

Surrey in the Great War Factsheet

The “War to End All Wars” was a conflict that started in Europe but spread across the globe. Between 28th July 1914 and 11th November 1918 over 70 million people took up arms. An estimated 9 million members of the armed forces and 7 million civilians lost their lives. The introduction of mechanisation and new technologies contributed to the terrible death toll and the period saw unprecedented changes in the old world order, including political revolutions and the collapse of empires.

In Europe, after an initial period of advance by the central powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary the positions of the main combatants entered a long period of stalemate characterised by trench warfare. All sides had expected the war to be a short one but the cycle of offensive and counter-offensive was to drag on until 1918 when, after a spring campaign in which German forces made major advances, the tide turned in favour of the Allies and an armistice was agreed for 11th November.

The impact of the First World War was felt immediately in Surrey. Professional soldiers (“Regulars”) in the Surrey Regiments went into action in the early months of the war and within weeks of the outbreak of hostilities Belgian refugees were being accommodated in towns and villages throughout Surrey. Numerous local initiatives sprang up to raise funds and provide support for servicemen, their families and refugees alike.

The Defence of the Realm Act was introduced within days of the declaration of war and this led to restrictions on reporting and the introduction of the blackout in response to the fear of Zeppelin raids. Newspapers of the time are full of stories of prosecutions of local people for having unshaded windows and lights on cars and bicycles. The fears were justified as Guildford was bombed although there were no casualties. Croydon – then part of Surrey – was less fortunate as 11 people were killed in a single Zeppelin raid in October 1916.

As the war moved into its second year the mobilisation of troops gathered pace and numerous camps and temporary billets were created across the county to supplement the established camps such as the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, Bisley, Tadworth in Epsom and Inkerman Barracks in Woking. An enormous camp was created at Witley near Godalming, exclusively for Canadian troops. Hastily arranged concerts and other amusements entertained the huge numbers of servicemen who were to be seen in even the quietest rural village. New railway lines and stations were opened up at Pirbright, Deepcut and Blackdown to assist the movement of troops and supplies. Residents of German origin were transported to a large internment camp in Frimley. The world was on the move.

Businesses and organisations began to feel the effect of staff leaving to join the forces. Women stepped into the breach and were soon being trained to work the land, drive buses and take up positions that had previously been male dominated. The introduction of Conscription in 1916 intensified the situation and military tribunals met regularly to consider applications for exclusion from the armed forces. Every available industrial business was redirected to war work. Surrey, with its leading role in the early days of aviation was a hub for aircraft production and training of pilots. Manufacturers such as Sopwith in Kingston and Martinsyde in Woking ramped up their efforts to manufacture enough planes for the pilots being taught to fly at Brooklands.

The log books of the Maybury Infants School (now the Maybury Centre) indicate how the war affected them, from the amalgamation of classes due to the lack of teachers to complaints of cold classrooms unable to be heated during the winter, temporary closures when commandeered for military billets and food shortages - “a good many attendances being lost this week due to boys being sent out for food”. At the end of the war this small school reported that 480 old boys had served in the forces, of whom 74 had died.

The influx of casualties from the front was met with the opening up of military hospitals across the county. Many of Surrey's large homes and estates were put to use – Clandon Park, Ottershaw Park and West Hall in West Byfleet. Mount Felix and Oatlands Park in Walton on Thames became hospitals for troops from New Zealand. The predecessor to Woking Community Hospital - Beechcroft - was busy with casualties from across the world. The presence of the Mosque in Woking led to the creation of the Muslim Burial Ground for casualties from the Indian forces. The fallen are now buried at Brookwood Cemetery and the burial ground transformed into a Peace Garden with a memorial to the men who once lay there. The traumatic effects of the conflict were not just physical. Men suffering from what came to be known as "Shell Shock" were admitted to local authority run mental hospitals such as Brookwood.

Surrey's newspapers began to fill with lists of casualties and tell harrowing stories of the effect of the war on individual families. The Surrey Advertiser, October 4th 1916 relates the death of George Chapman of York Road, Woking – a brilliant scholar. Chapman had written to his parents as he lay mortally wounded "Though obviously written in such physical distress that the poor lad could hardly hold the pencil, the whole note breathes a quiet courage very characteristic of its writer".

There were also reports of military honours and acts of valour. Major Richard Willis won the Victoria Cross for incredible bravery during the landing at Gallipoli on 25th April in 1915. His father in law wrote that "Captain Willis's haversack which was worn in the battle was emptied in front of me and every paper, book, and article inside it had holes in it and bullets came falling out of the holes. His cap was pierced more than once by bullets and his water bottle and field glasses that hung off his Sam Browne webbing were shot to pieces".

Many women whose family members were fighting at the front became nurses in the Voluntary Aid Detachments, mainly in hospitals in the UK but also at the front. Some gave their lives as a result of military action, infections or illnesses contracted in the course of their duties. Margaret Trevenon Arnold of Chiddingfold died at Le Treport Hospital of pneumonia and was buried with full military honours. In total over 90,000 women and men volunteered for the Red Cross during the war.

The war placed unparalleled demands on the country's manpower and all communities quickly became accustomed to the sight of their men going off to war. Rolls of honour, listing those serving in the armed forces, were proudly posted up in churches and public places as a demonstration of local patriotism and sacrifice. As the losses began to mount, local war shrines were erected to serve as a focus for contemplation and prayer.

After the war, as towns and villages came to terms with the cost, a collective determination that the deaths of so many should not be forgotten saw war memorials erected in almost every community in the country. Local war memorials answered people's need for a special place to remember the fallen and honour their sacrifice, especially in light of the decision, first made in March 1915 and reaffirmed after the war, that the actual bodies of casualties (regardless of rank and social background) should not be repatriated but remain close to the place where they had died. Not all relate solely to war dead – the Safe Return memorial at St John's in West Byfleet and Horsell St Mary's Church Parishioners tablet are examples of memorials that honour all who served. There are over 2,000 war memorials in Surrey dedicated to those who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Great War.

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For more information

<http://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/>

<http://www.surreyinthegreatwar.org.uk/>

Dame Ethel Smyth Factsheet

Her Life

Ethel Mary Smyth was born in Marylebone (then Middlesex) on 22 April 1858, the fourth of the Smyth family's eight children. She led a highly eventful life both in England and partly in Germany as one of the greatest British composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although her all-absorbing passion and much of her time was spent on music composition, she was a keen sportswoman, and an energetic and frequent writer on musical matters and women's rights within the musical establishment. She was also a well-regarded author with 10 books published in her lifetime. She supported the suffrage cause and for 2 years was an active member of the WSPU as a suffragette. She never married having rejected an offer from her long-standing friend Henry Brewster. She died at her house in Hook Heath, Woking on 8 May 1944.

Her Homes

Shortly after her birth, probably on her military father's return from India, the family moved to Sidcup, then part of Kent. In 1867 when her father was posted to Aldershot, the family moved to a large house, 'Frimhurst', at Frimley Green, Surrey. When she went to Germany in 1877 to study music, she lived in Leipzig, but 'Frimhurst' remained Ethel's English base when spending part of each year at home as required by her father. On her father's death in 1894, 'Frimhurst' was sold and Ethel moved to a cottage on Portsmouth Road, Frimley which she named 'One Oak'. Finally she moved to Hook Heath, Woking in 1910 to a newly built house she named 'Coign' where she remained until her death.

Ethel the Composer

She had decided at an early age to devote her life to music as a result of listening to one of the Smyth family's governesses who came from Germany and was very musical. Later, through a friend of her mother, she received her first lessons in composition from an army officer who made her aware of the music of the great composers. Ethel decided that she must go to Leipzig, at that time one of the most important conservatories, to study composition and eventually, after years of battling her father, who strongly disapproved, went there in 1877. Dissatisfied with the teaching at the Leipzig Conservatorium which had deteriorated since Mendelssohn's death, she took lessons from Heinrich von Herzogenberg of the Bach Verein and then moved in with the Herzogenbergs, becoming close friends with Heinrich's wife, Lisl. The Herzogenbergs were well connected to the musical establishment and as a result, Ethel met and came to know important composers notably Brahms, Grieg and latterly Tchaikovsky who encouraged her to compose orchestral works. Ethel composed many works, initially chamber music when studying with Herzogenberg and later large-scale orchestral works including a great Mass in D, a double concerto for violin and horn, and six operas. Sadly severe deafness set in during her later years and she composed very little after 1930. She was awarded Doctorates of Music by both Durham and Oxford Universities and was awarded the DBE in 1922.

Ethel the Writer

She was an indefatigable memoirist and writer on many subjects but chiefly on musical matters and what she perceived as a male prejudice against women in the musical establishment. She commenced writing her books when still working for the French Army as a radiographer at a hospital at Vichy during WW1 saying that musical composition was impossible under the conditions but writing her memoirs was an acceptable relief. In all she wrote 10 books published in her lifetime, the most important being her memoirs which included pen portraits of various luminaries including Brahms, Emmeline Pankhurst and Empress Eugénie of France who lived in exile nearby in Farnborough. There is also one volume on her beloved dogs and biographies of her friends Maurice Baring and the conductor Sir Thomas Beecham.

Ethel the Suffragette

She was deeply concerned with the apparent lack of rights for women in many aspects of life but particularly so in respect of what she perceived as prejudice against women in the musical world. She wrote many articles and sections of some of her books on this subject and was particularly concerned with the difficulty of securing performances of her own works given the sexual prejudice she experienced. Whilst she remained sympathetic to women's causes in effect all her life, she devoted 2 years to the WSPU, inspired by meeting Emmeline Pankhurst, and suffered a brief period of imprisonment in Holloway jail for breaking the window of the Colonial Secretary's London home. It was during this time that her song 'The March of the Women' was adopted as the WSPU anthem. Although approving of the aims of the WSPU and 'Votes for Women', she discontinued her support after her 2-year period as a voluble suffragette.

Ethel the Sportswoman

From the beginning when, as a child, she won a bet for riding a pig, to the end of her long life when she enjoyed membership of the Woking Golf Club, Ethel was a keen sportswoman. In addition to golf, tennis and cycling, she was a competent horsewoman enjoying hunting, an adventurous rock climber in the Alps and a walker especially in Germany, Switzerland and Italy. She was also a member of the White Heather ladies' cricket team around the turn of the century, at that time a rarity. It was her proud boast that she never lost a golf ball even when, 'as a result of a directional error', it landed in the rough and was retrieved by her beloved dog.

Ethel in Woking

She came to live in Woking in 1910 when she took up residence in a new cottage designed for her by Clotilde, the architect daughter of Henry Brewster, and paid for by the American patroness of the arts Mary Dodge, a friend of one of her sisters. The site in Hook Heath Road was ideally located opposite Woking Golf Club grounds for Ethel's interest in the game. Musically she became involved in local activities including conducting her own works: her compositions from 1910 to 1930 were composed while permanently based at 'Coign'. All of her books were written after she had settled in Woking. She had many visitors and there is a photograph of her protecting Emmeline Pankhurst when police officers came to 'Coign' to re-arrest her during the infamous 'Cat and Mouse' regime, and another of Ethel at 'Coign' standing together with the Princesse de Polignac, the well-known Parisian patroness and hostess. Ethel was a proud citizen of Woking and is reported to have stated that "if ever I were to be ennobled, the title I would choose would be Ethel, Duchess of Woking".

Finally

Ethel was a remarkable woman of indomitable spirit and boundless energy but despite her involvement in many other areas, she always insisted that her true and primary vocation was that of a composer.

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Dame Ethel Smyth Timeline

- 1858** Born 22 April in Marylebone, London, the fourth of eight Smyth children. Family moved to Sidcup, Kent after army officer father returned from India.
- 1867** Smyth family moved to Frimley Green, Surrey when Ethel's father was posted to Aldershot.
- 1870** Ethel introduced to classical music by a musical governess and further encouraged by an army officer friend of the family.

- 1872** Sent to boarding school with her sister Mary. Ethel remained determined to study music in Germany despite her father's strong objections.
- 1877** Finally achieved permission from her father to study music in Leipzig. Dissatisfied with teaching at the Conservatorium there, instead she studied composition with Heinrich von Herzogenberg, a minor composer. Became a close friend of Heinrich's wife Lisl.
- 1882** Injured knee when rock climbing. She went to Florence where she met Lisl's sister Julia Brewster and brother-in-law Henry Brewster for the first time.
- 1883** First meeting with the exiled Empress Eugénie of France, living in Farnborough just a couple of miles from the Smyths' home and friendly with Mrs Smyth. The Empress supported Ethel in her musical ambitions.
- 1884** First public performance of Smyth's compositions in Leipzig.
- 1885** Deepening friendship with Henry Brewster caused a rift with Lisl von Herzogenberg, who felt that Smyth had betrayed her and her sister. Smyth broke off contact with Brewster but her relationship with Lisl ended forever. Smyth remained in England in 1885/86.
- 1887** Returned to Leipzig for winter. People were generally friendly but Smyth was locked out of the Herzogenbergs' social circle. Given Marco, the first of a series of dogs which she kept for the rest of her life.
- 1888** Met Greig and Tchaikovsky who wrote that 'Miss Smyth is one of the comparatively few women composers who may be seriously reckoned among the workers in this sphere of music'.
- 1889** Returned to England to look after her ageing parents as all other Smyth children had left home.
- 1890** First public performance of her compositions in England at a Crystal Palace concert well received. Henry Brewster was present and her friendship with him was renewed.
- 1891** Completed her Mass in D. Death of Lisl von Herzogenberg, no reconciliation having been achieved despite the efforts of friends to mend the relationship. Death of Smyth's mother.
- 1893** Mass in D performed at Royal Albert Hall, London to public acclaim but a lukewarm reaction from critics.
- 1894** Death of father and sale of Smyth family home. Ethel moved to a cottage in Frimley.
- 1895** Death of Julia Brewster. Henry Brewster proposed marriage to Smyth, who rejected him.
- 1898** Premiere of Smyth's first opera, *Fantasio*, in Weimar, with libretto by Henry Brewster (who was to become the librettist for all of her operas until his death). This was the first of six operas composed between the 1890s and 1920s.
- 1902** Premiere of her second opera, *Der Wald*, in Berlin and a successful performance in London.
- 1903** Successful performances of *Der Wald* at the New York Metropolitan Opera, its first (and, for over 100 years, only) production of a work by a female composer.
- 1906** Premiere of Smyth's third opera, *The Wreckers*, in Leipzig.
- 1908** Henry Brewster fell very ill and died, aged 57, at his daughter Clotilde's house in Farnborough.
Staged performance of *The Wreckers* at Her Majesty's Theatre in London.

- 1910** Moved to Hook Heath, Woking to a house built for her opposite the golf course where she loved to play and designed for her by Clotilde, Brewster's daughter. Awarded honorary degree of Doctor of Music by Durham University.
- 1911** Impressed by Emmeline Pankhurst and the 'Votes for Women' movement, Smyth pledged 2 years of her life to the WSPU. Her 'March of the Women' became the suffragette anthem.
- 1912** Briefly imprisoned in Holloway Prison for participating in an orchestrated window-smashing campaign across the West End of London.
- 1913** 'Flight into Egypt' – Smyth leaves Britain as "my sole hope of struggling out of the suffrage whirlpool and getting back to music".
- 1914** In France with Emmeline Pankhurst (who was temporarily released from prison). All plans for performances of her works in Germany cancelled. Returned to England as war declared.
- 1915** Joined her sister Nina running an ambulance on the Italian front. Subsequently trained as a radiographer and attached to the XIII Division of the French Army as a radiographer at the military hospital at Vichy.
- 1916** Premiere of her fourth opera, *The Boatswain's Mate* (written in Egypt to her own libretto). Began to write her first book of memoirs while at the military hospital.
- 1918** Returned to England from France in March.
- 1919** First book, *Impressions that Remained* (two volumes), published. This was the first of 10 books that she published in her later years.
- 1920** Death of patroness and friend Empress Eugénie. Deafness severe by this time.
- 1922** Created Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (DBE) for services to music.
- 1926** Awarded honorary degree of Doctor of Music by Oxford University.
- 1927** Completed composition of her double concerto for violin and horn.
- 1930** Last major work composed – the symphonic oratorio *The Prison* to a text by Brewster.
- 1933** Publication of her essay collection *Female Pippings in Eden*, which included a long biographical sketch of Emmeline Pankhurst and chapters on Brewster and Brahms.
- 1934** Concert of her works at Royal Albert Hall in honour of her 75th birthday.
- 1939** Performances of *The Wreckers* at Sadler's Wells Theatre, London.
- 1940** Publication of her final volume of memoirs, *What Happened Next*.
- 1944** Died at her home in Hook Heath, Woking on 8 May, aged 86.

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The Women's Suffrage Movement in Surrey

The roots of the women's suffrage movement in England lie in the aftermath of the Reform Act of 1832, which extended voting rights among men but not women. However, campaigns for equal voting rights did not become effective until the end of the century, with the formation of the Women's Franchise League and the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). Members of these societies were both male and female and were known as suffragists, from which the later, more radical suffragette movement developed.

In 1903, Emmeline Pankhurst left the NUWSS and, along with her daughter Christabel, formed the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), arguing that a more drastic means of action was required for women to achieve the vote. From 1903 to 1917, the WSPU was the leading militant organisation campaigning for women's suffrage in Great Britain. Tactics used included illegal actions such as smashing windows, obstruction, violence, arson, and hunger strike following imprisonment; members became known as suffragettes.

The growth of Suffrage societies across Surrey

In Surrey, the movement appears to have been active from the 1870s, with the first suffrage meeting allegedly being held in Guildford in January 1871. A branch of the Central Society for Women's Suffrage had been formed in Reigate by 1906, with Ruth Pym as secretary, and by 1909 had affiliated to the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies to become the Reigate, Redhill and District Society for Women's Suffrage.

South east Surrey had traditionally been an area of non-conformism and reform and by the late nineteenth century was home to radical but wealthy residents, particularly in the villages around Dorking.

By 1909, the Godalming branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) had been established, with Mrs Mary Watts (the widow of artist G F Watts), the president. Gertrude Jekyll, Surrey's famous garden designer, was also a supporter of the NUWSS, designing and working on banners for both the Guildford and Godalming branches.

The Guildford branch had a shop in the High Street from 1913-1919 at which the Guildford Trades and Labour Council held their meetings. By far the largest meeting in Guildford was in July 1913, when, in preparation for the Suffrage Pilgrimage to London, meetings were held both afternoon and evening in North Street. The evening meeting on 27 July was deemed to have been the largest public meeting held in the town with 8,000 attendees.

Further branches of the NUWSS were established in Farnham and at Royal Holloway College, Englefield Green (1908), Oxted and Weybridge (1909), Cranleigh (1910) and by 1913 there were further branches in Egham, Epsom and Limpsfield.

The Woking branch of the NUWSS formed in 1910. Woking also had a branch of the militant Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), which was established by 1911 partly due to the most prominent local campaigner Ethel Smyth, composer and author. As a result of her friendship with the Pankhursts, Ethel decided to suspend most of her musical activities to devote her energies to assisting and promoting the movement. Mrs Horace Barrett was the Woking WSPU secretary; in June 1912, member Mrs Skepwith, also a member of the Tax Resistance League, had her goods sold at auction to pay for her overdue tax.

Other suffrage campaigners who resided in and around Woking included Mrs Laird-Cox, Miss Davies-Colley and Mrs Edith Hoskyns-Abrahall (West Byfleet).

By 1913, the NUWSS had nearly 100,000 members and launched the Woman's Suffrage Pilgrimage to demonstrate to Parliament how many women wanted the vote. The march planned to converge on Hyde Park on 26 July 1913, with local groups passing through their own regions. An estimated 50,000 women reached Hyde Park in London on 26th July.

Activism and Militant Suffragettes in Surrey

Surrey also saw its fair share of activism. In February 1913, the house of Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George, which was under construction on edge of Walton Heath golf course, was damaged by an explosion, for which Emmeline Pankhurst was sentenced to three years in prison. There was also an explosion of a bomb in the gentlemen's toilet at Oxted railway station, two months later. The ultimate activism came in June that year when Emily Wilding Davidson gave her life for the Women's Suffrage Movement, dying as a result of injuries she received from throwing herself under the King's horse at the Epsom Derby.

There is much controversy as to what she intended that day but it is generally accepted that she was attempting to pin suffragette colours onto the horse's reins. Whatever her intentions, there is some evidence to suggest that she was involved in the planning of the fire at the Members' Stand at Hurst Park Racecourse, near Molesey, five days later (Davidson actually died on 8 June). On 9 June 1913, militant suffragettes Kitty Marion and Betty (Clara) Givene were arrested for the deed. Their trial was held at Guildford on 3 July and they were sentenced to three years' penal servitude and immediately went on a hunger-and-thirst strike. Later that month, a bomb was left at Haslemere station but failed to ignite.

In 1911, in line with a national WSPU coordinated protest, Woking suffragettes Mary Elizabeth Stables and Ethel Smyth defaced their census forms (Smyth wrote "No Vote, No Census" across the sheet). Ethel's suffragette battle song *The March of the Women*, written the same year, was sung by suffrage supporters throughout London and elsewhere. Her uncompromising and energetic spirit led her to become a driving force in the women's movement and on 9 March 1912 she was arrested and taken to Bow Street Police Station for smashing the window of an anti-suffrage politician's office; she was sentenced to two months in Holloway prison.

Following Emmeline Pankhurst's release from hunger strike in prison in April 1913, she was sheltered by Ethel at her home in Hook Heath, Woking. However, the cottage was under constant surveillance by the Surrey Constabulary who, on 26 May re-arrested Emmeline under the Cat and Mouse Act (1913), as she attempted to leave; this notorious Act allowed for the temporary release of hunger striking suffragettes ('mice') who had become ill but also allowed their re-arrest once recovered.

Causing damage to golf courses, as an attack on male dominated organizations in the county, was a popular act of militancy. Interestingly, Woking Golf Club, of which Ethel Smyth was a member of the Ladies section, received no damage.

Suffrage and the First World War

At the outbreak of the First World War some but not all of the suffrage societies suspended militant tactics to focus on the war effort. The government in response granted an amnesty to all suffrage prisoners. Ironically, Emmeline Pankhurst's Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was one of the major societies to support the government, despite her having fire bombed the Chancellor's house only months before. Public support and sympathy with the movement had greatly increased following the rough and unjust treatment of protesting women. Suspending their protests in the face of a greater threat to the nation showed that they were rational and reasonable.

During 1914-1918, two million women worked in roles traditionally fulfilled by men, an achievement which helped to silence one of the arguments against women's suffrage. The contribution of women

to the war effort became a key factor in obtaining the vote. In 1917, a report on electoral reform (resulting from a conference the previous year) universally recommended women's suffrage, albeit limited.

Securing the Vote – the Final Hurdle

The electoral reform report of 1917 led directly to The Representation of the People Act being passed on 6 February, 1918. However, the Act only awarded the vote to women who were householders or the wives of householders, aged 30 and over.

The sentiment of a bitter sweet victory must have been felt by many women. The leaders of the women's suffrage groups were exclusively middle class, many of whom received the vote in 1918 but the movement was nothing without the support of working class women who remained excluded by the Act. In November that year The Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act was passed allowing women to stand for Parliament. As a result, Constance Markievicz was the first elected female MP (Sinn Fein) although she did not take her seat; Christabel Pankhurst stood at Smethwick as the Women's Party candidate but was narrowly defeated, meaning that it was not until 1919 when the first female MP, Lady Nancy Astor, sat in the House of Commons.

On 14 December 1918, 8.5 million women were eligible to vote in the general election for the first time. However, it was a further ten year wait for the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act of 1928 until women were given equal voting rights to men, and the voting age was lowered to 21. Fifteen million women became eligible to vote in the general election of May 1929.

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For more information on Women's Suffrage in Surrey visit

<http://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/themes/people/activists/suffragettes/suffrage-surrey/>