

## BELGIAN REFUGEES IN CUMBRIA during World War 1

### **West Cumbria**

The first mention of the Belgian Relief Effort in the Whitehaven News is a fund raising dance at Ravenglass Village Hall on 5<sup>th</sup> November, followed the next day by a Ball at Captain Shaw's School, Bootle.

At Workington Hippodrome there was a sacred dance on 18<sup>th</sup> October in aid of the general relief effort

On 22<sup>nd</sup> October we learn that there is a refugee family at Rothay Manor Ambleside- *Joseph Burseniers (a master builder), his wife Louise, and son Marcel Abta with his wife of 3 months-Juliette*, who had arrived via the Ostend to Folkestone boat.

In Whitehaven the first practical mention is on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1914 when there was an appeal to provide Furniture, Bedding and Kitchen Utensils etc to furnish the old Bank of Whitehaven building in Coates Lane as accommodation for around 3 dozen refugees.

This was co-ordinated by the Whitehaven Distress and Relief Committee, who also appealed for money for the around £500 per year estimated costs to maintain these facilities.

(There had been an earlier letter on 24<sup>th</sup> August asking for national donations, from a John William Young of Trafalgar Villa, Bransty quoting the Belgian Consul in Edinburgh who had Germans quartered in his father's house in Belgium, his 80 year old mother being held as prisoner by the Germans and whose wife and children had had to flee from the invasion).

On 29<sup>th</sup> October there is a very detailed report about the arrival of the first refugees at Whitehaven. The Whitehaven Colliery Company had paid for their train fares from London, and company housing at Kells and was going to provide work for them at Ladysmith Pit. They arrived on 27<sup>th</sup> October. They were from Charleroi, and had left Ostend on 18<sup>th</sup> October with little but their clothes. They were-

Madame Pauline Nys and children Marie & Bertha

Adam Theophell

John Isenbough

Joseph Naulaerts

Emile Francken

Joseph van Meerbeck

Jules Vilain Lebon Fortune (youth)

Elarts Theophell (youth) and

Alphonse Van Vlasel (youth).

On 5<sup>th</sup> November we are told that there are already 57 refugees in the Penrith area, 10 at Maryport and 29 at Workington, with promises of space for 50 at Alston, 30 at Whitehaven and 40 at Keswick with arrangements ongoing at Longtown, Brampton, Cockermouth and Wigton.

The **Keswick** refugees were looked after by the "Keswick and District Committee for the Prevention and Relief of Distress", with most of them living in the Blencathra Hotel

Also on that day there is reference to the house "Highfield" at Hawkshead being made available for a family, but doubt of whether a licence would be granted as Hawkshead was a restricted area.

Also on 5<sup>th</sup> November a Belgian family arrived at Finsthwaite.

On 6<sup>th</sup> November St Begh's had a rummage sale for the Mayor's fund for the relief of Belgian Refugees, by auction at the Church Street Sale Room (source YDFCRC 3/2/1/11). A collection was also made at each service on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November.

On 10<sup>th</sup> November 21 refugees in five families, ranging from babes-in-arms to a lady over 80 arrived by the last train to take up the accommodation in the old bank building

On 12<sup>th</sup> November we learn that Meadow View, Gosforth had been furnished ready to receive refugees.

On 9<sup>th</sup> November 5 Herdwick lambs were sold several times over at Mitchell's mart, Cockermouth to raise £114 for Belgian relief. Similar events happened at Workington Mart on 11<sup>th</sup> November and Millom mart on 16<sup>th</sup> November.

On 13<sup>th</sup> November there was a concert at Harrington to raise funds to furnish a house in Church Road to house 2 refugee families.

By 12<sup>th</sup> November a *Monsieur Fosty and family* were living at Underwood, Bootle (the home of Mr Hudson of Manchester). They had arrived on 26<sup>th</sup> October according to the Millom Gazette. One of them worked for Belgian railways and one was a dentist.

On 18<sup>th</sup> November 4 refugees arrived at Harrington to the house which had been prepared for them, owned by Mr Blacklock.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 6 refugees arrived at "The Cross", Hensingham by the 2pm train direct from London Euston to Corkickle arriving at 2215 where they were met by the Vicar, Revd CEA Blackburn who also acted as interpreter. 4 of them spoke Flemish, the other 2 Walloon. They had had a 7 week trip from Cerde, Belgium via Holland, where they were market gardeners. Their names were-

*Mr & Mrs Francis Bayans with their daughters Charlotte and Maria*

*Mr and Mrs Portuis (Mrs Portuis was sister of Mrs Bayans).*

The Cross had accommodation for many more refugees. These families were Roman Catholic and attended the RC School. By 18<sup>th</sup> December 12 more had arrived at "The Cross" and a man, wife and child were staying with Mrs Moore at Cartgate. The plan was for the men of this second party to work making munitions at Workington.

By early December 1914 there were also refugees at "Low Nook", Ambleside.

On 6<sup>th</sup> December there was a concert in aid of the Belgian Relief Fund at the Hippodrome, Cleator Moor- the building being provided free of charge by the proprietors Messrs Relph & Pedley.

On 12<sup>th</sup> December a party of refugees arrived at "Herding Nab", Seascale. They were;

*Joseph van de Pas, his wife Marie, and children Joseph Virginia (aged 14), Pierre (aged 6) and Charles (aged 14 months).* Joseph senior had formerly been in municipal employment, and they were Walloon speakers.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> December two married couples arrived at "Foumart Hill", Frizington- the cottage being provided by Mr T Dixon of Rheda.

By 8<sup>th</sup> January 1915 two families had arrived at 41 Main Street, Haverigg from Antwerp. They were-

*Francois Van Beylen, 34, assurance broker with his wife Jeanne aged 31 and son Etienne aged 9*

*Francois Van Gell, 30, diamond merchant with his wife Maria Rosatia aged 28 and daughter Elisa aged 8.*

They were joined the next day by *Jean Frerard, an engineer from Liege aged 52, his wife Maria, 52 and his daughter Felicie aged 25 plus Joseph Lecoq, a machine engineer from Vorviers aged 54.*

In mid January 1915 it is announced that Millom expects to receive between 300 and 500 Belgian Refugees, who will work at Barrow Shipyard. The arrangements to accommodate them were made by the Millom Ratepayers Association. Most of the ex-soldiers among them had been interned at Flushing in Holland and many had been forced to work for the Germans.

By 15<sup>th</sup> January *Lieutenant Goosens* of the Belgian Army was at "Woodlands", Bootle. He had been seriously wounded in the leg on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1914 and had been being treated at Canterbury Hospital for some time-two corporals were decorated for his rescue from the battlefield.

As at 20<sup>th</sup> January 1915 the number of refugees in Allerdale above Derwent was Hensingham-21, Seascale-7, Gosforth-3, Frizington-4 and Harrington-8. Around 21<sup>st</sup> January a further family of 5 peasant refugees were due at Maryport-to a house on Collin's Terrace. A box of toys had been sent for the children of the existing refugees there by Princess Marie Jose of Belgium.

On 28<sup>th</sup> January an Anglo-Belgian concert was given at the Drill Hall, Millom with major contributions from the refugee family at Bootle-*Monsieur & Mddle Bertrand and their 14 year old daughter Madelle.* On 27<sup>th</sup> January there was a concert for the Refugee fund at the Co-operative Hall given by the Haverigg Madrigal Choir and the Haverigg Minstrel Troupe. Throughout that week a contingent of refugees arrived at Millom daily-about 260 in total in the week, Between two and six were put up by individual's in their homes, and still much accommodation available. A special workmen's train was laid on to Barrow with about 500 seats. However it was unheated, leading to some of the Belgians moving to Barrow. The number in Millom continued to be supplemented in February by the arrival of wives and children, and a Belgian shop opened- initially just selling Belgian newspapers. On 9<sup>th</sup> February Monsieur Alfred Bertrand left Bootle to rejoin the Belgian army in France (after 4 months training in France)- his wife and daughter remained.

By 11<sup>th</sup> February (see page 2) there were around 900 Belgians employed at Vickers, Shipyard- as well as Millom they were living at Lindal, Askam, Kirkby, Ulverston (where many lived at Lund Hall-see below), Dalton, Cark, Kents Bank and Grange- with a new workmen's train now bring run from as far as Grange. Many were living in tourist B and B accommodation, two mansions had been converted for their use and Barrow Corporation were about to start erecting temporary accommodation. Also the Furness Railway Company was about to start employing Belgians to replace men away in the army.

Also Belgian miners were arriving in Whitehaven.

At Cockermouth a Private Eland of the 5<sup>th</sup> Borders had met a Belgian sailor called *Pyson* on the mail boat Leopold II. He had been able to put him in touch with his wife, *Angele and child* who were living at Derwent Street, Cockermouth. Happily Private Eland survived the war.

By 11<sup>th</sup> March the United Methodist Church in Millom was holding services for the refugees in French as the pastor Revd EC Bartlett, was a fluent French speaker. One of the Belgians had opened a class

to teach his countrymen English, and another to teach the locals French!- the latter being by far the better attended.

On 26<sup>th</sup> March the Millom Gazette noted that an RC priest called *Abdon Jacobs* from Malines would hold a service every 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday- he was also looking after the Belgian RC's at Barrow, Dalton, Ulverston and Grange.

On 27<sup>th</sup> March 1915 a manure cart belonging to Millom Co-op separated from its horse in the centre of Millom due to the shaft breaking. The horse was then careering through the town when one of the refugees, *Dubosch Heliodore* pluckily managed to stop it. He lived in Albert Street with his wife and son.

On 8<sup>th</sup> April 1915 it is noted that there are now 640 men using the workmen's train from Millom to Vickers daily-mainly Belgians, and that there are rumours of another large contingent arriving in Barrow soon, also that Haverigg householders have room for 200 refugees. There was also a meeting of the Belgians at Millom Co-op Hall on 5<sup>th</sup> April to set up a comforts fund for their own soldiers fighting on the banks of the River Yser- each man to contribute 1s per week to the fund.

On 29<sup>th</sup> April the Millom Free Library was given an allowance of £5 by the Town Council to buy French books for the Belgians.

By 6<sup>th</sup> May 1915 some of the Belgians were starting to leave Millom, on the expiry of their 3 month contracts to return to the front in France and to make munitions for the war, with the first men leaving on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May. A large contingent remained, though.

On 13<sup>th</sup> May 1915 *Aloysius Ludovicus Boeykins* died at Barrow Central Station as he tried to board a moving train, but fell between the platform and the train. He was married, was a riveter at Vickers and lived at 149 Wellington Street, Millom.

On Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> May 1915 there was a riot at Kells between the Belgian and English miners. There had been long standing simmering resentment amongst some of the locals that some of the refugees were of fighting age, and able to fight, but were instead working at the pits here while many pitmen were away fighting in the English Army. The riot started after some intemperate remarks by a group of 9 drunk Belgians. A superintendent, two inspectors and five constables were sent to quell the disturbance.

One Belgian-*Jerome de Freimi* aged 29 of 31 South Row Kells was arrested and eight others given refuge at the Police Station. Jerome was fined 9 shillings, and then with his 8 comrades despatched to the London camp. The next day the miners at Ladysmith Pit went on strike, demanding the removal of all the Belgian miners. By the Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May, after a meeting at Kells Reading Room tempers had calmed, and work was resumed with a resolution that all would work together until the end of the war.

Courtesy of Joseph Ritson on the BBC WW2 People's War website we know that one of the Whitehaven refugees was a Merchant Seaman- *Alfonso van der Vyver*. While here he worked as a seaman, and met a local girl- Mary Jane Williams who he married, and they used Mary's surname for ease. They went to live in Sandwith-one of their children was Louis. In the early part of WW2 he worked at Drigg Military Ranges, before enlisting in the RASC. He took part in the Normandy Landings and later was able to meet some of his Belgian relatives at Antwerp. After the war he worked at Haig Pit.

On 26<sup>th</sup> June 1915 at Millom *Jean and Celestine Servais Beaujeau* (from Liege) were brought to court for failing to notify the police of a change of address.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July 1915 a meeting was held in Millom to form a Union for the Vickers workers amongst them.

On 7<sup>th</sup> July 1915 a *Francois Docquier*, aged 25, appeared at Workington Court charged with changing his address from Workington to Bassenthwaite without giving due notice to the police. He was found to have made an honest mistake, but still had to pay the police costs of 9/3.

From the West Cumberland Times of 4<sup>th</sup> December 1915 we know more about the refugees at **Bassenthwaite**-Two cottages were offered rent free to the local Committee in November 1914 7 people moved into 1 cottage-*M & Mdme Fastre with 2 young children, also 2 single men and M de Greet* (whose wife and children were missing).In December 1914 a family of 3 Flemish arrived and were put up privately by Mrs Pearson. in January 1915 the *wife and children of M de Greet* family were located in Holland. They were re-united at Bassenthwaite and moved into the 2nd cottage. One of the young single men-*Desire Micha* was taught to drive and was chauffeur for Miss Spedding for a time. In February he and *M Mallet* (ex-soldier) found work at Moss Bay Steelworks and moved there, then Micha joined the Belgian Army. M Fastre found work as a gardener, and M de Greet as a farm labourer. In September 1915 the Fastre family moved to Newcastle to work in a munitions factory, and Mrs Pearson's family also moved away. All the refugees at Bassenthwaite were Roman Catholic and were attended to by the Belgian priest at Cockermouth, Fr Dupont. All the children attended the village school. There were also 3 discharged Belgian soldiers (through ill-health) being looked after by Mr & Miss Rathbone in December 1915.

By the end of July 1915 a Belgian lady teacher had arrived in Millom, and was teaching at St James' RC School. About 70 new Belgians arrived at this time, bringing the total in the town to over 650.

Between 30<sup>th</sup> September 1914 and August 1915 there were 12 men at Cunsey in a house given by Miss Edmondson of Bryerswood, Sawrey. However by 12<sup>th</sup> August they had departed to Bristol where one of their countrymen had opened a brush factory. In the same week some of the Millom contingent, employed as riveters at Vickers were sent to Glasgow instead.

Also in August a few of the Millom contingent who had been riveters at Barrow were sent to Glasgow to work in the Clyde Shipyards.

On 14<sup>th</sup> August a refugee, *Charles Speler* appeared at Keswick Court on charges of being drunk and of infringing the Aliens Registration Act. He was working as a journeyman painter at Workington earning 33/- per week and with a war disablement pension of 14/- per week. He was fined 5/- and £2 respectively for the two offences.

The following week John Duffy, a lodging house owner was charged with failing to keep a register of Belgian refugees staying with him at Senhouse Street-they were *Henri and Catherine Joyeux*- Henri had been working at the steelworks.

There was a similar case at Workington involving Henri and Catherine Joyeux (Belgians) who had other Belgian soldiers staying with them, who were employed by the Iron and Steel Company at the Harrington Colliery, where Henri Joyeux also worked

On 9<sup>th</sup> September it was reported that there were a number of Belgian soldiers on leave in Millom. That same week a *Louis la Cross* was found guilty at Whitehaven of being drunk and disorderly and was fined 13/-.. There is an interesting comment in the Millom Gazette of 6<sup>th</sup> August that their uniform has recently changed to Khaki.

In September 1915 two of the Belgians living at Harrington- *Clementine Van Malkot and Charlie de Weertd* married (reference SPUW 6/15 Letters 132 & 134)

A sign of the ongoing tensions between the English and Belgian miners in Whitehaven was a court case on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1915 against *Antoine Servais*, aged 29 of Alabaster Cottage, Sandwith, of tub-sticking. In this case we hear of other Belgian miners- *Theophile Elderts*, *Joseph Curvers* and *Lambert Masset*. Servais was a deputy at the pit, and had managed 760 men at a pit in Belgium before the war. His father had died in Belgium in October 1914 and his brother had been killed fighting in July 1915. He was acquitted of the charge. Rather over 300 Belgians lived at Alabaster Buildings, Sandwith.

On 4<sup>th</sup> October 1915 *Jean Francois Frenay*, aged 50, of 1, Barnes Lane, Workington, was killed by a rock-fall while haggng coal in the "lying position" the Main Band seam of Lowca No. 10 colliery at about 8am. He had worked at Millmort Colliery, Belgium before the war. He had worked at Lowca for 3 or 4 months. He was working with **Bartholemy Lexhau and Theophill Janssens** (both of Back Row, Northside, Workington).

Also on 4<sup>th</sup> October *Marias Merckz*, aged 22, of Gosforth appeared at Barrow Court for failing to obtain a permit to enter the prohibited area of Barrow. On 16<sup>th</sup> October 1915 the Merckz refugee family of 10 left Gosforth (where they had been since December 1914) to work at a paper mill in France, their previous trade. They travelled to Southampton for a ship to France.

Also on 4<sup>th</sup> October *Georges Deehaye* (27, iron dresser), *Fernand Verdicq* (21, labourer), *Camule Vanor* (24, caulker), *Sebastian Lebon* (33, fitter) and *Albert Fraikin* (25, planer) caused a general breach of the peace [a regular riot!] in Furness Street, Millom.

There was another court case for being drunk and disorderly and causing damage on 14<sup>th</sup> October against *Jules Moreen* and *Reni Messian*. Other refugees who gave evidence were *Louis Laermens*, *Charlotte Jeanne Wislet* and *Sophia Vandessel* (cooks). Messian had formerly belonged to the Belgian Civic Guard. Moreen was married and a former soldier. Each man was fined 40/-.

At the meeting of the Whitehaven Borough Non-Provided Schools Sub-Committee of 18<sup>th</sup> October the numbers of Belgian children at each school in the Borough was noted (minute 292) (a total of 52 children)-

St Begh's 16

St Gregory & St Patrick 6

Crosthwaite Mixed 2

Earl of Lonsdale's (Monkwray) Mixed 12

Earl of Lonsdale's (Monkwray) Infants 11

Trinity Mixed 3

Trinity Infants 1

Council Infants 1

On Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> November the Belgian Society of Millom gave a Grand Concert, for comforts for serving Belgian soldiers. Notable at this event was the appearance of *Sergeant Bughin* of the 13<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Belgian Army. He wore the medals Chevalier Leopld d'Or and the Croix de Guerre also a French military medal for capturing two cannon, other field guns and a large quantity of Ammunition from the Germans, and sang a song at the concert detailing the soldier's life- he was presented with a bouquet and the proceeds of a special collection and the Belgian National Anthem.

During November 73 Belgian soldiers visited Millom for a 3 or 4 day holiday- each was presented with 5/- pocket money by the local refugee community.

On 28<sup>th</sup> November there was a court case at Millom of assault between two sisters-*Isabella Rega and Charlotte Aerts* both of 115 Main Street, Millom- they were ordered to live at different addresses to each other.

Throughout their stay there were cases of drunk & disorderly brought against the Belgians, but no more or less than among the general population. There were also regular cases of failing to register a change of address with the police. On a happier note there were regular concerts given by the Belgians, most of which also attracted the general populace, and all were a great success. Many aimed to raise funds either for Belgian soldiers comforts or for displaced Belgians in Holland.

One of these concerts was on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1916, with music provided by the Millom Lyric Orchestra and dancing from 9.15 pm until 4am next morning. All proceeds from that concert was to assist Belgian families who suffered in consequence of the Powder Factory catastrophe at Gravelle St Honorine, Le Havre. In due course a letter of thanks for this was received from the Belgian King and Queen.

In January 1916 a few of the Millom Belgians emigrated to the Belgian Congo where they had found work. At Millom Court on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1916 *Joseph Dehaen, Henri Thiry, Jules Soheir and Marcisse Jeangout* were all found guilty of being drunk and disorderly during Christmas. There was also a case that day of a local stealing goods from *Victor & Ossarine Neve* of 65 Albert Street, later 140 Wellington Street.

On 20<sup>th</sup> May there was a Russian Flag day in aid of the Russian Red Cross Society, specifically to provide a bed in the hospital at Petrograd for the wounded soldiers of Russia, "our gallant ally". Each bed "costs" £250, over each bed will be the coat of arms or a design indicating the co-operating place. Overall £294/9/9 was raised- an aggregated total for settlements from Netherwasdale to Ulpha.

The Belgian Aid Society also contributed money to the Millom Disabled Soldiers and Sailors Fund.

On 29<sup>th</sup> April a Spaniard, *Uguel Lunna* appeared at court for failing to register- he was one of 11 Spaniards to arrive at Millom on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1916.

On 27<sup>th</sup> May August *van den Abeele* of 130 Wellington Street appeared in court for having no light on a bicycle.

On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July a concert, wrestling competition, sports and dance was held in the field opposite the Station Hotel, Millom, organised by the Millom Anglo-Belgian Society to aid and feed Belgian orphans being starved by the Germans in their own land.

On 21<sup>st</sup> July a carnival was held at Millom for Belgian Independence Day (21<sup>st</sup> July 1830). A director of Vickers was present (Mr Archibald Miller and the foreman of the Belgians at Vickers-Monsieur *Josef Francart*). This was also the inaugural event for the Belgian Band-using the instruments donated to them by Vickers. Mr Miller was the newly appointed President of the Millom Belgian Aid Society.

Within SPUW 16 there are a number of letters relating to the marriage at Prestwich, Manchester in the June quarter of 1916 of *Harry Morgenstern* (a Jew from Palestine working in Whitehaven) to *Leah Auerbach* from Russia. After marriage they are known to have gone to live at Barrow-in-Furness and have two children-Sarah and Abraham.

In May or June 1916 one of the Belgian Refugees living at the Old Bank, Whitehaven (*Joseph Lemaitre*) married a Jane Wharton (reference SPUW 16/letter 523). In the September quarter of 1916

there was another Belgian marriage- *Louis GJ Collard* to Mary J Telfer (SPUW 16/599) and in March quarter 1917 *Augustin Poulart* (of 25 Arrowthwaite) to Mary W McLeod (SPUW 16/600, 627, 637 & 765). In this last marriage Poulart was from Charleroi and had served in the Belgian Army until he was discharged wounded to a hospital at Newcastle before coming to Whitehaven in March 1915. Mary McLeod lived at 12 Arrowthwaite.

Also in the September quarter of 1916 there was a marriage of an Italian-*Giovanni Hodgson* to Elizabeth Hodgson (SPUW 16/665 & 666). He was from Vernasca, Italy living at 37 New Lowther Street. It turned out that he had been conscripted on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1915 but not joined the army, which he then had to do straight after marriage.

A further Belgian marriage in the December quarter of 1916 (SUW 16/718) was of *Florentin Delmotte* to Margaret B Pickering.

In the Millom Gazette of 4<sup>th</sup> August 1916 there is a piece about the release from internment at Aylesbury of the German born Mrs Burnyeat of Whitehaven- wife of the former MP for Whitehaven, daughter of a Prussian Officer. She had been released to live at Harrogate.

On 19<sup>th</sup> August 1916 at Millom Court Pierre *Josef Dons* (an iron turner) was charged with a serious sexual assault on *Marie Regina Van Eersal*, aged 13 at 12 Atkinson's Buildings on 19<sup>th</sup> February when she was aged 12. Dons was married and lived at 108 Wellington Street but had lived at 12 Atkinsons Buildings until 25<sup>th</sup> June 1915. The Eersal family had lived there since 18<sup>th</sup> July 1915. He was found not guilty on insufficient evidence although the full story is certainly an odd one. He was a wounded soldier, who had been decorated for his part in the war.

On 28<sup>th</sup> August 1916 a Belgian miner, *Theophile Wustenberg*, residing at Northside, Workington was killed by a rock fall in the Main Band seam of Lowca No 10 Pit. The fall knocked him over, crushed his head and broke his neck- death was instantaneous. The inquest was next day at the Lowca Institute. He was married with 3 children. He was identified by his brother-in-law, *Joseph Tombeur*.

On September 8<sup>th</sup> a German living at Millom died under unexplained circumstances at the Redhill Quarries where he worked. He was Charles Clark, aged 53. He was of German nationality and had come to Millom in Autumn 1914. On June 28<sup>th</sup> 1915 he was arrested and interned but was liberated and returned to Millom after a short time.

During the last week of September the Millom Belgians had their annual Holiday- some going to Silecroft or up Black Combe, others to friends at Manchester, Leeds, Blackpool etc. The Barrow schools had to be closed for lack of pupils.

In October Vickers Ltd applied for permission to erect a club in Wellington Street East for Belgian refugees and workmen.

On 28<sup>th</sup> October *Marie van Geel* of 41 Main Street Haverigg appeared in court for keeping a dog without a licence.

On 11<sup>th</sup> November the Roman Catholic funeral took place at Millom of *Monsieur Arnoldus Josephus Schiedts* of 74 Lord Street, Millom who had died of natural causes aged 72. He was believed to be the oldest refugee in the country, was living with his son and was "greatly esteemed". He had been a great supporter of the Belgian Band and they led the procession to the graveyard.

On 31<sup>st</sup> December 1916 the Belgian Band gave a concert at the Palace Cinema, Millom for the Millom Disabled Soldiers and Sailors Fund.

On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1917 *Eugene Vergote*, a 24 year old private in the Belgian army fell to his death from a train near Retford on his way from, London to Birtley, County Durham. He held the Military Medal and the War Cross.

On Saturday January 6<sup>th</sup> a Dutchman, *Joseph Delahaye* aged 35, a fitter of 89 Wellington Street appeared in court at Millom for molesting a married woman and brutally assaulting her defender.

During January 1917 some Flemish Belgian soldiers came on holiday to Millom, and by that date there are also a few Dutch residents in Millom. At Christmas 1916 the school children of Millom raised £13/5/- at their own Christmas Lunch in aid of the "starving little Belgians".

On 11<sup>th</sup> January 1917 a *Mrs Arends* of Arlecdon became chargeable to Whitehaven Poor Law Union (SPUW 16/854, 896 & 927), the wife of a German Sailor interned at Knockaloe on the Isle of Man- *Edward Christopher Arends*.

On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February *Rosalia Van-Put* died suddenly of influenza and Gyncope at her lodgings in Queen Street, Dalton. She was the wife of *Petius Van-Put*, a worker at Barrow Shipyard. On the same day *Francois Sprynt and Antoine Airelius Geeraert* were found guilty of drunkenness at Millom.

At Whitehaven Court in early March 1917 *Michael Leclerk (34)*, *Blendeaux Lederek (32)*, *Oscar Gilbert (30)* and *Leotine Gilbert (35)* were found guilty of failure to register a change of address from Geelom Terrace to the Alabaster Works, Sandwith.

On 9<sup>th</sup> March 1917 *Madame Octavie Marie Conterville Bartet*, aged 31 of 115 Main Street, Holborn Hill died of natural causes. Her husband, *Camille J Bartet* was one of the first refugees to come to Millom, and his wife joined him in July 1915. The funeral, on 12<sup>th</sup> March, was taken by the Belgian RC Priest at Barrow-*Fr Laurent*, followed by burial at Holy Trinity, Millom. The Belgian band led the cortege.

On 10<sup>th</sup> March 1917 at Millom *Leopold Eugeen Leroy* was sent to prison for 35 days for stealing property from a Spaniard, *Alberto Pinol Jorba* at 150 Wellington Street. Leroy had been at Millom from 15<sup>th</sup> April to 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1915 then removed to Dalmuir, Scotland. He came back to Millom for a few days holiday on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1916, initially to 12 Egremont Street but on January 17<sup>th</sup> moved to Barrow and later Liverpool.

On 17<sup>th</sup> March 1917 *Victor Hainant and Jean Earnour* were found guilty of drunkenness at Millom.

On 12<sup>th</sup> May *Elizabeth van den Nieuwenhuzzer* applied to Millom Court for a maintenance order against her husband *Joseph*, of 149 Wellington Street, as the marriage had irretrievably broken down due to persistent cruelty. They had one son. They had married on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1915 at Millom RC Church and lived together until 27<sup>th</sup> January 1917. The eventual outcome of the case was not made public.

From the Millom Gazette of 8<sup>th</sup> June 1917 we learn that Millom has a Belgian football club-*Le Union de Belge FC*.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> June we learn of the success of "The Little Belgian" of Millom in the Ji-Jitsu v English Boxing match at Whitehaven- it raised £57 which he distributed among the poor of Whitehaven. His next match is at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester on June 30<sup>th</sup> against the famous Italian boxer, *Biogiotti*.

As in 1916 Belgian Independence Day was celebrated in style at Millom on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1917.

On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1917 *Joseph Vanden Eynde*, aged 22 of 81 Wellington Street appeared at Millom Court for riding his motorcycle dangerously at Queen Street, Millom.

On 11<sup>th</sup> October 1917 at Millom St George's Church *Monsieur Vitel Aristide Doyen* married Miss Mary Agnes Foster of 34 Market Street, Millom- an Anglo-Belge wedding. He was the euphonium player in the Belgian band and had fought at the Battle of Mons- he was then interned for 9 months before escaping. At the end of October 1918 his brother, *Sergeant Viergile Doyen* died of wounds at Cabour, Belgium and was buried at Le Panne, Belgium. A memorial service was held for him at Millom St George's on 3<sup>rd</sup> November. Following Belgian custom *Vitel Aristide Doyen* took his wife's surname after the wedding.

In the Whitehaven News of 17<sup>th</sup> January 1918 the accounts of the Allerdale-above-Derwent Belgian Relief Committee were published.

On 30<sup>th</sup> May 1918 papers were served on *Fernand Vanlaeten* of 60 Albert Street, Millom as co-respondent in the divorce of Allan Kennedy from his wife May. Mr Kennedy was convicted of murder in June 1907 and sentenced to life imprisonment in Berkshire and later Nottingham where he was involved in a riot on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1913. In August 1916 he was conditionally released to the Salvation Army Colony in Essex and in March 1918 given a free discharge. He returned to Millom to work at the Hodbarrow Mines.

On 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> July 1918 Belgian Independence Day was celebrated in Millom, which included a collection for Belgian children interned in Holland.

In the summer of 1918 Miss Mary Fairish Brown of 1 Lowther Street, Whitehaven (1875-1940,, daughter of the solicitor Thomas Brown) was awarded the "Gold Medaille de la Reine Elizabeth" for her assistance to the refugees during the war. In August the refugees at the Old Bank gave her a coffee service in gratitude with an arrangement of flowers in the Belgian national colours from the children.

On 29<sup>th</sup> October 1918 Michael, a child (aged 4 years 6 months) of *Michael Leclercq* of Bardy Lane, Whitehaven died of scalding from falling into a bath of hot water. He is buried in grave 6O619 at Whitehaven Cemetery. The family had lost another child, *Marielle Ferdinand* aged 4 months in March 1916 when they were living at the Alabaster Works-buried in grave 6O636 (the 3<sup>rd</sup> burial in that grave).

On Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1918 *Lambert Moors* (aged 34) of 10 Portland Square, Workington was killed by a roof-fall at Lowca No. 10 pit. He had been in Workington since 1915 and had worked at Lowca No 10 pit since then. He had previously mined in both Belgium and Holland. He was married-see West Cumberland Times 30/11/1918 page 7 for a full account of the inquest.

The first ship to repatriate the Belgian refugees from Scotland and the Northern Counties sailed from Grimsby on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1918 for Antwerp. In the early stages all costs of repatriation were met by the British Government.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1918, in view of the impending departure of the first of the refugees a Thanksgiving Concert was held at Millom Recreation Hall.

On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> January 1919 the first 20 left Millom for home, and another 30 on 20<sup>th</sup> January. There is now a regular shipping service from Tilbury to Antwerp, and a Dover to Ostend service is to start shortly. Together they will be able to transport about 10,000 per week with everyone expected to be home by the end of March. On Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1919 almost all the remaining 300 refugees in Millom departed by special train to Newcastle for a ship to Antwerp. Their departure was a hugely emotional occasion for both Belgians and English. Only about a dozen now remain in Millom.

*Madame Christine Tilman* who had lived in Queen Street and Holborn Hill, Millom was taken ill on the steamship home, with influenza, and died 3 days after arriving at her husband's home at Herstal, near Liege, aged 49.

Also on 2<sup>nd</sup> February a special train departed at 10.15am from Bransty station to Newcastle for Antwerp conveying around 200 refugees. *Monsieur & Madame Cloempoel* presented Mr H C Reynolds, secretary of Whitehaven Colliery Company with a silver mounted walking stick and companion set of pipes in grateful appreciation of the Belgian miners for all that the Company had done for them. The platform was crowded with people, who gave the Belgians a very hearty send off as the train streamed out and fog signals on the line were exploded.

On 9<sup>th</sup> February 1919 *Monsieur Jaen Claes* (aged 66) attempted to murder his 71 year old wife at their home- Holly How, Coniston and then killed himself by hanging. He was from Malines, Belgium where he had run a brass founding business. He had been in Coniston since 20<sup>th</sup> October 1914 and had been due to return to Belgium shortly but was said to have become depressed on hearing that his business and machinery had been totally destroyed in the war. He is buried at St. Andrew's Churchyard, Coniston.

This leaflet has ended up concentrating on the Millom story, rather than the original intent of Whitehaven. This is because the Millom population was by far the largest and also the story is far more comprehensively told in the Millom Gazette than in the Whitehaven News.

It also seems to be true that the Millom model of housing the people in the town in small numbers per house led to much better integration than the Whitehaven model of housing them all together at a remote location outside Sandwith. It was also helped by the fact that at Millom the refugees were engaged in work which clearly helped the war effort, rather than at Whitehaven where they were working in the pits- although this was just as essential in its own way to the war, especially as so local pitmen had volunteered for war service, but there was an undercurrent of taking local's jobs.

There are also certain letters within the letter books of Whitehaven Rural Council (SRDED 1/4/15) relating to the Allerdale above Derwent Belgian Relief Committee, most of which relate to general business between the main committee and the local committees. There are some which relate to individuals-

29<sup>th</sup> April 1918 The *Cuypers* family- 3 adults & 5 children- came to West Cumbria from Golders Green, London in February 1918, the father is now too ill to work and the Refugee family wish to return the family to Earls Court Refugee Camp, London.

20<sup>th</sup> July 1918 The *Dons* family-man, wife, children aged 14,12,10, 8 and 7. They came to Gosforth in early 1916 (see *West Cumberland Times* 29<sup>th</sup> January 1916 page 8) from Menai Bridge, the father was an estate labourer at Gosforth but a French polisher by trade. The house is no longer available so the family are to return to London.

30<sup>th</sup> December 1918 The *Smeets* family (man and wife) of Frizington to be repatriated. They are still here at 14<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> February 1919 after the main contingent have left the area.

At 4<sup>th</sup> March 1919 the *van Iseghem* family (man, wife and 5 children) are still at 20 Catherine Street, but about to go to Fleetwood.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1919 a further party of Whitehaven Refugees are to leave Newcastle by ship for Belgium. They actually departed Whitehaven and were the last of the family's who had been living at the Old Bank since 29<sup>th</sup> November 1914- *Monsieur and Madame Callut + 4 children, Monsieur and Madame Van Den Boegarde & Madame Michel*. They had lived at Mericourt and left on a French steamer. That was torpedoed and the passengers rescued by a passing English vessel. Both men

were miners in Whitehaven. Mericourt village no longer exists so the families are to return to Tourcoing. Also leaving that day from this area were *Monsieur & Madame Steart + three children*.

A formal letter of thanks for the hospitality of the United Kingdom to the refugees was sent in August 1919 from His Excellency Monsieur le Baron de Brocqueville, Minister of the Interior for Belgium. It is reproduced on page 3, column c of the Millom Gazette dated 15<sup>th</sup> August 1919.

### **Workington**

From the Penrith newspapers (*op cit*) we know that by 17<sup>th</sup> February 1915 there were 8 families in the town, two of whom were in one house with each of the 6 others staying in a separate house.

The two families in one house were husband and wife and husband, wife and 3 children. The first received 10/- per week, and the second 13/-.

Seven of the eight families were of the peasant/artisan class- the eighth the family of *Monsieur Gesfer, wife and 3 grown up children*. Mons Gesfer had been the manager of a large cheese factory.

The allowances were for food only-coal, gas and clothes being provided by the Workington Belgian Refugees Relief Committee.

More is known about the Workington refugees from the West Cumberland Times, and, especially, the Workington Star.

The first mention is on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1914 when Doris Nicholson of 11 Johnstone Street and Annie Murray of 193 Harrington Road, scholars at St Michael's School had raised 15/- for the Belgian refugees shortly to arrive in town, and a further 6/8 had been raised by Mary Carruthers of 13 Findlay Place, Nancy & Aga Hogarth of 20 Findlay Place and Connie Petre of 12 Findlay Place. These sums were paid to Fr Standish who was managing the town's relief fund- with 5 or 6 families due on 28<sup>th</sup> or 29<sup>th</sup> September.

They duly arrived by train at 7.35 pm on 1st October-organised by The Society of St Vincent & St Paul through Banklands Roman Catholic Church- 4 families of 7 adults and 21 children. They are *Mr & Mrs Joseph Smith with 5 children staying at Derwent Crossings (1 daughter is ill at Alexandra Hospital); Mr & Mrs Bauler and 6 children staying at 7 Whitfield Street, Mr & Mrs Peter Williams & 6 children staying at 6 Whitfield Street, and Madame Josephine Vanderbronde (husband at war) with 4 children staying at 42 Beeby Street*

In early September 1915 a daughter was born to *M & Mdme Van Heste* of Harrington Road (WCT 4 Sep 1915 page 2), also *George Hendrick* (aged 42) joined the Belgian Army and so left Workington.

As elsewhere in the county there is then little further mention of them, as the menfolk found work and so they became financially self-supporting and much valued members of the town, removing the early feelings that they were going to need open ended support. As at Millom they integrated into the town- perhaps a lesson for the 21<sup>st</sup> century in this, where refugees are again fleeing war.

As everywhere else the sorrow was genuine when they returned home in the Spring of 1919, many to find their homes and businesses in Belgium destroyed. The very ordered manner in which this was organised by the Government is very interesting, and an utter contrast to the manner of their desperate departure from Belgium in 1914.

At nearby **Harrington** there were 3 families living in one large house.

At **Cockermouth** the Cockermouth Belgian Relief Fund (whose secretary was Rev J Popkin, Vicar of Christ Church). They gave an allowance of 5/- per week for each adult, 3/- for the first child and 2/- for each additional child.

There were 23 people living in 5 adjoining three-roomed cottages, all from Ostend and of the working class- including a dock foreman, a baker, an ironworker, a sailor and a male domestic servant. This group included 3 men eligible for military service.

In addition there was a grocer, wife and 5 children aged 14, 11, 3, 2 and 1 in one house, also 2 skilled artisan families living in another house.

**There is also information regarding the 360 refugees who went to Carlisle.**

This in several forms-

- (a) The Minute Book of the Belgian Refugee Committee of Charlotte Street Congregational Church (reference DFCCCL 8/111 at CRO)-

This shows that 3 cottages in James Street were loaned to the Church by Messrs Hudson Scott Ltd, in October 1914. From monetary gifts they were repaired, painted, distempered, cleaned and furnished (including with a clock each), provisions and firewood put in stock and supper was on the table for the arrival of the four families on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1914 who were to live there for over the next 4 years. "A never to be forgotten scene the refugees arrived in the city just as they had been driven from their homes by the German troops". Arrangements were made within the church for a weekly offering system from the congregation including a weekly lump sum from the Choir and an offering from the Sunday School. The Committee also purchased a supply of public Bath tickets. An allowance of 1/- per week was made to each adult refugee.

They were-

*M & Mme H Van den Eynde, M & Mme De Jongh and baby Noel, M & Mme F Ireane and daughter Maria, M & Mnme Van Mechelen and son Henri.*

Ladies of the church visited the houses each day, provided clothing, also 4 loaves of bread 3 times weekly. Local farmers provided potatoes free of charge.

In late November 1914 arrangements were made to give 20/- per week to each of the 2 small cottages and 28/- to the large cottage to allow the refugees to buy their own food and clothing, but coal and firewood still supplied by the church. The allowance to the large cottage was later raised to 36/- per week.

By February 10<sup>th</sup> 1915 one of the refugees in Cottage 2 was working, earning 18/- per week, so 10/- of the allowance was deducted.

From late February 1915 the free bread was discontinued. From late March allowances were paid monthly rather than weekly. Also at that date £40 was deposited in the bank with £10 to be paid to each male adult on their eventual return to Belgium. Free coals were also discontinued. By now M Freane was working earning 10/- per week.

By the end of December 1915 most of the refugees were working, so a total sum of 7/- per week was paid to them in future, and the subscribers fund closed as it had over £15 in hand.

By May 18<sup>th</sup> 1919 all four families had returned home (see the plaque below) so all the furniture loaned was either returned to its owners or sold and the £10 to each refugee remitted to help them to rebuild their homes.

The Balance of £36/3/5 in the fund at 20 Feb 1920 was given to the Fund for the feeding of the starving children of Central Europe.

The Minute book ends:

“ These minutes are a record of loyal, and self sacrificing services and will stand out as one of the brightest episodes in the splendid history of Charlotte Street Church.

Its members gave freely of their time & goods and rendered financial support at a most trying period to help those who had seen their homes destroyed, their loved ones slain and their country overrun by a terrible military machine, a machine founded in force, and brutal efficiency, which was ultimately overcome by the spiritual powers of the peace loving nations of the world.

The last act of the committee was in keeping with the teaching of The Master we serve, in endeavouring to succour the children of our late enemies and in the spirit of thankfulness, and a fervent hope that out of the horrors of the war, the dawn of a lasting peace had come to a weary suffering world”.

(b) The Minute Book of the City Council Refugee Committee (Finance Committee) from 27<sup>th</sup> Oct 1914-25<sup>th</sup> October 1915 (reference DX 740 at CRO)-

On 27<sup>th</sup> October 1914 each adult refugee was to be given 5/- per week (food only) or 7/6 (housekeeping and food) and each child under 12 given 2/6.

On November 4<sup>th</sup> 1914 we learn that they are being put up at Rickerby House and the furniture insured for £1,000. Also the refugees were to be given the facility to open Saving Accounts at the Carlisle Savings Bank.

During November 1914 8 of the male refugees were sent to London as volunteers for the Belgian Army but 5 of them (of whom 1 was a *M de Schmid*) returned to Carlisle.

From the Cumberland News of 1<sup>st</sup> November 1914 we know that about 60 refugees (the first 38 arrived by train at 18.05 on 29<sup>th</sup> October) are already in the City with another 50 expected imminently. Cecil Cottage, a “Garden City’ house on Kingmoor Road had also been prepared for them.. Also the Railway Mission were to provide a house for four people at Lewthwaite’s Lane (provided by Richard Sewell, Sadler), St Stephen’s Church to provide two houses at Water Street, St Cuthbert’s Church were providing 66 Warwick Road and the Quakers were providing 3 and 17 Victoria Place. Lady Gilford also provided a cottage at Petheril Bank House. The Cecil Street Primitive Methodist Church were providing hospitality at Currock Villa for 13 Belgians who had arrived on October 11<sup>th</sup>.

A family of 5 were also accommodated at **Port Carlisle**.

There were 23 at How Gill House, **Lanercost** provided by Lady Carlisle and 13 at **Naworth Castle** (actually in various estate houses, not the castle), also 23 expected soon at Sands Cottages, Brampton- see detailed account below for Lanercost, Brampton and the Naworth estate.

There were two families at **Silloth**, 8 people at **Wigton**, a number at Penrith (also Watermillock and Greystoke)[see detailed account below], also a family at **Canonbie**. Accomodation was also offered at Alston and Nenthead-12 went to **Alston** in mid November and about 22 to **Longtown (also Riddings and Carwinley)**.

The **Alston/Nenthead** contingent moved away to Tyneside in July 1915 and wrote this letter (see Cumberland and Westmorland Herald 24<sup>th</sup> July 1915 page 1f)-

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BELGIAN REFUGEES COMMITTEE AT NENTHEAD:

Ladies and Gentlemen-We left Nenthead with our hearts full of gratitude for the welcome received there, and for the generous hospitality we have enjoyed for so many months. We would never have thought of leaving the place before going back to our dear Belgium.had we not been called by a task which appeals to those who cannot fight for their country. We hope that in making munitions we are helping the cause of the allies, and fulfilling our duty towards the British nation who gave homes and sympathy to the Belgian refugees. As long as we live we will never forget the generous hospitality we received in Nenthead, and we beg to tender our heartfelt thanks to all the Nenthead people who bestowed it upon us, and to the committee who took care of us with the greatest devotion-

*J Noeninck, J Craen, A Knops, J Huymans, L Bauwens*

At Rickerby House, Carlisle a Priest and Chapel were to be provided, as well as a teacher for the children.

In October 1915 the City Council over 11 Chatsworth Square at a rent of £3 per month as extra accommodation and were empowered to take any houses required to accommodate Belgians as necessary.

- (c) From Mounsey & Bowman (Solicitors) File DMBS/9/4/18 at CRO we know that Brook Villa at Great Corby was provided by the Corby Castle Estate until 11<sup>th</sup> September 1915. From that date there were only 3 Belgians at Great Corby so the estate moved them into a smaller (unnamed) house. After a struggle Wetheral Council exempted the premises so occupied from payment of rates.
- (d) There is a file at CRO (D/MAR/3/42) about the disappearance of a refugee, Madame *Roberts (nee Eveline Chapelle)*, the wife of the Marechal de Logis, Chef Generale de Gendarmerie Belgique who vanished between the Alexandra Palace reception centre and her placement lodgings at Peterborough in October 1914, while she was heavily pregnant. After a long search she was eventually found with family friends in early January 1915 at Errwood Hall, Buxton, Derbyshire (about to go into confinement). She was said to be in a very confused state after her flight from Belgium and fearful that she had lost her husband in all the confusion. She had arrived there on December 18<sup>th</sup> in a "delicate state of health". Her husband was also traced at Dunkirk.
- (e) There is more on the refugees at Naworth, Lanercost and Brampton in the estate documents DHN/1/4-6 at CRO. Accommodation provided included houses at Brampton (Sands Cottages), Bog, High Boothby, Island, Milton, Parkgate, Tindale, Halton-lea-Gate, Howgill (Lanercost), Askerton Castle, Easby, Lambley, Bankshouses, Scarrowhill and the Spelterworks. The furniture and utensils were purchased at Auction.

The family names are found in these ledgers (not all were there at the same time), and there are spelling variations in the documents:

*Aertgaert (lived at Bog Cottage). Bekkaert, Beulens, Binst, Bosmans, Brys, ,Colette, Jules Cortens, De Blaerne, De Jang, De Klerck (lived at Spelterworks, transferred to Blackpool in August 1917) , De Laets, De Ryck, De Vos, De Witte, Demeulenaere (lived at Island Cottage, Fevrier (lived at Spelterworks and Beck) Goosen, Heyninck, Heyvaerts (lived at Milton), Imbrechts, Jacobs, Kluppels (lived at Howgill Hpuse), Louis Wuest (lived at Spelterworks), Manette, Meulenaere, Nagels, Nys, Olivers, Pierre Wuest (lived at Spelterworks) , Proesmans, Roisens, Rumpler, Serneels, Spoelder,*

*Steenkist, Thierens, Theophile, Wyngaert, Van Camp (lived at Bog Cottage), Van den Wyngaert, Van Deuren, Van Notens, Van De Piet (lived at Spelterworks and Island Cottage) Vercauteren (sick Feb-Apr 1917, transferred to Blackpool in August 1917), and Tomaszewsky (who had a new baby in November 1915, lived at High Boothby).*

They were mainly employed in various capacities on the Naworth estate although a couple went to Gretna Munitions works.

Belgian Newspapers were purchased for them. The estate was very kind to them even providing a Christening cake for the *Tomaszewsky* family.

On 15<sup>th</sup> January 1920 Lady Isabella Howard was awarded the Medaille de la Reine Elizabeth for her work with the Penrith refugees. (see DHW 8/69 at CRO)

- (f) On leaving Carlisle *Father Geysan* (their resident priest) presented a plaque on their behalf to Carlisle City Council in gratitude. Sadly, as of February 2015, the location of this plaque is unknown-it is neither at City Hall or the Tullie House Museum.

This was of White Marble in the form of a shield with the Union Jack at top left and the Belgian flag at top right. It read "In grateful remembrance of the kind hospitality of the citizens of Carlisle towards us Belgian refugees during the war 1914-1918" (refer Cumberland News dated 15/2/1919 page 7).

- (g) Also at Carlisle there is a ledger (reference CaC 10/12/8/4) listing donations of clothing by the Carlisle and District Women's League of clothing to Civilians and Belgian (there is a list of donors also included).

This starts on 2<sup>nd</sup> November with 1 Shawl, 2 Gowns, 2 Stockings and Children's Clothes to Madame Pourbiax at Morton Cottage.

Then on November 9<sup>th</sup>-Outfits to Union Street, 4 families at James Street, Cecil Cottage and a Lady at Mr Thompson's. Nov 16<sup>th</sup> to 3 Belgians at 3 Victoria Place (clothes and shoes), Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> to Madame Venere at Water Street, Dec 7<sup>th</sup> to a family at Jordan's Court, Dec 14<sup>th</sup> to a family at James Street, 11<sup>th</sup> January 1915 to *Madame Mecklin* at James Street, 8<sup>th</sup> March to the *Buchet* family and the *Anderens* family and an un-named family at Victoria Place and possible other donations to others who look, but are not identified as Belgian.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1919 a large shipment was given to the Belgian relief fund in preparation for repatriation mainly of under-garments but including caps, mufflers, shirts and aprons with a further gift on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1919-again mainly underclothes but including boys trousers, girls dresses, mittens, night-gowns and 2 cot covers.

So most of the donations were to assist the refugees on their initial arrival after their long journey to the UK and to set them up for their return journey, but they were self sufficient during their life in the city.

**Penrith** (see SUDP/1/2Z/15, the Penrith Committee minutes at CRO). The first meeting was on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1914 when it was decided that about 50 refugees, 2 nuns and a priest (*Father A Desmet*) could be accommodated and an appeal was launched in the Penrith Observer of 20<sup>th</sup> October 1914.

Initial accommodation was provided at Alma House (11), 23 Great Dockray (9) and 108 Lowther Street (8). The Bank of Liverpool also offered Skiddaw Grove, Lowther Street for officers or the educated class. Skiddaw Grove was not in the end used for refugees but as a temporary hospital run by the Red Cross VAD.

In mid November the husband of *Mme Nauwelaert* of William Street was found in Glasgow and transferred to Penrith, also *Mr E Dralan's* (of Alma House) wife's mother was transferred to Penrith.

Later accommodation was provided at 16 Bath Terrace (5) and 13c William Street (8) when the number was increased to 69, also with several families and at Horrock Wood (Watermillock, 10), Lake View (Watermillock, 3) and Poplin Dub, Greystoke (3). In due course 57 refugees arrived on 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> October 1914 (one party had been sent via Ulverston in error and had to overnight there).

The children were schooled at St Catherine's Elementary School and Penrith Girls Secondary School.

On 14<sup>th</sup> December M de Jough, his wife and child arrived unannounced at Penrith and found private lodgings. They returned to London on 19<sup>th</sup> December.

By February 1915 Mr *Nauwelaert* at Watermillock was working at a farm and *Mme Nauwelaert* at Greystoke was working as a dressmaker (there were 3 families *Nauwelaerts*-at Greystoke, Watermillock and Penrith). *Francois Dralaus* of Alma House, child, had been admitted free to Penrith Grammar School and *Paul Timbal*, lately of Brackenburgh Tower had been given a free scholarship to St Bees Grammar School.

By mid February 1915 rather than the committee providing all supplies, food etc a weekly allowance of 7/6 for each adult and 3/9 for each child under 12 was given to cover provisions, pocket money and tobacco. By this date there was also a family of 4 living at **Swiss Cottage, Leaming, Ullswater** under the supervision of Mrs Spring Rice of Watermillock.

Also a family of mother, 2 adult daughters and a boy aged 12 (name-*Stephens*) was accommodated by Mrs Crackanthorpe at **Newbigging Hall**. They returned to London on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1916.

On 18<sup>th</sup> February 1915 the *Piscaer* family returned to London. They were from Malines, Belgium- the father was *Leopold with his wife, and children Pierre (13) and Marie (17)*. Leopold had been a restaurant manager. They stayed with the Wainwright family in their house "Blencathra". In the flight from Belgium via Ostend they had become separated from Mrs *Piscaer's* father, mother, sister, brother and brother's wife. They had initially stayed at a house in London for 3 weeks which had to be vacated for wounded soldiers. An account of their flight is on page 6 of the Penrith Observer of 20<sup>th</sup> October 1914.

By 13<sup>th</sup> March 1915 Mr *Op de Beeck* was employed with the LNWR at Carlisle on 23/- per week. Mr *Van Vlenneren* had returned to London to work as an engine driver of an armoured train on the Belgian/French railways (but returned to Penrith in March). Mr *Francois Dralaus* was to work as a barber and shaver at the Wordsworth Hall and Skiddaw Grove VAD Hospitals.

In March Mr *Op de Beeck* resigned his job at Carlisle loco sheds. On 4<sup>th</sup> October Mr *Op de Beeck* and family moved to Workington where he had obtained work at the Steel Works, and on 13<sup>th</sup> October Mr *Van Vlenneren* went to work on the French railways.

Also a work room at the foot of Sandgate was offered free by Mr Joseph Jackson. The following women were to work there doing work for Belgian soldiers-

*Van den Bergh (girls) x 2 & Goubauer (of Lowther St) and Stephens (of Alma House)- all day*

*Goubauer (Lowther St), Van den Bergh (Lowther St), Op de Beeck and Van Vlemmeren (Gt Dockray)-afternoons*

*Stephens (girl of Bath Terrace), Dralaus and Claes (Alma House)- afternoons except Friday*

*Nauwelaerts (William Street) and Melanie Van Waert, girl- alternate Fridays.*

The workroom closed on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1915 and the work henceforward done in their houses.

On 25<sup>th</sup> Feb 1915 2 extra families of 4 each were received at the Bath Terrace House. 13c William Street was to close at Whit 1915. The *Nauwelaerts* family were thus moved to "Lochholme", Lowther Street.

On 17<sup>th</sup> March Mr Prudent van Wetteren found farming work at **Wolfa, Great Salkeld**. He stayed there until April 17<sup>th</sup> then moved to a Boot and Shoe factory at Stafford on 21<sup>st</sup> April.

By October 1915 the young *Claes* daughter had been admitted free to Penrith Grammar School, making 3 refugee children there. Also Mr Dralaus was now working as a hairdresser with Mr Pounder. Also by then the *Nauwelaerts* family had had a new baby.

The *Claes* family moved to the old workroom in August, but then to 28 Victoria Road in October.

Revd Desmet returned to London on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1915.

In December Mr Henri found work as a hairdresser and Mr Louise *Nauwelaerts* as a Baker with James Irving.

Also the young girl, Melanie Van Wiert was working as a servant to the *Nauwelaerts* family for 2/6 per week.

From February 1917 Mr Dralaus took charge of the Pounder's hairdressers as both Pounder sons had been called up for military service. Also Mr *Nauwelaerts* had been called up for service with the Belgian Army but was exempted because of his bakery work.

In March 1917 Mr *Claes* left Penrith to work at Dartford, Kent. He went with his wife and daughter (Louise).

Also Melanie van Wiert, girl, left to be a general servant at **Burton-in-Lonsdale**.

The remaining refugees returned to Belgium departing to Newcastle on 22nd March 1919 for a ship to Antwerp on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, after they had been given a leave-taking tea, concert, games and dancing at the Town Hall on 13<sup>th</sup> March. Also a small sum was given to each family for expenses during the journey, under-clothing and bedding was provided to them and a small quantity of non-perishable food. These arrangements included the *Op de Beeck* family from Workington.

During their stay they had had free entrance to the Alhambra cinema, and free gas, also honorary membership of various clubs in Penrith, free medical care by Dr Erdington, and free dental treatment by Mr J Morton. They took advantage of the gas supplies and pre-pay meters eventually had to be installed!

In all 72 Belgians lived in the Penrith area for various periods of the war. The account of their departure is on page 7 of the Penrith Observer dated 18<sup>th</sup> March 1919.

The surplus from the funds for their maintenance was given to the Queen Elizabeth School Scholarship fund.

**Windermere-** 29 refugees arrived from Liverpool on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1914. They were 9 men, 11 women and 9 children. They were accommodated at "Ellerthwaite" in Windermere Village. They had been travelling for several weeks via Nieuport, Ostend, Folkestone, Edmonton (North London) and finally Liverpool. According to the Westmorland Gazette of 11/1/1919 others arrived later and at the peak there had been around 100 at Windermere.

**Calgarth Hall-** Soon after the outbreak of war Calgarth Hall, Troutbeck Bridge, had been equipped as a War Hospital. On 16<sup>th</sup> November 1914 9 wounded Belgian soldiers arrived there followed by 5 more 2 days later.

**Ambleside-**“Low Nook” on Rydal Road was made available. 15 refugees arrived there on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1914 and 5 more 2 days later.

**Kendal-** Jane Simpson (nee Davidson) was awarded the Belgian Medaille de la Reine Elizabeth for assistance to refugees (she died 13/10/1950)- see WDX 515/2/1/13 at Kendal Record Office.

The available evidence is that she and her husband Arthur W Simpson (who were both Quakers, Arthur was the head of a well known wood carving business in the town) were very much responsible for the ‘Belgian Settlement for Kendal & District’, with the treasurer Isaac Braithwaite. From papers in Penrith Urban District Council Archives (SUDP 1/A Box 45 at CRO) we know that they were gathered in 4 hostels at “Prospect” (on Queen’s Road), “Castle Mount”, “Holly Croft” and “Silverhow” (all on Kendal Green). Each hostel was looked after by a Matron with the assistance of a housekeeping/stores committee. In February 1915 the cost of provisions and sundries is given as about 5/- per person. From the Westmorland Gazette of various dates it can be established that the first arrivals in the town were on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1914 when 29 arrived.

They were from Aerschot, Malines and Rillaert and comprised:

a horseman, wife and daughter; a painter (45), wife and 5 children aged 14,11,7,4,1; a widow cane chair seat maker with her own 3 children aged 8,6 and 2, also with 3 girls aged 18,18,12 and a boy aged 12 from 3 families, but all 4 orphaned; a knife maker aged 63 from Aerschot with his wife and 2 children aged 12 and 17 and a sawyer with his wife and 5 daughters aged between 3 months and 14.

They were followed on 16<sup>th</sup> October by a further 44. Of the 73 now in the town 13 were men, 22 women and 38 children. All were Roman Catholic and all the children attended the Catholic School. There were 12 from 3 generations of one family from Liege, Malines and Antwerp.

Amongst the new arrivals were a sabot maker aged 21, a machinist aged 62, a boot maker aged 55, a mechanic aged 22, 2 dock labourers aged 20 and 54, a ship’s painter aged 37, a hairdresser aged 23, a diamond cutter aged 28, a clerk aged 24, an upholsterer aged 32. The clerk (*Monsieur Wery Camille*) had served in the 34<sup>th</sup> regiment of the Belgian Army at Liege.

One of the women had her husband and two of her sons as Prisoners of the Germans with the other 4 sons missing, and 2 of her 3 daughters were still in London, the family having become separated in the confusion.

**Ulverston-**24 refugees arrived at Lund Hall, Ulverston (the property of Mr Wakefield of Kendal) on 31<sup>st</sup> September 1914, mainly of the artisan class from Louvain. One of the 4 women was English- a Mrs Turney who had been living between Malines and Brussels and had to abandon her house when she was in the middle of cooking the evening meal. On 10<sup>th</sup> November 1914 an electrician, his wife and 4 children removed to a bungalow which had been made available at **Newby Bridge**. He had been a Corporal in the Belgian Army.

**Barrow-** There is a file at Barrow Record Office (reference BDX 472) compiled by Brian Edge of Crewe, Cheshire about the lifetime friendship of Fred Edge (Brian’s father) with the refugee *Paul Van Der Schueren*. Fred was aged 17 and Paul 16 in 1916 when Paul arrived in Barrow with his parents, and began work at Vickers in Barrow. Some of the earliest refugees in October 1914 had worked at Vickers, Dartford, Kent. In total over a quarter of a million refugees arrived in Britain, the largest refugee movement in British history.

The Van Der Scheuren family lived at 36 Lord Street, Barrow, then one of the best parts of town. The working week was 53 hours with two breaks a day. Wages from 1<sup>st</sup> August 1917 were between 43 and 55/- per week inclusive of the 8/ per week war bonus.

Fred Edge enlisted when he reached the age of 18 and served the last year of the war in France.

*This document was prepared jointly in 2014 to 2016 by Stuart Nicholson and Susan Dench (retired Senior Archivist at Carlisle Record Office).*

This represents the sum total of what for the county can be determined as most documents were destroyed after the war.