mulholland, vicar, assisted by the vicar of his own church Rev R. Morrison Herdman M.A..



Florence & Thomas at a CLB Camp  
at Richmond, Yorks, in 1897

Milner's daughter, Florence Beatrice, Dexter was born on the 11th July 1895. Dexter was his wife's maiden name. Between 1895 and 1898 he held a Curacy in Morpeth, Northumberland. From 1898 - 1899 he was at Amble with Radcliffe and Hauxley, Acklington, Northumberland. In 1899, he moved to London taking up an appointment as Curate at Christ Church, West Green, Tottenham, the same year that two companies of the London Diocesan CLB were formed at that church. By 1900 the LDCLB, at Christ Church, was reported as having '122 officers and men' and being the largest in the Diocese. The LDCLB List for 1900 lists Rev T Milner as Captain of 'Company M' (7th Bn) [Enrolled Dec 1899] at Christ Church West Green. Company 'L' [Enrolled Oct 1899] was also based at the same Church.



Members of The Church Red Cross  
Brigade in South Wales

The Church Red Cross Brigade a female corps, was introduced by the Milners in 1901, Thomas relinquishing the LDCLB captaincy to Ernest Long. However, by December 1902 Long had found it necessary to resign command of the company and Thomas was re-appointed LDCLB Captain. The church magazine commented: "He may be able to infuse a little more enthusiasm among the lads whose numbers have dropped off sadly of late."

By March 1903 the LDCLB at Christ Church had been renamed 'Church of England Rifle Cadets'. Evidently a new independent organisation had emerged which had probably encompassed other LDCLB units. The change seems to have been part of the popular move

towards Rifle clubs encouraged by the likes of Field Marshal Earl Roberts VC KG who became the Commander in Chief of the new organisation.



## Factsheet 18 continued:



Florence & Thomas inspect the work of the CRCB at St. Mark's Kennington

Milner was described as 'Commandant' in his leaving presentation ceremony from West Green in 1905. He moved to Scarborough but was to remain there for less than twelve months. Once he was away from Tottenham the Cadets strength diminished and the lads' organisation seems to have completely

finished by December 1909 when a BP Scout Troop was formed. However, we can assume that the Girls' organisation continued.

Between 1906 and 1909 Milner was back in London as Curate of Christ Church North Kensington (Notting Hill). There was an LDCLB Co. registered there from 1897. From 1908 he became the 'Organising Secretary of The Church Red Cross Brigade' based at his home 163 Edgware Rd., with the London (Headquarters) Regiment meeting at 134 Edgware Rd. (on the corner of Star Street) Clearly the girls' organisation had spread through the capital and was quite successful.

One of the highest profile appearances of the Brigade was on the day of the funeral of HM King Edward VII, 20th May 1910 - it was a particularly hot day and many of the participants in the parade as well as spectators were affected by the conditions. In a lengthy article, the British Medical Journal of May 1910 praised the Church Red Cross Brigade which provided one hundred and fifty members who took up six stations all of them along the Edgware Road.

### Church Nursing and Ambulance Brigade

It is not known why the name of the organisation changed, but we can assume that it was partly a result of the British Red Cross receiving its Royal Charter in 1908 from King Edward VII. Having other organisations with 'Red Cross' in the title was, no doubt, confusing. Twenty years or so later it would have been illegal.

The Brisbane Courier of Wednesday 19th April 1911 in an article about the organisation's work, particularly at the Funeral of HM King Edward VII, stated that '*The Church Red Cross Brigade for Women and Girls in England is now known as the Church Nursing and Ambulance Brigade.*' It also went on to describe some of the work:

*"This corps ought to be specially remembered, as its efficiency and endurance are really remarkable. On the occasion of King Edward's funeral the services rendered by the brigade received special commendation from the Press. Under that blazing sun, when hardened soldiers dropped fainting every few minutes, the brigade worked hard and untiringly. Prostrate men were carried away, apparently with perfect ease; soldiers and civilians were treated in large numbers, to say nothing of women and youths and children. One old man who broke his leg received expert treatment. And perhaps the most remarkable test of all, in one way, was that out of the hundred and fifty women and girls on duty, during the whole day only two fell out, and these did not faint, but returned on duty in a very few minutes. The brigade teaches home nursing, hygiene, and first aid very thoroughly, so that its members in times of peace, and when no public duties call them, are made much more capable and useful members of the community than they would otherwise be."*







## Factsheet 18 continued:



Members of The Church Nursing & Ambulance Brigade

In the 1911 census Thomas & Florence were still living at 163 Edgware Rd and he was described as the 'Organizing Secretary' for The Church Nursing and Ambulance Brigade. His wife, whose full name was most appropriately: 'Florence Nightingale Milner', was described as Secretary to the CNAB. His daughter, Florence, Beatrice was aged 15 years. The object of the Brigade was: 'To make the Young Women and Girls of the Nation:- More useful in the Home, More Valuable to their Country, More sympathetic with the suffering, More truly followers of Christ.' This rhetoric was soon to be tested. Girls were admitted to the Junior section at the age of twelve years and transferred to the senior section at fifteen.

### The War Years 1914-18

Initially activities had simply been first-aid and home nursing but the Brigade would often be seen at public events rendering first-aid. In 1914, Sir John French, Inspecting the London Regiment at Olympia described the CNAB as 'a great national asset'.

In an illustrated year book and album produced in early 1915 which stated that there were upwards of 100 companies in different parts of the country, Thomas Milner, answers the question: What is the CNAB doing for the country? *'Unaided by any help from public funds, it is building up throughout the country a properly-trained and properly equipped Territorial Corps of the Sisters of our brave soldiers, sailors and Territorials, as already numbering many thousands of keen girls and young women!'*

From the outbreak of war, recruiting was rapid. In 1914 a dozen new companies were started in London and there was a 'quite abnormal' growth in the colliery districts of South Wales. Annual camps were held at Worthing and the CNAB National Brass Band (Based at the Edgware Rd Headquarters) is believed to have been the first all-girls' brass band to have been formed in England. It was during the war that the CNAB were able to come to the fore with the band leading military recruitment parades in London and assistance being given to girls coming to the Capital for war work. In Pontypridd (Glamorgan) wounded soldiers, returning from the front were given absolutely into the charge of the Medical Officers and Nurses of the South Wales Regiment of the CNAB. For some time after the outbreak of war the officers and members of the Northumberland Regiment, under the command of Col. Frank Hawthorn RAMC were in charge of the Rest Station for the Northern Command at the Central Railway Station. Newcastle-on-Tyne. The Band collected money for the Prince of Wales's Relief Fund and delivered thousands of circulars to assist the recruiting of the Army.

Miss Winifred Aitkin a member of St Martin's Kensal Rise Company from 1913, writes about her time in the CNAB. The company held monthly Church Parades with St Martin's CLB. Winifred states: *'On the outbreak of war a few senior members with Major M (Minnie) C Barfoot and Lieut. May Mock went on duty with stretchers and water bottles to help with the crowds at Paddington Tube Station. I think most of our time was passed in going up and down to the street to see what was going on. The Rev. Thomas Milner used to visit the different units on duty each night, such as Kilburn Company at Kilburn Station, Headquarters at Edgware Road etc. It was on one occasion when he had been going his rounds that he returned to his home to find his house had been bombed during a Zeppelin raid.'*



## Factsheet 18 continued:

Members of The Church Nursing & Ambulance Brigade, led by their Band, engaged in patriotic duty in Trafalgar Square 1915



By 1917, the organisation's President was The Princess Marie Louise and the Commandant in Chief, (since 1914) was the Right Hon. the Countess of Clonmell.

### The Brigade & The Milner's After WW1

After WW1 the work seems to have continued but everything was to change when the Milners moved back North, to Goole in 1922, by which time Florence Milner was blind, and an ageing Thomas could continue no longer with running the Brigade on his own. The Milners never returned to London to live, and Florence died in 1923. She is buried in Goole Cemetery. The epitaph Thomas put on her 'Angel' headstone commemorates her work with the CRCB & CNAB. Information from Crockford's 1951 shows that Thomas worked in Goole until 1925 then in Whitley Bay, at 'Alston' at the end of 1928 and 'Croglin' from 1933-1937. His address (in 1951) is stated as: Croglin, Ashfield Grove, Whitley Bay, Northumberland. Thomas died in Tynemouth, Northumberland on 28th February 1953. He was buried in Whitley Bay Cemetery on 5th March 1953. Grave No: A140.



Thomas Milner Organising Secretary of the CNAB 1915



A typical CNAB Badge

The gravestone of Florence Nightingale Milner





