LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Abstract Background

In the First World War in Europe, the wet and cold conditions in trenches caused a medical condition known as trench foot, and the Allies looked for solutions. One of the solutions was handmade socks. With thousands of soldiers in trenches, there was an urgent need to produce millions of pairs of socks. Committees were created to accomplish the task of creating those millions of socks. In 1914, Queen Mary's Needlework Guild was created, and even the Queen herself was known for picking up her needles in Buckingham Palace. Knitting was a great equalizer with no class boundaries, and those societies and committees created their own army to fight the Germans. The 'Knitting Army' greatly affected the men on the front lines, and letters home emphasized gratitude for the 'comforts' received.

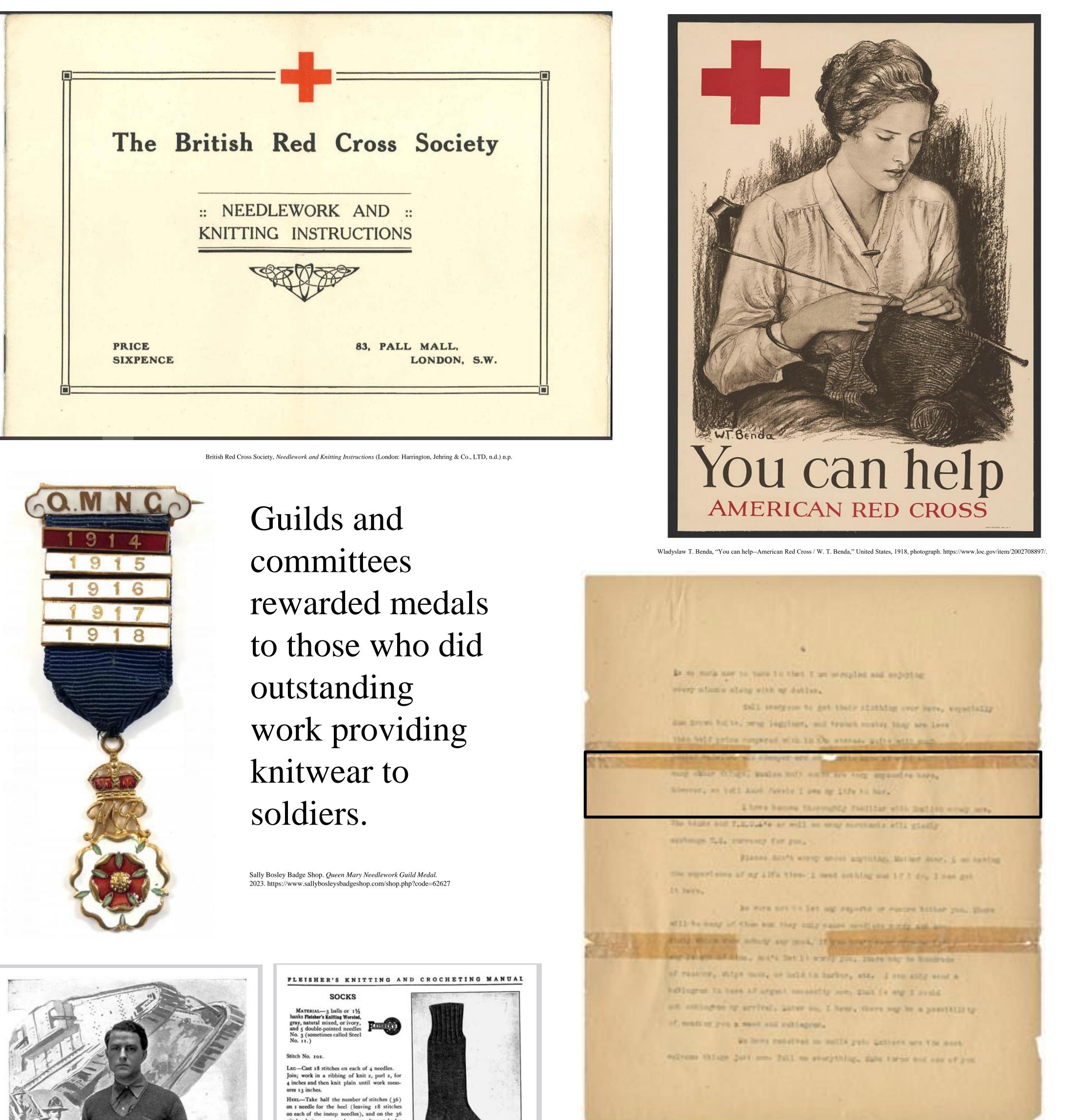
Research Question

What was the origin of the Kitchener stitch, and did it lead to increased knitting in the First World War? The Kitchener stitch is a grafting technique to seamlessly combine two edges of a sock to make a seamless sock, supposedly named after Lord Kitchener, the British Secretary of War during the First World War. While no chain of evidence led to a reliable conclusion of the origin of the Kitchener stitch, the question of its origin did lead to the discovery that trench foot was more of a leading incentive for the mass amounts of knitting during the War.

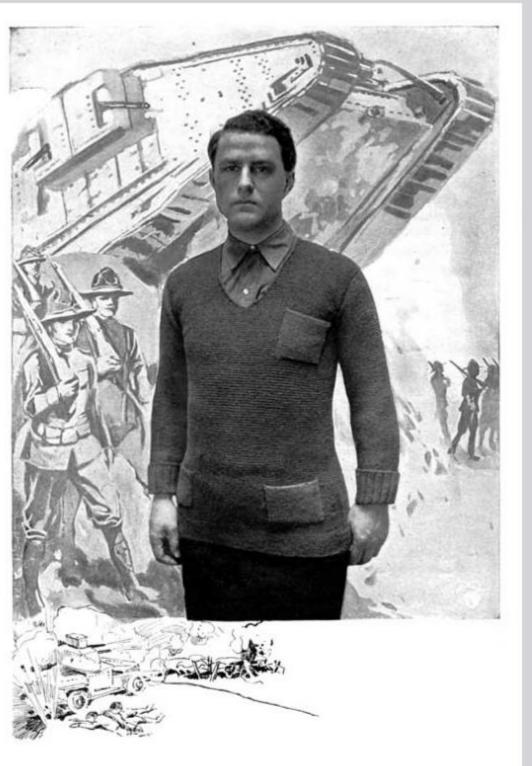
Methods

The first step was to look at the World War One Museums' collections to see if they had any letters or documents concerning trench foot or knitting while searching for scholarly articles about these topics. Inside the collections, several letters from Allied forces on the front lines showed the gratitude of the soldiers receiving socks and the awfulness of constant wet feet. The 'Knitting Army' emerged while looking at pattern booklets and propaganda material from the First World War era, especially ones from the Red Cross.

Knitting Together; The Knitting Army of the First World War Virginia Drye







stitches knit 1 row, purl 1 row alternately for to rows, always slipping the 1st stitch. Begin to turn heel on wrong side.

Purl 20, purl 2 together, turn; slip 1st stitch knit 4, slip 1, knit 1, pass the slipped stitch over the knitted stitch, turn; slip 1st stitch, purl 5, purl 2 together, turn; slip 1, knit 6, slip 1, knit 1, pass slipped stitch over knitted stitch, turn and continue working toward the sides of the heel in this manner, having 1 more stitch between decreases on every row until all the stitches are worked in. There should then e 20 stitches on needle.

GUSSETS-Pick up and knit 15 stitches on left up and knit 15 stitches on right edge of heel. knit 2 together, knit 1. next needle.

instep needles Knit 1 even round and in next round decrease to end. as follows:-knit together the 2d and 3d stitches Knit 3 rounds even, 1 decreasing round, from end of 1st needle, work across instep rounds even, 1 decreasing round, 1 round even needles, on last needle knit 1, slip 1, knit 1, and then decrease in every round until there pass the slipped stitch over the knitted stitch are 8 stitches left.



edge of heel, knit the 2 instep needles, pick TOE-Knit to the last 3 stitches on 1st needle On the same needle knit 10 of the heel stitches On 2d needle knit 1, slip 1, knit 1, pass the and slip the remaining 10 heel stitches on the slipped stitch over knitted stitch, knit to end. On 3d needle knit to the last 3 stitches, knit 2 There will now be 25 stitches on each of the together, knit 1. heel needles and 16 stitches on each of the On last needle knit 1, slip 1, knit 1, pass the slipped stitch over the knitted stitch and knit

t even until foot measures 7 inches fro

and knit to end. Decrease in this manner every 2d round until Put the 4 stitches of sole side on 1 needle, the 4 stitches of upper side on another needle and there are 16 stitches left on each heel needle. sew together with joining stitch.

"Woolen knit socks are very expensive" here, however, so tell Aunt Jessie I owe my life to her." - First Lieutenant James Kellogg Burnham Hockaday, 354th Infantry, 89th Division, June 23, 1918.

James Kellogg Burnham Hockaday, Somewhere in England, June 23rd, 1918, Collection Database, National WWI Museum and Memorial,

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Conclusion

Knitting had several benefits for the treatment of trench foot, as a well-fitting sock prevented the chafing of the wet, cold feet and, unlike fabric, knitted socks provided a wrinklefree garment that sculpted to the foot and was not like any other textile structure. The rallying cry of 'doing your part' was more than serving overseas; it also meant doing something even though that might have seemed insignificant. Knitting socks became a way of showing patriotism and a social and national activity. Based on the letters, instruction booklets, and knitting positively material, propaganda impacted the war effort. The topic of knitting as a cultural aspect of the War is something that could be examined further on a scholarly level.

Future Work

The Doughboy Foundation is a non-profit that aims to bring the history of the First World War to life. A submission on this topic could be given to them for material for their newsletter. A partnership with the American or British Red Cross could be made for displays at museums containing their propaganda and patterns for knitwear.

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