

# THE HOME FRONT IN SURREY IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

## A GUIDE TO SOURCES AT SURREY HISTORY CENTRE

### Part 11. The Response of Local Authorities

Many particular instances of references to war-related activities by District and Borough Councils and by Surrey County Council are given in several of the sections above, but it should be remembered that the minutes of Councils and their committees and, in certain cases, Council files, are a further source for local responses to the war, although the amount of detail varies considerably (those of Weybridge Urban District Council are particularly rich). Again, the following examples have been selected to illustrate what might be found.

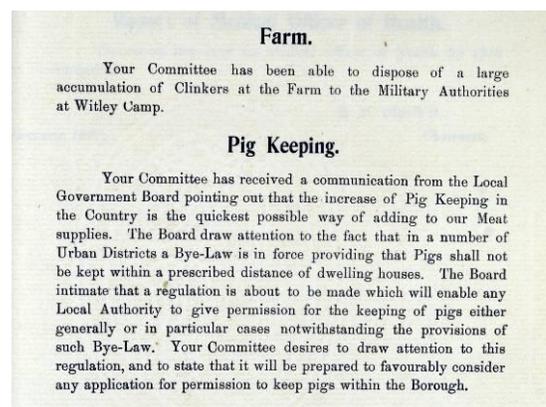


*The Mayor of Guildford opens a re-creation of the Western Front in Guildford High Street, 1918  
(SHC ref 1946/Box7)*

The records of Farnham Urban District Council include two files relate to the Council's activities during the war with references to such subjects as food production and food control; local businesses' voluntary observation of 23-24 Oct 1916 as a holiday in lieu of earlier abandoned Bank Holidays; the cost of gas and coal; the local War Loan campaign and wartime fundraising; lighting restrictions; the death of Council employees on military service; the evacuation of people from London to Farnham; and the support by the Council of the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Woking), Surrey Volunteer Regiment (**SHC ref 8119/3/3/1-2**). Files also survive which contain lists of exemptions of voluntarily attested men and concerning the Prisoners of War fund and other war matters (**SHC ref 8119/3/3/65 & 88**).

The printed proceedings of Godalming Borough Council spanning Nov 1916-Oct 1917 (**SHC ref 2253/3/32**) are a mine of information, including reports of the Medical Officer of Health (references to the Stretcher Corps, Emergency Hospital, influenza etc); and minutes concerning formation of the local War Pensions Committee; the granting of a war bonus to staff; the impact of the war on higher education; the encouragement of pig keeping; the censorship of films; the local Kitchener club; Witley camp; and the local Food Control Committee and Food Supply Committee.

The records of Haslemere Urban District Council include a general file on the Council's wartime activities (**SHC ref Ac1363/1/103/1**), alongside the file on the relief of war distress referred to in section 7 above.



*Godalming Borough Council encourages pig keeping (SHC ref 2253/3/22)*

The annual reports of the County Medical Officer of Health and District and Borough Medical Officers of Health are a vital source for the health of the local populace and the impact of war conditions. The County MOH's reports are to be found in **SHC ref CC171** which also contains some district reports. Other district MOH reports are held among the records of the originating district and some are printed with the relevant Council minutes and committee reports. The Farnham Urban District Council records include a special report by the MOH on the terrible influenza epidemic (**SHC ref 8119/3/3/58**).

## Report of the Medical Officer of Health

OF THE  
FARNHAM URBAN DISTRICT FOR 1918.

I beg to report that I have received during the year notifications of 74 cases of Infectious diseases, namely, Scarlatina 10, Diphtheria 7, Enteric Fever 2, Measles 26, German Measles 11, Erysipelas 2, Tuberculosis 15, and Ophthalmia Neonatorum 1, belonging to the Urban District, and in addition to this, in the Union, not belonging to the district, Erysipelas 1, Puerperal Fever 1, and Ophthalmia Neonatorum 5.

All the Scarlatina cases were removed to the Isolation Hospital and recovered.

Of the Diphtheria 6 out of 7 were removed to the Isolation Hospital, and all recovered. The one that was not removed was a baby alone with its mother in a house at Hale; it recovered, and no harm came of its not being removed. There were 15 new cases of Tuberculosis, Pulmonary and otherwise, and 16 deaths have been attributed to this cause. The 2 cases of Enteric Fever occurred in the same house. A young lady who had been away at work came home and developed it at once, and I think there is no doubt she became infected before she came home; and in due course her mother also failed with it. Both recovered.

The Measles and German Measles never came widely prevalent. A case of Measles was imported from outside the district to the Girls Grammar School, but the school was not closed, and there was not any large number of cases among its scholars.

Some cases of Chicken Pox occurred, but no large quantity. There were a few cases of whooping cough and one death. There was a very severe epidemic of influenza in October and November, and I reproduce below a special report made in January, 1919.

### Special Report of Influenza Epidemic of 1918, in Farnham Urban District.

In concurrence with the desire expressed by Sir A. Newsholme, in the Local Government Board Circular of Nov. 3rd, 1918, I made a special report on the epidemic of Influenza as it affected our district.

The following table shows that there were 15 deaths in all in 1918—1 in January, 2 in October, and 12 in November; and shows the age distribution, and also the sex distribution; this being 11 females and 4 males, with much the larger number of deaths between 25 and 65 years.

	Under						Over
	1	1-5	5-15	15-25	25-45	45-65	65
January							1 f
October				2 f			
Nov.	1 m	1 f	1 f	1 m	5 f	1 f	2 m
Totals	1 m	1 f	1 f	2 f	5 f	1 f	1 f
			1 m			2 m	

There was a sort of preliminary epidemic for three or four weeks at the beginning of July, but not very severe, but that had practically disappeared in August and September. It, however, reappeared about October 20th, and continued into the first week in December, and all the deaths, except the isolated case in January, occurred in the last week in October and the first three weeks of November.

I have no definite evidence as to the introduction of the disease into the district, but both in July and in October the first cases occurred at Badshot Lea, between which and Aldershot there is a great deal of inter-communication, and from Badshot Lea it came to the east end of the town and Hale, and from there to the west end of the town, and then south to The Bourne, and subsequently, I believe, to Frensham and Churt (these three last, however, being in the Rural District of Farnham). It is interesting to note that the same course has been followed, almost exactly, by the last two epidemics of Measles, which have become at all widespread. I am not aware that any particular occupations have been affected by the Influenza.

With regard to the clinical features of the outbreak, as far as I have had opportunities of observing, the cases have begun with about 48 hours of high temperature (followed by a subnormal temperature), and catarrhal symptoms, with much cough and sore throat, which either passed away quickly or developed into a congestion of the lungs with either Pneumonia or Broncho-Pneumonia, from one or other of which almost all the deaths occurred. Nose bleeding was a common accompaniment. In a very large proportion of cases during convalescence, the liver was attacked, and more or less bad attacks of Hepatic Dyspepsia resulted. In a small proportion of the cases the order of symptoms, as described above, was reversed, the case beginning with high temperature and marked hepatic disturbance, followed, during convalescence by the catarrhal symptoms, usually without the lung complications. I am pretty sure I have noticed that men with a tendency to alcoholism, and women, either at or near their menstrual periods are more liable to be attacked than others.

In my district, which is partly urban and partly rural, I don't think there was any special difference in the number of cases, and the proportion of deaths to population is almost exactly the same.

I have not heard of any local pathological, or bacteriological examination having been made, and prophylaxis by vaccine has not been attempted except in isolated cases. I have not any facts bearing on the duration of incubation or infectivity.

The only special preventive measure taken was the closure of the Schools. Badshot Lea School was closed in the July epidemic, but it was not thought necessary to close

*Report of the Farnham Medical Officer of Health on the influenza epidemic, 1918 (SHC ref 8119/3/3/58)*