

# SUNLIGHT SOAP



*Both have responded  
to the call of Duty.*

**T**HE proverb says that "many hands make light work"—but at Port Sunlight the hands of every woman worker are making light work even of those tasks which, before the war, were judged beyond their strength.

But nearly 3,000 Sunlight men have joined the colours, and the girls who have taken their places in the ranks of industry are demonstrating to the world that heavy tasks can be done with light hearts, where loyalty and devotion to duty are the order of the day.

In our photograph, Sunlight girls are seen stacking long bars of Sunlight Soap to dry, so that the Soap may be thoroughly mature before it is stamped, wrapped and packed ready for dispatch to the grocer.

**£1,000 GUARANTEE OF PURITY  
on every Bar.**

The name Lever on Soap is a Guarantee of Purity and Excellence.  
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## Discovering East Dorset's home front

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Voices of the First World War



# STAFFORDSHIRE'S WAR



9 June– 22 December 2018

## Home Front, Home

An exhibition commemorating 100 years since the end of World War I, exploring the lives of 7 local women.



Bridport  
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[bridportmuseum.co.uk](http://bridportmuseum.co.uk)



# ‘Total war’: a new kind of warfare



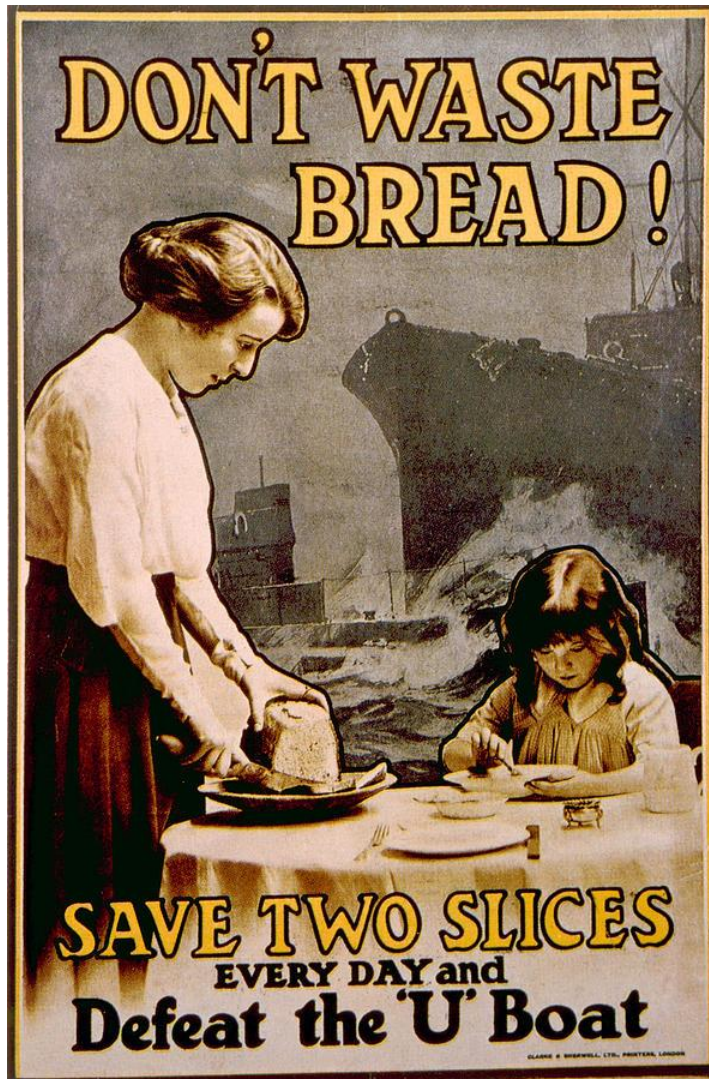
- Affected everyone in their daily lives: military and civilians; men and women; young and old
- Was fought on two interlinked fronts: the war front **and** the home front
- Sustaining a robust home front was vital to winning or at least not losing the war

This applied to all belligerents in what was a global war.

# The home front in 'total war'

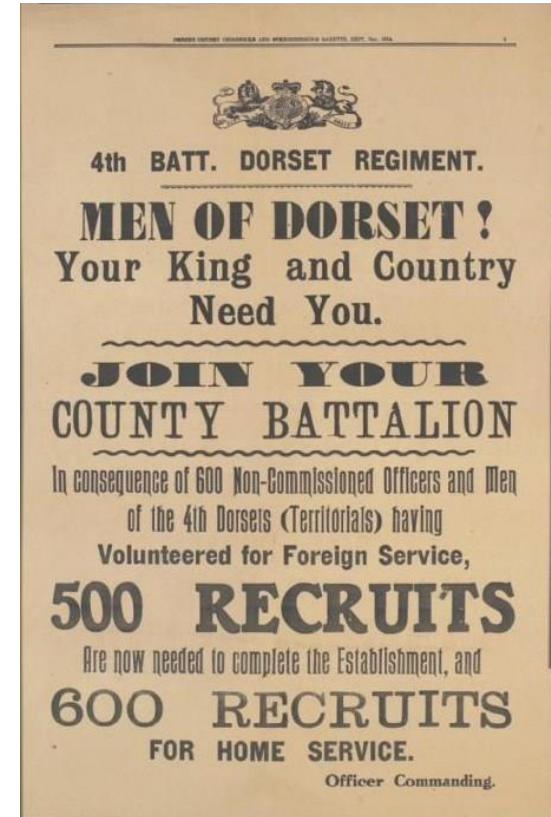
Lady Cornelia Wimborne (11.1916)

The ... food question was one of the **weapons** by which we must hope to win in the terrible war that is going on. Unless we could hold out with regard to food we could not hope to defeat the enemy for although it was important we should find men to fight, and munitions for them to fight with, it was also important that we should be able to secure a necessary supply [of food] for our people. She did not think that in the past the people of England... had realised the importance of the food question. They had been so accustomed to get their food cheaply and easily that they did not trouble to enquire where it came from, but now at last, they were awake to the fact that more than half of their food came from abroad, and that there were very serious dangers in securing that food supply.



# Who was on the East Dorset home front?

- Men, including those of military age (which extended as the war dragged on)
- Women
- Children
- Strangers, e.g. billeted soldiers, Belgian refugees



# Men: some job adverts

**1916:** For Garden Labourer and strong lads for nursery work (J. Stevenson, Nurseryman, Wimborne)

Lad wanted to help milk and drive milk cart. Treated as family. (Batten, Barford Dairy, Wimborne)

Man wanted for clay cutting at Pits, Corfe Mullen.

Manager for newly formed Wimborne & District Agricultural Co-operative Society. Preference given to smart energetic man (ineligible for military service), who has had practical training as assistant or sub-manager to a similar society. Commencing salary £150 per annum, with commission on net profit.

Gardener wanted for private house. Good at vegetables, flowers and fruit. Strong. Willing to make himself useful. Ineligible for Army – Ray, Stoneleigh House, Wimborne.

Bakers wanted to learn confectionery. Wimborne.

**1918:** Man to look after 2 horses, carriages and small garden. Not eligible for Army - Red House, Sturminster Marshall.

Striker and nailor on (good) wanted for shoe-smith's shop. Ineligible Army – Apply Dibben, West St, Wimborne.



# Examples of jobs of men coming before local military tribunals, i.e. men on the home front

WG, 6.10.16:

**URBAN:** chemist's apprentice; manager of building and sanitary engineering business; organ builder, tuner and repairer; draper's salesman and window-dresser; market gardener; shoeing and agricultural smith; land agent; managing clerk of Bankers' Settled Estates; agricultural repairing engineer; plumber and sanitary engineer; carter at Walford Mills; carman for delivering coal; 2 bakers of bread.

Youngest 18; oldest 38. 4 work for father; 1 for father-in-law.

**RURAL:** engine-driver; stockman, milker & calf-rearer with full management of bulls; proprietary nurseryman, fruit grower and seed expert; jobbing thatcher; fruit gardener & market gardener; builder; pit-wood carting & small-holder; partner, grocer & bakers; market gardener; carter; cowman & help at farm; ; master butcher & slaughterman; single-handed butcher; brick-manufacturer's partner; farm manager of 180 acre farm; small holder & master-woodman; carter; shepherd; 2 dairymen.

Youngest 18; oldest 38. 4 work for father.

# What do these cases show about the home front?

**Many businesses had already lost men:** bread baker, 30, Wimborne. 5/7 employees had joined the Colours; this only man left to do all the work of the bakehouse; employed female labour as far as possible. Conditional exemption.

**Domestic hardship:** thatcher, 32, s, Sturminster Marshall = sole support of widowed mother. Rejected.

**Many of men had already been rejected as unfit, but now being recalled:** draper's salesman, 32, s, Wimborne; heart disease, graded C3 + kept widowed mother; Tribunal said his work could be done by a woman. His employer said, "A girl could not be sufficiently experienced for the position, and it would mean almost getting an old woman". Rejected because not indispensable.

**Single-handed businesses common where a business would be lost if man called-up:** partner grocer & bakers, 35, Verwood; passed for sedentary work only. Said worked grocery store single-handed and business would be closed if he was called up & capital invested (partly by 3 single serving brothers) would be lost; 2 other married brothers running bakery business been condit. exempted; given temp exemption to 31.12.1916 to make arrangements for his business.



# **The farmer's son**

The Appeals Tribunal overturned this decision and granted Kent a temporary exemption until 31 March 1917. This was a wealthy farming family: the farmhouse had 13 rooms and in 1911 housed 2 domestic servants. Kent was an only son (had a sister) and does not seem to have served in the Army. He was on the electoral roll after the war and died in 1976.

# The local tribunals in 1917 and 1918

- More exemptions were made conditional on the man remaining in this or similar occupation.
- Substitutes sought to replace young, single men.
- Continuing debate about what constituted work of national importance, e.g. Military Rep said no need to grow tomatoes.
- Short exemptions given to plant ground or harvest crops.
- Little discussion of using women as replacement labour.
- Conscripted men were getting older.
- Dorset War Agriculture Committee began to give certificates of exemption to tribunals in order to keep experienced men on the land – including single, young, class A men. This was coupled with instructions to local farmers to plough up grassland and increase food cultivation. Farmers could also apply for women labourers from the new Women's Land Army.

# Women workers

**1917:** 3.8: Hampreston C of E School (Mixed) seeks Uncertificated Mistress for Standards 3 & 4. Salary £50, rising annually by £2 10s to £60.

7.12: National Service Representative to Dorset County Appeal Tribunal vigorously complained at Wimborne in Friday “appropos the scarcity of labour, that a lot of women were being employed in tea-shops and eating-houses in Bournemouth, waiting on idle tea-drinking women, when they should be better employed. It made him savage when he thought about it.”

**1918:** In the 5 columns of adverts for servants in WG, 17.5.1918:

GENERAL SERVANT Wanted. Two in Family. – Miss Chissell, Cowgrove Farm, Wimborne.

GENERAL SERVANT Wanted. Small Family. Reference – Mrs Richards, Ashleigh, St John’s Hill, Wimborne.

COOK-GENERAL – Can any lady RECOMMEND good COOK-GENERAL? Nurse-housemaid kept. Churchwoman. Age 20-23. Wages £20-£24 – Mrs Stote, Colehill Vicarage, Wimborne.

# Women 'doing their bit'



VADs at Beaucroft Hospital, Colehill



# Women on Wimborne home front committees

## Wimborne Urban FCC

- Ada Bartlett/ Ellis (1876-??)

1911: single, no occ., living with 2 sisters and widowed father + servants in 23 roomed house on St John's Hill.

VAD at Beaucroft Hospital, Wimborne, 12.14 – 7.15 (worked 840 hrs). Married CA Ellis (1868-1946) in 1918. He = widower, brewer and wine merchant + UDC Councillor from 1917, lived Millbank, 12 room servanted-house. Had been a VAD too (W Red Cross hospital).

- Susie Kemp (1876-??)

No stated occ; husband = journalist for *Western Gazette* + son (1901); lived West Borough in 7 roomed house, father a farmer at East Coker, youngest of 7 children.

# Wimborne Rural FCC

- Katherine Style (1869-1951)

s; father = vicar of Chalbury; East Dorset War Pensions Committee; Wimborne Profiteering Committee, County President Dorset WIs (1927); W and Cranborne Board of Guardians.

- Anna Mills (1853-1939)

Husb Henry John Mills = chairman RDC, Retired Captain, 6<sup>th</sup> Dragoons; no children, lived at the highly-servanted The Knoll, Corfe Mullen (27 rooms): Profiteering Committee.



- Ethel Lucas (1880- ??)

Father = jeweller, Solihull; s, living with bro-in-law Rev. Knapp, vicar of Woodlands, servanted 9 roomed vicarage; later lives separately in Woodlands village; VAD, Commandant St Giles House, nr. Salisbury (1-7.15); Dorset Local War Pensions Committee; Profiteering Committee; W & Cranborne Guardian after war; executive committee of Dorset branch English Folk Dance and Song Society (1936).

# Children 'doing their bit'

Many examples of schools closed so boys could help with hay-making (Shapwick, June 1916) or for blackberrying (Horton school picked 356lbs; Holt ½ ton, 9.1918) + boys given official exemption from school to work in fields.

# The challenges of the home front

- Recruiting sufficient men for the Army and Navy without damaging the wartime economy (including agriculture) or undermining domestic morale.
- Dealing with increasing shortages of labour, food and fuel.
- Coping with the relentless increase in the cost of living often without wage increases or war bonuses and with inadequate separation allowances.

... with no plans in place, trusting to the free market for the first 2 years and with no end in sight...



# Wages

May 1918: Dorset Wages Committee recommended to the Central Wages Board a minimum wage for male agricultural labourers of 30s a week (would be worth nearly £60 today) for a 54 hour week Mar-Oct, 48 hours the rest of year. Cottages would be graded into 4 with rents of: 4s 6d, 3s, 2s, 1s a week.

25.10.1918: War Cabinet recommended increases in allowances to soldier's wives and dependents eg extra 6s 6d for childless wife unable to obtain work; for parents of unmarried service men an extra 5s.

# Rationing from 1918

- Wimborne Urban Food Control Committee

Reported WG 15.5.1918, that the FCC had issued 2898 adult cards & 631 children's cards for butter/margarine. The scheme came into operation on 25 March. 14cwt of margarine was sent to the district but this was subject to alteration. A room in West Borough was being used to store, cut up and weigh out the margarine.

Complaints were being investigated that a local tradesman had made it a condition of persons registering with him for butter that they must also buy their milk from him. If this was proven, the retailer would be prosecuted.

# Effects of war on East Dorset home front

- Some businesses had to be sold (e.g. 1917, sale of farm at Longfleet (giving up dairying because shortage of labour))
- Women stepped a little further into civic life
- Labour becomes more confident despite culture of paternalism

After the Armistice the challenges of the home front continued because of food and fuel shortages, but now the unifying effect of being at war had gone.

Significant tensions re-emerged as it was felt that not everyone had made sacrifices during the war, indeed some had profiteered. Slowly the soldiers returned and had to be re-integrated into their families and communities AND into the post-war labour market.

The vast organisation of each local home front which had reached into people's homes, private decisions and daily lives, now had to be wound down. The new task was how to build the Peace.