

THE OUTBREAK OF WW1 MASSIVELY AFFECTED AGRICULTURE

THE ARMY CONTROL DEPARTMENT needed

- Men to serve their country
- Horses
- Huge supplies of food
- Wool for uniforms

‘The military offered soldiers for farm work. Farmers must apply to the Labour exchange who made the arrangements but in case of short notice the farmer might apply to directly to the commanding officer.’

Devon & Somerset News 25th Jan 1917’

Farmers were called upon to produce more food, particularly wheat to reduce our dependence on imports. They respond at first but bad weather, poor harvest and the loss of the imported supplies forced the government to take action to increase acres for arable production with the Ploughing up policy being introduced in 1917.

HORSES

Horses were needed primarily by the cavalry but it soon became apparent that both men and animals were very vulnerable to machine guns and artillery. The cavalry units still served but in the Middle East. Horses became hugely important in the logistics of supplies because of the rough terrain and awful conditions caused by bad weather.

- Heavy artillery, ammunition and supplies of food and water to the front
- Medical support and Ambulance Service to the front and returning the wounded
- Taking food and water to the fighting men

The Army Royal Veterinary Corps was stationed in France. They treated and saved many thousands of horses but huge numbers perished from injury, exhaustion, starvation and disease.

An agent from the War Office and a vet visited farms in the area to purchase animals much but at lower price than the market value.

THIS IS AN ENTRY IN FARM THE DIARY KEPT BY MR BRITTON OF WOOD FARM, CRUWYS MORCHARD.

L.G.Cruwys and a veterinary been round here buying all horses that are fit for the army, bought two at Northcote at £65 and £35.

The war office needed so many horses that they had to be brought in from Australia, Canada, United States and Argentina.

MORE CANADIAN HORSES COMING TO THE TIVERTON DISTRICT

A letter addressed to the editor of the Devon & Somerset Newspaper:

Dear Sir, - May I let it be known that the War Office have asked me to find temporary homes for some more Canadian horses?

They don't know yet how many they will wish to send, but if everyone who can help by taking one or more will send me written word at once I shall soon be in a position to let each know the decision of the War Office.

All fellow sportsmen know the added efficiency that will be given to our cavalry if the horses which are provided for them are "fit" and indeed it may surely happen that the ability of his horse to carry him vigorously to the attack day after day may mean the difference between life and death to the gallant soldier who rides.

Sir Ian Amory, Knightshayes Court, Nov 1914

THE FARMERS needed

- Men to work on the land
- Horses for haulage and heavy work
- Food for the home front
- Wool for use and the market

Because of the worsening situation of finding labour on the farms in December 1916 it was suggested that women should work on the land being trained and encouraged on the farm. School children were allowed to work on occasions.

‘Attendance this week has been poor. Some of the bigger boys have been kept home to help in getting in the mangolds. Influenza is prevalent among the children.’

Taken from the school Log Book 17th November 1916

CORN

“The corn is ripening fast due to the beautiful spell of fine weather”.

Western Times 11th August 1916

A farmer at Ash Thomas was taken to Court for not thatching his ricks under the Barley Restriction Order. The barley was damaged and not fit for purpose. He had been waiting for a threshing machine but was told he should have covered it in some other way. He said he had removed the damaged tops to feed the fowls but was told not to do this. 2 days later he had them thatched.

Devon and Somerset News Nov 29th 1917

WOOL

The Devon Farmers Union reported that farmers in the west had not been treated well by the War Office. Their wool had been commandeered at less than market price. They were fighting in Government for arrangements to be made for fixing prices and payment for the farmers but this was slow in coming.

Devon & Somerset News 16th Nov 1916

‘A census of all wool and wool products is being taken by the Army Controls Dept. under the Defence of the Realm Act regulations (DORA). Return is compulsory.’

‘Devon & Somerset News 4th Jan 1917

POTATOES

“The potatoes in this District are very much diseased”

Western Times 29th September 1916

In January 1917 there was a potato shortage as many suppliers realised the dearth of labour so did not plant their usual quantity. Poor weather also affected the harvest.

“Don’t waste the potato, it can be used instead of bread” was one of the pleas sent out to householders by the Food Controller.

Using mashed potato instead of flour produced very useful pastry.