

## TWELVE & SIXPENCE

### Life On The Home Front During The First World War

Susanne Crosby Project Manager Sound Architect

The First World War years: 1914 to 1918 saw a great many changes in the world, and the children from year 5 in Manor Primary School, Uckfield, undertook a special project to find out what life was like for people in Britain while so many men were away at War.

How did they live? What did they eat? What did they do? That's what they wanted to know. These 9 and 10 year olds immersed themselves in a world without mobile phones, without the internet, without electricity even, where food, money and even warmth was scarce, where teachers were strict and children often had to work after school just to help the family stay alive. They walked in the footsteps of those people, imagining their hardships, their joys, their woes. Only 100 years ago, but a million miles from today: a today that those people helped ensure for us all. They endured hardships and struggled to help the Country and the people in it thrive. The children learned respect for those brave women, men and children who fought their own war, here on the Home Front.

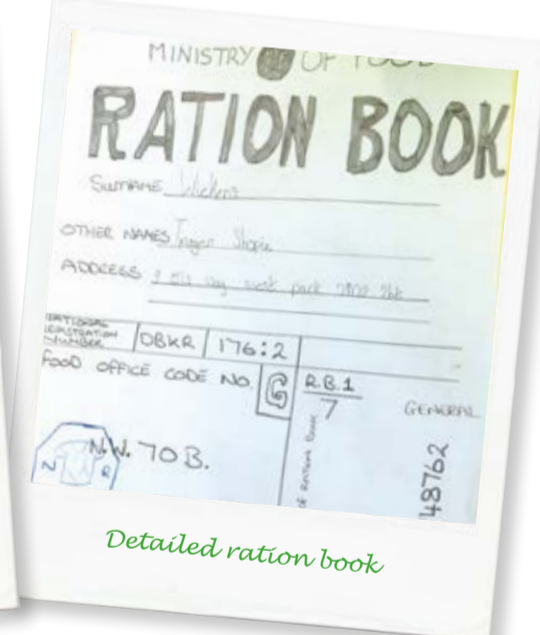
"12' 6d. = £26.91 in today's money. Money was short, and so was food. Women worked long and hard for little and tried to survive on as little food as possible." Tillie



Model of a munitions factory with women workers



Model of a Post Office, staffed by women



Detailed ration book

Above: Children's artwork, typical food for the family 100 years ago - if they were lucky  
Below right: basket of First World War rations

## 100 YEARS AGO

By the time Britain entered the War in August 1914, there were already food shortages, due largely to reliance on imports. Food Control Committees and Food Vigilance Committees, National Kitchens, "Win the War" Cookery Book published in 1917, and even "Milk for Tommy's Tea Fund" and "Eat Less Bread" campaigns: all contributed to make food at the forefront of everything. What had previously been a woman's private and domestic matter now became a very public one. Rationing was introduced in 1918 as a way to end the unfairness of food distribution and the massive shop queues for food. Growing your own food not only made sense, but was encouraged as one of the ways to win the War.

Separation Allowance was paid to all married soldiers, their wives and children, providing the wife could show they were of good character. In March 1915 this allowance was raised to twelve shillings and sixpence; £26.91 in today's money. Scarcity caused price increases, and in 1917 food was double the price it had been in 1914. The only way they could survive this long War was by being incredibly careful with money and with food, and growing some of their own.

The children's research gave them a unique insight into this world. This is a collection of what some of these 60 children discovered on their journey into the past, and we honour the lives of all those who lived at that time, who helped to create our world today.



A list of foods that were rationed during WW1:  
Milk,  
Margarin,  
Butter,  
Bread,  
Meat,  
Sugar,  
Flour.  
Charlie Loenos

# ON THE HOME FRONT

Before the War, women were marginalised in public life. They were only allowed to do certain occupations and usually prevented from working if they were married. Their role was home and family. The Suffragette Movement had begun much earlier, campaigning for political equality; a campaign that started peacefully but became over time increasingly violent. Women were very much seen as having to be watched and cared for; and the lower classes were seen as needing guidance from those above. It was a very structured society with defined roles, but with the gaps left by so many men signing up and going to War and later conscripted, the gaps had to be filled by someone, and there were only women left. There were also jobs created by the War that needed doing such as munitions. An estimated one million women entered the British workforce between 1914 and 1918 and worked in many different areas: from transport to agriculture; from banking to the civil service. Whether this was seen as a necessity to provide for their families or an opportunity for greater independence, it was a huge change for British home lives.



## WOMEN

### Jobs

The First World War provided the first chance for women to take on traditional male jobs. Before the War if women worked it was as servants and cleaners. Once a woman got married she had to give up work and be a housewife. The role was to look after the children and clean the house.

During the War women had to take over the men's jobs. Many inexperienced women took over jobs such as factory and farming. Money was low so many house wives had to work. Farm jobs involved milking cows, harvesting crops and food production, and all areas of the farm. As the war continued women had harder jobs as more men went to war, but didn't earn the same amount as men.

Some women worked in the textile industry but as the war went on they had to do different jobs. They had to go in factories making shells and bombs. Some became police officers and their main duties were to control the women around factories and public places, such as pubs and railway stations. Women were given the opportunity to become bus drivers and ticket collectors. They also work on the railway as porters and carriage cleaners. Women found it hard to find people to look after their children so everybody helped look after them such as parents, brothers, sisters and friends. It was very dangerous working in the shell filling factories. There were several explosions in which a lot of women were killed. *Tillie, Dominika, AJ and Imogen*

### Women in Service

In 1914 the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was formed. The women's Royal Naval Service was formed in 1917, and the Women's Royal Air Force was formed in 1918. It became very hard to buy food and in 1918 rationing was brought into equal the food out. This was done by everyone being issued a Rationing Book with so many tickets in it. *Imogen*

Left: Children's letter  
Below: Photo shows Rosemary Keen's aunt: Ethel Corden and Arthur Crabb who were engaged to be married. Ethel kept all his cards sent to her from the Front. Arthur died during the War; Ethel never married.

*Please keep your head down and your shoes warm. We miss you! Look after yourself properly. We hope you enjoy the things that we sent you. Write back soon. Lots of love, Margaret xxx*

Dear Ethel - hope you are feeling a much better than the new year. You must be a real old - to do a turkey dinner for a crowd of 100 people. Please write back soon. Love, Miss C

CARTE POSTAL  
1/1/16  
Flanders  
Miss C



Model of a box of goodies sent from home to the Front

## MEN

Even after so many men went away to fight, there were still plenty of jobs that men needed to do on the home front if they didn't or couldn't enlist to fight. From shovelling coal to patrolling the streets, men had all kinds of jobs during World War One. Some men were too old or too young to go to war. Some failed the medical test, or wore glasses, and others were in "reserved occupations". This meant they did jobs that were vital to the Country such as driving trains and buses, working in the coal mines, shipyards and munitions factories. Some men worked as farmers who needed to grow food for the troops and civilians. Other men guarded the coast in case of an enemy invasion. *Jack W*



### Conscientious Objectors

Some men refused and they were called Conscientious Objectors. They would have been called a coward. People would have given them a white feather. This was given to make the man feel embarrassed and bad for not fighting with the other men. They formed a group which protested about not going to war. Some men who were too ill for war were accidentally given white feathers. Over 16,000 refused to fight.

Tom Attlee went to jail because he refused to go to war. He didn't want to fight because his Christian religion wouldn't allow him to fight. He ended up going to prison for his belief. These men had to put up with abuse and insults from members of the public. *Paris and Peter*



Photos courtesy Rosemary Keen, Private Corden's niece

Above: Private James Corden from Uckfield. The Town now has his medals, thanks to Councillor Donna French



## CHILDREN

Boys and girls helped with the war effort by harvesting food for the soldiers. Boys helped by digging, weeding and harvesting and planting seeds so they grow. The girls helped by looking after the young ones and cleaning the house. Children went to pick berries and lots of families grew vegetables so they had to do lots of work and eat lots of the same things. *Ben*

"Dear Daddy, Mum's trying her best to look after us both but she is turning a bit harsh." *Becky*



School during the War



# SUFFRAGETTES



This famous picture of Emmeline Pankhurst is made up of much smaller photos of women, including this pupil's great grandmother

The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was founded by Emmeline Pankhurst. After years of peaceful methods of campaigning failed to bring any results, the movement became more violent, including women handcuffing themselves to railings and breaking shop windows. They even chained themselves outside Buckingham Palace. Some went to prison and even went on hunger strike and were force fed. Emily Wilding-Davison threw herself under the King's horse on Derby Day and died days later from her injuries.

During the War, the Suffragette's decided to put King and Country first and paused in their actions to support the War effort and the Home Front. After the War the Government gave married women over 30 the right to vote. Now women have the same voting rights as men. "It is more fair now. The Suffragettes helped to make the Government give us our vote and a fair point. Sadly there are still some places where women do not have the right to vote but in our Country we had the Suffragettes." Ella, April, Jessica, Amelia, Millajean

# FOOD

"Dear Daddy, I am really hungry. The only days I get 3 meals a day are Saturdays and Sundays. The meals are really small though. Harry is going to war now. He is 19 and he doesn't want to be called a coward... I hope you reply to be soon. You are always the hero." Heidi



Rationing is a way of sharing food fairly when there is not enough for everyone.

In 1918 the Government told the Country to ration. Each person had special rationing cards. There was a shortage of food because the Germans attacked our food supply with U boats, so our food from other countries often did not arrive in the UK.

The first thing to be rationed was sugar. After that it was meat. Then: flour and bread, butter, margarine and milk. There were even stories of butchers selling dead cats! The bread ration including cakes, puddings and normal bread. The meat included bacon, ham, sausages, rabbit and tinned meat.

School dinners were introduced in the War to make sure that children would not go hungry; many children were missing school to queue for food. Mothers were working and also queueing for food. Toad in the hole is a typical school dinner because it was a filling meal and it was a cheap dinner. Pudding could be jam roly poly. William G, Seb and Michael

Above and below: children's artwork - models of farming and rural life during the War

# GROW YOUR OWN

We used three different ways of growing things from scraps of food. This is what the World War One families would have done with their left over vegetables. The three types are spring onions grown from a cutting, potatoes from a cut bit of potato: a tuber, and mint from a runner. Millajean



## Why children gathered conkers during WW1

During the First World War, Britain was faced with shortages to various chemicals and components that were useful in making ammunition. In order to keep the army supplied solutions were looked into.

Research showed that conkers contained a key chemical called acetone which could be used to make explosives. The Ministry of Munitions, who were in charge of all ammunition production, ordered the collection of conkers across the country, to help make ammunition. School headmasters were urgently directed to send out pupils during the school day to collect as many conkers as they could find. Huge amounts of conkers were collected across the country, so much so that there were reports of sacks of conkers left rotting on station platforms because there were not enough trains to transport them all.

The schools were paid 7 shillings and 6 pence for each hundredweight of conkers collected but the reason why the children were collecting them was kept secret.

It was said this was for fear that the Germans would discover this method of acetone production. Production continued until July 1918.

## Why children gathered blackberries during WW1

In 1918 rationing was introduced to Britain. A government committee was set up to look at the ways of using any available natural resources. Throughout the country, rural schools were instructed to 'employ their children in gathering blackberries during school hours' for the Government jam making scheme.

The fruit was packed into specially provided baskets of a regulation size and sent immediately by train to special factories where it was made into blackberry and apple jam for soldiers. Steve and Vicky Darvill, Volunteers



Learning what 12 shillings and 6 pence could actually buy

## RECIPE: Trench Cake

Trench cake was made by families at home and was sent to soldiers fighting on the front line.

- Ingredients:**  
 225g plain flour  
 110g margarine  
 75g currants  
 2 teaspoons cocoa  
 ½ teaspoon baking soda  
 75g brown sugar  
 1 teaspoon vinegar  
 pinch of nutmeg  
 ½ teaspoon ground ginger  
 ¾ pint milk

**Method**  
 Preheat oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Grease and line a medium round cake tin. Rub the margarine into the flour. Add the other dry ingredients and mix well. Add the soda to the vinegar and milk, and then quickly add to the dry ingredients. Beat well and then turn into the tin. Bake for 1 - 2 hours or until a skewer put through the middle comes out clean.



Making trench cake in class

Left: children offering trench cake to the public who came to "World War One Day" at the Redoubt

# OPEN DAY AT SCHOOL

We invited our parents and family to see the work we have done on the project: writing, artwork, research, and science: growing food. We talked to everyone about all our work, about the Home Front, about money, women, men, children and families at home and what life was like. People brought in memorabilia from family, which was amazing.

"I really enjoyed the variety of work on the display. The children have put considerable time and effort into it and have clearly enjoyed many positive experiences. Congratulations - fantastic work!" P. Ediss



Results of family research: soldier's card and pay book



Members of the public brought First World War medals to the Redoubt

First World War artefacts at the Redoubt



Results of family research, First World War medals in the family



Children showing their artwork essays at the Community Open Day



We held a public event at the Redoubt Military Museum and Fortress in April. Some of our work was on display and we also brought trench cake and gave it to people. Most people really liked it, which was so nice to see.

# WORLD WAR ONE DAY AT REDOUBT



"We explored the museum and saw some amazing things... I found out that lots of people change because of the wars, as they lost friends, families, homes, basically the happy memories had disappeared from them. I would like to find out more about the feelings of the people who experience World War One." Becky

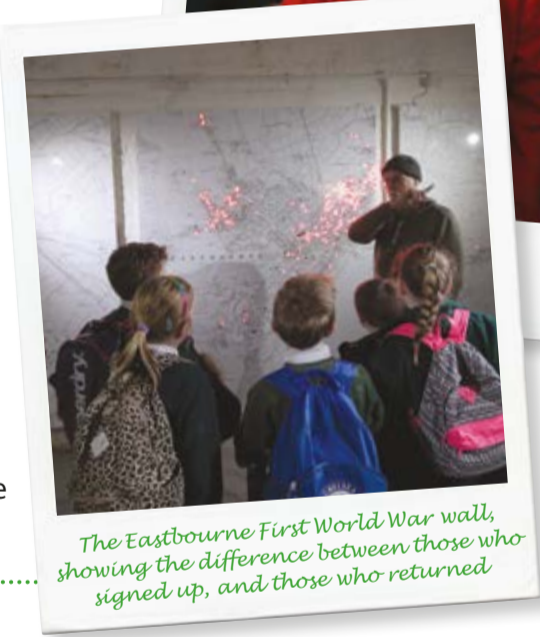


Above: children trying on uniforms at the Redoubt and looking at the replica trench

"I enjoyed going into the trenches whilst there were sounds, because it made you think about the sounds and actually makes you picture and do what they may have done." Ben W

# TRIPS

Redoubt Military Museum & Fortress, Eastbourne  
Imperial War Museum In London



The Eastbourne First World War wall, showing the difference between those who signed up, and those who returned

"I found out that when soldiers had to bring dead or wounded bodies through knee high mud they have to go back to their trenches and do it again and again. Also I learnt that they had to sleep in the trenches... in the trenches it felt so real. It was very strange to us but it must have been like a new but horrid home to the soldiers." Katie

"We saw shadows, Isla and my faces suddenly changed. There were noises in the walls!" Fleur

"War is a threat, which brings hate to everyone." Ben



"I found out that Germany didn't win World War One, England and France did. Although we did win the War, thousands of English people died." Fleur

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Manor Primary School

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Looking at the displays in the Imperial War Museum



Trying the minimum height for soldier's measuring stick