



The Great War Project - The Home Front 1914 - 1915

Posted by pilcothouse at 15:25, July 10 2014.

There is general agreement that many local communities involved themselves in supporting the war effort in what we now refer to as the Home Front. The work was voluntary (mostly women) and many local groups such as boy scouts, farmers, football clubs, and factory workers were also involved. There were many national charities, for example the Red Cross, which were usually managed and organised locally by the upper and middle classes. Truly local charities which, on the whole, supported local boys at the front, their families at home and local regiments did, however, include the working classes on their committees. Some commercial businesses also encouraged their staff to support Home Front activities. The peak for enthusiasm is believed to have been during the period from August 1914 through 1915.

This investigation, to be undertaken as a series of micro-studies by research volunteers, seeks to ascertain the extent of activities embarked upon by local communities and to confirm, or challenge, the current popular belief that support for the war effort was nationwide.

Initially ten volunteers piloted the project with the aim of testing a data collection sheet and identifying sources of information. Because we found so many areas of research, we decided to produce a workbook with a different spreadsheet for each subject heading. In looking at sources we found that the most useful starting point was the local newspaper, usually published weekly. These are often available on microfilm in local libraries, although a few are on line. There are, of course, many other sources and part of the research is to find those that refer to individual communities.

Each project member is free to choose his/her community to research. The community can be a city, a town, a village, an area, hamlet or a street. We hope to have a variety of projects across the country for comparative purposes with the results providing a national overview as to whether or not, support for the war effort was equally intense across the country.

Many of our project members are undertaking research in conjunction with their local history or U3A (*University of the Third Age*) group, which means that individuals can focus on different aspects of the Home Front. Those aspects include

- Call to arms local volunteers
- Local support/fund-raising groups national and/or local response
- Military Hospitals (Red Cross/Auxiliary) and VADs
- Local employers support for and impact on local employers and commercial activity
- Belgian refugees
- The impact on home-makers
- Women's roles
- Schools in the 1st World War
- The effects of local bombing raids
- Local policing and special constables
- Urban and Rural District Councils

Under each of these main subjects there are many more sub-headings and, indeed, some cross-over between them.

In addition to local newspapers, other sources which have been consulted include

- National newspapers
- Council minutes
- Memoirs and diaries
- Parish and company magazines and photos
- Family papers
- Special Collections, e.g. the Liddle Collection at Leeds University Library
- 1914 electoral register (not available in all areas)
- 1911 census
- 1910 land tax assessments

We will have dedicated project pages on our website which can be accessed by project members. The individual community workbooks will eventually be added. Project reports and news items are sent to all members as new information or items of interest become available. The final task of collating and analysing the information will follow in due course.

For more information, please contact Dr Sue Smith, Project Co-ordinator, by email, pilcothouse@gmail.com.