

# Bridgeton Illustrated War News

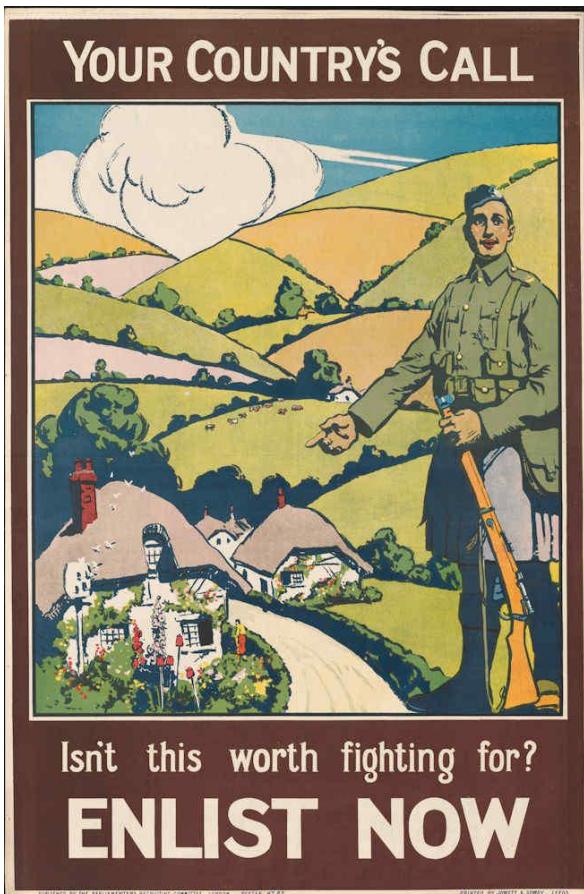
Bridgeton Library Local History Group

## THE WAR FRONT IN BRIDGETON

The First World War was the first total war. It was the first time that battles did not take place in open country at pre-arranged times. It was the first time that attrition became a standard military tactic. It was the first time that a gain of 50 yards of ground could be deemed a major victory. It introduced massive civilian mobilisation into the army. In 1914, Scots were only 10 per cent of the British population. Scots eventually made up 15 per cent of the national armed forces and, by the end of the War, accounted for 20 per cent of the dead.

### Propaganda

The major vehicle of propaganda was the poster.



The War transformed Bridgeton in many ways. When the War opened, Bridgeton, like everywhere in Great

Britain, was subject to propaganda of the most extreme kind. In any conflict propaganda consists of *myths* and *lies* in order to persuade people to fight, and then to keep them fighting.

Here is a myth-peddling poster of the type which appeared in Bridgeton, and which works on the basis of unthinking gullibility. We see a Scottish soldier, regiment unclear, being called to defend a place that has absolutely no resemblance to Bridgeton. In place of the pigeon-lofts of Glasgow, we see the dove-cots of rural England. The thatched cottages and rolling hills are reminiscent of the Cotswolds. Would the soldier consider an industrial representation of Bridgeton, or a view of the Bridgeton slums actually worth fighting for?

Allied governments justified the war by stressing the need to defend freedom and decency from the aggressive actions of the enemy. A popular theme was the supposed atrocities committed by Germany. Early in the war there was outrage over alleged crimes against women and children in Belgium where it was said that babies were being paraded on bayonets.



Here we see a Belgian baby, stabbed through the back and hanging on the end of a German bayonet. The German soldier is portrayed as a glutton: he is fat, and, by implication, has no control over his urges. The baby has angel's wings, symbolic of purity and innocence. This gives a satanic edge to the portrayal of the enemy soldier. To enlist in the British Army is therefore to be chivalrous, defending the weak and helpless against a cruel and unfeeling foe, and fighting for civilised values.

Even the women of Bridgeton were not exempt from the propaganda call to the colours. All sorts of jobs and areas were open to them.



Here, in the patriotic garb of Scotland, women are told that they are required to further the war effort.

### Joining the Armed Forces

Joining up was easy: you simply went to one of Glasgow's Recruiting Offices, including one in Bridgeton's Main Street. At the beginning of the War, it was not uncommon for boys to lie about their age and attempt to join the war at a recruitment office.



Taking the Oath in Bridgeton, 1914

### Support from the Church

The Church supported the call to war, often, as this extract from a local sermon in 1914 indicates, in very high-flown language:

*The utmost was done by our peace-loving king and statesmen to avert war. But we have been thwarted. War has been thrust upon us ... It was almost an impossibility that Britain could stand aside ... She never made a nobler stand ... We characterise the declinature of the German*

*Emperor to take part in the peaceful conference of the Powers as an irrational judgment ... It was then that the British stepped in between the lawless spoiler and the weak and intimidated. We promised to protect Belgium by land and sea and the other weak powers should necessity arise ... So Britain became involved.*

### Bridgeton's Local Battalion

Bridgeton was a major recruitment area for the army, especially the Highland Light Infantry. The Highland Light Infantry (City of Glasgow Regiment) was raised in Glasgow on the 2nd of September 1914 by the Lord Provost and City.



The Badge of the Highland Light Infantry

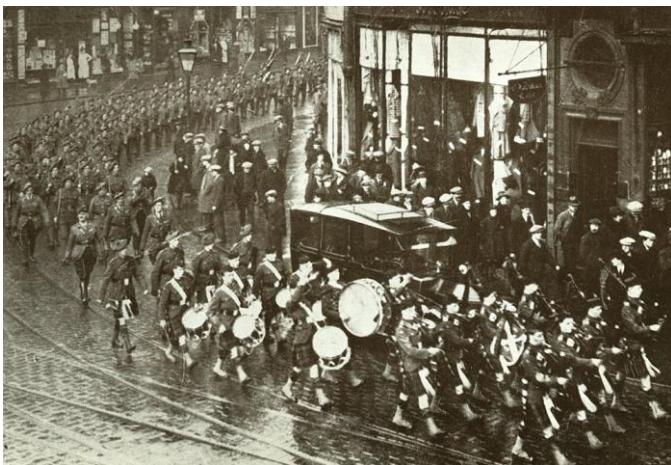
The 1/7<sup>th</sup> (Blythswood) Battalion had its headquarters in Main Street. Here, right in the heart of Bridgeton, was an infantry regiment with a wonderful kilted band.



The Battalion leaving Main Street Barracks

Here we see the Bridgeton Battalion forming up outside the Headquarters in Main Street. We see rifles at the "present arms" and many soldiers carrying large bags on their shoulders. In the foreground is the band. We sense that their music filled the soldiers with pride as they marched off. The battalions of the Highland Light Infantry made a grand sight as they paraded to Glasgow Central Station to go to war. Pipes skirling and drums drumming as the regiment proudly marched off to

training, and then to death or glory. For many of the men of Bridgeton it was, unfortunately, death.



**Death or Glory**

When they transferred to the European mainland, it was to discover that the enemy were not quite as had been portrayed in the propaganda posters.

What were the boys of Bridgeton expecting to find?



This propaganda poster would have led them to expect Germans who had grown fat on sausages, who were unfit, who had no moral sense (see the clocks and other goods stolen from the Belgian peasants) and who were cowards who would be blown over by the breath of elegantly uniformed Scots. The Scottish soldiers found instead that they were fighting highly organised troops in the towns of the Belgian coal-fields, in places that actually looked remarkably like Bridgeton.

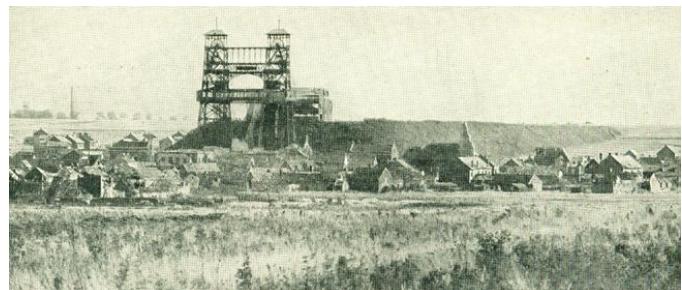
### **The Battle of Helles, Gallipoli 25 April – June 1915**

The Highland Light Infantry was in many important battles, many of which were characterised by their futility. Their first battle was typical. It has been described as a “lunacy that never had a chance of succeeding; an idiocy generated by the muddled thinking of “Easterners” who thought they could end the war by knocking out Germany’s allies, or by attacking her non-existent soft underbelly.” It was never a sensible strategy, not while the German army was lurking just a few miles from the vital Channel ports on the Western Front. By attacking the Turks, the British merely

allowed them the opportunity to kill and maim British soldiers, including, unfortunately, a lot of the Bridgeton boys of the Highland Light Infantry. There were 46 killed, 151 wounded, and 53 missing, a total of 250 men, all for a strategy which was never going to work.

### **The Battle of Loos 25 September - 18 October 1915**

By September 1915 the French Army had suffered heavy losses and was failing to make any impact on the



German Army. The French Commander-in-Chief, Joffre badly needed a victory. He wanted a joint British-French attack on 25 September. General Haig knew there were insufficient stocks of ammunition and heavy artillery. When the full knowledge of the German defensive system became clear Haig feared heavy losses. Joffre insisted that the Battle go ahead. The German Machine Gunners War Diary indicates that they saw 10,000 British troops advancing towards them over half a mile of open country, “... as if carrying out a parade-ground drill ... Never had machine guns had such straightforward work to do ... The result was devastating.” It was a slaughter, but it was a personal devastation for Archibald and Janet Dunn of 527 Dalmarnock Road, Bridgeton, whose three sons Colin, Archie and Richard were killed in the first two days of the battle.

### **The Battle of the Somme 1 July – 18 November 1916**

The British Army on the Somme included the Bridgeton boys of the HLI.



1 July 1916 was the worst day in the history of the British Army. The attack was made by five divisions of the French Sixth Army, eleven British divisions of the Fourth Army (including the Bridgeton boys), and two divisions of the Third Army. The enemy was the German Second Army. There were many successful

skirmishes and a substantial retreat by some of the German companies. However, the German defenders on the commanding ground north of the road inflicted a huge defeat on the British infantry, who had an unprecedented number of casualties. The Fourth Army lost 57,470 casualties, of which 19,240 men were killed, the French Sixth Army had 1,590 casualties and the German 2nd Army had 10,000–12,000 losses.



The 1/7th Battalion of the HLI endured what has been described as a baptism of fire on the Somme. It took the first German line, the Leipzig Trench, but attempts to advance further were met by devastating fire. By 9 o'clock in the morning, Battalion casualties amounted to twenty-two officers and 400 other ranks. This experience was repeated along the line, with the British army suffering 57,470 casualties among the 120,000 soldiers who left the trenches that morning. Some 21,000 men were killed, most in the first 30 minutes of the attack. The Battalion's first Victoria Cross was awarded (posthumously) to Sergeant James Turnbull (not from Bridgeton) that day. Having captured a strategically vital section of the Leipzig Trench, his men were subjected to a series of fierce counter attacks. Turnbull held the position but was killed late in the day.

General Sir Douglas Haig, the commander of the BEF, and General Henry Rawlinson, commander of the Fourth Army, have been criticised ever since, for the human cost of the battle. It was so bad that Winston Churchill criticised the British Army's conduct of the offensive, claiming that though the battle had forced the Germans to end their offensive at Verdun, attrition was damaging the British armies more than the German armies.

### Trench Warfare

Trench warfare was a new phenomenon of war, where millions of men dug in, and where the advantage always lay with the defender. The difference between the popular conception of trench warfare and its grim reality is striking. The average Bridgeton woman waving a husband, son or boyfriend off to war, and who saw this advert in her local paper would have a rather warped view of life in the trenches. The advert gives the impression of a fairly indolent life at the Front, where well dressed soldiers who are safely hidden underground

come to the surface to listen to items of musical entertainment.

**A Gift from Home!**

Now they will have musical entertainment at their command any hour of the day, whenever opportunity offers. For they have a "Decca" Gramophone

The "Decca" is light, compact and portable, it is self-contained, no case is required, and there are no loose parts to get lost. When moving it will go in the mess-box and not worry anyone. Immediately opened it is ready to play all makes and sizes of needle records.

**THE DECCA**  
**THE PORTABLE GRAMOPHONE.**

In Leather Cloth £7 15s. Od.	Compressed Fibre £8 15s. Od.	Solid Cowhide £12 12s. Od.
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Of Harrods, Army and Navy Stores, Whiteley's, Selfridge's, Gamage's, and all leading Stores and Music Dealers. Illustrated Folder, and name of nearest agent, free on application to the Manufacturers—

THE DULCEPHONE CO., 32, WORSHIP ST., LONDON, E.C. 2.  
(Proprietors: Barnett Samuel & Sons, Ltd.)

The reality was very different. The Bridgeton boys faced an overwhelming stench caused by rotting corpses (20,000 bodies lay scattered on the Somme battlefield) overflowing latrines, cordite, poison gas, rotting sandbags and animal carcasses.



Here we can see duck-boards almost completely submerged in mud. We see a rag-tag army clad in bits and pieces to keep warm. We see the handle of the spade which has been used to dig the trench. We don't see many records being played.

Back home in Bridgeton, local people, who had no idea of conditions at the Front, were being asked to help:

# **7th H.L.I.**

**The BOYS of the BRIDGETON BATTALION are in need of SOCKS and other COMFORTS.**

**ONE PENNY put into the LITTLE RED BOX will give every Boy a pair of Socks.**

**PUT YOUR PENNY IN TO-DAY.**

All parcels sent to the trenches must have been greatly appreciated, as this was a connection with home and loved ones. It was said that some wealthier soldiers were sent hampers from Harrods or Fortnum and Mason, but there was no such luxury for the average man from Bridgeton. The government recognised the importance of the parcels for troop morale and parcels for soldiers in France and Belgium arrived within two to three days, but it could take ten days to deliver to the front line.

## **Bringing the Wounded Home**

In September 1914, at the beginning of the War, Stobhill Hospital was requisitioned by Royal Army Medical Corps staff of the Territorial Force and the complex split and redesignated as the 3rd and 4th Scottish General Hospitals. Wounded servicemen arrived by specially converted Hospital trains terminating at a temporary railway platform built within the hospital grounds. The trains were unloaded during darkness, so that the local population would not see the terrible condition of the war-wounded. A staff of 240 nurses as well as volunteers from the St. Andrew's Ambulance Association cared for over 1,000 patients at a time. The range of injuries and conditions ranged from severe suffering from battlefield wounds to venereal diseases caught in French brothels.

## **Our Local Hero: Private Henry May VC**

Henry May (1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Cameronians) of 38 Colvend Street, Bridgeton, was the first Glaswegian to be awarded the Victoria Cross. At daybreak on 22nd October 1914 May was in a platoon under the command of Lieutenant D. Graham. This platoon was acting as a covering party in a ditch to hold the enemy in check while the main part of the Cameronians entrenched positions about 700 yards to the rear. This took place on the eastern side of the village of La Boutillerie. During this time the enemy, who were only 50 yards to the front of the platoon, attacked them in force which resulted in them falling back.

During the fighting Lance Corporal Lawton was wounded, about a hundred yards to the right of May.

May left the safety of his ditch and advanced through a hail of gunfire to rescue him. Lance Corporal McCall and Private Bell went with May to assist. Bell took off Lawton's equipment but Bell was shot dead as May and McCall tried to lift him to his feet. McCall was knocked unconscious and May then flattened himself on the ground determined to fight to the last.

At that moment he saw his platoon commander Lieutenant Graham fall to the ground with a bullet in his leg. While many would have felt that they had already done enough, Henry May showed outstanding courage at this point.



Private Henry May (1st Cameronians), who has been awarded the Victoria Cross for most conspicuous bravery near La Boutillerie on October 22 last. Our photograph shows Private May, his wife, and one of his three children.

He called to Bell to follow and ran over to their officer. The two men carried him step by step, zig-zagging as they stumbled on. When they had covered about 300 yards they reached a ditch where Bell was shot in the hand and foot but they managed eventually to reach comparative safety. May was exhausted but struggled to drag Lieutenant Graham a little nearer safety when Corporal Taylor came to his assistance lifting Lieutenant Graham onto his shoulder but was then shot dead. Henry May, by some supreme effort, then dragged the wounded officer to the British trenches and to complete safety.

Private Henry May's heroism and utter disregard for the safety of his own life was in the true tradition of the holders of the Victoria Cross. Eleven days after his VC action May was wounded by shrapnel during the attacks on the town of Ypres and was invalided home, returning to France in mid-January 1915.

## **THE HOME FRONT IN BRIDGETON**

The term *home front*, which was widely employed for the first time during World War I, perfectly symbolized this new concept of a war in which the civilian population behind the lines was directly and critically involved in the war effort. In terms of the Home front, the First World War forced the domestic economy to swing over totally to the war effort. This was good for

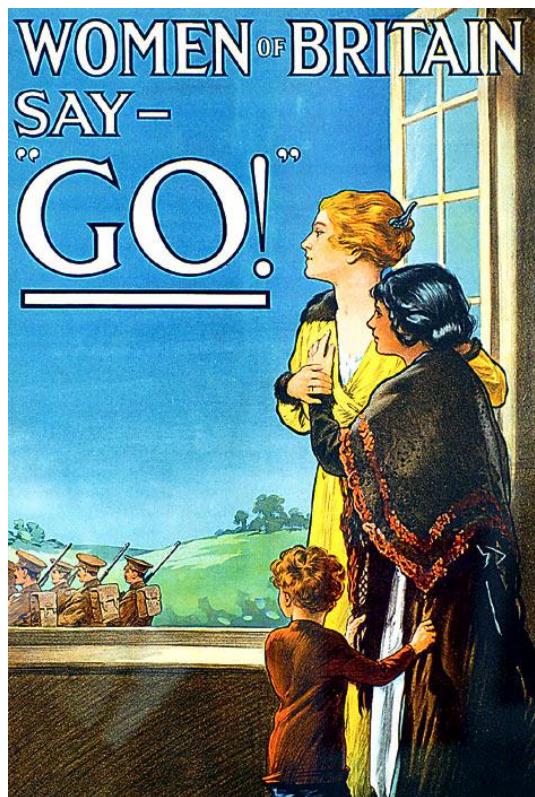
the traditional industries of Scotland: steel output doubled during the war and 90% of armour plate produced came from Glasgow. There was a diversification of industry owing to the war: Beardmore produced aircraft and artillery pieces.

With this came the flood of female labour into industry. Contradictions emerged: women's industrial ability contrasted with the accepted female virtues of wife, mother and nurse. However, with men away at the war, it showed women were very capable when faced with new challenges.



Women were also targeted by the propaganda efforts of those running the war. Here we see an implied model of British Womanhood, where the “natural” sympathy and caring qualities of British women are contrasted with the stark cruelty of her German counterpart. The German nurse exhibits no womanly qualities, delighting in the cruelty of tormenting the wounded British soldier. Looking on is a fat soldier who has an uncanny resemblance to the fellow who had the Belgian baby on his bayonet. Twirling his moustache in the background is the Kaiser. Women were also used in propaganda aimed at persuading men to fight. Once again, it does not look like Bridgeton: it appears to be a peaceful country scene with the women standing at the windows of a large country house. The women, who are probably the mother and sister (plus a little brother) of someone going to war, are extremely well dressed. Their clothing is made of very fine and expensive material. They look healthy with clear complexions and shining hair. These attributes, together with the concerned expressions on their faces, make them ideal representations of womanhood. There is also a subliminal message that

even the wealthy and landed are seeing their men go to war.

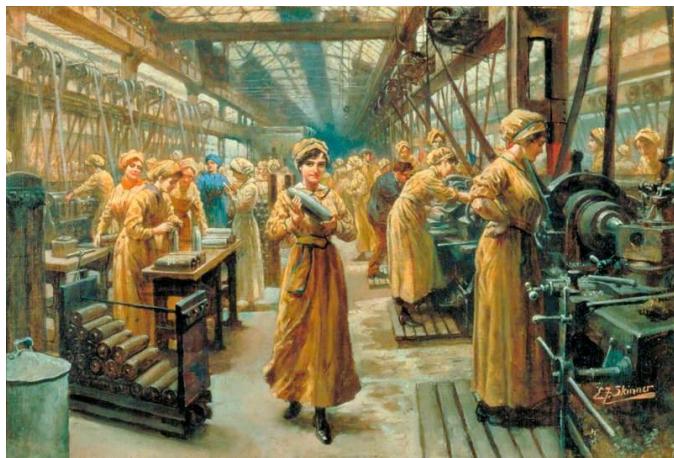


### Women and Work

In Britain during World War 1 roughly two million women replaced men at their jobs. Some of these were positions women might have been expected to fill such as clerical jobs. However, women were now suddenly in demand for work on the land, on transport, in hospitals and most significantly, in industry and engineering. It was found that they were quick to learn, efficient, and less liable to drink than male counterparts.



Women were involved in building ships and doing work such as loading and unloading coal. However, in Bridgeton, the most significant aspect of women's work was their involvement in the vital Beardmore munitions factory. Even here, propaganda aimed at women could be found.



**The Fantasy: a Workers' Paradise**

This idealised picture of life in a munitions factory shows a slim, pretty girl effortlessly carrying an artillery shell, surrounded by equally slim and healthy looking colleagues operating lathes and filling shells with explosive. One would not realise that, in a munitions factory, there was hard and dangerous work. As well as the ever-present danger of a catastrophic explosion, the sulphur affected the workers' lungs. You could always tell when a woman had worked "at the bombs" for a period of time, because the sulphur also tinged her skin yellow.



**The Reality: Beardmore Munitions Workers**

The women pictured at the Beardmore munitions works are rather more realistic. For a start, there is the normal variety of female shape. There is also a clearer impression of the heavy clothing which they had to wear, and no-one is wearing her bonnet coquettishly on the side of her head. In the face of the reality of life in a munitions factory, morale was kept high by beauty and athletic contests. The fortnightly factory newspaper produced by Beardmore would have a photograph of a smiling "bombshell", a pretty girl working on the shop floor. More remarkable were the international women's football matches organised by the various munitions works across Britain.



Despite it being said that women learned quicker, and were more efficient than men, this did not usually lead to a rise in women's wages. In Britain, rather than paying a woman during the war what they would have paid a man, as per government equal pay regulations, employers split tasks down into smaller steps, employing a woman for each and giving them less for doing it. This employed more women, but undermined their wages. Overall, women were able to earn more than they would have done pre-war, but less than a man doing the same job would make.

### Voices of Dissent

At the beginning of the war Glasgow was the leading militant city in Britain and was the major centre of mass support for the anti-war movement. In fact, on August 9th 1914 the ILP and the Glasgow branch of the peace society organised an anti-war demonstration of 5,000 people on Glasgow Green. John MacLean is the most well-known anti-war protester, but, although he was an important figure he was not alone. James Maxton and his sisters were on holiday the day that war was declared and immediately decided to hold a street meeting against the war. There were many more like minded people in Glasgow.

Glasgow's socialists, in all their various groupings, campaigned for peace from the day war was declared and continued their efforts right up to the armistice.

Among the groups involved were the ILP, the Labour and Socialist Alliance, the Women's international League, the Peace Society, the Women's Social and Political Union, and many others. But the Women's Peace Crusade was possibly the one with the largest following and in Glasgow the one with the largest working class grassroots support.



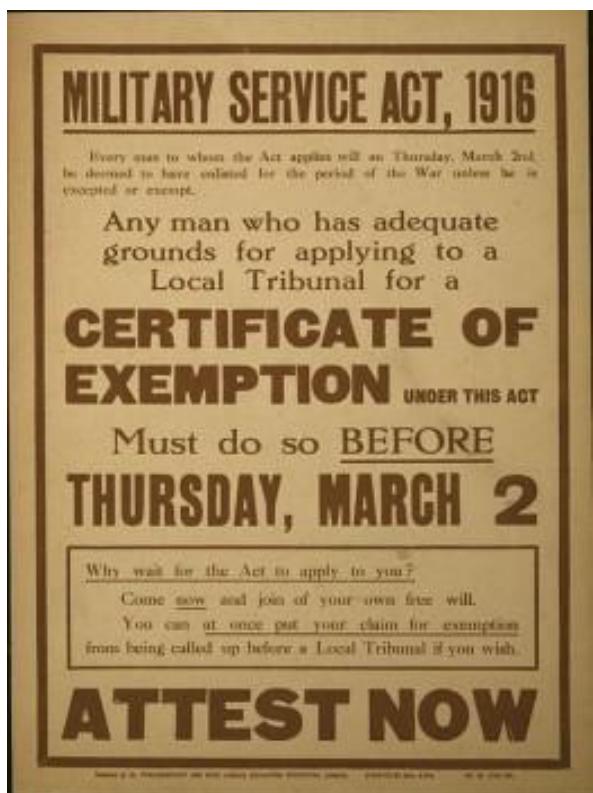
**James Maxton**

James Maxton was prominent in Bridgeton as a conscientious objector and leader of the Independent Labour Party whose headquarters were located on London Road near Bridgeton Cross. He was a vociferous opponent of World War I. He was a conscientious objector, refusing conscription into the military, and instead being given work on barges. During this time he was involved in organizing strikes in the shipyards. Maxton was arrested in 1916, charged with sedition. He was subsequently found guilty and imprisoned for a year.

### **Congscription and Conscientious Objection**

At the start of the War, the British Army had 247,000 regular troops and 145,000 reservists, a total of 392,000 men. By July 1916, at the time of the Somme offensive 420,000 British soldiers were dead: more than the number of the entire army in 1914. Most of the old British army had been killed. War leaders began to project that there would eventually be no army left. In the face of this impending disaster conscription was introduced into Britain in 1916. Conscription means compulsory military service and Britain had always relied on volunteers to serve in its army. However at this point in the war, the very high number of casualties meant that the government made men join the forces to replace those who had died. This was done through the Military Service Act of March 1916. This Act allowed for objectors to be absolutely exempted, to perform alternative civilian service, or to serve as a non-combatant within the Army. The decision depended on

the extent to which they could persuade a Military Service Tribunal of the quality of their objection.



With such a strength of feeling within Bridgeton against the war, there was a high level of conscientious objection. However, there was also much propaganda created to put pressure on men who were conscientious objectors, for example by pointing out that their offspring would be heartily ashamed of them.



**Appeal to Conscience or Accusation of Cowardice?**

Here, the little boy is playing at soldiers, while his sister is reading a book about military exploits. Clearly, the father will answer "Nothing" to her question.

Around 16,000 men were recorded as conscientious objectors, with Quakers, traditionally pacifist, playing a large role. 4,500 objectors were sent to do "work of national importance" such as farming, 7,000 were ordered to do non-combatant duties, but 6,000 were forced into the army, and when they refused orders, they were sent to prison.



**A Military Service Tribunal**

Tribunals were notoriously harsh towards conscientious objectors, reflecting widespread public opinion that they were lazy, degenerate, ungrateful "shirkers" seeking to benefit from the sacrifices of others. This was an opinion much fostered by the war leaders and government.

### The Women's Peace Crusade

Glasgow's unusual political mix, the remarkable day-to-day links between feminism and socialism, between the ILP and the Women's Social and Political Union, plus the neighbourhood groups strengthened through the rent strike (such as in Bridgeton) provided a unique seedbed for a popular women's anti-war protest movement. The fact that the peace movement survived at all in the face of government anti-German, pro-war propaganda and a viciously jingoistic pro-war press stands as testament to the tremendous courage and principles of all those involved. Women were also involved in other struggles such as the No Conscription Fellowship, but it was the Women's Peace Crusade that made the greatest contribution to the peace struggle.



**Helen Crawfurd**

The Women's Peace Crusade, headed by Helen Crawfurd, was launched on June 10th 1916. Over 200 women from 16 organisations attended. Following this conference a campaign of street meetings was organised. There was a deliberate attempt to involve working class women in the campaign. The Women's Peace Crusade moved the anti-war protest out beyond small-scale groups and created effective links with working class women across Scotland, not just with committed socialists but with a broad range of women concerned about the war's effect on families, homes and jobs. Glasgow June 1917 saw the national launch of the Women's Peace Crusade, after which it spread like wild fire across the country and it remained consistently active until the end of the war, by which time it had over 100 branches. The Glasgow movement continued with its activities on all fronts, street meetings, public meetings, meetings outside shipyard gates, marches, and demonstrations on Glasgow Green.



At the large public meetings they held, national figures in the peace movement would speak. But in Glasgow the main contribution of the Women's Peace Crusade was the grassroots work done by local propagandists. Members spoke at street meetings, including in Bridgeton. On Sunday July the 8th 1917 the Women's Peace Crusade organised a mass demonstration in Glasgow; from two sides of the city processions wound their way through the city accompanied by bands and banners. As they approached the Glasgow Green they merged into one massive colourful demonstration of some 14,000 people.

This was essentially a housewives' movement including married women whose husbands and sons had been killed in the war. The emphasis was on the family. The crusade also had religious overtones with the badges of the "Angel of Peace" protecting children. This link between the socialists on the one hand and the religious pacifists on the other was an attempt by the Women's Peace Crusade to create a broad mass movement against the war.

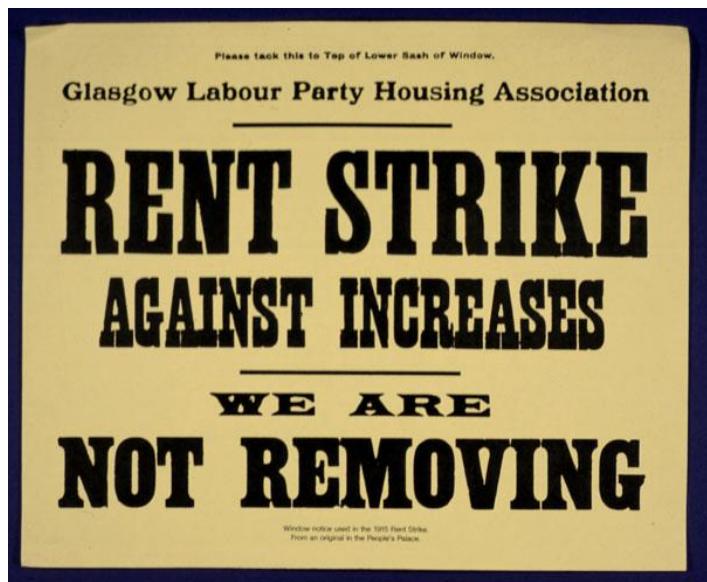
### The Rent Strike

From as early as 1911 housing shortages were a major concern to the working class. There was a real pressure on housing in Glasgow as a result of industrial expansion. From 1914 onwards, this pressure grew as more people came to Glasgow to work in the industries which were important for the war effort. Many working

class areas were affected but Bridgeton, Parkhead and Shettleston, housing the munitions, armaments, engineering and metal workers of Beardmore and Parkhead Forge, experienced great pressure.

There was therefore an increase in the demand for rented accommodation, and a subsequent possibility of raising the rents. However, with a great many of the male population now fighting in the war, ruthless landlords saw this as a great opportunity to increase the rents dramatically in already crumbling properties. Sometimes the proposed rise was as high as 23%. This venality became even more apparent as they targeted women struggling to bring up children and the elderly and vulnerable of society, with increasingly rising rents. They worked on the principle that, if the sitting tenants could not pay, there were plenty of others who would.

Evictions of tenants for arrears, particularly those involving the dependents of men who had gone to war, hardened attitudes and provided flashpoints for the expression of outrage and hostility. Many protests were made, led by three remarkable women: Helen Crawfurd, Mary Barbour, and Agnes Dollan. Helen Crawfurd, a suffragette and anti-war campaigner was the Secretary of the South Govan (Glasgow) Women's Housing Association, dedicated to taking on the landlords. Mary Barbour had a talent for organisation and had set up tenants committees and also co-ordinated eviction resistance.



The first direct action was the non-payment of rent increases in Govan. Resistance took the form of making it impossible for the sheriff's officers to carry out their evictions. Many protest meetings were held in Bridgeton, often in backcourts. Women were posted as lookouts, often with a bell, so that when the bailiffs arrived, they would ring the bell and women came from all around. They would form a scrum to prevent officers gaining entry to houses and throw flour bombs (some were said to contain rather more than flour!) at the

bailiffs. It was also said that they pulled the bailiffs' trousers down to humiliate them.



These protests were therefore very effectively organised by women. Politically they were astute: they accused landlords of being anti-patriotic and so gained the support of employers who did not want to see production affected by external factors.

By October 1915 the women were supported by men taking wildcat strike action at Fairfields and Beardmore's. In November of 1915 over 20,000 tenants were on rent strike and it had now spread to other parts of the country. On the 17th of November 1915, thousands of women along with engineering and shipyard workers descended on Glasgow Sheriff Court and the City Chambers. They were there to protest the fate of eighteen Glasgow tenants who had been taken to court for non-payment of rent. The decision by a Partick factor to prosecute eighteen tenants meant that this was a most important day. On the one side were landlords attempting to impose their legal rights to set the levels of rent they wished; on the other were the mass protests of tenants and the explicit threat of industrial action. The demonstration was the culmination of months of protest led by Mary Barbour. Prior to the case being heard there had been mass meetings in many workplaces. The officials of Glasgow Sheriff Court were so alarmed that they phoned Lloyd George. In the face of potential industrial action at a critical point in the war, he told them to release the tenants and promised action. As a result, Parliament passed the Rent Restriction Act,

setting rents for the duration of the war and 6 months to follow at pre war levels. The women had won.

## Food Shortages and the Impact of Death

When the war began in 1914, food shortages were mainly the result of panic buying and hoarding. By August of that year, some shops had completely run out of food. After the initial panic, people settled down and food was not a problem until 1916 when Germany began to really utilise its U-Boat fleet in an attempt to starve Britain into defeat. America and Canada were the main exporters of food to Britain and, until 1916, crossing the Atlantic was relatively safe. However, by 1917, merchant ships had become easy targets for U-Boats and, apart from the huge loss of life, this had a major impact on food supplies.



Food restrictions imposed by D.O.R.A, (Defence of the Realm Act) were proving to be ineffective and the government tried to introduce a voluntary form of rationing, whereby people took responsibility for what and how much they ate. Posters, such as this, appeared in Bridgeton and attempted to draw women into this battle in the Atlantic. It is difficult to determine if the residents of Bridgeton could work out just what this poster was saying. It appears to imply that if two thick slices can be saved every day, then one loaf less will be needed each week. If every family can do this, then the wheat cargo of one merchant ship successfully crossing the Atlantic will go so much further.

We tend to forget how many things had to go on as normal during the war, including sending the children to school. As this photograph shows, the schools were still full of children and there were still many mouths to feed. Food shortages became acute.



Dalmarnock Primary School 1917  
(courtesy of Glesca Pals)

Rationing in Bridgeton brought it home to the people just how bad things were. A little-researched aspect of women's lives in Bridgeton is the rush to a second marriage after being informed of the death of a husband at the front. This was sometimes seen as the only way to ensure an adequate income, although it may have resulted in unhappy relationships.

## AFTER THE WAR

Germany was defeated. After the War, something like a collective case of post-traumatic stress disorder set in. The realisation that something enormous had happened overwhelmed the combatant countries. The sheer magnitude of loss sank in as millions of individual deaths and tragedies combined to become huge, almost incomprehensible numbers.

What had it been for? Apart from getting rid of the Kaiser, many socialists in Bridgeton believed that the war had changed virtually nothing. Those lucky enough to have survived came home to an unchanged system of class and privilege. Practically an entire generation of young men had been destroyed. It is estimated that 1,640,000 British soldiers were wounded, and formerly healthy young men returned to Bridgeton with various disabilities.

It was generally felt that rehabilitation of the war wounded was the state's responsibility, but, with no standard criteria for assessing physical disability and no criteria whatsoever for assessing psychological disability, state provision for the war disabled was unsatisfactory. By early 1920, the government had trained and rehabilitated only 13,000 disabled men while 60,000 more were thought to be eligible.

Individual families in Bridgeton grieved over their sons, brothers, husbands and fathers. The factories, churches, schools, and social organisations of Bridgeton tallied up their losses. The results created the modern concept of war remembrance. It was expressed in everything from the names carved in schools' Rolls of Honour in Bridgeton to the great monuments of the Western Front such as the Menin Gate in Flanders. Between 1914 and

1918, the War had cost over 16 million lives, with another 20 million wounded. Many who returned would never be the same again, traumatised by what they had endured.

One important effect on Bridgeton was the loss of the managers of the future. There was a disproportionate effect of losses on middle-class officers during the war: One in six of the graduates of Glasgow University died. These were the men who would have guided recovery, and industry in Bridgeton and elsewhere suffered.



**The Highland Light Infantry War Memorial,  
Glasgow Green**

Many people believed that the war had helped advance women economically and politically. Firstly, it opened up a wider range of occupations to female workers with higher wages, better conditions, and enhanced independence. Secondly, women became politicised. In Bridgeton, the Peace Crusade and the Rent Strike altered the way in which women regarded themselves.

However, returning servicemen wanted their jobs back, and, in many instances, contracts of employment decreed that women would only be employed “for the duration of the war”. As unemployment levels soared immediately after the war, Britain suffered labour upheavals. Workers on the Clyde and in Bridgeton went on strike, demanding that the 54-hour week be reduced to 40 hours. On 31 January 1919, mounted police charged a crowd in George Square, injuring 40 people. The red flag was raised over the City Chambers. Alarmed politicians called it a “Bolshevik rising”.

Germany had started this terrible war: many now think that the punishing Versailles peace treaty ensured that there would another terrible war in the future.

## LOOKING BACK FROM 2014

Mary Thomson is a Bridgeton poet who was asked to give a contemporary reflection on World War One.

## WAR MEMORIAL

When they went they marched to the beat of the drum,  
to the skirl of the pipes, the cheers of the crowd,  
into the wire, the guns and the mud  
for King and country, for the glory of war.

When they died did they know what they fought for -  
the families who grieved with pride and pain,  
their pals who returned, never whole again,  
the poppy wreaths laid at the foot of a cross?

Laid each November, by spring they have faded but  
our young should be brought and told of the slaughter;  
their leaders' ineptitude, the lies and the myths  
should also be carved, remembered in stone.

**MARY THOMSON 2014**

## Bridgeton Illustrated War News

Produced in July 2014 by  
**Bridgeton Library Local History Group**

with support from  
Bridgeton Library, Glasgow Women's Library,  
Glasgow Life, James Dean and Neil Orr of North  
East Area Engagement Legacy Group.

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Journey's End (Gainsborough Films, 1930)  
Paths of Glory (United Artists, 1958)