

**A LOOK AT THE EFFECTS ON FAMILY LIFE
IN DERBYSHIRE'S HIGH PEAK
DURING THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918**



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This work is dedicated to all of the families and individuals whose lives were inexorably changed by the events at home and abroad during the Great War 1914-1918.



The war memorial at Chapel en le Frith

The idea for this study came from the organising committee of the Chapel en le Frith Male Voice Choir. A choir formed in 1918 by returning servicemen.

The newspaper archival research has been carried out by members of the choir during 2017 and 2018, notably, Steve Thomas, Ian Laing, Peter Bowes, Peter Baxter, Bob Marsden, Steve Brown and Richard Foulkes and the research has been edited and written up by Jonathan D’Hooghe to provide a snapshot of life in the High Peak between 1914-1918.

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CHAPEL EN LE FRITH MALE VOICE CHOIR FOUNDED 1918

AND THE EFFECT OF THE GREAT WAR ON THE LOCAL POPULACE

On the 4th August 1914, Great Britain declared war on Germany after Germany refused to withdraw its army from neutral Belgium. So began Britain's involvement in the First World War, a cataclysmic event that would change or end the lives of millions of people around the globe.

On the Home Front, the established cycle of life changed drastically for all classes and gender. Men volunteered in their thousands through 1914/15 for the services and in 1916 conscription was introduced for the first time. As men left the established workplace for the services, women filled their roles in the industrial and munitions factories and on the farms. The suffragists gave up their struggle with the government in return for a promise for votes for women at the end of the war.

The introduction of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) in 1914 regulated the lives of ordinary citizens in a way that had never been known before. This new law gave the Government sweeping powers to act in any way it thought fit and restricted the liberties of its citizens. It introduced British Summer Time, restricted the sale of binoculars (!), regulated the strength of beer and forbade the ringing of church bells to mention just a few of the many areas it covered.

The Liberal government of Herbert Asquith soon realised that the mounting casualty lists of 1914 made it impossible for the bodies of the dead to be returned to the UK. As the lists grew and were published in the newspapers, a wave of spontaneous street shrines and memorials sprang up especially in urban areas.

The government attempted to control this outbreak of "memorialisation" and in 1915 The Civic Arts Association was formed. One of its tasks was to promote good design in the production of war memorials. However, such was the desire to memorialise the dead that the speed at which projects took effect thwarted any attempt at legislative control.

Although conflict continued in many regions into the 1920s, it is widely known that fighting on the Western Front of France and Flanders came to an end with an Armistice that took effect at 11am on 11 of November 1918.

Great Britain and its Empire allies had suffered very nearly one million deaths in battle with as many as 2.5 million severely wounded, often amputees or with other life changing injuries, men and women trying to come to terms with their disabilities.

Therefore, post war community memorialisation accelerated rapidly and although there was no central control, most memorials tended towards the Christian, conservative form of a stone cross

often sited in the village churchyard. Some communities opted for a functional rather than a visual memorial, often a new village hall or a playing field. In the High Peak, alongside the traditional war memorials, a choir was born.

Chapel-en-le-Frith Male Voice Choir was formed in 1918 by young men returning from the Great War and was originally known as Chapel en le Frith Ex-Servicemen's Choir. Soon afterwards it widened its membership base and was given the name we know today. The first long serving conductor was Tom Longson, who held the position for thirty years, until 1949. Tom's nephew, Bert Longson along with George Muir, Joe Lomas and Joe Pearson were the original founding members.

In the following newspaper extracts, we will examine the effect that the war had on the High Peak communities and discover how the communities evolved through to 1918 and the return of the surviving servicemen.

1914

The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) arrived in France in mid-August and fired its first shots in anger at Mons. Life for those at home was already starting to change; The Buxton Herald and Gazette (BHG) reported that *'....events to be abandoned on account of the War [include] the annual show of the Whaley Bridge Horticultural Society and the annual exhibition of the Dove Holes Society.'* The war also affected *'Chapel-en-le-Frith Horticultural Society, which has decided to abandon this year.'*

On 22 August the BEF was yet to face the onslaught at Mons but DORA was in action at home. The Buxton Advertiser (BA) reported that; *'Oscar Weiss, a German, and employed as a porter at St Ann's Hotel was charged, at a special court, with failing to register himself in accordance with the regulations.'* Oscar had been in the UK since 1900 but such was the suspicion of foreigners, that he was remanded into custody.

In contrast, the BA stated that; *'Last evening, music-lovers of Buxton had another delightful treat provided by Herr W. Iff's Orchestra.....'* – seems that a hotel porter may have been a spy but not an orchestra conductor! Further concerts were held at the Opera House and the Buxton Hydro Hotel, the event at the Opera House being a *'War Matinee – All Of The Proceeds Will Be Devoted To The War Fund'*.

In the 28 August edition of the BHG, it was reported that *'The Buxton Rifle Club has largely increased its membership, [as] so many are anxious to learn how to use and sight a rifle.'*

The initial patriotism shown by so many surfaced in many different ways, the BHG again; *'Mr E C Stott has given sufficient wool to knit 100 pairs of socks for those who are on active service, and*

there are many ladies in Buxton who are clever with the needles - it is hoped that the wool will soon be made up.'

On 26 August, the BHG was reporting the names of the first deaths in battle and that *'Frith Knoll, Chapel-en-le-Frith, the residence of Mrs Spencer, has been offered to the local branch of the Red Cross Society as a convalescent home for sailors and soldiers.'*

By September, the local communities had set up patriotic war funds and those often more affluent members of society were actively donating substantial sums. Their names appeared in the newspapers for all to see. The BHG again, 2 September; *'The total of the Buxton War Fund to date is £2,302 2s 5d, including £112 collected in the King Sterndale parish. The list of further subscriptions will appear in the High Peak Herald on Saturday and the Buxton Herald on Wednesday next.'*

The following week, the BHG reported a stirring speech given by the local dominating aristocratic landowner, the Duke of Devonshire. Under the headline; *'A Call To Arms. Eloquent Appeals to the Young Men of Peakland – Your Country Needs You.'* The Duke stated *'The one question which you have to ask yourselves is "Is there any reason why I should stay behind."'*



In the 16 September edition of the BHG, the news was mixed. Stories told of a Buxton lady who had forwarded briar pipes and tobacco to the value of £100 to be sent to the troops at the front and that two well known local journalists; *'W E Brunt (Herald) and F Standbridge (Advertiser)'* had enlisted in Lord Kitchener's army. This optimistic and patriotic news was shrouded by the first announcement of a local death in battle. *'Harry Langford, a foreman on the Chinley and Whaley Bridge Sewerage Works, has been killed in action at the front. Langford was a reservist belonging to the Shropshire Regiment.'*

Despite the mounting casualty lists, volunteers were still coming forward; *'Stirring scenes were witnessed at Glossop on Monday, when about 170 recruits for Lord Kitchener's Army took their departure from the town. The men assembled at the Drill Hall and, accompanied by the Whitfield*

Bugle Band and Mr S Hill-Wood¹ MP, marched to the station where they were given a rousing send off by a large crowd.'



Recruits leaving Chapel en le Frith September 1914 – Almost everyone in a cap or a straw boater.

Although there must have been a sadness in many families as the menfolk marched off to war, these events also contributed to a sense of humour; the BHG reported that a lady entered a butcher's shop in Buxton "Well, missus, you look mighty cheerful this morning – what's up?" asked the butcher, "Oh, it's all right" she replied, "My old man has been called away to the army, and I'm feeling a bit of peace as it were – you understand!"

As the BEF and the French army retreated through September to the Marne, the BA was able to report the late season local cricket scores and at the same time, note that Buxton now had its first wounded man; 'A letter was received on Tuesday stating that W R Sanders was in Belgium wounded, in one knee in the retirement from Mons.'

Despite the mounting casualties of the BEF (some 15,000 by early September) the wave of patriotic fervour sweeping the country was kept alive by the propaganda reports of German atrocities in Belgium. The BA published a drawing of a German soldier with a sword threatening a Belgian woman with a small child whilst stating; 'Massacre of Civilians – In Dinant Sur Meuse, the women were

¹ Sir Samuel Hill-Wood 1872-1949. MP for the High Peak 1910 -1929. Served as a Major in the Cheshire Regiment. Financed Glossop North End FC to the Football League and was later chairman of Arsenal FC.

confined in convents whilst hundreds of men were shot. A hundred prominent citizens were shot in the Place d'Armes.'

These articles, which did report actual German atrocities were exaggerated to keep up the momentum of recruitment. Lord Kitchener had asked for 100,000 volunteers but by the end of 1914, some 600,000 young men had volunteered across the kingdom. The BA again; *'Steps are being taken with the view of facilitating recruiting in North Derbyshire. Colonel Brooke-Taylor² has been detailed to Buxton and has taken up his quarters. Colonel Taylor will be glad to hear from any of his old officers and non-commissioned officers who will help him get in touch with men who desire to join.'*

The same edition reported *'The Sherwood Foresters For The Front'* – The 46th North Midland Division, a Territorial Force division which contained the 6th Battalion of the Foresters, recruited in North Derbyshire was to embark for France. [They actually left in early 1915].

Meanwhile in Glossop, the High Peak Advertiser (HPA) reported that Private A Moon had been blinded by shrapnel and that Private John White³ had been killed in action; *'Thus another Glossop lad has given his life for his country.'* Alongside this sobering news came the strident headline; *'Women, Whisky, Medicated Wines, Meat Pies and Tobacco. What Police Saw At A Glossop Club. Constable's view through the keyhole and over the shutters.'* Glossop Working Man's Club was in trouble for perceived encouragement of excessive drinking and immoral behaviour!

Whilst there may have been scandalous behaviour in Glossop, at the front the British cavalry were finding that modern warfare, machine guns and barbed wire in particular ensured that the old methods of the *Arme Blanche* were often an outdated and wasteful tactic. The HPA again; *'A thrilling story of the exploits of the 4th Dragoon Guards has been received from Corporal T Sims, a Peakland Hero.'* – *'.....our cavalry brigade was practically wiped out. We charged in front of one hundred heavy guns, while thousands of infantry kept up a terrific rifle fire. My squadron went into action 180 strong; after our gallop across that awful valley we numbered 70 horses and men.'*

Despite such tales of slaughter, the patriotic fervour of the nation remained constant through 1914, so that the HPA could report; *Patriotic Glossopians – Over 160 men Leave On One Day To Join The Colours.'*

Back at home, further dark doings were reported; *'Robbing Glossop Orchards and Gardens. There is a class of people who make war an excuse for almost anything, and included in this class are those*

² Colonel Herbert Brooke Taylor. His son, Lieutenant Arthur Cuthbert Brooke Taylor was killed at Gallipoli June 1915.

³ 16406 Private John White, son of Mary and George White of St Mary's Road, Glossop.

individuals who systematically raid gardens and orchards, stealing and destroying the fruits of other people's labour. Presumably an easier task with so many men away doing their duty?

By October 1914, the German offensive had been held at the Marne by the French and British armies. A concerted counter attack had seen the Germans pushed back from threatening Paris and in the north both adversaries attempted to outflank each other until they reached the north Belgian coast. Thus the Western Front settled down into a static trench routine from Belgium to the Swiss frontier.

The BEF found itself manning the line from just east of Ypres in Belgium across the French border and into the coal mining area around Lens and Loos. The Germans launched one more large scale offensive at Ypres from October 19 to November 22. The BEF held the line with many cavalrymen fighting as infantry in the trenches but as Christmas 1914 approached, the original regular BEF was all but destroyed. The first Territorial Force units arrived at the front and the Kitchener recruits were beginning their training at home.

The Glossop Chronicle (GC) was able to report *'Housewives Urged to Avoid Panic. The senseless hoarding of food has left many provision dealers depleted of stock and to consequently increase the prices of many articles of food.'*

Despite the call for men to join the infantry the GC also noted the need for more skilled men; *'Need of Doctors and Motor Cyclists'* cried the headline along with the need for blacksmiths, farriers, drivers, artificers, electricians, coppersmiths, bakers, butchers and clerks to name but a few.

The BA reported in mid-December that Chapel en le Frith's National School was drawing up a Roll of Honour for all of their Old Boys who had joined the army. *'A Roll of Honour is being compiled by the Headmaster and will be hung in a prominent position in the school.'*

On 19 December it was reported that a; *'Concert For Wounded Soldiers'* had been held at the Octagon room of the Royal Exchange Buildings.

A further batch of Belgian refugees was expected to arrive in Glossop in December 1914 and further accommodation was sought within the community. Local footballer, Private S Doncaster was reported as wounded; *'.....Stewart Doncaster of the Coldstream Guards, who will readily be recalled as the former centre forward of the Glossop Football Club.'* And on 18 December, the GC reported *'The annual performance of Handel's Messiah rendered by the New Mills Orchestra and Chorus of 120 performers, was given in the New Mills Town Hall on Sunday last. The proceeds, which realised a large amount, were on behalf of the Red Cross Society and the Local Relief Funds.'*

Returning to the BHG, a letter from Gunner J Copley to his brother was printed; *'I am very pleased to be able to write this letter, hoping to find you and everything in Buxton in the pink.'* He details his actions from Mons, Landrecies to Ypres and concludes with; *'I send my best wishes to all my friends, hoping they may have a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.'*

Corporal Williams of the Royal Engineers also wrote home and his letter was in the BHG of 30 December; *'A few days ago we were inspected by the King. He ventured quite close to the firing line. I could easily have touched him with my hand.'* He went on to say; *'Every supply train brings boxes of gifts from home, and the only difficulty is where to put it all. We have had Christmas puddings and all the smokers say they have never had so many cigarettes. It is so nice to receive all these things, it makes one feel all the more like scrapping.'*

1915

On January 6 1915 the BHG correspondent 'Atticus' noted that another year had run its course and that everything in Buxton and District was overshadowed by the war. He went on to say how well the local men had done in joining up in large numbers and that trade at home was picking up and therefore; *'...the New Year opens brighter in that respect. We are all hoping that the war will be over, and Prussian militarism defeated, before another New Year is celebrated'*. Sadly, how wrong he was as during the same week it was reported that; *'Corporal Walter Wells had died from wounds received in the fighting at Ypres.for about three years as a policeman, he made Chapel en le Frith his home.'*⁴

The following week, the Herald noted again the powers of DORA. *'9 O'Clock Closing – Buxton Licensed Victuallers Hard Hit. -an order was signed decreeing that all public houses within certain areas should close at 9pm, and furthermore that members of His Majesty's Forces should not be allowed on licensed premises except between 12 noon and 1pm and 6pm and 9pm.'* Although trade was hard hit, the paper stated that; *'...Buxton publicans are, I am sure, patriotic enough and anxious to help their country at this great crisis, so no doubt they will take these restrictions as "all for the best" and with the hope of brighter days to come.'*

Restrictions on drinking hours or not, still the desire to 'do one's bit' prevailed; *'Fifteen more men left Whaley Bridge on Wednesday-recruits for Kitchener's Army.'*

In mid-January came the first reports of the infamous 1914 Christmas Truce near Ploegsteert. In a letter home to his parents, Sergeant H A Barrs stated; *'On Christmas Eve both troops were singing to one another, and on Christmas morning, after some shouted conversation across the open space*

⁴ Most probably 9962 Lance Corporal W Wells, Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

between the trenches a German shouted "Be British and come halfway" and out goes one of our officers. He shook [sic] hands and exchanged cigars and cigarettes with the German officer. The German suggested "You no shoot. We no shoot." That started the ball rolling, and they all came out and had a spree, exchanging souvenirs and autographs.'

Lieutenant Colonel Goodman had been appointed the commanding officer of 6th battalion the Sherwood Foresters in preparation for their move overseas. He wrote via the BA to say; *'Sir, Will you allow me to express on behalf of all ranks of my Battalion, our grateful thanks to all In Derbyshire who so kindly contributed to the enjoyment of the men during their necessary absence from home this Christmastide.'*⁵

On 16 January the BHG published a comprehensive list of *'Derbyshire Prisoners in Germany.'* All the men listed were from the 2nd battalion Sherwood Foresters. Although it must have been some comfort to see your man's name on the list, little did anyone think that it would be four long years before they would be repatriated, but were they in fact the lucky ones?

Many Belgian refugee families were still housed in Buxton. The Buxton Belgian Fund was reported as having spent £938 12s between September and December 1914, all from donations. A home at 7 Rock Terrace had been given to the Fund rent free and many families rallied round to provide furniture.

Kindness was also in great evidence not only for the refugees but the wounded and convalescing soldiers in the area. The BA reported; *'Concert for Wounded Soldiers – In the Octagon room at the Royal Exchange Buildings the weekly concert, given on Tuesday, was well attended, and the long and attractive programme was greatly enjoyed by our Belgian guests and our Soldiers.'*

In the run up to the embarkation of the local Territorials, the BA noted the following promotions; *'6th Battalion the Sherwood Foresters – The undermentioned Second Lieutenants to be Lieutenants Temporary, dated December 1914. : William T Marshall, John D B Symonds, Ronald D Wheatcroft, Gilbert S Heathcote, Harry D Orr and John H Marsden. Captain V J E Langford has been officially appointed to the Adjutancy of the 6th Battalion.'*

However, all the military preparations could not stop life at home continuing as normal; *'Charles Wheeldon belonging to Fairfield, Buxton was charged with burglariously entering the Swan Inn, Bolsover and stealing two packets of cigarettes and three half-ounce packets of tobacco valued 1s...'*

It was also reported that he had broken into the Blue Bell Inn and the Carr Vale Hotel too. There were also happier events; the BA again; *'A wedding of considerable local interest took place at the*

⁵ Lt Col. Godfrey Davenport Goodman commanded the 6/SF until November 1916 when he was promoted.

*Abbassia Garrison Church, Cairo, on the 5th ult., when Captain A L Spafford, adjutant of the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers, who has a large circle of friends in the High Peak, was married to Miss Marjorie Heap...*⁶

Despite the growing casualty lists including local man Private John Shallcross Ward, the BA was keen to report on the number of wounded soldiers making a full recovery; *'...the enormous proportion of complete recoveries testifies to the humaneness [sic] of the modern bullet and to the great skill of the surgeons. If the war is of a long duration, the majority of wounded men will return to the front.'* I am sure that all of the mothers slept well after reading that!, but not Mrs Green of Buxton who learnt that her son, Sergeant Tom Green of the Grenadier Guards had been killed in Belgium.⁷

In late January, the BA carried an article confirming that a Home Guard for Derbyshire would be formed. *'The object of the regiment is to provide a means by which every able bodied man outside the fighting years (19-38) can find scope for his energies and natural desire to serve his country at the present time.'* Everyone was expected to do 'their bit'.

The Territorial infantry battalions were reorganised in January from the old 8 Company's, A-H, into a 4 Company organisation, A-D and at the end of February 1915, the 46th (North Midland) Division became the first complete Territorial Force division to arrive at the front. This division consisted of infantry battalions from Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Staffordshire. The 6th battalion Sherwood Foresters (6/SF) recruited in the Peakland area and across to Chesterfield and contained many men from Chapel, Buxton, Glossop and surrounding villages.

They were mobilised in the summer of 1914 and had been training in the south of England ready for their embarkation. On arrival their first stint of trench life was in the Ypres area but they soon moved south ready for the Battle of Loos in September and October.

⁶ Arthur Langworthy Spafford was killed at Gallipoli on 7th August 1915.

⁷ 3487 Private John Shallcross Ward, King's Liverpool Regiment. Son of William and Ellen Ward of Town End, Chapel en le Frith and 15922 Lance Sergeant Thomas Green, son of James and Jane Green, 22 Darwin Avenue, Buxton.



The New Mills Band was with the 6/SF in Essex and after playing in Epping, they received a letter of thanks from the Urban District Council; *'My Council are desirous to express their appreciation of the music which the Band attached to your Battalion was good enough to provide in the town last Sunday morning.'* Wrote the Clerk, Mr J G Creed.

The clamour for new recruits continued apace and it was also suggested that a competition be held for all local villages and towns. The winning community would be the community that had sent the highest percentage of its available men to the services. The winning locality would receive a stone cross designed by Sir George Frampton which would be *'a tribute to men who heard the call, who turned out from the peace of the countryside to go out and save their country from the ravaging Huns.'*

With most of the able bodied men joining the services, farmers were finding difficulty in obtaining sufficient labour. They were turning to old age pensioners and boys but in due course, this shortage of labour in the fields and the factories, would herald new opportunities for women to break the pre-war shackles and start to go out and earn a wage.



NCO's of 6/SF at Harpenden before embarkation to France.

Just as the Peakland Territorials set off for France, a letter was published in the BA from a local lad, now a Prisoner of War, Walter Shirt who was interned in Weser, a province of Hanover. *'I have been in a few hailstorms, also lead ones just as severe, and how I lived to tell the tale I don't know, but I am here without a scratch.'* he wrote. One soldier from 6/SF who would not be going overseas was Private John Bower who died in Chinley Isolation Hospital having contracted Typhoid Fever.⁸

Congratulations were extended to police constables Norman and Bailey of Chinley and Chapel who had enlisted in the army. On the other hand Dr Kennedy wrote to the Chapel Board of Guardians to say that he wouldn't be enlisting but would remain a civilian doctor; *'...to attend to Dr Bennett's work and my own as originally arranged.'* In a letter to the BA from a recruiting officer, Major Brown, he stated that; *'The standard of height has been lowered for many infantry regiments to 5 feet 1 inch, and this gives an opportunity for the shorter men which may not long remain open.'* In due

⁸ 1739 Private John Bower 6/SF, son of John and Annie Bower of peak Forest.

course, this gave rise to the 'Bantam' battalions of men who usually through their poor diet and poverty had not grown to the old standard of 5 feet 5 inches. Everyone was required.⁹

'The needle seems an insignificant weapon beside the rifle and the bayonet, yet no history of the present war will be complete unless it does full justice to the part taken in it by the women of Great Britain who sit at home wielding these tiny weapons, hour after hour, day after day, in the self-imposed task of providing all sorts of requisites for the Army.' So wrote the BA as the devotion to duty and patriotism on the Home Front remained strong into 1915. In another example, it was reported that; *Fully 200,000 eggs are required weekly [for wounded soldiers]. Locally, the arrangements are in the hands of Mr J J Hodgson of Pineapple House, Bakewell.'* There followed a long list of names of all those who had contributed eggs in the previous week, in class order of course! – *'Lady Fitzherbert, Brooklands, Bakewell, Mrs Hoyle, Holme Hall....'*

The war of course, was not only on land. Local Burbage man, Harry Millward was a 1st Class Stoker on board HMS Carnarvon. He wrote to his sister; *'...we met the German China Squadron and we gave them a good fight and came off victorious.the German flagship went down head first and none of our ships could stop to pick up survivors. There was just about 3000 hands lost between the four ships [we] sunk. Tell mother not to forget the two wood pipes, for I am smoking a very small portion of a pipe at present time.'* Despite such a death toll, Harry was just as keen to make sure he received his new pipe in due course.

The Chapel en le Frith Board of Guardians were noted as asking for additional farmers to tender for the supply of milk and it was reported that Mr Hall had not yet supplied any of his contracted potatoes. Such was the daily hum of life back at home but occasionally, there were moments of high drama. Following a German air raid in Essex an unexploded bomb was discovered in a field. Sherwood Foresters, Private Goodall from Rowsley and Corporal Large from Bakewell; *'...placed a stick through the handle and proceeded to carry the missile to the river. On the way the bomb burst into flame, but the men ran on with their burden and immersed it in the river.'* They received a silver watch and a silver cigarette case respectively from Braintree Urban Council.

By the beginning of March 1915, the papers were reporting that the Royal Navy were attempting to force the Dardanelles. This was the seaborne action that preceded the allied landings at Gallipoli on April 25th, now commemorated as ANZAC Day.

On March 6 the BA stated that Private Richard Johnson who had been a police constable at Monyash was home on leave and that William Hill of Bakewell had been commissioned from the ranks as a second lieutenant in the Artillery; *'He has set an example which others should strive to emulate.'* It

⁹ The 18th battalion the Sherwood Foresters was formed at Derby as a Bantam battalion in July 1915.

was also reported that Jack Whelan a well-known Chapel footballer had enlisted in the Army Service Corps. Of course, not all the local heroes were men. The BA again; *'Following is an extract from a letter written by a Buxton lady serving as a nurse in France. She says:- We are very busy and have not nearly enough nurses. As to comfort we are much better off than others in this respect, but of course one does not expect comfort; if one can get the necessities of life one is thankful.'*

With the New Mills Band away with 6/SF, the Burbage Band were not to be left behind. On 13 March it was stated by the BA that the band had joined the 6th battalion of the Cheshire Regiment and that a meeting had been held to sanction them taking their instruments to war with them. At the same time, one of the first reported 6/SF deaths appeared in the BA; *'Lc.-Corpl. Allan Redfern had met his death at the hands of a German sniper whilst laying communication wires.'* This sombre news had not deterred further volunteers who in the adjacent article were pictured as a group of Buxton Lads – Private O Goodwin, Private Harry Bagshaw, Private Gordon and Lance-Corporal Hunter. The local ladies were also still keen to get in on the act and it was also reported that a Company of the Women's Volunteer Reserve was to be formed in Buxton and that eight Companies would be formed across Derbyshire.¹⁰

Although hundreds of local men had willingly volunteered for active service, the pressure on those still to volunteer was increasing. A further series of meetings to promote recruitment across the High Peak District were advertised at Buxton and New Mills where speakers would include Major Sir Alexander Bannerman, RE, Bart., DSO, Mr Will Crooks MP and the Duke of Devonshire.

This need for more recruits came about following the disastrous attacks by the BEF at Neuve Chappelle, March 10 – 13, Aubers Ridge 9 May and at Festubert 15-25 May. Localised gains were made in the opening attacks but further attacks without sufficient artillery support led to a huge increase in casualties.

Lieutenant Colonel Mosley, commanding 5/SF felt the need to write to the BA following Neuve Chappelle to; *'...contradict the statement that casualties have occurred in our battalion.'*

Back at home as spring moved towards early summer, the Belgian Refugee's Clothing Committee appealed for lighter garments for women and children, and the Sherwood Foresters' casualty lists appeared alongside. *'Died of wounds, under date 15 March: Lieut. R H Strange, Ptes. H Bagnall, F Bilson, F Hatherley, W Mansell.'*

The High Peak News had christened the local Territorials as the 'Wild Men' and in an article praised their arrival at the front; *'How the Wild Men got into the trenches and got their baptism of fire is well*

¹⁰ 1478 Lance Corporal Allen [sic] Redfern 6/SF, son of Mr and Mrs Ralph Redfern of 26 Byron St, Buxton.

known throughout the Wild Men's country, for letters galore have been pouring in from the front. How splendidly the Wild Men stood the test is recognised everywhere, and how proud the Officers were of their men is known to those that have been in touch with Headquarters. The hearts of the veteran Wild Men at home have swelled with pride as they read the reports.' Who wouldn't have been swayed by reading such jingoism and surely all men at home would want to join their fellows at the front?

Two further letters in the BA in April again showed how everyone was doing their bit. The first from Frank Sawdon, commandant of the Buxton Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) appealing for billets to be provided for convalescing officers; *'...they will require no special nursing, and I would suggest that invitations be limited to a period of three week.'* And the second letter from M A Shaw of Whitehall near Buxton noted that nothing stops a bullet like a bag of loose sand and therefore as the weather warms up, sewers should turn their attention to sewing sand bags rather than warm clothing for the men!

The Red Cross Society for nurses appealed for a further 3,000 members of VAD's; *'In anticipation of the large number of wounded expected shortly to arrive.'* And the Home Guard, now in full swing, looked to more volunteers from the over forties.

'A stirring little scene was witnessed at the Midland railway station on Tuesday morning, this being the send off of the Misses Cox and Duncan, whose services as nurses at the front had been offered and accepted.' Reported the BA along with news that a Buxton Hero, A P Linaker had been shot through the neck and was in hospital in France.

General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien commanding the 2nd Army in France wrote to the BA in April commending the sterling work of the Sherwood Foresters 1st and 2nd battalions and noting the arrival of the Territorial Force 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th battalions.

At Easter 1915, concerts were arranged at the Empire Barracks and at the Hippodrome where at the end of the performance, Lieutenant Brindley of the Gordon Highlanders was given the stage to appeal for further volunteers, explaining that it was the last day of his one week leave from France.

A week later, the BA reported that Buxton's hospital was now a fully fledged military unit and in its main editorial, the paper noted that David Lloyd George had started to introduce measures across the country to ensure that the BEF would be fully supplied with sufficient ammunition and shells, however, this was not to be the case in the autumn.

The mounting local casualty lists from the fighting in March were also now appearing and sadly covered more than one column in the BA, but such news was tempered to a degree, by the publication of news of concerts at the Pavilion and at the Devonshire hospital.

Back at the front, 5/SF had a new commanding officer, Major Coke, replacing Colonel Mosley due to ill health but such news rarely affected the men in the trenches. Their thoughts were more about home comforts. Private Mackintosh of 6/SF writing to Mr G Duncombe wanted a pack of cards sending out and noted that; *'..when they were in the trenches, they were only 30 yards from the Huns, but that the 6th battalion were the boys-singing and keeping it up all the time.'*

Pre-war, the Sherwood Foresters had consisted of two regular battalions, two reserve battalions and four Territorial battalions, but such was the influx of volunteers and later conscripts, that the regiment eventually consisted of more than thirty battalions, although not all of them served overseas. The BA announced the formation of a new battalion to be formed in the Peakland to be known as the Chatsworth Rifles. *'...the fact is patent that there are hundreds of fit and capable young men in the towns and villages and amongst the hills and dales who have not yet seriously thought what the "call" means. Height standard no longer serves as a barrier, it is now the chance of those from 5ft 3in. to 5ft 6in. to show of what grit they are made.'*¹¹

At the same time as the call was being made for more volunteers, it was reported that the first death had occurred of a man from Dove Holes. *'Sergt. John Herbert Fletcher met his untimely end at the hands of a German sniper whilst entering the trenches.'*, and it was also reported that Private George Hulley of Beeley, a veteran of the Boer War had been killed whilst serving with the Grenadier Guards and that, William Bagshaw of Buxton had been killed in action with the Northumberland Fusiliers; whilst Mrs Mullins of Peak Dale learned that her husband, Private George Mullins; *'....did not die instantaneously, but never regained consciousness and suffered no pain.'* One can only surmise why she wanted to have this published in the newspaper.¹²

On the wider home front, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George gave an upbeat statement to the House of Commons suggesting that Britain's financial position was in good health when compared to the effect of the naval blockade on Germany's economy but Mr Austen Chamberlain stated that; *'..we are not going to win the war by economic arguments but by hard fighting. And for hard fighting, every available man will be required.'* In hindsight, we can see that this was the start of the move towards conscription as volunteer numbers dwindled and casualty

¹¹ The Chatsworth Rifles formed in April 1915 became the 16th Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters. 16/SF.

¹² 2364 Serjeant John Herbert Fletcher 6/SF. 8698 Private George Hulley, Grenadier Guards, son of Mr and Mrs B Hulley of Beeley. 3072 Private William Ewart Gladstone Bagshaw 2/NF. 9144 Private George Mullins, DCLI.

lists rose. Including those reported in May for the 1st, 2nd, 6th, 7th and 8th battalions of the Foresters; *'Killed: Ptes. J Allchin, J Ferguson, H Hardy, L H Jackson.....[etc]'*

Those more elderly or less able also felt the brunt of the pen through the BA's letters to the Editor; *'Sir, will you let me have a rap at the scores of local able bodied men over enlisting age who have not joined the Home Guards. Their abstinence suggests cowardice...'* wrote one disgruntled correspondent.

It was also in May that the first news appeared of the sinking of the Lusitania. Initially, naval censors downplayed the fatalities. Eventually the news was released that there were; *'...1502 Victims'* amazingly a Buxton woman, Miss May Mycock, had been saved after four hours afloat in the sea.

In New Mills, Mr Schofield of the Labour Exchange was *'busily engaged in placing local ladies in positions where they can render assistance now that so many men have enlisted. [those of a] superior class as Clerks, others have been appointed to duties on the farm and various other occupations.'*

With the news that another 27 local men had joined the Chatsworth Rifles, came the news that Private Henry Gordon Adams had died in a Prisoner of War camp in Germany. His father, an old soldier, also had another two sons serving at the front. Private Samuel Muir from Chapel en le Frith, serving with the Foresters also passed away in May whilst in hospital in Boulogne.¹³

All of this local bad news sandwiched a small report of life at home. *'Robbing A Poor Box – the poor box at St. James' Church has this week been emptied by someone who had no right to annex the contents.'* As wages increased along with wartime productivity, so inflation hit the economy hurting the poorest members of society. Nevertheless, those more well to do were encouraged to donate four shillings to the Tuck for Tommies fund. *'Every 4s sent provides a large Tuck box for TEN British Fighting Men.'* The boxes were prepared and packed by E Lazenby and Sons Limited, who no doubt were doing very well out of the scheme.

Of course, not all of the reported deaths came from the working class. The death of Second Lieutenant Geoffrey Bagshawe from a noted county family of Ford Hall, Chapel en le Frith was reported as was the death of Lieutenant Arthur Railton of Woodburn, Buxton, and in contrast, a letter from Ivan Payne C. Coy 6/SF to his parents noted the bird life at his bivouac; *'..a Meadow Pipit has a nest of half fledged youngsters....there is a nightly serenade of a Nightingale not 30 yards away..... and just now a cock Blackie is perched on the top of a neighbouring tree whistling as though*

¹³ 2109 Private Samuel Muir 6/SF, son of William and Hannah Muir, Town End, Chapel en le Frith.

*his life depended on his vocal efforts. It seems almost impossible to realise that not half a mile away, there is a ruined village, a specimen of the Master Huns' Kultur. It makes me wish it was all over.*¹⁴

Although any death was a tragedy for the bereaved family, the poorer families, could with the death of a father or a son lose most of their income. Therefore, organisations like the Buxton War Relief Fund could provide much needed assistance – but not always as the BA reported; *'The deaths of three soldiers killed in action were reported at the meeting. The cases of their dependants were brought to the notice of The Royal Patriotic Fund Corporation, who at once sent a grant for the widow. In the third case, as the deceased soldier had not made an allotment of his pay, and had not otherwise contributed a regular sum towards maintenance, as required by the regulations, the Corporation were not able to make a grant.'*

Although inflation rose rapidly during the war, hitting the poorest hardest, many working men had already left Britain before the war to seek out better economic circumstances abroad. It is estimated that about 35% of all men serving with the Canadian forces were in fact British emigres. Therefore, it is no surprise that the BA was able to report that; *'News has been received in Chapel en le Frith to the effect that Pte. T Frith has been wounded. He formerly resided in the town but several years ago he went out to Canada and joined the Canadian forces on the outbreak of war.'*

Despite the growing casualty lists, life in many areas at home carried on as before. The paper was able to write about the forthcoming summer season at Buxton Pavilion, critique the latest play at the Opera House and report that at the Police Court; *'...Robert Ramsden was summoned for that he did unlawfully open his premises for the consumption of intoxicating liquor to members of His Majesty's Forces contrary to an order made by a competent military authority under the Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act 1914.'* Although he faced a maximum penalty of a £100 fine and six months imprisonment with hard labour, the bench noted that it was the first such case in the area and the fine was set at £5 but a severe warning was given to all other town licensees.

In the first week of June it was reported that 408 new volunteers had enlisted in Notts and Derby and from Belgium came news that the Sherwood Foresters [territorial] band had played the 7th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force out of the trenches; *'...the solo cornet in the band was a Buxton postman, Private Fanshaw.'*

The Canadian forces had held the line near Ypres the previous April when the Germans had used gas as a weapon for the first time. Therefore, it is no surprise to read of the first local casualty. *'Lce.-Cpl. George Bagshawe of Whaley Bridge has fallen victim to the treacherous German practice of gassing.'*

¹⁴ Second Lieutenant Geoffrey Hamilton Bagshawe, 1st (Royal) Dragoons, Son of Ernest and Alice Bagshawe, Ford Hall, Chapel en le Frith. Lieutenant A T Railton 4/Seaforth Highlanders, son of Joseph and Alice Railton of Lightwood Rd, Buxton.

The casualty lists were now a weekly occurrence in the local papers but still volunteers continued to enlist, albeit at a slower rate. As Lord Kitchener appealed for another 300,000 men and Lloyd George oversaw the increase in munitions production the paper was able to note that another 7 Buxton men had joined the Chatsworth Rifles, often to avenge the death of a loved one or a friend such as Private R Ball 6/SF – killed in action – *‘His Life For His Country’* stated the newspaper.¹⁵

A Buxtonian who had emigrated to Australia ‘some time ago’, wrote to the BA about his experiences serving with the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) landing in Gallipoli. *‘... the bullets were splashing in the water and the fellow in front of me was shot in the neck and a bullet hit my ear. The beach was only about 10 yards wide, and the shrapnel was very hot.’* It was also reported that Private George Kirkham originally from Burbage but now serving with New Zealand forces had been killed in action. Thus we can see that the men of the High Peak were serving in all theatres and in all armies and although the local Territorial battalion, 6/SF, had only been in and out of the trenches on their regular rotation, a report noted that they already needed 500 more men as replacements.¹⁶

With the fighting continuing on several fronts there were also opportunities for valour and awards. *‘Fairfield Man Wins The D.C.M – Residents will be proud to learn of the honour bestowed upon Pte. E Fairbrother of the 3rd Coldstream Guards.’* Wrote the BA alongside articles calling for more financial assistance for Belgian wounded and news of another concert at The Patriotic Club.

It was during July that a particularly sad blow fell upon the local men of the Sherwood Foresters Territorials. A single German shell fell amongst a party coming out of the trenches, nine men were killed and around fifteen others were badly wounded including Private Bert Longson who lost both legs at the knee. With some difficulty he was able to write to his mother; *‘Dear Mother, Just a line to prepare you for some bad news. A big shell dropped in the middle of us killing and wounding twenty. I have had both my legs taken off below the knees and so have done my fighting. Good-bye for the present. Hoping you are all well ?’* Bert Longson survived his wounds and became a founder member of the Chapel Male Voice Choir. He remained a well known local man for many years after the war running around on his motorised disability scooter and was still active at the 50th anniversary of the choir.

¹⁵ 2140 Private Robert Ball 6/SF.

¹⁶ 8/1082 Private George Kirkham, Otago Regiment NZEF, son of George and Sarah Kirkham of Warslow, Buxton.



Bert Longson, front row fourth from the right sitting on his motorised scooter at George V's Silver Jubilee celebrations in Chapel Market Place, 1935.

Despite the bad news, some aspects of life at home continued as before. The wedding was reported of Miss Winifred Durkan, daughter of Superintendent Durkan of Chapel and Mr J Beechinor a Customs and Excise Officer. *'The couple were the recipients of a very large number of handsome and costly presents and these included a pair of silver candlesticks from the Police of the Division. The honeymoon is being spent in the Lake District'* noted the BA.

Others still at home were beseeched by the Duke of Devonshire to make themselves available for the work required in filling in all of the necessary forms for the introduction of the National Registration Act 1915.¹⁷ Whilst W Stevenson, the General Superintendent and Secretary of the Devonshire Hospital also appealed for motor drivers to make themselves available to *'...to give our soldier patients (numbering about 100), a motor ride on Bank Holiday, August 2nd.'*

As the first anniversary of the outbreak of war approached, The Duke again was instrumental as the President of the Derbyshire Committee of The Central Committee for National Patriotic Organisations, in organising meetings in every community on August 4th to *'...strengthen public opinion to prosecute the war with unabated vigour, and so hasten the day when an honourable peace can be attained.'* There was no let-up in the national approach to doing one's duty.

¹⁷ August 1915 brought Britain a "Registration Day", an extraordinary census on 15 August recording information about every man and woman between 15 and 65 for a new National Register. Its purpose was to find out how many men of military age were still civilians, how many could be spared for war work and, more pressingly, how many could join the armed forces.

Back in Belgium, Dr Bennett wrote home about his experiences at the front and the German prisoners he had seen. *'We captured a trench after a terrific bombardment and blowing up a mine. I then watched some German prisoners go by-over a hundred. Those I saw looked very fit. Some were between 20 and 30 and others were older. I heard that one of the prisoners was a boy of 14 and he threw his arms round one of the men's necks, he was so glad to be out of it. In one trench taken by the "Jocks" two men were found chained to their guns....'*¹⁸

Two more locals were in the paper the following week. Bugler Hallam of 6/SF was reported killed and Private Clark of Fairfield was reported as being wounded but recovering in the Devonshire Hospital.¹⁹ At the same time concerts at The Pavilion, The Opera House and at the Hippodrome were well attended and enjoyed by all and it was announced that; *'Mr Harry Lauder will appear at the Buxton Hippodrome. This great music hall comedian has not appeared in Buxton before, and the terms which he can command are such that an opportunity of hearing Mr. Lauder in our town does not happen frequently.'*²⁰

Unfortunately, life has to go on even in the saddest of circumstances. It was reported that Hubberdale Farm, the property of the late Captain Hodgkinson of Baslow, who had been killed in action some months before, had been sold at auction for £2,305. In contrast, Corporal J Upton of the Sherwood Foresters had been presented with the Victoria Cross by the King for most conspicuous bravery on May 9 1915.

Instructions were printed in the BA giving details of how to fill in the Census form for the National Registration Act and the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr R McKenna, in an advert extolled the nation to invest in The War Loan and receive interest at the rate of 5% per annum. He said; *'The man be rich or poor, is little to be envied who, at this supreme moment, fails to bring forward his savings for the security of his country.'*

The Duke of Devonshire, ever active in his role, inspected the High Peak Home Guard at Fairfield at the end of August; and Lord Radstock as President of the British and Foreign Sailors Society appealed for funds for those civilian survivors of unarmed ships sunk by German U-Boats during their policy of unrestricted warfare. The U-Boat campaign had sunk a number of American vessels and the first rumours appeared in the press suggesting that neutral America would enter the war on the side of the Allies. However, President Wilson did not act at this time and in due course, Germany backed down from its policy of sinking all shipping on sight. Although backing down with this policy,

¹⁸ Many tales were told of German machine gunners found chained to their weapons. In fact they were often found dead at their guns with the carrying straps around their shoulders.

¹⁹ 2142 Drummer [Sic] Frank Hallam 6/SF, son of Sarah Hallam of Fairfield, Buxton.

²⁰ Harry Lauder wrote his most famous song – Keep Right On To The End Of The Road – after his son was killed on the Somme in 1916.

Germany did continue to use several forms of poisonous gas on the Western Front. At the end of September a letter was printed from a well-known Buxtonian who was also well known to Chapel residents explaining how they had been instructed in the use of the latest smoke helmets (rudimentary gas masks). Second Lieutenant Greenhalgh wrote; *'...we had to put our helmets on and enter the room in which there was a cylinder of gas. The tap was turned on and though they gave it us much stronger than it is possible for you to get it in the open, we could only just smell it.'*

At the end of September the first death of a Kitchener citizen volunteer from Chapel was reported. Private J W Tinsley was serving with the 11th (Service) Battalion Sherwood Foresters (11/SF). Although Kitchener's New Army did not receive its full first blooding until 1916, some units, considered to be up to scratch arrived at the front in the autumn of 1915. One of his comrades wrote to his wife; *'.. he was sniped by the Germans. Poor Joe is the first to die in the battalion, and I can assure you that all the men join in sympathy with you and your family.'*²¹

The rate of attrition in the trenches by snipers, trench raids and random artillery fire was horrendous and this had prompted the British to send the first citizen volunteer battalions to the front. The first large scale British offensive of the war was destined to take place in the coal mining area around Loos. The Battle of Loos, September 25 to 15 October also saw the British army use poison gas for the first time and it would mark the first major attack by the 46th (North Midland) Division at the Hohenzollern Redoubt on October 13.

As the men folk prepared for battle so there was no let up in the effort at home. *'War Service For Women'* cried the BA, *'All women having special qualifications such as cooks (trained), Domestic Economists, Typists, Bookkeepers, Laboratory Workers, Dispensers, Clerks (especially those with experience of Army Forms and methods), are invited to send their names as their services will be required in the immediate future by the St. John Ambulance association.'* The same edition also carried news of the town's wounded Belgians returning to the front and the plans for the autumn fund raising for Belgian refugees and soldiers.

Within a week of the opening salvos being fired at Loos, the local press were reporting more local casualties; Second Lieutenant William Brown was killed with 7/SF and Second Lieutenant Maurice Greenhalgh²² was killed within a month of arriving at the front in his first major battle. Of course, it was not only officers whose deaths were reported; *'Pte. Hugh Bagshaw²³ of the 6th Sherwood Foresters of Higher Level, Whaley Bridge was killed in action. The late soldier was but seventeen*

²¹ 17991 Private J W Tinsley, 11/SF.

²² Second Lieutenant William Leonard Brown, 6/SF. Son of Major and Mrs Abraham Brown of Hardwick St, Buxton. Second Lieutenant M L Greenhalgh, King's Liverpool Regiment.

²³ 2881 Private H Bagshaw, 6/SF. Son of Harriet Bagshaw of Railway Cottages, Whaley Bridge.

years of age.' As more men were soon to be needed in France, training continued at home which included organised sports events. The Chatsworth Rifles (16/SF) won all of the 100 yards heats but not the final however *'Pte. Smith, Chatsworth Rifles, beat Pte. Carlos, Hampshires, in the final of the blindfold boxing'* – this must have been good practice for night time trench raids! Although the main action was around Loos, casualties occurred at all parts of the line and it was at this time, October 5, that Private Edward Yates of 2/SF, the son of Frederick and Mary from Dove Holes was killed near Ypres aged only 16.²⁴

Concerts and fund raising continued apace in October with events advertised at the Pavilion, the Opera House, the Hippodrome and the Picture House and funds being allocated for the Belgians and also 'Tuck for Tommy', a box containing chocolate, sardines, sausage, Bovril, sweets and a tin opener to be sent to soldiers in the line. The far sighted civic leaders were also turning their attention to Christmas. *'This Christmastide the fathers of many children, instead of being at home to assist in the filling of the little mites' stockings, will be fighting for their country's cause. Therefore, any scheme whereby those who remain at home can brighten the lives of these children of our fighting men should be warmly welcomed.'*

In contrast to this, the recruiting drive continued as it became clear that more and more men would be required and that the war would not be of a short duration. The Duke of Devonshire made a lengthy address calling for more volunteers and suggested that conscription was on its way and Major Brown of Buxton recruiting office wrote; *'A recruit who comes forward now is worth three who come after Christmas. A great number of men of eligible age in the district, whose work could be dispensed with or could readily be done by women, are available.'* An anonymous writer, 'One Who Knows', was less polite. *'I look around the old town of Tideswell and see so many – I will not use the mild term of shirkers to them, but I will correctly designate them as what they in reality are, cowards.'*

The reluctance to join up was directly linked to the ever increasing casualty lists appearing in the newspapers. The latest casualty report to appear in late October was unfortunately now telling the tale of the failed attack by the 46th (North Midland) Division at the Hohenzollern Redoubt. The dead were from Staffordshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and of course Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, although the 6/SF, being in reserve, were spared the worst of the slaughter at the redoubt. The 46th Division had suffered 180 officers and 3583 men killed, wounded or missing. The 6th Sherwood Foresters had 13 men killed, one man missing believed killed and Sec. Lieutenants Percival and Gardiner and 48 men wounded. Amongst the casualties reported was; *'Lieut. B W Vann, 8th*

²⁴ 20287 Private Edward Yates, 2/SF, uncle of Chapel Male Voice Choir's longest serving member and lifelong resident of Dove Holes – Edward Green.

*Sherwoods, recently awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry, has been wounded for the third time.*²⁵

An unexpected fillip to recruitment came with the sad news of the execution by the Germans of the British nurse, Edith Cavell. This was seen as an act of horror carried out by barbarians and was used by propagandists to aid enlistment.²⁶ King George V made a country wide appeal; *'I ask you, men of all classes, to come forward voluntarily and take your share in the fight. George RI.'* The death of Cavell and the King's appeal had the desired effect in Buxton. The BA again; *'Boom In Recruiting Continues. The boom in recruiting at the Buxton office continues. Over 200 men have joined the Colours since October 20th. Up to date, the total who have enlisted is 1640, and over 50 are now waiting to join different units.'* There then followed a long list of local names who had enlisted together with news of a Military Cross for Second Lieutenant Innes of Buxton and the death of Sapper Leeke.²⁷

As the debate raged across the country as to whether conscription should be introduced, Lord Derby came up with a halfway house compromise. The Derby scheme allowed men to enlist immediately and choose their regiment or to enlist and then return to their homes and jobs until such time as they were required and then they would report for initial training wherever they were needed. Arthur Barlow, Herbert Ford, William Brocklehurst, Mason Cooper, Charles Element and many other Chapel men took advantage of this scheme, they usually didn't have long to wait for their call up, such was the requirement for new men at the front. This need prompted the commanding officer of 6/SF, Lt. Col. Goodman to write to the BA questioning why so few local men were choosing to join the local battalion? He wrote, *'I can promise a recruit that after the necessary training at home he will be sent with all speed right into the firing line, and what can a soldier want more?'*

On November 22, the Defence of the Realm Act (Liquor Control) Regulations came into force. The most drastic restrictions yet seen for publicans. The new regulations set opening hours for public houses at 12 – 2.30pm and 6 – 9.30pm (9pm on Sundays). The paper reported that; *'The terms of the Order are of a drastic character. Treating is prohibited under the Order, so that it will be an offence for any person to pay for any drink supplied to another. Credit is also prohibited, so that the rural "slate" will no longer do duty. Landlords are not permitted to be generous by giving "long pulls" in order to attract custom and spirits may be diluted.'* Restrictions on the law abiding citizens that had

²⁵ Vann, a pre-war clergyman, would rise to the rank of Lt.Colonel, command a battalion at the front, win a second Military Cross, the Croix De Guerre and a posthumous Victoria Cross after being killed on 4th October 1918.

²⁶ Research today suggests that as well as nursing the wounded of both sides in Belgium, she was undoubtedly sheltering and helping British soldiers to escape captivity.

²⁷ 50313 Sapper C Leeke, 90th Field Company Royal Engineers.

never been seen before were now coming into force and this would eventually lead to further belt tightening and eventually rationing.

Whilst Buxton had provided over 1600 men for the forces, so every small community did its bit too. By November 1915, the 100th man from Dove Holes had enlisted and the paper also noted the names of the 5 men from Dove Holes who had made the ultimate sacrifice. *'William Lomas, William Watts, E Yates, Harry Fletcher and J Herbert Fletcher.'*

November also saw the announcement of gallantry awards for the attack the previous month at the Hohenzollern Redoubt, this included the award of a Victoria Cross and a Military Cross for officers of the Sherwood Foresters Territorial battalions.

VICTORIA CROSS - *'Sec. Lieut. (temp. Capt.) CHARLES GEOFFREY VICKERS, 1st/7th (Robin Hood) Bn. Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regt.) T.F. – for most conspicuous bravery on October 14th 1915, in the Hohenzollern Redoubt. When nearly all his men had been killed or wounded, and with only two available to hand him bombs, Captain Vickers held a barrier for some hours against heavy German attacks from front and flank. Regardless of the fact that his own retreat would be cut off, he had ordered a second barrier to be built behind him in order to ensure the safety of the trench. Finally, he was severely wounded, but not before his magnificent courage and determination had enabled the second barrier to be completed. A critical situation was thus saved.'*²⁸



Victoria Cross

MILITARY CROSS - *'Lieut. (temp. Capt.) VICTOR OWEN ROBINSON, 1st/6th Bn. Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derby Regt.) T.F. – For conspicuous gallantry at Hohenzollern redoubt between Oct. 13 and 15, 1915, when his company was sent forward to the support of another battalion and placed in a portion of the front line trench. He was continuously on duty without rest, and was indefatigable in*

²⁸ Later Sir Geoffrey Vickers 1894-1982.

organising the defence, showing great coolness and judgement. Captain Robinson's name has twice previously been brought to notice for gallantry.'



Military Cross

Back in Chapel, a Novelty was declared! *'Lady Postman'* trilled the BA; *'Necessity is a creator in itself, and at Chapel en le Frith the lack of men owing to the war is being keenly felt. The women folk are coming forward in great numbers everywhere to discharge duties which have formerly been carried out by the men. MISS CHAPMAN takes the morning delivery, and commences about 6.30, finishing about nine o'clock. We are informed that the letters are delivered most expeditiously and on this, all will heartily congratulate Chapel's latest postal recruit.'* It seems amazing today to read such an article but the war really did pave the way for female emancipation.

As Christmas approached, the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire and the local town mayors met to agree another fund raising appeal to provide Christmas gifts for the troops at the front. It was agreed that a sum of £3,000 would be required to cover the cost. Whilst the troops looked forward to the arrival of their Christmas parcels, Corporal F Standbridge wrote to the BA outlining life in the trenches. He stated that being an infantryman was the most dangerous occupation as you were subject to all means of death but; *'...that a bayonet charge is quite the worst ordeal that a man has to face in a war of this description.'* I think we might agree with this even 100 years later.

Christmas, however did not stop the requirement for men to enlist. At the same time, industry and agriculture also needed labour. Chapel's farming community formed a committee and sent a strongly worded message to the War Authorities Board of Agriculture. *'The sons of farmers and farm labourers are being pressed to enlist, which meant that there would be no one left on the farm to sow, reap or do anything else. The authorities should remember that the country and the troops as well are dependent upon farms for produce and that could not be got unless there was sufficient labour on the farms to work them.'* This debate between the enlistment of working men and those being the sons of farmers exempted from service grew in 1916 when conscription was introduced.

At Buxton Lime Works, every man was advised by the Managing Director, T Ryan, to enlist under the Derby scheme. Those who were unfit for war service but who could remain at work or those that were exempted from war service were given a badge and an armlet, so that others in the civilian population didn't view them as shirkers or hand them a white feather – the symbol of cowardice.

On Christmas Day it was reported that Captain the Reverend Tom Middleton, the Chapel Wesleyan minister was home on leave after five months at the front. He preached at the Town End Wesleyan Chapel before returning to France. Several soldiers had their Christmas thanks and good wishes printed in the paper; *'Pte. W Bywater says: I wish to tender my sincere thanks for the parcel of cigarettes I received. I can assure you they are heartily welcomed by every soldier. Pte. D R Evans: I received the parcel today, wishing you all a Very Merry Christmas.'* – Others in the town received a less welcome Christmas present; their call up papers. *'The Derby Recruits – No time has been lost in calling up the Derby recruits – four groups will be needed on the 20th of next month. The groups in question are 2 age 19; 3, 20; 4, 21; 5 22. The notice was conveyed by Royal Proclamation, which was posted up in London early on Saturday morning.'* The only group to escape was group 1, those too young to serve overseas.

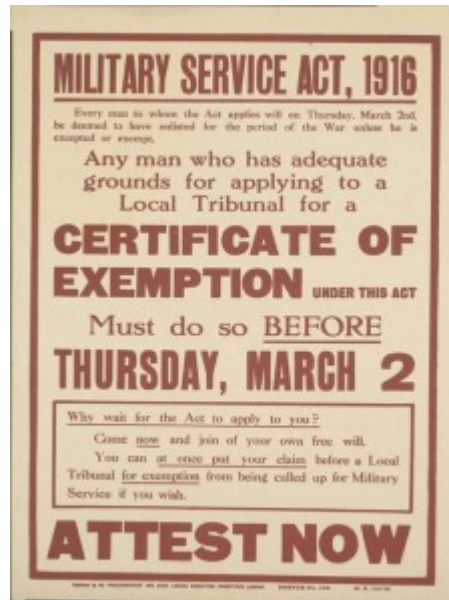
As 1915 came to a close, the Western Front in France and Flanders was at a bloody stalemate, the Gallipoli campaign had been a disaster and the peninsula was being evacuated. At home, government restrictions were starting to bite. Women were beginning to find their place in the world as the men went off to fight and yet there was to be more bad news in 1916 as Kitchener's citizen volunteer army was sent to the Somme.

1916

As January arrived, the High Peak Advertiser (HPA) carried an advert for Naval recruitment. It intimated that conscription was on the way and therefore, if a chap wanted to choose his branch of the service, then now was the time to enlist in the Navy or the Royal Marines. So called cushy trades such as Writer or Steward's Assistants had been closed but in particular demand were Ordinary Seamen and Stokers. *'Skilled men are also needed for Service as Electrical and Engine Room Artificers.'*

Following a vociferous campaign by the Daily Mail and others, the Military Service act was passed in late January. Conscription came into effect on March 2 and was extended to married men in May 1916. By the end of the war, the age for conscription had been extended to 51. Some 750,000 men applied for exemption, especially farmers and their sons and over 16,000 stated that they were Conscientious Objectors, although many served in a non-combatant role.

The Glossop Chronicle reported; *'The Nightmare of Conscription'* but the editorial was very pro conscription stating; *'The dreaded measure of wholesale conscription painted by the agitators has turned out in actual fact to contain nothing more terrible than the granting of legislative sanction to an Act which every patriotic Briton has itched for months past to do with his own hands – the hauling-off of publicly convicted cowards and slackers to do their duty.'*



There was also printed a list of patients in Moorfield Auxillary Home Hospital, Glossop and a selection of letters from Glossop soldiers and sailors thanking the town and in particular, the Mayoress for their Christmas parcels. *'What a tribute they all pay to our worthy Mayoress, these lads of Glossop and district. And how richly merited it is, for Mrs H Partington is indeed the Lady Bountiful of our town, and from a full and generous heart the honoured wife of our chief citizen, has nobly played her part and spared not her purse or herself in her efforts to help the nation. It is work of the kind Mrs Partington and her helpers are doing which nerves our lads for the fight and will enable our noble sons to fight on and on until the cruel might of the Huns is for ever broken.'*

A typical letter read like this; *'To the Mayoress of Glossop, - On behalf of myself and my chum, we thank you for the grand parcels we have received from you. We were in the trenches when we got them. We were up to the knees in mud and water, and the parcel was very welcome, for we had nothing but a bit of jam and cheese, and your parcel was quite a treat to us.'* It was signed by; *'11519 Pte. L Allcock of Dinting Glossop [and] 10723 Pte. E W Bowden, 14 Wood Street, Glossop.'*

At the same time, the Glossop Chronicle (GC), printed a pen picture of life at the front as written by Sergeant W V Furniss of Glossop and also reported on a fine concert held at Hadfield by The Throstles which cleared; *'the sum of £14 in aid of the Hadfield branch of the Red Cross Society funds.'*

With so many men away, it was inevitable that local sports teams would see their fixtures curtailed but this could also lead to financial hardship for the club involved. Glossop were to play Stalybridge Celtic but could only field nine men so borrowed two guest players. The HPA reported that; *'There are those men who are determined to keep the old club going, and are hoping for better times. I understand that Mr S Hill-Wood MP, has again promised to help the club. One would not like to see the old Derbyshire club disband, or even close down for a season as its history is a most honourable one.'*

In May, the Glossop and District cricket league was abandoned indefinitely. The HPA stated; *'Since the outbreak of the great war many of the gallant lads who were wont to disport themselves on the greensward when their favourite summer game was played, have donned their khaki and are now bravely doing their bit for their King and Country.'* However, it was hoped that a couple of fund raising games might be played during the season.

Sport was hampered and discontinued but another worry on the home front was the increasing bombing of civilians by Zeppelins. This was the first war where civilians had become targets from the air. The HPA reported on an unnamed Midlands town that had recently been bombed and three men were killed. They therefore, gave advice to the population; *'What To Do To minimise Air Raid Dangers'* ran the headline; *'One of the things that householders are strongly advised to do is to turn off the gas at the meter. The best course to adopt is to reduce risk by shutting off the supply and resorting to candles. In houses, shops and offices there should always be an ample supply of buckets filled with water.'*

Glossop Town Council added Zeppelin raids to their agenda in February and the Mayor stated that; *'..further lighting restrictions are necessary.'* The Lighting Committee and the Watch Committee were both instructed to meet to agree to these additional restrictions as soon as possible.

In April the GC noted the performance at Glossop Palace of Linga Singh, the Famous Hindoo Sorcerer. *'The performance contributed by Linga Singh, being one of the most mystifying ever witnessed by a Glossop audience. In the course of a brief address, Linga Singh emphasises the loyalty of the people of his native land to England. India's message to this country was, he said, "India for the King and to ---- with the Kaiser".'*

Easter 1916 had seen a failed but bloody uprising in Dublin against British rule. The GC in its Editorial hoped for a speedy reconciliation between all parties but toed the establishment line. *'The tragic farce of the Sinn Fein rebellion has made every loyalist in Ireland, whether Nationalist or Ulsterman, earnestly desire some speedy settlement of the old political differences which, by splitting the loyal majority of the population into warring factions, gave the disloyal minority its recent opportunity of*

mischief.' It is an interesting concept today to think that a proportion of Irish Nationalists were, in time of war, still loyal to King and Empire.

Although the HPA reported extensively about life at home, it did report on the main military actions of the war. On May 31, the mighty Dreadnought battleships of the Royal Navy and the German Navy met for the first and last time at the Battle of Jutland, off the Danish coast. Some 250 ships and 100,000 men were involved. The British Navy suffered the most sinkings but such was the damage done to the German fleet that it returned to port and did not leave again for the duration of the war. Thus the Royal Navy kept control of the North Sea and could enforce the blockade that would eventually bring Germany to its knees.

With so many men involved, it was inevitable that the HPA was able to write that; *Engineer Lieutenant Commander N Roberts goes down with his ship. Many Friends in Glossop and district learned with great regret that Engineer Lieutenant Commander N Roberts, of HMS Nestor, has lost his life in the greatest naval fight of the war, and of all history, which was waged last week off the coast of Jutland.*' Whilst; *'Frank Bridge, son of Mr and Mrs Charles Bridge of St Mary's Road, Glossop displayed such coolness, courage and daring, that he, along with several others of the crew was recommended by the Commander for that coveted award for bravery, the Distinguished Conduct Medal.'*

Fighting on land was not confined to France and Flanders. The GC was happy to print a long letter from Privates Cartwright and Broadbent who were serving in Salonica [Sic]. *'Dear Sir, - Just a few lines to let you know we are having a rough time just now. The place here is one mass of mountains and the worst part of the winter is just starting. Today there is a blizzard on, and we are snowed up.'* In the best tradition of Englishmen, they finished their letter with; *'Well, it is getting near tea time now, so we shall have to close, thanking you one and all for the parcels you so kindly sent.'* Whilst, Corporal W Turner wrote to the GC appealing for local men to enlist *'...to the memory of the late Private J Comerford'*, a local lad who left behind a wife and four children.²⁹

More bad news appeared on the 5 June after HMS Hampshire, an armoured cruiser, hit a mine and sank with the loss of over 700 lives including Lord Kitchener who was on his way to Russia to bolster support from the Tsar. The GC believed that he was; *'...the pivot of the whole of our war machinery, as he was indeed, the best trusted man in the government.'*

July 1916 saw the opening day of the 'big push' on the Somme in an effort to relieve the pressure on the beleaguered French army at Verdun. David Lloyd George became Secretary of State for War. On 1 July the British Army, including many battalions of Kitchener Pals suffered 57,000 casualties, with

²⁹ 2061 Private J J Comerford, 6/Cheshires.

19,000 being killed between Gommecourt and Maricourt on the Somme, including 853 from 46th (North Midlands) Division. Later in the year, the civilians at home would flock in their thousands to watch for the first time a specially made film about the battle, but already the Glossop Palace was screening Pathe News and *'large audiences nightly present have followed with the closest attention the films.'*

With the news of the disaster on 1 July and with the ever increasing casualty lists, the Mayoress, Mrs Partington published a letter received from the Ministry of Munitions. *'I am directed by the Minister of Munitions to enclose herewith a copy of a statement made by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on Thursday, 13th July, with reference to the postponement of the August holidays. The Minister is of the opinion that it is of great importance at this present time to maintain an undiminished output of munitions. For this purpose it appears necessary that all holidays, and not merely those of workmen directly engaged on munitions, should be postponed, and that anything in the nature of a holiday atmosphere should be avoided.'* Nevertheless, for those better off and retired, holidays in Blackpool or the Lake District were well advertised in the paper.

Despite the terrible news from France including the reported deaths of local men, Private J Etchell³⁰ and Gunner W Bramhall, Mr Winston the eyesight specialist was persuaded to spend another week in Glossop. *'Mr. Winston has found during the past week that the strenuous work the war has thrown upon women has considerably affected their eyes and has produced in numerous cases those terrible headaches from which so many women suffer. He has in a majority of cases recommended a pair of lenses to use when they are at work, but which they need not use and – as they think-disfigure themselves afterwards.'* The war provided many avenues to make a bob or two! – Including the growth in Spiritualism and Seances.

With so many bereaved families, many well-meaning and often fraudulent people set up as Spiritualists offering to connect the bereaved with their recently departed soldier husbands, sons and fathers – for a fee. This contrasted with the 'official' Spiritualist Church which also saw a huge growth in its congregation due to the mounting death tally and although there were numerous ways in which individuals profited from the war, the country's bill was also growing. The Chancellor reported in July that the war was now costing £6,000,000 a day but; *'..that his estimate had been out by more than £1,000,000. As a consequence his borrowing powers were becoming exhausted.'* So was Asquith's government.

³⁰ Most probably 11801 Private John Benjamin Etchell, Coldstream Guards. 4034 Gunner Wallace Wood Bramhall, RGA, son of Robert and Martha Bramhall of Sheffield Rd, Glossop.

The rising costs were not all about munitions and guns. By late 1916, the civilian and military postal service was handling some 15,000,000 letters and parcels a week in a very efficient manner. *'Generally it may be assumed that letters sent from England to the Expeditionary Force in France take three days to reach men in billets and four days soldiers in the trenches.'* – remarked the GC. Receiving regular mail and local newspapers was a very important tool in maintaining morale at the front, especially for the citizen volunteers. However, not all of the men could stand the strain, the GC again; *'A soldier under escort at the Chesterfield Great Central Station, at noon on Saturday, jumped onto the line in front of an approaching train and had one foot practically severed. His name is Private George Carline, of the Sherwood Foresters. He was before the local magistrates on Thursday as an absentee, this being his fifth appearance as a deserter.'*

Joseph Jepson felt the need to write to the GC after visiting the Magnet Inn at Gamesley. Here he had seen the framed portraits of 28 young men from the village who had all enlisted voluntarily. He also noted that the village had not yet suffered a death in action, but this did not apply to Glossop as three more local lads had their obituaries in the same edition; *'Private Robert White, Private J McCann and Private Frank Wharmby.'*³¹ The death was also reported of Herbert Partington, Glossop's Mayor who had died intestate with an estate worth £141,500. [£5.6M in 2018]

In October it was reported that Charlie Chaplin would be returning to the Glossop Theatre Royal, no doubt he would provide some laughter amongst the gloom and never ending casualty reports. Also on the bright side was the news that *'Private Harry Lee has been awarded the Military Medal for Gallantry in the Field. This is the first honour, we believe, that has come to the village of Tintwistle, and the news has given much satisfaction, though it was far from the wish of the gallant young soldier that it should reach the press.'*



Military Medal

³¹ 3/35478 Private Frank Wharmby, 10/Cheshires. Possibly 36988 Private Joseph McCann, 10/Gloucesters, from Reddish, Stockport.

Despite the war, some traditions could not be extinguished. *'A trial unique in the history of Derbyshire lead mining, carried on since the time of the Romans, took place on Friday last at Castleton.'* Presided over by Mr. H A Sanders, Steward of the Mines under the Duchy of Lancaster, the case revolved around the claim by the plaintiff, Mr W Eyre who claimed damages for trespass from Mr A W Heginbotham. Mr E W Clegg acting for the plaintiff said; *'...the case was one of the greatest importance and was the first of the kind that the Miner's Court had had to deal with for at least thirty years.'* Certain aspects of life continued unabated, war or no war.

In the Magistrate's Court, DORA was at the forefront once again as George Shuttleworth was fined five pounds for being in possession of a cigarette and a match in a prohibited area at Greenfield Mill. This mill was producing bleached cotton waste which was used in the manufacture of guncotton and it was stated just how *'...dangerous it was if a live match was in the bleached cotton when such was transferred from Greenfield Mill to the munitions factories.'* Poor old Shuttleworth had to pay ten shillings immediately and then seven shillings and sixpence a week until the fine was paid off.

With the arrival of the dark nights again in November, the HPA stated that it had been decided by the; *'...Town Council that the lower portions of street lamps shall be painted white during the dark nights of restricted lighting. But where is the sense, we would respectfully ask, of whitening the street lamp pillars, and leaving the electric standards standing in their garb of funereal blackness? Residents out at night can dodge the lamp pillars and then go crash into the electric standards. If it is not the duty of anyone to see to this, then it should be made somebody's duty, and the sooner it is done and the better for those of us who use our streets at night.'*

In the run up to the third Christmas of the war, Sir Douglas Haig made an appeal for magazines to be sent to the men at the front and the GC heralded with the headline; *'What Sort of Christmas Shall Our Soldiers and Sailors Spend?'* Unfortunately, some would not be spending Christmas at all, including the Buckley brothers from Hadfield, Sam killed in August and William in early December.³²

At this time, the Prime Minister H H Asquith resigned, weighed down by the strain of the war, the introduction of conscription, the large casualty bill and by the loss of his son, Raymond, on the Somme the previous September. A government of National Coalition between the Liberal and Conservative parties, headed by David Lloyd George came to power with the promise of pursuing the war vigorously to a victorious conclusion. This was the last time that a Liberal Conservative coalition ruled until 2010.

³² 29190 Private William Hadfield, 1/East Lancs & 20882 Private Sam Hadfield, 10/SF, sons of Charles & Sarah Hadfield of Hayfield, Stockport.

Christmas 1916 arrived and a war weariness had by now set in amongst the population. There was no end in sight to the dreadful carnage and slaughter and in a editorial comment, the HPA noted that; *'There seems to be a mockery in the singing of the words "Peace on earth and goodwill towards men", when thousands are being slain by their fellow-men.'*

1917

The year 1917 started as 1916 had finished with more local casualties being reported, this time by the High Peak News (HPN). *'Our readers in the Dove Holes and Chapel en le Frith district will be sorry to hear that one of the most promising young men the district ever sent forth to war has fallen a victim, namely, Lieutenant Ernest Howe, MB, RAMC.'* Dove Holes also lost at this time, Private Clement Ford of the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment.³³

The Longson family was in the news again in late January with a report that Frank had been wounded in the eye and that Wilfred was home on leave after spending a considerable time at the front. It was now expected that Wilfred would go to an officers' training course and receive a commission in due course.

As the war carried on its never ending path, life at home retained a certain amount of daily order. Chapel en le Frith magistrates, fined Harold Hill for speeding and driving dangerously through the town, despite him having an urgent telegram from the Minister of Munitions to report in Lincoln for work vital to the war effort.

In February two gypsy lads, Samuel and Joseph Brown were apprehended by the police in an isolated barn and placed before a tribunal under the Military Service Act. Neither could read or write, their births had never been registered and they did not know how old they were. Alderman G Slater, heading the tribunal, asked; *'Did they know there was a war on? They said that was just about all they did know.'* The Tribunal handed them over to a military escort. No one was immune from doing their duty.

The Picture House at Buxton took a large advert in the HPN to advertise "With The Empire's Fighters". Described as the; *'Greatest of all War Films, Photographed and described by H D Girdwood, BA, FRGS. Trench warfare at close quarters. Wave after wave of Gurkhas charging. The Leicesters going over the top. Capture of German trench. The Staffords advancing. – The thrilling story of these wonderful pictures graphically told by H D Girdwood, the man who actually faced*

³³ Lieutenant Ernest Howe RAMC, son of John and Anne Howe of Dove Holes and husband of Gertrude. 20066 Private Clement Ford, 3/King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment), son of John and Sarah Ford of Meadow Lane, Dove Holes.

death to get a good film.’ – and make money from the experience!! The public’s appetite for news of their loved ones would ensure that every seat was sold and there were four screenings per day.

Percy Goddard also placed an advert; *‘Whilst Percy Goddard is serving with His Majesty’s Forces, Piano Tuning will be carried on AS USUAL at the Music Warehouse, 59 Spring Gardens, Buxton.’* It was important to let folks know that you were doing your bit. Whilst, at the Opera House, Pygmalion was the star attraction for early March.

The war continued to provide business opportunities for those with a flair and an imagination.

Hawker and Botwood of London advertised their new product – CORVUSINE DG – *‘CORN is wanted to feed the nation NOT THE BIRDS.’* How many local farmers were tempted to buy, is not recorded.

However, with the Germans resuming unrestricted submarine warfare in early 1917, an act which would lead to the entry into the war of the United States, the country was running short of food. The new Prime Minister, Lloyd George, appealed to the nation for every spare man still at home with any knowledge of gardening or the countryside to volunteer for National Service to help farmers to plant every available acre of land. *‘Are YOU going to let those precious weeks slip by? If you can use a spade or a hoe; if you can manage horses, - you MUST volunteer. It will be too late to be sorry when YOU are faced with an empty larder. There’s still time to plant and sow the food that YOU will need. Come at once. Back up the men in the trenches.’*

The pressure to serve was relentless. A poem in the HPN from an unnamed Fairfield soldier summed up the feeling very well.

*‘Fancy socks of the Stay at homes,
What are you going to do?
There are blanks in the files of the blood stained miles
Of the trenches we hold for you!*

*Fancy Socks of the stay at homes,
Gird on your manhood, do;
We’ll fight for the lives of your girls and wives,
But why should we fight for you?*

*Fancy socks of the stay at homes,
Double out to the fighting line;
Dare you disgrace a fighting race?
Dare you the job decline?*

*Fancy socks of the stay at homes,
To your brothers, O be true!
We’ll fight for the fame of old England’s name,
But why should we fight for you?*

Women in the workplace was now becoming a common sight but was not without its risks. *‘Whilst following her employment as assistant to Mr. F Butler, butcher, Miss Florence Mellor had the*

misfortune to injure her finger rather severely in a mincing machine. She was attended by Dr. Nightingale and is now making favourable progress.'

In April, the Picture House was advertising The Beast but the real beast of April was the British offensive north, east and south east of Arras. Like many British offensives between 1915 and 1917, initial success was achieved but the inability, due to the conditions, to bring up fresh men, ammunition and the artillery left the exhausted attacking troops open to German counterattacks. This offensive, which was in support of the disastrous French army Nivelle offensive, on the Chemin de Dames, had one major success, the taking of Vimy Ridge primarily by the Canadian Corps.

This Canadian success, when all of their divisions fought side by side for the first time, is said to have heralded the birth of the nation, and therefore, it is no surprise to see an advert in the HPN in May for the '*Celebrated CANADIAN MILITARY BAND of Reserve Artillery*' who were booked to play at the Pavilion Gardens, Buxton every day from 26 to 30 May.

In early June, Bert Longson, who had lost both of his legs in action in 1915 was called up for medical re-examination. These ongoing medical checks were to ascertain the level of disability incurred, so as to decide on the level of war pension that an injured man was entitled to. It was also noted that the well-known footballer; '*Sgt. Ernest Hallam, of the Territorials, was home on leave. He went to France in February 1915, and has been wounded once. His many friends were pleased to see him.*'

The HPN on 9 June 1917, contains a very interesting letter from a writer signing himself Vox Populi. He notes that talk has already started about the post war erection of a town war memorial in Chapel en le Frith and that Mr Frood of the Herbert Frood Co. Ltd had offered to underwrite the cost. The writer is perturbed that the meeting held to discuss this issue was negative in its outlook and would not countenance an important public location for the memorial. He states; '*I contend, Sir, that the very best and most public position in the town for the erection of this memorial is the least that can be done, and that every other consideration should be subservient to it.and that it should be a substantial permanent memorial, with all the names of those fallen inscribed upon it.*' As was common in many parts of the country, temporary street shrines had sprung up and Chapel's was at the Parish Church and unfortunately there; '*...are now 73 names of men who have fallen in battle on the War Shrine.*'

In June, the High Peak was invaded by a plague of caterpillars, allegedly caused by the destruction of birdlife so as to save food for human consumption but June also saw the start of the Battle of Messines, a British success in Flanders when 19 large mines were exploded under the German lines after months of tunnelling. This attack was a pre-cursor to Haig's grand plan for a breakout east of Ypres the following month. The 3rd Battle of Ypres, which would start on 31 July is known today better by the name of its last phase, Passchendaele.

The losses on the Somme in 1916 and at Arras, Ypres and Cambrai in 1917 would test the British Army's resolve to the full. Douglas Haig believed in the offensive and Lloyd George whilst politically supporting the military was horrified by the butcher's bill and started a policy of keeping new recruits longer at home. This policy would very nearly lose the war for the allies in the spring of 1918 but in 1917, the search for every available man continued.

'Justice', a letter writer to the HPN, summed up his feelings. 'Are all our eligible young men coming forward resolved to do their duty in this grave hour of necessity? I, as a Tideswellian, unhesitatingly say NO. There are about thirty young men who are quite as capable of performing military duties as those brave lads who volunteered at the commencement of the war. There is too much badge hiding for one thing, and when one hears one of these contemptible shirkers, openly declare that he has obtained badge exemption which affords him exemption and which he asserts, he intends only to retain until the end of the war, one cannot but feel disgusted.'

In late June it was reported that Sergeant Longson and Gunner Arthur Barlow had both been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) and that haymaking had started on Colonel Barlow's farm; *'..we learn that the crop is a heavy one.'*



The Distinguished Conduct Medal

In August, the weather had turned against hay making but heavy downpours led to good trout fishing being available in both the Wye and the Derwent once the water had cleared. A fish of 3lbs had been killed at Darley and the HPN stated; *'Last Saturday was the best day of 1917 for bottom fishing and prospects are excellent.'*

By late 1917, it was possible for a man to have served at the front, be discharged due to wounds and now be active back in civilian life. This applied to Lieutenant F J Hick who had served for a year, been wounded twice, discharged and was now the bank manager at William Deacon's bank in Chapel. Hick used the opportunity to display his war souvenirs at the bank, the HPN describing the display as a 'most interesting little war museum.' The article continued; *'We were privileged to inspect Lieut. Hick's collection [which] includes a German Bayonet and a German hand grenade, captured on 10 March 1916 after the Huns had made a raid on the British trenches. There are also several types of nose caps, a piece of shell, shrapnel bullets, pieces of glass taken from Albert Cathedral and different kinds of gas helmets. Other interesting things are a French 75 [mm] shell case, a quantity of French bullets, a Belgian bayonet, and a very fine collection of postcards.'*

War pensions, previously mentioned, were not very generous and a man with a war disability may not be fit for a return to normal working life. Therefore, it often required some imagination and talent to get by. The Hippodrome at Buxton had on in September for one week only; *'The Khaki Boys – Ten Wounded and Discharged Soldiers in a Brilliant Entertainment. Direct from their London Success.'*

Whilst crowds would flock to the Hippodrome, the papers carried their grim tale of the desperate fighting in Flanders as the BEF inched towards the village of Passchendaele in the same August rain that had been so good for the local anglers. Lance Corporal Willis Evans and Sapper Leonard Riley were reported as wounded whilst Tom Worthy and Louis Crowder were killed. Crowder was an exceptional and well known cricketer and billiards player; *'One of the most skilful exponents of the game in the Peak District', stated the HPN.*³⁴

The tank had first been used in action in September 1916 but was initially unreliable and as a new weapon, it was not understood by the tacticians what it was capable of. By late November 1917, the

³⁴ 204551 Private Tom Worthy, 1/Royal Scots Fusiliers, son of Mr and Mrs P Worthy of Scarthin, Matlock Bath. 25801 Lance Corporal Louis Crowder, 16/SF.

new Mark IV tank was more reliable and available in large numbers. Following the closing down of the 3rd Battle of Ypres with the capture of a large part of the Passchendaele Ridge, the Tank Corps believed that away from the apocalyptic mud of Flanders, the tank could show what it was capable of. A quiet sector of the front, less damaged by shell fire outside of the German held town of Cambrai was chosen for a major tank, infantry, artillery and air force combined offensive. These new all arms tactics proved so successful on November 20, that a large hole was punched into the German lines. This was hitherto unheard of on the Western Front and as a result the British failed to exploit the situation and the Germans eventually recovered their position. However, the lesson was slowly being learnt although the manpower shortages were starting to bite.

As the tank came of age, so in November the HPN reported that; *'There is now urgent need of women over 20 years of age for motor tractor work. The terms offered are free training, outfit and travelling expenses. After training the wages will be 24s [shillings] a week for the first two weeks, 30s per week thereafter and a bonus of 1s per acre ploughed.'*

By late November as the fourth Christmas of the war approached, the papers were advertising gifts including the 1917 Pears Annual priced at 1s, which would include *'5 New Stories and 3 Magnificent Plates [pictures] – Give Your Order Now To Your Newsagent So That You May Not Be Disappointed.'*

The Triple Alliance of Britain, France and Russia was now broken. The Germans secretly bankrolled the Russian revolution and the new Bolshevik government sued for peace with the Germans. With the ending of the fighting on the Eastern Front, the Germans were able to move over 500,000 men from the east to the west in readiness for one last roll of the dice in 1918 – a major offensive to win the war before the might of America could be brought to bear against them. The home war effort went on unceasingly. *'Have YOU Helped Your Country?'* – A final plea in 1917 for the population to buy War Bonds to bankroll the nation's fight for survival.

1918

On January 2 the Buxton Herald and Gazette (BHG) reported the proceedings of the Derbyshire War Pensions Committee. *'During 1917 the total amount of grants paid was £295 6s 7d; postages and stationery £3 5s 2d – Total expenditure £298 11s 9d. Number of soldiers wives and widows assisted, 52; reports on discharged disabled soldiers 36; grants made by civil Liabilities Committee to 42 persons; yearly amount £948 10s. Deaths recorded of soldiers killed in action in the Buxton district 44.'*

Despite the sadness that many families had incurred, the BHG was upbeat about Buxton's prospects for 1918. Its editorial suggested that the Spa, the entertainment centres and the public parks should remain open and be; *...made as pretty as possible by having a rich profusion of foliage and bloom in the flower beds &c. Painting of garden seats, railings and shop and house fronts must not be scrimped. "It is an ill wind that blows naebody guid" – and consequently we look forward with optimism during 1918.'* However, such optimism couldn't stop rationing being officially introduced in early January, sugar to start with followed by margarine, meat, flour, milk and butter.

The adverts at the end of 1917 for War Bonds seemed to have the desired effect. For the week-ending 22 December, Buxtonians bought £6,320 against a set quota of £5,000 and in the following week, in a fit of patriotism; *'the amount realised was £13,035. Well done Buxton!'* Those at home able to buy bonds could also carry on with their daily lives. The BHG again; *'A marriage has been arranged between Mr, Sydney Ellis (Trench Warfare), Ministry of Munitions and Petronilla Kathleen Ryan, Sherbrook, Buxton.'* There were no such luxuries for Buxton soldier, Co. Sgt. Major Peter Kavanagh in Salonica, who; *'...has been mentioned in Dispatches by the General Officer Commanding. He has been out over two years. We all wish him a safe return.'* A happy wedding in Buxton must have seemed a million miles away to Kavanagh.

An original pantomime, Alice In Peakland was being performed at the Opera House with all receipts being given to the Buxton and District Cottage Hospital and other local charities but whilst all of this seasonal enjoyment was available to those at home, the search for more fit men continued. The BHG again; *'The need for men for the army of all grades is now very great, and the authorities are urging Recruiting Officers and Military Representatives to do all in their power to procure every man possible. It is urged that men who formerly might have been considered indispensable, could now be released without serious dislocation of business.'*

Everyone, military and civil were aware of the impending German Spring Offensive but politically, the Government were holding back new recruits in Britain. The BEF at the front was stretched and this position was exacerbated when Lloyd George, without discussion with his generals, agreed to the BEF taking over an additional 30 miles of front from the French. Despite this state of affairs in France, the wheels of DORA continued turning at home. Two Swiss subjects, were charged at Buxton of having failed to register at the police station as Aliens whilst on holiday at Haddon Hall Hydro. It was found that they were; *'...friendly aliens. The Chairman said it was a very serious matter failing to register, and they were liable to a penalty of £100. The bench had taken into consideration what Mr. Oram had said, and would only inflict a fine of 10s each.'*

Inflation was by now, raging in the economy. Wages at home had risen but foodstuffs were expensive and in short supply. Amidst this scenario, a letter was printed in the BHG asking for yet more public generosity for *'The Sherwood Foresters Prisoners of War Appeal.'* – *Just under 900 Sherwood Foresters are prisoners in Germany and Turkey. Some of these men have been in captivity for over three years and have endured severe privations and many cruelties at the hands of their captors. The Sherwood Foresters Prisoners of War Regimental Care Committee are responsible for the welfare of all these men, and have to arrange for each man to have six parcels of food per month, and a regular weekly supply of bread from Berne. The latter costs 7s 6d per month for each man.'* The letter concluded; *'The committee believe that, in spite of the heavy calls upon the generosity of the public, they will not appeal in vain for prompt and liberal help for these brave men, who have lost their liberty in defending ours.'*

Food, or the lack of it, was now a major daily topic and it spawned this humorous ditty amongst the men;

*'The Brigadier likes turkey
The Colonel-he gets duck,
The officers have ham and eggs;
And think themselves in luck;
The sergeants they have bread and cheese,
And mop up all they can,
But all the poor old Tommies get
Is bread and blankey jam'*

Whilst Tommy Atkins may have thought himself hard done by, it was nothing to that which the German army was now suffering and the German people at home. The Royal Navy's continual blockade of all German ports was by now having a severe and increasing effect on German morale. This would exacerbate as the year went on.

Military Tribunals were constantly combing out men at home for war service, including a 41 year old coal porter. His employer explained that he was the last able bodied man he had who could fill and lift a sack of coal. Major Buckley, for the tribunal asked; *'Couldn't a man with a wooden leg do it?'* Despite his employer's pleas, the man was ordered to report for service on April 17. Such a local man was Walter Hyde who served in the Sherwood Foresters but lost a leg due to gangrene. He was a

mainstay of the Birch Vale Male Voice Choir after the war, living until 1976.³⁵ Economy of food and economy of expense was the order of the day. It was reported that the Herald would no longer be available at the Free Library, so as to save 1d [one penny] per week. This prompted a response from the public and several generous citizens sent donations to ensure that the paper was not only available at the Free Library but also at the Devonshire Hospital. At the same time the High Peak Hospital Committee made a decision not to treat German prisoners from the Peak Dale Internment Camp as many had Diphtheria which could be passed to others.

With food in short supply, Captain E G Fairholme, Chief Secretary of the RSPCA, in response to a speech by a Mr Prothero, which said that all carriage and pleasure horses should be killed or put out to grass, suggested that the new humane killer be used. *'The RSPCA humane killer is being successfully used in thousands of slaughterhouses, and has now been adopted by the military authorities for slaughtering at the Metropolitan Cattle Market, the horses to be used for human consumption.'*

On the same tack, a BHG editorial stated that reports of shortages at home were troubling the men at the front. *'...their lot is hard enough without being told that their wives and children at home have not sufficient food. I would ask them to put a cheerful courage on, and while the men at the front are doing their part without complaining, let us at home remember we are much better off than our enemies.'*

On March 21, the Germans launched the first of four major offensives against the Allies in an effort to deliver the knockout blow and win the war. The first attack was against the British 3rd and 5th Armies south of Arras down beyond St Quentin. The 5th Army was very short of men for the long length of front it was expected to hold and rapidly fell back which meant that the 3rd Army had to comply or leave its flank in the air. By the end of April, all of the ground so bloodily won since 1916 on the Somme had been lost and the German's were within sight of Amiens and further south, threatening Paris but the German army had sustained huge losses in the face of staunch defence and was running out of steam.

However, back at home it was announced that the Board of Agriculture had decided that hens were to be rationed to one ounce of grain a day and it was suggested that owners seek naturally available foods like acorns and dandelions to feed their flock. Food became a daily topic of conversation and the newspapers were full of comment about the worsening situation caused primarily by the

³⁵ Birch Vale Male Voice Choir amalgamated with Chapel MVC in the 1950s, Walter's two sons and one of his grandsons are current members of Chapel MVC.

German U-Boat campaign. The topic, was not without its moments of humour, the BHG reported an overheard conversation about horse meat; *'My husband, Said Mrs A to Mrs B, Swears he won't touch it. So does mine replied Mrs B, But he's eaten it twice without knowing it, and if there's no other meat to be had tonight he'll get it again.'*

At the end of March an editorial comment appeared as the scarcity of food really started to hit home; *'We say that the man who grows two acres of wheat or potatoes for every acre he grew a year ago, is doing fine service for the country, for he is helping to combat the U-Boat menace as surely as the men who hunt the food-ship sinkers on the ocean.'* Unfortunately, not everyone could see that farmer's sons exempted from military service were doing their bit by staying at home to grow foodstuffs. Derbyshire, it was said, grew 21,400 tons of potatoes in 1917 but consumed 65,600 tons, and it was therefore imperative that anyone with an allotment or a garden planted additional potatoes in 1918.

It was not only the farmer's sons who were exempted from military service, in April solicitors were given exemption too, but it was announced that military service would now be mandatory for those aged up to 51 and fit and able. There also appeared in the BHG, instructions as to how to use your ration coupons in the local shops and the population was extolled to; *'Eat less; breathe more. Talk less; think more. Ride less; walk more. Clothe less; bathe more. Worry less; work more.'* As the state of the home front worsened, DORA was still in operation as a Mrs Mabel Hewitson was fined ten shillings for having a naked light on show from her window in the evening.

Following the success in Fairfield, a second National Kitchen was opened in Buxton by the mayor. He said; *'The National Kitchen was not a charity but a purely business proposition, where they could get good nutritious food well-cooked, cheaper than they could get it at home, and the more people who used the kitchen the cheaper would the dishes become. The main objects were to save food and fuel, at a time when both were becoming difficult to obtain. They hoped to have two meat dishes a week, and it would be necessary for anyone requiring a portion of those dishes to bring to bring their meat tickets- half a coupon would be sufficient, and that would be detached.'*

At the end of April the exhausted Germans and the beleaguered British once again dug in, some 50 miles westwards and static trench warfare resumed. The newspapers noted the shortage of men but requested; *'Fifteen hundred are required at once for the Royal Marines Labour Corps for service in North French ports loading and unloading ships. This gives a chance for men above the present military age to volunteer...'* It was also reported that one of the first war memorials had been unveiled in Chapel church. *'A marble tablet inscribed, "He loved duty more than he feared death."*

*has been erected to the memory of Acting-Sergeant Harold H Walker, of that town, who died of wounds received in the battle of the Somme, and is buried in Rouen cemetery.*³⁶

Calls to arms and duty intensified from the Prime Minister, Rudyard Kipling and Douglas Haig among others, newspapers whipped up the frenzy and the propaganda war continued apace. The American presence on the Western Front was growing and the Allies were looking for a new opportunity to renew the offensive after two months of retreat.

Not only were older men in great demand but so were older women. The age at which you were expected to do your duty was increasing and with the women's push for equality came the necessity for an equal share of the burden, although it was noted that by mid-1918 nine out of every ten employed in the munitions factories was a woman. Tobacco, was a staple product for the majority of the population at home and in France and was also in short supply. *'Tobacco costs us more, but, thanks always to the British Navy, we do get tobacco to fill our pipes, even in war time. It is very different in Germany and Austria.'* stated the BHG in June. It was also being reported at this time that during the German offensive of late March, their troops had stopped advancing when they overran British supply dumps, so as to enjoy cigarettes, beer, chocolate and foodstuffs not available to them for over a year.

Although it was not recognised at the time, the tide was about to turn in the Allies' favour as the Germans, short of supplies, short of young men and short on morale faced an ever increasing Allied response.

Despite the arrival of fit and fresh American troops, Britain still required its manpower to do their duty and in June the BHG published the expected news that; *'The Director General of National Service has issued an Order dated 15th June 1918, directing that every reservist born in the years 1867, 1868 and 1869, who is in the Reserve shall report himself at such place and on such date as he may be required by a calling up notice to be served on him.'* Thus a 51 year old could suddenly find himself directly involved in the war effort overseas.

The arriving Americans, although young and fit, were not hardened to battle and still had the naivety that the British had in 1914 before the horrors of the war were apparent. The BHG again; *'A troop train was passing through laden with American soldiers one of whom put his head out of the window and inquired with the utmost nonchalance "I say boys, what is this little 'scrap' you have got on in the old country?"* I suspect that he found out soon enough, as would many of the black American soldiers who had enlisted. As Britain was a very white society 100 years ago, the news that black

³⁶ Harold Hadfield Walker, Son of John George and Susan Walker, of Market St., Chapel-en-le-Frith, Stockport. Enlisted 8th Sept., 1914. Was a member of the Staff of The Manchester and County Bank, Ltd. (Piccadilly Branch), Manchester. Died 11th August 1916.

soldiers were on their way to the front was enough for the BHG to comment; *'What sort of fighting stock can be expected to come of a savage and slave ancestry? Every student of the American Civil War knows the answer. Some of the best troops in that terrible struggle were blacks. It is not in the ranks alone that the negro fighter is found. There are 650 commissioned officers, all men of college education....and, in addition, 225 negroes are serving as doctors and dentists, which implies that they hold diplomas from colleges.'*

Still the struggle went on for additional manpower both at home and abroad. The BHG carried a large advertising article for more women to join the Land Army; *'To make England entirely self-supporting, and to release even more men for the Front and more food ships for American transports, the Land Army is appealing for 30,000 recruits.'* In tandem with this appeal was a further call on the population to invest their savings in War Bonds – it was now a fight to the finish.

On July 4 at Le Hamel, the Australians, with four American companies, in one of the first all arms offensives, drove the Germans back over a mile in 90 minutes. This was a prelude to the opening day of the Battle of Amiens on August 8, where a combined all arms offensive, including some 500 tanks, on a wide front broke the German lines east of Amiens. This, said German commander Erich Ludendorff, was the 'Black Day' for the German army. This day heralded the final 100 days of the war that would lead to an Allied victory and the Armistice in November.

Despite the turn of the tide on the Western Front, life carried on at home and Buxton magistrates found themselves hearing a case against one of the Belgian refugees who had settled in the town. *'Joseph Gorremans, a Belgian Refugee, employed at Haddon Hall Hydropathic Establishment, was charged with stealing 94 preserve jars and bottles of the value of £5, at Buxton, on August 5th.'* The Fairfield Military Tribunal also met to hear the case of a; *'Joiner and undertaker, 46, Grade 2,'* who was; *'..given temporary exemption until November 1st, conditional on his doing work of national importance.'*

Also in front of the magistrate was Ernest Redfern aged 12, Ralph Redfern 13, and Herbert Carter 12. They were accused of stealing eggs from the hen-cote of a Mr Markendale. Unfortunately for the boys, the owner had marked the eggs and the boys were caught red-handed boiling them in a pan of water over a fire. *'Mr Redfern, the father of two of the boys, said he was very glad they had been caught, or later they might have been there for something worse. The Chairman sentenced the boys to each receive six strokes of the birch, the parents to pay the costs between them.'* There was no mercy attributable to hunger.

As the Allied armies continued their daily advance and for the first time there appeared to be a possibility that the war might end in 1918, certain aspects of life at home returned to normal. It had

been forbidden in 1914 for parish church bells to be rung and the only time this had been relaxed had been after the opening day successes of the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917, but in late August the BHG was able to report; *'For the first time at Chapel en le Frith two ladies who are staying in the neighbourhood took part in ringing the Parish Church bells for both morning and evening services. The parishioners of this ancient town were highly gratified to hear once more a peal of six bells.'*

In London the political shake down was also underway. The wartime national coalition government headed by David Lloyd George was looking to cement its position by holding a snap general election. Many questions remained unanswered, including votes for women, given their sterling war efforts both at home and in France and Flanders. The Marquis of Hartington announced that he would stand for North East Derbyshire as a Coalition candidate but *'Colonel Harland Bowden, the present representative has announced his intention of opposing the Marquis of Hartington, and that he has many Conservative sympathisers.'* The BHG noted that the; *'...political situation is curious, and future developments will be followed with deep interest.'*

In an uncanny omen, the BHG had a tale of three brothers who were reunited for the first time since November 1914. Lieutenant A F R Linaker, Lance Corporal A B Linaker and Flight Cadet G S Linaker were at home and the paper noted; *'..it is the first time the brothers have met since the November of the first year of the war, and people of a superstitious turn might be inclined to accept it as an omen that the present may prove the last year.'*

In September, the BHG was still able to write an editorial exhorting the local men of advanced years to join the National service and made it plain that men over the age of 45 in Grade 2 and Grade 3 (fitness categories) now had the opportunity of carrying out less physically demanding work and if they enrolled for this work, they were unlikely to have to appear before one of the Service Tribunals. In another sign that there was optimism that the war would shortly end, organisations for veterans started to spring up. Eventually these organisations, with many different objectives and political persuasions, would come together to form the British Legion but in September 1918 it was announced that a branch of the Comrades of the Great War would be using rooms at the Spring gardens in Buxton *'...to perpetuate the memory and story of the gallant men and women who died for their country, and to promote a spirit of comradeship amongst discharged men of every branch of the service. It is also a main object of the Society to look after the pensions of all ex-members of the Forces, and to watch and safeguard their interests wherever possible.'*³⁷

³⁷ Other organisations were The National Association of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers and The National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers. All were formed in 1917.

By late September, the Germans had been forced back to their 'impregnable' Hindenburg Line and the by now, largely young conscript, British Army was preparing to break this line. Technology was playing an ever increasing role and the BHG noted that, *'The invention of "tanks" has been one of the most valuable of the war. There is nothing like the tank for clearing out nests of enemy machine guns, and they have been the direct means of saving the lives of many thousands of British soldiers.'*³⁸ On September 29, the 46th (North Midland) Division including the 6/SF became the first British division to break the Hindenburg Line when the Staffordshire's captured intact, the Riqueval Bridge. On their left flank were the 27th and 30th American divisions.

Although the Germans were now in full flight, they were able to put up long periods of staunch defence and as their home front collapsed into near starvation, so there was less food available with which to feed the prisoners they were holding. The BHG again had to appeal to the British population for help; *'There are now 2,442 Sherwood Foresters prisoners of war in Germany, and the cost of sending parcels through the Care Committee of Derby is £6,330 per annum. As there are several Buxton boys amongst them, there is an obvious duty here for all of us to contribute to the fund all we can.'*³⁹

Therefore, it is no surprise that The Ministry of Food tried very hard to control the situation to stop Black Market racketeering. A notice in the BHG under the Defence of the Realm Act in mid-September placed further controls on such diverse products as Jam, Poultry and Game Birds, Peas, Beans and Pulses, Grain Prices, Canned Salmon and also; *'The Rats order, 1918, gives power to the Local Authorities to take such measures as may appear necessary to them with regard to the destruction of rats.'*

DORA was still active in other fields, including those of entertainment. *'Billiard saloons will have to close at half past ten in the evening this winter. As they consume a large amount of gas -six lights to a table- the Coal Controller is of opinion that that hour is reasonable enough time for sporting amusement of that kind to close, and they will receive fuel and light rations accordingly.'* Everyone was urged to save coal; *'Don't let the fire burn fiercely. Don't mend a fire late at night. Take off the coal when going to bed. Don't use the poker.'* Opined the BHG.

As the war news improved, albeit with substantial losses, so the politicians, ever eager to make the right impression, laid on a series of Propaganda Tours. The BHG again; *'In order that people in every*

³⁸ Brakes for British tanks were manufactured by Herbert Frood's company Ferodo in Chapel en le Frith. After the war the company was presented with a tank courtesy of the War Office.

³⁹ The constant appeal to the general population has to be looked at in context. By 1918, the poorest families did not have sufficient income to use up all of their ration coupons and generally, families were consuming only four-fifths of the meat they had consumed in 1912 and by July 1920 the cost of living was 152% higher than in July 1914.

part of the United Kingdom, including the most remote villages, may obtain a fuller picture knowledge of the events of the war and why we have still to continue it, a number of cinematograph motor-cars have left London to show films throughout the land.'

By October, the Germans were actively seeking an Armistice but their terms, relayed to the Allies by intermediaries, were unacceptable. It had to be surrender on the Allies terms or a fight to the finish. The Prime Minister's address for a 'Just and Desirable Peace' was published throughout the land, he sought the knowledge that; *'The Prussian military power must not only be beaten, but Germany itself must know it.'*

In the BHG of 16 October it was reported that; *'On Sunday morning the news spread like wildfire in Buxton and the surrounding villages that the war was over.'* Such thoughts were still a little premature. However, as the German's predicament worsened, they did start repatriating wounded prisoners who they could no longer care for, including Buxton lad, Corporal J W Mitchell of 2/6 SF who had been wounded and captured in the German Spring Offensive of 21 March. *'He lay for fifteen hours before being picked up by a German stretcher party; his wounds were then given a rough field dressing; and he received no further attention until 1st April, eleven days later, and after gangrene had set in, which necessitated amputation of the left arm about three inches below the elbow.'* The story continued with a direct quotation from Mitchell; *'The treatment of prisoners behind the lines was something disgraceful, and could not have been worse if our captors had been savages; in fact, we were treated more like cattle than human beings, but when we got to Germany proper, we were not so badly done to, although we were frequently without food; but then the Germans have very little for themselves, let alone for prisoners, and you may be sure Fritz always came first when it came to distribution. Of course, we got parcels through from England which kept us going, and we also had bread parcels from Switzerland and Holland, which were very acceptable.'* These repatriations were carried out with the assistance of the International Red Cross.

As November arrived, the fighting continued but talk of peace increased and this prompted the BHG to report the words of The Parliamentary Secretary to Munitions, he said; *'..if there be not work enough for everyone after the war, the women must stand aside and make room for the men who come back. The men from the front must be in front of the queues of civilians, whether it is a question of work or pay, food or fuel.'* He then went on to say; *'.. after the first inevitable confusion of sorting and returning soldiers and prisoners, women would be reabsorbed into industry – that is to say, they will be wanted to work for making a new world after the war, just as they were wanted to work for victory.'*

The Hippodrome, The Picture House and The Opera House all had full programmes to perform in early November but also to the fore was the news that jam was now to be rationed. *'...retailers will be permitted to sell jam to their registered customers only, and coupons must be detached from leaf 5 of the customer's ration book. The ration books of persons between the ages of 6 and 18 contain extra jam coupons, but these are not available for use until further notice.'*

At the monthly meeting of the Buxton Council, one item on the agenda was the proposed war memorial. Councillor Buckley said; *'They all believed they were rapidly approaching the end of the war, and that being so, there were certain things that should be done. The time had come to consider the advisability of preparing plans for the erection of a memorial to those men of Buxton and the High Peak who had fallen in the war.'*

Eventually, worn down by the Royal Navy's blockade of its ports and the ever increasing pressure of the Allied advance in France and Flanders, the German military government fell from office, the Kaiser abdicated to Holland and an Armistice came into effect at 11am on the 11 November 1918. The fighting had ended but the war would not officially end until the summer of 1919 with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Localised warfare in many regions continued but three great Empires had fallen, the Romanovs in Russia, the Hohenzollerns in Germany and the Hapsburgs in Austro-Hungary. Many smaller countries escaped from these Empires and looked forward to independence but of most concern was a worldwide pandemic of 'Spanish Flu' that infected a third of the world's population and is believed to have killed between 20 and 100 million people, no exact records exist.

However, back in Buxton celebrations were the name of the game. *'News that the Armistice with Germany had been signed and the cessation of hostilities was received in Buxton early in the forenoon of Monday, and within a very short period the town underwent a complete metamorphosis. From the Town Hall, hotels, hydros and other public buildings were hoisted the Union Jack and flags of the Allies-bunting and bannerettes which had been stored away for years were hastily dragged out, and were soon fluttering from prominent positions on nearly every house in the town.'*



Despite the end of hostilities, the daily grind and shortage of food was to continue. A BHG editorial stated; *'Now that the Armistice is signed and we may hope that the last shot of Armageddon has been fired, many people may be under the impression that all we have to do is to "resume normal conditions". Normal conditions will not resume for many a day to come.'* Someone had to shoulder the blame for this state of affairs and of course it has to be the losers. The Prime Minister stated; *'After Victory comes the judgement; the terms of peace must include punishment for the vile crimes and criminals which the war has found in the German ranks.'* The Treaty of Versailles not only carved up the world at the behest of the Victors but inflicted terrible financial reparations on the beaten Germans and their ailing economy.⁴⁰



Peace Day 1919 The Crescent, Buxton.

⁴⁰ It has been suggested that the very terms inflicted upon the Germans at Versailles, led to the economic and social conditions that would allow Adolf Hitler's National Socialism to rise to power in the 1930s, and therefore, rather than being the War to end all Wars, it was in fact the pre-cursor to WWII.

By the year's end, the returning soldiers, as expected, started to find employment. Lieutenant Josiah Taylor of 6/SF was recommended to become the Clerk to the Governors of Cavendish High School, the Food Controller made an order fixing the price of eggs at 5s 6d (five shillings and sixpence) per dozen and the date of the General Election was confirmed as being December 14, with counting on the 28 December and the New House of commons sitting for the first time on January 21. Buxton's patriotic citizens bought another £3,345 worth of War Bonds in the week ending November 16.

Somewhat surprisingly, given that women of good standing and aged at least 30, were able to vote for the first time, there was a 'Polling Day Apathy', the BHG stated that; *'It was difficult to realise on Saturday that a General Election was taking place. Nobody wanted it, and as was expected it was the dulllest and most common-place contest in the memory of even the oldest elector.'* David Lloyd George's ruling National Coalition won handsomely but in Ireland, Sinn Fein nationalists made the largest gains but refused to take their seats in Westminster.

Christmas arrived once again, this time in peaceful conditions but as the BHG editorial noted; *'The signing of the Armistice and the cessation of hostilities has brought real peace to many thousands of families, but there are, unfortunately many homes where joy will be tinged with sadness as memory recalls some loved one – father, husband, sweetheart, brother – who has made the supreme sacrifice, whose body reposes in a soldier's grave in a foreign land; whose presence in the family circle would have made for brightness and have filled the cup of happiness to the brim this Christmastide. Then, also, has to be taken into account the ravages wrought by influenza, which has been prevalent in epidemic form in all parts of the country; and which, even in our town and district, has exacted a heavy toll of comparatively young lives. The coming season, therefore, will be robbed in very many cases of the merriment which has been associated with it from time immemorial.'*

On Christmas Day came the notice of the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross to Lieutenant Colonel B W Vann VC MC; *'..who commanded the Chesterfield Territorials and took part in the heroic crossing of the Canal Du Nord (September 29). He was killed a few days later when leading his battalion to the attack.'*

So ended the First World War. The first industrial world war, the war that saw killing taken to new levels of technical achievement – the war that spawned the mass use of automatic machine guns, quick firing artillery, high explosive shells with detonation on impact, gas warfare, war in the skies and the invention of the tank. Life was changed for every family in Great Britain but out of sadness and hardship, ailing economies, unemployment and disability, came a spirit of optimism and renewal. The end of the war saw the birth of the Chapel en le Frith Male Voice Choir, which today in 2018, celebrates one hundred years of fellowship through singing.

