

## WORLD WAR I

I was nine years of age when war broke out. No one had any idea of the holocaust to come. My uncle said it would cost 100,000 lives, no doubt thinking along Boer War lines. Nothing seemed to change for some time, then a lot of men were going off on the trains to join up. Many people thought the war would be over by Christmas but when troop trains started passing through, things began to look very different. Windows blacked out in case of Zeppelin raids. There was no phoney period as in the last war. The school master gave us talks about the war. We read all the news in the papers. There was a map of the Western Front every day. I remember one cartoon of 'Old Bill', a British tommy in a shell hole with the caption "If you know of a better 'ole, go to it".

Men from the villages around had to go by train. They came home on leave with rifle and heavy pack, having to walk miles home, some still having mud all over their uniforms. We wrote letters from school to put in Red Cross parcels for the troops. They sent us a nice thank you letter. We had half days off from school to pick blackberries to make possy as the troops called jam. Mother came with us. I was not a good picker. Ma said it was not worth me going. I was more interested in what was in the hedge than what was growing on it. One man used to say it was a poor firm that wouldn't keep one lazy man. I am not sure if I fitted that description. It just seemed that the wrong job always seemed to pop up for me. Anyway we all shared the money paid for the fruit at school, 1½p per lb. Not quite a bonanza but over a penny was quite a sum for us. It was a half day from school, the best part of it, as I have mentioned.

We saw our first flying machines. Several small biplanes landed in the meadows near Aynho Station. They had lost direction in trying to find Witney airfield. Scores of people for miles around came to see them. If they stayed a night the local lawman had to guard it, and so the war raged on. Many families were bereaved. The Wrighton family at Aynho lost four sons. Also the Hancox family at Deddington. I have a friend whose father was killed on the very last day. It was such a great relief when it ended. One thing introduced during the war is still with us, British Summer Time. One local farmer, Mr Thomas Hawkes, kept to the old time saying it would upset his dairy herd to milk them earlier.