



The Spire Sentinel



**The Newsletter & Magazine of The
Chesterfield Branch of The Western Front
Association**



ISSUE 92 - October 2023

Our aims are 'Remembrance and Sharing the History of the
Great War'.



Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2023

Meetings start at 7.30pm and take place at the Labour Club, Unity House, Saltergate, Chesterfield S40 1NF

January	4th	. AGM + `British League of Help` by Dudley Giles. Nearly 90 towns, cities, and organisations in the UK, Australia, Canada and Mauritius signed up in the period 1920-1922 to 'adopt' a village, town or city in the Devastated Zone of France.
February	7th	` The First AIR War` ` by Grant Cullen. Based on a collection of rare photographs acquired over 20 years ago at a yard sale in Hazelwood, Missouri, US, this will look at the various protagonists in WW1 - people and Planes
March	7th	` Voie Sacree` by Roy Larkin. The story of the road that connects Bar-le-Duc to Verdun It was given its name because of the vital role it played during the Battle of Verdun in World War I.
April	4th	" For Home and Honour` by Yvonne Ridgeway and James Kay. A bit of a history of our local community in North Sheffield during WW1, from their own research, looking at recruitment, the 1st Sheffield blitz, the tribunals for those wishing to avoid military service and some of the local soldiers' stories.
May	2nd	The First World War contribution of Dulmial Village, in present day Pakistan by Dr Irfan Malik. His Gt. Grandfathers experiences in WW1, and the wider role of muslim soldiers during that conflict
June	6th	Stepbrothers in Arms: the Conscript Experience in 1918 By Tim Lynch who will examine the myths and realities of the army of 1918 and what the evidence actually tells us about ideas of cohesion, morale and professionalism in the BEF.
July	4th	Dr Rebecca Ball ' Daddy, what did you do in the great War? ' Drawing upon fifty working-class autobiographies, this talk examines the impact of the Great War on fifty English families with a particular focus on fathers.
August	1st	Dr. Adam Prime - a newly appointed WFA Trustee who will talk about ' India's Great War ' This talk looks at India's contribution to the First World War in every sense of the word.
September	5th	" Dark Satanic Mills - How Britain's Industry Went to War ". By Andy Rawson This is an insight into the wide range of factories across the country, which worked around the clock to keep up with the expanding requirements of the armed services.
October	3rd	Hedley Malloch <i>Left Behind</i> - the fate of British soldiers trapped behind German lines in Belgium and France after the Retreat of 1914
November	7th	Peter Hart - Trench Humour -a look at how soldiers use humour to get through the horrors of trench warfare.
December	5th	David Blanchard - The Casualty Evacuation Chain from Hill 60, Ypres, in early 1915

Issue 92 - list of contents

- 2 Branch Meetings Calendar**
- 3 Contents Page & October Speaker**
- 4 Secretary`s Scribbles**
- 5 WFA Calendars 2024**
- 6 -22 September Meeting**
- 23 - 30 Great War Soldier in Unmarked Grave Remembered**

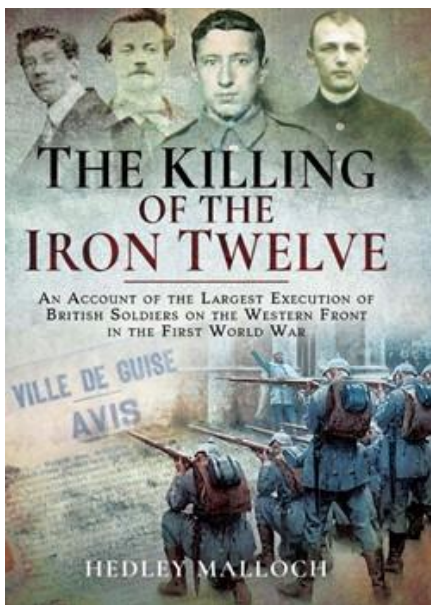
Any opinions expressed in this Newsletter /Magazine are not necessarily those of the Western Front Association, Chesterfield Branch, in particular, or the Western Front Association in general

Speaker - October 3rd - Hedley Malloch



Many British soldiers were trapped behind enemy lines in occupied northern France or Belgium. Some were caught and shot, others ended up in a PoW camp, but some escaped back to Great Britain. In his talk he will tell some stories about their fates and of the French and Belgian people who helped them, often at great personal cost. These are tales of courage, endurance, betrayal and ingenuity. Hedley will explain how the Germans managed this problem, why some fugitives were shot, but others were spared. He will cover the reaction of the Allies to these incidents, many of which were in violation of The Hague and Geneva Conventions.

About Hedley



A member of the WFA since 1990, he is a retired lecturer currently living in Nottinghamshire, having lived and worked in Lille, France for many years. Whilst living in Lille, he became interested in the fate of those soldiers left behind the lines, including the 11 British soldiers taken in by the village of Iron, Aisne, who were eventually betrayed and shot by the Germans at Guise Château on 25 February 1915. You can find out more information about them and the village villagers who helped them at the Iron Memorial website at <https://iron12.org>



Secretary's Scribbles

Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the issue 92 of our Branch Newsletter for October 2023

This coming Tuesday, October 3rd we have Hedley Malloch making his first visit - certainly as speaker - to the Branch. Full details about Hedley, and his talk are shown elsewhere in this newsletter.

As mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter there was a good number of WFA members in attendance at windswept Retford Road Cemetery in Worksop on September 19th to witness the unveiling and consecration of the CWGC headstone on the grave of Lance Sergeant Thomas Highton. I was honoured to be part of the group who organised this event. Sadly, despite our best efforts we could not locate any of his descendants, it is believed the family moved to the United States in the 1920s.

As most of you know, our Branch Member, Rob Nash, is WFA Parade Marshall at the November 11th ceremony at the Cenotaph in Whitehall in London. Rob was deputy to John Chester but took over last year when John had to stand down on health grounds. Now Rob will be Parade Marshall at the Remembrance Sunday parade in Worksop on November 12th, the previous incumbent having stood down. Without a Parade Marshall there cannot be a parade on public streets and Bassetlaw District Council, local Royal British Legion and Veterans groups in Worksop are grateful for Rob coming forward and making possible the parade to the War Memorial.

It's that time of the year again when Mark Macartney's house is full of boxes and parcels... yes it's WFA Calendar time again. Mark does a great job receiving the calendars and making sure they get distributed in good time. Details on how to order your copy are elsewhere in this newsletter.

Next month we have the annual visit of Peter Hart who will regale us as to how soldiers used humour to help survive the rigours and horrors of trench warfare. I'm sure - knowing Peter - this presentation will not be for the faint hearted or easily offended....but then neither were those sturdy men who 'Stood Too' in those trenches in France and Flanders over one hundred years ago.

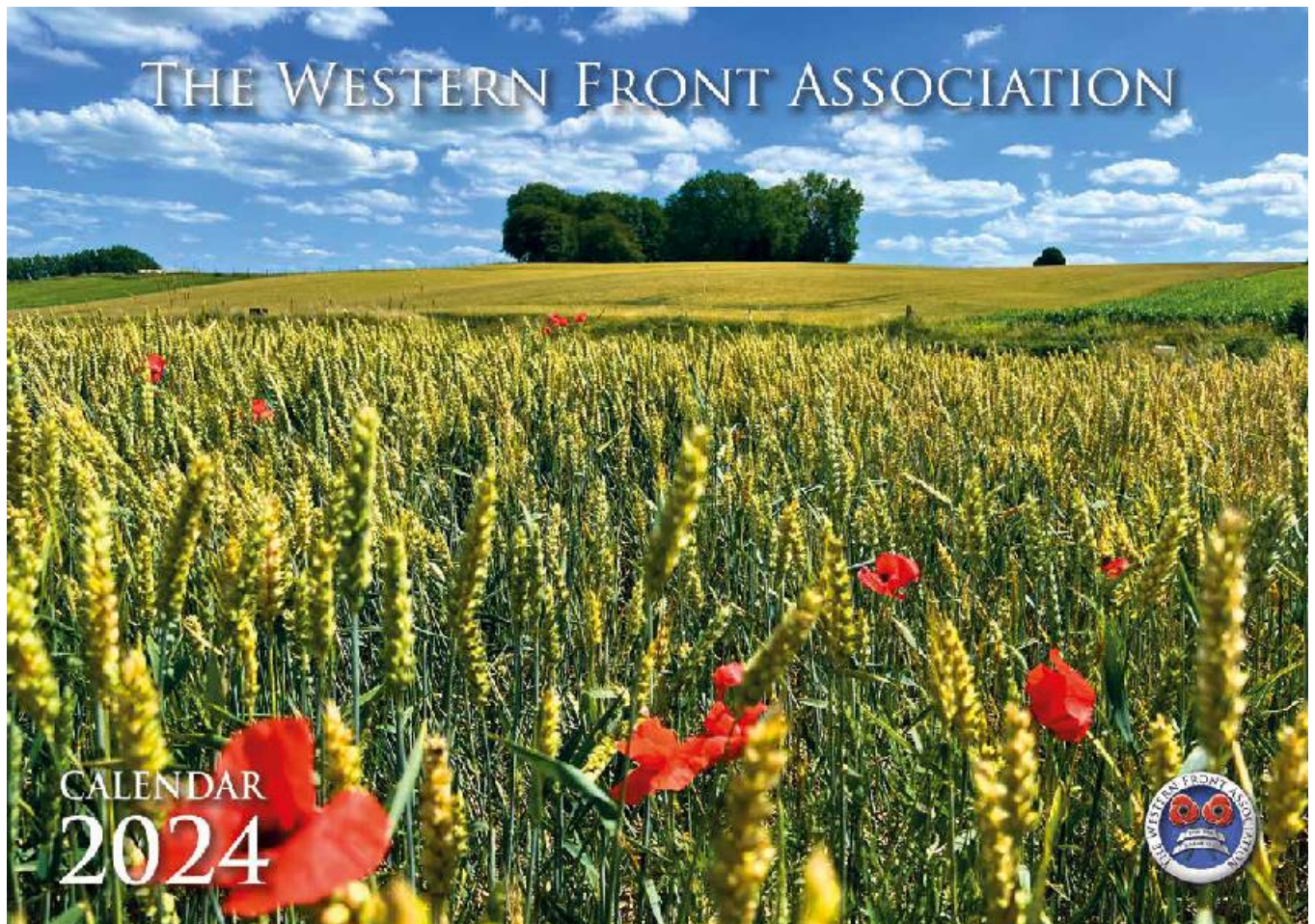
It is that time of the year when I'm making up the speaker's list for next year...suggestions from members would be most welcome.

Best regards,

Grant

Grant Cullen

Branch Secretary WFA Chesterfield Branch 07824628638



The Western Front Association Calendar for 2024 is now available - 28 pages of photographs and calendar pages. Our branch will be having a supply...hopefully available on Tuesday....remember if you the buy through the Branch...the Branch gets 50% of the selling price £10

The Calendar includes high quality, modern images of scenes from the Western Front. The images are specially selected from the work of a number of committed and talented Western Front photographers. A4 size when folded, opens out to A3 when hung on your wall. £10 (Inc p&p) This price has been held since the 2015 Calendar. Order online or by phone on 0207 118 1914 Link to buy on the Eshop<https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/wfa-branded-items/wfa-calendar-2024/> To Order by phone (0207 118 1914) please have your credit Card details to hand

Calendars will be sent out immediately on receipt of your order

September Meeting

Tuesday, September 5th, we had Andy Rawson making a welcome return as guest speaker. "**Dark Satanic Mills - How Britain's Industry Went to War**". By **Andy Rawson** This is an insight into the wide range of factories across the country, which worked around the clock to keep up with the expanding requirements of the armed services.

In introducing, Andy, Branch Chair (and National Chair) Tony Bolton commented that Andy was a prolific author - 40 books to his name - including 15 on WW1 topics. Andy opened by saying he had always considered, armies, battalions, guns, shells, ships etc...but hadn't really considered where these had all come from, but that had all changed about 4 years ago when he had started to look at Sheffield industry. Having looked at industry in his home city that inspired him to look at industries across the nation.

Andy started by talking about Billy and Jimmy, brothers, both killed a couple of months apart in the summer of 1915. Billy was killed by artillery fire near Ypres while Jimmy died when a roof collapsed underground in the coal mine where he was working. Billy's body was never found whilst Jimmy's was mutilated beyond recognition. Billy has no known grave, Jimmy no marked grave. The family grieved for their lost ones but they are remembered very differently today, crowds gather daily to hear last post at the Menin Gate where Billy is commemorated whilst very few stop at the memorial at Southgate Colliery near Clowne in NE Derbyshire.



Menin Gate



Southgate Colliery

So, as Andy's talk developed it would show that the war effort needed as much of the 'Jimmy's' as it did the 'Billy's'

Without the coal that Jimmy dug, Billy would not have had any weapons with which to fight.

So who were Billy and Jimmy?...they were Andy`s great grandfather Charlie`s younger brothers.. Charlie was quite a bit older than Billy and Jimmy and was a police officer in Sheffield.

We often hear the words `Forgotten Front` ...but Andy`s researches have led him to believe the Home Front was `not forgotten - it was just taken for granted. We all know that there was warships, guns, tanks, planes, shells, bullets etc but few take an interest as to where all these things came from. The same applied to logistics until the late Rob Thompson brought it to our attention in recent years.

So, what was the labour situation like before the war. In 1907 there was banking crisis in America which caused a global depression and this resulted in workers in Britain demanding better wages and conditions leading to widespread strikes throughout industry which became increasingly violent with police and even troops having to deal with striking workers. A nation railway strike in 1911 led to the government implementing martial law in 1912 in an effort to contain the strikes.

National unions were being formed and 11 million working days were lost in 1913. In the summer of 1914 David Lloyd George predicted that..."*autumn would witness widespread disturbances without precedent...*".

Of course the outbreak of the war introduced a much different `disturbance` to the one he was thinking of. So, what jobs had to be done as Britain went to war - coal and iron ore had to be dug, steel produced and worked into every shape you could think of to make the items mentioned earlier . Of course all these raw materials had to be moved by train around the country. An industry that was used to peacetime had to do two things to support its armed services. It would need to switch to the needs of wartime and dramatically increase production.

So, a lot has to be done to keep the soldier on the battlefield, the sailor on the high seas and the airman in the air.

Andy then quoted a few figures from Sheffield to qualify the question he was quoting.

In the first few months of the war around 10000 men joined the armed services but by the end of the war 75000 men and 25000 were working in the metal trades in the city. By the time of the Armistice they had made 11 million items for the war effort.

Andy believed that in the early days of the war the government relied too much on the armed services and not enough on the means of production to equip them and supply them in the field. Kitchener`s call to arms saw 500000 enlist in the first few weeks of the war followed by a similar number over the next six months. About 15% of those employed in the coal, steel and shipbuilding industries had joined up with Labour Exchanges being used as recruiting stations rather than job centres Many essential workers had left their jobs to sign up, indeed 200000 miners left their jobs to join up and this resulted in a temporary coal shortage. Also 35000 men from the iron and steel industries across Yorkshire went and signed up. This resulted in many of Kitchener`s New Army having to train *without* weapons when they could have been *making* weapons.

So as Andy said, when Kitchener said `Your Country Needs You`he should have added... `At Home and Abroad` .

So what did the navy need? Britain and the Dominions had a combined tonnage of 20 million tons, while warships were built during the war years - hardly any were started, it simply took too long to build one. So the priority for the shipyards was to build transport ships and vessels to defend the coastal waters. There was also graving or dry docks which were kept clear for cleaning ships hulls. Wet docks were used to replace worn out or damaged items.



Dry or Graving Dock



Wet Dock

To begin with the demands by the army were small, for example only 1% of steel produced in Sheffield in 1914 was destined for the army, quite simply, and battleships have bigger guns than what the infantry and field artillery need. From the manpower point of view a battleship crew is not much more than an infantry battalion but the army`s needs were much more complex and had a constant need, particularly, for ammunition. But, as the war went on, the army`s demands increased. Firstly, it grew to ten times in size, and with trench fighting it needed more of everything than originally anticipated. New items came on stream - mortars, grenades, helmets, tanks etc.

The Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) of March 1915 allowed the State to take over factories however well they were run but there was never enough shells. Colonel Charles Repington reported in the Times newspaper of the shortage of munitions in the Battle of Aubers Ridge and this resulted in Prime Minister Asquith forming a coalition government and David Lloyd George heading up a new Ministry of Munitions.



The new Munitions Act of 1915 meant that no munitions company could put the state in peril, also trade union rights were suspended and movement of labour was to be monitored. Strikes and lock-outs were banned and arbitration was made compulsory. Workers were allowed to move between trades and were also allowed to multi-task in a factory. Companies were also allowed to hire non-union labour with wages ours and conditions regulated and company profits were to be limited.

So how was the munitions industry organised at the beginning, to start with the country was divided into two areas. Area A districts had existing War Office contracts whilst area B districts had no War Office contracts. This did not work well and the Ministry of Munitions divided the country up into 9 areas.



Each area had several Boards and each board would coordinate the delivery of raw materials, particularly steel in its crude form, thus ensuring there was always enough stock to keep the factories up to speed with the contracts they were working on. The boards also ensured that there was adequate labour resources and, if necessary retrieved workers who had joined up in the New Armies.

Each city and town had a committee to deal with local issues, give out contracts and monitor progress. For factory owners they were kept busy changing their machinery and retraining their workforce. There was also tribunals in each town which were used to arbitrate and keep the peace.

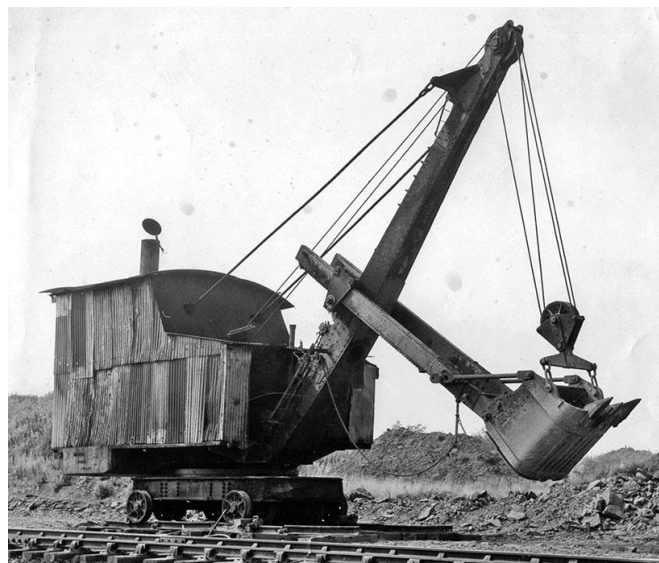
The process for ordering goods for the armed services was as follows....

The Ministry would issue a requirement of what it wanted, how many and accompany this with drawings and specifications while the district committees would confirm delivery dates. For example, one company would roll the sheet steel, second company cut out discs, third would forge into helmets whilst the fourth would gather all the off cuts and remelt them to be used once again.

Looking now at raw materials, coal was required to heat furnaces, raise steam etc. 1.2 million men and boys worked at 2500 coal mines, producing 300 million tons per year, most of it dug out by hand. In the coal producing areas almost half of all adult males were working in the mines.

Then we had iron ore from which pig iron was produced and further processed to make carbon steel. Additional iron ore mines were needed and when opened needed extra workers, some being transferred from Cornwall where they had been mining china clay to Cumbria. POWs were also used.

Most of the 250000 miners mining iron ore worked underground, others worked mechanical diggers, such as the Rushton steam shovels which were used for open cast mining...



Across the nation 14.5 million tons of iron ore was dug every year, but this wasn't enough and a further 6.5 million tons was imported from northern Spain.

When the ore was melted in blast furnaces to produce pig iron, the latter was subsequently remelted with limestone in open hearth furnaces to produce steel to which may be added elements like manganese, chromium, nickel etc, to create alloy steels.

Over 10000 worked at Colvilles Lanarkshire Steel in Motherwell, Scotland. Bolckow in Middlesborough was the biggest steel producer in Britain with 18000 employees while another 6500 worked at Dorman Long in the same town.

The big five companies in Sheffield were Hadfield, Vickers, Cammell Laird, John Brown and Newton Chambers and between them they employed 48000, mostly along the Don Valley. There was further steel producers in Scunthorpe, Connaught Quay on Deeside, Stoke while over 26000 worked in South Wales at Ebbw Vale, Port Talbot and Briton Ferry.

These were just the large steel works, there was many, many more smaller works, and of course, steel foundries.

In 1917 the Basic Iron Scheme called for the existing steel works and foundries to be expanded and upgraded and new ones were to be built so by 1918 the country was producing 9 million tons of pig iron, from which 9.7 million tons of steel was produced.

Many workers were involved in tinsplating a precursor to galvanising. Tinsplating involved pickling steel sheets in acid and coating with a thin layer of tin. This prevented corrosion and rusting, very important when making food and water containers. Tin was mined in Cornwall, South Wales and around Gloucester.

Andy then reiterated that all these materials, raw materials, stocks and finished goods had to be moved by train in the Great War. The Regulation of the Forces Act had taken control of 20000 miles of railway track in August 1914 and the first job was to move 670 troop trains, mostly to Southampton Docks. The government had to negotiate with over 130 rail companies and the rail unions to keep all of the system moving. This was all very complicated as many of the railway companies employees had enlisted and subsequently hundreds of goods and mineral wagons were sent to France and Flanders to support the BEF. Nevertheless rail traffic grew steadily until, by 1917 it was 60% higher than pre-war levels.

Andy then moved on to look at the workforce, there was an awful lot of training to do. Initially they had to look at exactly what the fighting forces required and then what quantities. Then the companies had to decide how they would have to change their machinery and methods to manufacture to the requirements. The Ministry of Munitions sent out booklets of instructions while advisors visited factories to assist in the tooling up and other changes.

The Munitions Committees had to ensure that there was fair distribution of labour across their areas and issue the war work exemption badges so workers were not discriminated against for not joining up.



So where would the workers stay if they couldn't travel from home to work locally? Some people took in these workers as lodgers and supplemented their income whilst the Housing Act of 1914 allowed local authorities to build emergency accommodation, some were wooden huts as seen in the Don Valley.



Landlords realised that their tenants were getting better paid so they started raising rents until the Ministry of Munitions stepped in with the Billeting of Civilians Act in September 1917.

We are all aware that women became progressively more involved in the war and this developed in three stages. The shells and fuses agreement of 1915 only allowed them to do unskilled repetitive work but before long over 380000 women had signed up. This was followed by the Dilution Scheme of October 1915 which allowed women to work as semi skilled workers and finally a further scheme was introduced in 1916 which permitted women to undertake skilled work .

Eventually over 800000 women were working in industry and that does not include those working in hospitals and other support services.



In August and September 1914 250000 Belgians arrived in Britain to escape the war zone and many found work in the munitions industries or on the railways.

Andy had mentioned industrial unrest before the war so how was labour relations during the war. There was still a few strikes usually over wages and conditions although 1917 saw over five and a half million days lost to strike action. One strike in 1917 at a Vickers works in Barrow delayed the despatch of more than 70 artillery pieces.

High Speed Steels (HSS) were developed and a Sheffield plant increased production of this material - often used to make machine tools, increased from 5 tons to 300 tons.

Increasing productivity led to a decline in quality and increasingly mistakes were being made . There was also a shortage of skilled engineers to maintain the equipment plus the relentless work was taking its toll on the workers themselves

Industrial accidents tripled on day shifts...up to five fold on nights...and finally health and safety and first aid were to be taken seriously and factory owners were told to monitor industrial accidents and diseases. The working week was set at 65 hours Maximum and breaks and holidays were to be increased. Clothing worn was to be safer and welfare facilities in factories improved. Whilst all of this were worthy suggestions, like all national schemes they took time to implement and were not in place before the Somme Offensive in 1916. The foregoing perhaps explains why many of the shells used were duds.

New licensing laws were introduced and pub hours were reduced, beer was weakened and the buying of rounds was banned. These steps taken were very unpopular but in time production rose and quality improved.

Andy moved on now to look at the National Factories. Back in 1914 the State only controlled three Royal Ordnance Factories. By 1918, 218 National Factories had been opened from those employing a few hundred workers to those employing thousands like Gretna and Georgetown near Glasgow and Paisley.

Safety was paramount but there were exceptions like the explosion at Chilwell in Nottinghamshire which killed many men and women.





It wasn't just munitions, there was other National Factories as well...Trench Warfare factories...Chemical Warfare (gas) factories.

Aircraft production factories had sprung up all over the country as well as the eleven opened by the government which produced planes under license.



There was many more factories churning out everything from tools and gauges, boxes, wire and cables. There was also eight salvage factories repairing items sent back from the front



Andy then discussed spoke of the naval shipyards and the product of battleships and other warships pre-war. Britain also had a huge merchant marine and had a dockyard capability of building 1.5 million tons of ships per year, much of which was made on the River Clyde and River Tyne. There was 14 shipyards on the Clyde between Glasgow and Greenock. The ships built on the Clyde included: 3 Battlecruisers, 11 Cruisers 5 Monitors' 155 Destroyers 36 Submarines, 2 Submarine Depot Ships 3 Aircraft Carriers, 2 Destroyer Flotilla Leaders and miscellaneous other vessels: patrol boats minesweepers sloops minelayers troopships hospital ships barges oil-tank vessels salvage vessels. If you add the yards building merchant ships the total working in the yards was 53000 .

Shifting to the Tyne, Andy mentioned Armstrong Whitworth who became the world`s largest arms manufacturer employing 37500. Add to that the other shipyards and you get the total employed at 76,000. Further afield there was also Vickers at Barrow in Furness with 31000, Cammell Laird with 13000 on Merseyside, and there was others totalling 17000. Moving south there was shipbuilding around Cardiff producing merchant ships. There was many smaller shipyards around the coast building, and repairing countless smaller vessels.

Moving on, Andy mentioned engineering developments like that of the tank. Work commenced at Fosters in Lincoln but to produce the numbers companies in Birmingham and Glasgow also set up production facilities.



Just west of Glasgow in Clydebank, Singers, the largest sewing machine manufacturer in the world became a major producer of SMLE rifles.



Of course, as the war went on, every soldier need a helmet and by the end of the war 7.5 million had been produced

Andy talked about the steel required for heavy guns...carbon steel for the gun carriage but special steel - alloy steels were needed for the breech - to withstand the explosion that propelled the shell - and the barrel which had to be grooved (rifling) to get the shell to spin in flight.

Shrapnel shells proved complex to produce and it took some development time to get production right and get them to the front in the quantities needed.

The number of shells required was enormous - 1.5 million alone were fired in the build up to the 1st July 1916...a year later at Messines 3.5 million were fired with 4.5 million being fired before 3rd Ypres.

In 1914 the Royal Arsenal was the only factory manufacturing shells and they ended up employing 8 thousand but factories all over the country were soon involved including one factory in Leeds employing 16000 making 50000 shells per week. Andy then reeled off staggering statistics of numbers produced nationwide per week. Chilwell, as previously mentioned, alone filled 19 million shells during the war.



The King visiting Chilwell

Despite that, Britain could not make enough shells indeed in 1915 only 305 were made in Britain, 30% Canada, 40% USA. By 1917 70 million were being made domestically but still another 20 million were being imported. Andy also mentioned the fatal accidents in the shell filling factories, including Chilwell as previously mentioned.

Moving on Andy discussed the making of light railway engines and wagons for the Western Front and the growing motor industries building large amounts of trucks and other vehicles, including motor cycles, again, mostly for the Western Front.

As the war drew to its conclusion many soldiers were returning from service and were looking for their old jobs back. The conflict had been a watershed between state and

industry and the recently formed Labour Party was calling for the common ownership of industry what we now call nationalisation. Factory owners were worried about fall in demand when the war was over. They had been urged to take on military contracts during the conflict and they now wanted protection from overseas competition.

All they got was, in 1921 the Safeguarding of Industries Act....but that only gave protection for essential items



SAFETY LIMITED.

Mr. BALDWIN (to distressed trades). "DON'T ALL SCREAM AT ONCE. I SHAN'T HAVE ENOUGH BELTS TO GO ROUND."

Andy concluded with several slides.....commemorating the soldiers...The Tommies...and the workers without whom the war could not have been won.



Great War Soldier in Unmarked Grave Remembered

Back in 2018 the Worksop Branch of the Royal British Legion decided to commemorate men from the town (over 600 of them) who fell in the Great War by attaching large plastic poppies (Floppy poppies) on lampposts and street signs outside houses in the town where some of these men had lived prior to the war. This huge project was well received by the folks of Worksop and many people were so pleased to learn of the history that the house they were currently living in had once been home to a fallen soldier of The Great War.

One such man was Gary Kyriacou who lives on the town`s Park Street, his house had been occupied by a chap, Thomas Highton whose name appears on the town`s War Memorial. Gary was much taken by the local RBL`s efforts to commemorate the fallen from Worksop that he decided to find out more about `his` soldier, Thomas Highton.

To aid him in his search, he accessed, on line, the Nottinghamshire County Council `Roll of Honour`

The Nottinghamshire Great War Roll of Honour is a permanent tribute to local men and women who died during the First World War. Until this was compiled, no list of Nottinghamshire`s Great War dead has been compiled and many communities did not keep written records of 1914-18 losses. This project pays homage to the County`s fallen and creates a FREE unique, centralised archive for researchers, historians and the general public.

Eight groups of volunteer information gatherers have collaborated with Nottinghamshire County Council which has funded the initiative and provided technical expertise.

Names have been collected across Nottinghamshire from 677 memorials in village and town centres, chapels, churches, churchyards, parish halls, factories and other work places, schools and sports clubs. Individual stories have been brought to life through the addition of biographical detail, narrative, photographs and newspaper extracts as well as entries from diaries and letters.

Fatalities unrecorded or missing from physical monuments have been added to a series of Virtual Memorials.

Many members of the public have already contributed and it is possible to add photos or data to the site using a simple Log-In process.

The following people were the main contributors for their work on the Roll of Honour to date:

Nottinghamshire County Council web developer Tom Styles who designed the site.

Consultant Ashley Marron who developed Phase 2 of the project in collaboration with Tom Styles and Alec Buchanan.

Lynn Sergant, who has uploaded much of the data harvested from the city of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire`s districts.

Dr David Nunn who has led the team of volunteers.

Volunteers by District

- **Nottingham** - Peter Foster, Steve Zaleski, Lynn Whiteley, Brendan Beecroft, Simon Williams and Brian Szowkomud
- **Ashfield** - David Nunn, Carol Taylor-Cockayne and Richard Clay
- **Bassetlaw** - Richard English, Colin Dannatt, Tony & Judith Goodall, Roger Caple and Robert Ilett
- **Broxtowe** - David Nunn, Hilary Hillier, Brian Taylor, Malcolm Jarvis and Richard Dodge
- **Gedling** - Tracy Dodds, Yvonne Davies, Peter Gillings, Barbara Worrall, Jean Parrott, the late Cliff Housley and Anthony Ball
- **Mansfield** - Carol Malone
- **Newark & Sherwood** - Gary Tranter and Andy McKinnon
- **Rushcliffe** - Murray Biddle and John Whalley
- **Across Nottinghamshire** - David Nunn, Rachel Farrand, Peter Gillings, Richard Clay and Steve Morse
- **Virtual Memorials** created by David Nunn

The sharp eyed amongst our readers may have noted one familiar name - Robert Ilett, WFA member and former legal officer to the WFA. Robert of course is not the only WFA member listed above.

This is the entry on the Roll of Honour pertaining to Thomas Highton.....

Thomas Highton



Place of birth - Worksop, Notts. •

Family History.

George and Margaret Highton, nee Greewood, came to Worksop around 1890 with a family of 4 children, Ada, Edward, Eliza and Margaret (the first two from a previous marriage of Margaret to Joseph Walton). George Highton was a retired licence victualler, the family living in Newgate Street, Grove Villa. There follow the births of 4 more children all born in Worksop, George, Thomas, Emma and Florence. Thomas was born in 1892 and volunteered to join the army in 1909 and by 1911 he was resident as a Private in the 2nd Bn Sherwood Foresters b. Worksop at Crownhill Barracks Devon, age 19. His parents still occupied their Newgate Street house in 1911 but later moved to 15 Park

Street, Worksop.

Service number 11174 and 39606

Rank Lance Sergeant

Military Unit. The Prince of Wales's (North Staffordshire Regiment)

Military History

Thomas Highton enlisted at Worksop on the 27 Jan 1909 in the Sherwood Foresters Special Reserve, number 11174 age 17 years 8 months. After reaching the age of 18 on the 27 May he took the oath and joined the regular service. After his training, he went with his regiment to India in September 1911. Whilst there, he appears to have contracted a disease which placed him many times, on and off, in hospital, once for a period of 126 days. His medical record shows him to have been diagnosed with paratyphoid fever, malaria and tuberculosis. It was recommended he returned to England which he did in May 1914 where he was now deemed fit for service. On the 7th September 1914, he was sent to France and as he was wounded by gun shot to his right elbow, was returned once again back home on 22 Oct 1914. He spent the next few years in England and was promoted to Cpl in Sept 1916 and L/Sgt in March '17. Whilst in Sunderland, he married Winifred Patricia Buchanan in the registry office on the 4th April 1917. He was then transferred to the 3rd Battalion of the North Staffs regiment, number 39606, and 5 days after his marriage was drafted with the expeditionary force and due to illness returned home in September. He spent time in army hospitals and even had an operation on his neck for glandular problems. Eventually he appeared before a medical board on the 13th Sept 1918 and was discharged on the 19 September 1918 as being permanently unfit for army service due to persistent illnesses contracted during his service in India. As well as his 1915 star, British and victory medal, he was awarded the Silver War badge number B15754 as a member of the 3rd North Staffordshire Regiment.

Ex-Sergt Thomas Highton from the Retford Times 9 May 1919

The funeral of ex-Sergt Thomas Highton, Park Street, Worksop, took place at the New Cemetery on Friday. The deceased who was 27 years of age, died at Bradwell, where he lived. He enlisted in the Sherwoods in 1911 and went to France with the 2nd Battalion when war broke out. He went through the retreat from Mons, and was wounded in the right shoulder at Armentieres. After a long spell in hospital he was sent to Mesopotamia with the 7th Staffords, but on reaching Bagdad his health broke down and he was eventually discharged in December 1917. Afterwards he worked in the laboratory at Firth's Steel Works. Ex-Sergt Highton stood 6' 3" Military honours were accorded the deceased, a firing party from Clipston firing three volleys over the grave, whilst buglers sounded the "Last Post." The Rev H Gray officiated. (There follows a list of mourners and floral tributes).

His grave in Retford Road Cemetery is in Section 4, grave 191, unmarked.

Research by Colin Dannatt

Gary was, understandably surprised that Thomas`s grave in the local cemetery had never been marked with neither a family headstone nor a CWGC grave marker and raised this with Adie Platts of the local Royal British Legion, the driver behind the project to put named poppies on local streets where fallen soldiers had lived. Both agreed that attempts should be made to put this omission right as from the records, there was evidence that Thomas`s death could be attributed to his military and war

service. Adie proceeded to enter into correspondence with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to persuade them, by submission of evidence, that Thomas's last resting place should be marked with one of their headstones. This took time, more especially with the restrictions due to the pandemic, and it was 2023 before the decision was arrived at.

However, enter 'Men in sheds'. The charity AgeUK opened the first 'shed' in 2008. The 'sheds' are a euphemism for a club and are actually the equivalent to industrial units where men can meet to undertake a variety of activities such as woodworking, metalworking, art and computers - almost like a youth club for the over 50's! Attending the sheds enhances men's self esteem and increases their confidence. The sheds can provide an opportunity for older men to engage in physical activity, keep mobile and live less sedentary lives than they would if they did not attend the Sheds. The sheds also provide a compassionate and supportive space for older men to share their health concerns and experiences with other men that is separate from traditional interventions and talking to other men and having somewhere to go during the week contributes to a reduction in feelings of depression.



'Men in Sheds' have a Worksoop Branch and work out of an industrial unit in Kilton Terrace in the town. RBL member (ex Royal Tank Regiment) David Boswell (pictured with the cross) arranged with his colleagues at the 'Shed' to have the temporary grave marker made from antique oak and David brought this along on May 1st 2021- almost 102 years to the day when Thomas died, for installation on the spot where he is buried.

Gary Kyriacou, several of his friends, two WW1 re-enactors in Notts & Derby Regiment uniforms, and members of the local Royal British Legion Branch gathered at the graveside to see the cross installed. RBL Branch Chair, Adie Platts and Robert Ilett (WFA) spoke briefly before Last Post was sounded, a two minutes silence held, followed by reveille.



The second picture shows Robert Ilett standing behind the grave with the cross installed, flanked by the two gentlemen in authentic Notts and Derby Regiment uniforms of 1918.

UNVEILING OF COMMONWEALTH GRAVESTONE FOR 39606 CPL THOMAS HIGHTON - TUESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2023

Over 100 attended this unveiling and consecration at a windy Retford Road Cemetery. Members of the Royal British Legion, Regimental Associations, including Standard Bearers, the Western Front Association, Deputy Lord Lt of Nottinghamshire, Civic Dignitaries and other guests including the Regimental Mascot of the Mercian Regiment attended. This service was not only to unveil the Commonwealth War Grave headstone that will finally mark Cpl Thomas Highton's resting place but to celebrate his service, courage, and unwavering dedication to his duty.

The service started with a welcome and Introduction by Gary Kyriacou (who lives in the house that Thomas used to reside in). This was followed by a moving address by Canon Fr. Spicer of Worksop Priory Church who unveiled and blessed the Headstone. Last Post was played, all observed a two minute silence followed by Reveille. A group of WW1 re-enactors - all in WW1 battledress fired a three volley salute. The temporary wooden cross was then removed and presented back to David Boswell representing Men in Sheds. The ceremony concluded with a Prayer and Blessing by Fr. Spicer.







The temporary wooden grave marker is returned to Men in Sheds representative, David Boswell (on left)