



First World War in Wimborne

By Angela Kernan

(Adult Category)

War against Germany was declared on August 4th 1914, after Germany invaded Belgium and also declared war on France; that was eight days before my thirteenth birthday.

My father works in the Eclipse Works on Newborough, in Wimborne Minster. They make machinery for brewing and bottling. My grandfather had a nearby 100-acre dairy farm, but my father was never a very good farmer and we lost the whole business. We now live on Station Terrace, and I miss the fields and open spaces.

My mother and I have walked into Wimborne Minster Square and across to the Minster Green to watch a parade of the newly enlisted men, who were excited about going off to war. My father said it would all be over by Christmas, but my mother is crying. I have three older brothers, I am the only girl. Mother is afraid they will be called into service to fight for their country.

I waved at my best friend from school, Kate, she called out to me, "hello Rose, isn't it exciting, my brother has just joined up." My mother scowled, she is sure there is nothing exciting about war.

Kate and I still attend Sunday School in the Minster, where we teach the younger children the Bible stories, and count the time away before we can go and play, by listening to the Quarter Jack strike. I have one more year at the Wimborne First School in its lovely new building near the Minster and then I will have to go into service as I will be fourteen, and be needed to bring some money home. I would love to stay in school, but my father says education is a waste of time for girls! We sometimes see the boys from the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, walking about the town fuelled by swagger and arrogance, all much older than me and still in education. I had heard that some of the older boys had already left to volunteer.

Mother and I watch the parades of young men, who have already volunteered, their mothers crying, their girlfriends cheering, I was sure my gentle brothers would want to join their friends. They

had seen the posters on the front of the Griffon Hotel and in the Cornmarket saying 'Your Country Needs You'.

The 5th Dorset Regiment march past, full of swagger and bluster, I wonder what will happen to them?

Tonight, Wimborne Minster is quieter, the young men have left, but my Father's generation have congregated in the White Hart pub at the back of the Cornmarket, frustrated that they are too old to join the young men of the town, and have to keep working in their monotonous jobs, providing for their families.

My father, after a few glasses of ale, always talks about his days as a farmer on the outskirts of Wimborne, and how everyday he would take the milk to the Dairy next to the Station, where the milk was put into 17 gallon churns and put on the train for London and elsewhere. As he becomes maudlin my brothers, Sam, John and Tom leave him and walk to Redcotts, the new recreation ground and kick their leather football to each other, before they try to sneak into our little house and avoid Father.

Mother has managed to store a few extra vegetables and a little flour, but we only have a small back garden now, little room for growing produce, and we only keep a few hens for eggs. I get very hungry now, how will it be if we do not have enough bread or potatoes, and Father would never give up his ale so we can eat.

My closest brother, Sam, works at the town station, he is a porter, he loves a uniform, and I have seen him studying his friends as they stride about the town, showing off their new appearance. I think he has not gone and enlisted yet, only because of pressure from mother and his girlfriend Mary. She wants to be a Station Master's wife and to be able to travel by train into Bournemouth and Salisbury.

I love Wimborne Minster; the old buildings give a gentle atmosphere. Wimborne is home to me. The Minster watches over us all, keeping us safe. I just hope we can all stay safe until this horrid war is over.