

The Workhouse in WW1 ... and how the Germans nearly came to Tattingsstone!

The effects of WW1 reached Tattingsstone in many different and unexpected ways and from Workhouse records we can see some of the implications:

In 1914 156 soldiers of 1st Highland Field Regiment of Royal Engineers descended on the Workhouse for the night, presumably on their way to Harwich and the Western Front. For this the Army paid the Workhouse Board £5.19.3d for their billeting. Similarly the next year 39 men and 8 horses of the 2nd East Anglian Field Regiment of Royal Engineers stayed a night while passing through. Other arrivals at the Workhouse included inmates transferred from the Tendring Workhouse probably to release space there for troops on their way through Harwich.

The threat of air raids led to a reorganisation of the wards within the Workhouse with the elderly and infirm moved to the ground floor and the more active inmates moved upstairs.

A weekly training session was held in the Dining Hall for the Volunteer Training Corps who would in effect be the Home Guard in the event of an evacuation ... a touch of Dad's Army in Tattingsstone maybe? The Dining Hall was also used for Whist Drives, to raise money for the Red Cross. Both of these activities must have been so very different from the normal everyday life in the Workhouse!

In 1916 Mr Carter, the Master of the Workhouse, was called up for military service at the age of 38. He obviously didn't want to go and asked to be exempted. The Workhouse Board thought differently possibly for patriotic reasons! Carter did escape call up for a short while as the War Office then decided he was in a reserved occupation but they changed their minds again so Carter finally went to War and fortunately for him he was one of the lucky ones to come back!

Food was not rationed as it was during WW2 although the "Revised Dietary for Wartime" was introduced. Imported food was in very short supply and so the price of home produced food rose. The supplier of cheese to the Workhouse made it clear that he would not take less than the market price.

There was a greater emphasis on self-sufficiency during the war years and a tenant farmer who worked some of the Samford Union land planted $\frac{3}{4}$ ton of seed potatoes and the yield was great enough to sell a surplus of 5 tons to the Army Canteen Board for £5.0.0 per ton.

And to aid the war effort, some old iron bedsteads were sold to Cocksedges a firm in Ipswich to be made into munitions!

Finally, towards the end of the War a member of the military came to the Workhouse to assess it for the housing of German prisoners of war! It never happened and to this day it's not known why.

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