



A glimpse into 1919 and beyond

Like many other places in the country, Buriton arranged activities to celebrate 'Peace Day' on Saturday 19 July 1919. Although the Armistice on 11 November 1918 is commemorated every year, it was only a ceasefire to allow peace terms to be negotiated. The final peace treaty, the Treaty of Versailles, was not signed until 28 June 1919 – and the country could then arrange celebratory activities in July.

On Friday evening, 18 July Buriton's demobilised men were entertained to a special dinner in the Institute building, provided by the employers of the parish. It was reported in the local newspaper that "Mr Lothian Bonham Carter presided and a sumptuous repast was followed by a smoking concert, the chief feature of which was the performance of Mr Norton Palmer of Petersfield who contributed popular humorous songs. During the evening the chairman, speaking with much emotion, thanked the demobilised men for all they had done for their country. They did not forget the lads who were still serving overseas and when they came home they would have a jolly reception."

Peace Day was the community's chance to really celebrate the end of the war. The church bells rang out loudly

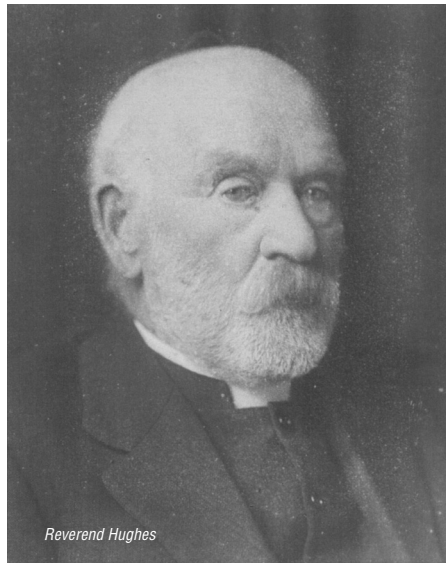
and there was a wide range of festivities and activities, summarised in the local newspaper: "A first rate procession, including many in fancy dress, marched from the entrance to the village to the Clays. Mr Evans played the cornet with a drum accompaniment, whilst freak musicians from Weston also enlivened the march. At the Clays, sports were held including a long distance race over Wardown, back through the cutting to the village, which was won by Mr Strugnell, Mr Harfield being second. For this event Major Davis gave a pewter cup. Everybody had tea in the Institute where later there was dancing and Mrs Cave distributed the prizes. It was a highly successful and memorable celebration."

Another local account also gives a flavour of the day: "Arriving at the field by the church where the celebrations were to be, we met the whole village in procession and mostly in fancy dress: there was Peace, Victory, John Bull, a cook and last but not least Dilly and Dally who dallied and dillied all day long. While the costumes were being judged the sports began including a tug of war, flat races, obstacle races and a race up Wardown and back. There was also a

veterans' race in which the Squire [Lothian Bonham Carter] came to grief but pluckily stuck it out. Then the rain came down: a soft wetting drizzle, the only rain of the summer. It damped everything except the proceedings, which went on gaily. Giant hot air balloons ascended into the clouds whilst a paper man made a successful parachute descent. Finally Mrs Cave gave away the prizes and at about 10 o'clock at night we walked up the Milky Way again. Some rockets were sent up whilst a few bonfires shone through the mist. We went to bed with a sense of duty done."

Local diary entries and newspaper reports indicate that collectors were appointed early in 1919 to raise money for the erection of some sort of memorial to the men from the parish who had lost their lives. By the middle of May almost £116 had been raised [probably worth about £5,000 now], discussions took place about the kind of memorial which might be built and Lothian Bonham Carter agreed to get designs and quotations for further consideration.

It was on Thursday 10 June 1920, that Buriton's War Memorial was unveiled and dedicated with the Rector, the Reverend Charles Hughes, amongst the dignitaries officiating. A detailed report of the event in the local newspaper explains that it was "a serene and beautiful summer evening" and that there was a "large and fully representative assemblage of the parishioners" in attendance. The memorial



was praised "both for its design and situation." The newspaper also felt that Buriton people would be proud of the memorial "as they also have reason to be proud of the splendid record of sacrifice which it commemorates, a record which few villages of this size and population can show."

But, as in many places, bigger changes were on their way which would change the look and feel of the community significantly. The First World War would have a profound effect on many aspects of British life with significant economic, social, political and cultural changes.

From a population of about 750, almost exactly 200 men had taken part in the war – with about one in five of them (39 men) not returning. Some who did return had lost limbs or suffered other physical or mental injuries. As local residents recorded in their memories years later, "village life was altered for ever."

Many horses had also left the parish

during the conflict, to help provide the backbone of the vast logistical operations of the army, leaving much less horsepower to work in the fields or in the local chalk quarries.

If the First World War had been a war of new machines – of tanks, aeroplanes, machine guns, quick-firing artillery and dreadnought battleships – then some ‘new technology’ was

soon to find its way into daily life on the farms, even if there had sometimes been mixed views initially.

Nursted Farm appears to have been close to the forefront of embracing mechanisation with Mr Bray buying one of the first tractors in the area, in 1919, as well as a binder to tie bundles of corn into sheaves. He also bought a milking machine around this time, apparently one of the first farmers to have one.

At Buriton's Manor Farm, tractors were used for harvesting from about 1928 with this cautious comment in a local diary: “Using tractor this year. Goes faster and gets over some ground. But, more noise and the men on the machine can't see so well as with horses.”

There was some mechanisation, too,



in Buriton's chalk pits – with a direct connection to the war. The internal network of narrow gauge railway tracks in the quarries was constructed so that chalk could be carried down to the kilns in small trucks, by gravity alone. But pony-power was needed to haul the empty trucks back up to the chalk-face.

New light rail

systems had been used on the battlefields, to reduce the men and horses required for transport and to reduce damage to roads and the numbers of men needed for repairs. At the end of the war, scores of petrol-engined machines came back to Britain – with at least one replacing some of the ponies in the Buriton chalk pits.

But perhaps some of the biggest changes in the years after the war were on the hillsides above the village. With only 5% of the country covered in commercial timber at the outset of war, there had been worries about supplies of this, then vital, resource. A new commission was established in 1919 to begin the task of expanding Britain's forests in case of another conflict. And when the local ‘squire’, Lothian Bonham Carter, died



A WW1 engine in Buriton Chalk Pits

in 1927 parts of the estate (Wardown, Head Down and Holt Down) passed to the Forestry Commission and trees were swiftly planted.

This provided new jobs in the parish for a period – but the hillsides were changed forever. Before the trees thousands of sheep used to graze the downs with shepherd boys taking them onto the hills in the day-time and bringing them down each night to fields where folds had been pitched. Lambing, shearing and dipping were particularly busy times of year – often seeing hundreds of sheep driven down into the heart of the village. Although some sheep were retained on local farms, the scale of the enterprise changed significantly after the war and the open downland scenery above the village is now a thing of the past.

The First World War marked a turning point in world history and claimed the lives of 16 million people across the globe. The war had involved every continent except Antarctica and, when it was over, it left widows, orphans and whole countries starving. Monarchies

disappeared, national infrastructures were destroyed, industries were broken and some disappeared entirely. Outbreaks of a deadly flu virus also then swept across the world, taking a toll on victims weakened by years of stress or shortages, and killing more people than the war itself.

Local accounts seem to suggest that, through all the stress and hardships, a sense of community spirit has always endured in Buriton. We should never forget that spirit – nor any of the people who made it possible.

The community's special publication about the First World War is now being finalised and will be available, free of charge, to parishioners. It will add details to all the articles which have appeared in the Parish Magazine since 2014 and will be illustrated with a wide range of photographs and images. Sincere thanks are due to the scores of people who have contributed to this piece of work, with assistance from many descendants of those who were living in the parish a hundred years ago being particularly helpful.