

Tattenhall in The Great War 1914-1918

At the outbreak of The Great War in August 1914, Tattenhall was a small agricultural village with a population of less than 1500 people. Youngsters immediately volunteered to join Lord Kitchener's Army in which they were quickly transformed from civilians into trainee soldiers. For many, it was their first time away from home. As war progressed, other youngsters joined the Royal Navy and the Royal Flying Corps.

The Great War acted as a catalyst for change. As Tattenhall emptied of many of its able-bodied men, some residents sought to galvanise group action within the community. The transformation of village life was swift and imposed great changes on everyone.

A particular focus within Tattenhall was the conversion of The Barbour Institute and The Rookery Annexe into Auxiliary Hospitals.



Watercolour painted in 1915 by **Blanche Jones** and which shows the interior of The Barbour Institute set up as an Auxiliary Hospital, together with convalescent soldiers.

Edith Marguerite Wignall became Commandant of both hospitals for which she was later awarded the MBE. She was supported by local doctors Thomas Brierley and William Wigham, and by a team of proficient and patriotic local Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) Nurses. Other volunteers took on a variety of responsibilities at both hospitals. The Chester Chronicle reported that Government Inspectors found everything to be in 'splendid order' within the hospitals.



Mrs Edith Wignall, Commandant of Tattenhall's Auxiliary Hospitals. Such hospitals were established to deal with less seriously wounded servicemen who were classified as 'cot' or 'sitting' cases.

On a day-to-day basis, rural life took on a new meaning:

- Patriotic church services took place where the subject of 'The Flag' was preached and where Sunday collections were directed towards the 'Relief Fund'.
- Lectures and Lantern Slide Shows were organised on the subject of 'Each Man's Duty', on 'War Savings' and which provided graphic images of the conflict.
- Local farmers responded to a call for Cheshire Cheese for His Majesty's troops. The Cheshire Observer reported that 'Tattenhall and Newton provided 22 cheese' and specifically praised Mr Earl Rutter of Owl Hall.
- School children regularly held concerts, collected funds for the war effort and, in one three-week period in 1917, collected 95 eggs for the wounded soldiers.



Recovering soldiers were compelled to wear a 'Convalescent Blue' uniform together with a red necktie. This group of convalescent soldiers is shown outside the Barbour Institute, together with former Tattenhall VAD, Mrs Breen, (back row, 2nd right) and Matron (centre front).



This iconic Great War poster shows VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) Nurses and lists the duties that were available. In Tattenhall, many local men and women volunteered their services and Drs Brierley and Wigham were in attendance.

Thomas Dawson was born on Christmas Day 1897. The family lived at 'Cheshire Cheese', Burwardsley Road, and Thomas was baptised at the Methodist Chapel, Burwardsley. He originally joined the Royal Horse Artillery and then transferred to the Royal Field Artillery. Gunner Thomas Dawson was one of Tattenhall's youngest fatalities, aged 20.



- The co-ordination of Tattenhall's Roll of Honour, to which the names of recruits and fatalities were added, was overseen by Mrs Frances Tilney, as was the publication of letters in the local press.
- Rummage Sales were held to raise monies for the 'War Fund'.
- Frivolous activities such as cricket matches were cancelled.
- The government's requisitioning of horses throughout the Parish became a feature of rural life. Some women, notably Marjorie Smyth, worked at the Chester Remount Depots where they cared for injured army horses.



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