

Women at War

Preparation: read background sheet on women at war

Learning Objective

Use source evidence and debate to explore how women contributed to and felt about the war effort.

Over the page are a selection of 8 primary sources from war-time Horsham about women.

Exercise 1: Women at Work

Take a look at **Sources 1-6**.

1. Pick two different kinds of source (e.g. photo, poster, article or speech).
2. For each source **separately** answer the following enquiry:

Use this source and your own knowledge to explain what the source tells us about how women contributed to the war effort.

Exercise 2: A debate on duty

One of the 'duties' of women hinted at in a light-hearted manner by the speaker in **Source 5** was none-the-less taken very seriously by some women. The duty to encourage their men to go and fight. **Sources 7 and 8** reveal two contemporary women's opposing views of this 'duty'.

1. In groups take either **Source 7 or 8**. Using the source and your groups own knowledge and opinions layout the argument to support that opinion.
2. Hold a public debate in the class between these two opposing sides with nominees from each group. Who wins?



Source 1

1915 Horsham poster encouraging recruits for the Women's Emergency corps.



WOMEN'S EMERGENCY CORPS.

A MEETING
WILL BE HELD ON
TUESDAY, JUNE 1ST, 1915,
AT
THE STATION HOTEL,
HORSHAM,
at 3.30 p.m.

SPEAKER:
MRS. PERTWEE.
MISS LETTICE ARNOLD
in the Chair.

ADMISSION FREE. ALL ARE WELCOME.
Tea and Discussion after the Meeting.

J. R. TYGHEMAN, PRINTER & BOOKBINDER, HORSHAM.

Poster: 1998.1510 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum & Art Gallery

Source 2

Article from the West Sussex County Times on 10th July 1915

War Hospital Supply Depot

It is proposed to start a Branch in Horsham of the War Hospital Supply Depot at Hove. The chief object of the Depot are:

1. To collect or purchase the proper materials from which all sorts of bandages, splints, medical dressings and other War Hospital requisites can be made.
2. To make the various articles daily in the rooms of the Depot under thoroughly qualified and expert superintendence. This work will be done by voluntary helpers/
3. To collect and receive Gifts of all other necessities such as Antiseptics, Invalids Foods, Clothes, etc.
4. To distribute quickly to various Hospitals at the Front and others which are in urgent need of all such requisites.

Further particulars of the working of the Branch will be inserted in next week's paper.

In order to ensure the success a considerable amount of financial support is necessary. The Committee urgently appeal for funds.

President: Mrs E. D. A. Harvey

Hon. Treasurer: Mrs Curtis

Hon. Secretary: Miss Allcard

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Source 3

Photograph taken of Miss Penfold who worked during war-time and after as a railway guard and ticket inspector.



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Source 4

1917 Horsham Poster advertising for the fund-raising Fete and Bazaar organised by Mrs Douglas Harvey of Beedingwood and opened by Lady Leconfield.



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Source 5

Snippets from a West Sussex County Times article on September 5th 1914 about a recent recruiting meeting at Cowfold in the Horsham District.

Patriotic Meeting at Cowfold Fine response to appeal for recruits

With the object of gaining recruits in this great national emergency a meeting was held on the Cowfold Cricket Ground on Saturday evening and was attended by great success. . . . There were many young men all over England who were not coming forward in the way they should do. . . Why did not the ladies say to the young men that they would not walk out with them unless they enlisted at once (applause)? They would soon find the young men would go and they need not be in the slightest degree afraid, for the charms he [the speaker] saw around him convinced him of that (laughter)!

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Source 6

Article in West Sussex County Times 26th February 1916

Women's War work - Helping on the Land

In order to promote war work on the land for women a well-attended meeting was held at the Town Hall on Wednesday afternoon.

The Hon Mrs Maxe said she had been enormously encouraged by the response the scheme had met with. She found very little opposition to the scheme among the farmers; those who did oppose it were coming in June to ask for labour. They had all got to do what they could, not only the cottage women but all classes.

Miss Bradley, organiser for Kent, Surrey and Sussex said that for twenty years she had been training women for agriculture and for eight years had had her own farm. As a practical farmer therefore, she had thrown herself into the work. She believed that women, especially educated women, would see that it went on because they would realise its vital necessity to England. The women would constitute England's second line of defence. So the women had been called upon to form an army to increase the food supply. It was a serious question now and would become more serious. England was a small country and could not produce enough for herself, but they ought to produce a great deal more and could do so if only the land were cultivated. The task was gigantic, but if founded on right lines it would soon spread. Miss Bradley said there was a women's committee for the county. Though the work would not begin in some Districts yet it was important that the number of women required by farmers should be known and that the women should be found. Though they might make a push for it this summer and keep things going, it was not likely that they would be out of the wood yet. The young women should train and get experience and practical work. They should learn to milk and to look after sheep, lambs and poultry. There were so many things a woman could do on a farm and the men who were left would be free to do the heavier work.

Mr Lawson, the Agricultural Organiser for West Sussex urged that they should hurry on with the work of organisation for farmers were in the temper to receive women labour. If the duty of the women was put clearly before them there would be good response.

Miss Bradley urged that the work, whatever the position of the worker, should not be voluntary, or it would upset the labour market, and strongly urged upon the girls who had the least instinct for country life to be thoroughly trained for agriculture.

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Source 7

Mrs Harvey wife of Rev. Harvey gave a speech at Girls Friendly Society that was quoted in the Parish Magazine September 1914.

As quoted in **Knight, J.** 2011 *Horsham's History, 1914-1918 Volume 4.*

“Then what are the women of England doing at this time, whilst the men are going to fight? What is our duty? . . . There have been many ways of usefulness . . . for trained nurses . . . only those fully trained being rightly considered fit for such service.

Then there is work to which we women and girls are called – hard and very painful work, but one which is our duty – to do all in our power to encourage our own men, brother or over, to respond to the country's call, and help in the hour of need. Englishmen are willing, but all do not understand the terrible need, do not understand the training that will be given to fit them, do not know that those dependant on them will be cared for whilst they give their service. It is our part to make all this quite clear to them, to shew that we shall be proud of their response, and wish them to arise to their great privilege. When the War is over, we want them to know the joy of having stood by England in her hour of need.”

Source 8

'A woman's View' article by Margaret Sackville, 3rd daughter of the 7th earl de la Warr, in Bibby's Annual 1916.

"There are some subjects on which women are supposed to hold no individual views whatever. In all the minor affairs of life they are encouraged to see things from their own standpoint, but where the question is one of life and death to millions, they are expected to resign their judgment and follow blindly the leadership of men. War, which affects women most closely, is generally held to be outside their province altogether, save, of course, in the matter of giving assistance and working to the best of their ability in order to ensure its successful prosecution.

And in this state of things women have, for the most part, acquiesced. . . And yet the most profoundest instincts of women must be against war. It would show a singular indifference indeed if women could easily see those bodies they have risked their lives in creating, wantonly sacrificed for no adequate cause. . .

To concentrate on home-life only is a form of selfishness, nor is it avoided by abandoning the home. There should instead be no vital separation between the home and the State – one must grow from the other and the same characteristics should be found in both. In this way women would cease to feel as individuals *merely*, and it would be no longer possible for the mothers of one country to lavish tenderness, sympathy and compassion on their own sons, and at the same time urge them forth to kill the sons of other mothers.

. . . women, in refusing to condemn war are indirectly guilty of the sufferings of women and children during war, for they are helping to uphold a system under which these particular sufferings are possible.

And yet . . . men are not fighting, nor women urging them to fight for evil motives but for good however great their mistake in thinking such methods can produce good.

. . . All women must combine, and immediately, if any good is to be done. They must work to prevent (what every peace has been up to now) a patched up peace. They must help to prepare a peace which shall differ in essentials from any other peace the world has known – because it will be based on the fundamental humanity of all the nations involved; and they must see that the stone of mutual respect and generosity between nations, which builders have hitherto rejected, shall become the corner-stone. . . "