BUCKINGHAMSHIRE IN THE GREAT WAR: A RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

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The sheer scale of the First World War compared to previous conflicts within living memory at that time, and the capacity to call upon modern industrialised resources, resulted in significant impact upon states, societies, institutions and individuals. Every man, woman and child, and every aspect of life was affected by the challenge of war. It was a war that shaped the course of the twentieth century. Some of its legacies finally disappeared with the demise of Soviet control of Central and Eastern Europe; others still have a profound impact in regions such as the Middle East. In Britain there is a distinct and lasting memory of the war, not just in terms of rituals of remembrance but in issues such as summer time, first introduced in 1916; phrases more or less still in common usage such as 'blighty' and 'conchie'; and other aspects of popular culture including that unique British contribution to fast food from the trenches, egg and chips. Yet it is also a conflict that is widely misunderstood in Britain, a result not so much of how the war was remembered in the 1920s and 1930s but of how its memory was reinvented at the time of the fiftieth anniversary in the 1960s. The usual suspects – Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen – were entirely unrepresentative of the millions who served in the British army during the war. The sense of victimhood with which Great War soldiers are often approached does them an immense disservice, just as does any concept that theirs was a futile sacrifice in a war of 'lions led by donkeys', a phrase that dates back at least to the reign of William III. The centenary presents a unique opportunity to revisit the actuality of the war in all its aspects and to impart real understanding of the significance of what took place between 1914 and 1918.[1]

The broad outlines of the war's impact on Britain have been well sketched out in terms of recent scholarship.[2] Understandably, much can be done to add to the overall picture through more detailed local studies. Certainly, a large number of projects have been under way since 2014 with, for example, the local stories researched through the BBC 'World War One at Home' project,[3] and the more focussed projects in which local groups have been partnered by academic advisers through the five World War One Engagement Centres funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.[4] While nominally attached to the universities of Birmingham, Hertfordshire, Kent, Nottingham, and Queen's Belfast, each has wider constituent groups of academic advisors elsewhere. Thus 'Gateways to the First World War' at Kent has current projects in Arundel, Brighton, Hawick, Leeds, London, Portsmouth, Southampton and in three Norfolk villages, as well as the 'Casualties of War' project in partnership with the Buckinghamshire Military Museum Trust and the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies.[5]

As the Buckinghamshire county co-ordinating meetings chaired by the Lord Lieutenant, Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher, Bt. – eight since 2013 – have also illustrated,[6] there are many local projects, some funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, that promise to provide a lasting county legacy. Among larger ongoing projects are the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies' HLF-funded 'Great War Buckinghamshire',[7] the Bucks Military Museum Trust's 'Buckinghamshire Great War Virtual Trail',[8] and the HLF-funded 'Great War MK' at Milton Keynes,[9] which embraces eight partner projects. In addition, Joanna Barclay and her team have produced the 'Our County at War: The Home Front in Buckinghamshire, 1914–18' DVD, which has been distributed to all schools in the county.[10]

It seems appropriate, therefore, to offer a framework for further local research on the county's experience of war between 1914 and 1918. First of all, the article will discuss what might be termed

the 'nation in arms'; secondly, the impact of war on state and society; and, lastly, legacies.

The Nation in Arms

Some 4.9 million men were enlisted in the British army between 1914 and 1918, of whom 2.4 million were volunteers, and 2.5 million enlisted after the introduction of conscription in January 1916. The latter figure, however, includes volunteers and so-called 'Derbyites' enlisted under the Derby Scheme, so that the actual number of conscripts was some 1.3 million. With the addition of those already serving in 1914 in the regular army, the army reserve, the special reserve and the part-time Territorials a wartime total of 5.7 million men served in the army at one time or another, approximating to 22.1 per cent of the entire male population of the United Kingdom.[11] In reality, the total represents a higher proportion of those deemed to be of 'military age' – those between 18 and 41 – and, given that the response from Ireland was not as great as that from Britain, and that conscription was never extended to Ireland, an even higher proportion of those of military age in Britain.

It should not be forgotten that a further 407,000 men enlisted in the Royal Navy. Indeed, a surprising number of Buckinghamshire men did so. When, for example, the three old cruisers of the 7th Cruiser Squadron, HMS *Aboukir*, *Cressy* and *Hogue*, were sunk by a single German submarine within 47 minutes on 22 September 1914, sixteen of the dead were from Bucks. Another 34 seamen from the county died at Jutland on 31 May and 1 June 1916.[12] The Royal Air Force, of course, did not come into existence until April 1918, its predecessor, the Royal Flying Corps, being part of the army until this time. The Royal Naval Air Service remained part of the Royal Navy.

In January 1918 the Lord Lieutenant, the Marquess of Lincolnshire, accepted the Bucks Roll of Honour recording the names of approximately 19,450 men who had joined the forces voluntarily prior to June 1916.[13] Given that the total male population in 1911 had been 107,326, this voluntary effort already represents 18.1 per cent of that total and, therefore, an even higher percentage of those of military age generally taken as those aged 18 to

Figure 1 King George V visiting Great Missenden, 18 November 1914 (photo: Centre for Bucks Studies)

41. But there are many inaccuracies on the Roll of Honour. It excludes those who were enlisted after June 1916 and it is not clear how far it records the 9,000 men assumed to be serving already in the armed forces in August 1914. Indeed, while the Roll records only 406 of those listed as being dead in January 1918, the invaluable work of June and Peter Underwood of 'Buckinghamshire Remembers' indicates that over 8,400 names are recorded on the county's war memorials.[14] In turn, Clint Lawson's equally invaluable database of servicemen's obituaries and all other references in the Bucks wartime local press, also now available on the 'Buckinghamshire Remembers' website, carries over 44,000 names. In accepting the Roll, Lincolnshire also spoke of the 3,000 men serving in the domestic Volunteer Training Corps, the Great War equivalent of the Home Guard, and a further 4,000 men serving as Special Constables. The Roll, therefore, does not yield anything like a full picture of the military effort of the county. To give just one example of the extent of military service, in the village of Whitchurch there were 622 inhabitants in 156 households in 1909. Between 1914 and 1918 a total of 198 men with some connection to the village can be identified as having served in the armed forces, 15 of whom are recorded on the war memorial, with five additional war dead not so recorded. Sixteen served in the Royal Navy, Royal Naval Air Service, or Royal Marines; five served in Australian or Canadian forces.

There are over 20 publications that have catalogued the lives and deaths of those whose names are on different parish war memorials including Amersham, Burnham, Chesham, Iver Heath, Maids Moreton, Penn, Stewkley, Stoke Poges, Stone, Waddesdon and Wendover. Many others are being prepared. Through the ready availability of service, medal and pension records as well as other national records online, the resources of national and local museums, the collections of the Centre for Bucks Studies, and the local press, there is so much that can now be found out about wartime servicemen and their experiences. One example is the Absent Voters' List compiled in 1918.[15] Not only did the local press carry obituaries but also letters from servicemen, as in the case of those from North Bucks servicemen put online by the Milton Keynes Heritage Association, for there was no censorship of the local press.[16]

Every conceivable military unit and every theatre of war is represented on the county's war memorials and in the many parish rolls of honour that also survive. What is often interesting is the number of Bucks men who had emigrated before the war and served with the Australian or Canadian forces as suggested by the Whitchurch figures. The 'Casualties of War' project mentioned above based upon the 'casualty books' of the 1/1st Bucks Battalion will yield the basis for a sophisticated database that can be interrogated for analysis on such aspects of the changing composition of the battalion with the influx of drafts from other units after heavy casualties in 1916 and 1917; the incidence and type of disciplinary offences and the sentences imposed; the incidence and type of disease and illness.[17] While the publications based on war memorials cannot always offer as much detail, they do still potentially form the basis for wider analysis on aspects such as recruitment, pre-war emigration, wounds and illness.

There were no 'Pals' Battalions of Kitchener's New Army formed in Buckinghamshire, but there were five service battalions of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry that recruited alongside the Territorials.[18] The whole business of recruiting in 1914 was a highly complex affair.[19] What used to be seen as a 'rush to the colours' has been substantially modified by new research in recent years. At Haddenham, for example, one recruiting agent reported on 28 August, 'The Bucks yokels are terribly hard to move. We are waking them up all we can but there is hardly anyone to help in this missionary work.'[20]

The response of Territorials to taking the Imperial Service Obligation, by which means alone they could be sent overseas in 1914, is itself instructive. Choices were made for many different reasons. At High Wycombe the squadron of the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars were drawn up in front of a wall in Dawes Hill Park by the squadron commander, the Hon. Fred Cripps, later Lord Parmoor. Anyone who did not wish to volunteer for overseas service was asked to rein their horse back two lengths: none could do so against the wall and Cripps reported 100 per cent had volunteered. Only two withdrew subsequently.[21] In the 1/1st Bucks Battalion, some 240 men declined to volunteer for varying reasons, many being married and older men, or both. They were labelled 'Never Dies' by the commanding officer, stripped of equipment and sent back to form the nucleus of the 2/1st Bucks Battalion.

Subsequently they virtually all went overseas with the 2/1st Bucks but it left lasting antipathy between the battalions.[22]

Nonetheless, the Territorials – the Buckinghamshire Battalions of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and the Royal Bucks Hussars – did represent that loyalty to locality so often marked among those who served. The Territorial Force was expanded so that the 'first line' was supplemented by a 'second line', and then a 'third line', designated respectively the 1/1st, 2/1st and 3/1st Bucks Battalions, and the 1/1st, 2/1st and 3/1st Royal Bucks Hussars. The 1/1st Bucks Battalion was on the Western Front from March 1915 to November 1917 and then in Italy, taking a prominent part in the capture of Pozières on the Somme between 20 and 23 July 1916. Material for the 1/1st Bucks includes company order books and trench logs.[23] It was one of the seven representative army units awarded a special gold medal by the King of Italy in March 1920.[24] The 2/1st Bucks Battalion served on the Western Front from May 1916 to February 1918, and was the battalion alongside the Australians in the attack at Fromelles on 23 July 1916, some bodies from which were recovered and reburied in a new cemetery in 2010.[25] The 3/1st Bucks Battalion did not go overseas.

The 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars went to Egypt in April 1915, serving in a dismounted attack on Chocolate Hill at Gallipoli on August 1915, subsequently serving in a mounted role against the Senussi in the Western Desert. It then served against the Turks in Palestine, leading one of the last great cavalry charges at El Mughar on 13 November 1917. Returning to France the regiment was on the SS *Leasowe Castle* when it was torpedoed in May 1918, subsequently serving as a machine gun battalion on the Western Front.[26] The 2/1st and 3/1st Royal Bucks Hussars did not go overseas. Ironically, there is far more material for these reserve regiments than for those in the first line.[27]

There had been no really large-scale visible military presence in Britain in a century and now servicemen were everywhere to be seen, something of a shock in what remained a generally parochial society in 1914. Apart from Bucks servicemen there were also those from outside, not least the 21st Division of Kitchener's New Army, mostly units from Yorkshire, Northumberland and Durham, initially billeted around Aylesbury and Tring, and then at Halton Camp from May until July 1915. The divisional artillery was located at High Wycombe, which remained a reserve artillery training camp. There was a major outbreak of meningitis at Halton in the autumn of 1914 and troops had to be sent back to billets due to the appalling weather conditions at 'Halton-in-the-Mud'. Local studies at both Ryburgh and King's Lynn in Norfolk have revealed something of the impact of the presence respectively of the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars over the winter of 1914–15 and the 2/1st Royal Bucks Hussars over the winter of 1915–16, including some marriages.[28] There is a great deal of scope for more study of the impact of the 21st Division in the county.

A visible legacy is the practice trenches that have been reconstructed within RAF Halton and the further examples in Whiteleaf Woods, and those dug by the Grenadier Guards and Royal Engineers at Pullingshill Wood outside Marlow. Another probable site has been identified between Halton and Buckland Wharf.[29] The Royal Flying Corps took over Halton in 1916 while Denham airfield was opened for the RFC in September 1917.

There were also a number of military hospitals established in the county. Chequers was opened in 1914 by Sir Arthur and Lady Lee, initially for wounded Belgian soldiers, while Cliveden was opened for Canadians by Waldorf Astor MP as the Duchess of Connaught's Red Cross Hospital (later Canadian No 15 General Hospital). The Langley Park Relief Hospital was opened by Lady Harvey for convalescent officers and there was also the Abbey Auxiliary Hospital at Tickford Abbey, Newport Pagnell. Other premises were also utilised including both Queens Park School and a building at Rivets in Aylesbury; the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) Hospital in the County High School for Girls at High Wycombe; the Slough VAD Hospital at St Bernard's School; and Winslow VAD Hospital in the Elms.[30] The letters of Lady Lee in the possession of the Chequers Trust are informative with regard to the patients at Chequers, but information on the other county hospitals is limited. The archives of the Order of St John, for example, have relatively little information, although it is interesting that original offers from the owners of the Cedars at Denham and Tyringham House were withdrawn subsequently, while Chalfont Park was used only briefly.[31] Work is underway in the archives of Lady Verney High

School at Wycombe, but the local press appears to be the most likely source for the additional information needed on wartime hospitals such as those at Bulstrode Park, Dorton, and Stoke Court. The archives of the Red Cross, however, are a ready source of information on those who worked as nursing or domestic staff in Bucks hospitals.[32]

Equally, there is scope for work on German prisoners of war in the county. It is often suggested that German prisoners helped build the water tower at Coleshill. There were certainly POW Working Camps at Westbury House (Newport Pagnell), Slough, Turvey and Waddesdon with POW Agricultural Depots at Denham Lodge and Langley Park and Stoke Green.[33] POWs worked for the 125th Canadian Forestry Corps at Woburn in 1917–18, and also worked at Halton. Civilian internees were held in the Aylesbury Inebriates Reformatory.[34] The treatment of foreign nationals can also be traced to some extent in the local press. Nancy Astor was the first woman to take her seat in the House of Commons but the first woman actually elected was Countess Constance Markiewicz (née Gore-Booth), confined in Aylesbury Prison after her part in the Easter Rising in Dublin together with five other members of *Cumann na mBan* ('Irishwomen's Council'). Aylesbury Prison was also to house Alice Wheeldon, the suffragette and pacifist convicted in March 1917 of a bizarre supposed plot to poison the prime minister, David Lloyd George.

In terms of another 'alien' presence, there were also the Belgian refugees who came into the county in 1914, the Belgian Refugee County Committee being formed as well as local relief committees to deal with the problem. There was a Belgian Refugee Colony at Olney and Stony Stratford and villages such as Beachampton, Bow Brickhill, Hanslope, Milton Keynes and Tingewick in the north of the county all took in Belgians. So, too, did southern locations such as Amersham, Beaconsfield, High Wycombe, and Marlow. Records at county level do not appear to have survived, meaning that the local press will be the most likely source for information. The county committee's overall report for 1914–19, however, is available.[35]

In April 1918 there was a complaint by the county's Women's Agricultural Committee, subsequently taken up by Lord Lincolnshire, that accommodation for British workers in Slough and surrounding villages had been taken up by, and tenants ejected in favour of 'alien invaders from London' prepared to pay more.[36] Essentially, these were those fleeing from the air raids by Gotha aircraft, which had begun a far more sustained and effective campaign compared to the earlier desultory Zeppelin raids. Once more, this would again be worth further investigation. In passing, for rather obvious reasons, just as the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha became the House of Windsor, so the Gotha Iron Works at Slough became the Windsor Works. Equally, the *King of Prussia* public house in London Road, High Wycombe had become the *King George V* in 1914.

In passing, there is one particular ethnic group that has a particular role in the story of Bucks at war. Even before the war, the influx of the Rothschilds and other Jewish families into the officer corps of the Royal Bucks Hussars had resulted in the regiment's unofficial nickname of the 'Flying Foreskins'. Anxious to demonstrate the loyalty of Anglo-Jewry in 1914, a recruiting office was established at the New Court headquarters of the Rothschild bank in London's St Swithin's Lane. As a result, a large number of Jewish recruits passed into the Royal Bucks Hussars and the Bucks Battalions.[37] In the case of those entering the Royal Bucks Hussars, many found themselves in Palestine. Evelyn de Rothschild was mortally wounded at El Mughar.

The Impact of War on Society

Of course, not all men went into the services. Roughly half the men of military age did not enlist, and roughly half of those who did serve spent half of the war as civilians.[38] A war waged on such a scale required that the enemy be out-produced as well as outfought, and that all the resources of the state be brought to bear.

Yet, for all the novel intrusions into peoples' ordinary lives entailed, localism mitigated national policy directives. Very good examples are the military service tribunals established in 1916 to adjudicate on claims for exemption from conscription. Tribunals have had a bad press, perceived to have been unduly influenced by military demands, and hostile to claims for exemption on the grounds of conscience. In fact, across the country as a whole only 16,500 claims for exemption were made on the basis of conscience when medical boards exempted over a million men in the last twelve

months of the war and, by 1918, there were also 2.5 million men exempted by reason of occupation.[39] In passing it should be noted that the position of the Quakers was well understood and accepted, Jordans playing a significant part in training the Friends Ambulance Unit.

Tribunals varied enormously in attitudes, the percentage of claims dismissed across the 22 Bucks tribunals between January and April 1917, for example, ranging from 3.5 per cent at Wycombe to 45 per cent at Marlow.[40] It has been suggested that all tribunals were mindful of local needs in terms of economic vitality.[41] As few papers have survived beyond Amersham, Eton and Newport Pagnell,[42] the local press is again the best source albeit that it must be recognized that the press tended to report what it regarded as the more interesting or controversial cases. One recent study has shown what can be achieved.[43]

As the papers for Northamptonshire have survived, it is known that tribunals there, unfairly or otherwise, considered that the London and North Western Railway Carriage Works at Wolverton was a haven for 'shirkers' and 'skulkers'.[44] Railways, however, were an important part of the war effort and much was made in Wolverton of the completion of an Ambulance Train in March 1916: public viewings were held for war funds.[45] Generally there was a great deal of countywide activity in raising money for war charities, war bonds, refugees and so on. At county level there was the Bucks County Relief Committee dealing with relief issues,[46] while examples of local efforts are the Marlow National War Relief Committee,[47] the Quainton General War Committee,[48] the Chicheley War Working Party, and the Castlethorpe Soldiers' and Sailors' Comforts Committee. The 27 men then serving from Tyringham all received a Christmas parcel in December 1915 containing a shirt, socks, muffler, pipe, tobacco, cigarettes, chocolate and a plum pudding.[49] There were many fund-raising events throughout the war such as the concert at Emberton on the evening of Boxing Day 1914, which included a play, 'Lancelot Shirker Makes Up His Mind', in which a shirker saw the light and became a perfect knight.[50]

The Soldiers, Sailors and Airmens' Families Association (SSAFA) or the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association (SSFA) as it was then, have recently begun putting their county records on line. In 1914 a total of £3,155.5s.3d was raised in the county through such functions as the Mursley Bazaar, Haddenham Brass Band Parade, and Hartwell Fete; collections were made by such groups as the Wolverton Carriage Works War Relief Fund, the Datchet War Relief Committee, the Stewkley Workmen's' Social Club; and offertories as at Weston Turville Church. A total of £2,099.11s.6d was paid out to 752 wives, 1,761 children and 607 other dependents.[51] The War Office was exceptionally slow to organize properly the payment of separation allowances and SSFA stepped into the breach.

While Bucks was obviously not heavily industrialised, the pre-war Bucks Battalion had been reliant for recruits on chair-makers from Wycombe, printers from Aylesbury, and the LNWR Carriage Works. During the war, Wycombe furniture makers could readily turn to war work. Firms like William Birch, H.S. Broom, Dexter & Co and G.C. Hugo all turned out munitions, while E. Gomme Ltd, Tyzack, and William Bartlett & Son made aircraft parts. In late 1917 work also began on a new factory, Wycombe Aircraft Constructors Ltd, but it was not completed by the time of the armistice. The Integral Propeller Company was also set up in Wycombe.[52] Wethereds brewery at Marlow also turned to munitions. In Aylesbury Putnams produced tents for the army. At Olney the boot and shoe manufacturer, Messrs Hinde & Mann, were turning out boots for the Russian and Italian armies, something that saved many of their key personnel from being conscripted after 1916.[53] The Slough Trading Estate began in June 1918 as the War Office Motor Repair Department, the siting of which on prime agricultural land was controversial.[54]

Unfortunately, local records for wartime industry are limited beyond minutes for Birch, the Chesham Brewery Company, Whitbread's Brewery and the builders, Webster and Cannon.[55] There are records, however, for the Chesham and District United Trades and Labour Council, and the Wolverton Co-operative Society.[56] Hazell, Watson and Viney also produced a wartime magazine relating to its employees serving in the armed forces, *With the Colours*.[57] National records may well prove a more fruitful source for local war work and labour issues but, again unfortunately, they are not catalogued in great detail.[58] There are many photographs of women munition workers, notably at High Wycombe, in the Centre for Bucks Studies

and the collection of High Wycombe Museum, while the Imperial War Museum has some photographs of female workers at the condensed milk plant of Thew, Hooker & Gilbey Ltd in Chandos Road, Buckingham.[59]

War work was not necessarily industrial. War Hospital Supply Depots and War Work Depots were essentially women sewing. There were no less than 73 War Hospital Supply Depots in the county.[60] The number of War Work Depots is unknown. In the case of the Whitchurch War Work Depot, by 1918 it had produced 8,579 different articles including mittens, mufflers, cardigans, socks, shorts, spine pads, pyjamas, surgical slippers, bed socks, bed jackets, helpless case jackets, and operation stockings.[61] A solitary record survives in which Mrs Louisa Nottage of the Eton War Hospital Depot was given the right to wear the badge of Queen Mary's Needlework Guild.[62]

Agricultural production was equally vital, as suggested by the constant efforts of the County War Agricultural Executive Committee to exhort farmers to increase production. While the German submarine threat was not as great as during the Second World War, rationing was introduced for sugar in December 1917 and for meats and fats in February 1918. There is material on rationing in Burnham and Taplow.[63] The records of the County War Agricultural Committee survive,[64] as well as those of the Winslow War Agricultural Committee, the Aylesbury and District Farmers' Association, the Princes Risborough Local Agricultural Association, and the Royal South Bucks Agricultural Association.[65] It is possible, therefore, to undertake a very full examination of wartime agriculture.

In effect, the Corn Production Act in 1917 represented quasi-land nationalisation with a compulsory plough policy: nationwide an additional 2.1 million acres came under cultivation. Some papers relating to compulsory ploughing are available for Akeley and Stony Stratford.[66] The war also saw the beginnings of mechanisation with the importation of American tractors. There was one publicised experiment in motor ploughing by night on Chisholm's Farm at Newport Pagnell in March 1917 using acetylene headlights: 42 acres were ploughed in five days and three nights, compared with 12 days by tractor in normal hours, and 56 days by horse.[67] In any case, the majority of horses had been requisitioned for the army in 1914. It was not coincidental that the bill drafted at the end of 1917, by which Sir Arthur Lee gifted the Chequers estate as the prime minister's residence, endowed it to be maintained with a model experimental farm to undertake innovatory agricultural practice. Another innovatory establishment contributing to the war effort was Whin's Vegetable Drug Plant Farm and Maud Grieve's School of Medicinal Herb Growing at Chalfont St Peter.[68] John and Paul Nash executed some of their wartime paintings in one of the herb-drying sheds at Chalfont St Peter.

What has so far been left unsaid is that much of the expansion of war work, much of the agricultural work, and the work connected to war charities, was the result of women coming into the work force. Prior to the war, it was unusual even for working class women to work once they married and the most common employment for women was domestic service. Relatively few women were employed on the land and many of them migrated to better paid industrial jobs in 1914 and 1915. As a result, Women's War Agricultural Committees were established to draw up voluntary registers but results were limited and farmers remained unconvinced that women could take on heavy agricultural work. In March 1917 the Women's Land Army and the Women's Forestry Corps both emerged to encourage more women into agriculture. Overall, only about 184,000 women were employed in agriculture by 1918. Most of the local surviving material relates to women such as Florence Fremantle, who worked for the WLA elsewhere rather than in Bucks. Arguably, a more lasting result of the emphasis on women's role in food production was the growth of Women's Institutes: the first was established in September 1915 and there were over 1,200 by 1918. The first in Bucks was that formed at Ivinghoe in 1917.

It is not the case that the female labour force in industry immediately expanded since women were worse hit then men by the initial increase in unemployment in 1914, and positive recruitment of women came only after the establishment of the Ministry of Munitions in May 1915. The rise in female employment was also less than sometimes claimed since there was also a shift within female employment patterns, particularly from domestic service, the wartime increase generally being calculated at 1.4 million.[69] Many of those entering wartime employment were married women returning to work. There is a partic-

ular image of the 'munitionettes' but the largest increases were in transport, commerce, administration and clerical work, and education. Indeed, half of the women brought into employment to substitute for men were employed in commerce. Wartime propaganda also exaggerated the extent of substitution, which was resisted by employers and unions alike, and it was not substitution *per se* but dilution, which meant a reorganisation of working practices so that unskilled men as well as women could perform more tasks. Incidentally, tribunals were particularly loath to conscript either bakers or butchers. In part, this was because bakers and butchers often fell under the potential exemption for 'sole proprietors' but it was also the case that bakers worked in the early hours, and often half-stripped, while butchers invariably carried out their own slaughtering. Consequently, they were not seen as trades in which women could be employed. War work, too, may have been more liberating for the minority of middle class women who entered employment for the first time than married working class women returning to employment: neither might necessarily have regarded such employment as permanent. Women's war work did not mean equality of pay and the strike of women workers of McCorquodales, the printers, at Wolverton in May 1915 has attracted some attention, as reflected on the 'Great War Remembered' website maintained by the Milton Keynes Living Archive.[70] The general assumption in 1918 was that women would return to domesticity.

A more traditional role was that of nursing, with pre-war organisations such as the VADs, Territorial Force Nursing Service (TFNS), First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY), and Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) all expanding. Excluding the 74,000 VADs, the number of military nurses rose from 2,600 to over 18,000. Those women who entered the armed services during the war also performed what might be regarded as traditional roles, the Women's Legion receiving official recognition in February 1916 and supplying 6,000 cooks and waitresses on home service. The principle was extended to similar service and clerical duties overseas through the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), later Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC) in March 1917. It numbered 41,000 women by 1918. The Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) and Women's Royal Auxiliary Air Force (WRAAF) were both formed in 1918.

Historians have generally overlooked the vital contribution of women in the more traditional role of keeping home fires burning and raising children in the absence of fathers, dealing with deprivation from rising prices and shortages of foodstuffs, dealing with separation, and with the possibility and all-too-often reality of untimely widowhood. There remains a lively debate as to whether the war actually postponed rather than accelerated the achievement of the franchise by some women in 1918, and how far the role and status of women were actually changed by the experience of war.

Family life was clearly disrupted and it was children on which this impacted most. About 75 per cent of children left school at the age of 14 before the war, and many below this age were customarily employed on the land on a seasonal basis during school holidays, or before and after school hours. Farmers took the lead in requesting that by-laws on child labour be relaxed, and government and local authorities soon acquiesced. By 1917 an estimated 600,000 children had left school early to take up wartime employment.[71] For those who did remain in the classroom, the syllabus took on an increasingly militaristic hue with an emphasis on celebrations such as Empire Day and Trafalgar Day. Moreover, as school log books invariably demonstrate, children were pressed into useful war-related activity such as war savings campaigns, knitting garments, vegetable growing, and the organised collection of acorns, blackberries and, in 1917, horse chestnuts. The latter was an attempt to replace timber and maize for the production of acetone, the solvent used in the manufacture of cordite. Thus, an entry in school logbook for Nash on 9 November 1917 records 'Letter of thanks received from the Director of Propellant Supplies for chestnuts gathered for the making of munitions.' The experiment was not successful and tons of conkers simply rotted away unused. A regular annual activity for school children was the collection of eggs for wounded servicemen. Between May and August 1915, for example, schoolchildren at Hanslope collected 3,681 eggs with certificates handed out to those who collected most. Invariably, the children wrote their names on the shells and often received letters of thanks in return. This was the case in Hanslope but also at Chicheley in July 1916 and Great Linford in September 1917.

At Chicheley in December 1917 the children also donated their sweet money for the purchase of eggs for servicemen.[72]

Those deemed too old or physically unfit for active military service could also play a role in the Volunteer Training Corps (VTC) and the Special Constabulary.[73] There was a genuine fear of German invasion of East Anglia in the autumn of 1914 and Lord Desborough from Taplow Court was one of the prime movers in establishing the VTC. There were local emergency committees and elaborate plans drawn up for local defence, including designating areas such as Hanslope Park and Whaddon Park for livestock evacuated from eastern counties, and what were called concentration camps for civilian evacuees to be manned by clergymen and Girl Guides in places like Bury Field at Newport Pagnell and Woughton Green.[74] Together with Lord Lincolnshire, Desborough oversaw the passage of new legislation in 1916 to regulate the VTC. Initially, three battalions were formed – the 1st (Southern), 2nd (Mid) and 3rd (Northern) but a 4th was carved out from the 1st in April 1915, only to be absorbed back into the 1st Battalion in 1918. In July 1918, the three battalions were re-designated as the 3rd, 4th and 5th Volunteer Battalions, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

The VTC was subjected to some ridicule. The 'GR' armband worn prior to the distribution of uniforms to the VTC led to nicknames such as 'Genuine Relics' and 'Gorgeous Wrecks'. The military authorities tended to suggest the VTC hid men from army service but they did perform useful tasks in static guards, helping with the harvest, manning anti-aircraft defences and so on. There is an astonishing amount of material on the VTC in the county, notably for the 2nd (Mid Bucks) Battalion.[75]

There are many more aspects of wartime experience that could be illuminated by further research in the local press, including other wartime restrictions such as those on alcohol, welfare issues, the incidence of crime, the impact of propaganda, and leisure. In some cases national archives will also be significant sources as, for example, in the case

FIGURE 2 The Aylesbury Presentation Tank being installed in Kingsbury Square, 24 March 1920 (photo: Centre for Bucks Studies)

of the local operation of the National War Aims Committee, established in 1917.[76]

Legacies

The Great War then had an impact throughout society and, inevitably, there were many legacies though, as in the case of the status of women, historians are now much more wary than they were 20 or 30 years ago in viewing the war as a major catalyst of change and as a moment marking discontinuity between the pre-war and post-war worlds. The most obvious legacy is post-war commemoration, although it was actually the South African War of 1899–1902 that marked the first large-scale memorialisation of the fallen. Non-repatriation of the dead was a decision consciously taken in March 1915 in the belief that there should be equality in sacrifice. As it happens, there are 18 original battlefield crosses that survive in Bucks, 17 of them in churches and one in Viney House in Aylesbury. Most are for officers and there were some prominent war casualties including Evelyn de Rothschild from Ascot House at Wing, mortally wounded in the charge at El Mughar; Lord Rosebery's son from Mentmore, Neil Primrose, killed in a second charge two days later; Lord Desborough's sons, Julian and Billy Grenfell, and their cousins, Rivvy and Francis Grenfell; the Lord Lieutenant's son, Viscount Wendover, to whom there is a memorial window in All Saints' at High Wycombe; Halford Fremantle, the son of Lord Cottesloe from Swanbourne; and the last heir to Stowe, the Master of Kinloss.

It was Arthur Mee who popularised the phrase, 'thankful villages' for communities to which every man who enlisted returned. Of the 50 or so identified in England and Wales there is just one in Bucks: Stoke Hammond. For the remaining communities, it was a matter of commemoration. There is much of interest to discover in terms of the choices that were made as to whether to put up just a memorial or to provide some form of community benefit such as a hall or a hospital. There are Memorial Halls at Old Bradwell and Hedgerley, the War Memorial Hospital at Wycombe, and there was a Memorial Cottage at Princes Risborough originally intended for use by the district nurse. If a memorial was chosen, then there is the question of the form it took and the names that were included or otherwise. Records for War Memorial Committees often survive as in the case of Amersham, Burnham, Chalfont St Peter, and Simpson.[77] Controversies certainly arose as in Stewkley, where the vicar boycotted the dedication of the memorial, to the form of which he objected.[78] As elsewhere, the 'peace day' celebrations in July 1919 were marred by protests by ex-servicemen at High Wycombe, in this case by the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers (NFDDSS), one of a number of radical veterans' groups that emerged towards the end of the war. Government concessions on pensions in August 1919 nullified unrest, with most groups disappearing or being absorbed into the British Legion in 1921.

Deaths affected what are characterised as circles of mourning: the immediate families of those killed, more distant relatives, friends and wider communities. As well as widows, orphans, and other dependants, there were those disabled by the war both physically and psychologically. Another legacy that was relatively common were war trophies offloaded by the War Office. At least 262 presentation tanks were awarded to towns such as Aylesbury and High Wycombe that had been particularly successful in selling war bonds or war savings certificates. Most went for scrap in the Second World War but the Aylesbury tank in Kingsbury Square blew up when being dismantled in June 1929 to make way for the new bus station.

It has not been possible to address more than a few aspects of the impact of the Great War on Bucks. Hopefully, however, enough has been said to indicate the amount of invaluable work that can still be undertaken at local level. For many, even the Second World War is a distant world but the centenary of the Great War represents a unique opportunity in terms of all the local projects that have already emerged and will still emerge over the next few years. They can make a really substantial historical contribution of lasting value.

Notes

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12. Figures from http://buckinghamshireremembers.org.uk/clint_search.htm For Jutland, see also the Royal Naval Museum's Jutland Interactive Map project at https://nmrn.nautoguide.com/app/nmrn/nmrn/!PNMRN
13. Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies (hereafter CBS), TA/1/66.
14. http://buckinghamshireremembers.org.uk/
15. CBS R-E 62.
16. http://www.mkheritage.co.uk/mkha/mkha/projects/jt/letters/
17. CBS, TA/6/11-14.
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22. Ian F.W. Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', in Ian F. W. Beckett and Keith Simpson (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 127–164, at pp. 149–50.
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65. CBS, AR 90/1984; D-X 772; D-X 821; and D 154.
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