

Berkshire Old and New

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Berkshire Local History Association

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Cover illustrations

Front. Clearing timber at Buckland Warren, 1917. Photo: Museum of English Rural Life.

Back. The war memorial at Arborfield.

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Call out the Cavalry

The hidden history of a museum object: a Berkshire Yeomanry cavalry sabre¹

Peter Quennell

The hidden history behind a museum object can tell us a lot about our past. The Windsor and Royal Borough Museum has in its collections a 'Pattern 1796 Light Cavalry Sabre'. Who originally used the sword, and how it came into the possession of the museum are not recorded, but it is of the type used by the Berkshire Yeomanry Cavalry and that is how it is described in the display.²

The story of this sabre starts in France in 1766. John Gaspard Le Marchant, the eldest son of the wealthy John Le Marchant of Guernsey, was born at his maternal grandfather's home in Amiens on 9 February that year. The young Le Marchant boy was withdrawn from his boarding school in Bath after the headmaster described him as 'with the exception of Sir Sidney Smith, the Greatest Dunce that had ever studied there.' His education continued at home, with the family butler.

In 1781 the young Le Marchant's father purchased a commission for him as an ensign with the Wiltshire Militia, but the 16-year-old was soon in trouble when he challenged his colonel, Lord Porchester, to a duel. The colonel calmed the hot-headed boy down, but impetuosity led Le Marchant into further trouble when he challenged a civilian to a duel. Fortunately for his career this early aggression appears to have been controlled thereafter.

In February 1783 Le Marchant transferred to the First Royal Regiment of Foot and was posted to Gibraltar where he occupied himself with painting and sketching. His sketches came to the attention of King George III, probably when Le Marchant was a commander of the escort to the king in 1789. The king was impressed and invited Le Marchant to court. Whether that helped his advancement is not clear, but certainly Le Marchant was promoted to lieutenant in the 2nd Dragoon Guards in November 1789.

Disappointed with the standard of swordsmanship and professionalism in the army, Le Marchant developed an effective cavalry sword drill, established a military training college at High Wycombe, and in 1796, working in collaboration with the Birmingham cutler, Henry Osborn, designed a new sabre. The trooper's version had a curved blade, 32½ to 33 inches long, with a single fuller (the groove running the length of the blade) and came to an asymmetrical point. It had a single knucklebow hilt of 'stirrup' type, with a leather-covered wooden grip, firmly secured to the blade by means of a rivet and iron lugs (not present on the sabre at the

museum). The scabbard, or sheath, was of iron, with two loose suspension rings. The officer's version, as displayed at the Windsor and Royal Borough Museum, is similar to the trooper's sabre, but it was usually lighter and finished with blue and gilt decoration on the blade. The new sabre was adopted by the army as the Pattern 1796 Light Cavalry Sabre and it has been described as 'The finest cutting sword ever manufactured in quantity.'

Britain was at war with France and there was civil unrest in southern England, which prompted Jacob Pleydell-Bouverie, Earl of Radnor, as Lord Lieutenant to the County of Berkshire, to write to the Secretary of State, Henry Dundas on 29 September 1800: 'In consequence of some unpleasant disturbances in the Borough of Windsor some respectable inhabitants of that town and neighbourhood have proposed to form themselves, if they obtain His Majesty's approbation, into a Yeomanry Corps of Cavalry to be called the Windsor Loyal Cavalry.' The letter asked the government to supply them with arms and horse furniture, and a recommendation was made for three officers to be appointed: John Sturges as captain, John Andrew Biggs as lieutenant, and James Ramsbottom cornet.³ A cornet was similar to a second lieutenant and he would normally have carried the colours, or flag, on parade. If the yeomanry cavalry had such embroidered silk colours they have not survived, although the contemporary colours of the Windsor Volunteers (infantry), circa 1800, have done, and are currently housed in a glass-fronted cabinet in the vestibule on the first floor of the Guildhall in Windsor.

Henry Dundas wasted no time. He replied by letter on the following day, to say that the offer of service had been accepted by His Majesty, and in December 1800, the newly formed Windsor Loyal Cavalry Troop paraded on the Long Walk and it was said that 'they made a very respectable appearance.' The uniform was blue with blue pantaloons; a leather light cavalry helmet had a bearskin crest and feather hackles at the side. The officers usually wore silver lace. The three officers would each have worn the Pattern 1796 sabre. There is no painting of them: the picture opposite of Lt. William Hallet of the Abingdon Troop of the Berkshire Yeomanry Cavalry can help us to imagine how the officers in the Windsor Loyal Cavalry might have worn the uniform and sabre.

Apart from the three officers, the troop appears to have had little difficulty in recruiting thirty to forty rank and file, including two sergeants, two corporals, a trumpeter, and a quartermaster. Attendance at meetings was required on three days each week for drills and training, and they were prepared to turn out anywhere in the county when required. They turned out on parade on 4 June 1801 and 4 October 1801 in Windsor, and on review in Woodley Green on 22 March 1804. Charles Knight wrote that 'the chief business of Windsor life at this date was the Volunteer Drills and Reviews.'

Perhaps the most substantial ceremonial occasion when the sabre might have been worn by an officer was at the Royal Review on Bulmarsh Heath near Reading on Saturday 8 June 1805, as reported in the *Reading Mercury*. Several troops, including the Abingdon and Windsor, had been amalgamated into the First Regiment of the Berkshire Gentlemen and Yeomanry Cavalry in 1804 under the command of Lt. Col. Charles Dundas of Kintbury, M.P for Berkshire. This was an occasion for the combined force to parade.

At ten o'clock in the morning on Saturday 8 June 1805 over a thousand Berkshire Volunteers, infantry as well as the yeomanry cavalry, assembled on an open heath known as Bulmarsh Heath, to the east of Reading and south of the River Thames. The volunteers had travelled there from all parts of the county, some having taken two days to arrive. King George III travelled in a carriage with a troop of Horse Guards, arriving at twelve o'clock. Twenty thousand spectators had arrived to see the review.

King George III mounted a horse and, accompanied by His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge and a number of officers, moved to the centre. The volunteer troops presented arms and saluted, the royal party rode down the line to inspect them as the bands played and then the king returned to the centre.

The companies of cavalry and infantry then marched past His Majesty before each corps fired a salute. The light companies advanced while the brigades formed themselves into close column of companies before resuming the original position and again firing by corps. Having completed the manoeuvres, a general salute was given.⁴

Before leaving the heath, His Majesty commented on 'the military perfection of his Berkshire Volunteers'. Escorted by troops from the 'Royal Regiment of Horse Guards Blue', His Majesty travelled on to Whiteknights, the nearby home of George Spencer-Churchill, Marquis of Blandford. The Italianate mansion was set in a magnificent eighty-acre estate. A 21-gun salute was fired as the King arrived and bands played as the guests enjoyed their dinner. The royal party included King George III, Queen Charlotte, the Princesses Elizabeth, Mary, Augusta, Sophia, and Amelia, and the Dukes of



Cumberland, Cambridge, Sussex, and Kent. Another 21-gun salute was fired when they left Whiteknights at seven o'clock. The day had been a great success. The dining arrangements for the 1,000 volunteers are not known.

The review was the high point for the Windsor Loyal Cavalry. Five months later, in November 1805, Cornet Ramsbottom resigned and Lieutenant Biggs was replaced for neglecting his duties and being absent from the corps. The number of volunteers dropped away and in July 1807, Captain Sturges asked for permission to disband the Windsor Loyal Cavalry entirely. The request was accepted.

John Gaspard Le Marchant, designer of the Pattern 1796 Light Cavalry Sabre, continued to serve with distinction. After being promoted to Major-General on 4 June 1811, he went on to command a brigade of heavy cavalry for the Duke of Wellington. At the battle of Salamanca on 22 July 1812, leading from the front, Le Marchant smashed into the left wing of the French army at a critical moment in the battle. Spotting Le Marchant's heavy cavalry, General Antoine Maucune ordered his French infantry to form hollow squares. During yet another, and some say unnecessary, unsupported cavalry charge into the French, Le Marchant was shot dead.

Watching Le Marchant's charge, Wellington turned to his cavalry commander, Sir Stapleton Cotton, and said, 'By God, Cotton, I never saw anything so beautiful in my life; the day is yours.'

When England had feared invasion or revolution and Windsor needed to raise a troop of yeomanry cavalry to defend the town and reassure the inhabitants, it was John Gaspard Le Marchant's Pattern 1796 Light Cavalry Sabre that was chosen to equip them, and the hidden history of that old cavalry sabre shows us how a school dunce, born in France, went on to establish a great military training academy in England, design a very effective new weapon for the light cavalry, and lead a decisive cavalry charge that helped the Duke of Wellington to win the battle of Salamanca and go on to secure England's reputation as a world power and to defeat Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo.

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The illustration of Lt. Hallett was supplied by Reading Library.

Newbury Anglicans and the Sunday School Centenary 1880

J. Dunleavy

‘There have been local celebrations of the Sunday school centenary all round during the last two weeks - floods of talk - oceans of tea - mountains of cakes - acres of banners - and any amount of music . . .’¹

The initiative to commemorate the centenary of Sunday schools was taken by the London-based Sunday School Union in 1879. The reason for the celebration was meant to honour the pioneering work of the Gloucester-based newspaper proprietor, Robert Raikes and others, in successfully establishing a Sunday school in 1780. There had been earlier attempts to set up such schools not only in this country but abroad, though unlike the Gloucester model they lacked the publicity. Raikes was able to further his work through the columns of his influential journal. Not content with making approaches to agencies such as the Church of England Institute, the Ragged School Union, and others engaged in promoting Sunday school work, invitations were sent out to thousands of individual institutions urging them to communicate with the London headquarters of the SSU with any plans likely to be suitable to mark this landmark in our religious and educational history. Reports from far and wide soon began to appear in the columns of the *Sunday School Chronicle* suggesting there was a wide measure of interest and desire to honour the work of Raikes and other pioneers in this great movement. There was interest not only in this country but in the other English-speaking regions, and even parts of Europe, pointing to significant support for the celebration planned for 1880. At the outset it looked as though the idea of the celebration was capable of surmounting divisions among Christians: such hopes were dashed in the summer of 1879 when the Church of England announced they were not prepared to collaborate with other denominations, preferring instead to organize functions that would be in accordance with what they termed Anglican traditions. This was a serious blow to the originators who had not anticipated such an outcome; after all, how could the established church decline to participate in a movement that had for its aim an occasion when Christians of all denominations might unite by occupying a common platform of congratulation and prayer? With few exceptions, separate celebrations were organized by Church of England and the nonconformists.²

The decision to act without reference to the nonconformists gave the established church the opportunity to draw up its own programme. At Newbury a number of committees were formed. A general committee had responsibility for co-ordinating events under the chairmanship of the Hon. and Rev. J. Horatio Nelson (vicar of Shaw-cum-Donnington); Rev. W. B. Banting was secretary, and Mr J. E. Nelson served as treasurer. Teachers and other friends of the Sunday schools located not only in Newbury but the villages situated in the deanery made up the other members.³

Looking at the deliberations of the Anglicans it is obvious the leading figures in the established church were concerned with trends in education. Relations between nonconformists and the Church of England had experienced a number of crises during the nineteenth century, none perhaps proving to be as contentious as that of education. This was reflected in the subject for discussion on the first day of the festival, where delegates were invited to discuss ‘Sunday schools, and the place they occupy in the Church’s system.’ From the accounts appearing in the local press it is obvious Anglicans were anxious to act positively by discussing ways in which the Sunday schools could be made more efficient. One speaker informed delegates that the Bishop of Oxford had recently suggested there was a need for trained teachers in the Sunday schools. This need had become even more pronounced now that they lived in an age of compulsory elementary education. The nature of the 1880 Education Act, holding out the prospect of more efficient schools provision, ought not to concern them unduly, the Bishop was reported as saying; as long as the day schools were to concentrate on secular subjects on weekdays, there was all the more reason for the church to make the most of religious instruction on the Sabbath.⁴

While the first day concentrated on arguments for religious education, on the second day delegates were invited to focus on: ‘The Sunday school teacher: his work and qualifications.’ Most of those attending had extensive experience of teaching in day and Sunday schools, yet it is obvious the organisers were convinced there was a need to address the question of teaching methods. As though to drive home this point, two demonstration classes were held, and were much appreciated by the large audience in the Town Hall. A measure of the stimulating effect this had on those present can be gauged by the number of delegates who were prepared to share details of sources they had used with some effect. The Bible alone, one speaker declared, was not sufficient for the scholars, and neither was the prayer book; instead he urged the need for a wider use of the catechism.⁵

Among the practical suggestions put forward was the need to recognise the responsible agents in the education of a child, and this was not simply the school and the church but the parents at home. Again, those close to the

bishop argued there was a need to raise the status of the Sunday school teacher who ought to be regarded as a member of a professional body. This, the bishop was reported as saying, would lead to a feeling of esprit de corps, and there was a role for the teachers' association to play.⁶

In what appeared to be a full timetable for conference and discussion, those attending were expected to participate in prayer meetings and services. Meanwhile the scholars had no doubt been looking forward to the day set aside for them. The Mayor published a request urging tradesmen to suspend business from noon on the day of the treat (29 June) and this was widely observed. After a short service with a sermon in St Nicholas church, the Newbury parish scholars processed through the main streets of the town, the destination being Goldwell Park. The procession was joined by contingents from the schools at Hungerford, Kintbury, Shalbourne, and Avington, and the total number was well over 2,000. Those in the procession carried flags and banners, and as they walked through the highly decorated streets, they were accompanied by no fewer than three bands. The local journal reported:

The entire procession was of great length and very pretty and effective in appearance, and never before had there been such a vast assemblage of children in the streets of Newbury as on this auspicious occasion . . .

Arriving at the park the processionists were treated to tea, after which games and amusements kept the children happily engaged for several hours. At Goldwell Park an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 partook of the refreshments, helping no doubt to diminish the oceans of tea and mountains of cakes provided. The organisers, recognising their young charges had had a lengthy and ultimately tiring day behind them, supplied each child with a bun as they left the park.⁷

The local press certainly was of the opinion that the festival from a social point of view had passed off well; but spiritually the inability to forget past squabbles and agree to unite indicated that the rivalries between the churches were still there. As for the scholars, the local journal was of the opinion that the happiness and enjoyment of the scholars was such that they were unlikely ever to forget the centenary festival of 1880.⁸

According to Philip B. Cliff, the historian of the Sunday school movement, 1880 deserves to be regarded as the most memorable celebration in the history of Sunday schools in the nineteenth century. It was certainly a much more serious business than the mere consumption of tea and cakes. Yet as the opinions among Newbury Anglicans indicate, there were concerns about the future of Sunday schools, which appeared to have

come to a crossroads. The introduction of compulsory schooling in 1876 had placed an additional burden on all voluntary schools, both Anglican and those operated by sections of nonconformity. The expense incurred seemed to put many such schools at risk. Even more concern was apparent whenever the programmes adopted by the so-called Board Schools became known.

Although reading the Scriptures was allowed, no commentary by the teacher was permitted. Supporters of the voluntary schools became increasingly concerned that the Board Schools were nothing less than the vanguard of secularism: if not that, at least they appeared to be in sympathy with an age coming to be perceived as one of scepticism.⁹

The world of education by 1880 had undergone dramatic changes since the time when Raikes and friends began promoting Sunday schools. At the outset Sunday schools in many cases were non-denominational, frequently controlled by the teachers: this was no longer the case in centenary year. The laity had lost out to the religious ministers or leaders. The early schools had a very narrow programme: by 1880 Sunday schools had become quite diverse in their offerings. While time was allocated for scripture reading and the cultivation of what might be termed religious knowledge, the schools had assumed more of the nature of community centres, with savings clubs, excursion committees, penny banks, musical societies, temperance crusaders, and so on. Little wonder that something like four million people were happy to count themselves among what were still termed Sunday school scholars. Well might the SSU report conclude there was no need to estimate the value of Sunday schools since they had long promoted the spiritual, moral and social welfare of the young.¹⁰

The movement also had an influence on the development of education generally. For instance in view of opposition to secular subjects on the Sabbath, the weekday evenings came to be utilised for such work. Many of the promoters were drawn into what were termed mechanics' and other adult institutes. There is little doubt an appreciation of education, such a marked feature of the nineteenth century, owed a great deal to the influence and experience of the Sunday schools. Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, regarded as the architect of our popular school system, declared:

'The Sunday School was the root from which sprang our system of day schools.'¹¹

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extending over 700 pages chronicling the events at home and abroad. It is useful for the background to the rivalries between the established church and the nonconformists that surfaced during 1879 and which proved to be irreconcilable. [hereafter, referred to as *Centenary*]. F. Booth, *Robert Raikes of Gloucester* (1980) passim.

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The Great War in the Berkshire Countryside

E. J. T. Collins

Since 1918 an estimated 25,000 books and scholarly articles have been written about the Great War, mostly though on the military aspects.¹ The Home Front is at last beginning to attract the attention of local historians, although the impact the war on the countryside remains a much neglected topic, glossed over in a couple of pages by most parish histories. It is generally believed that, war deaths apart, the countryside was little affected by the war, and that life went on there much as usual. John Trigg's *A County at War, Berkshire, 1914-18* (2007) is an exception, and an outstanding example of what diligent research using local sources can yield. Without it, this article would be much the poorer.

Following the long Bank Holiday weekend, Tuesday 4 August 1914 dawned bright and clear, the corn rapidly ripening, and the harvest in full swing. Later that afternoon, some seven hours before the expiry of Britain's ultimatum to Germany demanding the withdrawal of its troops from neutral Belgium, a telegram from the War Office was handed in at 4.45pm at the Central Telegraph Office, London, addressed to the Secretary of the Berkshire Territorial Forces Association, at Yeomanry House, Castle Hill, Reading. Reaching there at 5pm, it read: "MOBILISE TROOPERS."²

After weeks of speculation and mounting tension, the Great War began. The mobilisation order was quickly disseminated throughout the county by police and volunteers.³ The 5, 6, and 7 August were declared Bank Holidays. Among the first to be called up was the Berkshire Yeomanry, the mounted arm of the territorial force, drawn mainly from the rural areas, On 5 August, over 800 regular officers and men of the Royal Berkshire Regiment left Reading for Portsmouth: in November the Yeomanry, following three months training at Churn on the Berkshire Downs, where they were inspected by King George V, was dispatched to the east coast. By 1918, the Royal Berkshire Regiment had grown to 13 battalions, 8 combat and three labour. Some 20-25,000 men, from all parts of Britain, passed through its ranks, The 2nd Battalion, which entrained for France in 1915, consisted principally of volunteers from the market towns and villages: 'B' Company from Newbury, Wantage and Wallingford; 'C' Company from Windsor and Maidenhead; and 'D' Company from Abingdon and Wallingford.

Exactly how many Berkshire men served in the armed forces is nowhere

precisely stated, nor their peacetime occupations. As a proportion of its total population, Berkshire had the highest number of men under arms in the country. In Britain overall, some 887,000 men, about one-seventh of those who served in the armed forces were killed in the war, and between two and three times as many wounded. Proportionately, the upper classes fared worst of all: in the first year of the war, one in every seven of the officer corps died compared with one in seventeen of the other ranks, while almost 10 per cent of titled, mainly land-owning families, lost a direct heir.⁴ Of the 5,588 Etonians who served, more than one-fifth were killed and more than one-quarter seriously wounded.⁵ Of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, 1300 were killed in action and three to four times that number wounded or missing. The 2nd Battalion was virtually wiped out in late May 1918, altogether 1474 were killed and 3,000 wounded or missing. When in February 1918 the 6th Battalion was disbanded, only 10 per cent of the 725 founding members remained.

The demographic cost to small communities was sometimes out of all proportion to their size. At East Woodhay, for example, of the 51 men and one woman who enlisted, 20 per cent perished. At Welford 22 died, compared with just one in World War II, and in the tiny village of Wasing, 7 out of a population of just 13 died, 60 per cent of the adult pre-war population. East Hendred lost 115 out of a total population of 726, and Steventon 59 out of 335.⁶ The lists of war dead inscribed on village war memorials attest to the scale of loss, to which must be added the many who returned home severely disabled or mentally scarred. Yet, despite the mounting carnage, popular support for what was generally regarded as a just and necessary war, scarcely wavered.⁷

Berkshire saw no direct action. The Zeppelin raids struck mainly the east coast and London, where some 668 persons died and about 2000 were injured in airship and aeroplane attacks. Invasion or sabotage was a tangible threat. The duties of special constables, assisted by Boy Scouts, included helping the regular police guard key road bridges over the Thames, and water work and reservoirs.⁸ Counter-invasion plans required the removal of all livestock and road vehicles from Kent, Sussex and Surrey, to special camps in Buckinghamshire and Berkshire, such as Bulmershe Farm at Woodley, Folly Farm at Barkham, and Palmer's By Field at Glebelands.

In March 1915, J. H. Benyon of Englefield, the Lord Lieutenant, issued instructions to all inhabitants as to what do in the event of an enemy landing:

The civilian population was not to move unless ordered to; likewise all cattle, which should be branded with the marks of their owners for ease of identification

‡ All forms of transport, water and road – boats, barges, launches, houseboats; motor vehicles – wagons, carts, bicycles; along with all horses, were liable for requisition

‡ Likewise all food supplies and tools – spades, pick axes, saws, axes.⁹

The following main roads were to be kept clear for military use:

‡ Bath Road between Reading and Slough; London Road between Wokingham, Bracknell, and Sunningdale; and the main roads connecting Wokingham, Sandhurst, Blackwater and Aldershot

Roads connecting to the Thames bridges at Caversham, Sonning, Henley, Marlow and Eton

To the casual eye, the war left the countryside little changed, unlike in neighbouring Wiltshire where the Army took over a large part of Salisbury Plain for training and encampments. Berkshire had relatively few military installations. These included a large ordnance depot and munitions factory at Milton near Didcot, remount depots (for the supply of army horses) at Barkham and Arborfield, a tank store at Newbury Racecourse, and a Royal Flying Corps stores at Ascot Racecourse and the Royal Ascot Hotel. In 1916 an airfield and training school for aircraft mechanics were sited at Coley Park, Reading, south of the present Berkeley Avenue. A Prisoner of War Camp was established at Newbury Racecourse in August 1915, but closed after a few months following allegations of atrocities, the inmates being later transferred to hulk ships lying off the south coast. Other camps were located at Ascot, Lodge Farm, Lambourne, and at Maidenhead, at Philberds, a large private house, where 100 German officers were housed in corrugated iron huts, and were discovered digging an escape tunnel.

The largest military complex, the Officer Training School at Sandhurst, underwent major enlargement in the form of a new hospital, more accommodation blocks, and extra classrooms. The number of cadets doubled in 1914-15, with 780 passing out in 1916-17.¹⁰

On the streets, an outward manifestation of war was the increasingly common sight of men in uniform, indeed uniforms of all kinds, along with unfamiliar dialects and foreign languages. Troops were encamped and billeted in towns and villages across the county.¹¹ Over 100,000 Belgian refugees arrived in Britain early in the war; some were housed locally – in a special refugee home in Maidenhead, at The Acre at Sonning and later at the French Horn, and in private houses in Newbury and Bucklebury. A few Belgian children were enrolled at Wargrave Infants School. Registers were drawn up of aliens and German and Austrian nationals. The numbers detained, where, and for how long, is unclear.

Voluntary Hospitals and Convalescent Homes

A feature of the war was the mushrooming of private and voluntary run hospitals and convalescent homes for treating the soaring numbers of war wounded. Located mostly in private houses in the rural areas, they were to play a vital role in the war effort.

The army hospital service was a patchwork of different types of institution providing varying levels of care.¹² At the apex were the War Hospitals, based in Reading and Newbury, under direct War Office control, run by the army, and offering a wide range of treatments, and below them, convalescent hospitals, also run by the military. The Reading war hospitals included the Royal Berkshire, Battle hospital on the Oxford Road in a former workhouse, and Redlands School. Military patients were also treated at district and cottage hospitals, such as at Newbury and Wallingford, and at the Edward VII Hospital for Officers at Windsor.¹³

'Auxiliary' Hospitals and Convalescent Homes ranged in size from 20 up to as many as 200 beds, and were run by the Red Cross, the VAD, or local committees, in association with local doctors, and staffed by a mixture of volunteers and paid employees. The VAD – Voluntary Aid Detachment – was an important but by no means the only provider, of professional and ancillary staff – male and female nurses, orderlies, cooks, clerical and domestic staff, drivers, and general handymen. In all, the VAD opened over 600 new hospitals in Britain, together with canteens and recreation huts.¹⁴ Auxiliary hospitals were supported by local fund-raising, private donations, wealthy individuals, and in varying degrees by the War Office. Accommodation in private houses was usually provided by their owners free of charge.

By September 1915 a county-wide network of residential homes and hospitals had been created. In 1918, the War Hospitals possessed at least 2500 beds, and the auxiliary hospitals as many again, with Reading the chief administrative centre. The HQ of the Hospital Supplies Department, for example, was situated in Duke Street. Auxiliary hospitals looked to the War Hospitals for specialist advice and access to advanced equipment such as x-ray machines, and new (especially orthopaedic) treatments.

This involved not only the conversion and fitting out of wards and treatment rooms in private houses, but also the movement in, out and across the county of tens of thousands of patients. The hospitals lay at the end of a supply chain which began at the field dressing stations behind the lines, then across the Channel, and from the ports by rail to Reading or Newbury, the main-line stations, and onwards via the branch lines to the local stations, and finally, by horse-drawn or motorized ambulance, to the hospital, in a country house, in a remote village. Some of the wounded travelled by convoy

direct from the battlefield to British hospitals. Car owners would often lend their cars free of charge to ferry patients or fetch supplies. Transport services organized by Berkshire Automobile Club brought the wounded from Reading station to the hospitals, 14,000 being transported in 1914-16, in 20 ambulances and cars.¹⁵

Most of the auxiliary hospitals were located in large private houses, many of them on agricultural estates, provided free of charge by their owner, who in some cases bore the entire cost, including staff and transport. The following is only a partial list of establishments:

Cliveden at Taplow. The Duke of Connaught's Canadian Red Cross Hospital, said to have treated 24,000 soldiers during the war, and described in *The Times* as one of the two best hospitals in the county.



Bearwood House. A Canadian convalescent hospital, housing at one stage 900 wounded. Local publicans were challenged as to whether or not to serve patients with alcohol, being that Canada went "dry" (no pun intended) for the duration of the war.

Basildon Park. Empty from 1910, it was requisitioned by the War Office as an army convalescent hospital for Guards officers. No rent was charged.¹⁶

Highclere Castle (Hampshire), part of which was converted into a convalescent hospital, the part it plays in the television series 'Downton Abbey'.

Englefield House. A Red Cross hospital with 25 beds occupying the Long Gallery, run personally by Dame Elizabeth Benyon, wife of the Lord Lieutenant.

Milton Hall (Steventon). A large auxiliary hospital with a professional staff of 40 and 220 beds, paid for by the Singer brothers. More than 4,500 patients were treated.

Welford Park. Following its closure in August 1915 when the lessee left for active service, the house reopened as an auxiliary hospital and convalescent home with 38 beds, all paid for by Lady Wantage.¹⁷

Similarly: Ardington House (Stockcross); Albion House (Donnington) specializing in the treatment of paralysis; Lambourne Place; West Woodhay House; Silwood Park; Teesdale House (Abingdon); Woodclyffe Hall (Wargrave). And the following private houses: Church House (Woolhampton), Fernhill (Windsor), Kingsclere House, Newton House (Newbury, a hospital for VAD personnel), Oaklee (Bracknell), Heatherside (Crowthorne), Ridgeland (Finchamstead), St Anne's Hall and Cliff House (Caversham, the latter a country annex of the Freemason's Hospital, London), with 25 beds, and offering massage and electrical treatments, and Queensland (Windsor) run by Lady Churchill at her own expense.

Other sites included the Old National School and Church House at Hungerford, Newbury Grammar School, Albion House at Speenhamland, The Club House at Mortimer (initially for housing Belgian refugees); the Grandstand at Ascot; Hungerford Technical College, and Leckhamstead Men's Club. With 200 beds and a throughput of more than 3,000 patients, supported by private donations, public appeals, and fund-raising events, Maidenhead boasted one of the largest and best-equipped auxiliary hospitals in the county.¹⁸

Of the six or seven auxiliary hospitals in Reading, one was located in St Luke's Church Hall in Erleigh Road, and the others mostly in local schools. In West Berkshire, Albion House, Newbury, was an auxiliary hospital (later designated a war hospital). War wounded from Ypres arrived at Newbury by train and were promptly installed in a special emergency ward at the District Hospital.

In all, Berkshire hosted as many perhaps as 40-45 voluntary auxiliary hospitals and convalescent homes. By mid-1920 these had mostly closed. Being largely undocumented, they have passed into history leaving barely a trace.

Farming in Wartime

In 1914 four-fifths of Britain's population was classed as urban, and only one-tenth of the labour force worked on the land. Yet, in still largely rural counties such as Berkshire, agriculture was a major source of income and employment, with over half the occupied population in country parishes employed on farms and estates.¹⁹

Agriculturally, Berkshire was a complicated county, with many local variations in land use and type of farming. The percentage of the cultivated area under arable was highest in the Abingdon, Hungerford, Lambourne, Newbury, Wallingford, and Wantage Petty Sessional Divisions.²⁰ The Faringdon, Maidenhead, Wokingham, and Windsor divisions were largely pasture. Sheep were found mainly on the downs in the Faringdon, Newbury and Wantage divisions; pigs in the Abingdon, Newbury and Reading divisions, and cows in the mixed-soil Wokingham and Reading divisions, the Vale of the White Horse and Upper Thames Meadows.



Gathering the 1914 harvest on one of George Baylis's farms on the Downs

Since the onset of the Great Depression in the late 1870s, Berkshire farming had performed at best indifferently, at worst very badly. Between 1870 and 1914 physical output fell by an estimated 46 per cent, and the workforce by 52 per cent, more than in any other county. Rents, too, suffered, falling by 38 per cent. The reduction was most marked on the thin chalk soils of the Berkshire Downs, and the heathy acidic soils at the other end of the county, much of which had by the 1890s fallen out of cultivation. Mixed farming on the mixed soils of the Reading division fared best.²¹

As their patriotic duty, British farmers were exhorted to maintain

production at pre-war levels, while at the same time releasing men, horses, and fodder for the military, on pain of requisition. The most immediate need was for soldiers to reinforce the under-strength British Expeditionary Force – the ‘Old Contemptibles’. At this stage, the recruits were mostly volunteers. The initial response was most encouraging. Strongly backed by public opinion, teams of recruiting officers toured the villages. Large numbers of mainly single men, aged 18-41, enlisted more or less at once. By the end of 1914, in west Berkshire alone, 54 men had enlisted from Aldermaston, 31 from Welford, 36 from Chaddleworth, 97 from Thatcham, and 346 from Newbury. By April the following year, the Thatcham intake had grown to 180 and Newbury’s to 932.²²

Recruitment was already slowing by the time of the First Battle of Ypres in early 1915, just as farmers were beginning to complain of shortages of skilled labour. In order to stem the exodus of ‘essential’ workers, in August 1915 the terms of enlistment were modified. A national register was drawn up of all men aged 15-65 not serving in the armed forces; skilled men doing essential civilian work were ‘starred’ meaning that they would not be accepted for military service, but could serve in the reserves. Among the starred occupations were bailiffs, shepherds, stockmen, horsemen, and cowmen, as well as tradesmen such as thatchers, agricultural engineers, and steam-plough and steam-engine operatives. Farmers were deemed exempt. General labourers were subject to no such restriction, and so made up the majority of agricultural recruits during the first two years of the war.²³

Mounting losses on the Western Front and the opening up of new theatres of war in East Africa and the Middle East, led to the decision in March 1916 to introduce conscription for all single men aged 18-41 years, except those in exempt occupations: married men could enlist voluntarily if they wished.

The German 1918 spring offensive proved the ultimate challenge. A fresh call for soldiers led to a further extension of the Military Service Acts. The upper age limit was raised to 51, and all exemption certificates held by skilled workers, married and single, were cancelled. Farmers, who out of patriotism had in 1914 actively encouraged the younger men to enlist, now found themselves deprived of their ablest and most highly skilled workers. Up to this point, recruits had been drawn mainly from arable farms, with their large staffs of mainly unskilled workers. It was now the smaller livestock farms in the Thames Valley and Vale of the White Horse that bore the brunt. Farmers’ relatives, many of whom had escaped military service, even though many of them lacked the qualifying skills, were now liable. Some farmers went to great lengths to gain exemption for family members, even to the point of dividing up their farms into smaller units and inserting

their son’s name as the tenant. It was said that because most farmers’ sons could not get commissions, they refused out of snobbery to serve alongside their labourers. The appeal tribunals were in the main very unsympathetic to such entreaties. Few went as far as the Headmaster of Bradfield College who, it is recorded, was so incensed at the conscription of the college baker that he forced his way into the office of the Under-Secretary of State in Whitehall demanding his exemption on the grounds that he was baking bread for the country’s future officers.²⁴

In 1911, the number of agricultural workers in Berkshire was about 10,000- 12,000 regular and 2,000 casual, almost entirely males.²⁵ While the labour situation varied from farm to farm, Berkshire would have suffered more than most counties because it contained a high percentage of large farms of more than 300 acres, each employing 10-20 men, general rather than skilled workers, and so more liable for call-up. A War Office questionnaire of October 1916, suggests a fall of 27 per cent in the farm workforce since the start of the war. This was probably an over-estimate, as most of the returns were from the larger employers, while many of those who had left the land did so not to join the forces, but for better-paid jobs in the towns. Dewey suggests a more modest decline, of closer to 10 per cent.²⁶

To make good any shortfall, farmers had to mobilize new sources of labour. Home-based soldiers were first made use of in the hay harvest of 1915, their numbers rising from 2-3000 in that year to over 80,000 in the 1918 corn harvest. The success of the 1917-18 ‘plough-up campaign’ was threatened less by a shortage of horses than of ploughmen. Former ploughmen in the Home Defence units were ordered to take agricultural leave for six weeks to assist with the Spring and Autumn ploughing, while some were even returned home from France for the purpose.²⁷

‘Village women’ could often be tempted into doing part-time farm-work by the offer of higher wages. One of the duties of the Berkshire War Agricultural Committee was to encourage them to do so. A record book for 1918, kept by Mr Alfred Castle of Charlton, near Wantage, details the work done there by 16 women and four men paid for by the committee, mainly in the harvest and hoeing.²⁸

Great efforts were made to secure the services of ‘educated women’. Organizations such as the Women’s Defence Relief Corps and Women’s Farm and Garden Union, although enthusiastic fell short of the standard required, due to inexperience and lack of training. The Women’s Land Army, formed in 1916 and recruited mainly from the towns, was better regarded. By September 1918, about 16,000 WLA staff were hard at work, mostly on dairy farms, but on other work too, including tractor driving. They were generally women of good education and character, with some prior

experience of farming or gardening, and appropriately trained.

In 1918, women workers on British farms comprised as much as 15 per cent of the workforce at the summer peak. On small dairy farms much of the work had always been done by women and girls, just as on the Downs women and children had helped hoe turnips and bring in the harvest, though far fewer than in the mid-nineteenth century due to the use of machinery and the apparent reluctance of country women 'of the better sort' to do field work.²⁹

In 1918 an estimated 700,000 school-children were employed part-time on farms in the holidays, but where local education authorities agreed to their release, in term time also. For example, boys helped with the harvest at Padworth in 1916 when the school closed for a week.³⁰ In the 1917 harvest special agricultural camps were organized for secondary school pupils. Berkshire children participated in a national campaign to collect eggs for wounded soldiers in 1917-18.³¹ One group of Berkshire school children collected over 50 tons of horse-chestnuts for use in munitions factories, saving it was claimed 25 tons of cereals. Many schools encouraged pupils to grow vegetables in specially designated 'Victory plots'. In the towns especially – most villages already had them – allotments became all the rage during the food crisis in the latter part of the war. Instruction in fruit and vegetable growing and preservation was provided by itinerant lecturers from the Berkshire College of Agriculture and Reading University College.³²

A further source of temporary labour, especially useful as many were former agricultural workers, were prisoners of war.³³ Rated highly by employers, they were viewed with suspicion or downright hostility by their regular staffs, less because they were the enemy than because they were cheap and depressed wage rates. I have found one reference only to POW labour being used in Berkshire – a payment of £200 for that purpose made by the War Agricultural Executive Committee to one Mr Wilson, probably a gang-master, in 1918.³⁴ Some 25,000 POWs remained in Britain, mostly on farms, in June 1919, seven months after the armistice. Policemen, too, formed part of the labour reserve. A letter in Berkshire Records Office dated April 1917, from the Home Office to chief constables, urges local forces to allow officers with the requisite skills (not unusual as many policemen worked on farms before joining the force), who could be spared, to do land work, especially between May and September.³⁵ Canadian lumberjacks played a key role, as to a lesser extent did the Women's Forestry Corps, in the timber campaign of 1916-18. A detachment of Canadian forest workers based at Old Farm, Mortimer, felled timber on and around the Englefield Estate, while teams of Portuguese workers cleared away the undergrowth.³⁶ Little is known about the travelling gangs of Irish and north Hampshire



Members of the Women's Timber Corps at work in north Berkshire, 1917

coppice workers, who before the war had worked regularly on the downland farms, harvesting corn and hoeing turnips.

The irony is that on arable farms labour may have been if anything better supplied in 1918 than in 1914, at least numerically. The key question is whether the temporary workers, many of them women and children, were as productive as the regular workers whom they replaced. Probably not. Farmers got by, just, by making best use of replacement labour, by taking short cuts, leaving inessential work undone, and by working their regular workers harder. Livestock farms, being more dependent on skilled workers, for which there were fewer ready substitutes, fared less well.

Agricultural Horses

The requisition of horses by the military was much resented by farmers as it deprived them of animal draught at ploughing time when the teams were fully stretched. The anguish and sense of loss that this involved has become part of twentieth-century farming lore, that is re-echoed in the much acclaimed West End play 'War Horse', the story of a horse commandeered from a Devon farm, and eventually returned there.³⁷

The evidence suggests, however, that the impact was in reality less traumatic than is generally assumed. The remount depots were alerted on 3 August 1914, and told to deliver 100,000 horses by the end of the month. In fact, in the first 12 days they acquired only 12,000, and no more than 40,000

during the following month, far short of the target. Horses were the backbone of the military machine in the Great War. An infantry brigade of four battalions required 250, and the average division 5,600. Of the 368,000 horses employed on the Western Front in 1917, more than two-thirds were from North America and Ireland. About one-seventh needed to be replaced every year, and in France alone, about 250,000 were lost over the course of the war. In contrast to France and Germany, the British army did not have a strategic reserve, and so had either to purchase horses from the dealers, or requisition them from private owners.

What is not generally realised is that the majority of army horses were 'light' rather than 'heavy', that is 'saddle' or 'light draught' horses, used for riding and transport, not agricultural horses, 17-18 hands high, weighing between 17 and 20 cwt, used for ploughing and heavy draught. By the end of September 1914, the army had requisitioned only 9,000 heavy horses. In June 1917, the military stock comprised 8 per cent, heavy horses, 33 per cent riding horses, and 50 per cent light draught horses. Horses on grass and livestock farms were in the main smaller and less powerful than on arable farms.

The agricultural statistics show only a modest (8 per cent) reduction in the numbers of agricultural horses on Berkshire farms between June 1914 and June 1915, then a gradual recovery until by June 1918 they stood at more or less their pre-war level.³⁸ Some farms, however, were short of horses, especially in the plough-up campaign of 1917-18. Horses were hired out by the Berkshire War Agricultural Committee, while the Berkshire and Oxfordshire Chamber of Agriculture had plans for a 'clearing house', to assist farmers whose horses had been requisitioned.³⁹ Retired or surplus army horses were disposed of by the Royal Veterinary Corps. In France and Belgium, work and riding horses were sold to farmers and breeders, and the remainder to butchers for meat. Only 62,000 horses were repatriated to England, where heavy horses found a ready market, and a lucky few, like 'War Horse', returned to the farms whence they had originated.

As an aside, perhaps the military mind was too obsessed with the horse as a weapon of war. This cost the country dear in the First World War, and in the Second World War up to the Battle of El Alamein, when entire regiments and hundreds of British tanks were needlessly destroyed in cavalry-type charges. As it was, the mounted arm played only a minor role in the fighting, as from 1914 they were gradually replaced by motor vehicles. In 1917, indeed, one section of the Berkshire Yeomanry was re-deployed as a Cyclist Unit. Yet, up to the early 1930s the War Office continued to conduct its own national horse census, classifying horses by size and function, as if preparing for the war just gone.⁴⁰

Army horses also needed to be fed and littered. Many hundreds of thousands of tons of hay and straw were required on the Western Front to sustain a herd of c. 400,000 horses. During the course of the war, army horses are estimated to have consumed 3 million tons of oats and 2 1/2 million tons of pressed hay. Thus, a Forage Department was set up in every county in compliance with a War Office Order of March 1916 authorizing the requisition of all hay and straw on farms or stocked by forage dealers. The minutes of the Berkshire (and South Oxfordshire) Forage Committee, 1916-19, provide a systematic account of the local forage campaign.⁴¹ The committee's HQ was located in the Old Queen's Hotel in Friar Street, Reading, and later in the Forbury.

The procedure was broadly as follows. All forage, standing or in the stack, was inspected for quality by army officials, and if required, purchased at an agreed valuation. If refused, the farmer or dealer would be issued with an exemption certificate. Following purchase the hay and straw would then be baled by special travelling gangs to await dispatch. By the end of the war most of the baling was done by women.⁴²

Enormous quantities of forage were acquired in this way – in the six months 20 July 1917 to 16 February 1918, some 20-25,000 tons of hay, and 7,500 tons of straw. Following a severe winter, hay prices doubled between February 1917 and April 1918 as stocks ran down.

A common complaint was that, following its requisition, hay had to remain on the farm in the barn or in stack until required, often several months later. A poor second hay crop in September, followed by a cold winter or late spring, such as in 1917-18, could spell disaster, made worse by the refusal of the Forage Committee to rescind the original purchase order, and release all or part of the consignment to the farmer. Small farmers complained of long delays in receiving payment from the War Department, leaving them in 'serious pecuniary straits'

Government intervention 1917-19

At the outbreak of war Britain was only 50 per cent self-sufficient in temperate foodstuffs, and was dependent on imports for over three-quarters of its cereals and dairy products, and 40 per cent of its meat. Increasing food production should therefore have been a government priority, but only in 1917, and then very reluctantly, did the government take positive steps to safeguard food production. In 1914 the President of the Board of Trade saw no cause for public concern about food supplies or a significant rise in food prices.⁴³ Closer to home, Alfred Sutton speaking that summer at the Marston Show advised 'no need to panic, food supplies in this country were never so plentiful.'⁴⁴ With a vast empire to supply it with cheap food and raw

materials, and the world's most powerful navy to guard the shipping lanes and blockade enemy ports, Britain had no reason to fear either food shortages or becoming involved in a European land war. Nor did the government see a need to change long-standing policy. Since the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, Britain had pursued a policy of free trade in food. Tariffs and subsidies, it was argued, meant not only higher food prices, but benefited agriculture at the expense of manufacturing, and farmers and landowners at the expense of food consumers.

The early years of the war saw very little change either in farming methods or the pattern of production, despite a substantial advance in food prices and farmers' profits. Early 1917 saw the food situation unexpectedly deteriorate due to poor harvests in Britain and north America coinciding with heavy losses of merchant ships due to attacks by German U-boats. Most worrying was a deficit in energy foods, especially cereals, particularly wheat. For the first time since the Napoleonic Wars, Britain faced severe physical shortages of basic foodstuffs, and worse, civil unrest. Shaken out of its complacency, the government had to abandon its free trade principles in



Threshing in Stanford in the Vale, 1917, with S. W. Puzey's threshing set. Edwin Puzey was the driver of an Aveling & Porter traction engine.

favour of direct action.

The Corn Production Act, which passed into law in August 1917, was revolutionary and wide-ranging. Part 1 of the Act offered guaranteed prices for wheat and oats (but not barley out of deference to the temperance lobby); Part 2 established a Central Wages Board to fix wages and set a national

minimum wage; Part 3 protected tenants against excessive rent rises and guaranteed them security of tenure. In Part 4, the most radical and controversial of all the emergency measures, the government was granted far-reaching powers over all aspects of agricultural production – inputs, outputs, land use, stocking, food processing and distribution. At the same time the powers of the newly created County War Agricultural Executive Committees ('War Ag') were reaffirmed. Made up of leading farmers and land agents, the War Ags' main purpose was to implement at local level the policies of the Food Production Department. Only a small part of the large body of data generated by the Berkshire committee survives in the county record office.⁴⁵

The strategic objective was to increase the acreage of wheat, oats and potatoes – the key energy foods – at the expense of pasture and uncultivated land, and to identify and if necessary assume the management of uncooperative or badly managed farms. The committee was also responsible for controlling the supply and distribution of factors of production, such as fertilizers, feeding stuffs, temporary labour (including POWs, soldiers, and women workers), and machinery. This included motor tractors, mostly American imports, such as Fordson and International Harvester. They were a portent of things to come: there were probably fewer than 200 tractors at work in the county in 1918.⁴⁶

Table 1 summarizes the impact of these measures on land use and stocking. Compared with other counties, they were not especially dramatic: amounting to little more than a modest increase in the arable and a corresponding reduction in the area under permanent and rotational grass. Most notable were a 15 per cent growth in the area under wheat and oats, and an 80 per cent increase in that of potatoes (although from a low starting point). Important, because roots had long been the pivot of sheep-corn farming on the western chalk-lands, was a further sharp contraction in the turnip acreage. After an initial dip, horse numbers ended the war more or less unchanged. A reduction in sheep and pig numbers (by 13 and 23 per cent respectively) was partly offset by a small increase in dairy cattle and an inexplicable large rise in 'other cattle'. Commercial poultry rearing was in a state of near collapse.

The numbers held up better than yields. Cereal yields were depressed by shortages of fertilizer, especially sodium nitrate and potash; but as there were reserves of fertility in the soil, yields fell only moderately. Livestock yields, though, declined by about one-fifth. P. E. Dewey estimates that in 1918 the slaughter weights of sheep and cattle were nearly 20 per cent lower and milk yields 22 per cent lower than pre-war, due to lack of feeding stuffs.⁴⁷ Lower turnip yields were linked to the reduced use of phosphate

Crops		Livestock	
Wheat	+18%	All cattle	+15%
Oats	+15%	Cows and heifers	+5%
Potatoes	+84%	Sheep	-13%
Turnips	-15%	Pigs	-23%
Grass	-8%	Horses	unchanged
		Poultry	-50%

TABLE 1 Percentage Changes in Crop Acreage and Livestock Numbers in Berkshire 1914-18 (%)

fertilizer, of labour for thinning and weeding, and shepherds to supervise the feeding off of the crop by the sheep.

Agricultural output in Berkshire fell during the war by perhaps 5-10 per cent. Crucially, though, calorific output, the cornerstone of the wartime diet, rose due to greater emphasis on cereals and potatoes, the high energy crops. From a nutritional point of view, the least satisfactory feature was a sharp reduction in animal protein foods, especially milk. In certain respects, the plough-up campaign was a failure. Much of the grassland selected for conversion was poorly managed, poorly drained, weedy and exhausted, the turf densely matted and difficult to break down, and in 1917 especially often riddled with wire-worm.⁴⁸

Apart from the land-based industries – farming and mineral extraction – rural Berkshire offered little by way of industrial employment. Demand for domestic servants fell as country houses closed down and did less entertaining. With many of the men-folk now in the services, whole families moved away, many to London, or to live with relatives. Hospitals and convalescent homes were a novel feature, albeit short-lived. The traditional rural craft trades were in decline or had ceased.⁴⁹ For some, the war provided an unexpected boost, in the shape of lucrative War Office contracts, or because the war had reduced the imports of craft products from continental Europe. The wood trades saw a resurgent market for barrel hoops, coopers' staves, wattle hurdles for making track-ways across the Flanders mud or emergency fencing, tanning bark, and charcoal – alder and willow for making black gunpowder, and bulk charcoal for heating in the trenches. Thatcham turnery firms did good business making mop handles for the navy and tent poles for the army.⁵⁰ Home-grown timber was much in demand for planking, scaffolding, pit-props etc. In World War I, some 450,000 acres of British woodland were felled in the vain attempt to make good the collapse in timber imports which before the war had supplied over 90 per cent of Britain's needs. From 1916, forestry, too, was under

government control. Canadian lumberjacks, Portuguese wood-cutters, and the newly formed Women's Forestry Corps were hard at work clear-felling large areas of mature (if in many cases badly managed) woodland in areas such as the Kennet Valley, North Hampshire Woodlands, and Savernake Forest, as well as the young birch and conifer plantations created in the late nineteenth century on former common land in east Berkshire and west Surrey.

A few manufacturing firms switched to war work, Brown's Turnery at Thatcham, for example, made cartridge cases, and put in a team of six blacksmiths to make horse shoes for the army.⁵¹ Similarly at Hurst, a firm of blacksmiths, White Brothers, hired boys from the village at night to drill holes in the shoes to put in studs to prevent slippage. The agricultural engineers and steam engine makers, Nalder and Nalder of Challow near Wantage, made shell cases; Huntley and Palmers made shells, and Pulsometer Pumps parts for machine guns. This aspect of war work was a shot in the arm for many ailing firms, and deserves further investigation.

This paper is concerned principally with the demographic, economic and agricultural aspects of the war in the countryside. Some readers may find it too generalized, others too detailed. It may only have scratched the surface, but hopefully it provides some essential background and a framework for further research.

Part 2 will look at various components of community life – wartime regulations, living standards, food and diet, rationing, and village institutions.

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- 46 The cash books of the Berkshire War Agricultural Committee provide important information about the economics of maintaining a reserve of horses and tractors for hire to needy farmers. BRO C/TR4/2/1-2. As early as autumn 1915, the government had begun to organize the supply and distribution of fertilizers, especially potash, 90 per cent of which had been imported from Germany pre-war.
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The illustrations are from the Museum of English Rural Life.

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