

Lullington-The Home Front A WW1 Memorial Walk



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South Derbyshire
VISITOR INFORMATION
Centre

The Home Front- Lullington during the Great War

To begin this short walk of one mile, park in the village hall car park (DE12 8EH). Ordinary shoes are appropriate. Start by the large lime tree on the village green to the right of the car park entrance when facing the Church.

1

People living in Lullington between 1914 and 1918 would not think it possible that over a hundred years later millions of us would be commemorating the Great War.

Much of the focus is on the soldiers who fought hard for freedom. We must not forget those who worked at home to support the war effort. Lullington was typical of many estate villages of the time. The class system of the time now gone. Although still an estate village, the social mix is quite different from that of 1914 with few children and many 'incomers' enjoying a life in the countryside.

The Colvile's bought the 1822 acre estate from the Gresley family for £98,000 in 1837. Gilbert Colvile owned the estate during the war but was an absentee landlord. He was fighting the Germans in Tanganyika in The East Africa Campaign. He rarely visited the village but kept the estate intact. His mother visited occasionally; Lady Colvile preferred to live at her main home near Bagshot or near her son at Gil-Gil in Kenya. The hall was often empty except for a housekeeper. The elegant house-parties, the shoots over the estate, the annual servant's ball at Christmas which brought the village to life had come to an end. The patronage of village societies had finished too. The Edwardian life style had gone

With your back to the Church, walk towards Overseal. Stop on the corner by the entrance to Limes Farm.

2

The agricultural depression of the 1870s and better paid employment opportunities in mining & industry brought about a gradual decline in the population of Lullington. The Colvile's deliberately knocked down empty cottages which were inconveniently located and in poor repair, partly to avoid paying tax on them. A fifth of the cottages in the village were removed between 1901 and 1921. The open green space on your right had housing, now gone. The depression had a substantial effect on the Colvile's income from rents which more than halved between 1880 and 1920. This meant less money was spent on capital improvements to the estate, fewer servants employed at the hall and less money provided for village activities. The residents were farmers, servants, labourers and miners. In 1911

the population was 226 and by 1921 it had declined to 208. By 2011 there were only 119 in the parish.

As farms needed fewer labourers as a result of mechanisation some houses were empty. Those that were not knocked down were rented to miners and others who did not come from the village. A parish meeting was held once a year when five men attended – the vicar, churchwardens who were farmers, the



blacksmith and the village shopkeeper. Roads were muddy and surfaced with stones. Poor quality for the increasing traffic. The Parish Meeting often discussed this but their complaints fell on deaf ears at Repton Rural District Council. They said the roads were good enough. However swilling the step that led into the house was a daily chore. If you worked on the land, mud from farmyards, pig sties, barns and fields was carried into the home. The farmyard smelt, as did the privies and the workers. Bathrooms didn't exist in the labourers' cottages. In reality life did not reflect the idyllic scenes portrayed on an artist's canvas.

Continue towards Overseal and stop just past the Victorian cottages before the newer properties.

3

Between the houses stood the reading room – open Mondays to Fridays from 11am to 9.30pm during winter months.

For a subs of one penny a week members could browse through newspapers, books and magazines like Punch some of which came from the hall after the tenants had finished with them. Rules were drawn up which forbade gambling, cards and using bad language. By the war the rules had been relaxed and playing cards was allowed and darts, draughts & dominoes too. The building was knocked down to make way for the newer housing.

Continue to the junction of Dag Lane.

4

Farm labourers were paid about 18 shillings a week (90p). Many of them got a free cottage and garden and farmers sold produce to their men at a low price. Lullington had 4 small-holdings about 12 acres in size in addition to 6 large farms. The idea was that by saving profit the small-holder could one day afford a bigger unit. It didn't often happen.

12 miners lived in the village and had a 4 miles walk to Netherseal Colliery which stayed open through the war. Their walk took them towards Linton and then to the pit. It was close to the phone mast visible through the mature woodland looking along the road towards Overseal. By then a cutting machine had been introduced – a disc type of mechanism that bit into the bottom of the coal and then was shovelled up. After the introduction of the minimum wage in 1912 the miners were worse off as they had previously been paid more taking home £2 a week. During summer they worked for 4 days a week as demand was lower.

Cross the road and walk along Dag Lane. There is no pavement.

The open spaces both left and right were allotments during the war. The rent was 7s 6d.

When you reach the red brick building with decorative blue brickwork on the left, stop. The hub of the village was around the road junction ahead. The location of six important buildings – the carpenter and wheelwright, the smithy, the Creamery, the pub, the post office and the bike shop.

5

Carpenter's & wheelwright's - notice the square and compass design in the gable end of the first building on the left. Wheels were made here and then hooped with iron tyres.

The work was often done in the summer when the wooden wheels had shrunk in the dry weather. Carts and carriages were still more important than cars. They were for the wealthy. The carpenter, Mr. Berridge, was also the village undertaker and did repair work on the estate and the church – pointing, varnishing gates and doors. Ernest Berridge took over his father's business when he died but could not make a living so left in 1916.

The smithy run by Mr Radford, was the next building on the left. Blue bricks are used to display a horseshoe in the brick work. A blacksmith's work was very heavy & tiring - mending farm machinery, sharpening implements and shoeing horses, Creamery – The large building with louvred windows on the right had been left empty from 1903 when the village gas works closed. The idea to establish a 'milk factory' appealed to the local farmers. Milk was bought from farmers at an agreed price and sold in bulk yielding a higher profit. After the deduction of costs the money was divided between the suppliers. The



factory opened in 1907. Churns were loaded onto a cart and taken to Gresley station, four miles away to be transported to market.

The Colville Arms. Conditions for publicans changed considerably during the war. With workers becoming drunk in munitions factories and dockers laying the hulls of ships crooked, the government was forced to act. Previously pubs opened at 6.30am but Lloyd George put a stop to it, "Drink is doing more damage in the war than all the German submarines put together". Licensing authorities were encouraged to impose limited opening hours and in many areas the sale of alcohol was



forbidden before noon and throughout the afternoon after 2.30pm. This reduced drunkenness and these restrictions became permanent for many years.

The pub was the gossip shop of village life. This is one thing that hasn't changed. The Barber worked in the back yard.

On the site of the car park and bungalows next door stood six thatched cottages. Next to the pub was home to the bike repairer and the last cottage was the post office.

The bike repairer carried out other jobs – painting & cleaning metalwork, clock repairs, installed telephone lines, installed electric bells & put up lightning conductors.

The postman collected letters from Gresley station using a red bike & began deliveries at 8am. Deliveries completed, he sold stamps and spent the rest of the day repairing boots & shoes. At 5pm he had to cycle back to Gresley with the outgoing mail including parcels of goodies for distant family members. The returning mail bag was eagerly awaited of news from the front. Occasionally it was sad.

At the road junction turn right and walk to the entrance to Lullington Hall.

6 Lullington estate was almost the sole employer for the village and surrounding farms. This provided security and food for the workers. The Colvile Sick and Dividend Club was formed in 1913. For 3d (1p) a week members received benefit if sick and at the end of the year were paid a dividend of the remaining income. They did not collect if they ran out of benefit. Sick people who were unable to work had to rely on these friendly societies but things had improved for the elderly when the Liberal Government of 1908 passed the Old Age Pensions Act. Life was transformed for people over 70 whose total income was less than 10 shillings (50p) a week. The State would give a

single person 5 shillings a week and a married couple seven & six (37p). People drew their pension from the post office. In 1911 a compulsory health insurance scheme was introduced for all wage earners. Employees & employers contributed to the fund using a stamped card. This was the beginnings of the welfare movement.

Return to pass the Colvile Arms and stop at the village bus shelter on the right.

7 Society was dominated by men, house work was generally left to the women and children whilst men found pleasure in the pub and on the sport's field. The husband was the provider and saw himself as head of the family. The wife controlled expenditure and disciplined the children, visited sick neighbours and grandparents, always thinking that she might need their support one day. Cottages had large gardens and were able to grow their own produce.

Women in the village who had time on their hands saw it as their duty to serve others - knitting and sewing for the war effort. No woman should be just sitting, she should be knitting. Even Queen Mary sat knitting. Cardigans, socks, sweaters, mittens, scarves and anything else that could be knitted was produced in enormous amounts. Sewing focussed on clothing for the troops and the sick and wounded in hospitals. In addition women organised fund raising bazaars and fêtes in the summer. Money being sent to the Red Cross. What the war brought was recognition that women were wanted and no longer helpful but essential. Even if they were not wanted on the front line there were increasing opportunities on the Home Front. Nursing, munition work, driving ambulances and working on the land amongst other tasks.



The old Post Office

Women began to wear practical clothes and rode bicycles. They also left home before they married to find a job beyond daily travelling distance from the village.

Walk towards the cross roads by the Church and take the road towards Edingale. Pause by the church gate. If the church is open venture inside to view the war memorial

8 One additional wartime expense, resulting from fears of Zeppelin raids, was aircraft bombardment insurance. It was impractical to put blackout curtains on the church windows so the time of the evening service was changed to 3pm. Fewer people went to church during the war consequently there was less money to send to organisations beyond the parish. Charity begins at home. Money went to village causes. Jobs had to be done on Sundays. However, in August 1915 a fête was organised for the British Red Cross Society. The aim was to raise money by providing folks with fun and laughter – guess the weight of the sheep, guess the name of the doll, a play was performed and comic songs.



Private Percy Holden

Twenty two men went to war - 1/5th of the men in the village. 3 didn't return. Richard Radford who lived at the Colville Arms; Henry Wetton who was born in 1901 and lived in South View, Dag Lane next door to the garage and William Bragg. William had married his girlfriend only a few days before being killed in action in France. At the outbreak of war the vicar

appealed to the young men of the parish to do their duty to king and country by enlisting in His Majesty's Forces. To the rest he said – We may not all be able to do valiant service in the fighting line or the trenches, but each of us should strive to exercise a spirit of self-sacrifice for the sake of the brave soldiers and sailors who are protecting our shores from invasion. After the war he preached that -The Christian Church must take action to prevent the recurrence of such turmoil and misery. Arthur Townend, the vicar at the time had spent some time visiting the western front at Arras where he worked as superintendent of the Church Army hut. He spoke of his experiences on return. John Sims, who survived the war was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Military Medal.

Continue along Edingale Road towards the entrance to Lullington Park Cricket Ground on the left. Pause and consider another aspect of rural life.

9 In 1915 the Women's National Land Service Corps was set up. They were provided with a green arm band and no uniform and helped out with farming tasks including ploughing. There was an increase in U boat activity during 1916 and by autumn the country was growing short of food. Rationing began – meat, butter, sugar and tea. The government persuaded the farmers to grow more wheat and potatoes. With so few men to harvest them it put pressure on rural communities to allow women & children to help. This meant children working instead of going to school. They had days off school for blackberrying too – In 1918 the pupils spent five hours on the task. They also had to help out at home out of school hours - gardening, chopping sticks, bird scaring and watching the cows as they grazed the roadside verges. The Women's Institute also took root at this time encouraging and inspiring women to spread their wings. Education, gardening advice and cookery lectures were just some of their programmes. However packing parcels, rolling bandages and making clothes gave women the opportunity to be together. 'As in many wars, there was an energy and urgency which kept life moving along at an intense rate, though well before 1918 it was painfully clear that the scale of the conflict was causing exhaustion to creep into daily lives' quotes Kate Adie in her book 'Fighting on the Home Front'.

A number of poaching incidents are recorded during the war. The activity provided much needed food for the family. The village bobby spotted a miner from Coton in the Elms walking with four dogs at 6.30 in the morning. The Poaching Prevention Act of 1862 allowed a policeman to stop and search any one on the road or in a public place whom he suspected of taking game. The lad had a rabbit in his pocket. The result was a £1 fine plus five shillings costs. If he failed to pay he was imprisoned for 15 days. The magistrates were much harder on men who persisted in poaching. In 1917 2 miners were caught with 4 partridges, a gun and a rabbit. The gun was confiscated and the men given hefty fines as they had been caught 3 times that year and one had 21 previous convictions. Fines of £5.10s and £3 were imposed.

If you wish to lengthen your walk and enjoy a view over the Trent Valley towards Lichfield and Cannock Chase walk around the perimeter of Lullington Park, home of the cricket club, and through the woodland. Then return to the village and pause by the Village Hall where you parked to begin the walk. Originally this building was the village school.



10 The school building has an impressive facade – the Colville coat of arms on the front below the bell turret. However most schools of the period had a piano, library and a large playground but not Lullington. When the school was inspected in December 1914 it was found to have damp walls, filthy paintwork, inadequate heating and two broken window panes. In wet weather the playground was unfit to use becoming muddy and covered with pools of water. The one fireplace was inadequate to heat the two large rooms. The school managers neglected the building as there was a general feeling that the environment where children learnt didn't matter. Limited funds came from Derbyshire Education Committee. The inspector said that the children should be given a more useful

school life. Arithmetic, history and geography were weak, composition work was too formal and in general the teaching was not successful in obtaining either mental effort or interest. 9 months later the headmistress died following flu, developed because of the cold building.

The following comments came from the School Log Book 1911 - 1919:

'Children left school at 13 when the boys usually went to work on the farms and the girls tended to become domestic servants. After the inspection the curriculum changed to reflect the roles they were to perform. Maths was applied to the home environment and rural life hoping that the children would benefit from the practical nature of the problems they were set. School walks were taken through Lullington Park. In April 1917 the children noticed the budding trees. Girls did needlework but the boys did drawing and additional maths. It was assumed that domestic work and love of the home should be the focus of women's lives. Patching, darning, doll dressing, knitting and learning new stitches encourage thrift, neatness and self respect. They knitted socks for the war effort. PE exercises mainly arm exercises and drill were intended to promote smartness and discipline. Occasionally girls would leave school to go into service but would be readmitted to school if the post was unsuitable. She would leave school again when a new post came up.'

Between 1911 and 1916 four to thirteen year old children went to school but numbers declined from 55 to 30. Pupils came and went as their parents moved on from one job to another. Numbers fluctuated. At the end of September 1915 the school managers gave a number of boys permission to work on local farms as some men were away at the front causing a shortage of adult labour. One lad called Charles Holden was absent over 2 weeks and was only 11. I was surprised to read that his absence was followed up as he was regularly punished for bad behaviour and cheek! The signing of the Armistice on 11th November 1918 was greeted with great excitement in the village. Only 7 children went to school.

11 The End of the Great War

Gilbert remained in East Africa after the war developing his huge cattle ranch. He became a millionaire but in

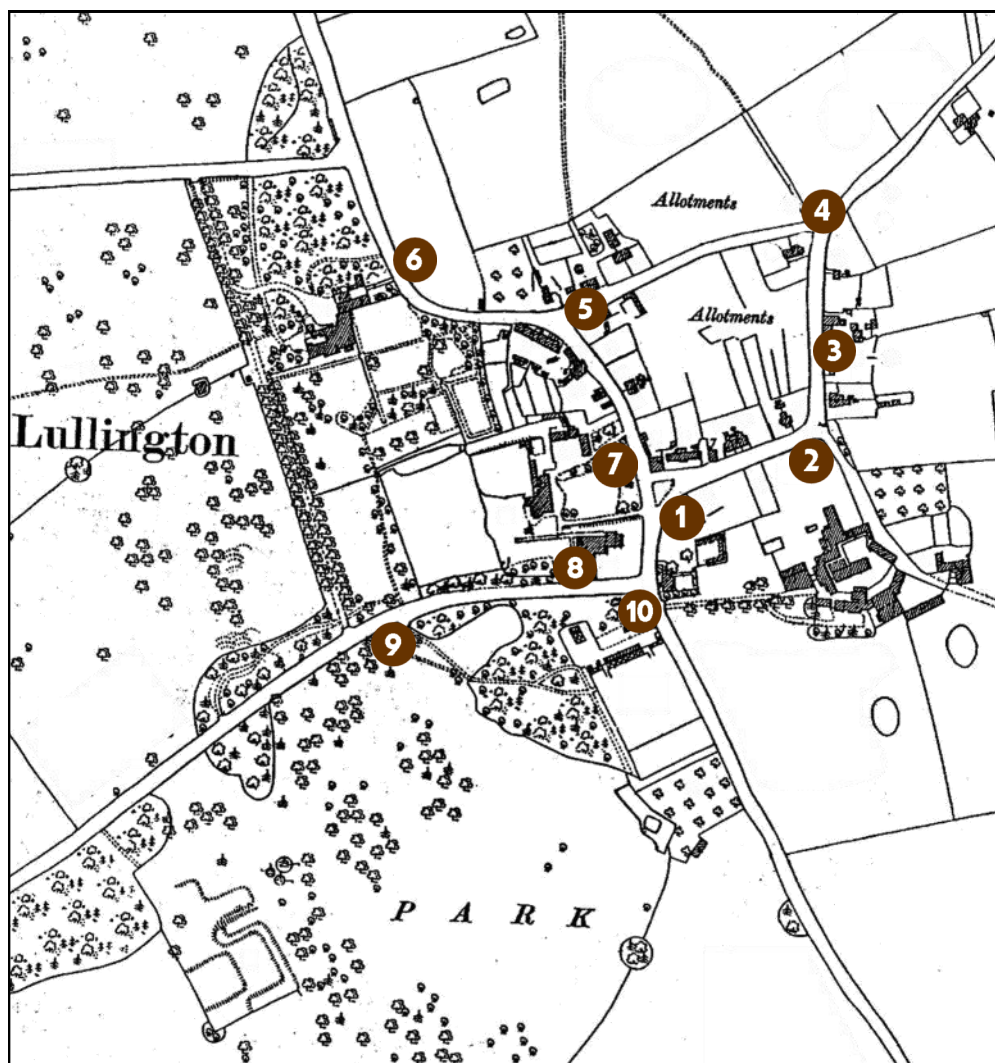
comparison with the high society life of other English landowners in Kenya he lived in squalor, preferring the company of Masai tribesmen and his many dogs. He never lived in Lullington again. The estate was sold to The Merchant Venturers in 1950. The hall having been lived in by various tenants since the start of the Great War.

Land owned by the family in Overseal was sold off after the war during a period of rising land prices.

New Plantation & Woollens Plantation are not on the 1902 map. These areas were planted with conifers after 1918 to replace trees that had been felled for the war effort.

The Cricket Club had not played a game since the end of the 1914 season. 1919 arrived, time to put on the boots, pads and whites, find the wickets and get the team organised again.

The Great War shattered lives, changed society and altered the way we think about conflict. The commemoration, a century later, still considers the many changes that the war brought.



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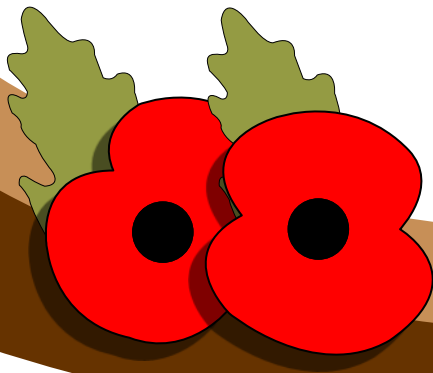
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