

A close-up photograph of a hand moving a black chess piece on a chessboard. The hand is positioned at the top left, with the thumb and index finger gripping a black pawn. The chessboard is in the foreground, and other pieces are visible in the background, slightly out of focus. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the hand and the smooth surface of the chess pieces.

SEDLSCOMBE IN WORLD WAR I

At the start of the 20th century, fears were growing about the military build-up of European Powers. Germany, in particular, was trying to acquire more land. In a 1908 Sedlescombe Parish Magazine there was a warning –

“This part of Southern England stands a chance of being invaded at any time and those living here must be ready to defend themselves”

Photo from the
Women's Institute
1953 Scrapbook

Local concerns about a possible invasion led to three ex-Military men – Majors Combe, Prendergast and Mullens setting up a Rifle Club in Sedlescombe.

In 1908, a Rifle Club was set up
on the Oaklands Estate,
probably on the site of today's
Sportsfield





Horace Martin

RIFLE RANGE AND CLUB STARTED AT OAKLANDS PARK

SCHOOL RIFLE CADET CORPS STARTED BY HORACE MARTIN

- Harvey T B Combe, who had already offered to provide a 100-yard rifle range on his land at Oaklands Park, was elected President. The price of ammunition was 1 penny for 5 rounds. Competitions were arranged and shooting days were held on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 5 o'clock to dark. Member numbers soon increased to 60. Prizes of a silver cigarette case and a silver match box were awarded during the first year.
- Even the children were involved when, in 1909, the headmaster, Horace Martin, set up a School Rifle Cadet Corps. Boys stayed at Sedlescombe School until they were 13 and so some of the children practising on the shooting range would, a few years later, be shooting for real on the fields of Flanders.



GERMANY

BELGIUM

GREAT
BRITAIN

Reasons for World War I are complex, but the last straw seemed to have been an old agreement signed by Great Britain that assured that GB would defend Belgium at all times. When Germany invaded Belgium in 1914, in an attempt to get to France, GB was tipped into war with Germany.

MILITARY IMBALANCE – NO COMPULSORY ENLISTMENT IN BRITAIN UNTIL 1916

There was no compulsory enlistment in Britain until 1916 so, in Great Britain, men were just asked to volunteer to fight. In comparison, Germany called up all its reserves at the outbreak of war and so they immediately had military forces 3.8 million strong, while our army numbered as little as just over 700,000. Horrendously, 700,000 was about the number of our men who either died or were injured before the end of 1914.



© IWM Art.IWM PST 2763



© IWM Art.IWM PST 0311



© IWM Art.IWM PST 2734

If we were living in Sedlescombe in 1914 onwards, we would be seeing posters going up around the Village urging people aged between 18 and 40 to join up to help fight against Germany. There was a lot of pressure on men to join

STEP INTO YOUR PLACE



© IWM (Art.IWM PST 0318)

PUBLISHED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY RECRUITING COMMITTEE, LONDON. — POSTER NO. 109.

PRINTED BY DAVID ALLEN & SONS LTD, HARROW, MIDDLESEX.



MEN FLOCKED TO THE COLOURS



Eventually, anyone seen on a bus not in uniform would be ridiculed and criticised.



Remember the 1908 article in the Sedlescombe Parish Magazine which warned that we might be invaded at any time? There was a growing feeling of patriotism throughout the country and hundreds of thousands flocked to the colours in order to protect our country and the Empire. In 8 weeks from August 1914, more than three quarters of a million men in this country joined up to fight in the war. Even though there was a rush to volunteer, it took time to get so many kitted out and to be given at least rudimentary training. There was a shortage of everything including weapons and uniforms and some even had to wear cardboard hats at the beginning and use cut out wooden rifles for training.

MEN FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE RESPONDED TO THE CALL TO ARMS

At first, before the volunteers could be kitted out and trained, it was the already serving or retired regular soldier that was sent to the Front, and it was the officers who were first in the line of enemy fire.

In Sedlescombe, there were three officers that feature on the Sedlescombe War Memorial in the Parish Church, who were killed within nine days of each other, in November 1914. They were:

- A retired soldier, aged 32, retired 1913 **HENRY (aka Harry) ADEANE died 02/11/1914 (All Souls Day)**
- A new soldier, aged 20, joined 1914 **GILLACHRIST MOORE died 07/11/1914**
- A serving soldier, aged 26, joined 1914 **BOYCE ANTONY COMBE died 11/11/1914**

Every year on Armistice Sunday, we hear these and other names read out with appropriate solemnity, often to a packed Church. But who were these men who sacrificed their lives so early in the War?



All 3 of these men who are on the Sedlescombe War Memorial are also on the memorial at the Menin Gate for men without any known grave.



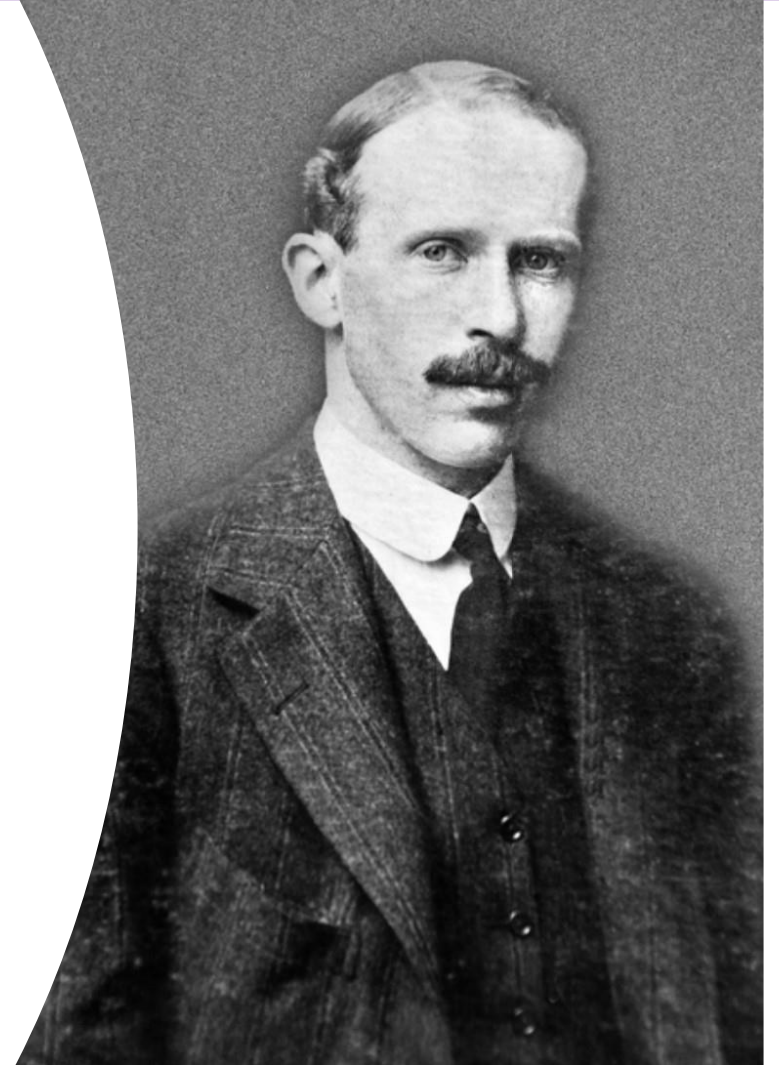
They were also all awarded the Mons Star for those serving early in the war. Much later this group of men became known as "*the old contemptibles*" which is how the German Kaiser disparagingly described them in 1914.

HENRY ADEANE, JACOBS FARM, POWDERMILL LANE, SEDLESCOMBE, DIED NOVEMBER 1914

The Adeane family's ancestral home was the huge and imposing Babraham Hall in Cambridgeshire, but Henry (aka Harry) Adeane spent most of his childhood at Jacobs Farm, Sedlescombe with his retired parents. He was an only child. His father had been an Admiral – the highest rank in the Royal Navy to which someone can be promoted. Henry himself had already served his time in the Army and in 1913, when still a young man, had retired, married and had 4-year-old son. He, his wife and son were living in London.

At the outbreak of War, the call to arms was strong and the day after Great Britain entered the war, 32-year-old Henry Adeane left his wife and son and re-joined his old regiment, the Coldstream Guards, as a Captain, and was soon sent to fight at the Front .

The fighting approaching Ypres was not going well, the number of British men was much lower than the Germans, many were being killed, the equipment was poor with jamming guns and ammunition was in short supply, but our men were still made to push forward to try to repel the attack. Henry Adeane died on 2 November 1914 just off the Menin Road, east of Ypres.



HENRY ADEANE
CAPTAIN IN THE COLDSTREAM GUARDS

{Use of Photo authorised by "Rutland Remembers"}

THE NAMES OF THE FALLEN CAN BE SEEN ON SEVERAL WAR MEMORIALS

As well as his name being remembered at the war memorial in Sedlescombe Church, Henry Adeane's name is also on a stone cross at the village centre in Babraham where his family home was, and on the Langham and the Barleythorpe War Memorial in Rutland where he used to hunt when staying locally. Surprisingly, because he was a relative of the Stanley family, the premier Holyhead family, there is also an impressive set of three angel stained glass windows dedicated to his memory in St Cybi's Church in Holyhead in Anglesey.



{Photo taken by Patricia Hughes and this use authorised by "War Memorials Online"}



Jacobs Farmhouse, Sedlescombe

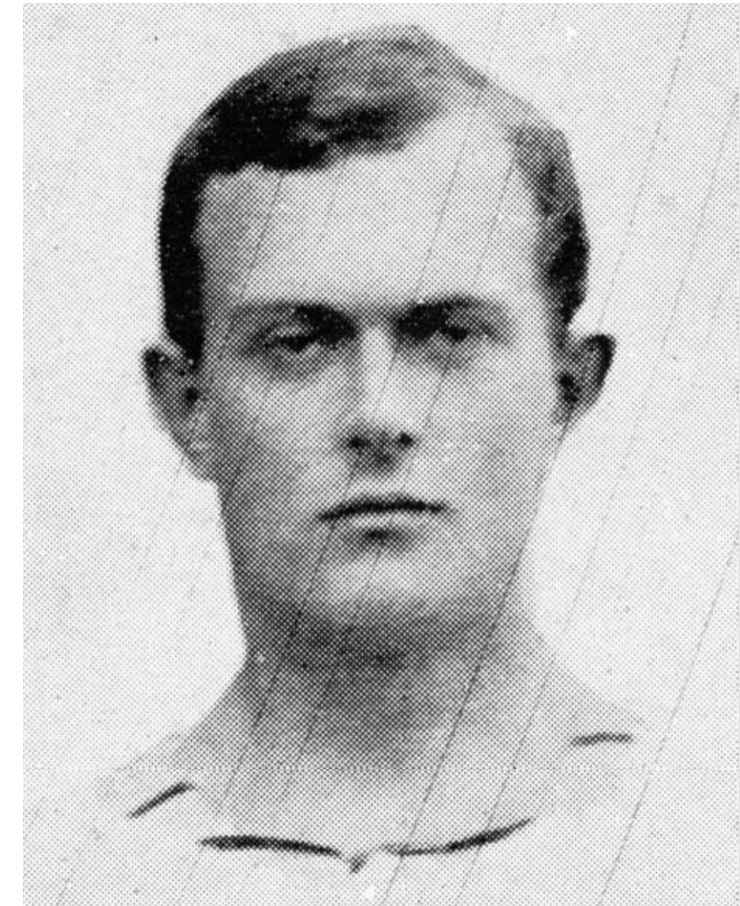


Babraham war memorial

GILLACHRIST MOORE OF HANCOX, DIED NOVEMBER 1914

Gillachrist Moore's death on the 7 November 2014, also in the Battle of Ypres, was just 5 days after Henry Adeane was killed,. He was a young 20-year-old officer from Hancox, a large property on the A21 just past the entrance to Stream Lane. With the Hancox land from time to time straddling Sedlescombe and Whatlington parishes, it was appropriate that Gillachrist's name should feature on the Whatlington War Memorial as well as Sedlescombe's. And there is also a memorial stone at The Oratory School, a Catholic school in Birmingham that he attended, and another memorial at Cambridge University where he had joined the Officers' Training Corps and received his Army commission and where he was assigned to the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment. So, there are at least four memorials to Gillachrist Moore.

Gillachrist was named by his father who, from the time he was a few days old, called him "The Gilla". We can envisage something of what Gilla's life was like as he prepared to leave and while he was at the Front because his great niece Charlotte Moore has written a rather special book called *"Hancox, a House and a Family"*. Charlotte still lives in Hancox which was Gillachrist's family country home and was once called "Sedlescombe Place". Various parts of Charlotte's family have been there since the 1890s and what is quite extraordinary is that hers was a family that threw nothing away. The frontispiece to her book says that *"Every cupboard and every drawer is crammed with relics of family history – letters, diaries, school reports, sketchbooks, even bundles of bills"* and some of these are reproduced in the book including letters relating to Gilla.



{Use of photo authorised by Imperial War
Museum © IWM HU 125841}

**HANCOX, AKA
SEDLSCOMBE PLACE**



It was while Gilla was spending an idyllic few weeks in the early summer of 1914 at Hancox, where he loved the countryside and everything natural history, worrying signs that we were heading towards war had become ever more evident. Unaccustomed noises brought the whole household outside to stare up into the sky at the newly-invented aeroplanes flying over Sedlescombe.

1914-18 AIRCRAFT

We do not know the identity of the planes that flew over Sedlescombe, but this is a British Avro 504 that was flying in 1914. It was a trainer, fighter, bomber and very noisy!



This is a picture of the Nieuport 12, a French sesquiplane reconnaissance fighter aircraft. Young 19-year-old Cyril Mullens, whose name is on the Sedlescombe War Memorial, was in this type of plane when it was shot down in 1916 over Ostend by a German torpedo boat and seaplane. He and the pilot were drowned.



1914 CHRISTMAS PRESENT TO THE TROOPS



The letters reproduced in Charlotte Moore's book tell the moving story of Gilla's love for Mary Haviland, a young girl from nearby Brightling Place and her love for him. Charlotte Moore describes the grief felt over Gilla's loss and how, although Gilla's body was never recovered, the personal effects that were with him on the day he was killed have been safely kept in a tin trunk until this day.

At Christmas 1914, about a month after the death of the 3 officers from Sedlescombe, every soldier was sent a small cardboard box containing a tin as shown in the picture above. It was embossed with a portrait of an aunt of our Queen, Princess Mary, and the names of the Allies. Inside was a printed card with the words *"With best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Victorious New Year from The Princess Mary and Friends at Home"*. On the lid of the box is a typed message *"It is regretted that non-smoker gifts are not available"*. Gilla was an enthusiastic pipe-smoker but the packets of tobacco in the tin remain intact for the present arrived when he was already dead. This reminder of the War and of Gilla's loss remains in the tin trunk in Hancox.

**BOYCE ANTHONY COMBE FROM
OAKLANDS, DIED NOVEMBER
1914**



*Photo use authorised by the Imperial War
Museum. Photo submitted to IWM by DES42319*

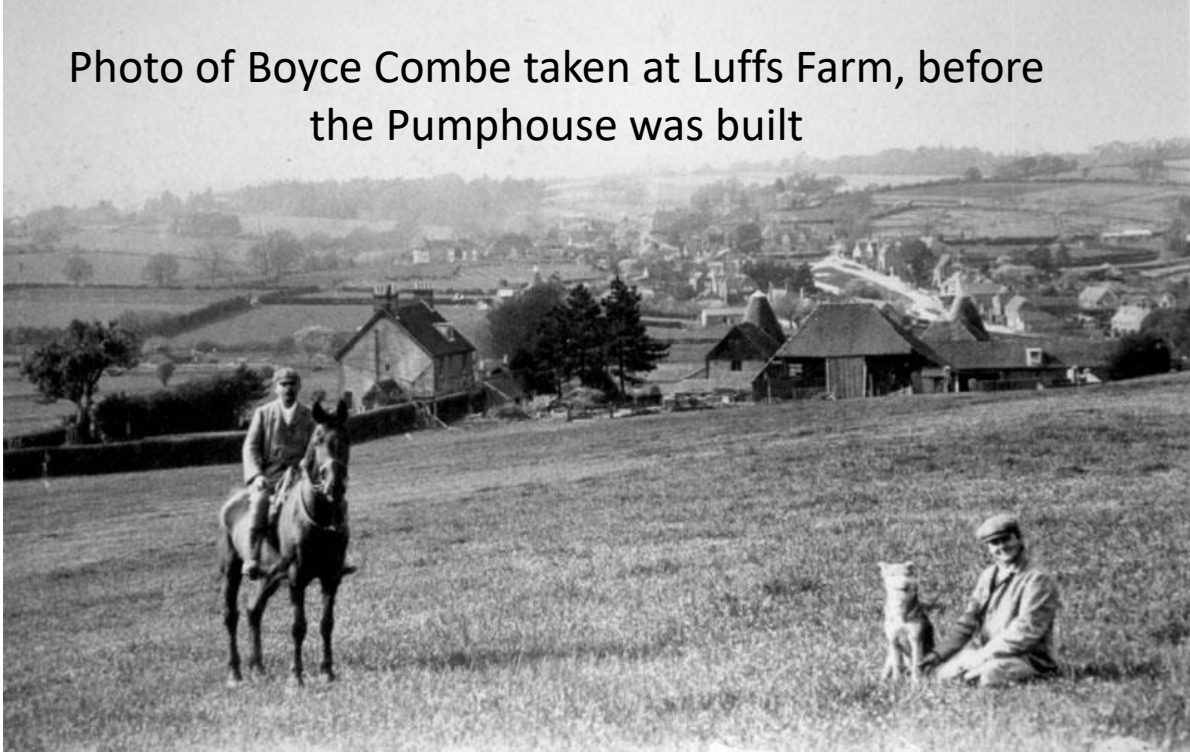


Photo of Boyce Combe taken at Luffs Farm, before
the Pumphouse was built

The late Lottie Wilson remembered that Boyce Combe was known as “Boycey” in Sedlescombe and “was a lovely man with no sides on him at all” (i.e. he was not arrogant or pretentious).

Boyce Anthony Combe was the youngest of the two sons of Sedlescombe’s Squire at Oaklands Park. He was born in Oaklands Park which is now in Sedlescombe but was then in the parish of Westfield and was christened in Sedlescombe Church in 1889. He died in action in Hermitage Wood near Ypres on 11 November 1914, aged 26. He was a Lieutenant in the Royal Fusiliers and after the war his mother said that just before he died he had been the only officer left commanding his men with 3 other battalions against the might of 15 battalions of the Prussian Imperial Guard. (A battalion is between 300 and 800 men.)



Westfield War Memorial

BOYCE ANTHONY COMBE

Boyce's family held an important position in local life being employers, providers of homes and magistrates who had dealt out punishment for offences since the 1830s.

Boyce's father was Harvey Trewythen Brabazon Combe, the first Chairman of Sedlescombe Parish Council in 1894.

As well as on the Menin Gate Memorial and Sedlescombe's war memorial, Boyce's name is also on the Westfield Church memorial.

(See WW2 for further about Boyce Combe's family)

BOYCE COMBE'S MOTHER AMY

Even before Boyce's death, his mother, Amy Combe had taken the lead with the Sedlescombe Red Cross War Relief Fund raising money in the village and giving materials for weekly working parties in the Brabazon Art Gallery (now Kester House/Tithe Barn) to make Bandages, Pyjamas, Sheets, Pillow Cases, Hot water bottle covers etc. for the auxiliary hospitals. Each month £2 was also set aside for soldiers' presents. Long lists of subscribers were included in the parish magazines.

The Parish Magazine records in February 1915 that small bundles of comforts had been sent to Sedlescombe men, James Guy and Thomas Playford containing laces, socks, mittens, chocolate and writing paper wrapped up in khaki handkerchiefs.



**WW1 RED CROSS RELIEF FUND WORKING PARTY IN
BRABAZON ART GALLERY, TITHE BARN**

SEDLSCOMBE RED CROSS WORK PARTIES & COMFORTS FOR THE TROOPS

The ladies of Sedlescombe continued throughout the war to make articles for the hospitals and to make up parcels to be sent out to our local soldiers serving overseas.

In 1917, the Sedlescombe Red Cross Work Party made 630 bandages, 57 swabs, 79 handkerchiefs, 27 tea cloths, 49 glass cloths, 6 shirts, 1 night shirt, 8 pyjama suits, 5 bed jackets, 5 knitted caps, 37 pairs of socks and bed socks (always washed first to prevent blisters), 107 bags, 18 hot water bags, 46 pillow cases, 8 sheets, 43 pairs mittens, 3 mufflers, 26 sets of ointment cloths, 28 towels.

Parcels were sent to 55 soldiers containing socks, mittens, bootlaces, soap, candles, chocolate, notepaper, pencils, tins of soup, fish, cocoa, Oxo, etc.



LIFEBUOY SOAP

LIFEBUOY SOAP is a perfect soap and a perfect antiseptic acting together in perfect unity. It cleans and disinfects at the same time. It is the ideal soap to use for bath and toilet, for cleaning sick room and living room—for home and hospital.

The mild Carbolic odour you note in Lifebuoy Soap is the sign of its splendid Protective Qualities.

**MORE THAN SOAP—
YET COSTS NO MORE.**

The name Lever on Soap is a Guarantee of Purity and Excellence.

*In health or sickness,
In peace or war,
ALTOGETHER!!*

LEVER BROTHERS LIMITED, PORT SUNLIGHT.
L 128-4

Lifebuoy Soap was one of the soaps chosen for the soldiers. Lever Brothers, who produced it, claimed that using it would protect you from germs and save you from sickness (hence the name Lifebuoy). It contained carbolic acid (which gave it a strong medicinal smell). Early ads stated that using it as a disinfectant was the best protection against diseases such as typhoid, cholera and diphtheria. This ad was in Sedlescombe's Parish Magazine.

Parish Magazine June 1916



I peg a Union Jack on my clothes line every wash-day! In other words, I use the purest and best BRITISH SOAP.

SUNLIGHT SOAP

upholds our national tradition for Quality and Efficiency. It is made from the best materials in the world—by the best labour in the world—for the cleanest homes in the world. Like every typical British Manufacture **IT WILL STAND EVERY TEST** whether practical or analytical. So be loyal to your country! Use Sunlight Soap and peg a Union Jack on your clothes line every wash-day.

£1,000 GUARANTEE OF PURITY ON EVERY BAR.

The name Lever on Soap is a Guarantee of Purity and Excellence.

LEVER BROTHERS LIMITED, PORT SUNLIGHT.

B 961-4

Sunlight Soap was also advertised in the Sedlescombe Parish Magazine in June 1916. This was another soap produced by the Lever Brothers.

“CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS”

With the Victorian belief that “Cleanliness is next to godliness”, soap was always going to be an important ingredient of parcels to the Front. However, trench living would not have given the soldiers any opportunity to use the soap for washing and it just goes to show how out of touch the people left at home in England were. This was another advert in the Sedlescombe Parish Magazine of WWI.



An Incident of the Trenches

TOMMY: Look here, boys, someone's dropped a cake of Pears' Soap. What a quick answer to my letter home of last night, asking for some to be sent in the next parcel. Line up, we must have it. It'll do for the lot of us, and by George! we need it.

They got it, and had the wash of their lives

Pears' Soap

is doing capital work at the Front. The boys give a cheer when they see it. There is nothing like it for freshening up the skin and keeping it in a healthy condition.

It is the most economical of toilet soaps, therefore

always make a point of including Pears' in your Parcels

A beautiful coloured reproduction of "BUBBLES," a facsimile of the world-famous picture, by Sir John E. Millais, P.R.A., size 28 in. by 19 in., free from any advertising, will be sent post-free on receipt of 11d. in stamps or postal order.

A. & F. PEARS, LTD., 71-75, New Oxford Street, London, W.C.

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE, and sold at their Depots: London: Northumberland Avenue, W.C.; 45, Queen Victoria Street, E.C.; Brighton: 290, North Street. Printed by Harrison and Sons, St. Martin's Lane, London, W.C.

Also included in the Parish Magazines were other reminders about cleanliness and the housewife doing everything she could to keep her home free from flies and fleas because “thousands of deaths are caused every year by flies”. The following was printed: “Of course, private individuals would do their best. Mothers especially would fight for the lives of their children, sacrificing sleep and food, and counting no sacrifice too great.... We must then kill as many flies as possible by means of fly-traps and such methods. All thoughts of kindness to animals must be banished. Our sailors and soldiers are fighting against the Germans, let those who stay at home fight against insects.”

SIDNEY WELLER FROM THE PRESBYTERY, DIED NOVEMBER 1914

Although Dan Snow, a television historian, has said that the First War impacted disproportionately on the elite, Sedlescombe's war memorial also records the names of others who would not be described as "the elite", who died fighting for their country. Sidney Weller's father was a Brede Policeman and when the family moved to live in the Presbytery in The Street, he became the leader of the Sedlescombe Brass Band. Sydney died, on the 10th November 1914, in the First Battle of Ypres as our three officers had done. He was one of 17 children in his family.



SEDLSCOMBE BRASS BAND LED BY SIDNEY WELLER'S FATHER

This is the only photo in the Sedlescombe Archives of the Sedlescombe Brass Band found in the Sedlescombe WI's 1953 Scrapbook (given to Sedlescombe Archives on closure of Sedlescombe WI and now held in the County Record Office in Lewes).

The Queen's Head can be seen in the background of this photo taken on 24th June 1915 but it is also possible to just make out that the Band is leading the Sedlescombe Volunteers with their black armbands marching behind. This band of volunteers was set up in January 1915 at a meeting at the Queen's Head called by Mjr Mullens of Westfield Place. The Sedlescombe Brass Band often joined the Volunteers on route marches.

SEDLESCOMBE VOLUNTEER CORPS



Sedlescombe Volunteers in 1915 on parade outside the Queen's Head, the headquarters at the time. There are no weapons. The volunteers were made up of men and boys too old or young to join up or those in reserved occupations who were needed to stay at home.



By the time this photo was taken, the Volunteers appear to have weapons, or maybe wooden replicas. We know the names of some of the men – George Kenward, Boss Martin (headmaster), T G Hilder (pub landlord), Wallace Gregory (baker), Mr Dallaway, Mr Clayton.

SEDLSCOMBE VOLUNTEER TRAINING CORPS MARCHES



Royalty free photo

Lieutenant General Robert Baden-Powell (1857-1941), founder of the Scout Movement and co-founder, with his sister Agnes, of the Girl Guide Movement

By March 1915, there were 32 members of Sedlescombe Volunteer Training Corps and in April 1915, the Sussex Agricultural Express was reporting a route march from the Queen's Head, headed by the Sedlescombe Brass Band, up Chapel Hill and along to Westfield, returning via Cottage Lane to Westfield Place where Major and Mrs Mullens entertained them to tea. But not before the men had been "put through some movements on the lawn in front of the house".

In July 1915, Sedlescombe Volunteer Corps, along with Robertsbridge's Volunteer Corps paraded from Cripps Corner to St Mark's Church in Staplecross for inspection by Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Baden-Powell, K.C.B., K.C.V.O. Sedlescombe was under the command of Platoon Commandant J.Nash Leigh. Lieutenant-General Baden-Powell said that he admired very much the spirit in which the Volunteers were preparing themselves to protect their children, their wives, their homes and their country. *"It was the right spirit, and one that would ensure success. The Germans would have no respect for anyone. They would kill women and children and non-combatants, as well as combatants. It became more improbable every day that they would get here, but it was possible, and what was possible might happen."*

He went on to relate some incidents which had occurred at the siege of Mafeking during the South African War. He told the men that it was most important that they obeyed orders and learned how to be good marksmen which meant good judges of distance which they could practise in their daily lives by guessing distances and then pacing them out.

GENERAL SIR JOHN NIXON MOVED TO SEDLESCOMBE

In 1916, there was a new military officer to inspect the Volunteer Corps. General Sir John Nixon had moved into The Manor House, in The Street with his wife.



Royalty Free Getty Image

It had been a very difficult time for General Sir John who in 1915 had been Commander in Chief, Northern Army in India, going on to become the Commander of an Expeditionary Force in Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq), aimed at taking Baghdad. A series of misjudgements by the General resulted in his inability to rescue a garrison full of troops. The loss of his troops had been a burden too great for him to bear and he had suffered a nervous breakdown. Just before he moved to Sedlescombe in 1916, he had asked to be retired from active duty. In 1917, an inquiry found General Nixon principally responsible for failure of the Mesopotamian Expedition which ended the General's career.

SEDLSCOMBE DURING THE WAR SHELTERS SOLDIERS

During the long years of the first war, some of the big houses gave shelter to soldiers returning to the front or home on leave. The Sedlescombe Parish Magazine records that at one time there were more than 1200 soldiers sheltered in the village, more than trebling the number of people living here.

NORMANHURST, CATSFIELD, RED CROSS AUXILIARY HOSPITAL

The Red Cross with St John's did a great deal of humanitarian work in WW1 and as early as 1909 plans were made for setting up auxiliary hospitals and convalescent homes for wounded servicemen in time of war.

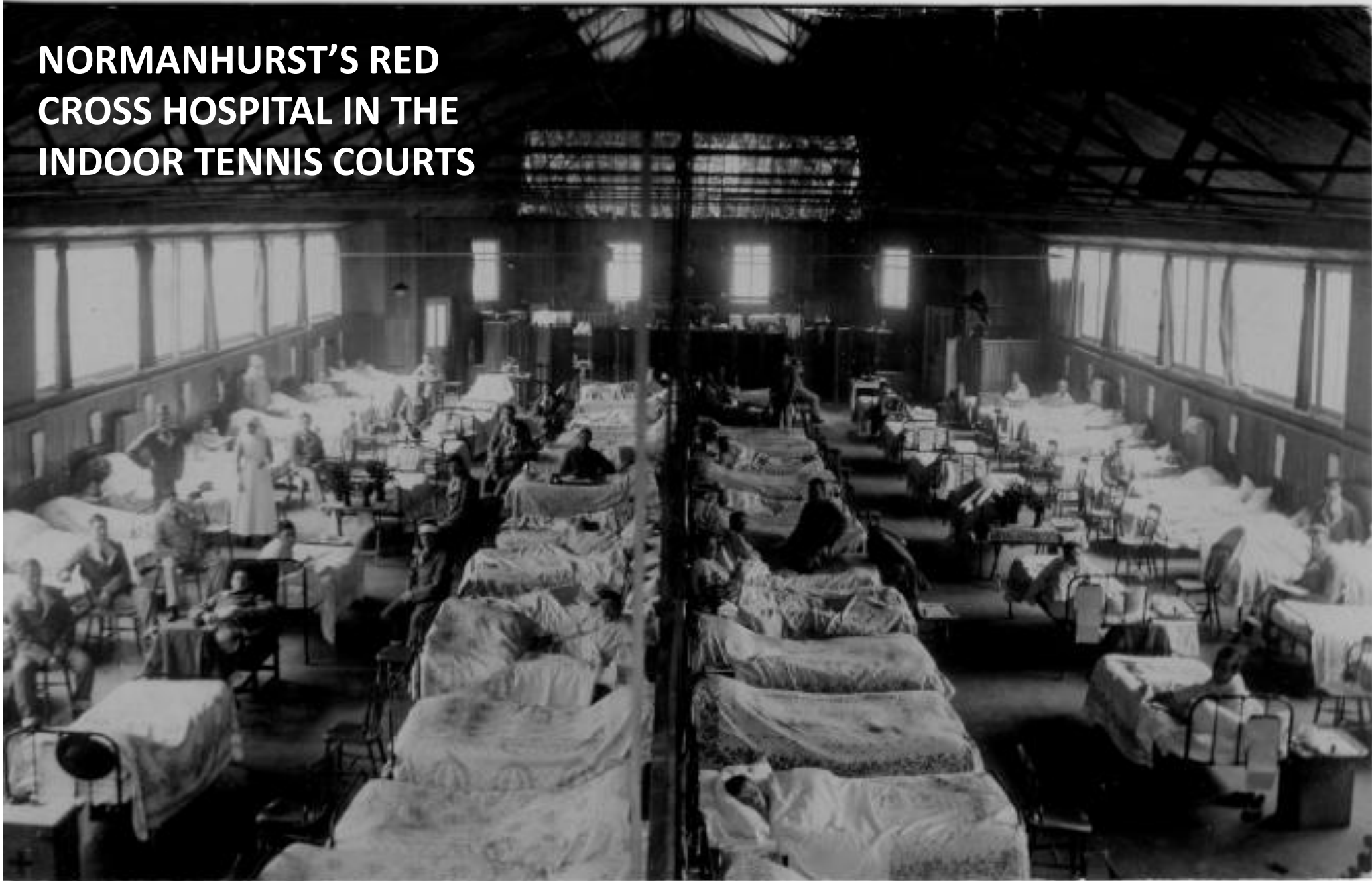


Normanhurst Court after enlargement in 1903.



<https://museumandarchives.redcross.org.uk/objects/10966>

**NORMANHURST'S RED
CROSS HOSPITAL IN THE
INDOOR TENNIS COURTS**



PINK CARDS RECORDED THE AMAZING NUMBER OF HOURS OF VOLUNTARY WORK AT THE NORMANHURST RED CROSS HOSPITAL

From 1914, auxiliary hospitals for this area were opened at Dixter in Northiam, a beautiful old home which many will know, and at Normanhurst, a colossal 80 room mansion in Catsfield belonging to the Brassey family, now demolished.

The auxiliary hospitals were staffed by volunteers from across the district and today it is possible to look at the Red Cross volunteers' pink cards online and see that all sorts of unpaid voluntary work was done, not just nursing and organising, but also menial cleaning and cooking. This was a great way for people to help with the war effort. It was often the titled ladies from the big houses who would be at the forefront. For this area, the mothers of two of the officers killed were organisers.

Mrs Amy Combe, Oaklands	1912 to at least 1919	Vice-President organiser of work parties without pay
Lady Millicent Moore, Hancox Whatlington	1915 to 1917 served 350 voluntary hours	VAD Nurse at Normanhurst, organisation of Voluntary Auxiliary Nurses without pay
Albert Winter, Hancox Farm Whatlington	1915 to 1918 served 382 voluntary hours	Night orderly (NB after finished his work on the farm) without pay
Rose Playford, Hancox Cottage Whatlington	1914 to 1915 1915 to 1918 served 713 voluntary hours	Peace Service without pay Cooking at Normanhurst without pay
Lilian Hart, Oak Cottage, Sedlescombe	1915-1916 served 504 voluntary hours	Nursing at Normanhurst without pay

LADY MILLICENT MOORE AND HANCOX WORKERS

As can be seen for the previous page, included are details from the card relating to Lady Millicent Moore, Gilla's stepmother from Hancox. Her cousin was Florence Nightingale. Lady Moore was obviously deeply involved with the Red Cross not only doing many hours of voluntary unpaid nursing work at Normanhurst but also acting as the organising Commandant. She also worked voluntarily at the Red Cross HQ at Piccadilly in London. She received the Voluntary Aid Detachment Roll of Honour award 1st Class for her work.

Some of those employed or who lived at Hancox worked there at the Normanhurst auxiliary hospital too.

A famous patient was Siegfried Sassoon, the war poet, who was sent to Normanhurst to convalesce.

Dr George Kendall, High Street, Battle

1911-1915

1915-1919 serving as a voluntary
Medical Officer and Anaesthetist

Peace service

121 operations and 40 attendances as
Medical Officer without pay

There is one card belonging to Dr Kendall of Battle, who throughout the early years of the 20th century was much loved by his Sedlescombe patients whom he often would treat without charge.

In 2018, a book was on show in Battle Museum. It had a beautifully illuminated front page and was presented to Dr Kendall on his retirement in 1928. The book listed those who subscribed to a going away present which surprisingly raised enough to allow Dr Kendall and his wife to buy a bungalow in Eastbourne!

Incidentally, Dr Kendall's retirement present was displayed in a new glass cabinet at the Museum purchased in memory of Derek Wilton of Sedlescombe.



MEDICAL STAFF AT NORMANHURST VOUNTARY AID DETACHMENT HOSPITAL



Is this a photo of Dr Kendall
or was he a patient?

Mercie Pratt (aka Winter) in front on the left
(Margaret Simmons who transcribed
Sedlescombe's censuses is her niece).

MR AND MRS THOMAS GEORGE PLAYFORD OF BARRACK COTTAGE, SEDLESCOMBE

In 1916, other Sedlescombe families were keen to show that they were contributing towards the war effort too.

A newspaper report states that not only did Mr and Mrs Thomas George Playford have 3 sons and 4 sons-in-law serving their country, but they also had one grandson who had been attested and passed and was waiting to be called up AND A FURTHER 8 OTHER GRANDSONS who they hoped one day would be able to join a future English army!

Mr and Mrs Playford were Sedlescombe's Julia Chapman's great grandparents. In Julia's book "Life through the Lens" she has a photograph of the couple and a newspaper cutting about their golden wedding with the information that Thomas George and Mary Ann Playford had six daughters, three sons and twenty grandchildren.

WHAT WERE OTHER PEOPLE IN SEDLESCOMBE DOING DURING WWI?

In Sedlescombe, Frank Thomas, the builder, was ringing a church bell each day at noon to remind people to pray for our sailors, soldiers, chaplains, doctors and nurses at the War.

At first a seemingly strange item in the newspaper reported that James Byner had collected 8 bushels of apples for the sailors from our parish. But there may be an explanation seen by reading an interesting First World War local story called “**Lady Mabelle’s Coffee Shop**”, written by Mountfield Archivist, Trish Jones. In the book, Trish explains how Lady Mabelle Egerton (nee Brassey) working with more than 170 other women, against all the odds, set up and ran a coffee shop at Rouen Station which became a wonderful homely place behind the lines for men going to and returning from the Front. Beginning in 1914, she continued for five years until 1919. As well as serving hot drinks which is how it all started, Mabelle also had a store of “comforts” sent out from England. This included a supply of fresh fruit. Possibly this is where James Byner’s apples collected from Sedlescombe went.

THE MILITARY SERVICE ACT, 1916,

APPLIES TO UNMARRIED MEN WHO, ON AUGUST 15th, 1915, WERE 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OVER AND WHO WILL NOT BE 41 YEARS OF AGE ON MARCH 2nd, 1916.

ALL MEN (NOT EXCEPTED OR EXEMPTED),

between the above ages who, on November 2nd, 1915, were Unmarried or Widowers without any Child dependent on them will, on

Thursday, March 2nd, 1916

BE DEEMED TO BE ENLISTED FOR THE PERIOD OF THE WAR.

They will be placed in the Reserve until Called Up in their Class.

MEN EXCEPTED:

SOLDIERS, including Territorials who have volunteered for Foreign Service;
MEN serving in the NAVY or ROYAL MARINES;
MEN DISCHARGED from ARMY or NAVY, disabled or ill, or TIME-EXPIRED MEN;
MEN REJECTED for the ARMY since AUGUST 14th, 1915;
CLERGYMEN, PRIESTS, and MINISTERS OF RELIGION;
VISITORS from the DOMINIONS.

MEN WHO MAY BE EXEMPTED BY LOCAL TRIBUNALS:

Men more useful to the Nation in their present employments;
Men in whose case Military Service would cause serious hardship owing to exceptional financial or business obligations or domestic position;
Men who are ill or infirm;
Men who conscientiously object to combatant service. If the Tribunal thinks fit, men may, on this ground, be (a) exempted from combatant service only (not non-combatant service), or (b) exempted on condition that they are engaged in work of National importance.

Up to March 2nd, a man can apply to his Local Tribunal for a certificate of exemption. There is a Right of Appeal. He will not be called up until his case has been dealt with finally.

Certificates of exemption may be absolute, conditional or temporary. Such certificates can be renewed, varied or withdrawn.

Men retain their Civil Rights until called up and are amenable to Civil Courts only.

**DO NOT WAIT UNTIL MARCH 2nd.
ENLIST VOLUNTARILY NOW.**

For fuller particulars of the Act, please apply for Leaflet No. 45 to the nearest Post Office, Police Station, or Recruiting Office.

COMPULSORY ENLISTMENT

With the loss of so many regular soldiers, by 1916 The Military Service Act, all unmarried men or widowers without dependent children, between the ages of 18 and 40, unless they were exempt for one reason or another, were “deemed to be enlisted for the period of the war”.

Exemption from military service was claimed by 40 year old Chas Alchin – son of Linton Alchin who had been one of Sedlescombe’s grocers (see *“Sedlescombe Grocers” for further details*) although the family had moved to Hastings a few years earlier.

In his application for exemption, Chas spoke about his father’s sudden death 15 months earlier and said that he himself was suffering from heart disease and bad eyesight. He travelled from London every day in order to be with his mother who was a confirmed invalid and therefore was unable to join the Army. The Tribunal allowed exemption so long as the present circumstances continued.

OTHER EXEMPTIONS FROM COMPULSORY ENLISTMENT – SLAUGHTERMAN ASKS FOR HIS SON TO BE EXEMPTED FROM CALL UP ON ACCOUNT OF THE PROBLEM CUTTING UP GOVERNMENT MEAT!

Percy Nickols, 37, Grade 2 slaughterman, Staplecross was at an employer's appeal against his son's call up. Mr Nickols said that Mr Holmes, Sedlescombe's butcher, could not slaughter for both businesses and there was no other slaughterman nearer than Sedlescombe or Battle three miles away.

The father said he could not cut up the Government meat, which was like huge blocks of ice weighing two or three cwts*. It took three quarters of an hour to cut up a side of beef, whereas English meat could be cut up in five minutes.

A man in the place of his son would want £5 a week. There were 700 customers, and the father was 78 years of age.

APPEAL DISMISSED.

* One cwt was 112lbs in weight in the old British Imperial System

1919 PRIZE FOR HAVING LARGE FAMILY

After the war, there was congratulations all round:

“Mrs A E Bryant of Riverbridge Cottages, Sedlescombe, has just received a tray from the “News of the World”, given as one of the prizes for the mothers of large families. Mrs Bryant is the mother of eleven children, seven boys and four girls. Six sons have all served in the Army.

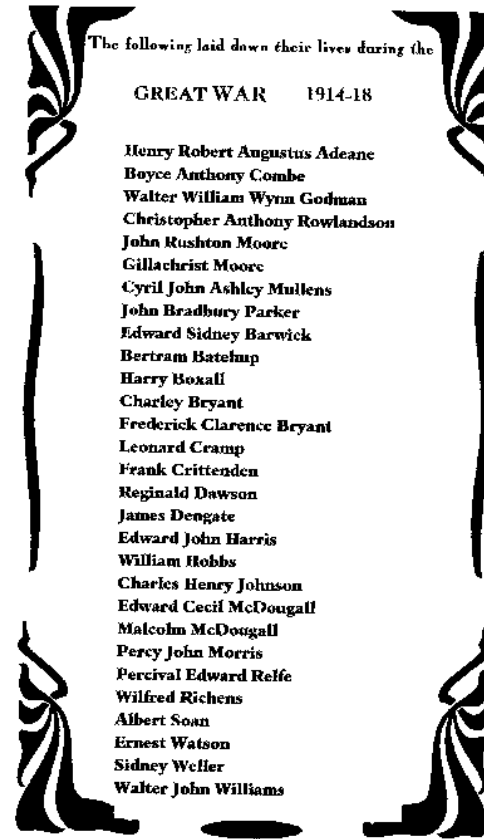
- One son has gone back to Australia, where he was when the War Broke out,
- Three others were discharged not being fit for further service,
- One has been through it all has been demobilised, after four years’ service and not receiving a scratch,
- While the sixth son, who had his right leg off, died of pneumonia and influenza last November, while waiting to be boarded for New Zealand, where he was working when the War broke out.
- The seventh son was only forty hours old when he died.”

SEDLSCOMBE WAR MEMORIAL

In November 1919, Amy Combe was chosen along with another mother, both of whom had lost sons in the Great War, to unveil the Sedlescombe War Memorial in the Parish Church with the 29 names of people connected, if somewhat loosely, to Sedlescombe. Another memorial was unveiled later with 9 further names at the Congregational Chapel.

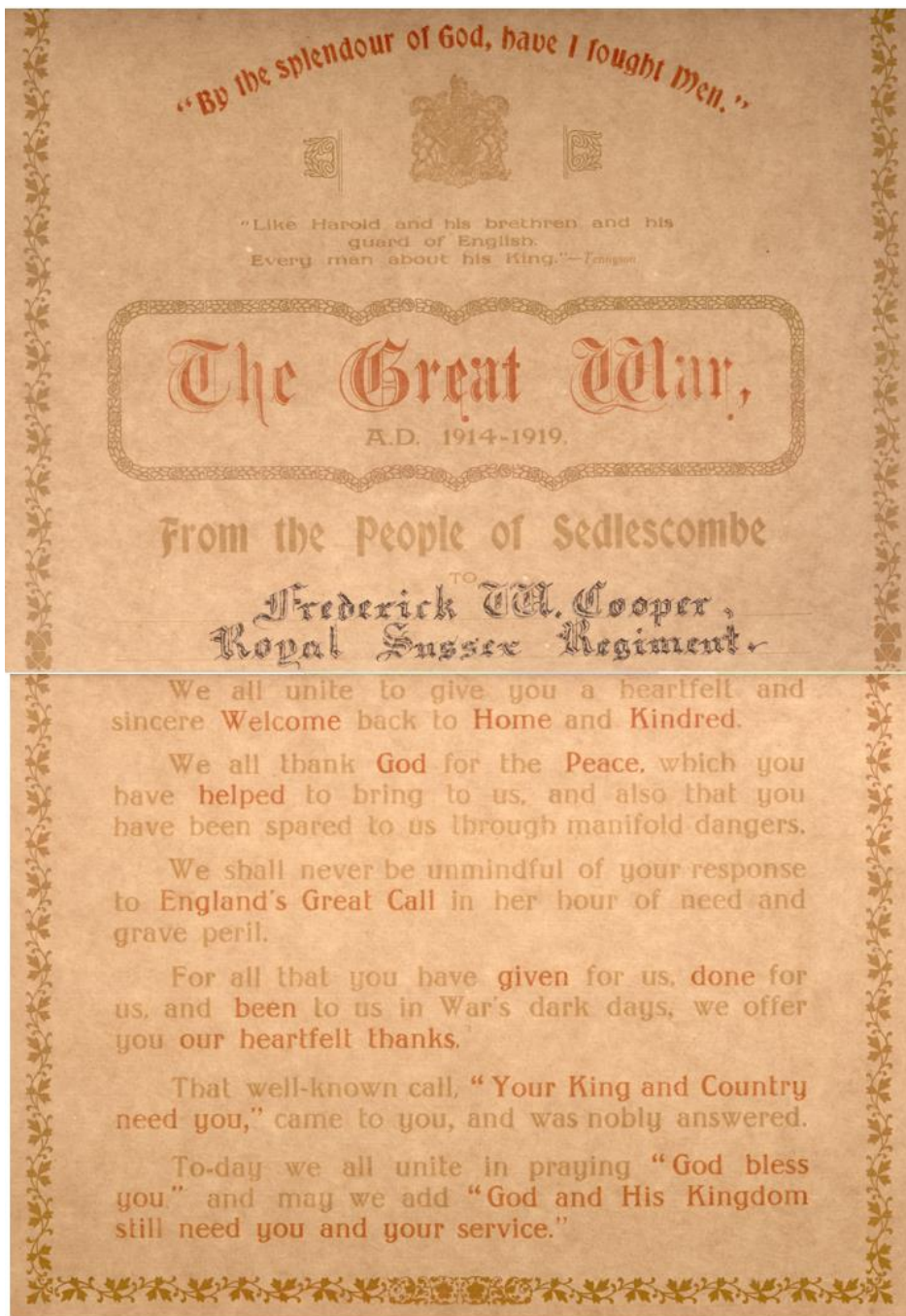
Amy Combe presented testimonials and sprigs or wreaths of bay leaves to returning servicemen and women as well as to the relatives of those who had died. The old School room was packed for the event in December of 1919. No doubt with the thought of her youngest son Boyce whom she had loved and lost in the war, she recognised the gallantry of them all and said that out of a population of 500 people, 100 or more men were at that time being presented with tokens of gratitude which was a high percentage.

Amy Combe also paid tribute to the women who had to stay at home, she said, did not dispute any allowance or pension, nor had she heard of any bereaved woman in Sedlescombe replacing her warrior husband with an alternative lover.



Those named on the memorial were not always living in the Village. Sometimes names were included on memorials where the deceased relatives had lived, where the deceased went to school, college or university or at their place of work. As we have seen, quite often, someone lost in the war would be named on more than one memorial.

FRED COOPER



Certificate awarded to Sedlescombe man Fred Cooper who was a prisoner of war of the Germans during WW1 but returned home to the Village. For 70 years, until she died, his daughter Ivy kept his certificates framed with a red poppy and hanging on the wall in her little Riverbridge Cottage.





IVY COOPER AT SEDLESCOMBE SCHOOL
IN 1918 when her father was a prisoner
of war



IVY COOPER IN 1979 IN LOTTIE
WILSON'S COTTAGE



FRED COOPER'S PRISONER
OF WAR CERTIFICATE 1919

British Red Cross Society.

The annual meeting of the Westfield and Sedlescombe Centre was held at Oaklands, on May 12th. There was a large attendance, Mrs. Combe in the chair. After minutes were read, a vote of condolence was passed to the family of the late Mrs. A. A. Hart, a most valued and hardworking member of the V.A.D. It was resolved to issue circulars to the two parishes, pointing out that the member's subscription is now only 4/4. Mrs. Mullens (Commandant), gave an address on the value of Red Cross training in the home, and asked for new members for the V.A.D., and for support for the nursing lectures which will be started in early autumn, and hoped to re-organise and bring to efficiency the Stretcher Bearers' Corps. Mr. Mark Pole gave an address on the work of the society in peace time and the necessity for many more members, working and honorary. After votes of thanks to Mrs. Mullens and Mr. Pole, and to Mrs. Combe for presiding, the latter kindly entertained all present to tea.

After the War, the work of the British Red Cross Society continued locally with the Westfield and Sedlescombe Centre at Oaklands.

Mrs Rita Mullens, from just along the road at Westfield Place, was still the Commandant and was keen to get new members for the Voluntary Auxiliary Detachment which had carried out such sterling service during the war.



WESTFIELD PLACE.

GOVERNMENT DECISION TO TAX THE RICH IMPACTED BADLY ON SEDLESCOMBE

Unfortunately, the coming of the Armistice in 1918, did not see the return of life to normal. David Lloyd-George's government, struggling to cope with the cost of paying for the war and meeting the demands of returning heroes for homes and jobs, was forced to raise revenue through increased taxation.

Overall, the burden of direct taxation fell on country estates, rising from 9% pre-war to 30% of income and, for some landowners the only option was to sell parts, if not all, of their estates.

We have seen in Sedlescombe that young men from the big houses had been slaughtered in the early days of the War, their women and their workers had given hours of voluntary labour in helping those injured on the battlefields in local Red Cross Hospitals, they had also used their own money to provide facilities. But with the increased taxation many of them faced ruin.

IN SEDLESCOMBE SOME OF THE BIG HOUSES WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN

1923, was a particularly bad year for two of the “big” country house estates to the south of the Village, i.e. Westfield Place and Oaklands Manor where the Mullens and Combe families had been living for some years as near neighbours.

Mjrs Mullens and Combe often served together as Justices of the Peace at Battle Courts.

WESTFIELD PLACE. The first inkling of change was when, in March of that year, Major Mullens advertised that he had sold his beloved collection of 3,500 bird books to a rare book company in London, who were willing to sell them on for £1/book equivalent in total to about £150,000 at today’s value.

This was quickly followed in May by a 3-day auction sale at Westfield Place of all the furniture, carpets, paintings, ornamental items etc. In addition, the contents of the Mullens’ considerable wine cellar of 30 dozen bottles including some of ancient vintage. These sales raised nearly £4,000.

By September 1923, Mjr Mullens was living in a much smaller property in Cantelupe Road, Bexhill and standing for election to the County Council.

OAKLANDS PARK. And then, in December 1923, the death was announced of Harvey Trewythen Brabazon (HTB) Combe of Oaklands Park. The death of the man known as the Squire, caused no end of worry and concern as the estate was split up and houses, cottages, farms and other land were sold in three large property sales.

In addition, in 1926 and 1927, 3,199 paintings by Hercules Brabazon Brabazon, uncle of HTB Combe of Oaklands, were sold in three large 2-day sales.

Then in 1927, HTB Combe’s surviving son, Harvey Alexander Combe of Oaklands Park was declared bankrupt.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS WITH THANKS

Much material from Sedlescombe Archives
Local Newspapers
Online information including
from the Imperial War Museum and the Rutland Remembers website
Frank Johnson photos
Photos of Normanhurst from Margaret Simmons
The late Miss Ivy Cooper for Certificates and Photo
“Hancox – A House and a Family” by Charlotte Moore 2010
“Lady Mabelle’s Coffee Shop” by Trish Jones 2018

PART OF THE 2020 SEDLESCOMBE LOCAL HISTORY VIRTUAL EXHIBITION
COLLECTION ADDED TO BATTLE & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY WEBSITE 2024

Copyright © 2024 Pauline Raymond.

Permission granted to reproduce for personal and educational use only.

Commercial copying, hiring or lending is prohibited.