

HOMELAND MINUTES



Rufus Isaacs, 1st Marquess of Reading and his wife Stella Charnaud Isaacs, Marchioness of Reading
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Stella Charnaud: Lady Reading, the Dowager Marchioness of Reading, GBE

In 1938 the British government asked the much travelled Lady Reading to organize the 100,000 strong Women's Voluntary Services. By war's end, Lady Reading had mustered a million vol-

unteers of whom 400 were killed on active service. The volunteers distributed everything from clothing to powdered milk (the Canadian Kinsmen sent 40.4 million litres of powdered milk) and served in every capacity from manning shelters and canteens to doing cadaver detail to place remains in sacks.

The Dowager Marchioness came to Canada in 1946 on a two month tour to thank Canadians for their generous support. Below are excerpts from speeches and articles about her:

"The women of Britain have come to know the IODE with affection, regard and respect. Never before has there been a closer friendship—as real a friendship—as exists between our two countries today. Canadian women can well be proud of their contribution during a time of world suffering, for it is one thing to face emergency when close to it, and another to accept responsibility, rise to it, maintain it faithfully at long distance ... to give children a future to make up for a past they must forget. War has taught us dreadful things, but it has also taught us how to laugh, to see how fine the other woman is and how great men are. Difficult times lie ahead, but we have learned to know our friends"

"... Of all the wonderful things the IODE sent, the quilts ... were the most wonderful. They were of every colour, kind and form and were used all up and down the country after the blitzes. In rest centres after the raids their gaiety cheered and their warmth comforted many a poor old woman whose eyes would fill with tears at the thought 'That anybody who doesn't even

know us should do this for us—all those stitches!”

“The wedding dresses for war brides meant so much too. With starchy diets our brides are a little bigger than yours, but they held their breath, gladly, to get into them. Afterward each dress went to the cleaners (which took seven weeks) to be ready for the next bride.”

It was a very human, heart-warming story, told with so much humour and appreciation that every IODE war worker must have gone away very happy to have made her small contribution to that big contribution, which, as Lady Reading said, “means the betterment of life itself”.