

CROYDON AND THE GREAT WAR



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TOWN HALL, CROYDON

From the official Photograph, 1896, in commemoration of its opening
by the Prince of Wales (King Edward VII.)

CROYDON AND THE GREAT WAR

The Official History of the War Work of the Borough
and its Citizens from 1914 to 1919

TOGETHER WITH

THE CROYDON ROLL OF HONOUR

EDITED BY

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B.A., B.MUS., J.P.

Honorary Freeman of the Borough ; Mayor from 1906 to 1908

ASSISTED BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND PORTRAITS



Prepared under the direction
and at the cost of the Corporation
of Croydon and published at the
Central Public Library,
Town Hall, Croydon.

1920

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Note.—The portraits which illustrate the Roll of Honour appear on numbered plates I.—XXXVI. which are included in the Roll itself. The references at the end of some of the entries in the Roll form the index (e.g., “Plate XXIX., 5,” means that the fifth portrait on plate XXIX. is that of the subject of the entry.)

The portraits also include a few of living soldiers, amongst whom are (Councillor) S.Sgt. J. A. Clarke, V., 1, and 2nd Air Mech. A. J. Clarke, R.A.F., VI., 5, and others from whose names reference is similarly made in the list of Naval and Military Honours.

Part One
INTRODUCTORY

I. Introduction

Without doubt the World War of 4th August, 1914 to 11th November, 1918, was the greatest crime in history. Look at it which way you will, the length and magnitude of Germany's preparation, the subtlety and meanness of her espionage, her colossal lying, her inhuman brutality, her callous shamelessness towards friend and foe alike, her reckless defiance of all decency, her innumerable and in many cases indescribable cruelties to old men, women and children, prisoners and wounded, her diabolical inventions of air-warfare, and of the still more infamous submarine warfare (waged not only against our naval and mercantile marine but also against peaceful fishermen, ordinary civilian crews and passengers, nay even, though it sound incredible, against hospital ships), and the wholesale use of poison-gases and well-poisonings, made up together an immense villainy too bad for adequate description, a heap of iniquity too colossal to grasp, the fierceness and especially the unexpectedness of which nearly overthrew the world. Even the failure of Germany leaves us maimed and exhausted, though our spirit is undaunted ; for as the Duke of Wellington always declared, " Nothing is more horrible than a Victory, except a Defeat."

In naming 11th November, 1918, the date of the armistice, as the end of active war, we may indeed be called to account ; for even when Peace with Germany was signed on 28th June, 1919, and even when, after many vicissitudes it was ratified on 10th January, 1920, war was still active in many quarters of the world, and it will be long subsequent to the publication of this book before peace with Germany's many accomplices can be achieved.

Englishmen stood shoulder to shoulder in this gigantic life-and-death struggle, and the blows England dealt were heavy with the weight of the whole nation.

Croydon sent 25,000 men to the War, and 2,500 of these, alas, never came back ; 10,000 returned wounded, and they and the unwounded (the more fortunate remaining half of Croydon's fighters) received many medals and honours for their bravery, besides having acquired the esteem and admiration of their fellow citizens.

Every town has, published or unpublished, its Roll of Honour ; and behind its contribution to the military, naval, or air forces engaged at the front, or supporting the actual

combatants, it has a noble record of money raised and supplies sent and work done by non-combatants; by the weak, the middle aged, the old, and above all by the women; without which support the armies in the field could not have won through.

As regards the Roll of Honour it is more than three years ago that the Chief Librarian suggested to the Libraries Committee the necessity of compiling a record of every Croydon man and woman who had sacrificed life for King and Country in the Great War, or who had won naval or military honours. The Town Council unanimously adopted the proposal and the Roll of Honour was at once started. It is only just that I should record here the large share in this work performed so excellently by the Deputy Librarian (Mr. H. A. Sharp); by the former Deputy Librarian (Mr. John Warner, now the Librarian of Newport, Monmouth); by Miss Kathleen Snow, and especially by the Reference Librarian (Mr. L. Roy McColvin). An attempt was made to add a list of the wounded to our list of honours to the living and to our glorious melancholy list of the noble dead, but the difficulties proved altogether insurmountable, and it had to be abandoned.

At the Croydon Council Meeting on 21st July, 1919, the Chairman of the Libraries Committee (Councillor J. O. Pelton) proposed that an account of the military activities of Croydon men at home and on the various battle-fronts, and further a history of what we civilians did and suffered in Croydon, and the efforts we made to support the army and the country during the War should be added to this Roll of Honour, and that the whole should be published as the record of Croydon in the War. His proposal was unanimously adopted, and the work was entrusted to the Libraries Committee, with the Chief Librarian (Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers) as secretary and sub-editor; and the great honour of the editorship of the whole was placed upon my own shoulders. The Mayor (Alderman Howard Houlder), the Town Clerk (Dr. J. M. Newnham), and the Borough Accountant (Mr. J. H. McCall) kindly joined the Chairman in the small Editorial Committee then formed; and those responsible for the several divisions of the town's war-work took much trouble to give us particulars of the activities over which they so efficiently presided. [After November, 1919, the new Mayor, Councillor C. Heath Clark, also came to our assistance.]

To keep the book within reasonable dimensions we have condensed our record to the extreme limit, but we hope we have not destroyed its interest. And those who wish for fuller details

(especially as to the Roll of Honour) are referred to the Reference Library at the Town Hall, where the full text of the whole work as originally compiled may be inspected.

We have wished to show that Croydon had a worthy military history and that her own regiment "The Queen's" maintained in this last great test an already glorious record. The prowess of our Croydon Yeomanry and Croydon A.S.C. men must also be properly narrated with due acknowledgment. These and the Roll of Honour were to be the cardinal features of the book. But we desired to do more ; to give as faithful a picture as might be of the state of our town in war-time, and especially to show that those who stayed at home threw themselves ardently into every kind of work that would help the fighters, maintain civil order, and provide for the many needs that a war inevitably brings with it, in war-manufactures, in the provision of clothing, money, food and fuel. A glance through the list of contents will show what has been included.

There are, I fear, omissions from the work. For example, we have found it impossible to give more than a passing reference to the work of all the churches for the country in its hour of need. A volume might be written on that work alone, and all people must be grateful for it ; but such a record seemed beyond the scope of this book. Other matters of much private and public interest, such as the work of individual firms, the coming forward of the women to take the place of men in business houses, on the railways, on the trams, on the farms, in the Army as W.A.A.C.'s, in the Navy as W.R.N.S.'s, in War hospitals as V.A.D.'s, in the Police as Women Patrols, and in many ways not before generally deemed to be within the scope of women's work or possible to women's nerves or physical strength—these things receive only a brief mention.

The gathering of the material, and the collating and bringing it into a literary form has been arduous, but it has been a labour of love. We deeply regret that artistic difficulties have prevented us from reproducing all the photographs which were kindly sent us by the sorrowing relatives of those who laid down their lives for us. We can assure them, and our readers, however, that we have published the largest number possible.

There must be many shortcomings in a work of this complexity, many omissions, and many errors. For these we must throw ourselves upon the mercy of our readers, entreating them to believe that we have done our best to obtain complete records, availing ourselves of official documents wherever possible, and of the exceedingly great kindness of many qualified persons who checked the correctness of the facts we had brought together.

These good friends, who gave us so generously of their time, must not, however, be chargeable with defects in the work as produced. For the actual book as it stands I am responsible (except the Roll of Honour, for which Mr. Sayers is exclusively answerable), and I must bear the blame for all its imperfections. These would have been far greater if it had not been for the great amount of work Mr. Sayers has done, and for the fine literary sense he has brought to my assistance. So much is our work intermingled that no part can be said to be wholly his or wholly mine.

I must be permitted especially to thank, for innumerable services rendered to the book, the Town Clerk (Dr. J. M. Newnham), the Borough Engineer (Mr. G. F. Carter), the Borough Medical Officer (Dr. Veitch Clark), the Borough Accountant (Mr. J. H. McCall), the Assistant Town Clerk (Mr. S. Jacobs), the Chief Clerk in the Town Clerk's Department (Mr. A. C. Gower), and the Clerk to the Education Committee (Mr. James Smyth). And to all others of the Town Hall Staff, who were always ready to take trouble over my queries, I tender my best thanks; every one was helpful and cordial. The help received from all these gentlemen was continuous throughout the work. Assistance in procuring special facts, and in checking the following special chapters must be gratefully acknowledged to the undermentioned ladies and gentlemen in regard to the subjects following their names: The Mayor from 1916 to 1920, Alderman Howard Houlder, and the present Mayor, Councillor C. Heath Clark (Mayor's Committee, Military Tribunals, etc.); The Chairman of the Libraries Committee, Councillor J. O. Pelton (Croydon's Military Record before the Great War); Colonel Phillipps, Secretary, Surrey Territorial Force Association (The Queen's); Colonel N. E. Cutler (The Fourth Queen's); Colonel N. E. Cutler, Lt. Col. S. D. Roper, Lt. Col. H. A. Atkins (The 1/4th Battalion, The Queen's); Captain and Adjutant P. C. Duncan, M.C. (The 2/4th Battalion); Major (Acting Lieut. Col.) K. A. Oswald, D.S.O. (The 3/4th Battalion); Major K. W. Elder (The 4/4th Battalion); Lieut. Col. N. T. Rolls (Fourth Reserve Queen's); Major Stanley R. Docking, T.D., Sergeant McConnell and ex-Sergeant Latham (Croydon "C" Squadron Surrey Yeomanry); Major T. E. Fox, T.D., and Captain Brooks (Croydon Transport and Supply Column, A.S.C.); Major James Petrie, O.B.E. (Volunteers); Colonel John F. Worlledge (Boy Scouts); Assistant Commander H. C. Swaine (Special Constabulary); Miss Rhoda Brodie, M.B.E. (Women Patrols); Councillor T. W. Wood Roberts and Chief Officer John W. Dane (Fire Brigade); Dr. Edward H. Willock, Dr. J. J. Redfern, Col. H. E. Deane, R.A.M.C., Dr. J. J. Douglas, and

Miss Cooper (Medical and Hospital Services) ; Miss Edith Carr, Mr. Jones, and Miss Cooper (Soldiers' and Sailors' Recreation Rooms); Mrs. John Major (War Hospital Supply Depot); Mr. Albert G. Norris and Mr. Leonard S. Rogers (War Supplies Clearing House); Mr. Councillor Francis Allen, M.B.E., J.P. (War Pensions Committee) ; Lady Edridge (Mayoress's Needlework Committee) ; Mrs. Houlder (Mayoress's Committees) ; Mr. Bryan S. Harland and Mrs. Redfern (Belgian Refugees) ; Mrs. Colchester, M.B.E. (Croydon Local Central War-Savings Committee) ; Mr. Henry Berney (District Association of Voluntary Organizations, and many other chapters) ; Mr. A. C. Cramb (Munitions Committee, etc.) ; Miss E. L. Hudson (Allotments Movement) ; Councillor Arthur Peters, C.B.E., J.P., and Mrs. T. W. Wood Roberts (National Kitchens) ; Mr. J. T. Tompkins (Control of Food) ; and Mr. George F. Carter (Control of Fuel and Light).

Acknowledgment is also made to the various friends who have lent photographs or blocks ; and to the various photographers who have permitted the reproduction of the illustrations.

In addition to those whom I have named above, I have also to thank many other kind and helpful friends whose names I have not set down (for which they must forgive me, and must by no means think me, therefore, unrecognizing towards their services), and I beg them to believe that I am very grateful to them for their assistance.

The record closes with an account of the rejoicings of the Armistice (11th November, 1918) and the celebration of the Peace with Germany (28th June, 1919) on the day appointed for that glad ceremony (Saturday, 19th July, 1919) ; and last of all we add a reference to the beautiful thanksgiving performance of the " Messiah " at the Parish Church, on the following Tuesday (22nd July, 1919). This solemn and reverent service, deeply impressive to all who were privileged to attend it, fitly closed (as far as Croydon is concerned) the commemoration of England's escape from the greatest danger which ever beset her, and the uprising of the whole civilised world from beneath the heel of a blood-thirsty and debased tyranny.

H. KEATLEY MOORE.

CROYDON,

March, 1920.

II. The Course of Events in Croydon during the War

1914

Croydon was no more prepared for the world-calamity than any other place in England. The murders at Serajevo on that fatal Sunday, 28th June, 1914, had stirred the whole world, but few outside Germany and Austria realized that the spark had been set thereby to a train of events which were to lead to world-conflagration before the end of the next month. We knew, as July drew to a close, that intense communications of the gravest import were passing between the European Powers ; but we believed that by some means or other Sir Edward Grey would accomplish the usual miracle, and keep us and Europe out of war. Then came the news that the German Armies were marching, and with the news the story of the violation of Belgium, and almost immediately Great Britain declared war.

At first the enormous character of the catastrophe did not dawn upon the average man. He knew that we were opposed by the greatest military and the second greatest naval power on earth ; but the statement did not then convey the appalling facts that we now know. We knew only that the business was serious, and as tale after tale came to us of the struggle for Liege, the fall of that place, and the calculated savagery of the German advance into Belgium, an advance in hordes such as the world had never known, our people braced themselves for their greatest war effort. There was bewilderment at first, but there was no panic. Rather, in those early days, the motto was " business as usual." Nor was there any war-fever, that enthusiasm which finds expression in flag-flapping, cheering, boasting, and the singing of patriotic songs. It was, as one acute observer remarked, " a war without a cheer ;" it was too serious a matter : for surely not one of us supposed that our " contemptible little army " of 170,000 men, which was on its gallant and glorious way to Mons, could be more than the mere spear-head of the great force that must follow it—from somewhere—if we were to arrest the rush of the nine million men whom the Kaiser was reputed to have set into motion. Everyone felt that sooner or later he or his would be involved in the great vortex. Lord Kitchener had been stopped on his way to Egypt, had taken

his seat at the War Office as Secretary of State, and already had issued his appeal for "one hundred thousand men" to enlist for "three years or the duration of the War, whichever should be the longer." Three years! It seemed a life-time, an impossible period. Three months had been our hope, and for a time was our expectation, because even the German strategic optimists, such as Von Bernhardt, had declared that Germany could succeed only by a rapid overwhelming of Europe; but the great sphinx-like soldier statesman at Whitehall knew his task. We had yet to learn ours.

With the history of the War in general we are not expected to deal here, and in other pages of this work we treat of the gallant deeds of the soldiers who went from Croydon, and of the work of the many organizations which were called into being by the developing necessities of our great days. Here we are concerned only with the current of events in our own home-town; and even in that brief compass there is much that we must pass over in our endeavour to preserve a characteristic view of Croydon in war-days.

Anyone walking through Croydon streets on the day after War had been declared, would hear that in the night a military train had passed along the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, and had dropped guards, who were men drawn from the City of London Volunteers, at bridges, signal boxes and other vulnerable points; there were sentries already in position at water reservoirs, gas and electricity works and similar places. Already, too, stories of spies were whispered, although so far as we know, none were ever detected in Croydon. All wireless systems in private hands, and there were several in and around Croydon, were dismantled. Grave-faced knots of people discussed the situation at every corner, and in every shop, office and restaurant. If we enter the swimming bath we shall see the swimmers stop to ask the new-comers if "there is anything new." Moving quietly through the streets are Volunteers of the Croydon National Reserve selecting and commandeering horses and vehicles from firms who are considered to be able to spare them. We hear, then, that the Territorials who are away on Salisbury Plain in camp have been properly mobilized, and all reserve men from the Post Office, the Gas Company, the Corporation and many a firm have been called up. Next day we learn that the train services have been severely restricted, all cheap tickets being withdrawn; a particularly hard matter for those on holidays or about to take them. Some, indeed, may have started on holidays at the fateful hour, but the holiday spirit has gone from the air entirely, and is not to return for many a weary day. We learn, too, that on the Continent all passenger railway services for civilians have been suspended to

allow the free and rapid movement of troops. Several Croydon people are held up in Switzerland and elsewhere, without any provision in some cases for a long stay, and with little prospect of getting home again ; and are victims of the wildest rumours of the German advance, the fall of Paris, and the invasion of England. Their experiences fill many columns of the newspapers of the day.

Yet a few hours, and the walls of the town were plastered with the words, TO THE RECRUITING OFFICE, with huge arrows all pointing the way. It was a day of intense voluntary recruiting. Boys who left home in the morning convinced and palpable civilians returned home to their apprehensive, but still approving, families in the evening as convinced and palpable soldiers in their khaki. And not a few who were no longer boys went with them to take the "one day's pay" and sign the oath of military allegiance. Men of forty-five persuaded recruiting officers that they were "just thirty," in order "to do their bit," as the simple phrase for a great service fashioned itself in the speech of the soldiers. Khaki became familiar in our streets ; but soon even the khaki gave out, so great was the demand for it, and men paraded in make-shift uniforms—particularly a vile dark-blue uniform with a black forage cap. In fact England was not prepared for equipping a vast army, and the whole of the organization and *materiel* had to be improvised while the army was growing. In these early days the Boy Scouts did much useful work as messengers, in calling up the soldiers, etc., and two patrols of our Croydon Boy Scouts were dispatched in the course of the month to patrol the Kent coast for forty-five miles. During the first week the rifle clubs of the Croydon and District League held a meeting to consider the best means of promoting the national cause. At first the rifle ranges were thrown open for practice, and out of the meeting just mentioned sprang the volunteer movement which, so far as Croydon is concerned, eventuated in the fine Volunteer Training Corps with its successors the First and First-Twelfth battalions of the Surrey Volunteers, who were finally amalgamated into the First Volunteer battalion of the "Queen's" Royal West Surrey Regiment. We tell of their doings upon another page. Already too, the people were awake to the fact that war must bring suffering at home and in the field, and schemes for relief were soon under way.

The most prominent of such schemes was that great outpouring of private charity to which the King's son lent his name. The Prince of Wales' Fund was initiated for Croydon by the Mayor, Alderman Frank Denning, on 7th August ; and within a week £4,000 had been subscribed. It was intended to alleviate



Photo by W. F. Skewes

Alderman FRANK DENNING, J.P.
First War-Mayor (Nov., 1913 to Feb., 1916)



Mrs. DENNING
Mayoress, Nov., 1913 to Feb., 1916

Photo by E. Norton Collins

the inevitable financial hardships of war, and, from first to last Croydon raised £21,108 in this way. People gave willingly enough ; and it must not be forgotten that all the circumstances in which men went to the Front differed enormously from those prevailing in former wars. Many employers made allowances to their men. The Government gave its employees who enlisted their full pay while on service ; many banks did the same ; corporations like that of Croydon gave half-pay to married men, and third-pay to single men ; and many public and private companies made similar provision ; but, even so, there were many small employers who could not afford such assistance to their workers, and the need for help from other sources was widespread and real. There was a general determination, too, that so far as was humanly possible the hardships of previous wars should be reduced for the sailors and soldiers to the minimum ; and the minimum indeed exceeded in horror all previous human experience. The determination took practical shape almost immediately in the formation of public and private societies for making or otherwise providing comforts for the forces. Meetings of these were held in various parts of the Borough in connexion with the Churches—who worked for such objects freely and selflessly throughout—and with many other organizations. It was only August as yet, but the prevision of the people was such that they were already making warm woollen clothing, comforters, helmets, etc., against the coming winter. The sick and wounded were to be prepared for too ; this seemed a strangely serious business, but it was accepted cheerfully and willingly by hundreds here as elsewhere. There was a little overlapping, possibly a little confusion, at first, but all the work was admirably apt, and was soon directed into well-organised channels, as in turn the county, borough and village became co-ordinate units in one large system of service.

Croydon was fortunate in the men who had the control of her affairs. The Mayor, Alderman Frank Denning, was a man of great courage, industry and initiative ; a self-made, self-educated man, who had from humble beginnings built up the large business of Welford's Surrey Dairies and was a controlling force in many commercial concerns ; a man, too, who had also built up a reputation for straight speech and high character. He was the head of a Council which was of equally determined and well balanced character, and which under his guidance threw itself into all schemes of recognised value for the promotion of the purposes of the War ; and behind these was the Town Clerk, Dr. John Montague Newnham, who became chairman or honorary secretary of a hundred movements for the general good, and worked untiringly as their organiser, adviser, and executive officer. We wish to emphasise the services of Dr. Newnham, as

the work of the Town Clerk is quiet and unobtrusive and is too often altogether overlooked ; and in doing so we do not forget the admirable services—in, and, more often, out of office hours—of the other principal officers and staff of the Corporation. Everybody who could be spared from the staff, and that included practically every eligible man, was encouraged to enlist, and those who remained had anything but the “cushy job” with the possession of which most stay-at-home workers were credited. That the work of the town was carried on smoothly is sufficient tribute in itself to the Corporation and its officers.

Except for the extension of the activities we have mentioned there is no startling fact to record for the first two or three months of the war. An example of prevision must be mentioned on the part of Mr. Mark Major, who on 15th August wrote to *The Croydon Times* announcing that Mr. Douglas Young had placed vacant land at the disposal of Croydon people for allotments. This led to the whole allotments movement in which the borough was to win the record of having the largest number of plots under cultivation by amateurs in the country. The great civilian force, the Special Constabulary, came into being in the first month of the war, and actually held its first regular parade on 16th August, when 130 men were inspected by Captain Vincent. Our later pages tell of their invaluable work in detail ; we need only say here that they were twitted frequently by the unthinking in the earliest days, but the blue and white brassard was soon accepted by the people, and when the days and nights of air-raids were upon us, there were few who did not recognise gratefully how efficient and meritorious were their services. The smart specially-designed uniform which became their regulation dress later on won a respect equal to that which the Englishman bestows involuntarily upon that of the regular constables ; and, in fact, a prominent Croydon magistrate declared publicly that if he were contemplating a misdemeanour he would rather attempt it in an area guarded by the regular police than in one watched over by “Specials.” Late in August arrangements were made for the reception and maintenance of numbers of Belgian refugees, who arrived in the first week of September, and who received cordial hospitality in the days of their exile here, the children being taken into many Croydon homes.

All this time Captain David Barrie, Croydon's recruiting officer, conducted a vigorous campaign from his headquarters at Mitcham Road Barracks, the home of the old Royal Foot Guards. Later this work was transferred to the Town Hall. Parties of men left Croydon every morning. Amongst the first to go were three members of the Council, Messrs. J. C. Crowley,

P. G. A. Cosedge and John A. Clarke. Councillor Clarke, who was on a motor holiday at the declaration of war, returned immediately, and served in the Thornton Heath Special Constabulary for about a month, becoming one of the first three inspectors elected by the men, as was then the rule. In October he enlisted in the R.A.S.C. (Remounts) as Farrier Sergeant, and was promoted to Staff Sergeant later ; and before the end of the month he went out to France in charge of twenty-two shoeing smiths, settled down in the danger zone, and had the unique experience of being shelled out of Poperinghe on his fiftieth birthday. He has a fine record of strenuous and responsible work, including the charge of a large forge at the base, until September, 1918, when he was returned to England and discharged as unfit. It is fair to add that he made no claim against the Government on account of unfitness.

His colleagues, Messrs. J. C. Crowley and P. G. A. Cosedge were not to return.

It was in October that the words "Roll of Honour," now so sadly familiar to us, began to appear in the local newspapers. Several Croydon men were lost when the Germans torpedoed H.M. Ships "Aboukir," "Hogue," and "Cressy" in the North Sea ; and almost simultaneously the first of the Croydon school-teachers to fall in the war gave his life on the battle-fields of France—Lieutenant T. R. Bottomley, B.A., of the 1st East Yorkshire Regiment, a fine, promising young soldier-scholar. These were the first of a very long list.

Sir Frederick Edridge had announced on August 27th that the Fourth Queen's had been selected for foreign service. It was some disappointment to them to learn that this was not to be service on the Western Front, but in India, for which country they departed on November 25th. The attitude of the home folk towards the troops deserves commemoration. Parcels were sent profusely and regularly containing things good to eat, cigarettes, pipes and tobacco, things useful, and not a few things alleged to be useful to soldiers by enterprising tradesmen. There is no doubt that all this helped to sustain the men in their long, and often wearisome and monotonous training.

One of the important social features of the later part of 1914 was remarked upon by the Borough Recorder, Mr. R. F. Colam, K.C., in his address to the Grand Jury at the Quarter Sessions in October, and that was the remarkable decrease in crime which showed itself already and which continued until the end of the war. This has been attributed to the rigorous restrictions imposed upon the drink traffic during the war, and

it may be that these restrictions did have their part in maintaining the good record, but at the time the comment was made by Mr. Colam the ordinary hours of public houses were still in force. Others have ingeniously supposed that the adventurous spirits who found an outlet for their energies in burglary and other heinous offences, now found it in the struggle with the enemy. We record the fact, and do not attempt to explain it.

It will be remembered that the Germans startled the world in general and the people of Antwerp in particular by the bombing of that city from the air by means of Zeppelins as early as August, 1914. A few may have anticipated the rapid and extraordinary development both in power and in range of air-craft, but at this time the majority of us were sceptical and not at all alarmed. *The Spectator* assured us that it was hardly likely that Zeppelins would be able to find their way to London, or even to travel so far in view of the variability of weather conditions; and Mr. Winston Churchill was no less confident in his assurances, that any Zeppelin which ventured into our skies would be attacked by a veritable "cloud of hornets" in the shape of defending aeroplanes. Still it was not long before precautions were quietly taken which showed that in high quarters this assurance was not completely shared. The middle of October, 1914, saw a very drastic reduction in our street lighting as a precautionary measure against aerial attack. It was not yet the "horror of darkness" which came a year later, but by contrast with our brilliantly illuminated streets of the immediate past, it was dismal enough. Old residents told us that it resembled the "good lighting" (by gas, of course) of fifty years before. The lighting was further reduced in November, but was still sufficient for the usual practical purposes.

Mr. Frank Denning was unanimously re-elected Mayor in November. In an inaugural speech, in which he made no rash promises, he pointed out the amount of work already done for war-purposes, in the way of relief through the Prince of Wales's Fund; the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association; the Belgian Hostels, which already contained 500 refugees; and the Croydon General Hospital, where wounded soldiers were being treated.

In December was held the first of the many "Flag Days" which were a peculiar and picturesque feature of the whole of war-time. They were a variant of the Queen Alexandra Rose Day, initiated a few years before, on which charming ladies dressed charmingly, stood at street corners, railway station entrances and in other public places, with large trays of tiny artificial wild-roses which they sold to very willing buyers at

prices ranging from a penny to several pounds, and the proceeds were devoted to the hospitals. To escape undue and irresistible importunity, and to show that they have done their duty in buying, the buyers wore their roses as a buttonhole. In similar manner, on flag days ladies sold miniature paper flags that might be worn on the lapel of the coat. Our first flag day, as was the case everywhere else, was devoted to the relief of Belgium, the land which had suffered most in the first days of the war, when the Belgian flag was sold, and the takings amounted to £400.

In our chapter on the Mayoress' Flag Day Committee (Part V., Chapter VIII.) we give a list of the many flag days and their variants, and we need say no more here than that in general they were cordially approved of by the people, and supported by them, even when they were repeated so often that they became weekly, or even half-weekly, occurrences. Through them much private generosity was tapped which otherwise might not have found so satisfactory an outlet.

Our first War Christmas was a sober one, although some of the former festival spirit survived. The war situation was not immediately menacing, but was obscure as to the future, and we heard much of the cold and privations of the opposing armies who now faced one another in the frozen trenches of Flanders and France. The Marne had been won, the German armies had been pushed back to the Aisne, but a deadlock seemed now to have set in, and the world was far too anxious to spend a "merry Christmas." On Boxing Day we learned that the war had taken its first toll of the Council and that Councillor Percival George Allen Cosedge had died on active service, at No. 8 Casualty Clearing Station, on 16th December. He was only thirty-six years of age, and had been an old Volunteer, and a member of the Croydon National Reserve. He became a Councillor in 1912 and during the two years of his service had given evidences of an able concern for the public welfare and keen well-controlled powers of debate. At the outbreak of war he joined the "B" Company of the 3rd East Surrey Regiment. "His action in putting his name down as a Volunteer," writes one of his colleagues, "was done with calm deliberation and a clear appreciation of all the risks he ran, for the one sufficient reason that he conscientiously believed it to be his duty He has died at an age when his character and talents were beginning to be at their best, and would have been, as I well know, freely and modestly placed at the service of those who were poor and oppressed."

Looking back from the present to the first year of the war it is curious to see how many prophecies were falsified by the

event. A great shortage of food and money, unemployment, bankruptcy generally, and much other disaster were prophesied, but none of them came to pass. Later there were to be various shortages, but none within measurable distance of those foretold.

1915

We need not dwell at length on the events of 1915. It is a record in which a brief summary may be made to serve for intense and continuous activity. On 19th January the Special Constabulary received and responded to the first of many emergency calls. The same date was Khaki Day at Thornton Heath when presents for the troops were given by five hundred people. Large recruiting demonstrations were held from time to time, a memorable one occurring on 22nd February, when Mr. Will Crooks, M.P., made one of his characteristically vigorous appeals to the patriotism of our young men. Other happenings in Croydon make rather curious reading in the light of subsequent knowledge. For instance, the cost of living had gone up aggressively it seems, and a protest meeting on 25th March was held at the North End Hall, when Mr. W. C. Anderson, M.P., and other speakers participated. "A few days ago," declared Councillor Bradshaw, "the people of Croydon were paying 1s. 11d. a cwt. for coal," and "Shame!" cried the audience. In fact all the necessaries of life had gone up 25 per cent. and the meeting demanded that the Government should take control of transport, fix maximum prices, and control food to prevent the exploitation of the people. The advice of the meeting was good, but the British Government moved slowly; still, it did move towards the policy which our meeting recommended, and ultimately accepted every one of these demands. It should be recorded that in the first years of the war certain articles of food became scarce and this was in no small measure due to the selfishness of people who hoarded supplies beyond their immediate needs. In ordinary circumstances it was counted a virtue in a housewife to keep a well-stocked store cupboard; but war transposes the values of things, and at a time of scarcity, the hoarding of more than the individual needed at the moment proved to be dangerously unpatriotic.

At the Council meeting a few days before, the first of the war-bonuses had been given to the Corporation workmen as a contribution towards the increased cost of living. The grant

was 3s. weekly to men earning less than 30s. weekly, of 2s. for those earning between 30s. and 35s., and 1s. for those earning from 35s. to 40s.. The clerical and administrative staffs were not included. At that same meeting a Councillor ventured to forecast an unlikely event: "Supposing," said he, "the war lasted another six months!" We were optimists still, it will be observed.

On 22nd April Princess Clementine Napoleon, cousin of King Albert of Belgium, visited Croydon to receive gifts, the collection of which had been organized by *The Croydon Advertiser* and *The Croydon Guardian* (then separate newspapers) to be sent to Belgian soldiers at the front. At the same time an appeal was made by these journals and supported by the Mayor for a "Croydon" ambulance for the Belgian armies, and this was provided and sent out in due course.

Recruiting for the "Queen's" and for the army generally continued for the whole first war year. It was at about May, 1915, that the traders everywhere were faced with the fact that they would have to relinquish more and more of their men for naval and military service. The voluntary system still persisted, but the demands of the armies were straining it to breaking point. Women were gradually replacing men at the railway stations, in shops, and in business houses. This was in many cases a complete innovation, but it was one forced upon the country by the exigencies of the time, and one in which the women as a whole justified themselves completely. On 17th May a Thornton Heath woman, Mrs. Florence Earle Lamont, was killed at Ramsgate in a Zeppelin raid. This was the first raid in which any Croydon civilian resident is known to have been killed. In June over 2½ tons of food, collected by the Primrose League, were sent out for the prisoners of war in Germany. The same month saw the notorious attacks on Lord Kitchener in connexion with shell shortage. There was no doubt need of more ammunition at this time; and towards the end of the month an appeal was made for persons to come forward as voluntary munition workers, a large open air meeting being conducted by the Mayor in Katharine Street on 29th June. Money was also required for all war purposes, and it was now that the Government floated its great War Loan, to which on the following Monday, 5th July, the Council subscribed a first £50,000. August brought us news that the 2/4th Queen's, which had proceeded to the Dardanelles in July had been in action and had suffered severely. Mention must be made, too, of the curious but effective "no treating" order which was enforced in Croydon, as elsewhere, from 11th October, an order which cancelled the right of any man to

offer a friend intoxicating liquor on licensed premises. It was probably the most intimate check on the individual will that the Government contrived, and it could only be justified by necessity, and by its success in achieving its object. Never was there greater sobriety ; never was there less crime than in the years when it was in force.

This, in the baldest summary is an outline of the events in Croydon until October, an outline which conceals a multiplicity of good deeds, of sacrifices, of energy spent in one way or another for the public good.

On the memorable night of the 13th October, Croydon came as a town definitely into the war area. Zeppelins had reached London in the spring of this year, and during September they raided London on two consecutive nights. It was on the second of the September raid nights that the " thud-thud " of an airship's engines was first heard locally, approaching Croydon from the north-west, disappearing as the machine passed over South Norwood with engines shut off, and re-appearing in the direction of Elmer's End as the Zeppelin went on her way apparently to the mouth of the Thames. No public warning had been given, the authorities having conceived the curious notion that English people would be less liable to panic if danger came upon them suddenly than they would be if they had notice of its coming. One only gathered that " something was on " from the sudden silence and comparative darkness that fell upon the streets, and one missed the more distant sound of the trains, which stopped during raids.

On 13th October a somewhat heavy Zeppelin attack was made on London at a little before nine in the evening. Bombs had been dropped near Trafalgar Square, and the attack passed away. Soon after eleven o'clock a listener in Croydon heard what he thought was the syphoning of a street gas-lamp, then what appeared to be an exhausting of steam through a near-by factory chimney, and then it seemed that a very heavy motor-vehicle was drawing nearer up an adjacent street ; only, all the time, he had an impression that the sound was from the air. A few seconds later a flash from the sky, a sudden illumination of the whole neighbourhood, a deafening explosion and violent tremors of the ground showed that the German invaders had actually reached Croydon. Explosions followed in rapid and terrifying succession as the Zeppelin crossed over Addiscombe, passed south and east of the London, Brighton, Railway line and then throbbed away towards Woolwich. It has not been discovered with certainty which way the airship approached ; but



Photo by Walshams, Ltd.

RUINED HOUSES IN BEECH HOUSE ROAD
Zeppelin Air-raid (13th October, 1915)



RUINED HOUSES IN EDRIDGE ROAD: Zeppelin Air-raid (13th October, 1915)

Photo by Walshams, Ltd.