



Life at home: January to March 1917

German submarine attacks and poor harvests in 1916 brought food shortages and price rises early in 1917 and the Government took drastic action. People were urged to keep pigs, poultry or rabbits, and grow as much of their own food as they possibly could. Beer-brewing was also cut by more than 50%, which is perhaps why Percy and Charles Seward grubbed up over a third of their hop acreage at Weston.

Other local farms were also suffering from the labour shortage; Mr. Bray at Nursted Farm gave this as the reason why he put his excellent milking herd up for auction. In fact, when Petersfield Council debated action on the Government's 'National Service' plan to discover how many men could still be enrolled for service, the Chairman cited Buriton as a place that has already sent just about every man it could - out of a population of 845, 170 men were already serving, 90 of them from farming. The Local Tribunal certainly was sympathetic to Kathleen Strugnell's brave plea that, with two sons already killed, two serving in France, and four sons-in-law also serving, her last son of serviceable age might be exempted from military service.

Buriton men were certainly paying

the price: Leon Harfield was in hospital, wounded in the head, and Walter Pretty found a newspaper on the battlefield containing a photograph of his brother-in-law, Caleb Chitty, missing in action since last September. The Daily Mirror published photographs of missing men, in the hope that other soldiers on the battlefield might have seen them; Caleb's sister, Walter Pretty's wife had sent a photograph of her brother.

It was a hard winter, with Heath Pond and Buriton Pond frozen over heavily enough to take skaters. Fun for some, but cruel to the elderly, and Buriton saw the funerals of Margaret Bone, Sarah Harfield and Harriet Pink. Lothian Bonham Carter's step-sister, Mary Bonham Carter, 49, was also buried at Buriton; she had been in poor health, and her death was said to have been hastened by grief for her brother, Arthur, killed in the war and memorialised in St Mary's.

There were happier events too - Buriton welcomed little Ronald Richards, from Weston, into the community, and the Primitive Methodist Chapel saw the wedding of Harriet Legg and Cyril Harfield. Both were members of large families of long-standing in the village, so there were many there to wish them 'Good luck!'