

Buckinghamshire in World War One: The Home Front

Much attention has been focused on the soldiers who went to war, but little has been written about those who were left behind, and even less about life in Buckinghamshire. World War I reached into the lives of every person in this country in a way which previous wars had not. From school children to old women, from farmers to factory workers every person was impacted in some way and expected to use their skills as part of the war effort. The aim of these pages is to show the impact the war had on people in Buckinghamshire and to give a flavour of what life was like for those left behind.

The text pages have limited illustrations; more can be found on a companion CD entitled "The Home Front in WWI" and which can be purchased from the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies for £10. There is also a select bibliography on the final page.

Both text pages and CD represent a small amount of the information that can be found about WWI at the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies. Teachers are welcome to visit the archives and local studies areas of the Centre, and we can organise school visits although we do not have the space to accommodate large numbers of pupils. Should you require more information about resources held at the Centre or advice about how to use this pack, please contact the archives on 01296 382587 or email archives@buckscc.gov.uk.



Royal Artillery leave for France after being billeted at Ivinghoe, 1916. (CBS ref phIvinghoe56)

Part 5: End of the War

The End of the War and Financing the War

The End of the War, 11th November 1918

The armistice which ended World War I was signed at 11 o'clock on 11/11/1918. There were great celebrations over the whole country tinged with sadness as some families mourned those of their family killed or badly injured in the War. Thanksgiving services were organised at short notice in churches across the county. William Crouch, the county clerk, described the scene in Aylesbury:

As soon as the news arrived [of the Thanksgiving service] people flocked to the church at the time arranged until St Mary's was crowded from end to end, and there was scarcely standing room for another person. They came not in Sunday clothes, but straight out of offices, or shops or wherever they happened to be at the time, and just as they were in their work day kit.

Lily Cox

from Marlow

recalled Armistice Day when interviewed in 1988 (D/X 1908):

I was still at school and I can remember the day war finished. Two teachers had gone into lunch and they came out and said... "Will you go and ring the bell and ring it really loud" and the people came from the Talbots, from the big house. I caught hold of that rope and I pulled and pulled the thing over and that was the end of the bell ringing!

As the troops returned they marched through the towns in which they had enlisted and thousands lined the streets to cheer them. Other groups who had helped in the war effort also took part in these parades.



Great Horwood welcoming home their service men, 1918 (CBS ref phGreat Horwood11)

Men and women who had worked for the war effort now had to return to civilian life and to a world very different to that of 1914. Those badly wounded could not be given their old jobs back but had to be retrained if possible. Some had injuries to body or mind that would prevent them ever holding down a job again. Their families had to find ways of managing.

Women who had stepped in to fill the jobs left by men joining the army now found themselves laid off as the men returned to be given their old jobs back, e.g. The Women's Land Army was disbanded and female married teachers lost their jobs. However, the contribution of women in the war years had persuaded many men that a woman's role could be more than home-maker. In 1918 women over 30 who were householders were given the vote. Many women had enjoyed the responsibility that their war work had given them and looked for other areas where they could find fulfilment. Florence Fremantle, a Land Army Girl from the upper class, did some nursing training and went on to become a Christian missionary in the Middle East, making use of her artistic and literary skills there. She then worked for the Foreign Office, the BBC and as an illustrator of children's books.

Remembering the fallen

Those who had lost loved ones continued to grieve. As so many of the armed forces had been killed it was logistically impossible to bring them home for burial. War cemeteries were created wherever there had been battles, but their families needed a focal point at home to remember the fallen. In 1920 the remains of an unknown soldier were carried from France and reinterred in Westminster Abbey. In the same year the Cenotaph in Whitehall was built as a permanent memorial to those who gave their lives. In villages and towns across the country war memorials were erected and ceremonies held every year to remember the war dead.



The people of Cadmore End gave their bits of silver to the Irish sculptor Kathleen Shaw who melted it down and made this very beautiful statue of the Virgin and child in memory of the nine men from Cadmore End who lost their lives in the war. It forms part of the cover to the christening font. (Photograph from *Bucks Remembers* website)



Large crowds gathered at the dedication of the War Memorial in Aylesbury in 1921. Similar scenes were found across the county. (CBS ref pHylesbury1183)

The Representation of the People Act 1918

In anticipation of elections immediately after the war the new Act of Parliament which gave women the vote also required an electoral register of the soldiers still abroad. William Crouch was Clerk to the County Council throughout the war and it fell to him to compile such a register for Buckinghamshire. He described it in these terms:

The preparation of the Absent Voters' List also gave an immense amount of extra work, and to my mind did not work at all satisfactorily, being always in a state of flux owing to the constant changes of address of Soldiers and Sailors, abroad on military service, which made it extremely difficult to keep the Lists in a correct and reliable state. All this extra burden was imposed on Clerks of the Council at a time when everyone who could give efficient assistance was either fighting at the Front, or absent ...doing War Work elsewhere.

From "Reminiscences" by William Crouch (1927)

2165	Clark, Jonathan Bertram	Uppings	H/205270	L.Cpt., 1/1 R.B.H.	2165
2166	Hirons, John	Lower Farm	128945	Gr., 240 S. B., R.G.A.	2166
2167	Simons, Thomas Alfred	Berryfield	205220	Pte., 3rd Res. Cavalry	2167
BEACONSFIELD POLLING DISTRICT D.					
PARISH OF BEACONSFIELD.					
2168	Abbott, Henry	Heatherdene, Burk's Rd.	Eng.-Capt., H.M.S. "White Oak," R.N.		2168
2169	Adams, Bertie	43, Windsor End	543922	Sgt., 574 A.C., L.C.	2169
2170	Alloway, Leonard	Langlebury	235058	Pte., O. & B. L.I.	2170
2171	Anderson Arthur Geo.	Berrylands	2 A., R.F.A. (T.)		2171
2172	Andrews, James	2, Fowler's Yard	292125	Dvr., A.S.C.	2172
2173	Batting, Harry	63, Shepherd's Lane	124451	Sapp., R.E.	2173
2174	Batting, James	45, Aylesbury End	134683	Pte., A.S.C.	2174
2175	Bennett, Charles Alan	Hall Barn Cottage	2nd-Lieut., 5th Rifle Brigade		2175
2176	Beresford, William	69, Windsor End	108082	Dvr., R.F.A.	2176
2177	Berry, Alfred Edward	5, Meadow Cottage	286366	Gr., R.G.A.	2177
2178	Betts, Albert James	Wilton Park Lodge	135622	Pte., 574th A.C., L.C.	2178
2179	Birch, Charles William	"Homeside"	Master of M.S. "Woodcock"		2179
2180	Birch, William Thomas	Orchard Dale	2nd-Lieut., R.A.F.		2180
2181	Birdsey, William	60, Candlemas Lane	4018	Pte., A.V.C.	2181
2182	Blinko, Alfred William	31, London End	316728	Pte., 468th Lab. Co.	2182
2183	Blinko, Bertram Henry	29, London End	123485	Pte., R.A.M.C.	2183
2184	Bolwell, Francis	19, Shepherd's Lane	14116	Dvr., R.E.	2184

Part of the Beaconsfield entry from the Absent Voters list (CBS ref R/E 62). 80 men are named on the War Memorial at Beaconsfield and lost their lives; 347 from Beaconsfield are named in the Absent Voters list of 1918 and most of these would have returned home. However annoying for William Crouch this register is now an invaluable source for tracing servicemen who served in and survived the war.

The Financial Cost of the War

The enormous scale of the fighting in the First World War meant that a very large amount of money was required to cover the cost of armaments, transport and other war requirements. Britain not only had to fund her own war effort but also subsidised those of her allies.

The British government had initially hoped to meet the costs of the war from the great wealth the country had accumulated during the previous century. This proved insufficient and so the government was forced to increase income tax and indirect taxes on consumer goods and, also, imposed a supertax on the wealthy.

In August 1914 the government granted £100 million for the war but by November they had to grant another £225 million. This latter amount had to be borrowed.

By May 1915 the government estimated that the war would cost £1,632,654,000 whilst revenue was estimated at £270,332,000. The government was forced to borrow more and more money, much of which came from the USA.

In September 1915 there was an emergency budget in which new taxes were introduced. There was to be a 50% tax on excess profits and also on some luxury goods; a 40% increase in income tax, postal charges, and on some imports such as tobacco and petrol.

The April budget in 1916 put new taxes on matches, amusements and mineral water; raised income tax again; and increased taxes on sugar, cocoa, coffee and motor-cars by 50 to 60%. In July of that year interest rates rose to 6%.

As the centres of conflict increased so did the cost of the war. In May 1916 it was said to be costing £4,820,000 a day. By March 1917 the cost had risen to £6 million a day.

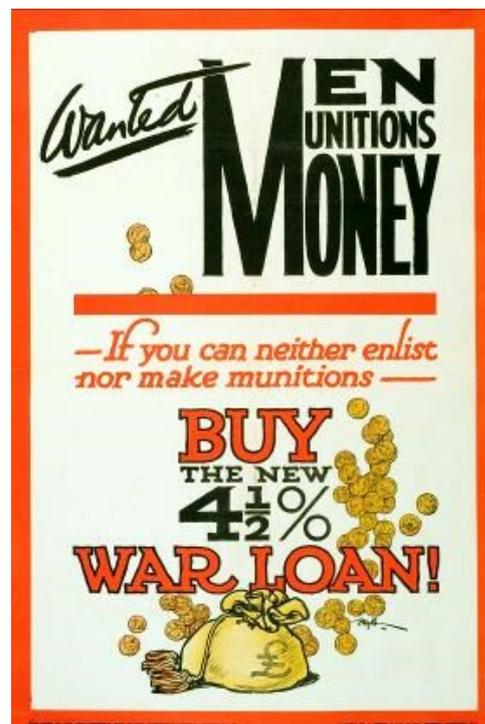
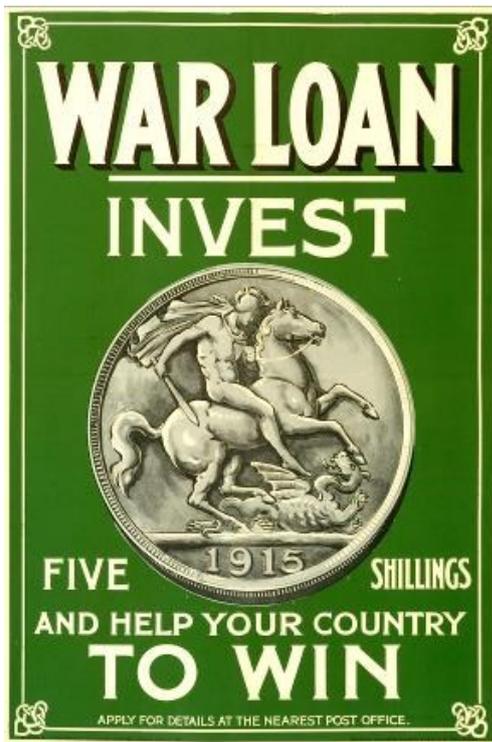
The government continued to increase taxes both direct and indirect. The whole population was affected as the price of goods went up at the same time as the government was taking more of their wages in income tax.

National War Bonds

In September 1917 the government began to issue National War Bonds. There was a great campaign to encourage everyone to buy them. There were posters published in all newspapers and local committees were set up to encourage their sale. In March 1918 War Bond Week raised £138,870,240. In September 1918 more war bonds were issued which raised £1,000,000,000.

As part of the campaign six tanks toured the towns and cities of England. Inside each tank were people selling war bonds. People were fascinated by the presence of these new machines and as a marketing tool they were a great success. After the war 264 war battered tanks were presented by the government in recognition of the money raised. One was placed in Kingsbury in Aylesbury and another outside the Boys Grammar School in High Wycombe.

By the end of the war Britain had an enormous debt mainly owed to the USA which had to be paid within 62 years at 2% interest. Britain was owed money by its allies but in 1918 they were in no position to repay their debts. Britain finally repaid the debt to the USA at the end of the twentieth century.



Two of the posters encouraging ordinary people to invest their money by lending it to the Government. (CBS ref D/X1882)