

## MAYFIELD AND THE GREAT WAR - NO. 39 - JUNE 2017

On the Western Front the British Army attempted to over run a decisive German strongpoint at Messines Ridge. Heavy artillery bombardment, which had been ongoing since the 21st May, led to the main British attack on the 7th June. Huge underground mine explosions began just before dawn beneath German positions. At 7am the second stage of the assault began with an advance of troops. In one day this well planned offensive by Canadian/British forces captured Messines Ridge and paved the way for the later Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). The first days fighting resulted in 17,000 British casualties and 25,000 German casualties.

On the 25th June the first American troops arrived in France to large enthusiastic crowds. By the end of 1917 180,000 American troops would be on the Western Front.

On the 13th June Central London was attacked in daylight hours by German Gotha bombers, resulting in over 160 dead and 400 injured. No German aircraft were destroyed in the attack, which led to considerable effort in strengthening British air defences. The success of these defences was evidenced by the German attacks switching to night time raids. A further sign of learning from adversity was the success indicated by the recently introduced naval convoy system. A dramatic decrease in losses was clear.

The 5th (Cinque Ports) Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment spent the month of June in Haplincourt, France, less than 15km away from Thiepval. As a pioneer regiment their tasks through the month were concerned with fortifying trench lines and constructing dugouts.

On the national front much effort and energy was devoted to persuading the general public to reduce the consumption and waste of essential foodstuffs. Alongside these efforts, various government agencies were active in identifying, and bringing into productive use, farm land which had remained fallow for any number of reasons. An important thread in this was the work of the National Service Agency which had the task of finding the work force to help increase land production. One of the schemes promoted the use of older school children to help on farms during school holidays. The Royal Family had already announced the royal household were on strict rations and newspapers helped to promote the idea of the general public joining the 'Royal Pledge'.

In another royal initiative The King ordered members of the Royal Family to change their German titles. Saxe-Coburg-Gotha becoming Windsor and Battenberg becoming Mountbatten.

Of political note Winston Churchill returned to the Government as Chairman of the Air Board.

Locally, the newspapers found various ways around the censorship rules in identifying Folkestone as having been the target of a bombing raid. Subsequently newspapers carried formal instructions to readers on how to react to air raids and advice on how to recognise official siren warnings of imminent/cessation of air raids.

Early in June the Mayfield Parish Council considered a letter, from the Board of Agriculture, requesting the formation of a Food Production Society to encourage cottagers and allotment holders to keep pigs, poultry, rabbits etc and instruct them in cropping their allotments. This request, together with a suggestion to form a rat and sparrow club (to contain vermin), was left over for future meetings.

A very successful 'Gifts Sale' on the 6th June at Mayfield in support of the Red Cross Fund made in excess of £600.00. An amazing sum that today would amount to tens of thousands of pounds. A full account of this astonishing fund raising can be read on P7 Kent & Sussex Courier (K&SC) 8/6/17.

It was reported by the Crowborough Water Company that the recent crop of mint at the Mayfield sewage farm was coming up badly in places and had in part to be ploughed. It was proposed to plant cabbage on it.

The Uckfield Rural Military Tribunal heard an application from a Mr Chandler, farmer, on behalf of his employee J Bishop of Scotsford Cottage, Mayfield. Mr Chandler said his farm was 235 acres, 163 being grass. He has 6 horses at work, and his other stock included 45 cows/heifers. His total staff consisted of 10 persons, some of whom were boys and others who were not strong. 120 acres of grass needed to be cut for hay. Prior to his taking over the farm the land had not been properly cultivated for many years and a great deal of labour was needed to recover it. Bishop also had a small holding of 12 acres. 6 months exemption was granted, conditional on Bishop remaining in his current occupation.

The application of Mr A Fenner aged 32, a gardener employed by Mr R G Ribon at Mayfield was disallowed.

The K&SC 15/6/17 P6 reported. *'WAR NOTES. Corp Alfred Luck, MGS, son of Mr A Luck, Victoria Road, Mayfield is home on 28 days leave from the front. He joined the Guards Regiment 13 years ago and was*

*called up with the Reserve on the outbreak of war, and went to France with the first Expeditionary Force and was wounded in the foot about 18 months ago.*

*Pte Frank Hazlewood, West Surrey Regiment was wounded on May 11th and is now in hospital at Exeter. He went to France in the early days of the war and has been in several engagements.'*

*The K&SC 29/6/17 P6 reported: 'Lt W E Burchell son of Mr & Mrs Burchell of the Star Hotel, is in hospital at Portsmouth suffering from rheumatic fever.*

*Corpl George Bowyer, Royal Sussex Regiment, has had 10 days leave from the Summerdown Convalescent Camp having been ill from rheumatic fever contracted at the Front. He joined the Army in February 1916 and went to France in the Autumn, and was wounded in the leg in the November. He was previously Coachman at Aylwins.*

*Shoe-Smith T Barrow RFA has had 7 days leave from hospital having been suffering from malaria fever. He was previously invalided home from Salonika with the same complaint.*

*WOUNDED: Pte Jack Hosman son of Mr & Mrs Hosman, Coggins Mill is reported wounded in the recent fighting.*

*Pte Tich Groombridge, West Kent Regiment, of Pound Hill Cottages, Fletching St is reported wounded and in hospital in Birmingham.'*

There are no names recorded on the Mayfield or Five Ashes War Memorials for June 1917.

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