

H.A. H.G



KEEP THE
HOME FIRES
BURNING

The Hemingfords
1914-1918

Compiled by Members of the Hemingfords' Local History Society



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Introduction

In mid-2013, Theatre Matters, a Cambridge-based performance company, approached the Hemingfords' Local History Society (HEMLOCS) and St Margaret's Church Hemingford Abbots with a view to staging a new theatre production to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. The group had been awarded a Heritage Lottery Grant to develop the project; this involved a range of local voluntary organisations working with Theatre Matters to collect local history material and stories to provide a display at five different venues across Cambridgeshire. Each display would be followed by a performance of a newly devised stage production using the poetry and music of the era. These events were scheduled to take place during the week leading to Remembrance Sunday, 2014.

The HEMLOCS committee set up a working group of six people who embarked on the research necessary to find the material for our display. Our brief was to focus on life in our two villages during the four long years of fighting and the impact the war had on their inhabitants. Our research led us to look at rural communities generally across the country and then, more specifically, at the resources available to us locally. These included local historians, the Norris Museum, St Ives Library and Huntingdon Library and Archives, where we sifted through seemingly endless copies of the Hunts Post on microfiche. We also received significant help and support from local residents, who were only too willing to provide family stories, photographs and memorabilia. Our sincere thanks go to these people and agencies; they were most helpful.

Our Remembrance event was held in a packed St Margaret's Church on Friday 7 November. Over 130 people viewed our display and then sat enthralled and moved by the stunning Theatre Matters performance. The display remained in the church for further viewing the following day and has since been mounted in the Hemingford Grey Reading Room and for the children of the Hemingford Grey Primary School. This booklet is an attempt to provide a permanent record of our research and to give future generations an idea of what life was like in the Hemingfords during World War 1. If anyone reading this publication has any relevant information or material, please contact a HEMLOCS committee member or email info@hemlocs.co.uk.

The Hemingfords in 1914

The Hemingfords of the early 20th century were very different from the villages we know today. They were essentially rural, agricultural communities and the majority of the inhabitants worked on the land or were in service. In the 1911 census, the population of Hemingford Abbots was 364 and that of Hemingford Grey 808, including the inmates of the Union Workhouse, now The Limes, which could hold up to 450 people. Hemingford Abbots had only 89 houses and Hemingford Grey 183; the relative grandeur of Hemingford Park (where the widowed Mrs Edith Williams resided with five live-in servants), Hemingford Grey House and Madeley Court was in stark contrast to the harsh conditions experienced elsewhere in the villages.

In 1915, the Rural District Council reported that many houses in the Hemingfords were in a poor state. Victoria Terrace was over-crowded, while the cottages in Filbert's Walk had cellar kitchens which were damp in summer and flooded in winter. Some cottages had filthy and over-flowing ash pits close to the house and the thatch was often thin and poorly maintained. Cottages in Hemingford Abbots were in better condition but still not good. Diseases in the community included scarlet fever, diphtheria, TB and head lice. There were no sewers and the water supply was often a shallow well.



Jennifer Cottage in Hemingford Abbots

The Huntingdon to Cambridge railway line (joint Midland/Great Eastern/Great Northern) ran very close to the northern edge of both villages but there was no station, not even a 'Halt' for the villages. Because of the good railway communications, the wide open spaces of Hemingford Meadow and the easy availability of stabling in St Ives, cavalry regiments were sometimes billeted in the

local area. Villagers had to go to St Ives to catch a train or collect goods. If they lived at the western end of Hemingford Abbots, the station at Godmanchester might have been easier to get to. The roads were largely of crushed gravel, there being plenty of this available locally, but in the event of heavy rain or flooding these became quagmires.



Floods at Armes Corner, Hemingford Grey

By 1914, bicycles were commonplace, if you had the money, and much better than the old penny-farthing. Though motor vehicles were available, and they became increasingly common as the war progressed, the horse was still the main mode of transport for both the farming community and individuals.



The road outside Whitehall, Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots

There was a Post Office (PO) in both villages, with three deliveries a day and, correspondingly, three 'dispatches' (compare this service to that of today).

Hemingford Grey PO had 'telegraph' (for telegrams) and 'money order' facilities, and was run by George Geeson; it was also a grocery and general store. Hemingford Abbots PO was run by Alfred Fear and was also a shop. Both villages had schools, Hemingford Abbots for 80 children under Headmaster Arthur Cattell and Hemingford Grey for 165 children under Headmaster George Wilson.

The Great Ouse was little used for commercial transport upriver of St Ives. The water mill in Hemingford Grey was operated by Thomas Knights and Son, who were in partnership with the Giffards of Rosenthal House in the High Street. The Hemingford Grey windmill, next to the school, was operated by Charles and Erastus Watts.

The gas works in St Ives (now the disused Murketts site in London Road) supplied the town, and although evidence of ancient gas piping has been found in some of the older village houses, it has not been possible to discover whether town gas was available in 1914. There was no electricity delivery system into the villages, so lighting, heating and cooking facilities were provided by oil, coal, wood and coke. Consequently, there was also no street lighting.

Telephone systems existed in the local larger towns such as Huntingdon. At the outbreak of war one could contact the Huntingdonshire Cyclist Battalion on the easily remembered Huntingdon 39. The churches were much as they are today, with St Margaret's and St James' but with the addition of a Congregational Chapel in Front Street (now High Street) in Hemingford Grey; this is now a private house. The Reading Room in Hemingford Grey, which is still there, had a library of some 350 books.

The pubs were great centres of social activity. Hemingford Abbots had the Fleur-de-Lis, the Oak, the Wheatsheaf, the Ramping Lion and the Axe and Compass, which of course still flourishes; in addition, there were three 'beer retailers'. Hemingford Grey offered the Anchor, the Cock (still with us), the Waggon and Horses, the New Crown and three more beer shops for the discerning drinker.

The villages were largely self-supporting in that together they had farmers, bakers, thatchers, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, grocers, drapers, boot and shoemakers, market gardeners, carpenters, builders, nurserymen, florists, basket-makers, artists and a laundry. The laundry was on the site of what is now St James's Court and run by Miss Gertrude Rainey with the help of a manageress and four laundry maids. Of course, the Monday Markets were held in St Ives, as they still are to this day. Doctors were available in/from St Ives and there was a hospital in Huntingdon.

The war affected traditional village pursuits. The record of the Hemingfords Regatta shows that the 13th Regatta was held on Bank Holiday Monday, 3 August 1914: *this year the Regatta was overshadowed by the imminent danger of Great Britain being drawn into the Great War and the subject of men's thoughts was*

naturally the prospect of war. The weather was fair and the racing good and the attendance of spectators well up to the average. The next entry gloomily reads: 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918: Years of the Great War. No Regatta was held during the war. The young men were fighting. The women were working. The old men were carrying on. The casualties were increasing and the spirit of the people was sad.

On the very day of that last pre-war Regatta, Germany declared war on France and the next day, 4 August, Britain declared war on the Central Powers. In the early weeks of the conflict, there was a strong fear of spies and imminent invasion. Posters dated 29 August 1914 and signed by the Town Clerk of St Ives were widely distributed; these warned motorists, cyclists, pedestrians and others, in large red and black type: *If challenged, they must immediately stop and, if riding, immediately dismount and reply. If they do not reply and stop they will be FIRED UPON.*

Any shooting would presumably have been done by the police or the Volunteer Training Corps; the latter was organised soon after the outbreak of war as a means of service for those over military age or in important occupations. Units had to be financially self-supporting and provide their own uniforms and weapons. The local HQ was in the Priory Rooms in St Ives and by spring 1915 the Corps had 60 members drilling twice a week. People were invited to send funds *so that St Ives and the surrounding villages may be able to take their place in this patriotic movement of preparing to assist in the defence of our hearths and homes.*



The Volunteer Training Corps on parade outside the Free Church in St Ives

The war brought about an immediate rise in prices. Bread went up by a farthing to 3d for a 2lb loaf and the price of foreign meat by 2d a lb. The trade in wheat at St Ives Monday Market was suspended and the price of petrol nearly doubled (it was virtually unobtainable anyway). A large number of horses were requisitioned locally. The Defence of the Realm Act of 8 August 1914 gave the government

wide-ranging powers to requisition land and buildings and introduced censorship. Relatively trivial peacetime activities no longer permitted included flying kites, starting bonfires, buying binoculars, feeding bread to wild animals, discussing naval and military matters or buying alcohol on public transport. Alcoholic drinks were watered down and pub opening times were restricted to noon-3pm and 6.30pm-9.30pm (the requirement for an afternoon gap in permitted hours lasted in England until the Licensing Act of 1988).

UK Currency in 1914 was, as now, based on the Pound but notes and coins were very different:

Notes were £5, £1 and 10 shillings.

There were 20 shillings (s) in a pound and 12 pennies (d) in a shilling.

There were coins for a ½d (halfpenny), a ¼d (farthing), 1d, 3d, 6d, 1s and 2s.

In December 1914, Lord Sandwich, the Lord Lieutenant of Huntingdonshire, issued a proclamation stating that there were special grounds for apprehension and appointing a Central Organising Committee and Local Emergency Committees to liaise with the military. *I rely on the inhabitants to afford all assistance which may be required by the Military Authorities and give ready and implicit obedience to the directions of the Police.*

By this time, the residents of the villages were already counting the human cost of the war. Private Arthur Hull of the Bedfordshire Regiment, born in Godmanchester and married to a Hemingford Abbots girl, was killed at the Battle of Le Cateau on 26 August 1914, 22 days into the war. On 16 November 1914, Private William Hookham, also of the Bedfordshire Regiment, was killed in the First Battle of Ypres. In the 1911 census, he lived with his wife in Filbert's Walk and his family were just round the corner in Victoria Terrace. On 23 October 1914, the Hunts Post reported:

Corporal Tom Brookes of the Royal Garrison Artillery returned wounded to the home of his parents, Mr and Mrs W Brookes of Hemingford Abbots on Wednesday. Corporal Brookes was hit in the head and chest by shrapnel in the Battle of the Aisne. The major of his battery and five other men were wounded by the same shell.

This war would certainly **not** be over by Christmas.

The Role of Women

Women at the beginning of World War 1 had few options open to them outside the home. Before marriage, they may have been employed as domestic servants, often 'living in'.



Staff at Hemingford Abbots Rectory circa 1914

There were shops selling food and other necessities in the Hemingfords, where some women may have worked. Others were employed as seasonal workers at harvest time on the many farms and orchards around the two villages but none were paid as much as men for similar work.



Women stripping willows on Holt Island

There was no gas or electricity or mains drainage in the Hemingfords. Cooking was done on a coal-fired kitchen range; homes were lit by oil lamps or candles. Garden produce was preserved, in the form of bottled fruit and vegetables, pickles and jams, for use over the winter months. Simple domestic chores involved hard physical work, often in unsanitary conditions.



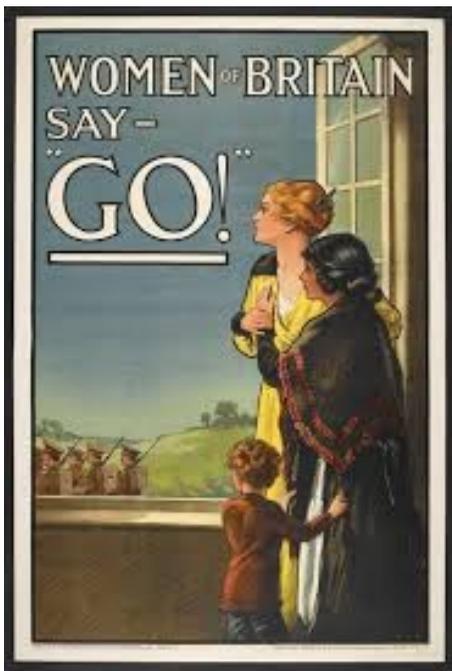
A typical middle class family of the time. Older sons appear to be in the army or in training, perhaps the one on the left is about to leave for the front

Women of a middle class background lived a very different life. Few expected to work for a living. They were supported by the men of the family and were accustomed to having servants to do all the domestic chores. Many also considered it their duty to do charitable work.

All social classes would find that by 1918 life had changed forever.

In the Hemingfords, as elsewhere in the country, the war began to have a serious effect on normal life. Schools were without schoolmasters, churches without vicars and choir members. Men were enlisting in large numbers and in an agricultural community this meant that many farmers were finding it increasingly difficult to grow the food that was so desperately needed. As a result, women were regularly employed on the land in the Hemingfords during the spring and summer months. By September 1915, formal agricultural training had begun for women to work on farms. However, the Huntingdonshire War Agricultural Committee deplored the suggestion that women should be paid the same as men – *women can look after themselves*. The Women's Farm Labour Committee countered this by distributing certificates of honour with the county coat of arms,

in colour, to all women working on the land. It was generally accepted that women could do the milking and take charge of cattle, but could not do ploughing and ditching. Most farmers were not prepared to pay women the same rate as men, and as the war progressed, increasing numbers of women took up nursing.



Women were urged by the government to encourage the men in their families to join up.

Women and children left behind could follow the news of the war in the local papers, much of it reporting the huge numbers being killed or wounded, but would have had little up-to-date information about their own husbands and fathers. The standard communication told them very little:



This locality was important as a training area, not only for the Army but also for the newly recruited young men learning to fly at Wyton. Good rail links meant that men could quickly be sent to the ports for transfer to the front.

There were large numbers of troops in camps around this area and a Scottish cavalry regiment's officers' mess in St Ives. The war could not be ignored.

NOTHING is to be written on this side **except** the date and signature of the sender. Sentences not required may be erased. **If anything else is added the post card will be destroyed.**

[Postage must be prepaid on any letter or post card addressed to the sender of this card.]

I am quite well.

I have been admitted into hospital
 { *sick* } and am going on well.
 { *wounded* } and hope to be discharged soon.

I am being sent down to the base.

I have received your { *letter dated* _____
 { *telegram* " _____
 { *parcel* " _____

Letter follows at first opportunity.

I have received no letter from you
 { *lately*
 { *for a long time.*

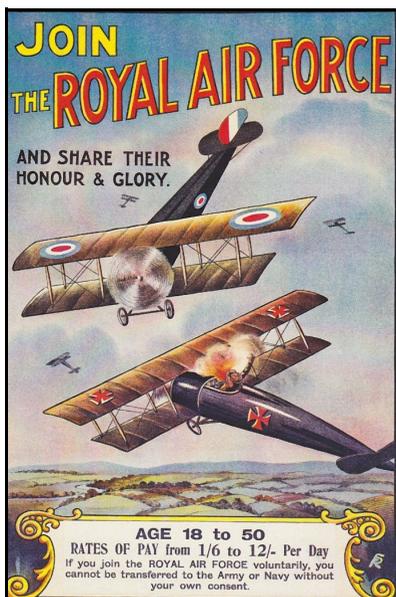
Signature }
only }

Date _____

Wt. W65—P.P.948. 8000m. 5-18. C. & Co., Grange Mills, S.W.

Women were being asked to be not only the homemakers but an important part of the war effort. They and their children began to play a significant role in food production. Boys as young as 11 could leave school to work on the land. The government, desperate to produce enough food for the Home Front, put women in charge of local food production.

In August 1915, Village War Food Societies were formed to help with shortages of food. The aim was to identify vacant plots of land, even common land, and to get permission to cultivate them to produce food co-operatively, using women and child labour. Children in infants' schools were taken out of lessons and whole classes picked blackberries for jam making.



In Hemingford Abbots, farmer Frederick Ruse appealed against the call-up of one of his men saying that, from his 200-acre farm, he had lost nine men to the armed forces, leaving him with only three to work his farm, of whom only two could work with his six horses. Losing one of these would leave only one to work them. The comment was made that more women should work on farms.

The Women's Land Army was formed in February 1917 (in spite of male resistance in farming communities) in an attempt to provide a full-time, properly regulated workforce for agricultural industries. The Women's Land Army was not part of the army or even under the control of the War Office. It was funded and controlled by the

Board of Agriculture and Fisheries; however, as an organised body supporting the war effort, it deserves its place in any consideration of the fighting forces.

It eventually employed 113,000 women; female labour made up some one-third of all labour on the land, the remainder being a mix of enemy prisoners, members of the Army Service Corps, infantry labour units and agricultural workers outside military age.



The following advice was given to those joining the Women's Land Army:



The contrasting styles of dress from the early pictures of women working on the land must have shocked many

You are doing a man's work and so you are dressed like a man; but remember that because you wear a smock and trousers you should take care to behave like an English girl who expects chivalry and respect from everyone she meets.

Still more demands on the time of women were being made. Men at the front needed warm clothing which was not being adequately supplied by the army, so women were urged to knit socks, gloves and scarves to send to the front.

The field kitchens were made by Perkins of Peterborough and called by the men 'Polly Perkins'.

In the Hemingfords, women must have been constantly afraid of losing the men they loved who were fighting in the trenches. They and their children were often hungry and keeping families healthy was a huge problem. Houses were inspected by the Rural District Council Medical Officer of Health, who had to notify the existence of a number of diseases, such as diphtheria, TB, phthisis and scarlet fever. Cases could result in the whole family being excluded from school, removal of the patient to an isolation hospital and disinfection/fumigation of the dwelling. In 1915, a case of poliomyelitis in the Hemingfords proved fatal. The home was fumigated and considered no further threat to the community.



Maybe this soldier is wearing a scarf knitted by someone at home following a request made by Elenora French, wife of General Sir John French, for 250,000 mufflers two and a half yards long by 12 inches wide, with no fringes, colour khaki or grey

Those living in the tied and parish cottages were coping with poor living conditions, such as we can hardly imagine today – damp, sometimes flooded, difficult to heat, especially as coal became more expensive.

Apart from the main road through the villages, roads were rough tracks, which would be muddy and full of puddles in wet weather.



Rideaway, Hemingford Abbots

At the end of January 1918, there was a sudden thaw and St Ives and the low-lying areas were flooded, particularly Filbert's Walk and Victoria Terrace. Residents worked by lantern to get their pigs and poultry onto higher ground. The water was several feet deep from Victoria Terrace to the Woolpack and Low Road was flooded as well. The floodwater was over the railway line at Hemingford Grey. By dint of hard work, four men prevented the flooding of Hemingford Grey by damming the riverside road leading to Hemingford Abbots with gault.

Before 1914, many women had demanded equal voting rights with men and the Suffragettes had made their presence felt on the streets of the major cities, especially in London. By the end of the War women had assumed an important and vital role on the Home Front. Votes were granted to women in 1918 but only to householders over the age of 30. Few women in the Hemingfords would have been allowed to vote.

Kate Adie in her BBC television programme about women 1914-1918 made the following observations:

By the end of 1918, only a third of adult women were in employment, the same as before the war. Within a dozen years their wages were less than half those of men in the same industries. The clock had struck midnight. The Cinderellas were no longer in the limelight; they were at home by the hearth. The lot of women was to be carers once more, to return to a traditional maternal role.

A Ministry of Labour leaflet made clear the Government's position:

A call comes again to the women of Britain, a call, happily, not to make shells or to fill them so that a ruthless enemy shall be destroyed, but a call to help renew the homes of England, to sew and to mend, to cook and to clean and to rear babies in health and happiness.

Women finally gained equal voting rights with men in 1928. The women of the Hemingfords had played no small part in proving that women were worthy of equality with men.

Hemingfords' Children during the War

Life for most children 100 years ago was hard. For many in the Hemingfords, living conditions were poor; houses were cold and damp and often poorly maintained. Overcrowding was common; one cottage in The Thorpe had parents and five children in one bedroom, with only a wooden partition for privacy.

All children were entitled to free school education up to the age of 12 and some stayed later. During the war, the Board of Education's President, Mr H A Fisher, visited many schools around the country and was determined to improve education. After the war, the leaving age was raised to 14 with part-time schooling for working 14–18 year-olds.



A Class at Hemingford Grey School - circa 1918

The present Hemingford Grey School was opened in 1903 and, by 1914, was educating around 80 children. The Public Elementary School in Hemingford Abbots was very much smaller, bringing the total number of pupils in the two villages to about 100. In Hemingford Grey, the 1914 school year started well. Attendance was at 90% - very good considering the incidence of sickness amongst the children. During 1914, a gas pipe was laid to the school improving the lighting, though heating was still from solid fuel burning stoves.

With the outbreak of war, a drop in attendance was noted; children of 11 years of age, shown to be employed on the land, were excused school to carry on the work of the men who had gone to the war. This relaxation was reversed in 1916 when it was discovered that Huntingdonshire was the only county taking 11-year-olds out of school to work.



Hemingford Abbots School – early 20th Century

The children were very aware of the ‘far away’ war, with relatives and other villagers away on the continent and refugees from Belgium in the village. They would also have been aware of troop movements through local towns, the establishment of hospitals for the wounded and the saddening effect on village folk following bad news from the front. Occasionally, there was good war news - in June 1916, a half-day school holiday was given to celebrate the award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal to Sergeant William Fordham, an old boy of Hemingford Grey School.

Children were encouraged to do their bit to help the war effort in any way they could. In March 1918, the children of Hemingford Grey *gave an entertainment in the school. Some 21 items were rendered by the tiny actors to a very large appreciative audience. Proceeds of £5.10s were handed over to the Red Cross Society.* Later that year, the school children themselves raised £1.11.8d (about £1.58) for the Blinded Soldiers Fund. This was a large sum of money for young children to raise in those days.

There was a shortage of food caused by the war. In 1915 Village War Food Societies were formed; the aim was to use vacant land to help with the shortage. Land was identified in the Hemingfords and a group formed to arrange working of the land by women and children. As well as growing vegetables, some areas of land were suitable for keeping pigs, rabbits and poultry. Food produced was for home consumption and shared according to effort put in

The absence of adult male influence in the villages may have led to an increase in petty crime amongst the young. In December 1914, three Hemingford Grey boys appeared before the Children's Court accused of stealing a tin of biscuits worth one shilling (5p) and a box of chocolates worth sixpence (2½p) from shops in St Ives; all pleaded guilty. The eldest also pleaded guilty to numerous previous thefts and he was sentenced to three weeks in the workhouse. Pilfering continued throughout the war and boys caught were sent to the workhouse for a month. The master could flog them if they absconded.

The opportunity for youngsters to make some money, and help the war effort, came about in 1917 when the Board of Agriculture estimated that farmers were losing 10% of cereal crops to sparrows and rats. Bounty was offered to the tune of three pence (1p) per dozen old sparrows caught or killed and a penny per score of eggs or young sparrows. Children were permitted to get involved if supervised by a teacher. Aiding the troops directly, however, was always voluntary work, readily undertaken. In 1917, the Women's Section of the National Service Department asked children to collect wool caught in hedges and fencing to make blankets and clothing for soldiers and sailors. Lavender was also collected and sent in bags to the wounded abroad as a 'scent of home'.



Children in front of the Wheatsheaf, Hemingford Abbots – early 20th Century

Some relief from the worries of the war arrived in October 1915 when a huge tent was seen being erected on Hemingford Meadow.



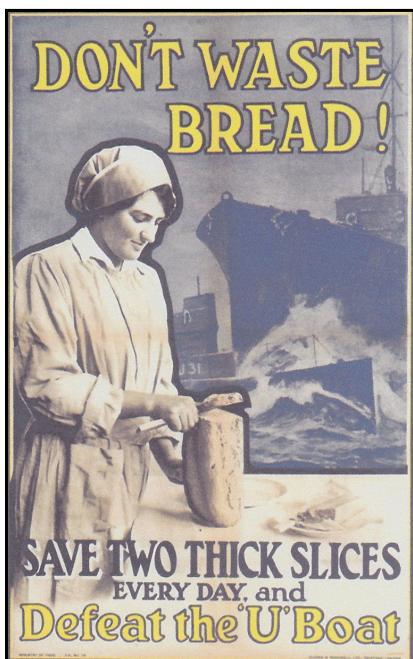
Bronco Bill's Circus and Wild West Show had arrived!

The show sported a two-ring circus and speciality acts of the American West. Seat prices were from 3/- (15p) down to sixpence (2½p), with children at half price for the matinee.

While the village children knew the effect of war - the lack of menfolk, shortage of food, the need to support the war effort - there was no invasion of their homeland, there were no enemy troops on the ground, no Zeppelins in the sky dropping bombs. Their lives were not in danger from the conflict but they would be aware of the Belgian refugees living in the villages and why those people had fled their own country. Most of all, they would have experienced the sadness of knowing that many of the villages' men would never come home.

Hunger at Home

Life was hard; the poor living conditions of agricultural workers, aggravated by the constraints of war, meant that families already deprived of wage earners struggled to stay clean, fed and healthy. Feeding the family was a constant problem, with continuous food shortages. Even before 1914, we needed to import a large proportion of our foodstuffs and by 1916 this figure had risen to 80%. Traditionally, we had relied on the Merchant Navy and the numerous fishing fleets around the country to keep us supplied, but the need for ships to transport men and supplies to Europe and other areas of conflict and the declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare by Germany in January 1917 made this impossible.



We were thrown back on our own devices, trying to feed a population that had doubled since 1851 and largely failing. Statistics show that for every nine men of conscription age, two were unhealthy, three were physical wrecks, one a chronic invalid. Things may have been easier in the country than in the towns and cities, but even here there were problems, not least the absence of men. From voluntary enlistment at the outbreak of war to full-scale conscription, running farms and other agricultural industries became increasingly difficult and exemption from military service less and less easy to obtain. As well as women and young boys now working on the land, disabled soldiers, refugees, prisoners of war and conscientious objectors were drafted in. Seven million extra acres of land were dug up to provide food, gardens were dug up for allotments, chickens

and rabbits were kept in back gardens. Motor tractors operated day and night. Sunday working became accepted. Nevertheless, it was never enough and ironically, because much of the food produced was needed elsewhere, particularly for those serving in France and for military hospitals, people producing the food struggled as much as anybody. Large quantities of fruit and vegetables, for instance, were needed for sailors at sea. Seed oats and potatoes were sent to farmers in France as a token of the British farmers' wish to stand by their allies.

Taxes on beer and tea were increased early on, to raise funds for the war effort and to reduce consumption. Poaching became a crime, the Hunts Post reporting in September 1916 that a local lad had been fined 10/- (50p) for shooting a hare. Eggs became a rare commodity, two boys being birched for stealing eggs and a woman fined 10/- for accepting them, knowing them to have been stolen. A year later, Mrs Everitt and Mrs Rathmell collected 472 eggs for the Red Cross military hospital in St Ives' Methodist Church.



Methodist Church, St Ives



War on the spadger (house sparrow) was declared, based on the belief that spadgers ate as much as 10% of cereal crops - 3d per dozen paid for old sparrows caught or killed, 1d per twenty eggs and young sparrows before they left the nest.

The Hunts Post of 29 December 1916 declared:

We are finishing 1916 feeling the pinch of the war, food control, having to go gently with sugar, the increased price of eggs. Whilst you are hungry you will feel virtuous. This year marks the time that Britain found herself rather ashamed of previously puffy satisfaction, agreed to wear the chains of military conscription and sprang to glorious energy in organisation, adaptability, engineering science and equipment for war.

It was the shortage of flour that caused the most concern. In March 1917 all bread had to be sold by weight, a 1lb loaf, or even number of lbs, and had to be at least 12 hours old. No currant, sultana or milk bread was to be sold. Wheat was for

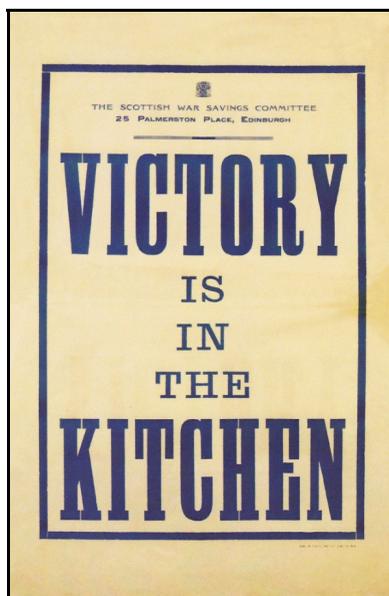
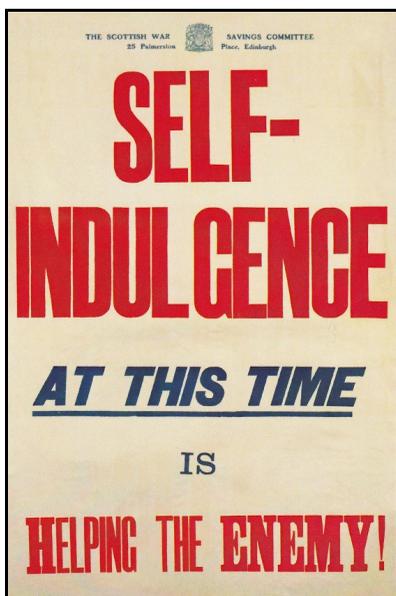
flour and seed only, with no grain for poultry, pheasants or other game birds. Maize, oats, rice, potato and barley flours were to be used in bread recipes.



A *Win the War Cookery Book* approved by the government declared: *Women of Britain, our soldiers are beating the Germans on land, our sailors are beating them on the sea. You can beat them in the larder and the kitchen.*

A wealthy lady of the house and her cook demonstrate how to use potatoes and rice in place of flour.

Members of the Royal Family did not exempt themselves. On 2 May 1917, King George V issued a proclamation urging the nation that *abstention from unnecessary consumption of grain was the surest means for defeating the devices of Our enemies and thereby bringing the War to a speedy and successful termination*. Specifically, people were charged to reduce the consumption of bread by at least one-fourth and wherever possible abandon the use of flour in all articles other than bread.



By June 1917, the average cost of food had doubled. A government Food Controller was appointed, with local Food Control Committees, to fix the price of essential foods – sugar, meat, flour, bread, potatoes and milk. Sweet making was cut by half. People were encouraged to use corn syrup/glucose instead of sugar when making jam. No sugar was to be used in making bread.



Mr Charles Darlow outside his bakery, High Street, Hemingford Grey

In July 1917 a Huntingdonshire Women's Food Economy Committee was formed to go from house to house obtaining promises from householders to keep within prescribed rations. Sugar cards were issued in October 1917 and David Lloyd George appealed to women to give up smoking now that there was a shortage of tobacco!

People responded with typical British humour!

La Guerre

*We're getting bread of sorts today
From which we're told that pains accrue
And double price for it we pay
Mais c'est la guerre! Que voulez-vous?*

*We're getting beer so weak and thin
It might well be a temperance brew
Whisky for wealth and so is gin
Mais c'est la guerre! Que voulez vous?*

*We can't have sugar for our jam
And without pastry we must do
Green peas are in, but where's the lamb
Mais c'est la guerre! Que voulez vous?*

Rationing was introduced in January 1918, one person's rations for a week being 15oz meat, 5oz bacon, 4oz margarine and 8oz sugar.



But there was no fresh meat in the shops, only corned beef.

Ration cards were introduced and everybody had to register with a butcher and a grocer. Rationing was a clear indication to the British public that all was not well, but it did work. The malnutrition that had been identified in poorer communities earlier had disappeared and, as in the Second World War, 21 years later, no-one actually starved.



*Trench Cake - a taste of home
that soldiers on the front line
could not wait to receive: a
welcome and healthy relief after
their monotonous diet of tinned
meat*

Fundraising for the War Effort

At the outbreak of war, the UK had 250,000 regular soldiers. Military commanders were quick to recall 200,000 reservists, some men receiving only a few hours notice of call-up. Such a rapid removal of breadwinners and menfolk from their homes caused immediate problems for their dependants. Two days later, a question was put to the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, demanding to know *what provision was being made for the reserve men's wives and children?* Mr Asquith's reply, *a full consideration will be given to it*, was seen by many as evasive and perfunctory. Amongst those angered by the reply was none less than the Prince of Wales, who immediately asked The Times newspaper to publish a plea in his own words to the ordinary citizens of the country. The Times published the Prince's message the same day:



The popular Prince of Wales postcard

All must realise that the present time of deep anxiety will be followed by one of considerable distress among the people of this country least able to bear it. We must earnestly pray that their suffering may be neither long nor bitter, but we cannot wait until the need presses heavily upon us. The means of relief must be ready in our hands. A National Fund has been founded, and I am proud to act as its treasurer. My first duty is to ask for generous and ready support, and I know that I shall not ask in vain. At such a moment we all stand by one another and it is to the heart of the British people that I confidently make this earnest appeal.

The Prince's confidence in the public was fully justified and by midnight on 6 August the Palace had received £250,000. This had risen to £1 million by the end of the week. The Fund also sold postcards to

raise money and these became very popular, the card depicting the Prince himself being a prized possession.

Within days branches of the National Fund were formed all over the country and the Hemingfords were among the first villages to get involved. In September 1914, Mrs Williams of Hemingford Park set up the Hunts branch of the Prince's Fund. The committee comprised Colonel Linton, representing Hemingford Abbots, and Mr Geeson, representing Hemingford Grey. Miss E K Fuller, of Broom Lodge, was the secretary. Mrs Williams became the centre of charitable activity in the villages a month later when, in response to a talk on the plight of Belgian

refugees, she pledged the villages' help and support for the displaced people. Refugees duly arrived, initially three men of military age, and a local doctor placed his furnished summer residence at the disposal of a family. The refugees were offered work where possible and no cases of genuine hardship were refused.

The Prince of Wales' sister, Princess Mary, took up the call for charity and launched an appeal, within her Sailors and Soldiers Fund, to send a Christmas gift to every man serving overseas.



The Princess Mary Gift Box

The gift was to become the Princess Mary Gift Box, a small brass box containing cigarettes, tobacco, notepaper, pencil, a Christmas card and picture of the Princess. The Hemingfords were quick to send a donation to the Princess. So successful was this appeal that production of the boxes suffered from a shortage of brass. A consignment was ordered from the USA and was shipped on the RMS Lusitania in May 1915 – the very crossing on which the Lusitania was torpedoed and sunk, with the loss of the brass.

The villages reacted to the call for charitable work and became heavily involved soon after the outbreak of war. In May 1915, £90 was donated to the Prince's National Fund from the parish of Hemingford Grey. In October, supplies of woollen articles – mittens, mufflers, helmets, gloves, cardigans and socks - were collected and donated. Funds for the Relief of Allies and the Star and Garter Fund were the aim of an auction in Hemingford Grey the same month. Villagers contributed livestock, home crafts, homemade jams and pickles, kitchen items, furniture, fishing rods etc. plus an electric spoon warmer! In March 1916, a local

Whist Drive raised £5.7s.6d (£5.36) for the St Ives Red Cross Hospital for a washing machine. November saw a Whist Drive and Social in the Old School, Hemingford Grey. 112 people attended and £9 was sent to St Ives Centre War Relief Fund. A Whist Drive in Hemingford Abbots raised £12 for the St Ives Patriotic Sale, a fund that eventually reached over £1,000.

In June 1917, children collected wool caught in hedges and fences for blankets and clothing for servicemen. As mentioned earlier, Hemingford Grey School staged a concert by the children in March 1918, raising £5.10s for the Red Cross Society. Vacant plots of land in the villages were used for growing vegetables and fruit and raising chickens and pigs for home consumption as food shortages hit the area.



Local Fundraising

A good response was seen to the Red Cross appeal for 'comforts' for troops - cushions and bags of sand to steady wounded limbs on journeys. The villages played their part in the huge fund-raising effort that continued throughout the war. As well as for the benefit of the troops, money was used to help those local people who were suffering through the lack of menfolk, lack of jobs and lack of food.

After the war the thoughts of the bereaved turned to remembering their lost ones in more formal fashion. In Hemingford Abbots in 1919, the St Margaret's congregation raised £9.15 towards a memorial which the parents of the fallen wanted to be placed in the Church. The villagers could be justifiably proud of their contributions and support for the war effort.



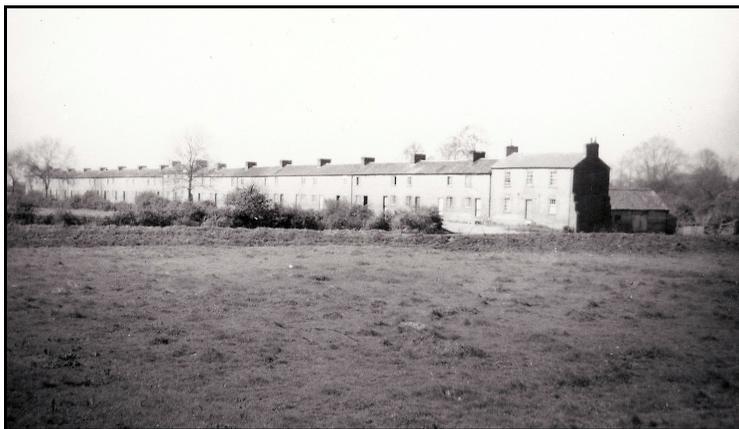
Hemingford Grey and its Fighting Men, 1914-18

It is summer 1914 and you are walking from St Ives to Hemingford Grey. Having strolled along the Causeway, you turn right into Filbert's Walk, where you pass a terrace of 31 houses on your right-hand side. These houses are all owned by Johns (Jack) Harrison, osier grower and basket maker, and the Harrisons' family home is at Numbers 30 and 31, converted into a single house. This is the last house at the Victoria Terrace end of the row. Jack's son, Charles is also an osier grower and he and his family live in the house at the St Ives end of Filbert's Walk.



Filbert's Walk from the St Ives end. The house in the foreground was Charles Harrison's family home. His father, who owned all 31 houses, lived at the far end.

You pause at No 5, where **William Hookham** and his wife Harriett live. He is 33 and works as a brewer's carman. His parents, brothers and sister live just around the corner at 7 Victoria Terrace. He will join the Bedfordshire Regiment and be killed in action in Belgium on 16 November 1914.



Filbert's Walk from the London Road Causeway

Just two doors farther along, at No 7, the Avory family have their home. Their son **Sydney Avory**, who is 15, will lie about his age and join the Hunts Cyclist Battalion on 2 November 1914, transferring to the Bedfordshire Yeomanry Reserve in November 1915. He will subsequently serve with the London Regiment and be killed in action in France on 6 November 1918, just five days before the Armistice.

At No 10 lives another branch of the Avory family. **James William Avory** is 22 and a rod cutter with Harrisons the basket makers; he will become a driver with the Royal Field Artillery and will die at home of wounds sustained in the Great War on 29 February 1920; he is buried in Hemingford Grey Cemetery.

You pass the Green Man pub at No 16 then glance at No 21, where **Arthur Stocker** lives. He will die of his wounds in Belgium on 14 July 1917, aged 19. The Hunts Post reports as follows:

Pte Arthur Stocker killed

Pte Arthur Stocker, aged 19, only son of Mr and Mrs Harry Stocker of 21 Filbert's Walk, St Ives, has laid down his life in France. The Rev C Bankes, chaplain to the Dorset Regiment, has written the parents a sympathetic letter in which he states that he buried the body alongside some of his companions on 15 July. "He took his place in the greatest of the world's struggles and played his part." Deceased joined the colours about nine months ago and was drafted from the Beds to the

Dorset Regiment. He worked at Messrs Enderby and Co's printing and lithographic works, St Ives. This makes the third employee of that firm killed in action. On Tuesday afternoon, Mr Stocker received official intimation from the War Office that his son was killed on 14 July.



Ronald Harrison

You reach the last of the cottages in Filbert's Walk, where Harrison senior and his family live. The Harrisons have a son, Ronald, who is 19. Lieutenant **Ronald Harrison** will be killed in action at the third battle of Gaza on 10 November 1917 and is buried in the Gaza War Cemetery in Palestine. He is commemorated in Broad Leas Cemetery in St Ives.

At the end of Filbert's Walk, you turn right along Victoria Terrace. The first building, No 1, is a pub, the Queen's Head. Further along, at No 25, lives the Rook family. George is an insurance agent and he and his wife Lizzie have six children. Eldest son Henry is 16 and his brother William 15.



William Rook



Both boys will lie about their age and join up. By the time the Army finds out, they will be serving in France. William will later be posted to Ireland, while Henry will be wounded in the ankle and invalided out. Henry will send photos of himself in uniform to girlfriend Laura, who reciprocates in kind. They will marry after the war and both men will live into the 1980s. Younger brother Frank, who is 8 at the outbreak of war, was the father of Gerry Rook, a local historian and archivist.



Henry and Laura

Next door to the Rooks lives a widow, Alice Stocker, and her children. Alice is a laundrywoman and her youngest, Joseph, is 15. Joseph Stocker will be killed in action in France on 31 May 1918, serving with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment



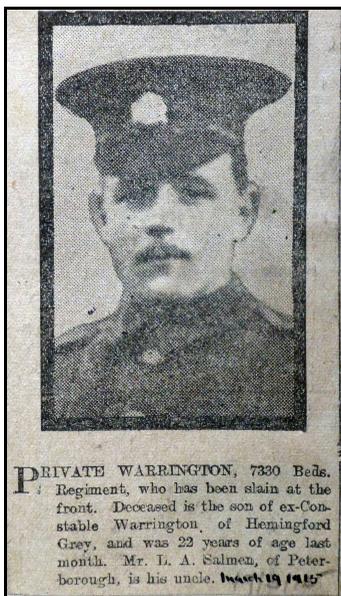
25 and 26 Victoria Terrace today

Carrying on towards the village, you see only four more houses until you arrive at the school, opened in 1903. From there, you pass open fields on either side until you reach the pub, the Waggon and Horses, at Apex Corner.



You decide to take the right fork and walk down Back Street (now Church Street). Looking across to the river, you see the Water Mill in the distance. This is run by Thomas and Henrietta Knights and their family; one of their sons, **John (Jack) Knights**, has moved to Canada. He will join the Canadian Infantry and be killed in France on 10 June 1917, aged 34.

Carrying on down Back Street, you pass the cottage of Samuel Warrington, the recently retired village bobby. His son **John Warrington** is 21 and a domestic chauffeur. He will volunteer for service with the Bedfordshire Regiment and be killed in action in Belgium on 31 January 1915.



The Warrington family home, 18 Church Street

Further along, you see New Walk Villa, where Henrietta Pratchett runs a small boarding house. Her son **William Pratchett** is a regular soldier, serving with the Royal Garrison Artillery. He will die, aged 35, of wounds suffered in the Somme area of the Western Front on 30 September 1918.



New Walk Villa today

At the end of Back Street is Old Rectory House (now Hemingford Grey House). Here lives Major (later Colonel) A F Watt of the Yorkshire Hussars, Yeomanry Territorial Force; in August 1915 he will be appointed ADC to Field Marshal Sir John French, Commander of the British Expeditionary Force from the outbreak of war until his replacement in December 1915 by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig. In March 1916, it will be announced that the President of the French Republic has, with the permission of King George V, conferred the decoration of Croix de Chevalier on Major Watt.

You turn along Church Lane and find some small cottages (now demolished) in front of the Maltings. The Jakins live in Miller's Cottage; father Joseph is a rag and bone man and also sells newspapers. He and wife Julia have three children, the middle of whom is George, a 20-year-old farm labourer. **George Jakins** will volunteer, joining the Suffolks, and will die of his wounds in Belgium on 20 December 1915.

At the end of Church Lane, you turn right towards the river. Immediately on your right-hand side are five cottages in Dharwar Terrace. The last one is Number 5, home to William and Sarah Favell, their five children and Mr Favell's 86-year-old father. Son George is 16 and will also join the Suffolks. **George Favell** will be killed in action on 10 May 1917. On 1 June 1917, the Hunts Post will report as follows:

Sorrow At Hemingford

PTE GEORGE FAVELL, son of Mrs. Wm. Favell, of Hemingford Grey, has met a soldier's death on the field of war. He joined the Suffolks at the start of hostilities when he was only 16½ years of age. He was invalided home about a year ago with shell shock and loss of speech from which he recovered in three or four months, and was again sent out. The sad news came on Saturday last from the War Office that he was killed on the 10th May. The sympathy of everyone who knew him is with his mother (a widow) and family. A memorial service was held on Tuesday evening, the Church being nearly full. Afterwards a dumb peal was rung by ringers from both villages.



5 Dharwar Terrace, now 55 High Street

Across the road are four houses called the Pavement. Tragedy strikes two houses here. The Doo family (John is another retired PC) have two sons, Tom and Fred, who will join up. Tom will be taken prisoner and held in Germany but Fred Doo, a driver in the Royal Army Service Corps, will die on 11 November 1916. The Hunts Post will report his funeral on 24 November 1916:

Soldier's Funeral at Hemingford

Funeral of Fred J Doo, son of Mr and Mrs John Doo of Hemingford Grey, took place in the village cemetery on Thursday afternoon, 16 November, with every sign of sorrow and respect, most of the houses having blinds drawn. The young soldier, a smart fellow, joined as a driver in the Army Service Corps. He fell sick after inoculation and, following months of illness, passed away at St Mary's Hospital Worthing on 11 November from cellulitis of neck, septicaemia and heart failure. Deceased was 24 years of age and served his apprenticeship with Messrs Bryant and Bryant's boot and shoe establishment in St Ives. Afterwards, he was in a situation at Palmer's Green, from where he enlisted. The body was conveyed by rail from Worthing to Hemingford Grey.

Next door (now 70 High Street) is home to the Briars family. Their son **William Briars** lives in London, where he works as a barman in the City. In June 1912, he married Connie Ward and they have a child, Edward, born in June 1914.

They will have two more children, Edith May born in June 1915 and Dudley William in September 1916. In November 1915, however, William will respond to Lord Kitchener's call and enlist in the King's Royal Rifle Corps. He will be killed in



Part of The Pavement, now 68 and 70 High Street

action in Belgium on 18 April 1918, aged 29. When his Army records are finalised in July 1919, Connie is living in Wolverton, Bucks, and her three children are in the National Children's Home in City Road, London.



*One of Goodwin Cottages, now 48 High Street,
home of William Fordham in 1914*

On a less sombre note, you spot the Fordham family home in Goodwin Cottages in the High Street (now 48 High Street). Son Bill is a 21-year-old stableman but in June 1916 he will be Sergeant William Fordham, attached to the Royal Horse Artillery and awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for Bravery on the Field of Battle. As a result, the children of his old school in Hemingford Grey will be given a half-day's holiday.

Sergeant Fordham's citation reads as follows:

For conspicuous gallantry. When his gun had been much damaged and he himself wounded and unable to walk, he insisted on remaining in charge of the gun till it was towed away. The whole gun detachment had been wounded.

William's brother George is pictured here in uniform in St James' Churchyard with the village bell ringers, namely John Briars (father of William Briars, killed in 1918), John Mayhew Briars, George Levitt and Walter Favell.



Seventeen men are commemorated on the brass plaque in St James' Church Hemingford Grey, four of whom have yet to be mentioned.

Arthur Ernest Hull

Arthur was born in Godmanchester and was a regular soldier in the Bedfordshire Regiment. Just before the outbreak of war, he married Sarah Watson in St Ives. Sarah lived with her family in the High Street, Hemingford Abbots. Arthur, aged 28, was killed in action in France on 28 August 1914, just 24 days after war was declared and a mere seven days after the first British death following enemy action. By the time that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission was undertaking its registration work in the early 1920s, Sarah had remarried and it was presumably she who decided that her late husband should be commemorated in St James' Church.

John Victor Mulley

John was born in Ipswich but enlisted in Huntingdon. He was serving with the Suffolk Regiment when he was killed in action in France on 16 September 1916. We have been unable to find anything that links him to Hemingford Grey.

Frank Leslie Stokes Oliver

Frank was born in Essex but was living in Cambridge in the early 1900s. He enlisted in Huntingdon and was serving with the East Surrey Regiment when he died of his wounds at home, probably in Christchurch Hampshire, on 2 November 1918. He was 27. He is buried in Hemingford Grey cemetery. By the time the CWGC registered his death, his widow had remarried and was living at 32 Victoria Terrace.

Herbert Frederick Walker

Jack Walker was born in Houghton and his family farmed at Houghton Hill, though they appear to have had strong links with Hemingford Grey. He was serving with the Machine Gun Corps (Cavalry) when he was fatally wounded on 10 November 1918, the day before the war ended. He died on 1 December 1918 aged 25. On 13 December 1918, the Hunts Post reported his death as follows:

Private Herbert Frederick Walker, better known as Jack, fourth son of Mr and Mrs G Walker of Hemingford Grey, died on 1 December at No 18 General Hospital in France at the age of 25. He joined the Bedfordshire Yeomanry in October 1914, went to France in June 1915 and was transferred to the Machine Gun Corps (Cavalry). He was wounded on 10 November 1918 in the right and left shoulders and developed bronchial pneumonia. He was buried at Etaples in a military cemetery and there will be a memorial service in Hemingford Grey Church on Sunday evening 15 December 1918.

How utterly devastated his family must have been - he survived over four years of service only to be fatally wounded on the day before the Armistice was signed.



Hemingford Abbots and its Fighting Men, 1914-18

You decide to carry on along the river until you come into Hemingford Abbots. On the High Street near Watts Lane, you see the house of local farmer, Thomas King and his wife Rose. Unusually, they have just the one child, a son, who is 15. **Harry King** will enlist in Bedford and be killed in action in France, serving with the Royal West Surrey Regiment on 1 September 1918.



The King family home, Cross Keys, Hemingford Abbots

Walking into the centre of the village, past the Wheatsheaf public house, you pause near the Reading Room (probably opposite the current Village Hall) at the house of William Burbage, a 74-year-old retired farm labourer. Living with him is his nephew, **Harry Hayes**, aged 23 and also a farm labourer. He will join the Bedfordshire Regiment, be promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal and be awarded the Military Medal, introduced in March 1916 for acts of bravery in the field. He will die of his wounds on the Somme on 13 October 1916.

Nearby, in Sunnyside, opposite the Axe and Compass, live Walter Allen, a local builder, and his family. Walter and Mary have four sons - Charles, Edward, George and William - who are all involved in the business. Charles will be exempted from military service to continue working in the family business, but his



William Allen

three brothers will all serve. The youngest, **William Allen**, has already joined the Bedfordshire Regiment Territorials in 1913 and will find himself transferred to the Hunts Cyclist Battalion on the outbreak of war. He will subsequently be transferred to 63 Royal Naval Division, serving in Nelson Battalion at Passchendaele. He will end up in hospital with trench fever and when he comes out he finds that most of his battalion have been wiped out. He joins Hawke Battalion and in 1918 is badly wounded and repatriated. He is still in hospital when the Armistice is signed. Thirty years later, a piece of shrapnel works its way down his leg and is removed by a doctor (William's granddaughter still has the shrapnel).

William's son and his wife still live next door to Sunnyside.

Close to the Allens live the Hart family. Charles is a widower shepherd with two sons and a daughter. Charles junior is 18 and Tom 16; both are domestic gardeners and both will serve in France. Charles will join the Hunts Cyclist Battalion as soon as war breaks out and will be badly wounded, and discharged from military service in 1918. **Tom Hart** will be killed in action in the Somme area of France on 21 March 1918, serving with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.



Sunnyside today



Charles Hart



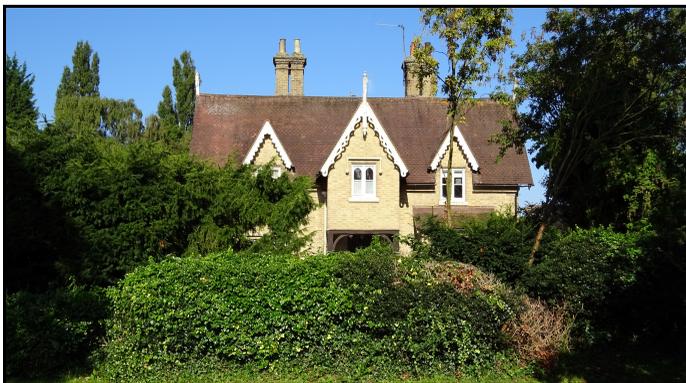
Tom Hart



Charles Hart, front row right

On the corner of High Street and Rideaway stands the Cedars, home to Thomas and Florence Ivatt. Their son, **Harold Ivatt**, was educated at King's School Ely and is employed as a mining engineer in the Cannock Chase coalfield. He was commissioned in the South Staffs Territorials in 1912 and will be mobilised with his battalion on the day war breaks out. Deployed to France in April 1915, Harold will be attached to the 137th Brigade Mining Section as a result of his experience working underground. He will then be posted to Egypt, but will soon return to

France, heroically leading his company at the taking of the Hohenzollern Redoubt. He will be awarded the Military Cross for *great bravery in rescuing his men from a burning mine*, being decorated by the King at Buckingham Palace in the Birthday Honours Investiture, 1916. However, he will spend time in hospital in May 1916. At the end of July 1916, he will be sent to England suffering from further ill health, be assessed as being fit for light duties only and be struck off the strength of his battalion. Nevertheless, he will be promoted to Captain in August 1916 and finally return to the South Staffs in June 1917. On 21 May 1918, while his battalion is fighting in the Essars sector, Harold and his two subalterns will be killed instantly by a shell which explodes in the headquarters dugout. Major General Thwaites (GOC 46th Division) writes: *his loss is deeply regretted by me and his battalion; we can ill spare valuable young officers of his calibre now.*



The Cedars today



Commander Locker Lampson

Carrying on along Rideaway, you come to Hemingford Park Lodge, home of William and Elizabeth Locke and their three children. Son **Willie Locke** is 20 and works for Murketts. As part of his duties there, he has driven Oliver Locker Lampson, the MP for Ramsey. In December 1914, Locker Lampson, who is a friend of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, will receive a commission in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and personally fund the establishment of an armoured car squadron of the Royal Naval Air Service. Willie will join this squadron and serve in an unoccupied portion of Belgium for most of 1915. By the end of that year, trench warfare will mean there is no scope for armoured cars on the Western Front and the Admiralty will disband most of its armoured car squadrons.

As a gesture of goodwill to the Russians, however, three squadrons of armoured cars, known as the Russian Armoured Car Division and including Willie Locke in their complement, will be sent by ship to Murmansk. Commander Locker Lampson will command the force. By 1917, the armoured cars will be fighting in what is now Ukraine and Willie will already have been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for bravery. Sadly, on 13 July 1917, the Hunts Post reports:

Chief Petty Officer Locke, who has died of wounds received whilst fighting with Oliver Locker Lampson's Armoured Car Squadrons in Roumania, on July 1st, was the son of Mr and Mrs Locke, of Hemingford Abbots Park Lodge. As a lad, he was employed by Mrs Williams at Hemingford Park. Afterwards he worked at the St Ives Post Office, and subsequently for Messrs Murkett, motor engineers, of Huntingdon and Peterborough. Deceased joined the Squadron on its formation and had seen a good deal of service, rising by merit to the rank of Chief Petty Officer. A memorial service is to be held this (Thursday) evening at Hemingford Abbots Church.



Armoured Car



Hemingford Park Lodge

Willie was with a party of men manning a Maxim machine gun in the trenches when a shell hit the entrance to the dug-out where they were sitting. He died overnight from his wounds. Locker Lampson wrote to Mr and Mrs Locke and concluded: *he fell as a soldier should, fighting for his country and a noble cause, and he leaves behind a fine record of devoted duty.*

Willie will posthumously be awarded the Russian St George's Cross. He is commemorated on the tombstone of his grandfather, James Haynes, in Hemingford Abbots churchyard with the following lines:

*Sleep on dear boy in your hero's grave
A grave we may never see
But as long as life and memory last
We will remember thee.*

Going back into the High Street, you stop near the school at the house of the Saunders family. Harry and Elizabeth have nine children, two of whom will join the Army. **Herbert Saunders** is a 22-year-old farm labourer and Ernest, 18, an errand boy. On 25 May 1917, the Hunts Post reports:

Pte Saunders, of Hemingford, dies of wounds

Pte H G Saunders, Manchester Regiment, son of Mr H Saunders of Hemingford Abbots, has died of wounds received in action in France on May 10th, at the age of 25. A letter received from a comrade states that the deceased soldier had done his duty bravely and was well loved by all the men of his platoon, who wished to express their deep sympathy to his friends. A younger son, Pte E W Saunders, Royal Berkshires, was wounded last November, and had his right arm amputated. He is now at home on leave.

Continuing into Common Lane, you see the Boot and Slipper public house. George Lilley is a farm labourer but runs the pub in his spare time with his wife. Son **Fred Lilley** is 17 and works at Marshalls Brewery in Huntingdon. He will volunteer at the outbreak of war, joining the Hunts Cyclist Battalion, but will then transfer to the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. On 24 September 1916, he will die of leg wounds on the Somme, having been in France for only two months. Elder brother William will serve with the Bedfordshire Regiment.



The Boot and Slipper today

As you leave the village, you spot the home of Isaac Favel and his family. Isaac's wife is Constance and her brother **James Clifton** lives with them. He is 19 and a hay cutter and presser. In October 1915, he will volunteer along with his workmates and join the Bedfordshire Regiment. He will serve as a machine gunner in France, Belgium and Italy. In September 1916 he will be wounded and

invalided back to the field hospital but once recovered he will return on the front line. Later in the campaign he will have his appendix removed in the trench hospital and be cared for by local Belgian people. Less than six weeks later he will be declared fit and returned to action. His proudest moment will be in 1918, when he will destroy two German machine gun nests, which have pinned down his battalion and delayed their advance. He will be awarded the Military Medal for his bravery in this action.

Jim will later be awarded the Medaille Commemorative des Batailles de la Somme and the freedom of the City of Ypres; the medal will finally arrive in 1970 as the Belgian authorities cannot trace him for over 50 years, despite the fact that he will visit Ypres and the battlefields every year after the end of the war. He will sign his name in the Visitors' Book at the Menin Gate 56 times and on his final visit in 1969 he will proudly lead the Veterans March in Ypres.

Jim will live the rest of his life as a farmer in Hemingford Grey and die in 1984 aged 89. Jim's son still lives in Hemingford Grey.



For Jim, as for many men who serve, the war will remain the central experience of his life and everything that follows will seem to be an anti-climax; the ordinary routine of life must have appeared dull and restrictive after the rigours of war.

Peace at Last

The signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918 saw the conclusion of the fighting in 'the war to end all wars'. On 15 November, the Hunts Post reported great rejoicing in town and village, with St Ives a mass of colour. *The inhabitants of St Ives received the news of the armistice joyfully, and almost simultaneously the streets of the town were one mass of colour – flags and bunting. The joy bells of Hemingford Grey could be heard. At night, the youngsters celebrated the event by a mass of fireworks, and kept the game alive as long as the stock of Mr Hill lasted.*

However, the war was not finally over until the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919. Sunday 6 July was appointed by Royal Proclamation as the Day of Thanksgiving on the occasion of the Signing of the Peace. Special services were held throughout the day at the Hemingfords' churches and these were very well attended. At St Margaret's, the collection at the evening service, which amounted to £9-15s, was given to augment the sum required for a memorial which the parents of the fallen soldiers wished to place in the church.

Saturday 17 July was declared the official holiday. In Hemingford Grey, every home was decorated and there were sports for servicemen and sports and tea for 120 children. In Hemingford Abbots, a house-to-house collection had been made to fund a sports and tea for the children and to extend the sports to the adults if the funds allowed it. In the event, £20 was collected and the Parish Magazine reported that *the committees provided a most excellent programme of sports for both adults and children and a splendid tea for the latter.* The ringers rang a peal on the church bells during the morning and Mrs Williams kindly allowed the sports and tea to be held on the Hemingford Park cricket ground and in the pavilion. *Everything possible was done to make a memorable and happy day before all else for the children, and the amicable and united efforts of all undoubtedly extended that happiness to everyone who was able to be present.*

From these two small villages, nearly 200 young men served King and Country; of those, many suffered terrible injuries, both physical and mental, and 24 made the ultimate sacrifice. The villagers were proud of their men and today Rolls of Honour can be seen in St Margaret's Church Hemingford Abbots and the Reading Room in Hemingford Grey. Plaques to those who died are displayed in St Margaret's Church Hemingford Abbots and in St James' Church Hemingford Grey. The final words should perhaps be left to Drummer Arthur Girling. He lived with his parents in Mill Lane, Hemingford Grey and was 18 years of age when he volunteered. In October 1915, Arthur sent a poem to the Vicar of Hemingford Grey, which embodied the hope and optimism of these young men. It started:

*We think of the village once dear to us all,
As we are doing our bit day by day,
And remember the time when we answered the call
Of duty that hailed us away.*

*When the Call of the Nation came floating along,
The boys of old Hemingford Grey were willing
To leave their dear homes with a smile and a song,
To serve for their keep and a shilling.*

A century on, we should remember and respect the sacrifices made by the whole community and acknowledge that the Great War, more than any other event, was the one that forged modern Britain.

Timelines

Year	World War 1 Timeline	Hemingford Grey Timeline	Hemingford Abbots Timeline
1914	<p>4 August - UK declares war on Germany</p> <p>7 August – Lord Kitchener calls for volunteers for the New Army</p> <p>5 September – first Battle of the Marne begins. Trench warfare as soldiers dig in</p> <p>19 October – first Battle of Ypres begins</p>	<p>26 August – Arthur Hull KIA in France</p> <p>16 November – William Hookham KIA in Belgium</p>	
1915	<p>19 February – Dardanelles campaign begins</p> <p>22 April – second Battle of Ypres begins</p> <p>7 May – the Lusitania is sunk</p>	<p>31 January – John Warrington KIA in Belgium</p> <p>20 December – George Jakins DOW in Belgium</p>	
1916	<p>21 February – Battle of Verdun begins</p> <p>2 March – conscription introduced in the UK</p> <p>31 May – Battle of Jutland, the major naval battle of the war, begins</p> <p>1 July – Battle of the Somme begins</p>	<p>16 September – John Mulley KIA in France</p> <p>11 November – Frederick Doo DOW in Worthing</p>	<p>24 September - Frederick Lilley DOW in France</p> <p>13 October – Harry Hayes DOW in France</p>
1917	<p>15 March – Tsar Nicholas II abdicates</p> <p>6 April – the US declares war on Germany</p> <p>31 July – third Battle of Ypres begins</p>	<p>10 May – George Favell KIA in France</p> <p>10 June – Jack Knights KIA in France</p> <p>14 July – Arthur Stocker DOW in Belgium</p> <p>10 November – Ronald Harrison KIA in Palestine</p>	<p>10 May – Herbert Saunders DOW in France</p> <p>1 July – Willie Locke DOW in Galicia</p>

Year	World War 1 Timeline	Hemingford Grey Timeline	Hemingford Abbots Timeline
1918	<p>21 March – Germany launches the Spring Offensive</p> <p>15 July – second Battle of the Marne begins</p> <p>9 November – Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates and flees Germany</p> <p>11 November – Armistice signed</p>	<p>18 April – William Briars KIA in France</p> <p>31 May – Joseph Stocker KIA in France</p> <p>30 September – William Pratchett DOW in France</p> <p>6 November – Sydney Avory KIA in France</p> <p>11 November - Frank Oliver DOW in Hampshire</p> <p>1 December – Herbert Walker DOW in France</p>	<p>21 March – Tom Hart KIA in France</p> <p>21 May – Harold Ivatt KIA in France</p> <p>1 September – Harry King KIA in France</p>
1919	<p>28 June – Treaty of Versailles officially ends World War 1</p>		
1920		<p>29 February – James Avory DOW at home</p>	

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All the residents of Hemingford Abbots and Hemingford Grey

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KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING

The Hemingfords 1914-1918

In mid-2013, Theatre Matters, a Cambridge-based performance company, approached the Hemingfords' Local History Society (HEMLOCS) about a joint venture to commemorate the outbreak of the First World War. In November 2014, HEMLOCS mounted a display in St Margaret's Church Hemingford Abbots, illustrating the effect of the war on the Hemingfords; this was followed by Theatre Matters' performance of a newly devised stage production using the poetry and music of the era. This booklet is designed to show the reader what life was like in the villages during the war and what fate had in store for some of its young men.

More information and material can be found on the HEMLOCS website, www.hemlocs.co.uk.

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