

Belper in Wartime: Outbreak of the Great War

Adrian Farmer

Dedicated to the memory of the Belper men who were killed during the World War of 1914-18.

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Introduction

This book for schools has been made possible through a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, secured by the Belper Arts Festival. It has been designed to help students better understand the impacts World War One had on the people of Belper, particularly those who stayed in the town whilst many of the men were away fighting across Europe. It tries to provide an understanding of what the town was like just before, and during the first 18 months of the war, and the challenges people faced in wartime.

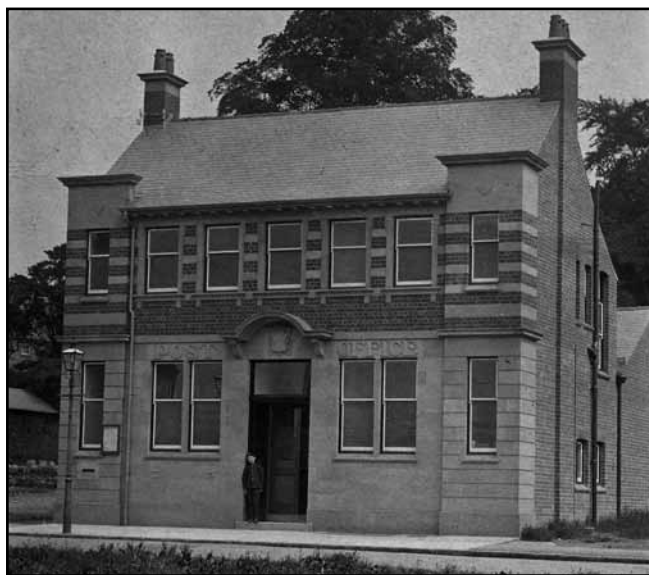
This book does not cover the whole of the war period, but closes shortly before the Battle of the Somme, the first day of which ended in the loss of many Belper men's lives. There is a plan to complete Belper's wartime story with a second publication at a future date. At the end of this book you will find a glossary of words which students may not recognise, as well as a map of Belper in 1914 and questions for each of the chapters, to help teachers and children discuss the topics covered.

You can find out more about Belper during the First World War (or Great War as it was known at the time) by visiting the website www.belperinwartime.org. Much of the information in this book comes from the Belper News reports of 1914 to 1916. Copies of these newspapers are available to view on film in Belper Library.

1: Before war broke out

In Belper, at the beginning of August 1914, there was no sign or knowledge that a long and brutal war was about to begin. The first day of the month was a Saturday, and the start of a sunny and warm Bank Holiday weekend. Yet, by the end of that Bank Holiday, news had come through from London that Great Britain was at war with Germany. At the time, many people greeted the news with excitement, not realising that it would be a long and terrible conflict in which more people would die than in any other war in history.

To understand how life in Belper changed so completely once war was declared, let's look at what it was like in the town the month before, in July 1914. People in Belper were aware that other countries in Europe were preparing to go to war with each other, but there was no sense that it would impact on their lives. It seemed of such little importance that no mention of any kind was made during the July editions of the Belper News, Belper's local newspaper. Life went on as normal in the town – here is a taste of activities in Belper in that last month of peace.



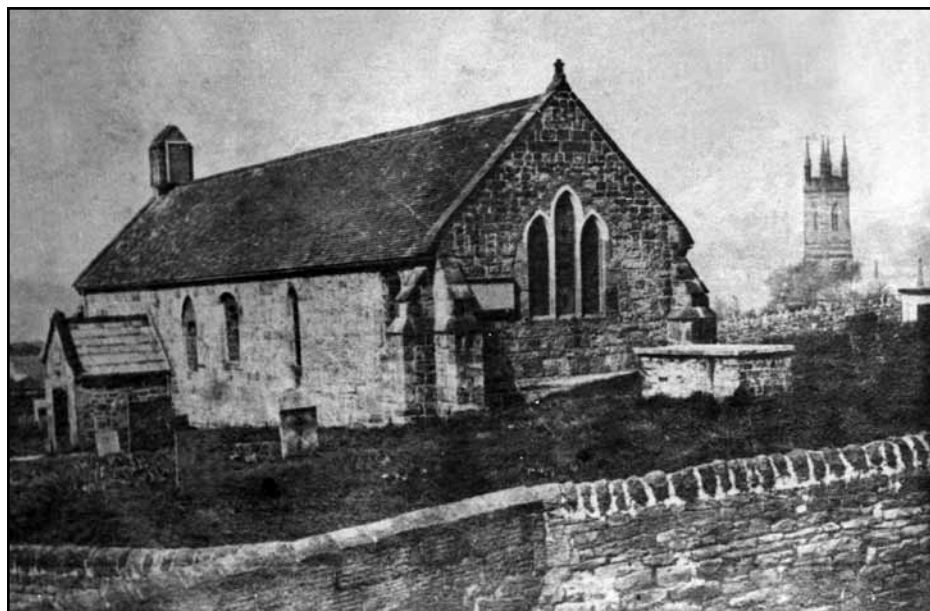
**Belper Post Office
shortly after it
was built in 1909.**

In 1900, the Strutt family, who built the town's cotton mills, had given land in the town centre for a new street, allowing businesses to build new premises. It was named after the Strutts, and gradually buildings opened, including the town's first purpose-built post office in 1909 (which you can still see on Strutt Street today). The Belper News of July 1914 reported that the street was still a building site, with many plots of land still untouched. In the picture, you can see that the photographer is standing on a patch of unused ground. If you stood in the same spot today, you would be inside the Co-op Supermarket.



Herbert Strutt Elementary School.

Belper's newest school, the Herbert Strutt Elementary School, proved to be very successful and popular, with parents sending their children there from across Derbyshire. As a result the five-year old school on Derby Road was extended. By the end of July 1914, three new classrooms were almost ready. Founder of the school *Alderman* George Herbert Strutt, who had paid for the school to be built, provided a further £6,000 for the improvements to be made.



St John's Chapel.

There was an outbreak of vandalism at St John's Chapel, Belper's oldest building (it was already about 670 years old in 1914). The chapel was barely used at this time, as all services were held at the bigger and more modern St Peter's Church. Boys had smashed 62 panes of glass at the chapel. Many other buildings in the town had also had glass panes smashed in this latest 'craze', and there were calls to catch the culprits.

July was a wet month, but it didn't stop people from attending events and organising activities in the town. Belper members of the local *Friendly Societies* marched through the town in the pouring rain on July 19 for their annual procession to raise funds for local charities. Boy Scouts and the Church Lads' Brigade took part for the first time. The Belper and District Agricultural and Horticultural Show on July 29 had lots of entries, but poor weather meant few people turned up. The 24th Belper Horse Show was part of the day's events, and included musical chairs for horses which proved popular with the people who attended. The horse show had been held every July since 1890.



Belper Horse Show on the Meadows.

The warm, drier Bank Holiday Weekend of August 1, 2 and 3 finally arrived, to the delight of many people in the town, for days off were much rarer than they are today. On the Saturday, the Belper Welcome Tavern Radish Society held its fifth annual show at the public house on Mill Lane. There were 43 entries, which were judged to decide who had grown the town's best radish. On the same day, the men who worked on Mr Strutt's estates – including the gardeners for his big houses in Belper and Makeney – were given their annual day trip to Blackpool, each receiving *seven shillings and sixpence* (37½p in today's money) to spend on the trip.

The Palace Cinema on King Street re-opened that weekend, after its annual redecoration. First film of the week was a three-reel drama called 'The Dungeon of Despair' a colour film (in those days each frame had to be hand-painted).

One of the highlights of the weekend was on Derwent Street where, on the Bank Holiday Monday, the 'biggest tented exhibition on earth' was visiting Belper. There had been men in the town advertising its arrival in the week before, to make sure that there would be large crowds wanting to see the shows and displays.



Men promoting 'Wild Australia' in Belper.

Previously seen by King George V and Queen Mary, and called 'Wild Australia', it included 'a *pageant* of the finest horsemen in the world' and whip-cracking with a 60ft whip. There was kangaroo boxing, and a kangaroo chase, as well as tips on how to handle a crocodile and a re-enactment of a famous 1862 Australian robbery, called 'Sticking Up the Gold Escort'. There were two performances in the day and tickets for the whole show ranged from sixpence to five shillings.

As the Bank Holiday weekend passed, alarming news finally began to spread across the country, that Germany had declared war on France, and intended to invade neutral Belgium to reach France. Great Britain had issued an ultimatum to Germany, that unless it withdrew from Belgium, the British Empire would be forced to enter into war with Germany.

A report reached the town on the Sunday that all planned military band engagements were being cancelled, but the Yorkshire Dragoons still turned up for their Bank Holiday Monday



In the River Gardens.

engagement to perform in Belper River Gardens (although a planned repeat performance for the Thursday was cancelled). They were a popular choice, having entertained in the gardens several times since they first opened in 1906. Also providing entertainment was ventriloquist John Goddard and his marionettes (string puppets) and Mr Temple's Punch and Judy Show. A motor boat was providing trips on the river for sixpence per person or you could hire a rowing boat. For parking your motor car there was a charge of sixpence per vehicle (2½p in modern money), and twopence for bicycles, which were stored under cover. The day ended with a large display of fireworks, despite heavy showers which prevented some displays from lighting. Cheap train travel had been arranged by the Midland Railway to encourage people to visit the Gardens that day, although many *excursion* trains were cancelled at a very late stage as railway companies discovered they would very soon need to provide transport for large numbers of troops.

War with Germany was declared at 11pm on Monday 3 August, by which time it was clear that Germany had ignored a deadline set by the British Government to withdraw from Belgium. Very quickly, more and more countries were choosing sides in the conflict, so that countries including France, Russia, Italy, Turkey, New Zealand and Australia had become involved. The 'Great War', as it became known, had begun.



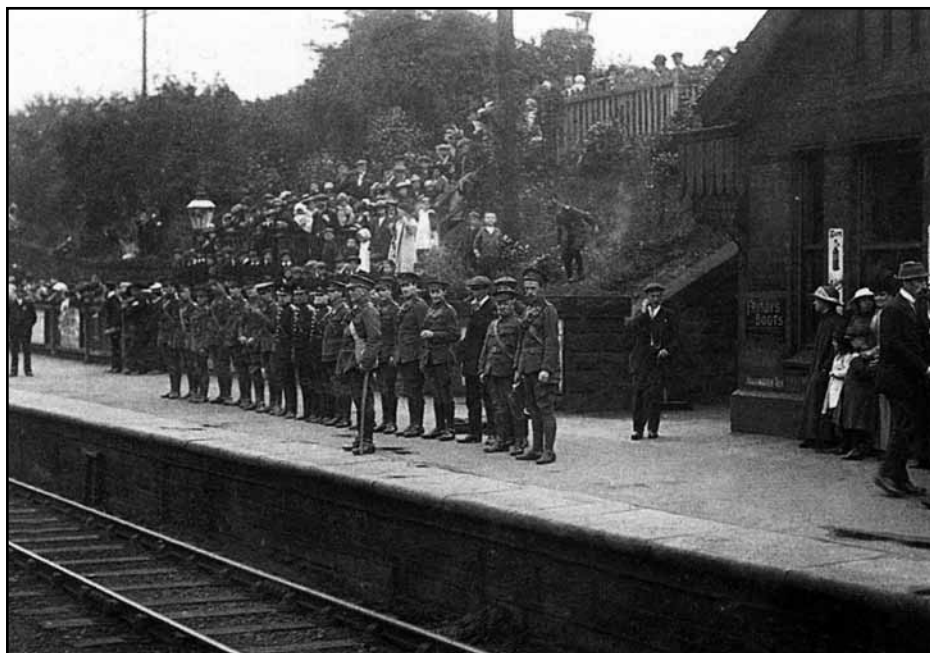
Members of the Derbyshire Yeomanry gather in King Street.

2: The First to Leave

On Tuesday 4 August, official notices went up across the town, letting men who were *reservists* in the *Derbyshire Yeomanry* and *Territorial Army* know that they would have to mobilise early the next day. The following morning, hundreds of people turned out at Belper Station to see off the 22 members of the Derbyshire

Yeomanry from the Belper District, under the command of Sergeant H Gillett. People gathered around the men as they arrived in the town centre, to wish them well before they left the town. As they lined up on the station platform for the arrival of the 11.12 train, a large crowd had gathered, which cheered loudly as their train pulled out of the station, heading for Chesterfield on the first stage of their journey to the *Front Line*. As a cavalry unit, they would receive horses at Chesterfield.

The Gillett family were perhaps the most affected in Belper in that first week, with three sons and one son-in-law all leaving the town in the first few days of war, including two on the photograph below. The roll call at the station was Sergeant Gillett (of Belper); Corporal Marriott (Holbrook); Lance-Corporal Knifton (Milford); Trumpeter-Corporal Payne (Farnah Green); and Privates Banks, Mackard, Blount, Bott, Gillett, Hardy, Harrison, Hastie, Hodgkinson, Horner, Hunt, Lichfield, Needham, Nightingale, Ratcliffe, Ryde, Watson and Ford (all of Belper).



Derbyshire Yeomanry on Belper Station.

The Derbyshire Yeomanry kept a War Diary from the very first day of the war. Here are entries for the first days of mobilisation, when the Belper men were there.

5 August: First day of mobilisation. All Officers joined. Medical inspection board. All squadrons in *billets*. Parade of national reservists attached to Regiment. Officers' swords were handed in to be sharpened.

6 August: Second day of mobilisation. 12 discharged as medically unfit. 2 men returned home as medically unfit. Arming, clothing and equipping of men proceeded all day. All ranks reminded they are subject to military law. Roll of absentees called for. All arms and equipment ordered to be carried on all parades.

9 August: Fifth day of mobilisation. Volunteers called for to fill up the Notts & Derby Mounted Brigade Signal Troop. Lieutenant Worthington appointed to command the Signal Troop. First horses received and handed over to Squadrons which billeted them out. Regiment warned to move to Main Station on Wednesday 12.

10 August: Sixth day of mobilisation. The outlying Squadrons (A from Chesterfield and B from Bakewell under Capt G A Strutt and Major H A Grettin respectfully) marched into Derby and went into billets. Branding of horses started. Five men discharged as medically unfit. Seven recruits joined. More horses received today. *Ordnance* stores received. No nosebags retainable. We were ordered by Ordnance Depot to purchase locally, which we did at Banks Dairy, the day of mobilisation. Recruits taken on.

Clearly some men were returned due to being unfit, but those Belper men who were fit for duty would have been with the Regiment when it went overseas in April 1915, arriving on 27 April in Egypt, before moving on to Gallipoli in the Ottoman Empire (now Turkey). They landed at Suvla Bay on 18 August 1915 just over a year after War was declared. Their first action against the enemy was on 21 August 1915 at Scimitar Hill, which was the largest single attack by the British during the Gallipoli campaign. It failed and Gallipoli



**Training
for trench
warfare.**

became a long-term war zone, involving trench warfare, with men trapped in trenches by enemy gunfire, with occasional, and usually suicidal, attacks made by going over the trenches to try and reach the enemy. The Derbyshire Yeomanry went in with 326 men and left Gallipoli with only 32. There were 33 killed at Gallipoli but the main cause of the losses was through illness - usually dysentery. Most of the original Yeomanry Regiments departed with less than 50 men each having all landed with 326 each.

We don't have information on all the soldiers in the station photograph, but they include:

Sergeant Herbert Gillett – Herbert, a plumber before the war, was the son of Harry Gillett, a plumber with a shop on Bridge Street, Belper. He died of *malaria* in the 63rd General Hospital, Salonika, Greece on Saturday 23 November 1918, 12 days after the war had ended, as his regiment prepared to return to Great Britain. He was buried in the Mikra British Cemetery, Kalamaria, Greece.

Corporal Thomas Marriott (46) – A *framework knitter* married to Eliza Booth since 1887, Thomas had previously served in the Derbyshire Yeomanry in 1902 but re-enlisted into the newly formed territorial Derbyshire Yeomanry in 1908. He was discharged during the 'combing out' in Chesterfield on the 12 August 1914, due to his age.

Lance Corporal William Knifton (28) – William was a farmer

from Swainsley Wood Farm in Milford. He had married Rose Hitchcock in 1912. William was 5 foot 6 inches tall (1.68 metres) with brown hair and eyes. He served at Gallipoli in 1915 where he was *Mentioned in Dispatches*. He was promoted to Sergeant on 11 November 1915 and discharged from the army on 18 February 1916.

Trumpeter-Corporal Frederick Payne (23) – Originally from Farnah Green, Frederick was promoted to Sergeant in 1915. Discharged from the army in 1919, he married Maude Ellen Wood in 1920.

Private John Banks (28) – John was 5 foot 6 inches (1.68 metres) tall with a 37 inch waist. He transferred to the Royal Field Artillery on 26 January 1915 and promoted to *Bombadier* on 10 May 1917.

Private George Frederick Blount (38) – Married to Sarah Anne Noon since 1896, George had two children, a boy in 1903 and a girl in 1906. He transferred to the 65th Company Labour Corps on 23 August 1917 and was discharged from the army on 12 March 1919 with a 20% Disability Pension.

Private Maurice Gillett (20) – A self-employed book-keeper, Maurice was Mentioned in Dispatches during the war. He was the brother of Sergeant Herbert Gillett. His father and mother were Henry (Harry) and Emma Jane Gillett. He married Lillian Fox in 1919. Maurice died in Belper in 1967, aged 73.

Private Thomas Hardy (21) – Originally from Kilburn, Thomas was a miner with the Butterley Colliery Company. He had joined the Derbyshire Yeomanry on 18 January 1911 and served in Gallipoli in 1915. He was 5 foot 6 inches tall with a 35 inch (89cm) waist. He was discharged from the army on the 14 January 1916. Thomas died in 1948, aged 55.

Private Harold Hastie (22) – Born in Turnditch, Harold lived at Lawn Cottages, Wyver Lane and was a cabinet maker.

Private William Charles Horner (22) – Charles was married

to Sabina Taylor at St Michael's Church, Holbrook in 1913.

Private George Lichfield (20) – The son of Mrs Fisher of 6 High Street, Belper and the husband of Martha Lichfield, of Swinney Lane, Belper, George had worked at Denby Colliery before the war. He died of *pneumonia* as a result of *influenza* in the 63rd General Hospital, Salonika, Greece on Thursday 21 November 1918, ten days after the war had ended, as his regiment prepared to return to Great Britain. He was buried in the Mikra British Cemetery, Kalamaria, Greece.

Private John Nightingale (23) – Belper-born John was a warehouseman and labourer. He was rejected during mobilisation at Chesterfield as he was not fit enough. He re-enlisted on 5 September 1914 and was accepted. John contracted *Hepatitis* in June 1915 and was discharged due to ongoing health problems, on 21 October 1915. He was 5 foot 5 inches tall with a 37 inch waist and had brown hair and hazel eyes. He was the son of William and Sarah Ann Nightingale.

Private William Watson (19) – Born in Milford, William was 5 foot 10 inches tall and was a fitter at Belper Mills. He had joined the Derbyshire Yeomanry in 1913. He was transferred to the Army Service Corps on 9 September 1916 as a motor mechanic. His parents were Samuel and Elizabeth Watson who lived at Top House, Hopping Hill, Milford. William was demobbed on 15 June 1919.

Private Godfrey William Ford (22) – Born in Belper, Godfrey was 5 foot 6 inches tall with a 35 inch waist and was an auctioneer. He had joined the Derbyshire Yeomanry on 7 April 1914. He was with the *Mediterranean Expeditionary Force*, landing in Alexandria for training on 27 April 1915 and landed at Gallipoli on the 14 August 1915. He also served in Salonika where he was promoted to Lance Corporal on 8 November 1916. On 18 October 1917 he was admitted to the 60th General Hospital in Salonika, Greece, suffering from Malaria, but he survived. William was demobbed on 15 May 1919 and died in 1977.



Marching to the Drill Hall, early on Wednesday 5 August.

3: Preparing for Active Duty

In the week leading up to the Declaration of War, the 5th and 6th Battalions of the Derbyshire Territorial Army, including many from the Belper area, were at their annual training camp on the Yorkshire coast. They had set out by train from Belper the previous Saturday, for a four hour train journey. By 1.30pm they had arrived, and set off with their guns and baggage for a 10 minute march to their camp. Tents had already been pitched, fires lit and a meal was ready for the men on arrival. Three trains from across Derbyshire brought men to the camp for training. Food was provided, so there were no cooking duties, and the men concentrated on setting up their beds and collecting blankets and waterproofs, although it rained until lights out.

During the week's training, a typical day saw *reveille* at 5am for an early parade before coffee and buns were issued at 6am. Breakfast was at 8am, dinner at 1pm and tea at 5pm. Drills, parades and rifle inspections filled the men's time, but there were also

opportunities for the men to visit the towns and villages nearby. The undercurrents in the water of the local bay was not felt to be safe, so bathing parade was cancelled.

There were about 3,500 men at the camp. The Belper News reported: "The war cloud of Europe is the big theme of conversation, and the healthy appetites of the *Terriers* are whetted. I have no hesitation in saying if the command came, Colonel Clayton would lead the Battalion full of enthusiasm and ready to go anywhere required. Nine tenths of the Battalion wear the Special Service Badge for overseas service, and have therefore given the pledge to serve." By the time his report had been published, war had already been declared and the men were on the move.

The camps broke up early on the Monday morning, as messages came through that men needed to return to their home towns and in all likelihood, they would immediately have to go on active service.

On Wednesday 5 August, even before the Yeomanry men had gathered at Belper Railway Station, the Territorials were *mustering* at the Drill Hall on the Clusters. Only recently returned from



Mustering outside the Drill Hall on Cluster Road.



Horses on Derby Road, waiting to be taken away by train.

Yorkshire, the men barely had time to go home before returning to duty and moving out on the first stage of their journey to the Battle Front. Some who lived outside Belper stayed overnight in the Drill Hall on the Tuesday so they could report in the following morning.

In all, 97 Territorials assembled in Belper for training on Wednesday 5 August, marching under the command of Captain Naylor to headquarters at Derby the following day, accompanied by two military wagons of kit. Mr Bridges of Moscow Farm, just south of Milford, gave out free drinks of milk to soldiers as they passed on the long march into Derby in that first week.

It wasn't just men leaving Belper in those first few days of the war. Some of the best horses in the district left Belper on Sunday 9th August, after the army made compulsory purchases over the previous three days. They were taken down to the Goods Station off Derby Road, and left by rail.

People were warned that Derby was likely to be a centre for training large numbers of Territorials – about 10,000 – in the first weeks of the war, and many were likely to march through Belper. 4,000 soldiers from the north came down through the Derwent



Territorials in Ambergate, preparing to march through Belper.

Valley to Belper in the first weekend of the war, and stayed for the night in the River Gardens, the Public Hall (now the Ritz Cinema), schools and other suitable places. People in the town were asked to provide somewhere to sleep for the officers, who were given free use of the facilities of the Conservative Club on Campbell Street and the Derwent Club on King Street.

The Fourth Lincolnshire Regiment was the first of a number of *regiments* to visit Belper in the first few months of war, marching through the town on their way to make use of the huge firing range on Wyver Lane, which was the largest in the Midlands Region. Whilst in Belper, officers and other ranks were given free entry to the swimming baths on Gibfield Lane and the older river baths cut out of the river on Matlock Road, and to the Belper Meadows cricket match, held on August 15. The Belper Conservative Club on Campbell Street and the Derwent Club on King Street again gave free use of facilities to officers. The Belper News reported that people out late at night were now being stopped at bayonet point, but there had been no problems as a result. Belper Boy Scouts were helping the visiting *battalions* where they could.



The Lincolnshire Regiment marches down King Street.

In the August 21 edition of the Belper News, a member of the 5th Lincolns Territorial Force sent in a letter praising the people of Belper for all their kindness and cheerfulness while they had been staying in the town. 'Every consideration has been shown, and although our stay has been very brief, we shall always look upon our visit to Belper with pleasant memories and the happiest of recollections'.



The Firing Range on Wyver Lane. Can you see the man beside it?

4: Belper adjusts to Life in Wartime

Although lots of men did decide to join up and become a soldier in the first few weeks of the war, many were reluctant to leave their family and homes and go abroad to fight. For most of them, they had never been outside Derbyshire, never mind crossed the sea to visit other countries. At that time, men – as long as they were fit – had, in theory, a choice as to whether they joined the army or not, but in reality there was great pressure for them to show their commitment to King and Country. In the first three days of war, 35 Belper men enlisted, and many more would follow. For the rest of the people in the town, there were immediate changes to the daily routines as they adjusted to living in wartime.

One of the earliest changes involved people suspected of having German origins – even if they were British born or had lived in the Belper area for most of their lives. They faced questioning and possible imprisonment if they were felt to be a threat to national security. The chief dyer at Milford Mills, Mr Eugene Zibolt of Foundry Lane, Milford, was arrested as, although he regarded himself as French, he had served in the German army in his younger days. His parents were both French, but he had been born



**Milford
Mills.**

in Germany. He was later released with conditions. He later said he had been treated well after his arrest, but had objected to having to wear convict's clothing, as prisoners of war were not expected to wear it. He had several family members serving in the French army at the time.

The British textile industry was struggling by the end of September, as there was no access to the spun cotton previously supplied by mills on the continent. Belper was in a better position than most, with all stages of cotton production happening within the valley. Lancashire Mills were struggling to stay open by October, as raw cotton became harder to come by, but the Belper Mills were continuing, almost as normal. Hosiery companies in the town were very busy, producing underwear for the army and navy, with some employees working 12-hour shifts because there was so much work. By November, *Belper Urban District Council* was being asked by George Brettle and Company of Chapel Street for permission to extend their premises, and that was granted.



George Brettle and Company during World War One.

Information was sent out by the Red Cross to women in the second week of the war, on how they could help. They were asked to form sewing groups, producing large quantities of pyjamas and dressing gowns for the injured men in hospitals. For one shilling and threepence you could send away to the Red Cross for the paper patterns. Requests were also made for collectors of old sheets, linen and other materials for bandages, and women with good recipes were asked to make them available to the public.

A fortnight of hard work in the September for the ladies of Belper ensured that they were able to send off to the Red Cross Society for distribution to soldiers in hospitals the following: 379 pairs of socks, 51 cotton shirts, 17 flannel shirts and 18 cotton night-shirts. Belper District was then asked to complete an order for knitted socks in September, to keep soldiers' feet warm over the winter. This was followed by a request for two hundred mittens. All women able to knit were asked to help support the work. 23 girls from Belper Pottery School, wanting to help, had a collection from which they were able to buy khaki wool and then knit socks.

In the first week of war, Belper Post Office decided to operate day and night, for all services except money orders. Official war news was posted up at the Post Office every Sunday morning. All telegrams were now subject to *censorship*, and had to include the sender's name at the end or they could not be sent. Ordinary telegrams in code, as well as blank telegrams, were not allowed, to reduce the risk of traitors or spies using the telegram system to pass on information to the enemy. Belper's first public telephone cabinet was installed at the Post Office at the end of 1914, to help people communicate. By then, three of the four male staff members had *enlisted*. Every male Post Office employee had been sent a letter encouraging him to enlist, and by the end of the year 28,000 from across the country had joined up.

There were some attempts at *panic buying* by shoppers in the first week of war, of items they thought would soon be in short supply. Shopkeepers tried to discourage customers from buying goods in large quantities, so that there was enough to go round.

There was plenty of rice, peas, lentils and *sago*, and people were being encouraged to make the most of them.

Some grocers were attacked from the *pulpit* by the vicar of St Peter's Church, the Rev Cooper, who accused them in his sermon of increasing prices for goods in that first week of war, knowing there would be shortages to come. Several shopkeepers protested, feeling they were wrongly accused, as many had kept their prices down. That month, the Government agreed a list of maximum retail prices for certain retail goods, including granulated and lump sugar (3¾d per lb), bacon (1s 3d per lb), imported butter (1s 6d per lb) and cheese (9½d per lb).

In September, despite the loss of trained builders in the town, improvements were completed to the town centre, with two parades of new shops opening at the entrance to the Railway Station Yard. They were welcomed for being very different in style and design to the older King Street shops. The only regret was the loss of the bushes around the old station entrance. In November, Dicks, the old established Belper boot firm based on Bridge Street, moved into one of the most prominent of these new shops. One of these parades was demolished in 1973, but the other still stands today, next to the Poundland store.



Dick's new shoe shop opened in September 1914.

A Government Bill was drawn up to reduce the opening hours for public houses, as it was feared people would drink more in wartime. Local magistrates would make the final decision for each area, and the Derby and Derbyshire Licensed *Victuallers* Association tried to show its support for the war effort by donating all its available funds to the Prince of Wales Distress Fund (also known as the National Relief Fund), in the hope that it would show a responsible attitude towards the war effort, and discourage interference with their opening hours.

Within a month of the Prince of Wales Distress Fund being set up, the people of Belper had raised over £800 towards it. By the end of September, it had passed the £1,000 mark.

The district's Sunday School Football League faced calls to cancel the 1914/15 season. Some clubs were already dropping out in the August, as their players joined the army and left the area. Others wanted to press on with the season, The Belper News claiming they saw opportunities to do well with some of the other teams missing, and it was decided to at least start the season and see if it could carry on. It was agreed any money raised during the season would be donated to the National Relief Fund. The League finally folded in early December, as more and more men enlisted.

'Know Your Enemy' was the theme of a five-week lecture series provided by the Belper Natural History and Philosophical Society for its members, starting in October 1914. Titled 'The Formation of Modern Germany', the series would cost two shillings and sixpence per person. Another useful pastime for members of the public was provided by Dr Heyworth of Bridge Street, who ran an ambulance class in the autumn of 1914.

At the end of October, there was a successful sale of cattle, horses, pigs, sheep and carts at Belper Horse Fair, with a large number of buyers present, although the usual fun fair in the Coppice did not take place.

Belper *Isolation Hospital* was struggling to cope with infectious diseases in the district, and there were calls in the August to carry



Belper Isolation Hospital.

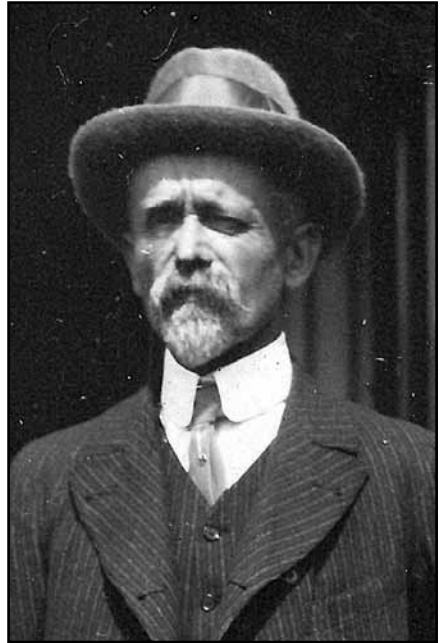
out a much needed extension to the building on Crich Lane (now Ridgeway Nursing Home). A meeting of the governing committee was called, and after much deliberation they decided that it would be unwise to carry out the work during wartime, so the proposal was put on hold.

There may have been a war on, and some of the *Workhouse Guardians* felt it was not appropriate, but they agreed by 15 votes to 10 to supply the inmates with their annual drink of ale on Christmas Day. They weren't allowed alcohol on any other day of the year.

5: The Strutts and Green Hall

George Herbert (known as Herbert) Strutt was a well-known figure in Belper. His family had built the Belper mills, bringing jobs and prosperity to the town since 1776. Herbert had sold first the business, in 1897, then the mills in 1905, which allowed him to provide for the people of Belper, including the River Gardens in 1906, the Herbert Strutt School in 1909 and the Gibfield Lane Swimming Baths in 1910. By the outbreak of war, he was Chairman of Derbyshire County Council. He had lived at Makeney Hall, near Milford, since his first marriage in 1876, but also owned Bridge Hill House, in Belper itself.

Herbert's *heir* George Ashton Strutt, left Derby with the Derbyshire Yeomanry on Wednesday 12 August. Herbert's second son, Anthony Herbert Strutt joined the Officers' Training Corps at Berkhamstead. The following year, aged 19, he joined the 16th (Chatsworth Rifles) Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters, and left Belper on July 5 1915 for Redmires, near Sheffield. He was not to survive the war.



George Herbert Strutt.



Anthony Herbert Strutt.

In the first few days of war, Herbert and his wife Emily returned early from their summer holiday in Scotland. They opened Bridge Hill House to all army officers visiting Belper, so they had somewhere to stay in the town. All the available beds at the workhouse were also made available for the lower ranks.



Emily Strutt.

As soon as he was back in Belper, Herbert began work on converting Green Hall on King Street into a *Voluntary Aid Detachment Hospital* for the Red Cross, where soldiers could recover from injuries or illness. Emily Strutt provided uniforms for the nurses, and people were asked for old and disused blankets and bedding. Matron was Nurse Crump, (later awarded the Royal Red Cross in 1918) and the Commandant was Emily Strutt (who was awarded the OBE after the war for services to the Red Cross.) Matron had four trained nurses working under her. Emily headed a team of 47 female helpers. The hospital had 40 beds and an up-to-date operating theatre, all paid for by the Strutts. Over 3,000 men would be cared for at Belper in the four years of war that followed.

The first patients arrived on Tuesday 1 December, on a train containing 30 wounded or sick men. A crowd had gathered to welcome them to the town, and 30 vehicles provided as temporary ambulances, with doctors attending. However, nearly all the men were fit enough to walk unaided and many of the vehicles and doctors were not needed. The Strutts visited the next day and donated magazines for the men to read. The patients were delighted with their treatment, some saying they had never been so well looked after in their lives, with five meals a day.

Belper people were told they were not to 'treat' soldiers to

an alcoholic drink as it would slow down their recovery. People wanting to visit the soldiers were admitted only on Wednesdays and Sundays, and even then by ticket only, available at no cost from Green Hall. This was to make sure the soldiers weren't swamped by interested visitors. All but three of the men who arrived on December 1 were well enough to move to their Leicester Headquarters before Christmas Day.



Injured soldiers staying at Green Hall.

6: The Call to Enlist

Many men leaving Belper to enlist as soldiers in the first few weeks of war thought they were going on a big adventure. For those left behind, the only way they could share in this was by receiving letters and postcards about the men's experiences, or following the reports in the newspapers.

Nearly a month after their departure from Belper, the men of the 5th Notts and Derby Territorial Regiment were still in training in Hertfordshire. A report was sent back and printed in the Belper News, letting people know what had happened to them. Men from Belper, Derby, Ripley and Alfreton were all living within a few streets of each other, in people's homes. Every morning at 5.30 or 6am, a *bugle* was sounded, and an hour later all men were out exercising. At 8am, a kitchen in the street supplied tea and bread with butter and jam or bacon. Parade was at 9.30am, followed by a march of up to 12 miles. While they were away, the houses where they were staying were inspected, and meat provided so that women could cook them a meal. After dinner there was kit inspection, a short march and drill, followed by four hours of free time. Military police made sure everyone was indoors by 10pm with lights out at 10.30pm. In September, the order came through that they would be moving on to France.

There were many men still in Belper who were fit and the right age for enlisting as soldiers, and they came under a lot of pressure to enlist. On Sunday 30 August, the vicar of St Peter's, the Rev J A Cooper, gave a sermon in which he told the young men of the town: 'What are you going to do? Are you saying "Let's wait a bit and read the newspapers again; it will be sure to come out alright"? Are you saying that, when there is a brave little army fighting for our existence as a nation, in France? Are you young men satisfied to play football on a Saturday afternoon, and are you satisfied to go about in the streets on a Saturday night and do nothing to help our brave little army? If you saw a bully thrashing your young

brother, would you read the newspaper, or would you go out and punish him? You let our brave little army suffer, and stay here while braver men than you are laying down their lives.'

He told the young women of the town to ask any young men they met why they had not enlisted. Over 60 men from the town enlisted the next day, and more followed later in the week. They all left town on the following Friday, heading for Derby Barracks – the first step in their journey to the front line.

In September, the owners of the Belper mills, the English Sewing Cotton Company, told their male workers that if they joined up, their job would still be there for them at the end of the war, they would receive half-pay while they were away, and their contributions to the Pension Fund would continue to be paid.

That month, two Belper labourers, Herbert Milward and Ephraim Topham, facing charges of being drunk and disorderly, had their cases dismissed by Belper Magistrates when they heard both had enlisted and left the town.

The first Belper man to be wounded in the Great War, Private W Flint of the King's Own Rifles, contacted his parents on Penn Street in September, to let them know that although wounded in the chest and foot he was recovering in a French Hospital. He was moved to a Manchester hospital shortly afterwards.

In November, word got back to Belper that Privates Samson Beardmore of High Street, and fellow Belper colleague Private Jacob Simms, both Sherwood Foresters, had been captured by German soldiers at the Battle of the Aisne.



**Prisoners
of War in
Germany.**

7: Refugees

Often in war, many people lose their homes and must flee for their lives, with little more than the clothes they are wearing. During the autumn of 1914, Belgian refugees began arriving in Belper having lost almost everything they owned as they escaped from the German invaders. Before they reached Derbyshire, Miss Emily Smith of Rose Villa, Belper, had already collected and sent on 350 items of clothing to give the refugees as they arrived in Britain.

The Gables on Green Lane, built in 1898, was another large house owned by the Strutt family. It was turned into living quarters for the refugees. The first ten arrived by train in October, and were driven from the station to the Gables by Mrs Strutt on their arrival. Three Belgian families were staying there by the end of October.

The old Belper Grammar School on Chapel Street, which had been empty since it closed in 1913, was rented by Herbert Strutt to house 29 more refugees, with furniture given by Holden and Son's Cabinet Works, based in the Unity Mill on Derwent Street. Mrs Strutt, through the Belper News, thanked all those people who helped set up the Gables and Old Grammar School, and provide comforts as well as essentials for the refugees. The only shortage they had by the end of October was in French books for them to read. Mrs Strutt spoke French well, so helped the refugees and local people to understand each other. Shops in the town were encouraged to display the Belgian flag in their windows, to show support and offer comfort to the new arrivals.

The vicar of St Peter's Church, the Rev A Cooper, told people not to 'spoil' the Belgian visitors with free drinks, and not to encourage them to visit public houses, as they were unaccustomed to the stronger alcoholic drinks served in England.

A fortnight later, his curate, the Rev H Newton, gave a sermon welcoming the refugees as they would bring new knowledge and opportunities for growth to local industry. He reminded



The old Belper Grammar School on Chapel Street.

them of refugees who fled France in the 16th century, bringing improvements to the textile industry in England.

By November, the Belgians were seeking jobs. Some younger women became domestic servants. One man was a miner, and moved to live near the mine; others were employed at the Belper mills, whilst three were working for Holden's, two as cabinet-makers and one as a wood carver. One of the cabinet makers had previously made a cabinet for a Belgian Princess, and the wood carver had won awards in Belgium for the quality of his carvings.

On Friday evenings, the Belgian refugees would come to The Palace Cinema to watch the silent films, and for these performances, after the National Anthem, the Belgian National Anthem would also be played. There was a request in the Belper News in August, for other filmgoers to stay standing for this anthem, rather than sitting down again, out of respect for their Belgian visitors. Gradually, the refugees became part of the community.



Soldiers crawling to the trenches.

8: A Soldier's Life

As 1914 continued, it became clearer that the war would not be over by Christmas, as people had expected, and the early excitement of having family members going abroad to fight turned to worry for loved ones who would not be back to join in the festivities. This meant that, more than ever, people would listen out for the postman, hoping for new letters of life in the trenches.

On Boxing Day 1914, Maurice Watson of the *Grenadier Guards*, and formerly of Hopping Hill, Milford, wrote to his father: 'We came out of the trenches last night (Christmas Day) and went into billets about eight o'clock. As soon as we got there we had hot stew and plum pudding from Lord Derby. I can tell you we have had it rough these last 48 hours – above the knees in water and freezing all the time. At nearly three o'clock in the afternoon, the Germans broke through, and we were all helpless, as we were in water. Our artillery, however, began and blew them to pieces. The shells dropped about 20 yards in front of us and right amongst the Germans, so you can tell how good our artillery is.' News that Maurice (19) had died of *pneumonia* contracted in the trenches, reached Milford in the April.

In March 1915, Private Sydney Stevenson wrote to his mother in Devonshire Terrace, Bridge Street: 'We are billeted in barns, no houses. You have to give about 10 pennies for a loaf, and a penny for a slice. We often have a rat running over our faces. I jumped up the other night when one was on me. You don't bother though, when you are tired.' Stevenson was later captured by the Germans, becoming a prisoner of war.

In April 1915, the Daily Mirror printed a report given by a new recruit from Derbyshire of a typical day for newly joined men. He had joined the London Irish Rifles, but the report said the day would be similar for most regiments:

6am – Reveille (tea served).

6.30 – Parade for running exercise.

7.0 – Breakfast – tea, bread, butter, jam or marmalade, potted meat or bacon.

8.0 – Company parade and inspection. Men must be clean and shaven.

8.30 – Battalion parade, after which the whole battalion moves off to the appointed training area for the day, haversacks loaded with bread, cheese and cake etc. Every man is given an hour's physical drill, then he is taken over by his company officers for musketry, trench work, etc.

12.30 – Lunch and a smoke.

4pm – The men are marched back to camp, and at 4.30 dinner is served. This consists of bread, meat, with two vegetables, sometimes Yorkshire pudding, followed by a sweet, such as jam-roll or plum-duff.

Supper (bread, cheese and onions) is served later in the evening and the men are free until –

10pm – Lights out.

'The huts in which the men sleep are substantial, with a big stove in the middle and plenty of electric light. About thirty men



Picking up the wounded from a recaptured village.

sleep in a hut, with ample space and bedding for each man,' the correspondent reported.

Dr Heyworth of Bridge Street left Belper in June 1915, to take charge of a military hospital in Belgium for three weeks. Dr Clayton Allen, also of Belper, went to supervise the same hospital in July.

In December 1914, Mrs Mary Vincent was visiting a Paris military hospital when she came across a Belper soldier, Private G Powditch, recovering from *frostbite* in his feet. On finding he was from Belper, where she had lived until she was 12, she visited him regularly. Her husband was organist and choirmaster of the British Embassy Church in Paris, so they organised for the choir to visit the hospital on Boxing Day and sing for the injured troops. When any Belper boys left the hospital, many of them having recovered from frostbite, Mrs Vincent provided them each with a small foot stove and fuel, to try and prevent it happening again.

This meeting with Private Powditch set Mrs Vincent thinking on how else she could help the Belper men in France. She wrote to Private Powditch's mother to tell her of his recovery, and said she would visit Belper early in 1915. By the end of April, she had received a list of Belper men at the Front from Mrs Powditch, and had written to the 46 names, asking them what they would like in a parcel. She wrote to Mrs Powditch, telling her 21 men had

responded and eight parcels had been sent off.

In June the Belper News printed another letter from Mrs Vincent to Mrs Powditch, in which she reported she had written to nearly 100 men, and sent off parcels to 23. She was recruiting other Englishwomen in the city to help her cope with the demand. She thanked Mrs Powditch for sending her the addresses of three more men. She had received a number of letters of thanks from soldiers' wives and mothers.



Mrs Mary Vincent.

9: A New Year

The arrival of a new year gave the people of Belper a chance to look back at 1914, but also look forward to 1915, and hope for an early end to the conflict. People in Belper wanted to keep busy, so they had less time to think about the dangerous conditions facing their menfolk across the sea.

The New Year brought new patients to Green Hall. Sixteen arrived by train on Friday 8 January, some badly wounded but most suffering from frostbite. One was a Belper man, Private Flint of the King's Own Rifles, who was suffering from a *shrapnel* wound to his foot. The following Wednesday, more arrived. Later in January a railway wagon containing 20 freshly-killed pheasants and eight hares arrived for the men staying at Green Hall – a gift from the King. The nurses and ladies who visited the men were each given a souvenir pheasant feather.

Visiting hours by people in the town had to be restricted to 2pm to 4pm on Sundays and Wednesdays, so the men had enough rest time. The Sunday session was taken up with a concert, provided by local people. Other concerts were given by the town's music halls, when they had visiting performers passing through. One soldier reported: 'The feeding and nursing at the Green Hall Hospital cannot be excelled. As soon as the men are well enough they are taken for motor drives all over the country. There are plenty of concerts to pass the nights away.'

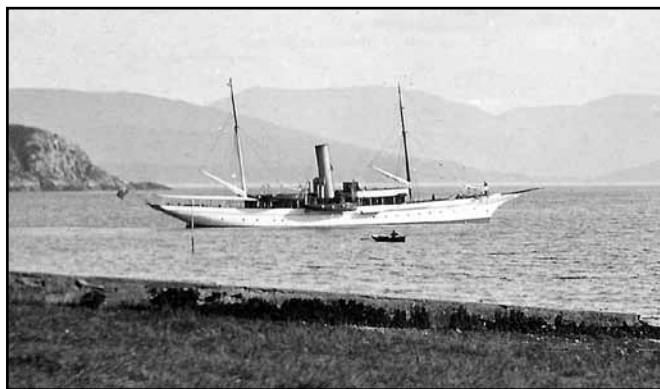
In January, a military order was made, forcing public houses to close at 9pm if they were within a three mile radius of a military base. At first, Belper was far enough away to be unaffected by the new order, but several hundred artillerymen from the First West Riding Regiment of the Royal Field Artillery then arrived in the town, and the reduced hours were introduced, with pubs only operating from 12 noon to 1pm and 6pm to 9pm, from March 8 to April 9, 1915.



Officers were housed at Bridge Hill House.

The new arrivals were given living quarters at the Public Hall (now the Ritz Cinema), the River Gardens and the Derwent Street Blouse Factory, as well as other rooms in the town. Officers were again given room at Bridge Hill House. The local branch of the Women's *Temperance* Association opened up a cafe and recreation room in Campbell Street to help entertain the troops. Books and magazines were provided, as well as refreshments. Every Saturday the St Peter's Church Musical Society provided a concert for the soldiers, as well as free refreshments and cigarettes. The men were given free access to the Gibfield Lane swimming baths, and during their 32-day stay 1,900 visits by soldiers were recorded. On March 30, 250 of the men moved on to Doncaster and Hull for more training. The rest left Belper on April 9.

In January 1915, Herbert Strutt handed over his steam-powered yacht *Sanda* on loan to the navy, and on the 23rd it sailed from



**Herbert Strutt's
steam-powered
yacht, *Sanda*.**

Oban in Scotland, where it was docked, for Portsmouth, to be painted in naval colours and fitted with guns. Sadly, it would never return to the Strutt family. Almost exactly a year later, the navy released details confirming the sinking of Sanda on 25 September, 1915 during a German attack off the Belgian Coast, with its captain on board. The boat was 152 feet long, 22 feet broad and 13 feet deep.

At the end of January 1915, Herbert Strutt had spoken to a crowded public meeting in the Public Hall on King Street, about the need for a Home Guard. He reminded them that the idea of a voluntary unit of soldiers for the town was not a new one – a few months earlier, the colours (flag) used by the Belper Volunteers over a century earlier, had been found at the Tower of London, and he had them moved and fixed in a new position inside St Peter's Church. That time, the Volunteers had been created out of fear of a French Invasion – this time it was Germany for which they had to be ready. On Friday 5 February, over 100 members of Belper's Home Guard met for the first time at the Drill Hall in the Clusters. Their first parade was on March 14, with a march to St Peter's Church for the 10am service, accompanied by boy scouts with bugles. There were no uniforms available for the Home Guard, but they were all issued with arm bands, to show they were members.



**The colours of the Belper
Volunteers in St Peter's Church.**



Belper River Gardens.

10: Keeping Active

With so many men leaving the town by 1915, it became harder and harder to keep organisations, activities and events running in the town – not just because of the lack of men, but also because those left behind felt less inclined to join in with entertainments, particularly sports, unless it was to raise money to help the war effort.

By the end of February, the Belper News claimed that not a single game of football had been played in Belper during 1915 – of the old Sunday School League, there were only four teams left – the members of the rest had all joined the army.

Belper Boating Association, which planned events in the River Gardens, held very few events after war broke out. The new season began on Easter Monday, April 5. For the first time there were no fireworks, as these had been banned by the Government. The greatest excitement, other than the planned entertainments, occurred when a man slipped and fell in the fishpond by the fountain. He was able to visit a Belper friend to dry off before getting his train home later in the day.

Occasionally, entertainments came from outside the town. On Saturday 8 May Sanger's Circus returned to Salt's Meadow (at the bottom of Derwent Street) for one day. Soldiers and nurses were allowed free admission to the Big Top.

Although the usual Sunday School processions, followed by meals and games, were held as part of the town's *Wakes Week* celebrations in July, when the people of the town were traditionally given time off work, there were none of the usual sports and entertainment for the adults. Only Mr and Mrs Strutt put on an event, hosting a tea in the River Gardens for the wounded soldiers at Green Hall.

In Belper, you didn't have to go to the Front to be injured by gunfire. A man was shot during a trip to the fairground in Belper's Coppice, off the Market Place. On Saturday 11 September at about 10am, John Thomas Smith (46) of New Road was shot in the chest



**The Palace
Cinema on
King Street.**

just as he entered the fairground with friends. Police later found a bullet-hole in the canvas of the nearby rifle saloon, and the saloon was shut down to prevent any further accidents. No charges were made. The saloon, owned by Albert Ashley of Nottingham, had been providing glass balls as targets, thrown in the air by little fountains of water which constantly changed height. The bullet just missed Smith's heart, but he made a full recovery.

A concert at the Palace Cinema and Entertainments Hall on King Street, and a flag day by the teachers and children at Herbert Strutt School raised £121 6s 9d for the Red Cross and St John Ambulance Society. The children had made the flags themselves.

As Christmas approached, over 50 fat cattle were sold off in the final Smithfield Cattle Market of 1915 – there was still meat available so that many people could eat well over the Christmas period. Amongst the buyers were local butchers Beresford, Bosworth, Cooper and Ryde. The Smithfield stood between King Street and Field Lane, and between the railway station and Bridge Street.

Magistrates permitted Mr Moorley, owner of the Palace, to show two films on Christmas Day only if the Belper police had watched the films first to ensure they were suitable. Superintendent Vardy was called in to watch 'The Stoning' and 'Marguerite of Navarre' – both hand-coloured films – before the big day, and found them to be acceptable.



Superintendent Vardy.



The Lander Lane house that was knocked down (on the right).

11: Town Changes

Although the war was the focus for people in the town throughout 1915, not everything in Belper revolved around it. By March 1915, the junction of Lander Lane and High Street was widened, by knocking down a house. There were calls for the council to widen Bridge Street outside Beresford's stonemasons, where the road narrowed, becoming dangerous for vehicles, but this last piece of work never took place (and still hasn't, a century later).

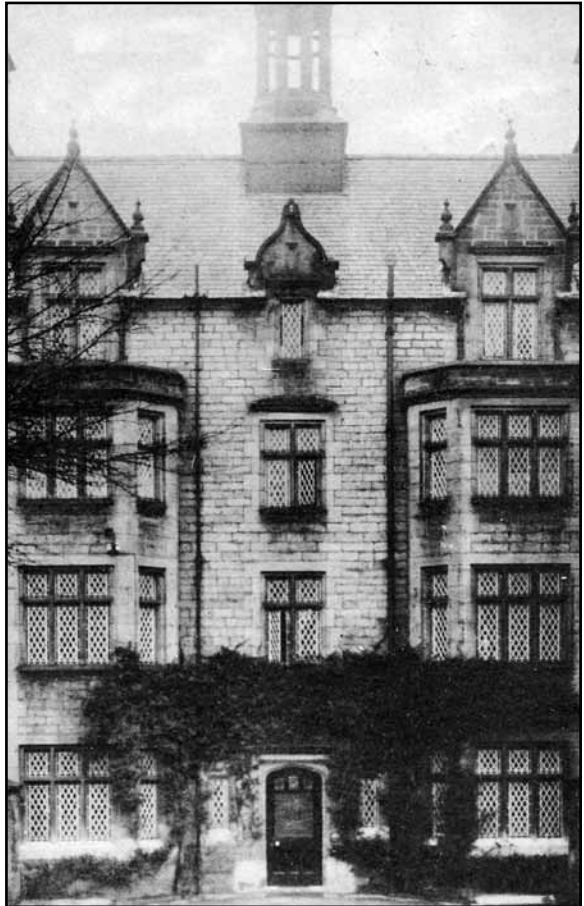
It was a busy time for hosiery companies in the town, with some providing clothing for the war effort. Belper builder Mr Haynes provided new workrooms and storerooms at Brettle and Company on Chapel Street as orders increased. Another hosiery firm, Ward, Sturt and Sharp, was planning to add a storey to one building and a roof over the yard to create more space.

It wasn't just hosiery companies that benefited from greater

orders. Following complaints over the British Government giving orders for horse-shoes to America, Belper blacksmith Mr Albert Wigley of Field Head and Wellington Court received a Government order for 80,000 horse-shoes in late 1915, as there were still many horses at the Front.

On April 1, for the first time in 15 years, the dietary table for inmates at Belper Workhouse was changed. One significant alteration was the replacement of butter with margarine. The changes would save up to £250 a year on feeding the inmates. Four workhouse nurses resigned in July 1915, over the decision to supply them with the same margarine as the inmates had, instead of butter. The Guardians, who ran the workhouse, accepted the resignations and brought in new staff.

Soon afterwards, the Guardians were requested to buy only loose sugar, as there was a national shortage of cube sugar. They were assured that loose sugar was just as sweet and suitable. In the September, they insured the buildings against *zeppelin* attack, following the council's decision to insure the Belper Waterworks.



Belper Workhouse.



One of the wards in the Green Hall Hospital.

12: The Home Front

For those people in Belper unable to enlist, but wanting to play a part in the war effort, there were two main ways to get involved – by supporting the Red Cross Hospital at Green Hall, and by preparing themselves in case of a German invasion.

In March 1915, 32 more injured soldiers, some on stretchers, arrived at Green Hall, with a further 15 in June, 14 in July, and more followed. Each time, they were met by Herbert Strutt's motor cars, which took them up from the station. When the men arrived in July and were still on the platform, an express train came through and blew its whistle, causing the soldiers to jerk round, thinking it was a shell.

In the 23 April 1915 edition of the Belper News, a request was made for women to come forward as voluntary nurses, which were urgently needed.



Nursing staff at Green Hall.

Mrs Emily Strutt continued to support and provide for the injured soldiers at Green Hall. Private J Morris, of the second battalion of the Scots Guards, and a patient at Green Hall, wrote a letter to the Belper News, thanking Mrs Strutt for 'kindly and wholeheartedly doing so much for her country and setting a brilliant example'. He also thanked the people of Belper who sent in gifts every day, and provided for regular musical evenings for the patients. 'The doctors are of the best and do all in their power to bring about a speedy recovery. The sisters truly are efficient.' But he pointed out that there were still many able-bodied young men in Belper who he had seen without uniforms, and he urged them to enlist for King and Country.

Entertainments for the injured men included visits from the town band, performing on the lawn outside Green Hall, and more visits from the touring performers at the Palace, who would give a special performance at the hospital.

A recruitment drive was held in the Paddock (now the Memorial Gardens), opposite Green Hall, at the end of July, with the wounded soldiers calling on Belper men to join up. This was very successful,

with a new record set for the number of men joining in a single day.

All of the soldiers at Green Hall were moved to Leicester later that month, so the building could be cleaned and repainted ready for 52 new wounded and sick men arriving on October 6.

A week later, a recruiting rally in the Market Place saw the Sherwoods' band coming up from Derby, with speakers, and lots of the Home Guard joined by wounded soldiers from Green Hall. One of the speakers was a Major Pine Coffin (the Belper News reported) from the Lancashire Regiment – hopefully his name didn't put them off. In all, 21 men enlisted at the event.

In September 1915, having been fully trained and drilled, the Belper Home Guard were assigned guard duty for key bridges etc, in the event of emergencies, by the Chief Constable.

By the end of the year, 75 employees from the Belper and Milford Mills had enlisted – a high number considering how few men worked at the mills (it was mainly women). By the end of the previous year, 7,531 men working for the Midland Railway Company had enlisted and gone to war, so more women were employed as clerks, ticket collectors and parcel van drivers. For the first time, lady porters were finally introduced from January 1917, and were soon on the Belper platforms. Women workers were praised in the January 28 1916 edition of the Belper News, for taking on skilled and heavy work in industry with great accomplishment. The same month, it was reported that Mrs Mary Vincent was now endeavouring to send packages to Belper men who were Prisoners of War in Germany, a very special kind of war work.

By February 1916, the war had been part of people's lives for 18 months. Many had first thought it would all be over in a matter of weeks, but the difficult reality of trench warfare, and the heavy loss of life it brought, had gradually made it clear that this would be a long, slow war – and it was far from being over. Many more Belper men were to lose their lives, and the worst was yet to come...



Three of the injured soldiers staying at Green Hall.

Glossary

Chapter One

Alderman – Elected Councillor.

Friendly Societies – Groups of people who join together to give financial or other support for members.

Seven shillings and sixpence – Britain's old money system (pre-1971). 12 pennies (12d) in a shilling, 20 shillings (20s) in a pound. One shilling equals a present-day 5p, so seven shillings and sixpence = 37½p

Pageant – A public dramatic show.

Excursion – A short trip, taken as a leisure activity

Chapter Two

Reservists – Trained soldiers who are not in active service, but can be called up to serve in times of war.

Derbyshire Yeomanry – A Derbyshire based cavalry (horse-mounted) and infantry (on foot) regiment.

Territorial Army – A reserve army of trained volunteers.

Mobilise – Prepare for active service.

Front Line – The part of an army that is closest to the enemy.

Cavalry – Horse-mounted soldiers.

Billets – Places, usually people's houses, where soldiers are lodged for a short time.

Ordnance – Guns, weapons.

Malaria – A deadly disease spread by mosquito bites.

Framework knitter – Someone whose job is to use a knitting machine.

Mentioned in Dispatches – Praised in a report to the Officer in Charge.

Bombardier – Officer in a unit of soldiers handling large guns.

Pneumonia – An illness affecting the lungs.

Influenza – An illness these days better known as 'Flu'.

Hepatitis – An illness affecting the liver.

Mediterranean Expeditionary Force - Part of the British Army in charge of British soldiers and their allies (units from other countries working with Great Britain) during the battles around the Mediterranean Sea.

Chapter Three

Reveille - A signal using a bugle or drum to wake soldiers.

Terriers – The nickname for the Territorial Army members.

Mustering – Coming together for inspection.

Compulsory purchases – Bought by the government or army without the owner's agreement.

Regiments – A large unit (group) of soldiers, that can be divided into smaller groups called companies, squadrons, batteries and battalions.

Battalions - A unit (group) of soldiers – there were usually two battalions in a regiment.

Chapter Four

Belper Urban District Council – The council which provided services in Belper until it was replaced by Amber Valley District Council in 1973.

Censorship – Stopping people from writing or saying whatever they want.

Enlisted – Join the army.

Panic buying – Buying large amounts for fear that something will later be hard to find in the shops.

Sago – A milky pudding made from the pith in the stems of sago palms.

Pulpit – A platform where a vicar gives a speech, known as a sermon.

Magistrates – Someone who makes decisions about smaller things concerning the law.

Victuallers – People allowed to sell alcohol by law.

Isolation Hospital – A hospital for people with illnesses which can be easily caught by others, so they are kept apart from everyone.

Workhouse Guardians – The group of people in charge of running the workhouse.

Chapter Five

Heir – At this time it was usually the eldest son, who would inherit all property when their parents died.

Voluntary Aid Detachment Hospital – A hospital run by a group of volunteers which provided nurses.

Chapter Six

Bugle – A small trumpet.

Chapter Eight

Grenadier Guards – A unit of soldiers with connections to the royal household.

Musketry – Learning how to use a musket (gun).

Frostbite – Damage to the body, caused by extreme cold.

Chapter Nine

Shrapnel – Pieces of bomb thrown out in an explosion.

Temperance – No alcohol allowed or wanted.

Chapter Ten

Wakes Week – Holiday period, like the Bank Holidays we have today.

Chapter Eleven

Zeppelin – Large German airships that could drop bombs.

Questions for Readers

Chapter One

- Why do you think people were excited about war with Germany?
- What was 'Wild Australia'?
- How would you have spent the bank holiday of August 1914?

Chapter Two

- Look at the first photograph in this chapter. If you were one of the boys in the street how would you be feeling?
- Now think of yourself as being one of the soldiers. Describe your first few days in the army.
- Look at the list of soldiers at the railway station. Do you have any friends or relatives with the same surname?

Chapter Three

- Describe a typical day at Territorial training camp.
- Why did the army compulsory purchase horses?
- Why did different regiments come to Belper for training?

Chapter Four

- Why did the Belper mills cope better than other mills in Britain, during wartime?
- What duties were women expected to take on during the war years?
- How did shopping differ during the war years?

Chapter Five

- Who was George Herbert Strutt?
- Why did injured soldiers come to Belper?

Chapter Six

- How were men persuaded to enlist in the army?

Chapter Seven

- What is a refugee?
- How did the people of Belper look after refugees?
- How did the refugees repay the people of Belper?

Chapter Eight

- Describe a typical day for a newly enlisted man.
- What was life like in the trenches?
- Who was Mary Vincent?

Chapter Nine

- What was life like for wounded soldiers at Green Hall?
- What was ‘Sanda’?
- Who are ‘The Home Guard’ and what was their job?

Chapter Ten

- Why do you think fireworks were banned in 1915?
- What sort of entertainment existed in Belper in 1915?

Chapter Eleven

- Why were textile companies and blacksmiths, in Belper, kept busy in 1915?

Chapter Twelve

- Imagine you live in Belper in 1915 but are unable to enlist. What would you do to help the war effort?



**Belper
in 1914.**

