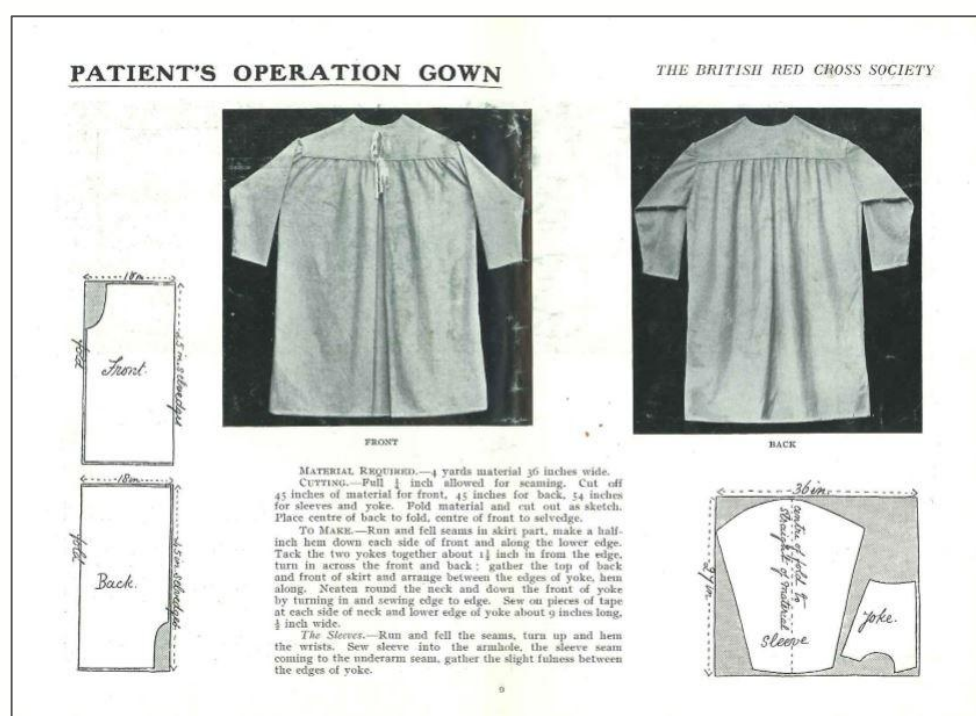




Mary Richards (nee Cordwell)

27 White Street



From a book of instructions issued to Home Workers by the British Red Cross Society © BRCS

Mary and her husband Ernest moved into White Street early in 1911 – they are recorded there in the 1911 census taken on 2 April with their young son Edmund who was a month and a half old.

Because “Richards” is such a common surname it has proved difficult to build up a picture of their lives. We know from the 1911 census that Mary was born in Ireland and that the couple had been married for five years, and they were both born in 1882. This has made it possible to track her down to one Mary Louisa Cordwell who married Ernest Richards in 1905 in Bristol. In the 1901 census Mary was living in Bristol with her widowed mother and 4 brothers. Aged 19 her occupation was a teacher. We know from the 1911 census that Ernest, originally from Birmingham, was a clerk with the Education Department of Derbyshire County Council but at what date they moved to Derby is unknown.

They continued to live at 27 White Street until the early 1930s. We only know of one child – Edmund born in 1911. Ernest was 34 in 1916 when conscription was introduced in 1916 but we can find no evidence that he served in the armed forces – perhaps he was medically unfit. However Mary’s father had worked in army barracks in Gloucestershire, and with four brothers it is likely that she had a relative somewhere serving at the front.

Mary volunteered with the Joint War Committee (Red Cross and Order of St John) as a home worker in January 1916, aged 34. We don’t know her exact role but she would be sewing, knitting and possibly preparing hospital supplies such as swabs and bandages. (An information sheet on the role of home workers is available on our website). Her voluntary work continued until December 1919.