

World War I in Shetland



Primary 5-7

Contents

Introduction	Page 3
Shetland before War	Page 4
Outbreak of War	Page 5
War at Sea	Page 6
Land War	Page 7
At Home	Page 8
End of War	Page 9
End of War in Shetland	Page 10
Books about WW1 for Children	Page 11

The First World War 1914-1918

In the summer of 1914 Europe went to war. Gradually more countries got involved and the fighting spread around the globe.

World War 1 was triggered on 28 June 1914 by the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife Sophie. It was planned by a Serbian terrorist group called The Black Hand.

The two main sides were the Allies, which included France, Great Britain and Russia; and Germany and Austria-Hungary.

In total, 30 countries were involved in the conflict.



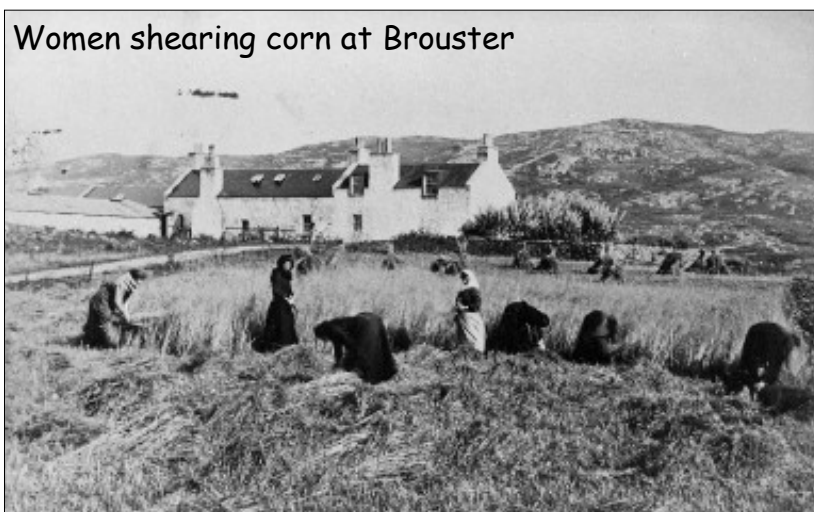
Around 10 million people were killed on the battlefields and millions of civilians lost their lives.

The First World War

Shetland before War

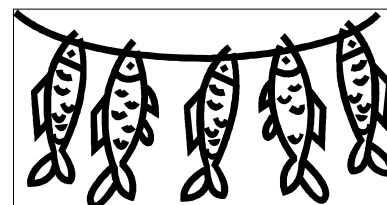
Majority of people lived in the country and worked on crofts.

Women shearing corn at Brouster



Women and children did most of the croft work. They also sold knitted jumpers to buy things like sugar.

Men were away at sea or fishing most of the time.



People started to move to Lerwick and Scalloway for paid work. They wanted to earn more money to buy modern things like lamps, lino for the floor or fine dishes.

During the early 1900s, the German Fleet visited Shetland on various occasions, and talk began of the importance of Shetland as a naval base in the event of any war, although war was thought unlikely.



German fleet off the Knab

The First World War

Outbreak of War

4th August 1914

Britain declared war on Germany

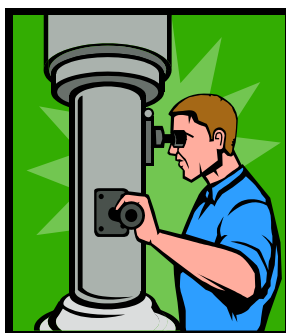
Hundreds of Shetland men were called out to report to Lerwick for training to become soldiers or to serve on board of ships. Some were sent South.

Shetland men at War

*1,500 men served in the Royal Navy Reserve

*3,000 men served in the Merchant Navy

1*,000 men served in the Army



Lerwick became an ideal base for navy and merchant ships in the North Sea.

Royal Navy

Many Shetland men served in the navy aboard fighting ships, anti-submarine boats and escort boats.

Merchant Navy

Shetlanders often worked on merchant ships -they were important as they took essential supplies to and from Britain. These vessels were often attacked by German submarines.

Army

Shetland soldiers served in many branches of the army and in many countries across the world. These places included France, Flanders, Russia, Egypt and Palestine.



Shetland was an important place in Britain during WWI. Men too young or old to be sent away to War guarded telegraph cables throughout the islands. Others were on the lookout for German submarines.

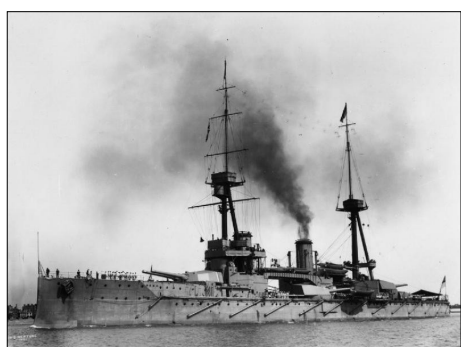
Sandwick Cable Guard

The First World War

War at Sea

Warships

The British and Germans had the largest navies in the world. As the War continued, they battled for control of the seas.



Submarines /U-boats

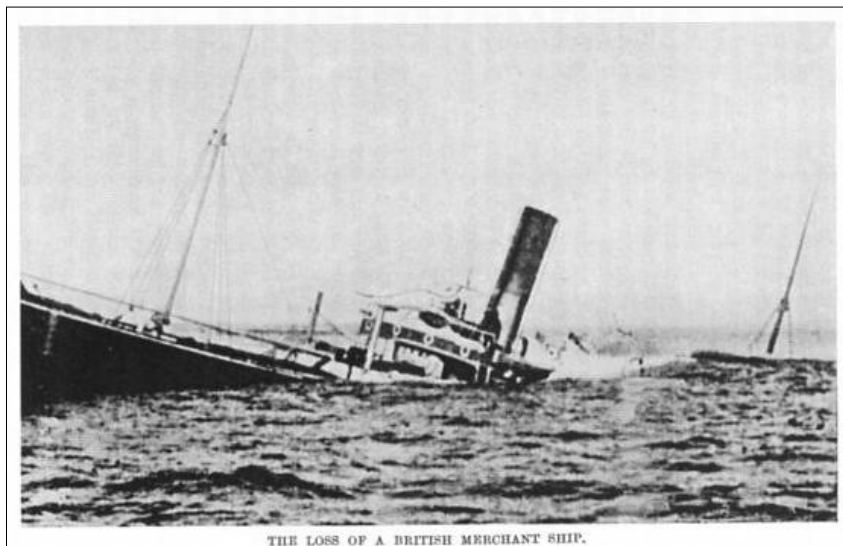
German U-boats stalked the Atlantic Ocean, attacking Allied ships with torpedoes. Germany used term Unterseebooten (undersea boats) for submarines. That got shortened to U-boats.

Battle of Dogger Bank

The Battle of Dogger Bank took place on 24th January 1915 in the middle of the North Sea. The British lost no ships and suffered few casualties, Germans lost a ship and most of its crew.

Battle of Jutland

The Battle of Jutland took place on 31st May 1916 near Denmark. German and British fleets had a total of about 250 ships. Both sides lost ships and thousands of men and there was no clear winner. The Germans retreated and never challenged the British fleet again.



THE LOSS OF A BRITISH MERCHANT SHIP.

In all the biggest naval fights of the war - Dogger Bank, Coroner, Falklands, Jutland and Zeebrugge, the Shetlanders played a full part in the fighting.

The First World War

Land War

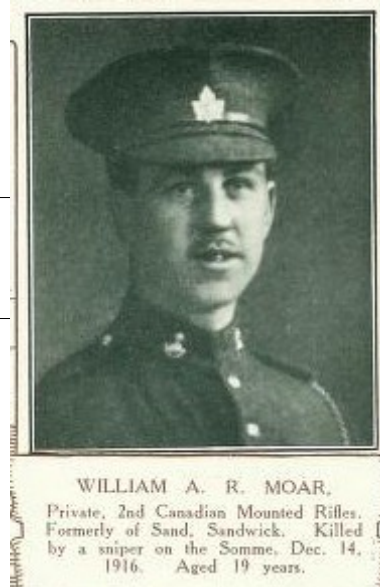
Battle of The Somme

The Battle of The Somme lasted from 1 July to 18 November 1916. 19 Shetland soldiers were killed and 22 wounded at the Battle of Ancre. The news took nearly a fortnight to reach Lerwick and came as a great shock.

Battle of Arras

The Battle of Arras was fought in the spring of 1917. Many Shetland men died in this battle.

The 1917 end of year report in the Shetland Times said, "Shetland has responded most nobly to the call; but she is paying the price".



Battle of Cambrai

This battle began in November 1917. It was for the first time that a large number of tanks was used in battle.

476 Allied tanks launched a surprise attack on Germans but many tanks became bogged down in the mud or broke down. The fighting continued into December.

Tanks were so called because of early attempts to disguise them as water tanks.



Last Great Battles

In the spring of 1918 the Germans launched a major attack on Allies in Europe. By June the Germans had to stop due to lack of supplies. In July the Allies attacked with the help of American troops. Many German men began to surrender. The end of the war was in sight.

The First World War

At Home

Lerwick Ladies founded the Emergency Association to help injured men. Women knitted jumpers and socks for soldiers and sailors.

Post Offices in Shetland were open night and day to send and receive official messages.

The price of food was expensive. Most islanders grew vegetables and raised animals on crofts.

Many men and horses that used to work on the crofts were now at war and women and children had to take on more of the work.

Boy Scouts were used as messengers for the naval base in Lerwick.



Lerwick Post Office



People raised money and collected used clothes.

Eggs were collected and sent to Aberdeen to the soldiers in hospitals.



Collecting eggs at Cunningsburgh

The First World War

End of War

Armistice

The deal to stop fighting was made on the 11th November 1918. At eleven o'clock the guns fell silent.

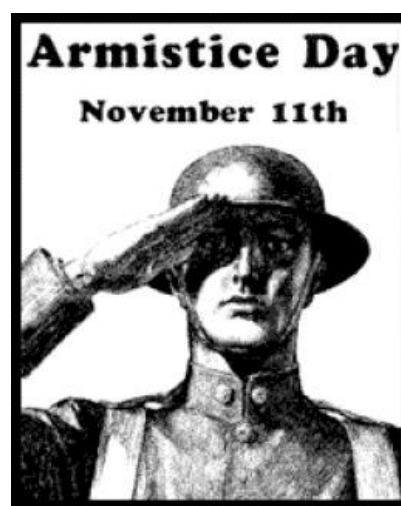
The War was finally over.

After the armistice Germany's fleet of warships sailed to the British Naval Base at Scapa Flow in Orkney. On the 21st June 1919, the German commander ordered the fleet to be sunk. 52 ships were sent to the bottom of the sea.

Peace Treaties

28th June 1919

All the countries involved in the war signed peace treaties. The Treaty of Versailles was signed and Germany was made to accept blame for the War. Austria-Hungary signed treaties splitting up its empire, creating Austria and Hungary. Two more new countries were formed, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia and this changed the map of Europe.



On 11th November every year we remember all of the people who died during the First World War, and all the other wars since.

The First World War

End of War in Shetland

The end of war was marked in Lerwick by:

- Bell ringing
- Ships sirens
- Rockets were fired
- Flags and bunting displayed
- Brass Band played
- Young people sang songs

In Shetland a committee was set up in 1918 to discuss and decide on a war memorial for all of Shetlands' fallen. The War Memorial on Hillhead was built after five years. Local memorials were also built in most districts in Shetland, sometimes in Churches, sometimes outside.

When the war ended 630 Shetlanders had lost their lives out of the 3600 who went to serve. There weren't many jobs for Shetland people after the war and many chose to emigrate.



Peace Celebrations parade at the Esplanade, Lerwick



Unveiling the War Memorial at Hillhead, Lerwick on 6th January 1924

In 1919, Shetland's Roll of Honour and Roll of Service was published. It was a book listing people to be remembered for their brave action during the war. The book was the work of Thomas Manson, the editor of the Shetland News.



Page from Roll of Honour

The First World War

Books about WWI for children

Stay Where You Are and Then Leave by John Boyne

The Amazing Tale of Ali Pasha by Michael Foreman

Soldier Dog by Sam Angus

Valentine Joe by Rebecca Stevens

A Dog in No Man's Land by Damian Kelleher

Stories of World War One by Tony Bradman

War Horse by Michael Morpurgo

Private Peaceful by Michael Morpurgo

The Best Christmas Present in the World by Michael Morpurgo

My Story: Road to War by Valerie Wilding



These online local history resources were created in 2014 by Shetland school library staff.

Our thanks to the Scottish Library and Information Council's Public Library Improvement Fund for financial assistance.

www.shetland-library.gov.uk