

## THE HOME FRONT IN SURREY IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR A GUIDE TO SOURCES AT SURREY HISTORY CENTRE

### Part 3. The Mobilisation of Industry and Industrial Relations

Many of Surrey's industries were soon engaged in supporting the war economy and the production of munitions and military equipment. Records relating to this work have not survived in any great quantity, in part because of the wartime paper salvage campaign which led to the destruction of many records. H S Billing of Billing and Sons, printers of Guildford, testifies to this, reporting in his early history of the firm that records for the years 1900-1919 were 'non-existent' (SHC ref 1394/6/1).

Dennis Brothers, vehicle manufacturers of Guildford, were already engaged in making lorries for the army when the war began but in October 1915 became 'controlled' by the Ministry of Munitions which took the firm's entire output and controlled prices and profits. The directors' minute book covering the war includes many references to war work (SHC ref 1463/2/3). For a contract with the Ministry of Munitions to build War Office Subvention model A Type lorries see SHC ref 1463/CF/1, for an illustrated brochure of this vehicle, 1915, see SHC ref 1463/PUB/10/1 and for further photographs of lorries and fire engines ordered by the War Office see 1463/PHTALB/1/2-3 and 1463/PHTALB/3/1. For insurance policies against War Office military lorry parts being damaged by aircraft, 1917-1918, see SHC ref 1463/IP/6/8-15.



*Dennis army lorry trials  
(SHC ref 1463/PHTALB/3/1)*

Drummond Brothers, lathe makers of Guildford, also became a 'controlled' establishment, making 3.5' lathes, for use in destroyers and submarines, and 5' lathes for the mechanised section of the Army Service Corps (for use in mobile workshops). The factory worked night and day to supply the forces' needs, until production was disrupted by a fire which destroyed a large part of the works in May 1915. As soon as rebuilding was complete work restarted. At the end of the war the entire production was being taken by the Government departments, a special feature being a precision screw lathe, bought by the Ministry of Munitions (SHC refs 1550/2/1 and 1550/3/2). The issue of the shortage of skilled labour and its 'dilution' through the employment of women is reflected in printed circulars from the Munitions Labour Supply Committee of the Ministry of Munitions, 1915 (SHC ref 7449/7/1).

The factory of the famous piano makers, John Broadwood and Sons, was in London although the family's seat was in Capel. During the war the factory produced aircraft fusilages and ammunition boxes. This work may be reflected in the firm's ledgers and 'porter's books in SHC ref 2185/JB/-; a weekly analysis book, includes running financial total for munitions production from 1915 (SHC ref 2185/JB/54/2) and photographs of wartime production, including women making ammunition boxes are in SHC ref 2185/JB/72/1-7 & 30.

The county's technical institutes also played their part. The minutes of the Munitions Sub-Committee of the Wimbledon Technical Institute include references to the institute undertaking munitions work and also providing training for munitions workers (**SHC ref 8514/4/1/1**).

Inventor John Henry **Knight** (1847-1917) of Badshot Lea, also sought to contribute to the nation's drive to arm itself: for a photograph of his grenade-throwing catapult, c.1915 see **SHC ref 7146/1/4**.



*John Henry Knight's prototype grenade launcher (SHC ref 7146/1/5)*

Records of the Dorking Greystone Lime Company include details of men exempted from military service and of German prisoners of war employed during World War I (**SHC ref 2973/2/34**) and correspondence of J Keen and Sons, brickworks, Worplesdon, also refers to war work (**SHC ref 1504/4/1-27**).

The Woking and Brooklands based aircraft manufacturer, Martinsyde Ltd, built military aeroplanes during the war. A photograph of model of the Martinsyde bomb-dropper at the War Exhibition, London, is held as **SHC ref 8093/9**. The other great aircraft manufacturer in the county, the Sopwith Aviation Company in Canbury Park Road, Kingston, extended its operation in 1917 when it took over National Aircraft Factory No.2 in Ham. A Surrey County Council Clerk's file relating to this is held as **SHC ref CC28/141**.

Organised Labour within Surrey is reflected in the minute books of the Guildford Trades and Labour Council, which include many resolutions and references to war time hardship, wages and food shortages (**SHC ref 1364/1/1-2**). The minutes of the Guildford Branch of the United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers (**SHC ref 5299/1**) include many references to disputes with the Dennis board and managers over, for example, the 'new nefarious system'(13 Jan 1917) of allotted timings and prices assigned per 'job', resulting from the Munitions Act; and the 'dilution of labour' by the employment of women in jobs previously done by skilled men.

The impact of labour and materials shortages on the building industry is reflected in for example, correspondence of Kingston & Surbiton Presbyterian Church with the Ministry of Munitions and Ministry of National Service (**SHC ref 2121/6/5**) and papers relating to delays in the construction of the Star and Garter Homes in Richmond for disabled servicemen (**SHC refs 8711/961/PP/28 and 31**).

Later in the war, the Department of National Service, later Ministry of National Service, was set up to coordinate the voluntary recruitment of men and women for industry and agriculture. A set of posters issued by the Ministry urging people to enroll at post offices, employment exchanges or National Service offices (eg. 'Enrol today and back up the men in the trenches', 'If you cannot fight for your country work for it'), are held as **SHC ref CC917/Bun 10**.

Some references to the reaction of local traders to the war will be found in the minutes of Woking & District Tradesmen's Alliance, from 1915 Woking & District Chamber of Trade, including the proposal that the organisation raise a private volunteer corps (**SHC refs 7462/1/2 and 7462/1/5**).

Further papers relating to the involvement of Surrey firms in munitions work and industrial relations during the war will be found in the records of central government departments at The National Archives.

The following is just a few examples of records that can be found through searching the TNA's online catalogue: a Ministry of Munitions file relating to the supply of brass-strip required by Martinsyde Ltd of Byfleet, for the manufacture of radiators, 1915 (**TNA ref MUN 3/111**); a similar file relating to the reduction of Sunday Labour at Dehon, Godar & Connell, shell manufacturers of Barnes, 1918 (**TNA ref MUN 3/235**);

papers relating to wage claims at

Chilworth Gunpowder Mills, 1918-1919 (**TNA ref LAB/2/426/IC3775/3/1918**); papers relating to preparations for, and construction of, No.1 National Aircraft Factory, Croydon, and on fitting and equipping, staffing and salaries of the factory, 1917-1919 (**TNA ref MUN 8/41**); and an arbitration award made by the Chief Industrial Commissioner's Department, Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades, in the case Taylor and Bates Ltd Chertsey Surrey v boatbuilders (A J David), 1917 (TNA refs **LAB 2/258/IC2329/1917 & -/2/1917**).



*Women making ammunition boxes at the John Broadwood and Sons' factory (SHC ref 2185/JB/72/8)*