



East Hoathly & District Preservation Society

Sussex in World War I

Presented by Ian Everest.

Fri 10th February 2017

Ian has presented various talks to the Preservation Society over the years and once again, the chosen topic was brought to life with an excellent narrative worked around a very interesting set of slides. Due to its proximity to the English Channel and beyond it the battle fields of France, Belgium and Holland, Sussex played an important role during the war. As well as becoming a training ground for troops, a conduit for them, their munitions and supplies to the ports along its coast, it received the wounded and maimed from the front. It also played its role in overcoming critical food shortages to counter the German tactic of cutting off imports that brought Britain perilously close to defeat.

Some of the facts and figures presented were remarkable in their magnitude:

The town of Seaford with a peacetime population of 4,000 was swelled by a further 20,000 at the nearby Kitchener training camps, the platforms at the railway station were lengthened to accommodate the larger trains required.

20 ships sailed daily from Newhaven, carrying part of the 6,000,000 tonnes of munitions used.

5,500,000 tonnes of hay was sent across the channel to feed the horses, supported by the efforts of the newly formed Women's Land Army.

The artillery could be heard as far away as Isfield.

Just 52 villages in the country experienced the return of all their soldiers. East Wittering was one such "thankful village". In contrast, there were 16000 war memorial committees across the land.

Sussex had 9 convalescence camps with 3500 patients.

Local people featured too, including Ian's own grandfather who was in the Middx Regiment. He went to fight at the battle of Mons in August 1914 but was taken prisoner on the first day. Many prominent people and organisations were either involved in recruitment, training, making land available and contributing to the war effort in ways that are too numerous to include in a brief summary such as this. For those interested in further reading the book that Ian referred to was Kim Leslie's "An Historical Atlas of Sussex", ISBN 9781860771125.