



WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

‘All over by Christmas’

The impact of World War 1 on the local area

During the period of the World War 1 radio was in its infancy and newspapers were one of the main means of reporting news and also communicating official information and instructions. Both The Surrey Mirror and The East Grinstead Observer continued to be published weekly during the war. The main theatres of the war and national events were covered but from the point of view of the impact of the war on the local area the two publications are a rich source of information. Reports of events in the RH7 area are usually brief, however the ‘snippets’ which were found give an insight into the life ‘on the home front.’ The newspapers are the main source of information for this fact sheet. A full list of acknowledgements can be found at the end of the fact sheet

1914

Preparations for War

In the months before August no mention of war was found in the local papers, although contingencies were quietly being put in place. On July 25th the East Grinstead Observer reported on a Red Cross Field Day held at Imberhorne Farm. A rest station was prepared “near an imaginary battlefield” and Territorials in battle kit acted as “wounded”, while stretcher bearers administered first-aid and dressed wounds.

The declaration of war on 4th August 1914 initially did not have a great impact on daily life. The Surrey Mirror edition on the same day carried a cautious report on Britain’s involvement in war. By the 11th August edition the paper reported that all doubts were now removed and “we know that practically the whole of Europe is in the grip of war... the Fleet is ready and the army mobilising.”

Once war was declared, however, it did not take long for things to step up a gear and for the public to get behind the war effort. Territorials guarded lines of communication. Important sections of practically every railway line in the country were guarded, especially lines between Southampton, Aldershot, Chatham and London over which troops might have to be conveyed.

Locally Boy Scouts were posted to guard the viaduct bridge over Cooks Pond, Dormans Park

Advertisements appeared in the papers for Army pensioners to act as Recruiters and by September the Red Cross was asking for bandages, instructing people to boil the calico before tearing, leaving no selvages; the length and width were to be marked with ink and fastened with safety pins.

The Lingfield Emergency Committee was formed. "All the chief residents, farmers, tradesmen and many members of the working class were invited to serve". The committee would deal with recruiting, relief, food supply and other urgent matters. There were appeals for aid for wives and families of soldiers and it was recorded that Lingfield Church gave £25 to the Prince of Wales Fund. On 25th November the Dormansland school log reported that the children would give an entertainment in aid of the National Relief Fund; this took place in December and raised £13.2s.11½d

Spy Mania

In October 1914 The Surrey Mirror reported that "a suspicious foreigner" was found wandering in a field at Lingfield. Karl Horvath, aged 18, was unable to give a good account of himself and was remanded; there was no report of what happened to him subsequently.

Alarming stories began to circulate in the local papers. The Surrey Mirror reported that on Sunday 9th August a troop train near South Godstone was fired at and several windows smashed, although no-one was injured. From the train four men were seen in a field on the east side of the line. Three shots were fired at which the men then jumped into a motor car and drove away. The train was pulled up and Territorials stationed at Redhill, together with police and motor scouts scoured the surrounding country. "Residents in the neighbourhood joined warmly in the chase, one gentleman lending a powerful motor car and also guns for six men to go with it. But it was all in vain and those who made the attack got clean away." The next day an attempt was made to fire at Territorials on guard at the L.B. & S.C. Railway loop line at Holmthorpe just outside Redhill. Sentries fired a round or two and called out the guard. Two men were seen running away from the embankment and a search was made but no-one was found.

At about the same time come reports of a troop train being fired upon at Edenbridge. A rifle bullet was found in the woodwork of a carriage. The police description of the suspect was circulated as someone "tall and dark with a sallow complexion and dark moustache." It is not clear what these reports meant but there has been some suggestion that these stories were a deliberate invention with the intention of keeping troops and Territorials on their toes.

Enlisting

Long lists of men who had enlisted were printed. On September 5th 1914 the East Grinstead Observer reported an appeal from the vicar of East Grinstead for men to join up. He expressed his hope that the rugby club would join up and cancel games as "this was no time for young able-bodied men to be playing or watching games". The scoutmaster for the 1st

Lingfield and Dormansland troop, Captain Henry Lloyd Martin enlisted; he was later to be killed at the Battle of the Somme. The scouts from Lingfield and Dormansland competed against the Oxted and Limsfield scouts in a shooting match. Several of the scouts taking part went on to enlist: assistant scoutmaster Harry Cox became a gunner in the Royal Artillery; Arthur Potter and Albert Friend joined the Royal West Kent regiment and George Skinner joined the Queen's Regiment.

Patriotism

Patriotic verses written by readers were published each week in the Surrey Mirror; these started off by being very jingoistic:

.....*Still shall she rule the waves*
Crushing usurping power.....

but within weeks become much more sombre:

O God of our fathers hear our prayer
In this dark hour of strife.....

National Loans meetings were held in Lingfield and Blindley Heath. In Lingfield the meeting was chaired by Mr Gow of Batnor Hall; the Lingfield Band played patriotic airs and three cheers were given for "our soldiers in the trenches". At the Blindley Heath meeting the cry was "every man of military age and medically fit who has not joined the Colours must ask himself the question – why do I not enlist?"

Life goes on as Usual

On Saturday 1st August the annual church parade at Lingfield took place. Taking part were the Fire Brigade, Friendly Societies with banners and sashes; the Lingfield and Dormansland Boy Scouts; the Copthorne Prize Band, the Dormansland Institute Band and Lingfield Band. In September the Lingfield Harvest Festival went ahead as usual. At Christmas Aladdin was playing at the Croydon Hippodrome. Aladdin, played by Miss Lillie Lassae, encouraged the audience to help her with "Sister Susie's Sewing Shirts for Soldiers" and "It's a Long Way to Tipperary".

In October Lingfield Park Racecourse announced that the first autumn meeting would be held as usual. It was felt that if it was stopped it would mean hardship for those employed. Also if "the interest of owners is allowed to wane there would be a serious blow to horse-breeding and the supply of animals to the army would be severely affected. There should be no false sentiment about the propriety of holding the races." It was announced that all serving officers of army and navy were welcome to the course and enclosure free of charge. Wives and daughters of members away serving in the forces would be allowed to use the member's badge.

Food

There were official warnings against the hoarding of food but it seems that these appeals were generally ignored by the general public. At the outbreak of war panic buying broke out and shops such as Sainsbury's issued notices to the effect that its regular customers would be kept

supplied. The requisitioning of delivery horses by the army also affected distribution to Sainsbury's branches and customers were asked to carry smaller parcels home themselves.

Demon Drink

By September it was recommended that due to the large numbers of troops billeted in East Grinstead the sale of intoxicating liquor was to be restricted. The sale of alcohol was therefore suspended between 9pm and 9am. The Government had grave concerns about the amount the public were drinking and was especially worried about the amount of beer munitions workers were drinking. There followed new national regulations allowing the watering of beer. This becomes known as 'Government Ale'. A line from a popular music hall song of the time went:

*.....But the worst thing that ever happened in this war
Is Lloyd George's Beer.*

The Red Cross issued a warning to chauffeurs in charge of convalescent soldiers out for an airing in private motors who had been seen stopping off at public houses and treating the men to drink. It was requested that anyone seeing cases of this kind should report it to any Red Cross Convalescent Home in the neighbourhood.

Fuel

During the autumn and winter of 1914 supplies of fuel and light were curtailed, street lamps dimmed and no lines of lights were permitted.

Events in Belgium

After the German invasion of Belgium many of the population were displaced. By December the Surrey Mirror had started a weekly column in French for the benefit of the local influx of Belgian refugees. Accommodation was offered in many places; locally The Colony (now Young Epilepsy) in St Piers Lane offered places for 36 refugees

1915

Enlisting and training

Lectures were held in Lingfield and Felbridge as to "why every available man is needed to defend his country". Lantern slides illustrated the lecture and the position of the armies was explained. All the proceeds went to the Belgian Relief Fund. Once a week Lingfield's Volunteer Training Corps enthusiastically carried out training and shooting practice. A major training exercise was carried out at the end of May at Ford Manor attended by companies from Purley, Caterham, Oxted and Limpsfield as well as Lingfield. All in all about 500 men took part.

The Lingfield church organist, Mr C. Maude left in May to join the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Patriotism

In July Mr Cobham gave an address on the National War Loan at a public open air meeting to a "large and appreciative audience" numbering about 300. Men, munitions and money were all dealt with in a rousing patriotic speech. Once again the Lingfield Band played a

selection of patriotic airs. At the end Mr Cobham called for “three cheers for our men in the trenches” to which there was a vigorous response. Many patriotic concerts were held in Lingfield and Dormansland and proved to be very popular. At a concert held in Dormansland in aid of the Prince of Wales National Relief Fund, the local paper reported that “a large number of gentry were present.” The concert held in aid of the Women’s Emergency Committee at the Victoria Memorial Institute was so crowded that many people could not obtain seats.

More Spy Mania/Anti German Feeling?

In March The Surrey Mirror reported the case of Ludvig Paul Selbach the tenant of Tower House, Godstone Road. As he lived in London he offered the house as a hospital to The Red Cross. Mr Selbach was born in Germany, then lived in America but had never taken citizenship. He had German documents and he appeared at London Police Court charged with being an alien. His defence claimed that he was of good character, had lived in England for 37 years and had donated £50 to The Prince of Wales Fund and that his failure to register was a lapse of judgement. In spite of this he was given 6 months hard labour. (History does not relate if the hospital was established; no evidence has come to light to suggest that it was)

Precautions during the war

In January the public authorities were ordered to ensure that all lights other than those not visible from the outside of any house or navigational lights were extinguished between 5.00pm and 7.30am. The Surrey Mirror commented “...the streets of our towns and villages have never presented a more gloomy and depressing appearance.” The Christmas 1915 edition of the parish magazine reported that owing to the regulations in force for obscuring light in buildings at night, (presumably against Zeppelin attacks) it was necessary to darken the church windows in order that the evening services could be continued. “The cost of doing this has been considerable” the magazine records, “and material used amounts to £18.1s 4d. Many of the congregation have generously donated towards the expense but there is still a further sum required.” At Baldwins Hill owing to the great darkness at night caused by the new lighting orders no extra Advent services were to be held.

Food and Drink

The duty was doubled on spirits. With the need to reduce imports the Government greatly encouraged the home production of foodstuffs. Farmers were given guaranteed prices for crops and exhorted to grow more wheat, potatoes and sugar beet. However with the enlistment of so many agricultural labourers there was a massive labour shortage. The biggest headache was the gathering in of the harvest.

Another worry for farmers was the danger from incendiary bombs in Zeppelin raids. In July the Surrey Mirror issued a warning from the Central Chamber of Agriculture for the period from 20th July to the end of August when there is a considerable danger in Eastern and Southern counties from fields of corn being set on fire by incendiary bombs. The advice given to farmers was not terribly helpful: they were advised to team up in pairs and keep watch in case of any outbreak of fire. An advert in the Surrey Mirror described a

‘contrivance’ which would warn of a Zeppelin raid. It was said to work on the basis of a reduction of gas pressure and would automatically ring a bell. (there were no reports of its use or effectiveness)

Apart from the shortage of labour the East Sussex branch of the National Farmers Union were alarmed that the military authorities were proposing the commandeering of hay (presumably for the horses used by the army). They claimed that all the hay in the county would be required for the farmers’ own stock and there was no surplus. Both the Redhill Fat Stock Show and the Oxted Agricultural Show were abandoned.

Fuel

By early 1915, the coal shortage had taken hold. As the price of coal rose steadily each month, local newspapers filled their pages with fuel-saving hints, ranging from the dismal to the positively dangerous. The following appeared in a column entitled Helpful Hints for Cooks and Mistresses:

“For saving coal damp some waste paper and wrap some coal in it. Put it to the back of the grate. With a shovel full of slack on it and a few bits of good coal in front the sitting room fire will burn gently for many hours without replenishing.”

“... Put a shovelful of slack, which has been held under the tap for a few seconds at the back of the grate. Two or three such shovelfuls will keep the fire going for hours.”

“Coal dust from the cellar mixed with sawdust and slightly moistened with paraffin, if rolled into lumps the size of oranges, can be used for banking and keeping in the fire”

“Take a pound of resin, melt it and add two ounces of tallow. Add sawdust to thicken and spread the mixture on a board which has already been well sprinkled with sawdust to prevent sticking. Cover closely with fir cones and when dry remove from the board and break into small pieces for use.”

Local Gas Companies urged their customers to use more gas instead of solid fuel which was needed for the munitions factories; besides which the greater use of gas was good for business!

Support for the Troops

The Surrey Mirror began a ‘Tobacco Fund’ to supply cigarettes and tobacco for soldiers and sailors at the Front. This turned out to be extraordinarily successful. By April an appeal was also launched for comforts for wounded soldiers with the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) at Rouen. A letter appeared in the Surrey Mirror from P.G. Martin with the 1st Battalion Queens Royal West Surrey Regiment serving with BEF in France. He appealed to readers to send out mouth organs to the Front as “... on the march it cheers us up and makes things lively on the way to the trenches.”

The National Egg Collection for the Wounded started in 1915. Initially its aim was to collect nationally 200,000 eggs per week for the wounded. However, it became so successful that it achieved an average of one million eggs a month. Ten thousand eggs per

day were shipped out to hospitals in France. There were local depots for collecting the eggs which were sent to the central depot at Harrods where approximately 55,000 eggs came in every day. The eggs were packed in bags of sawdust and sent to French and English hospitals. All broken eggs are sent to wounded soldiers in St George's Hospital.

The local papers promoted this scheme, regularly giving updates. The Surrey Mirror edition of 23rd March 1915 reported on the enormous part children were playing in the work of collecting eggs. The Lingfield school log book reports that "160 eggs collected by the children have been sent to Bermondsey Military Hospital". The Dormansland children brought eggs every week and in February after a special appeal 100 eggs were contributed. By June the Surrey Mirror reported that 3,000 eggs had been collected in 12 weeks from people living in Merstham, Chaldon and Bletchingley.

The Lingfield Women's Service League held a Red Cross street collection raising £16. The league also formed a local branch of The Vegetable Products Association and sent fruit and vegetables to the Fleet every fortnight. Eggs and flowers were sent weekly to hospitals.

To celebrate Empire Day on 31st May the children of Dormansland school brought pennies towards "our soldiers and sailors on active service" Later in the year 17s.1d was given to provide Christmas presents for the troops

On 31st July the East Grinstead Observer reported that a Church parade took place at Lingfield in aid of hospitals. The procession was headed by the Lingfield & Dormansland boy scouts followed by the Lingfield Band in front of which walked Mr Konig accompanied by the vicar. These were followed by the local lodge of Oddfellows, Dormansland Institute Band, and Fire Brigades from Lingfield, Dormansland, Godstone, Blindley Heath, Oxted and Edenbridge.

Appeals for the Public to help with the war effort

In May the War Office issued an appeal for respirators "against the asphyxiating gases being used by the enemy." The public were urged to make these up to the following instructions:

A face piece (to cover mouth and nostrils) formed of an oblong pad of bleached absorbent cotton wool about 5¼ inches x 3 inches covered with 3 layers of bleached cotton gauze and fitted with a band to fit round the head and keep the pad in position

A piece of double stockinette 9½ inches long by 3½ inches wide in the centre, gradually diminishing in width to 2½ inches at each end with a piece of thick plaited worsted about 5 inches long attached at each end, so as to form a loop to pass over the ear.

Respirators were to be sent in packages of not less than 100 to the Royal Army Clothing Dept., Pimlico. It is not recorded how effective these home-made gas masks were.

By June the East Grinstead branch of the Women's Suffrage Society proposed to start making sandbags for the trenches and appealed for volunteers to help. By July 1915 the Government asked for volunteer recruits for the munitions industry

Daily Life

In spite of the restrictions daily life carried on as best as it could. The parish magazine reported on the first Parochial Sale of Work which by all events was successful. As well as stalls there was a cake-weighing competition, a Baby Show (with a prize of 5 shillings [25p]) and a Gentlemen's Hat Trimming competition. The Cinema Royal at Redhill was showing recent war pictures from France, Russia and Italy as well as Keystone comics. Because expeditions were not allowed the Lingfield Mothers Group were entertained by Mrs Stanger at her residence, Calemore.

The Lingfield Debating Society proved to be a popular weekly event. Some of the themes discussed were : "How to Save the Empire"; How to Abolish Taxation; The Alarming Rise of Sobriety. (this last theme sounds like a tongue-in-cheek reference to restrictions on the sale of alcohol) In September Lingfield shopkeepers agreed to reduce their opening hours by closing their establishments at 7 o'clock each evening, except Saturdays when it would be 9pm. The Lingfield Racecourse re-opened in November under much restricted rules, having been closed since May.

1916

Conscription Starts

1916 was a bleak year for most families, with the shortage of food and news of local men wounded or killed in the Battle of the Somme coming in weekly. The beginning of the year saw the introduction of military conscription for men between the ages of 18 and 41. Conscription impacted greatly on daily life in the local area and in April there was call up of married men. Throughout the year the local paper reports weekly cases of appeals for exemption from conscription – either by employers on behalf of their workers or by the men themselves. Some examples follow:

The Lingfield Drainage Committee reported that the Lingfield Sewage Works Manager had been called up for service. The Committee recommended the appointment of a temporary manager. Frederick Head aged 24 had been employed there since "a lad". He was in charge of the pumping station with nine miles of sewers and land which is cultivated. It would take a long time to train someone else and he already has three brothers serving. He was exempted for one more month.

At the beginning of May William Edward Boorer aged 32 ,plumber and gas fitter of Plaistow St applied for exemption on the grounds that he was the only one who could look after his business. He was granted exemption until the end of June but eventually joined the Royal Flying Corps. (The business obviously managed to keep going somehow as after the war William and his brother Fred were partners in a successful ironmongers business on the site of the present Lingfield Garage.)

In July William Miram, Butcher, applied for Albert Boorer aged 37, slaughterman, on the grounds that there was no other slaughterman in the neighbourhood. Exemption was granted until 11 August. (Albert Boorer eventually joined the Queens Royal West Surrey regiment and went to France in 1917. His company lost nearly half its strength in its first

engagement. Albert returned to Lingfield after the war and managed his own butcher's shop in Lingfield High Street.)

An application was made by Mrs Skinner, High Street, Dormansland on behalf of Frank Skinner (37) and Gordon Mayo (30) shoeing and general smiths on the grounds that they were now turning out 100 shoes a week under an Army contract as well as doing repair work for farmers. Exemption was granted.

Albert George Lawrence, Carter of Blockfield Farm Dormansland applied for exemption as he was in certified employment. His employer was 74, farming 214 acres (52 acres arable); he had a son who was "delicate" and looked after the sheep but could not do heavy work. If the carter went into the army the land would go out of cultivation. Exemption was agreed as long as he stayed in the same employment

Bert Andrew Gibson, 32, of Clinton Terrace Dormansland had previously been sent for an army medical and passed fit. His employer, Mr Malden, had a large poultry farm in Lingfield and had applied for exemption on the grounds that Gibson was an expert at fattening chickens. Gibson conducted the 'Cramming Process' of chicken fattening – a specialist way of fattening chickens. Exemption was granted for 3 months.

Preparations for Invasion

In March The Surrey Mirror reported

INSTRUCTIONS IN CASE OF INVASION

A placard will be posted in each parish stating:

Careful plans have been made

If a state of emergency is declared stay quietly at home.

Many roads will be closed to all traffic.

If you wish to move you will be given assembly points

Conveyances will be provided for aged, infirm and young children.

All others go on foot.

Take only necessary clothing, boots blankets and money

It may be necessary to destroy certain property

All movement will be directed by the Police.

Lingfield residents will be directed to Blindley Heath

Food and other Shortages

Food shortages became a serious issue. By April 1916 Britain had only six weeks of grain left and four days' supply of sugar. 'Standard' bread was introduced containing soya and potato as well as wheat and was an unappetising dirty grey colour. There was an appeal to Surrey farmers to produce as much food as possible. Farmers were to be paid £1.00 for employing women "Whatever you may think about employing women you must do it. When women tackle a job they generally do it whether it is managing a husband or milking a cow."

The Government exhorted the public not to waste food and published handy recipes for housewives. The Surrey Mirror published simple “one-course” dinners under the heading ‘War Time Cookery’, such as Savoury Batter and Gravy; Meat and Vegetable Pudding with Potato. The paper advises its readers that $\frac{3}{4}$ lb of bread should be served with each dinner. Some other suggestions:

- Use butchers steak trimmings (2d) in a pie
- Bake your own bread (the shortage of labour meant that bakers could not maintain supply)
- Use a hay box instead of fuel
- “A northern recipe” - Snow pancakes – contained no egg but a handful of snow instead . The snow contains air which expands with the heat giving a very light pancake.

There were problems for the middle classes – “The average servant cannot or will not make vegetable dishes interesting and palatable. John Bull cannot be expected to become a complete vegetarian nor is it desirable that he should”. The public were encouraged to grow their own food where possible. By the end of the year food prices had increased and coal was in very short supply. It had even become illegal to throw rice at weddings! The Surrey Mirror urged people not to be ashamed of wearing old clothes and both papers included patterns for ladies clothes which would not take too much material.

Due to the shortage of paper wood pulp would no longer be imported. No more free copies of newspapers were issued to libraries. Newspapers had to be ordered in advance from the newsagent. On 24th March the local paper reported “drastic” changes in the hours during which Post Office business could be transacted in East Grinstead and the surrounding district. The hours of public business at the East Grinstead Head Post Office and sub-offices, including Lingfield, would now be 9am to 12.30pm and from 2pm to 7pm. There were also alterations to postal deliveries because of so many men at war. There would now be only two deliveries per day instead of three (those were the days!)

Warnings for the public

The War Office announced that many carrier pigeons were being shot. “Many of these birds are used for naval or military purposes. Anyone found shooting these pigeons will be prosecuted. If you can’t tell the difference between a wood pigeon and a homing pigeon then don’t shoot at all. All injured birds are to be handed in to the military authorities”.

Support for the troops

Advertisements appeared for “Trench Comforts” the illustration showed a cigarette and a pipe of tobacco. Smokers were urged to donate a special parcel of cigarettes for 1 shilling. These could be sent post free to a regiment (but not an individual).

In February a plan was announced to supply smallholdings for men who had fought in the Great War. The numbers of wounded men returning from the front had increased to the extent that the East Grinstead Observer offered adverts free of charge on behalf of disabled sailors and soldiers seeking employment.

What about the children?

Food and fuel shortages affected the children. Lingfield school was closed until the middle of January because of cases of diphtheria breaking out in the village. This was followed in February by cases of whooping cough and scarlet fever. In May there was an epidemic of chicken pox at Lingfield school, with over 50% of the children absent.

In spite of illness, the children were able to assist the war effort. For the month of September 30 children from Lingfield School were away hop picking. In October school children collected horse chestnuts. This is in response to the Government's appeal for school-children to collect conkers for the war effort. Horse chestnuts could be used to produce acetone, a vital component in the manufacture of cordite, used in the munitions industry. "With a bounty of 7/6d (37.5p) a hundredweight the children have soon collected more conkers than there are trains to transport them".

Empire Day was always an important day in the schools' calendar, never more so than during the war years. The Lingfield school headmistress wrote in the log book "It is unusually important that Empire Day shall be celebrated this year." A Dormansland School The Roll of Honour inscribed with names of Old Boys who had volunteered for service with the forces was presented, framed, ready for hanging in the School. Several children were personally affected by the sentiments of the ceremony with fathers and brothers serving with the Allied Expeditionary Force, some having been killed or injured.

1917

Food.

Food problems were now serious. The Surrey War Agricultural Committee was set up in January 1917. Examples of many of the proposals put forward by the committee being put into action were found in the local press. People were urged not to panic and to cultivate vacant land.

Ploughing up pasture to grow potatoes and wheat meant less pasture for cattle (milk and meat). "We must not deny our children milk." It was reported that "unless the price of feeding stuffs can be brought down it will be necessary to contemplate a large reduction in the live-stock of the county. Home-produced fertilizer was produced – sulphate of ammonia mixed with basic slag. There is a record in the Colony archives of this being ordered from Stanford's in Lingfield.

Help was given in the purchase of seed potatoes. In March Crowhurst Parish Council reported that they had received a letter from the County Agricultural Committee asking what quantity of seed potatoes would be required by parishioners. A guaranteed price for wheat was introduced. The County War Agriculture Committee reported that to maintain food supplies more tractors must be used. However farmers were very conservative and sceptical. Demonstrations were arranged to show them how much quicker ploughing would be if tractors were used and training was provided. Local farmer Mr Young stated that he had heard that ladies could drive tractors. By March 16hp Mogul tractors were being imported from USA but the purchase of new or second-hand tractors from this country was

advocated to reduce the need for imported machines. However the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee commented: "I understand that the Ford works in USA will be able to turn out tractors at £50.00...this will revolutionise agriculture.....it will knock the English workers off their trade ."

With so many men away many women started to work on the land. A separate Women's War Agriculture Committee was established to "get down to each parish" to organize work for women. It was decided that the best system was for women working on the land to work in gangs. There should be a gang leader who would assemble the team and keep the time sheets. The Home Defense Army was to help during the spring sowing season, also German prisoners, Interned Aliens and Conscientious Objectors. To add to the difficulties there were reports of swine fever at Newchapel and potato disease at Baldwins Hill "which has wrought much havoc."

Because of the sugar shortage those able to grow their own fruit were allowed sugar in order to preserve their crop. The local papers printed weekly Hints for Allotment Holders to encourage people to grow their own fruit and vegetables. Lingfield Drainage Committee received a request from Mr W. Wallis to rent a piece of land at the sewage works. This was agreed at a rent 10/- (50p). The land had to be used for food production and subletting was not allowed.

The shooting season for pheasants was extended to 1st March. Rabbits were to be "dealt with" (? Culled) in February, March and April. Appeals were made to local hunts to keep the numbers of foxes as low as possible.

In response to the massive amount of shipping lost to German U-boats the Government authorized the organization of a National Kitchen, where healthy and nourishing food was cooked and served to the masses now that most men had been called up to the Front and women had taken their places in the workforce. Food shortages became a serious problem and initially food prices were fixed, eg. the price of a quartern loaf was fixed at 9d; butchers were limited to 2½d profit per pound. Finally the Government introduced food rationing, starting with sugar. This was in place by the end of November

The situation was not helped by adverse weather conditions – an abnormal, long and snow-bound winter; a belated and hurried ploughing season followed by drought in May and then a wet and stormy August

Patriotism

There were several War Aims Meetings in Surrey villages. Their purpose was to explain the government war aims. The Lingfield meeting was held on 26 November in the Victoria Institute. An example of a resolution passed at these meetings: "This meeting heartily approves of the nation's inflexible determination to continue the struggle until the evil forces which originated the conflict are destroyed and to maintain the ideals of liberty and justice which are the common and sacred cause of the allies."

Troops

Throughout the year news of many deaths and injuries continue to be reported in the papers – too many to be listed here. Apart from the dreaded bad news families must have been eager for any information. The troops were restricted in what they could say and the censor was very rigorous. A set of postcards sent home by Stanley Jenner to his mother and passed down to his daughter, Ruth Jenner are a good example of such correspondence. Although there was no real news they must have been a comfort in that as long as the cards kept coming families knew that their loved one was alive.

On 3rd March the local paper reported on a military round up at the Racecourse: “On Saturday last the Military made a raid on the Lingfield racecourse at the conclusion of the day's racing.” Likely looking men were held up and requested to produce papers proving their exemption from military service. A cinematograph operator who attempted to get a picture of the event had to be protected by the police and narrowly escaped a rough handling by some members of the crowd. Five men were eventually taken.

Labour Shortage

A letter to the Surrey Mirror asking “what about the children of women who work? Will the older children miss school to look after their younger brothers and sisters? I call upon all women up to 60 to volunteer for this work of national importance. It is time to consider the citizens of the future”.

There were many reports of women taking over their husband's work. For example in July the licence of the Royal Oak, Dormansland, was transferred from Albert Leigh (who was serving with the Colours) to his wife, Beatrice Annie Leigh.

Daily Life

In the midst of so much bad news the Observer reported two weddings which took place in Lingfield church on 27th October. Frances Nita Fuller married Ernest William Frost. He was a Canadian soldier and was on short leave, returning to France shortly. Nora Sybil Wallers married Percy William White, “one of our brave fellows who was wounded at Gallipoli and has now been discharged.

Miss Norah Burton, chauffeur of Red Cottage, Station Road, Dormansland was summoned for not drawing her bedroom blinds at night. She wrote that she got in to bed, leaving a candle burning by her bedside. She was fined £1.00

A Drama in Dormansland

“On August Bank Holiday Mr Winston Churchill, Minister of Munitions and his wife left their residence, Lullenden in their motor, proceeding to London. On reaching The Crossway, the residence of Mr Davey Walker, another motorist approached from the blind turning and struck Mr Churchill's car full broadside with such violent force that the vehicle was thrown on its side. Mr and Mrs Churchill were badly shaken but as soon as they could obtain another car they resumed their journey.” It was reported that there had been many narrow escapes at this junction and advocated that the AA provide “one of their special warning notices.” Now that a member of the government had been involved some action was expected.

1918

Trials of Daily Life

In February 1918 the Daily Mail bemoaned the fact that “servants of any kind are becoming unobtainable and that therefore the daily task of the housewife are becoming more difficult. They have to spend hours going from shop to shop, waiting their turn to be served and then not being able to obtain the food they required”. Where, the paper asked, are the National Kitchens that had been promised?

Labour shortages are a constant problem and women continue to take over from their menfolk.

Fuel

Fuel continued to be in short supply. During the war years Lingfield Primary School experienced shortages of coal for its fires, whereby only two classrooms in the school heating . By 16th January attendance at Lingfield was low as mothers were not sending their children to sit in cold classrooms and by 10th February so many children were suffering from colds that the school closed. It remained closed for another week.

Illness.

Lingfield School, which had been closed since October 22nd due to an epidemic of influenza, re-opened on November 13. During this time the influenza had affected teachers and children alike. Two boys died and one teacher was gravely ill.

Food

By April meat, butter, cheese and margarine were added to the list of rationed food. The National Egg Collection scheme, providing eggs for the troops, had been so successful that there was now a national egg shortage at home.

Towards the end of the year the Government allowed a special allotment of sugar for jam making to those who grew their own fruit. In the Lingfield area alone there were 3,000 applications which had to be dealt with. The East Grinstead Observer described this as an “arduous piece of work.” Schoolchildren were recruited to pick blackberries for the jam industry and the Education Authority agreed to any holiday necessary for the children to do their part. The children would be paid 3d (1½p) per pound of fruit picked. Lingfield schoolchildren were given a half holiday in September to pick blackberries. The Domansland School Log Book records in September 1918 that the older children went blackberrying on Dry Hill and Smithers farm. The total return picked was 389lbs (½ tonne).

Some Light Relief

“A Special Matinée Concert” was advertised, to be held at the Whitehall Theatre, East Grinstead the September of 1918 in aid of the Red Cross. Many “celebrated London Artistes” agreed to perform, including Mrs Lillie Langtry.

Troops – high morale for some.

Pte S.H. Turner of Newchapel wrote very cheerful letters. “We have just finished giving Johnny Turk one of the greatest hidings he ever had. We have been in action for three

days.....there is no danger at all compared to that in France; we are all as happy as sandboys” One suspects that this sentiment was not felt by many troops.

Help for the troops

The East Grinstead Observer reported that by December the East Grinstead district contributed 121,127 eggs for the National Egg Collection Scheme since March 1915. Nationally over seven million eggs had been sent to UK hospitals and over twenty-five million eggs to hospitals abroad. The Lingfield Parish magazine reported that the village headed the list of all Surrey villages, raising £167.5s.0d over the past 11 months for the Surrey Prisoners of War Fund. 1,000 parcels were sent every five days to POWs (mainly the Queens).

Example of a parcel:

1 tin corned beef	½ lb cocoa	1 tin dripping	1 tin milk
20 cigarettes	8oz soap	1 tin Irish Stew	½ lb sugar
1 tin sardines	1 lb biscuits		

The Armistice 11th November

In the Surrey Mirror of November 15th there was a muted report of the armistice which had taken place a few days before but no banner headlines or pictures. The paper continued to record the names of those killed in action. The log for The Colony school simply recorded on 12th November “School closed for Armistice”. The East Grinstead Observer of 23rd November gave a long report about a torchlight procession in Lingfield. It was headed by the Fire Brigade and followed by the Boy Scouts. After patriotic speeches the celebration ended with the burning of an effigy of that “Blighter Kaiser Bill” and three cheers for the King. A torchlight procession also took place in Reigate.

‘All over by Christmas’ was the initial response to the war but after four years life for everyone had changed forever.

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WHAT THE PAPERS SAID