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GREAT ASHFIELD HERE, BUT NOT HERE

Our village at the time of the First World War



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and
Donia Stick
for
Great Ashfield Parish Council
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THE RUN-UP

What was life in Great Ashfield like in 1914 in the months before the start of the war? One primary source of information is the Bury Free Press which had a "District Intelligence" feature which brought together news from the towns and villages around Bury St Edmunds, including Great Ashfield.

On Saturday 3rd January 1914 the Great Ashfield report featured a village Christmas Party:

The first dance, a successful one, was held at the schoolroom, which had been tastefully decorated for the occasion. The party numbered between 60 and 70, the Rev. Dalby giving each member of the choir a Prayer and Hymn Book, box of crackers, and sweets. About ten o'clock refreshments went round, given by the following ladies: Mrs. Dalby, Mrs. George and Miss George, Mrs. Watts, Mrs. H. Armstrong, Mrs. D. George, Mrs. Lister, Mrs. Woodcock, and Mr. N. Lynn. During the interval Mr. H. Sunter was asked to sing. Mr. N. Lynn kindly lent his gramophone. Mrs. Dalby proved a most efficient pianist. The duties of M.C. were carried out by the Rev. Dalby. A very pleasant evening concluded in the usual loyal fashion. The refreshments left were given to the aged and large families in the parish.

The report on Saturday 5th May 1917 focused on a 'cycle accident in Great Ashfield at the foot of what is now known as Ashfield Hill, but which, to many villagers, is more familiarly known as Hollonds Hill. Villagers, familiar with the gusts of wind, will empathise with Mrs Jaggard's experience.

On Wednesday afternoon week, as Mrs. Ernest Jaggard, of Walsham-le-Willows, was cycling to Buxhall, she was thrown from her cycle at the bottom of Norgate's Hill, through a sudden gust of wind catching her just as she was rounding the corner, and causing her to take a bigger sweep than intended, and to run onto the side of the road. Mrs. Jaggard was fortunately able to walk to Mrs Tyrell's, who lives nearby, and was subsequently conveyed home in a trap by Mrs. Nichols. The

accident resulting in discolation [sic] of the shoulder, necessitating calling in medical aid. One or two other Waltham residents have met with disaster at the same corner.

Whilst the Daily Telegraph for 2nd June 1914 focuses on Suffragette arson attacks and the proposal to introduce policewomen in Britain – which it considered to be “so novel and surprising... that a nation so conservative in its mental attitude as ours will be in no great hurry to welcome the proposal” it mentions as well that there was dancing on Hampstead Heath. There was dancing in Great Ashfield as well where the Reverend Philip Dalby had taken over the position of Vicar in 1913. He will feature frequently in these stories.

The District Intelligence report on Saturday 13th June 1914 recounts:

The Vicar and churchwardens had the churchyard cleaned.

The children wish to thank Miss Waltham for the tea she kindly provided for them on the lawn. Whit-Saturday afternoon and evening were devoted to dancing and games, and Miss Waltham told them of her travels round the world. Miss Connie George lent her gramophone.

The Parish Church was tastefully decorated for Whit-Sunday... Miss George contributing lilies and red geraniums for the altar. Since the Whit-Monday dance, so many enthusiastic followers of the art have begged for just one more, that the promoters of these social evenings decided to hold one once a month. Dancing was carried on from 9.30 to 11.30 when the singing of the National Anthem brought the evening to a close. Cheers were given for the Vicar and his wife, who had spent a lot of time in making the evening a success... The proceeds have been given to the Vicar to pay for the hire of a piano for six months. One more dance will, it is hoped, pay that debt. The boys and girls of the choir went free. The choir and Sunday School wish to thank Mrs. Dalby for arranging another dance for them last Saturday in the school.

On 28th June 1914 Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife were assassinated in Bosnia by a member of the Black Hand Gang, which was supported by Serbia. Bosnia wanted to be independent

from Austria. The Austrian Government blamed the Serbian government and on 28th July 1914 declared war on Serbia, which was allied with Russia.

In Germany it was thought that the Russians would not mobilise to support Serbia so they offered to support Austria if they were needed. Russia mobilised and called on France to help to support Austria.

On 1st August 1914 Germany declared war on Russia and two days later on 3rd August 1914 declared war on France. German troops invaded Belgium, a neutral territory, and the British Foreign Secretary demanded that they withdraw. This did not happen and on 4th August 1914 Britain declared war on Germany. Everyone was convinced that the war would be over by Christmas 1914.

By Saturday 8th August 1914 the War was underway, and in Great Ashfield:

AT THE CHURCH on Sunday special prayers were offered for peace, and the Vicar made reference to the crisis.

A WHIST DRIVE took place on the Vicarage Lawn on Monday, and resulted in the sum of £1:10s. 6d being handed in. Thanks are due to Mrs. Dalby who gave all the prizes.

SALE OF WORK. – Notwithstanding a number of local attractions. There was a good attendance of buyers and others at the sale of work arranged by Mrs. J. George and Miss George, Grange Farm, and held on Tuesday week. Mrs. A.G. Lee, of Langham, opened the sale and said it gave her much pleasure in so doing. Miss Ella George presented her with a beautiful bouquet of flowers...

During the evening a short programme of sports was held, the results being as follows:-

Married ladies' race 1. Mrs. Blizzard 2. Mrs. Whiting 3. Mrs. Roper

The cake in the guessing competition went to Mrs. Harry Pearl, who guessed 7½ lbs., the correct weight being 7¾ lbs.

In the pig guessing competition the winners were Jack Redit and C. Scase.

Drawing for fowls Mrs. David George one pair, Mrs. Rettern one pair.

One pair ducks, Mrs. John George.

Box of eggs Mrs. Rettern.

There was also a tug-of-war.

The net proceeds of the day amounted to £18 4s 1d. Miss George desires to thank all those who kindly rendered any assistance. Dancing was enjoyed until eleven o'clock. Thanks are due to Mr. David George, Mr. Lister, and Mr. Woodcock for taking the "gate".

During 1914 appeals were made in the Bury Free Press for towns and villages to submit the names of men who had enlisted.

Saturday 5th January 1915

Defenders of the Empire.

OUR COUNTRY AND THE WAR.

Serving King and Country.

It is with sincere pleasure that we fulfil our promise to publish a "West Suffolk Roll of Honour", comprising the names of men from our county who are serving their King and Country at home and abroad at this time of national crisis. We have made every endeavour to secure as complete a list as possible, and we heartily thank those of our readers who have kindly assisted us by sending in names.

The first instalment of names appeared last week, comprising those from Bury St. Edmund's, and now we start upon the other districts of West Suffolk.

The various towns and villages throughout the county will receive similar attention week by week in our columns until the names received by us have been published.

Our attention has been called to the fact that some of the London daily papers are now issuing lists of killed and wounded under the heading "Roll of Honour" and it has been suggested that the title under which we are publishing names may give rise to a wrong impression and cause pain. But we venture to question the accuracy and justice of the heading thus adopted

by these London journals. Such lists should be called the "Casualty Roll", because surely all who are patriotically coming forward and offering their services to their country in the present crisis are entitled to have their names honoured! It ought not to be necessary for them to be killed or wounded in order to be remembered as noble patriots who responded to the call of duty. Besides, our heading, if carefully read, clearly explains itself.

We sincerely wish a safe and happy return to those brave men whose names we publish, and who have already gone or may yet go to the front, and whilst wishing this, we at the same time gratefully place their names in a Roll of Honour in which their patriotism justly entitles them to a place.

GREAT ASHFIELD

MANNING	Sidney	2nd Suffolk Regt.
MEEKINGS	John	2nd Suffolk Regt. (prisoner)
MEEKINGS	Joe	Royal Garrison Artillery
KERRY	Dennis	3rd Suffolk Regt. (missing)
CLOVER	Fred	4th Suffolk Regt.
GOODWIN	Herbert	1st Suffolk Regt.
GOSWELL	John	Royal Horse Guards
JAGGARD	George	9th Suffolk Regt.
KERRY	Fred	1st Suffolk Regt.
KING	William	1st Suffolk Regt.
MEEKINGS	James	Royal Garrison Artillery
MEEKINGS	George	2nd Suffolk Regt.
MANNING	Harry	8th Suffolk Regt.
MULLEY	Dennis	Royal Navy
MULLEY	Harry	2nd Suffolk Regt.
REDIT	Jack	2nd Suffolk Regt.
RODWELL	Arthur	2nd Suffolk Regt.
SCASE	Cyril	8th Suffolk Regt.
SCASE	Ernest	8th Suffolk Regt.
WALPOLE	Leslie	8th Suffolk Regt.

THE WOMEN

How did life continue on the home front in Great Ashfield during WW1 whilst the men were away? The recollections of a former Ashfield resident, Joy Howlett, née Wade, born in 1929 and who died in 2014, give us an idea.

Obviously, women still had their traditional role in bearing and bringing up children. In addition, they took on new responsibilities at the home front.

Emily FLATT's (née Abbot) husband George Alfred lived with his parents in Long Thurlow. She and George married in 1890 and they lived on Long Thurlow Road. George died in early 1930 and is buried in All Saints Churchyard in Great Ashfield.

Emily and her unmarried son George William Flatt were Joy's next door neighbours. Emily and Joy both lived near The Thurlow Arms in The Thatched Cottage, Long Thurlow Road, which was then semi-detached. Emily, born in Mickfield on 28th December 1866, was the mother of 8 children born between October 1892 and October 1908, 5 girls and 3 boys. One of Emily's daughters used to go to help her each day at this stage in her long life of 94 years. Emily was the mother of William George and John Alfred Flatt who fought in and survived WW1.

Joy recalled a conversation that she had in about 1950 with 84 year old Emily Flatt.

"You got no children yet dear? My life was always having children and my husband wasn't a FAST man either. I used to wait for them things to come, and they didn't, and oh dear! off again with another child coming. Life was hard for a woman in those days."

