



## Buriton and the First World War

These pages are the first part of a new project to commemorate the First World War by considering the effects it had on Buriton.

What impacts did the conflict have at home, in the parish? And what happened to each of the 193 men who left Buriton, some going to 'forgotten' parts of the war, such as Mesopotamia and the seas off Chile?

We shall be looking at as many sources as we can. But if you know of anyone who might be able to help us in any way, please let us know.

Some of you might have concerns that this 'war to end all wars' will, in some way, be glorified by this work, but that is certainly not the aim of the project.

The war brought about huge social changes, particularly in agricultural communities where the losses of men and horses hastened mechanisation in farming and moves away from rural lifestyles that previously had altered little in a hundred years. And the personal costs could also be high in small communities such as Buriton. We hope to recognise those who lived through these life-changing times.

In each edition of the Parish Magazine we are aiming to summarise activities and events of 100 years ago: season by season. This first instalment covers the period from August to November 1914.

Our project will, therefore, last as long as the First World War itself – perhaps helping to bring home to us all today just how long the terrible conflict lasted.

During the course of the project, you'll probably have several holidays, children will pass through schools and babies born will grow into young children. But each time you open a new magazine, you will be reminded that the war that was meant to be 'over by Christmas' was still taking place.

At the end of the project, we hope to produce another special book about the history of Buriton – including more information and photographs to add to the material used in each magazine.

Do let us know if you can provide any information – and come and see more of our findings at our annual 'Bygone Buriton' local history exhibition on Saturday 27th September.

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*Buriton Parish Magazine: Autumn 2014*

*For comments or to provide further information to this project,  
please email [heritage@buriton.org.uk](mailto:heritage@buriton.org.uk)*

# The first few months of the war - and the roles of Buriton men

At the outbreak of war on 4 August 1914, a number of Buriton men were already serving in the forces and departed swiftly with the British Expeditionary Force. They sailed from Portsmouth and Southampton, arriving at Calais and Le Havre, before travelling north through Flanders by train, double-decker bus and on foot – amidst a tide of refugees heading south.

Amongst these soldiers were Lt Algernon Bonham Carter of the Manor Farm and Royal Marine George Treagus,

the son of one of the estate's gamekeepers. Several more men served in the infantry, Engineers and Artillery whilst one had joined a Cyclist Battalion.

Two men were also serving in the Navy: Stuart Bonham Carter

and Henry Tupper, the latter being on a ship bound for Chile.

Civilians volunteering at the outbreak included Wilfred Aldred of Weston, Frederick and James Powell of Bones Lane, Levi, John and Robert Hiscock of Faggs Farm and also Arthur Watts, Roland Marriner and Godfrey Harfield. Gamekeeper Harry Legg was turned down as less than 5'3" tall.

George Treagus was soon fighting near Antwerp as part of a unit nicknamed the Motor Bandits, using adapted Rolls Royce cars for reconnaissance. As the Germans advanced and captured the area, they retreated to Ostend.



Other Buriton men were 50 miles inland around Mons trying to hold a line with French forces against an advancing German army. They took part in a tactical retreat, outnumbered by four to one, lacking in supplies and kit. They covered 20 miles each day, fighting and being shelled day and night. Dehydrated and exhausted, they reached the River Marne with their clothing in tatters, feet swollen and morale low. New French recruits arrived (using hundreds of Parisian taxis) and the Germans, who were also stretched, were stopped.



On 10 September, Lt Bonham Carter's Battalion advanced through the village of Hautesvesnes but encountered an enemy Jäger Battalion. Following British artillery fire, three Companies (about 300 men) were ordered forward over an open stubble field. Lt Bonham Carter led his platoon from a sunken lane, one unit firing as another ran forward. As they went in with bayonets, white flags appeared along the German line. Eleven British men were killed and Lt Bonham Carter was one of 60 to be wounded.

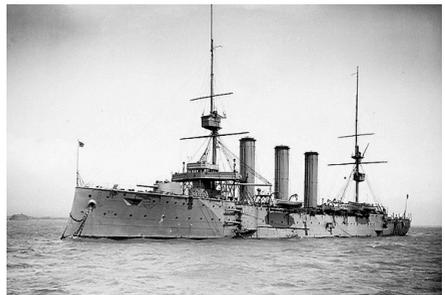
This was a terrible time to be wounded as there were no casualty clearing stations and men mostly cared for themselves for days with unchanged dressings.

On 18 October, George Treagus was near Ypres. His team reversed their car towards a mill occupied by German Cavalry and were fired upon from only 50 yards. George was hit and died later that day, leaving a widow, Georgina. As the news reached Buriton of the community's first fatality, Godfrey Harfield and Ernest Dennis left for India to allow more experienced troops to return to Europe.

At sea, the Germans laid mines around the Thames and U-Boats plagued shipping. The Royal Navy scoured the oceans for Admiral von Spee's squadron of ships. They were reported off Chile, where four British ships waited near Coronel with Henry Tupper on board HMS Monmouth.

At dusk on 1 November, in stormy seas, the gap was closed but HMS

Monmouth was silhouetted on the horizon. The Germans fired first, having greater range, and Monmouth's forward turret was blown from the ship. Fires raged, she listed badly but kept her stern to the swell as darkness fell. At 600 yards she was checked for signs of surrender and then fired upon a further 75 times before capsizing with no survivors. Another Armoured Cruiser, HMS Good Hope, was



also lost with all hands in the same battle.

Initially the British press thought that Monmouth had escaped and so the loss went unreported. Henry Tupper is not listed on the village war memorial, but is recorded on the plaque inside the church. He left behind a wife, Hartie.

Back in Europe all plans and strategies for the ground war had been abandoned as a stalemate had been reached. The Generals scratched their heads and both sides dug in for winter. A lot had been endured in just twelve weeks and it was clear that the war would not be over by Christmas. The battle of the factories began.

# Life at home: August - November 1914

At the outbreak of the First World War, the population of the parish of Buriton was about 750 (similar to today) including over 200 children. There were many fewer houses than now – with more people living in each one.

## **What was life like at that time?**

Across the country as a whole, life expectancy was 50 years for men and 54 for women. There was no electricity or gas here, no running water and your toilet was a shed over a big pit at the bottom of your garden.

In the months leading up to the declaration of war, the impending conflict had not been a big issue on everyone's minds. In the same way that the Irish Question occupied national attention, local newspapers were focussed on new-fangled motor vehicles driving on footpaths, worries about tuberculosis and a fascinating range of dress-making patterns for the many people making their own clothes. Petersfield's 'Woman's Suffrage Society' held occasional meetings and a fete at Bedales.

In Buriton, life seems to have been much as normal in the early months of 1914: successful football matches were followed by successful cricket matches, the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council saw the re-election its officials and

"successful entertainments" were held in the Village Institute: evenings of "enjoyable songs" and "dancing kept up from 8 'til 1 o'clock".

There were some hints of what might follow with G Company of 6th Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment's Territorial Force holding musketry practice on Butser Hill and, in July, "the passage over Petersfield of aeroplanes and airships travelling between Farnborough and Portsmouth in connection with the Fleet mobilisation excited much admiring interest."

Within days of war being declared the price of bread rose and horse owners were ordered to send their animals to Petersfield where those considered suitable were requisitioned. Carts and harnesses were also taken with the "chief sufferers" being farmers and tradesmen.

On 2nd September the local newspaper published a list of men on active service and later in the month it was reported that 77 men from Buriton were serving in the forces.

The annual hop-picking season appears to have taken place as normal but October and November saw the deaths of the first Buriton men, one of whom was 7,500 miles from home.

The war was already a World War and was affecting Buriton in a number of ways.