Social Impact of WWI

The Role of Women in the War
- Nikola Medenwald –

Pals' Battalions & Demographic Consequences
- Sandra Krombach -
The Role of Women
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- Situation before the war
- Psychological pressure: “Total war”
- Economical changes
- The Home Front
- Political changes
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- Charity
- Protest
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- Food rationing 1917
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search lights over London
destruction after an air raid
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Economic Changes

- new fields of occupation
- collapse of “domestic service“
- advantages
- examples for new occupations
Economic Changes

- **new fields of occupation**
  - increasing range of jobs for women
  - 1914 – 1918: ~2 million jobs filled by women
  - Women in total employment:
    - July 1914: 24%
    - November 1918: 37%

- collapse of „domestic service“

- advantages

- examples for new occupations
Economic Changes

- new fields of occupation
- collapse of „domestic service“
  - until 1911: 11-13%
  - by 1931: <8% (E+W)

- advantages
- examples for new occupations
Economic Changes

- new fields of occupation
- collapse of “domestic service“

**advantages**
- higher wages
- better conditions > TRADE UNIONS
- enhanced independence
- huge increase of day-nurseries
- advantages for the industrialists

**examples for new occupations**
New Fields of Occupation

- Women’s Police Service (WPS)
- metal and engineering industry
- public transport
- service industries
New Fields of Occupation –
Women’s Police Service

- formed under auspices of Margaret Damer Dawson
- by 1916: over 2000 members
- against immorality in public places
New Fields of Occupation – metal & engineering industries

- > 900,000 female workers in munitions production
- Dangerous work: TNT poisoning → „canaries“
  - More than 300 victims
New Fields of Occupation

- public transport

- service industries:
  - General Post Office
  - Commerce & banking
  - others
New Fields of Occupation

Women doing "male jobs"
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The Home Front

- British Military Nurses: QAIMNS / QARNNS
- Voluntary Services: FANY, VAD
- Women’s Volunteer Organisations: WEC / WVR / WAC
- Right to Serve March July 1915
- Women’s Services: non-nursing capacities
- outstanding women
The Home Front –
British Military Nurses

**QAIMNS:**
The Queen Alexandra’s Imperial Military Nursing Service → regular army

**QARNNS:**
The Queen Alexandra’s Royal Naval Service

both formed in 1902
The Home Front – Voluntary Nursing Services I

**FANY:** First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (1907)

- Linking front-line + field hospitals
- Tasks: ambulance drivers, soop kitchens, troop canteens, hospitals, recreation centers, military headquarters
- Special Operations Executive (SOE)
Voluntary Nursing Services II

- **VAD**: Voluntary Aid Detachment (1909)
- Trained by the British Red Cross Society
- Medical assistance at the home front + overseas
- ~126,000 recruits: middle + upper class
The Home Front – Women’s Volunteer Organisations I

- **Women’s Emergency Corps (WEC)**
- **Women’s Auxiliary Corps (WAC)**
- **Women’s Volunteer Reserve (WVR)**

- 1914 Evelina Haverfield & Marchioness of Londonderry
- clear military structure
- fitness, discipline
- support of the civil powers
The Home Front – Women’s Volunteer Organisations II

- **Women’s Legion**

- **April 1915: Marchioness of Londonderry**
  - More assessible for lower class
  - Largest voluntary women’s organisation
    - > 6000 members
  - Cooks + waitresses at the front

**Influence:**
establishment of WAAC in 1917
The Home Front – Women’s Volunteer Organisations III

- **Women’s Land Army & Forestry Corps (WLA)**
  - formed 1917
  - 3 Sections:
    - agriculture
    - forestry
    - forage
The Home Front –
Women’s Right to Serve March

- July 17th 1915
- suffragettes
- ~3000 demonstrators
The Home Front – Women’s Services I

- **WAAC (1917):**
  Women's Auxiliary Army Corps
  - 57,000 in administrative jobs
  - 1918: QMAAC

- **WRNS (wrens) (1916):**
  Women's Royal Naval Service

- **WRAF (1918):**
  Women’s Royal Air Force
The Home Front – outstanding women I

- **Flora Sandes** (1876-1955)
  - Red Cross nurse in Serbia
  - Nov 1916 seriously wounded

- **Elsie Knocker** (B.ss T’Serclaes)
  - Independent first aid post in Pervyse with own funds
  - 1917: British Military Medal
  - March 1918: badly gassed, returned to GB

- **Mairi Chisholm**
  - ...
The Home Front – outstanding women II

Edith Cavell (1865-1915):
- nurses’ training school in Brussels
- saved > 200 soldiers
- 1915: sentenced to death

Elsie Inglis (1864-1917):
- Scottish doctor, suffragette
- 1914: independently raised 14 Scottish Women’s Hospital units
- 1917 died shortly after return to GB
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In the midst of this time of terrible anxiety and grief, it is some little comfort to think that our large organisation, which has been completely built up during past years to promote women’s suffrage, can be used to help our country through the period of strain and sorrow.

→ In: *The Common Cause*  
(UWSS newspaper) on August 6th 1914
Political changes - Suffragettes II

- **WSPU**
- February 1918: Right to vote (30+)
- June 1928: equal voting rights
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Post-war Development – Return to Domesticity

- psychological reasons
- returning servicemen
- temporary labour agreements
- closure of day-nurseries
- disunity among women
- many branches closed again for women
Pals’ Battalions
Definition of Pals‘ Battalions:

- an army of volunteers
- men from the same town, city or workplace or sports association who had volunteered
- Liverpool founded first Pals‘ Battalions
Civic Pride

- many other cities followed Liverpool’s example
- cities competed with each other
- by early 1916 around two million had enlisted voluntarily
Origins and profession of Pals

- stockbrokers
- students
- journalists
- clerks
- teachers
- shop assistants
- artists
- public schoolboys
AT THE FRONT!

Every fit Briton should join our brave men at the Front.

ENLIST NOW.

YOUR COUNTRY'S CALL

Isn't this worth fighting for?

ENLIST NOW
Reasons for joining the Battalions:

- patriotic optimism
- common desire to help Belgium
- army service offered opportunities, excitement and travel
- army promised a break from the poverty
Advantages:

- regular pay (one shilling a day for privates)
- proper food and clothing
- better living conditions in barracks
Story of James Tail – a pal

- 15 years old, inexperienced young boy
- joined 10th Battalions, East Yorkshire
- first together with his stepbrother Frank Cocker, but Frank died
- opportunity to go to war was an adventure for him
- nine weeks in Egypt, then transferred to the Western Front
only criticism he had was about the quality of training and the attitude of some of the officers

mother applied for his release and James was sent back

joined up again in Sep. 1917

by April was back in France and survived third German offensive which began on 27th May 1918
The Battle on the Somme:

- 1 July- 13 November 1916
- 1914-1916 Pals‘ Battalions spent training in Britain
- Battle of the Somme was first major battle for most volunteers
- Pals’ Battalions were defeated by superior equipped Germans
- army´s greatest single loss
- 60,000 casualties, 20,000 died
Battle of the Somme
Consequences of the Pals' Battalions:

- in many towns and cities anger spread out
- few homes remained untouched
- an epidemic of grief swamped the country
- often more than one member of a family died
- communities were decimated