

July/August 1914

Even in July 1914, it seems that life in Tatsfield continued unchanged. One villager was fined £1 for attacking her neighbour with a poker; a call for a speed limit had come to nothing; newly-planted trees needed replacing and there was talk of pond improvements and two new seats for Westmore Green.



But then, in the last days of July, two air incidents provided a foretaste of events to come. On the 23rd, a naval balloon approached Tatsfield from Caterham but got into trouble over Oxted and came down at Broomlands Farm. Then, a day or two later, six aircraft from the Royal Navy Flying School were flying towards Tatsfield when one of them developed engine trouble and came down with its nose blocking the Approach Road. The Westerham Herald was pleased to report that the pilot was able to free himself and was helped by Jim Beagley who had been working in a field nearby.

War came in August but it merited under 20 lines in the Surrey Mirror. Twice as much coverage was given to the Gardening Society show. But as the Mirror said: *"The war is, of course, on everyone's lips. It is noteworthy that Tatsfield has contributed many young men and lads to the Army and Navy. A dramatic episode occurred towards the close of the Gardening Society's Show festivities on Monday evening. Miss Tindall, a lady visitor (a splendid reciter), gave a fine rendering of Kipling's 'Recessional'. The applause which followed was broken by the audience simultaneously breaking into the National Anthem and the cheers for the King which followed were probably as hearty as any that ever greeted the name of His Majesty."*

The outbreak of war was the last substantive item on the agenda for the parish council's August meeting. The Lord Lieutenant of Surrey had written requesting the setting up of 'War Fund Committees' across the county. The minutes record that Tatsfield had lost no time and had already formed such a committee! In last month's magazine, I wrote about the Tollemache grave in Tatsfield churchyard. Our archives have no mention of the family apart from that grave. Rosemary Brown recalls having been told that the family once lived in Ricketts Hill Road. Does anyone else have any family memories handed down from 100 years ago that could shed more light on the Tollemache connection?

September 1914



A month after war had been declared, it seems to have had little impact on Tatsfield.

The only recorded event for September 1914 was the auctioning of the contents and livestock of Botley Hill Farm. Fifty cattle of various breeds, eight carthorses and a multitude of farm implements, household furniture and effects were up for sale.

As summer ended, the Times newspaper had reported that some British citizens who had been in Germany when war was declared had been able to return to England safely. However, one group of visitors included several who were of *'an age capable of bearing arms'* and they had been detained. Among them was *'Mr Charles Leveson Gower, J.P., Squire of Titsey'*. He and others were to be *'removed to a fortress and placed on ordinary prison fare'*.

He and his companions were among the first group of visitors to each country whose names would appear on lists of prisoners of war to be exchanged between Britain and Germany.

Meanwhile, Tatsfielders were volunteering for the front, and in the months to come, there would be news of casualties. The names of Tatsfield men who died in the First World War are now to be seen at the Aileen McHugo Building.



October 1914

By October 1914, the war was two months old. Many thousands of troops had been mobilised. There was fighting not only in Europe but in Africa and the Far East too. At home there was concern about the need to make London less vulnerable to attack from the air. The closeness of the fighting to southeast England was underlined by the fact that in that month the Westerham Herald started a '*Nouvelles du Jour*' column bringing news from home for French-speaking wounded Belgian soldiers who were being treated at Limsfield.

Nevertheless, the routine peacetime pre-occupations were still taking their place in daily life. A Tatsfield father was fined five shillings for failing to send his child to school. The parish council was pushing the district council to do something about the '*insanitary*' houses in the parish. The local sanitary inspector had been given a list of such houses several months before the outbreak of war. Despite the war emergency and the departure of so many men for the front the local Medical Officer and the Sanitary Inspector were able to report that all the defects reported had received attention.

November 1914



By November 1914, people were beginning to organise 'comforts from home' for troops on the front across the Channel. The Westerham Herald published a list of Tatsfield people contributing.

At the end of that month's Parish Council meeting, the chairman drew attention to the fact that "*William Young was employed on the roads, he being of age for military service*". Soon after Britain had declared war on Germany in August, it had become obvious that more volunteer recruits were needed. Lord Kitchener's campaign – promoted by his famous "Your Country Needs You" poster – had encouraged many thousands to enlist but they were still not enough.

Who was William Young? He lived at Monks, Tatsfield Green. He was in his mid-twenties and a manual labourer for the rural district council, so he obviously stood out as a potential recruit. He joined a battalion of the Royal West Surrey Regiment which was sent to India eventually to take part in the Third Afghan War. However, Private William Young was later to die while stationed at Lahore – now in Pakistan. Twenty members of his battalion died there in an outbreak of influenza as the war ended.

Meanwhile, in November 1914, the Parish Council had other pre-occupations. It seems that some people were failing to keep their horses tethered when on the greens. As the minutes show, the Rural District Council was threatening to withdraw licences from owners involved.

A photograph of a handwritten letter on aged paper.

A letter stating that the District Council had decided to withdraw all licences from persons who did not keep their horses tethered on the Greens.

And some problems never go away. The lower end of Paynesfield Road – to this day largely unmade – was in such a poor state one hundred years ago that it was suggested that the local 'War Committee' might be able to help!

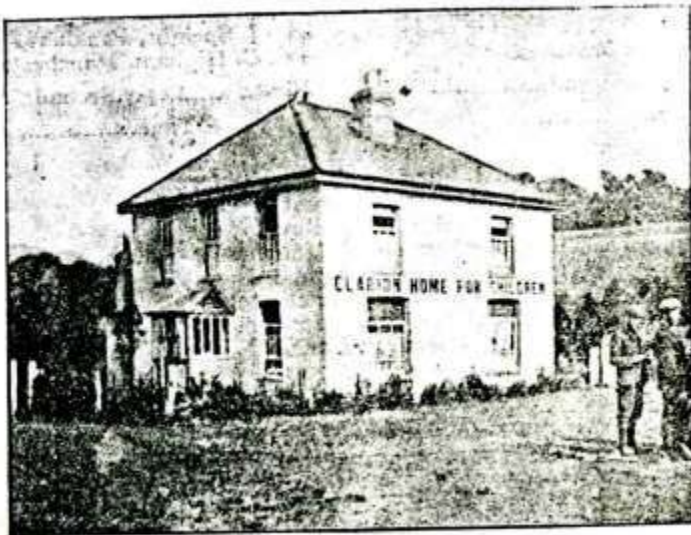
December 1914



Christmas 1914 has gone down in history as the Christmas when an impromptu football match was played between the trenches between British and German soldiers. It was the Christmas by which the war would be over, according to optimists in the summer of that year. This was however not to be.

In Tatsfield however, the recurring problem of insanitary houses came to the fore once again. This time 'closing orders' were issued by the local Medical Officer of Health in respect of six cottages in the centre of the village. These orders prohibited the use of the premises for human habitation until improvements had been made.

The final mention in our archives from 1914 refers to the Clarion Home for Children. Run by Mrs Mary Morris from a house in Ninehams Road, this was one of a chain of 'Cinderella Clubs' – summer holiday homes for children where youngsters could spend a couple of weeks in the countryside.



TATSFIELD HOUSE



January 1915

Despite the optimism of a few months before, the war was not 'over by *Christmas*'. As 1914 ended, Turkey had just joined in on the side of Germany, with Britain, France and Russia supported by Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro and Japan. Soon, this alliance was to be joined by Italy, but Bulgaria was to ally itself with Germany.

The impact of the war on Tatsfield still appeared to be relatively light. Volunteers had gone to the front, but local newspapers were yet to begin quoting from their letters home and their accounts of conditions in the front line.

But when education officials met early in the New Year, they noted that school attendances in Surrey had been down during the previous term, largely as a side-effect of the general dislocation caused by the war. As more and more men had volunteered to fight, there was an even greater need for extra pairs of hands on the land. The autumn term had started earlier in 1914 at a time when many children were still busy hop picking, so many children started the term late.

Meanwhile the housing problem had not gone away. As reported almost monthly, the Local Government Board was calling for urgent action to improve the condition of houses which were in very poor state, overcrowded and unfit for habitation. Many of those were in Tatsfield.



February 1915

In February 1915, the Surrey Mirror carried news of one of the Ringer family who had emigrated to New Zealand before the war. The family ran general stores in this part of Surrey. Walter Ringer's shop was in Red House Road. The young man who had gone out to New Zealand wrote to his mother in Warlingham saying how much he would want to help the war effort. He had heard from Tatsfield that '*no Zeppelins have been over yet*' and remarked that this could not be a happy time for anyone who loved their country.

The spectre of poverty was never far from the lives of Tatsfield people in 1915. The local War Distress Committee had been approached and found that it had been justified in making a grant to at least one Tatsfield family.

As part of the local war effort, Doctor Harry Hoffman (he lived at Tatsfield Lodge) started running a course of Red Cross lectures to help villagers prepare themselves to provide first aid to casualties that might occur in Tatsfield as the war progressed.



March 1015

As the first winter of the war came to an end, there was no news – good or bad – in the local newspapers from any Tatsfield men at the front.

The war had not helped efforts to improve living conditions for those at home. The 'insanitary housing' question came up again and again, with apparently little progress being made to deal with it. In the same month three people were taken to court for failing to pay their rates. One summons was upheld but two households were excused because of the destitute state of the family.

With so many men volunteering for the front, there was another side to the coin. There were 'staff shortages' at home and at least one better-off Tatsfield resident placed an advertisement in the Surrey Mirror for a desperately-needed manservant.

The paper also reported how the war had affected the local authorities. Various improvements to public facilities in Tatsfield had been stopped from going ahead. Works to improve Clarks Lane were in abeyance but there was talk of a "*confident hope of all for victory and lasting peace*".

Sadly, this was a far-off hope and in the following month, the true reality of war was to be brought home to one Tatsfield family.

April 1915

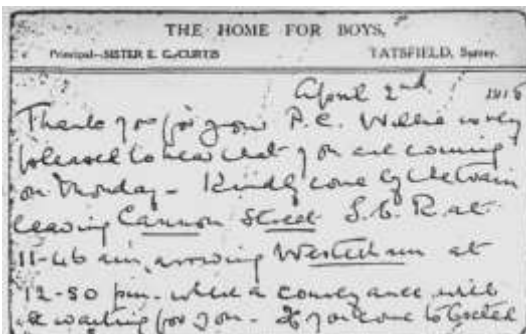


April 1915 brought news of the first serving soldier from Tatsfield to die during the First World War and what is believed to be the village's first military funeral. He was 32-year-old Arthur Martin. Arthur's parents had moved to Emily (now Westmore) Road in the 1890s. Arthur was born in Westerham in 1883 and was a carpenter. By 1915 he was living with his wife Beatrice and their two children at 4 Grove Villas in the centre of the village. They had been married for just over five years.

Sapper Martin had joined the Royal Engineers at Guildford in February 1915, but he contracted scarlet fever soon afterwards. The Westerham Herald reported that complications followed and although recovery seemed possible and a return home planned, a relapse occurred and he died in the Military Isolation Hospital in Aldershot on 3rd April 1915. This was decades before antibiotics were available to combat such diseases.

Sapper Martin's body was borne on a gun carriage from his home to the churchyard, where it was transferred to the shoulders of men of his unit. The pathway through the churchyard was lined by troops and local Boy Scouts and at the conclusion of the service a firing party fired volleys over the grave and buglers played the Last Post.

His war grave can be seen in the churchyard next to the path to the Millennium Hall and his death is recorded on the memorial plaque inside St Mary's Church. Four more men from Tatsfield were to die while serving in the armed forces before the end of the year.



Also in the archives from April 1915 is a postcard sent from 'The Home for Boys', run by 'Sister Curtis' at the Chestnuts in Ninehams Road. A century ago, the Tatsfield air was believed to be beneficial to sufferers from tuberculosis and other lung complaints. With this card, Miss Curtis confirms that arrangements have been made to

pick up parents from Westerham Station for their visit to their son.



May 1915

Last month, we remembered the first serving soldier from Tatsfield to die during the First World War. Tatsfield's second casualty was to be Alfred Honey, an agricultural labourer who was a private in the Royal West Surrey Regiment. He died on 16th May 1915.

Private Honey was one of more than 13,000 British soldiers who took part in some of the fiercest fighting on the Western Front near Lille during the first year of the war and who have no known grave. Born in Oxfordshire in 1883, he was the son of James and Emma Honey, who had moved to Pond Cottages, Westmore Green in 1893. Later in 1915 his brother William, was seriously wounded and the next year another brother, Sergeant James Honey, was gassed. When his father died at the age of 87 in 1947, the Sevenoaks Chronicle reported that he had lost two sons in the First World War.

At home, two Tatsfield men had found their way into the local newspaper. A man living in Goatsfield Road was acquitted of stealing three chickens at Beddlestead Farm. Another, a general dealer from Emily (now Westmore) Road, died in Brixton Prison. He had been taken there for failing to settle a bill for rates on a piece of land he owned in the village. On the way to prison he complained about being unwell, was placed in the prison hospital shortly after admission but died four days later from chronic heart disease.

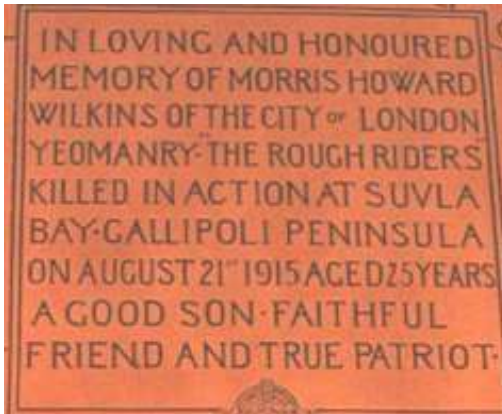
June 1915

In the summer of 1915 newspaper reports of the war brought news of the early stages of the Dardanelles campaign Against Germany's ally, Turkey. However, for Tatsfield readers it seemed that there was little to report from abroad. There were other events at home that caught the attention of the editor of the Westerham Herald.

In the middle of the month, fire had destroyed Forge Cottage in Paynesfield Road, the house of the Foster family, who had moved to Tatsfield from Battersea in the early 1900s. In the 1911 census James Foster, then 35, described himself as a '*walking foreman in a candle factory*'. He and his wife, Emma, whom he had married in 1900, had seven children, four of them born in Tatsfield. There was no indication of any casualties in the fire and there is no further reference in the archives.

Other local newspaper coverage included the sad story of a 19-month-old child who was found dead in the well at the back of his parents' house. The inquest – held at the 'Ship' – heard that this was not the first time that such a thing had happened in Tatsfield. The coroner said he had already written to the District Council about such dangerous wells in Tatsfield. He said this one was the most dangerous he had ever seen – an open well nine feet deep just outside the back door and the only protection an old tea-tray with a stone on top.

Some weeks before, two Tatsfield men had also found their way into the local newspaper. A man living in Goatsfield Road was acquitted of stealing three chickens at Beddlestead Farm. Another, a general dealer from Emily (now Westmore) Road, died in Brixton Prison. He had been taken there for failing to settle a bill for rates on a piece of land he owned in the village. On the way to prison he complained about being unwell. He was placed in the prison hospital shortly after admission but died four days later from chronic heart disease.



July/August 1915

By the summer of 1915, the war had been underway for a year and the deaths of two men from Tatsfield had been recorded, but by the end of that year another six had lost their lives.

News of three casualties came back to Tatsfield in August. As the memorial plaque in St Mary's records, on the 21st, Sergeant Morris Wilkins was killed at Gallipoli.

Private Albert Asling was killed in Flanders on the 24th and Second Lieutenant Geoffrey Strahan was a further Tatsfield casualty of the Gallipoli landings on the 31st.

Sgt Wilkins, a 25-year-old regular soldier in the City of London Yeomanry, was the eldest son of Howard and Ellen Wilkins, who lived at Colegates, then known as Ken Court. A soldier of the Royal Fusiliers, Pte Asling's name appears on the war memorial in St Mary's, as does that of his brother, George, who was killed in the Middle East later in the year. Both were born in Battersea, but where they lived in Tatsfield is not known. 2/Lt Strahan was in his thirties and served in the 10th London Regiment. He was a member of the Royal Society of British Artists. His family lived in a house then called 'the White Gate' in Paynesfield Road.

September 1915



In September 1915 the First World War was well into its second year and building up to the attempt by Britain and its allies to push through the German defences at the Battle of Loos on the outskirts of the northern French city of Lille.

In August, three Tatsfield men had died in the war. In September, the reality of what was

happening was brought closer to the village with the arrival of 150 members of the Army General Reserve from various parts of London. They mustered in the area before being deployed, with a third of a million others, in the defence of the country.

The report of their arrival carried by the Westerham Herald also brought the news that Private John (Jack) Standing of the Royal West Surrey Regiment had written home to reveal that he had been wounded. He was hoping to be in hospital in London *"in a day or two"*. His Tatsfield pal, Private Harry Streets, wrote home to say Jack wasn't worried by his wound: *"In fact, he walked to the hospital smoking, so you may be sure he is all right. We are very sorry to lose him for a time, as he is well liked and popular here. But every cloud has a silver lining, hasn't it? And some of us are almost envying him his chance of seeing his own people so soon. Ask him to drop a line to his pals out here swatting flies"*. Private Standing had been at the front in Flanders for four months.

Meanwhile, life in Tatsfield started to adapt to war conditions. The parish council had received instructions about turning off street lights and advice about what to do about the potential damage by fire to properties as a result of enemy air raids.

On relatively mundane matters, residents in Maesmaur Road and Parkwood Road Had decided against making them up and a caravan became the subject of a 'closing order' because it was uninhabitable.

And it was in 1915 that the Lord of the Manor decided to transfer a plot of land next to the Village Hall to Surrey County Council for provision of a Police House!



October 1915

The war was about to enter its second winter, and there had already been nearly half a million British casualties. On the twelfth, the English nurse, Edith Cavell, was shot in Belgium. The next day, 56 people died in a Zeppelin air raid on

Croydon.

On the fifth of October, a 46-year-old former resident of Chestnut Avenue, Captain Ambrose Hunt, with three of his crew, had died when his merchant ship, the 'Burrsfield' was attacked by an enemy submarine off the Greek coast. His death is commemorated on the plaque in St Mary's Church which was presented by his wife, Catherine.



Less than two weeks later, news came from Flanders of the death of Rifleman John Standing - one of the 35,000 men with no known grave remembered on the Tyne Cot Passchendaele Memorial in Belgium. He was 28. The month also brought news that Arthur Rushen and Joseph Bruce had been wounded in action.

The Westerham Herald reported that Tatsfield had been 'exceptionally favoured with visitors' because the fear of air raids had meant large numbers of holiday-maker who would normally go to the south coast went inland instead. Those who came to Tatsfield were apparently pleasantly surprised to find themselves close to the Surrey Hills and the Garden of England.

Meanwhile, other 'normal' aspects of life continued. Two men appeared at Oxted Police Court charged with stealing lead and brass from Red House Yard. The men were identified by local witnesses. Arthur Tapsell saw them from a roof on which he was working nearby and Hilda Vincent, landlady of the Old Ship, had unwittingly served them bread, cheese and a glass of beer before they made off with their horse and cart.

And finally, on a happier note, the marriage took place of William Neale and Mabel Standing, uniting two well-known Tatsfield families.



December 1915

1915 ended – thankfully - with no further deaths to add to the eight Tatsfield men who had given their lives in the first full year of the war. Tatsfield's male population was only about 400 at the start of the war. By the end, of those of an age suitable for military service nearly a quarter had died and many others had been wounded.

In December 1915, one of those was Harry Payne who, as a young man, has been a 'house boy' at a property in Old Lane. He overcame his wounds, appeared on the Roll of Honour on display in St Mary's church and lived into his late 40s.

Another Tatsfielder was Robert Neal. A 19 year-old whose family ran one of the shops in Emily (now Westmore) Road had emigrated to Canada a few years earlier. Now he was back, serving with the 52nd Regiment of Canada.

Meanwhile, there were still pressing problems not connected with the war. The Village Hall had been built only six years earlier, but for some residents, it had not come up to expectations. Accordingly, on the 11th of December, the Westerham Herald recorded that a campaign had been launched to renovate the building!



January 1916

After the deaths of eight Tatsfield men in 1915, families of Tatsfield men still at the front must have felt apprehensive as the New Year began.

One of those who came home on leave in January 1916 was Bombardier Ernest Lugton of the West Surrey Regiment. He was one of the first of the village lads to join up when war was declared and was sent to the front a few months later. After only a month in the trenches he was wounded and spent eleven weeks in hospital in London. At home with his parents, he was waiting to recover enough to be sent back to the front.

Another other visitor was William Ridgeway, who had emigrated to New Zealand some years earlier and was visiting old friends in Tatsfield before volunteering for service in the armed forces. Another man on leave was Sergeant Walter Forbes of the Royal Field Artillery who joined his parents and his brother serving with the Canadians before going back to the front.

In the middle of January an evening of entertainment was held at the Village Hall during which Tatsfield's volunteers were honoured. The Rector, the Revd P.G.Popham, said he did not suppose there was any village in Surrey that had a bigger proportion of men who had gone to the front or who were ready to go. They were upholding the honour of Tatsfield.

There was special mention of Private Harry Middleton who had lost his right arm in the Dardanelles; of Lance Corporal Harry Streets who had been wounded and sent home; and messages from Gunner Beagle and Leading Royal Navy Signalman G.C. Scott.

Meanwhile, The Board of Agriculture in London had been in touch to remind the Parish Council of the importance of allotments being tended properly by the men who had not joined the armed forces "in view of the present state of the country".

February 1916



Louisa Rushen, of Westerham, the first woman bus conductor to be killed. While walking in front of her bus at Catford she was knocked down by a private motor-car.

February 1916 was to bring the first of a series of blows to the Rushen family. William Rushen had come to Tatsfield from Wiltshire half a century earlier and in 1878 had married Sophia Holman from Limpsfield.

The sad events the family experienced during the First World War began, not at the front in Flanders, but much closer to home – in Catford.

By 1915, there were serious staff shortages on London's buses, trams and Underground as men enlisted for military service. The obvious answer, the employment of women, was not immediately welcomed by either the trade unions or male management.

But in November, the first of the 'women substitutes' was reluctantly agreed by the Underground management and the first 'clippie' was appointed to replace a male conductor on the buses. Within weeks, 22-year-old Louisa Rushen had joined the Thomas Tilling bus company.

Then, after only a few days in her new job, she had finished her duties one Sunday evening and was crossing the road to catch another bus to come home when she was struck by a passing car. The subsequent inquest recorded her death in hospital but exonerated the car driver from blame. Among the mourners at her funeral at the beginning of February were two of her brothers in uniform. By the end of the war, her parents would have to suffer the loss in combat of three of her brothers.

One of her brothers who attended her funeral was to survive the war but by February 1916 had been at the front twice and had been wounded both times. But he was no exception. Corporal Jack Brown from Paynesfield Road was wounded on the day he was to have come to Tatsfield on leave. Private William Honey was at last able to come home after four months of treatment after having been seriously wounded with the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment. Also home that month was Driver Archibald Lock of the Army Service Corps.



March 1916

Alfred Luckie was a Private in the 6th Battalion of the Royal West Kent Regiment. He was killed during a period of relative stalemate on the front line south of Lille. We do not know the precise circumstances of his death. He has no known grave. His name is one of the 20,000 that appear on the Loos Memorial.

Pte Luckie was born in Camberwell in 1897. His parents, Fred and Clara, lived at Sunmount on the corner of what were then Emily Road and Louisa Road - now Westmore Road and Crossways. (Sunmount made way for two pairs of semi-detached houses only last year).

Alfred Luckie, a former clerk, had volunteered less than three weeks after the war had broken out in 1914. He enlisted at Woolwich and joined the British Expeditionary Force in Flanders in June 1915.

His death came a few days after the heavy casualties of the previous year and the drying up of voluntary enlistment had led to the first Military Service Act being passed by Parliament. This imposed conscription on all single men aged between 18 and 41, but exempted the medically unfit, clergymen, teachers and certain classes of industrial worker.

April 1916

In April 1916, with the war about to enter its second summer, the Parish Council Chairman, Mr Samuel Joyce Thomas, was expressing the hope that “before long they would be rejoicing in an honourable peace”.



That was just over a month after the start of the battle of Verdun, which was to continue until just before Christmas and was the longest and costliest battle of the First World War.

A barrister and owner of more than 20 acres of land in the parish, he was to remain Chairman while on active service the following year.

For Tatsfield families however, there was some respite, with no battlefield deaths reported. The village had been doing its bit by providing facilities for army volunteers to use parish property for training purposes and raising nearly £15 – nearly £1,200 in today's money - for the Red Cross War Committee.

Thought was also being given to post-war Tatsfield. There was talk of widening Lusted Hall Lane and the Approach Road to improve access to the village and even one proposal to widen White Lane. Discussion also started about how to improve the surface of Maesmaur and Parkwood Roads. Several roads had recently been given a tarmac surface and at the Annual Parish Meeting a presentation was made to the local highways surveyor, Mr Crowter, in appreciation of his work in local government since 1895.

The meeting also heard that since Tatsfield was relatively remote from the railway system, wartime government advice was that more food needed to be grown locally and particular encouragement was being given to rabbit breeding.

May 1916

In May 1916, families all over the country, including many in Tatsfield, waited anxiously for news from relatives held prisoner in enemy camps or fighting at the front. For a few weeks however, Tatsfield was spared bad news.

In the local newspapers, more 'routine' items began to appear. In the Westerham Herald, there was space to report on how well a performance of amateur dramatics had gone in the village hall at the start of the month. A week or two later it was a major barn fire at Church Farm that made the news.

In many ways, normal life continued. The Working Men's Club was thriving under the presidency of John Skinner of Tatsfield Court Farm. The local directory listed the Conservative Association, the Parish Institute, the Children's Guild and the Gardening Society and their officers. It also recorded that in addition to the parish church, Tatsfield also had a Baptist Chapel and a 'New Gospel Hall'.

The Post Office – run by the Mullens family - was open from eight in the morning until eight in the evening on six days of the week and from 8.30 until 10 a.m. on Sundays. There were letter collections three times a day and deliveries twice a day - except on Sunday when there was only one.

The actress, Edith Goodall, was living in Goatsfield Road and learning her lines for the opening of the comedy, Hobson's Choice, at the Apollo Theatre in London the following month.

Edward Curtis was the agent for the South Eastern Railway and ran a horse-drawn carriage service to and from Westerham Station from his premises next to the Old Ship. Next door were the offices of the London Alps Company - the local estate agent.

June 1916



One of the popular histories of the First World War described 1916 as the year that the Allies were 'at bay'.

On the fifth of June Britain lost its Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, who was on board H.M.S. Hampshire on his way for talks with Britain's ally, Russia. The cruiser struck a mine off the Orkneys and sank with the loss of 700 men. Lord Kitchener, whose face had been on a recruitment poster since 1914, was the most senior officer from either side in that war to have died on active service.

The stalemate on the European mainland did not mean that families at home were spared bad news. Towards the end of the month the Rushen family of Goddards Cottage, also known as Manor Cottage, heard that their son, Joseph, had been badly wounded on the Somme. Another son, Bertram, serving in the Royal West Surrey Regiment - as was his brother - had also been wounded, but a third son, Private Arthur Rushen, was home on leave. He was in Tatsfield for a happier reason - his marriage to a daughter of the Streets family of Church Farm. Two of her sisters were bridesmaids at the wedding and carried bouquets of 'carnations adorned with the national and Allies' flags', according to the Westerham Herald report.

For another Tatsfield family there was some encouraging news: Sergeant James Honey was recovering slowly in hospital after having been gassed in France five weeks earlier. The war had been under way for nearly two years and had yet to reach its mid-point.



July/August 1916

In last month's magazine it was recalled that despite the stalemate on the Western Front, casualties were still occurring and that a Tatsfield man, Joseph Rushen, had been badly wounded. Not long after that his family received the news that he had sadly died.

On the first of July, supported by a French attack to the south, thirteen divisions of Commonwealth forces had launched an offensive on the Somme. Despite a preliminary bombardment lasting seven days, the German defences were barely touched and the attack met unexpectedly fierce resistance. Losses were catastrophic; Joseph Rushen was among them.

The Westerham Herald account of Private Rushen's death reported that his brother, Bertram, had now also been wounded. Two other brothers were on active service as well. Another Tatsfield man, Private Alec Terry, had written to Mr Adams, the headmaster of Tatsfield School, to say a bullet had hit him in three places, but that he was recuperating in England.

The Westerham Herald also reported that Sydney Wright, described as a coal and corn merchant, farmer and contractor of 'The Stores', Tatsfield, had asked for exemption from compulsory military service. This had been introduced earlier in the year. In January he had tried to join up voluntarily but had been rejected as medically unfit. Now he was running a one-man business – with the help of a lad – involving carting coal, keeping three horses and 60 acres of land. The 'Military Act' tribunal granted his conditional exemption.

In August 1916 the death was announced at the age of 73 of Harry Streets of Church Farm. The Surrey Mirror reported that he had come to Tatsfield "48 years ago and the success which attended him was a striking example of what can be accomplished by perseverance and a good reputation". As well as running the family farm, "for some 25 years he had officiated as Parish Clerk". The Streets family were at Church Farm for almost a century and a half until it was re-developed a decade ago.

September 1916

By September 1916, the 'Great War' had been underway for over two years. Ten Tatsfield men had been killed; others had been wounded. The number of men of military age in the parish at that time would probably have been around 140.

Conscription for single men aged between 18 and 41 was now in force. War Office notices began to appear in the Surrey Mirror asking for information about men who had not reported for duty. One was said to have been working as a nurse for Dr Sherrard at Lusted Hall.

He may well have been exempted later by the 'Reigate Rural Area' tribunal which in September 1916 dealt with an application from the owner of Park Farm, Richard Robinson. He wanted – and obtained - exemption for one of his employees, Walter Beagley, who was desperately needed on farm. Only one other man and a boy were available to work the 200 acres and Mr Robinson's own two sons were already serving in the forces.

One of Tatsfield's Parish Councillors, Alfred Smith, a master mariner who lived at the Firs in Ricketts Hill Road, resigned at the age of 41 to join the Royal Navy.

With the war at virtual stalemate in Europe and difficulties with food supplies in England, there was a setback for Tatsfield's allotment holders (then on land on the opposite side of the Approach Road from today's allotments). Cattle had broken through fences and destroyed much of the produce local people had been cultivating.

Nevertheless, the war did not stop planning for an improved post-war Tatsfield. The Rural District Council was in discussion with a landowner on acquiring land to widen Ricketts Hill Road and cutting back the brushwood. The question would have to 'stand over' until after the war.

One activity which went on uninterrupted was Tatsfield's annual horticultural show. It was held on a rain-swept Wednesday. There was an increase in entries in some classes and the show made a cash surplus which was donated to the Red Cross. The show was held on land next to the Village Hall and the day ended with a programme of entertainment in the hall. The Surrey Mirror reported that the hall was 'packed to overflowing, with good music, some fine songs; a humorous sketch combined in providing an enjoyable conclusion of the day's proceedings'.

December 1916



The third winter of the First World War ended what, for Tatsfield families, was a less difficult phase, but the first few days of 1917 were to herald a change. Since the start of the war more than two years earlier, ten Tatsfield men had lost their lives. In 1917 alone, a further nine were to die.

In the early years of the last century, the rector, the Rev B.G. Popham, organised an annual social for parishioners. At an evening of musical entertainments in 1916 – held at ‘the Institute’ possibly then in Borough Road – he wished everyone happiness for the New Year. He recalled that the first thing on their minds would be the soldiers. There was applause when he announced that the number of names on Tatsfield’s Roll of Honour had reached 101. These were young men who had gone from their parish, or whose fathers and mothers lived in their midst. They were all proud of them. Many had left their wives and families behind, and they had been helped with their finances pending receipt from the War Office of the allowances to which they were entitled. A committee had been set up to look after soldiers and their families, with power to act through the War Office. Volunteers had come forward to cultivate soldiers’ allotments during their absence. More volunteers were needed.

It was soon afterwards that news came to Tatsfield of the death of Richard Ambler, a 40-year-old mechanic in the Royal Naval Air Service. His widow’s address was given as Old Lane at the time of his death. He died in Malta, where hospitals and convalescent homes had been established to accommodate well over one hundred thousand casualties from the campaigns in Gallipoli and Salonika. He is buried at the Capuccini Naval Cemetery in Malta.

March 1917

The historian Sir John Hammerton described 1917 as the First World War's 'Year of Attrition'. For him, there was no sign whatever that the war would end in the way that each group of combatants desired – *'in a smashing victory for one and a smashing defeat for the other'*. Each side carried out a policy of exhausting the human resources of the other.

For Tatsfield, as mentioned in December's magazine, 1917 brought the first of a number of tragedies. In January, Richard Ambler of the Royal Naval Air Service died of wounds sustained in Turkey. His name does not appear in Tatsfield's archives, but his widow's address was given by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as Oakdene, built in the 1890s at the very northern end of Old Lane.

All the time there was the worry about husbands, sons and brothers at the front, but the war was having its impact locally too. Food shortages meant that there was increased pressure from the government to take action locally. The Village Hall was to be used as a depot for the distribution of seed potatoes. Neighbours took over the allotments of men at the front to make the best use of land.

To add to the problems the country was facing, Tatsfield had another – the weather. 4ft snowdrifts cut Tatsfield off in early February 1917 and halted much work of the work being carried out on the neighbourhood farms.

Another problem for local farmers was the shortage of labour - made worse since the recent introduction of conscription. Farmers had to appear before an Appeal Tribunal in Croydon to have the call-up of their labourers postponed. In January, Mr Bradshaw of Botley Hill Farm obtained a three-month temporary exemption for his shepherd and stockman, Arthur Smith of the Briars in Ninehams Road. Then in March, Mr Francis Keeble, living in the Manor House, obtained only six weeks postponement for his gardener, John Baldock of Johns Road.

Mr Keeble's son was to die in action the following year. When the war was over, he published a pamphlet *'Was the Bible answerable for the War?'* In this he argued: *"Our children must be shown that the facts of history persistently prove the complete failure of brute force to elevate man and to discount all the flowing descriptions of encounters of so-called heroes on the battlefield, whether by Walter Scott or Kingsley, or the drivelling of bishop or cardinal of today"*. Two decades before, he had been involved in a local controversy in which he was accused of failing to support the British cause in the Boer War.

May 1917



It was in May 1917 that the First World War took on a new dimension with the decision by the United States to come to the aid of Britain and its allies. On May 2nd, the first United States destroyer flotilla arrived at Queenstown (now Cobh) in Cork, Ireland. A few days later came the first German air raid on London.

In places such as Tatsfield, the preoccupation continued to be the wait for news of loved ones at the front. Sadly, May 1917 was to be the beginning of a period of a growing number of casualties.

On May 9th, Alfred Whitbread, an acting Corporal in the Northamptonshire Regiment, was killed. His name does not appear on the memorial in St Mary's Church and there is no trace of a family of that name living in Tatsfield 100 years ago. Nevertheless, the records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission state that he was born in Dalston in 1885 and was '*the son of William and Clara Whitbread of London and husband of Ellen Burbage (formerly Whitbread) of Emily Road, Tatsfield*'. (Emily Road is the original name for Westmore Road).

The War Graves Commission says he is buried in Fort Pitt Military Cemetery, Chatham. The cemetery contains 265 graves of First World War servicemen in the Rochester area.



September 1917

September 1917 was the worst month of the First World War in terms of the village's casualties. Four Tatsfield men were killed in action that month.

Harold Mudd, a corporal in the London Regiment, was killed in Flanders on 16th September. His name is commemorated at the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial - one of four memorials to servicemen missing in Flanders in the Ypres salient. The third battle of Ypres took place in the summer and autumn of 1917 in deteriorating weather ending in November with the capture by British forces of Passchendaele. Born in 1895, Cpl Mudd was the son of Walter John and Bertha Roye Mudd of Leehirst, Maesmaur Road. His father was a builder in Tatsfield in the 1920s and 30s.

Four days later, Private Bertram Rushen of the Royal West Surrey Regiment died and his name appears on the Tyne Cot Passchendaele Memorial - another of four memorials to the missing in the Ypres Salient. Born in Tatsfield in 1898, Pte Rushen was the son of William Henry and Sophia Rushen (née Holman) of Manor Cottages, Tatsfield, also known as Goddards Cottage. His sister, Louisa, had died in January 1916 after being hit by a car while working as a bus conductress near Lewisham Town Hall. His twin brother, Stanley, and another brother, Joseph, were also killed in the First World War and all three names appear on the memorial plaque in St Mary's Church.

Then on the 20th September, Lance Corporal Archibald Lock of the London Regiment was killed. His name is also commemorated on the Menin Gate. He was the son of Arthur Henry Lock & Ruth Lock (née Underwood) of Meadowsweet, Ricketts Hill Road, and had been employed as an outfitting assistant. His brother, Francis, was also a First World War casualty and was killed in 1919. He is buried in Tatsfield churchyard.

On 26th September, Gunner Edwin Larkin of the Royal Garrison Artillery was killed in the Ypres salient. He was married to Anne Maud Larkin (née Willis) of Emily Road, (now Westmore Road) Tatsfield where they ran Larkin's Stores – a drapers and general outfitters shop. His name appears on the memorial plaque in St Mary's Church.



October 1917

Two men from Tatsfield died in action in October 1917.

On the 14th October, John Standing of the 7th Battalion Rifle Brigade was posted missing during the third battle of Ypres. His death is commemorated at the Tyne Cot Passchendaele Memorial in Belgium.

The Third Battle of Ypres offensive was mounted to divert German attention from a weakened French front. The main assault began at the end of July but quickly became a dogged struggle against determined opposition and the rapidly worsening weather. The campaign finally came to a close in November with the capture of Passchendaele. The memorial on which Rifleman Standing's death is recorded bears the names of almost 35,000 officers and men whose graves are not known.

John Standing was born in Tatsfield in 1889 and was the son of James and Emma Standing (née Burkin) of "Sunnybank", Old Lane. He was the brother of Thomas Walter Standing, born in Tatsfield in 1897, a member of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve who died in 1919. Both names appear on the memorial plaque in St Mary's Church. Thomas Walter is buried in St Mary's churchyard.

Twelve days after Rifleman Standing had been reported missing news was received that Corporal Norman Beagley of the Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment had also not been heard from. He too died at Passchendaele and is buried at Tyne Cot. This is the largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the world.

Norman Beagley was the son of William John and Annie Beagley (née Blake) of 1 Grove Road, Tatsfield. He was born in Cudham in 1894 and worked for the Post Office. His name also appears on the memorial plaque in St Mary's Church.

November 1917

At the start of the winter of 1917, Tatsfield was able to reflect that nine of its sons had been killed in action during that year, but there was to be some relief from such news for several months to come.

At the beginning of November there was some good news. The Surrey Mirror reported that Jack Oliver Brown, who had emigrated to Canada before the outbreak of war, was back as one of the first to return to England in Canadian army uniform. Now as a Sergeant Major and having recovered from serious combat wounds, he was reunited with his parents who were living at Kylemore in Paynesfield Road. The occasion was his wedding to Annie Venetia Forbes, of Clontievy in Grove Road.

With winter close by, the Surrey Mirror reported on what was a growing crisis - how to ensure coal supplies? The only coal merchant in Tatsfield had gone into the army and many residents were unable to obtain supplies. At a public meeting in the Village Hall the parish council set up a committee to run a scheme to distribute coal from a central point in the village. Distributing the coal within the village was only one task. 200 tons of coal had been ordered for delivery by rail at Warlingham. Such was the national shortage of fuel that only 50 tons would be available. However, that was only part of the problem. The next issue was how to get the coal from the station to Tatsfield in the absence of the local fuel merchant and his vehicle.

Meanwhile, what might be described as normal life went on. Police were called to deal with burglaries at Lusted Hall Farm and at the Working Men's Club - then located at No 2 The Parade.

December 1917

December 1917 brought some relief from bad news from the front for families in Tatsfield, but the hardship being felt because of the war was well in evidence. Conscription into the armed services meant a shortage of labour at home. 23-year-old Arthur Smith of the Briars in Ninehams Road had been called up. He was a shepherd and stockman at Botley Hill Farm and the farm was successful in pleading in court that his presence was essential to the farm and vital for food production.

Securing supplies of coal for the village was still a problem and residents were being asked to guarantee that funds would be available to pay for the fuel when it finally arrived. Parish Council minutes recorded that £265 had been raised. A coal depot was to be established at the White House and ration cards would be issued. The expectation was that 50 tons of coal would be supplied over the next six months, but some parishioners expressed dismay at the apparent delays in supplies earlier in the year.

In the New Year there was to be a public meeting to discuss 'England's War Aims', organised by the church and arrangements for the delivery of seed potatoes were said to be underway.

April 1918

A century ago, many Tatsfield families were waiting anxiously for news from the front. Among them was Mrs Wallis-Taylor of Paynesfield Road who had given birth to a son soon after her husband had been called up. Driver Forbes of Grove Road had been serving with the Canadians in France but was now in hospital in England. His brother Walter was in hospital in France. Private Blake of the Royal Fusiliers had been wounded and the Westerham Herald reported that Private George Standing of Maesmaur Road -serving in the Royal West Kent Regiment - was also a casualty with leg and arm wounds.

For the parish council, the preoccupation was the supply of food for the population at home. Four tons of seed potatoes ordered by the council had now been delivered and were ready for distribution from 'the Institute' in Borough Road.

The community spirit was strong as the war continued and there was time for a group photo outside Mr Potter's tearooms, now the Bakery restaurant.



One consequence of the war was that the village's street lamps and posts had not been used and were not likely to be for some time to come. The parish council decided to sell them!

September 1918

During what was to be the last summer of the First World War, four men from Tatsfield died in action. In August, Capt. Alfred Keeble of the Machine Gun Corps was killed in Flanders at the age of 46. His parents had come to live at the Manor House in Ricketts Hill Road in 1900. His father, Francis Keeble, was a fine art expert who, after the war, published a four-page pamphlet which included the paragraph: *“Our children must be shown that the facts of history persistently prove the complete failure of brute force to elevate man, and to discount all the flowing descriptions of encounters of so-called heroes on the battlefield, whether by Walter Scott or Kingsley, or the drivelling of bishop or cardinal of today”.*

Also in August came news of the death of the third member of the Rushen family to be killed in action. 20-year-old Pte Stanley Rushen of Goddards Cottages served in the Tank Regiment. The Westerham Herald of 21st September 1918 recalled that his brother Joseph had already been killed and that his twin Bertram was missing. The article also recalled the death in 1916 of his sister – an early volunteer as a bus conductress - and added that his father had recently died.



A war grave in St Mary's churchyard is that of Air Mechanic Albert Carson, who died in September 1918 while based in Yorkshire. The fourth death of the summer was that of Pte Beaconsfield Davis of the Norfolk Regiment, killed in France. Aged 21, he was the son of Arthur and Charlotte Davis of Peace Cottage, Ship Hill.

Another death in Tatsfield was that of 61-year-old Mr C. Field. In his 35 years in the village he had built the three shops at the Parade on Westmore Green and ran a small business in Emily (now Westmore) Road. He was one of the founders of the Working Men's Club which started out as part of the Parade.

On a more positive note, the village was planning for post-war Tatsfield. The parish council responded to the district council's assessment that six houses would need to be built by saying this would not be enough – many rented properties were uninhabitable. It said houses should be built in pairs in different parts of the village.

In other news, George Stevens of Rag Hill was sentenced to three months hard labour for assault on a member of the Newman family of Parkwood Road. For some years, continuing differences between the families had been reported in the local press.

October 1918

Towards the end of October 1918, there came news of the second member of the Beagley family to have died in action. Driver George Beagley of the Royal Field Artillery was killed on 23rd October near Cambrai in northern France as British and New Zealand troops advanced towards German positions. Aged 19, he was the son of Stephen and Kate Beagley, whose address was given as '3 Council Cottages'. His cousin, Norman, had been reported missing in October 1917 and is buried near Ypres in Belgium.

On 28th October, Pte John Burbage of the 7th (Queen's Own) Hussars was killed in action against Turkish forces in Iraq. His death is commemorated on the Basra Memorial, in the middle of what was to become - several generations later - a major battleground during the 1990 Gulf War. Born in Winchester in 1896, he was the son of John & Georgina Burbage (née Mitchell) of The Limes, Maesmaur Road. The names of both men appear on the memorial in St Mary's church.

Across the world, allied forces were advancing and one major participant, Austria-Hungary, had asked for an armistice. In Tatsfield, the end of the war was in sight and there was a prospect of a return to peacetime rural life. In the middle of the month there was an auction of furniture and outdoor effects of Kylemore, which had just been sold in Paynesfield Road and a postcard from 1918 shows the tranquil scene at the junction of Ship Hill and Church Lane.

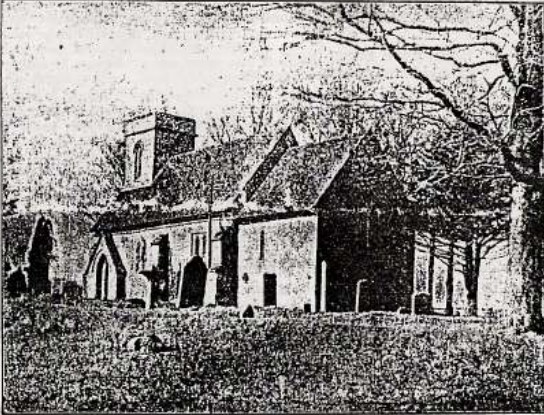


November 1918

A total of 27 Tatsfield men were killed in the First World War: two more deaths were recorded in 1919. Many other men had been wounded. Four families had lost two or more members in the fighting across the world. The youngest to die was 17. More than half were under 30. The population of Tatsfield a hundred years ago was less than half what it is now, so doubling the casualty figures would give an indication of the impact of such a loss on today's Tatsfield, let alone the lasting grief of so many families and friends.

SERVICE
FOR THE
UNVEILING & DEDICATION
OF
Tatsfield War Memorial

+



BY THE
Right Honble. Sir L. WORTHINGTON EVANS, Bart., M.P.,
(Secretary of State for War.)
* Mr. E. BELLAMY.
Rev. B. G. POPHAM, M.A. (Rector).

AUGUST 14TH, 1921, AT 3 P.M.

It was less than a week before Armistice Day that Private William Young of the Royal West Kent Regiment was killed – in India. He was one of 1,800 servicemen who died in India during the war and his death is commemorated at Kirkee Memorial in Poona. Born in Tatsfield in 1889, Pte Young was the son of Stephen and Elizabeth Ann Young (née Lee) of the Monks, Tatsfield Green and worked for Godstone Rural District Council.

Three years after the war had come to an end, in August 1921, Tatsfield's wartime sacrifice was to be recognised at a high level - by the presence of the Secretary of State for War at the unveiling of the war memorial in St Mary's church.