

Chapter 5

1918 'Backs to the Wall'

The New Year was ushered in with a memorial service at the parish church to commemorate the sixty-eight men from the parish who had 'made the supreme sacrifice' in the war so far.

By November 11th this figure had risen to one hundred and nine as the first half of 1918 saw some of the bitterest fighting yet.

There was never any doubt that 1918 was going to be a difficult year for the Allies. With the October Revolution in Russia that nation had effectively been taken out of the war. The Germans began to switch resources to the Western Front, where the Americans had yet to make any great impact on the balance of numbers.

The British and French were exhausted by the battles of 1917 and could only sit and wait for the inevitable German attacks. Between March 21st and the middle of July the Germans were to launch four major offensives against them, the aim being to divide both and push the British back to the Channel.

Rather ominously for soldiers and civilians alike, back in the village a new 'enemy' had begun to rear its head, the influenza. By the middle of the year church services were being cancelled because of it and local schools were being closed down.

'During the past week there has been a very considerable increase in the number of cases of influenza in the district. A considerable number of workmen have been affected and a large number of school children were also absent from school on this account. It appears to be of a mild type and recovery takes place in a few days time.'

Just as the war against the 'flu' was being lost, so it was obvious on the Home Front that the war on the battlefield was far from going the Allies way.

In January the weekly sugar ration was reduced to half a pound per person per week and the sale of ice cream was banned. In an attempt to reduce the food queues shoppers had to register with their local shop or food supplier.

The shortage of meat was most keenly felt and anyone in the village who considered complaining was reminded to think again about the scale of the 'hardship' they had to endure. 'Those who are at home and in comfort, cannot expect to escape some measure of sacrifice, and anything experienced so far is as dust in the balance to what our men in France face daily without a murmur. Let us act worthy of them; they deserve it.'

One week later all butchers shops in the village were closed for most of the week due to the small quantity of meet secured at market.

When a supply of meat finally arrived there were 'stirring scenes outside shops in the village ... large crowds gathered in the snow ... the C.O.O.P. allowed in as many as the shop would hold and then closed the doors to serve them ... the remaining butchers who opened on the Saturday were besieged and had to restrict themselves to serving their own customers.'

In February a scheme for the issue of ration cards was announced, more allotments were made available to the 'green fingered' of the parish and the successful 'war cookery classes' of the previous year were re-established, no doubt helping the produce from the allotments to go just that bit further.

The West Calder and District Angling Society met and agreed to petition the food controller, Lord Rhondda, to order that all rivers, tributaries and lochs be opened to all people for fishing to supply food for the duration of the war.

'Local farmers are nearly all ploughing early and an extra field as well. It is only by such means we can hope to defeat the ravages of the U-boats ... as the PM has said the size of the home grown crop this year may mean all the difference between victory and disaster. It is painfully evident we are not building ships as fast as we are losing them, and the necessity for us raising more of our foodstuffs at home is therefore all the more imperative.'

The PM even made a personal appeal to women to get out and do their bit on the farms and in the fields.

In March, bakers were requested not to show any fancy cakes or pastries in their windows, as the sight undoubtedly would drive the local population wild or mad!

Visitors to the village from the city commented on the noticeable shortage of certain items.

'During the week a number of Glasgow visitors have been resident in the village. With the exception of a wet forenoon on Tuesday, they have been favoured with good weather. What they complain of most is the shortage of tobacco, cigarettes and matches in the country districts. The city is very much better off for tobacco and cigarettes than the country villages, where for days at a time no supplies can be got.'

Other wartime restrictions included the early closing of public houses in the village; further limitations in the train service because of 'depleted rolling stock' and a shortage of coal; a reduced postal service; and a warning that coal would be confiscated from those who showed signs of stockpiling it.

There was even an impact on the Advertiser. Customers were rationed to one copy of the newspaper each from their newsagent; those requesting multiple copies would be refused.

Over the months of rationing and food shortages, opportunist thieves had been taking advantage of the crowds that queued at the local shops. Villagers were asked to be on the look out for anyone acting suspiciously and a thirteen-year-old boy was arrested. He was charged with 'theft by pocket picking' and sentenced to eighteen stripes with the birch rod. His mother pleaded guilty to receiving a 'ten shilling Treasury note' from him. She was given a warning.

Later in April an eleven-year-old boy was apprehended for the theft of purses. His parents admitted that he was beyond their control. He was sent to an Industrial School for a period of five years.

Another court case highlights how very different were attitudes to crime and the punishment of children in wartime West Calder.

A father was charged with assaulting his nine-year-old son, by 'striking him with a fist to make him bleed'. The lad had disobeyed an order given by his father and left the house to stay with friends. The father had flown into a temper and marched round to the friend's house to confront his son, striking him about the face in punishment. 'The sheriff said an assault on a boy of tender years causing an effusion of blood was a very serious matter.' 'No doubt children required chastisement, but it should be administered on another part of the body, and not the face, and certainly not to the effusion of blood.'

The father was fined three pounds, despite the fact that he had already served a sixty-day sentence in prison for hitting another son.

Judging by reports in the Advertiser, the year got off to a very 'lawless' start.

'A mild sensation was created on Thursday morning when it became known that three cases of burglary had taken place the preceding night... It would appear that the burglars had commenced operations at the Pawnbrokers Shop ... made all the more daring by the fact that the constable was going his rounds at the time ... The burglars must have watched him pass by before taking the shop shutters down, using a diamond to cut a hole in the window and then taking what they could reach.'

'They then crossed the street to Mr R Duncan's watchmaker and jeweller and did the same ..they smashed the glass here and had to make off in a hurry ... while police searched the village, the culprits walked along the railway line to the Railway Station, they broke in , ransacked the office and took several parcels .. while police were searching the village on bicycle, the thieves walked up the line to Addiewell where they caught the next train to Edinburgh.'

On the war front, the newspaper could celebrate the bravery of yet another local man.

'We are pleased to learn that 2nd Lieutenant James Brash, of the Seaforth Highlanders, son of Mr Robert Brash, Society Place, West Calder, has been mentioned in Sir Douglas Haig's dispatches. Brash was awarded the DSO for gallantry in the field on a former occasion and we understand it was a specially smart piece of work which has again brought him to the front. Our young townsman has acquitted himself with distinction since he enlisted, and we hope he may be spared to come safely through what remains of the war.'

The heavy fighting and German attacks of the first half of the year are reflected in the pages of the Advertiser as news from the Front increases, along with the number of casualties.

One of the first official casualties of the year was a Private Grant.

'Dear Mr Grant - It is with feelings of the greatest regret that I have to inform you of the death of your son, who was killed in action on the night of March 15th.'

'The circumstances under which he was killed were these - A party of the enemy, under cover of darkness, rushed the post in which he was with four others. They failed to reach the post, and had to retire, leaving one of their number dead, but not before they had killed two and wounded two of my men by rifle fire at close range. Your son was buried near where he fell, and a cross erected over the grave the next night. He was a very promising NCO and his loss is deeply regretted by everyone in the Company. Please accept my sincere sympathy at your cruel loss. I shall be pleased to give you any information that you may wish, if it lies in my power to do so. Yours sincerely. R B MacLeod, Captain. BEF France March 19th.'

In April the list of wounded includes Private Samuel Haldane, who was hit by shrapnel. He enlisted in early 1915 and was wounded at Loos and the first Battle of the Somme.

Lieutenant Corporal Hugh McPhee of the Seaforth Highlanders was wounded for the 5th time.

'At the close of the morning service in the Parish Church, the Reverend Dr Anderson referred briefly to the death in action of Private Robert Brash, MGC, which had taken place as a result of shell fire on the 1st of April. God's hand he said was laid heavy upon us as a nation at this time, and we are in sorrow these days because of loved ones that are not - in sorrow because of the brave, the brave that are no more. When the records of this war come to be written, the Brash family may well hold their head high. One son has just made the supreme sacrifice; another is a prisoner of war in Germany; another is in the front line today; a fourth who has brought high honours to the parish, and of whom we are all deservedly proud, is awaiting the summons to return to the fighting line. Surely in their sorrow there is some compensation in this record. We are not unmindful of it.'

There is no doubt that April was a period of high anxiety for the parish and the country. Families rightly worried about the fate of their soldier lads while in the

country there was an understanding of just how important these battles were in France. They would decide victory and there was no guarantee that the Allies would come out on top.

'Parents who have sons in the severe fighting in France have spent another anxious week. One good feature however, is that letters are now coming across more regularly, and parents are able to learn how their brave lads are. We have had to withstand the shock of a terrible German onset, and have had to yield more ground. The situation is still critical, but provides no reason for despondency. Our generals are still confident that they can keep the Germans from breaking through. The enemy is paying a terrible price for every mile of ground gained, and, after all, there is a limit to the number of fresh divisions he can throw in against our tired troops.'

At this time, a number of young men left the parish, but France was not their destination!

'A number of young Irishmen employed at the shale mines and oil works in West Lothian have hurriedly returned to Ireland this week to escape military service here.'

Adding to the gloom were the very personal Memoriam messages that filled the pages of the Advertiser at this time.

'In loving memory of our dear son, Corporal George Elder, Royal Scots, who was killed in action on 23rd April, 1917, aged 19 years.'

The flower of the family
He was loved and liked by all
Was chosen three years ago
To answer the great call

In a soldier's grave he is sleeping,
Our boy the dearest and best;
In our hearts we shall miss him forever,
Though we know he is only at rest

Somewhere in France dear George sleeps,
Far frae his native hame;
What more or better could any man give
Than die for his country that others might live

Inserted by his father and mother, sisters and brothers, Raeburn's Row, West Calder

'Steel - In loving memory of Thomas James Steel, RSF, aged 19, who fell in France on 23rd April, 1917, only son of Mr and Mrs Steel, Station House, Addiewell.'

'Sneddon - In loving memory of my dear son, Pte Richard Sneddon, 3rd Royal Scots, attached KOSB, killed at Arras, 25th April, 1917, aged 19 years. A day of remembrance sad to recall.' Inserted by his mother - 61 Main Street, West Calder.

Towards the end of April, Sir Douglas Haig made his famous 'Backs to the Wall' appeal, which the local newspaper applied to all, civilian and combatant.

'Sir Douglas Haig's stirring order recently was addressed directly to the Army, but its message applies with the same force to everyone of us. For 'the safety of our homes and the freedom of mankind' we are all under the same obligation of doing our utmost. There is no man or woman whose duty is not described by the Commander-in-Chief when he says 'There is no other course open to us but to fight it out ... With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end.'

The military situation no doubt improved attendance at church services in the village and the congregation for Gospel Meetings at the Gospel Hall, in Rae's Buildings, on Sunday afternoons grew apace with the crisis.

Whether the news from the front was good or bad, the women of the parish continued with their efforts to relieve the distress of the injured and wounded. 'Wounded soldiers from Bangour were entertained by women members of the West Calder C.O.O.P Society Women's Guild. No motor transport could be got, so they were transported by brake to West Calder.'

'The weather was mild and the men were none the worse for their drive in the open air. On arrival they were provided with Bovril and biscuits. Each received a hearty supply of cigarettes and were told how much was appreciated their sacrifice.'

'Games, dancing, hunts for half crowns and a pea guessing competition followed. The local band supplied music for those who could dance. Coffee and sandwiches were served and they were given a hearty send off.'

For those who wanted a taste of the war at first hand, a visit to Edinburgh would have brought them face to face with the fighting weapon that was supposed to win the war for the Allies. A tank, named 'Julian', was visiting the city in an effort to convince residents to help the war effort by purchasing war bonds.

'One had read so much of the Tanks pursuing their war tasks under all manner of inclement conditions that on Monday the touch of winter merely served to produce the effect of realism. With horses slipping and sliding about, it gave the Tank an opportunity of showing what it could do; in a way the January morning had merely blown Hansel in on 'Julian'. 'Julian' has seen service. There are bullet marks on his sides, and he looked the reverse of spick and span, but there was nothing wrong with the internal mechanism. Hundreds of school children lined up to see it and it became the centre of a

large procession. There were cheers in Princes Street as the Tank ambled to its place within the barricades, where the weeks business will be done'.

April 8-13 was designated as 'The Scottish Week'. A special effort was made to increase the sale of War Bonds and War Savings Certificates. Each parish, village, town and city in Scotland was asked to provide an 'instrument of war', such as a machine gun, an aeroplane, a tank or a battleship. At a meeting held in the Masonic Hall a public pledge was made for West Calder to raise £25,000.

'It will cheer the lads in the trenches to know that those at home are providing the money to purchase weapons of war, so that valuable lives may be saved. We have lost many guns, Tanks and other material in the recent fighting and our losses require to be made good if victory is to be won.'

The parish actually raised £30, 199 - enough for 5 tanks.

There were those who were already looking to a time when the war would be at an end.

In April there was a lecture at the Lesser Hall on the subject of 'Women and the Franchise'. In May plans were announced for the registration of women voters. In the same month, the West Calder and District Labour and Democratic Council began to flex its muscle by protesting against the withdrawal of the 1.14 pm train service to Edinburgh and petitioning the PM for better housing for the working classes. Members of that same Council travelled to Edinburgh (although not on the 1.14) to consider running a Labour candidate for Midlothian at the General Election which all knew would take place that year.

The remaining male members of the parish probably gave more time and effort to improving their snooker skills than they ever did considering the political climate.

'Handsome prizes are being offered by Mr Boyle for the 'snooker' and billiards handicaps in the East End Rooms, which are now crowded nightly, many of the players putting in a special preparation with the hope of securing a prize.'

If snooker or billiards were not to your liking, you would find something at the Picture Palace to interest you.

'Thomas Hince's million-dollar film spectacle 'Civilisation', which comes to the Picture Palace on 20th and 21st May is remarkable for the fact that it presents on the screen the first filmed record of how a submarine operates when attacking a big steamer ... The sinking of three enemy ships takes place in full view of the audience.'

A few months later, 'With the clouds of the great war hovering over Britain, the production at the People's Palace on Monday and Tuesday of D W Griffith's gigantic spectacle 'The Birth of a Nation', is particularly timely, showing not

only one of the most stupendous battle scenes of the great American conflict, but also the evolution of our American sisters and brothers in the years succeeding the declaration of peace.'

'The vital and enormous part which women played during these years is being and will be duplicated by the heroic women of the United Kingdom. On the screen you will see 18,000 people; 5000 horses; 3000 scenes; it cost £100 000 to make.'

By the end of July the great German offensive had failed and it was now the turn of the Allies to attack.

As the Allied offensive ground on, there was a realisation in Germany that the possibility of defeat was now very real and attempts were made to sue for peace.

'On Sunday last fitting reference was made in all the local churches to the war, and intercession made for the victory of the Allies and a speedy and just peace.'

For a change, the news from the Front was good and it was clear that the Allies were indeed heading for victory. Yet that victory could still be lost.

At the Picture House on Monday evening, September 9th, Mr Borland, President of the local War Savings Association read a message from the Prime Minister to the nation.

'The message which I send to the people of the British Empire on the fourth anniversary of their entry into the war is 'Hold Fast'.'

'We are in this war for no selfish ends. We are in it to recover freedom for the nations which have been brutally attacked and despoiled and prove that no people, however powerful, can surrender itself to the lawless ambitions of militarism without meeting retribution, swift, certain, and disastrous, at the hands of the free nations of the world. To stop short of Victory for the cause would be to compromise the future of mankind.'

'I say 'Hold Fast' because our prospects of Victory have never been so bright as they are today. Six months ago the rulers of Germany deliberately rejected the just and reasonable settlement proposed by the Allies. ... but the battle is not yet won. The great autocracy of Prussia will still endeavour by violence or guile to avoid defeat and so give militarism a new lease of life. We cannot seek to escape the horrors of war for ourselves, by laying them up for our children. Having set our hands to the task we must see it through till a just and lasting settlement is achieved.'

'In no other way can we ensure a world set free from war.'

HOLD FAST. D Lloyd George. 4th August 1918.

The Advertiser re-enforced this message a week later.

'An army and its generals may win battles, but only a nation itself can be victorious in war...The brilliant successes of the past few days in France have put a more cheerful colour on the whole military outlook, and raised all our spirits ... Unless the home front keeps firm, the fighting front is bound to collapse, for no army can sustain a war unless the civilians do their bit in supplying food and munitions, in building ships and digging coal...the next twelve months will probably test what we are made of more severely than any of our four years through which we have yet been fighting.'

No doubt the references to 'holding fast' and 'keeping firm' would hit a chord with the shale miners and various other unions within the country who were threatening or carrying out strike action.

In support of the 'Home Front' the government announced that the army would release soldiers on furlough to help with the harvest. There was a false report that miners would be released from the army, even before the fighting in France had finished, to help the crisis of manpower in the local shale and coal mines. The government made a speedy response to this, stating that only miners in the army on home duties would be released. Those fighting at the front still had a task to complete!

As November 11th approaches, hindsight makes the injuries and losses of those last few months of the war seem all the more poignant.

'Private William Cookston, the village postman, who enlisted in February and has been six weeks in France, has been wounded.'

'Private Peter Donachie, who enlisted in January and went across to France last month, has been wounded by shrapnel.'

'Information has been received that Private Francis Grimley has made the supreme sacrifice in France. When home recently he looked very fit and healthy. He was behind the lines when a bomb from a German aeroplane burst near him. The family have suffered severely in the war and sympathy will be felt for them in this fresh bereavement.'

'Private Ernest of the Royal Scots has been killed in France. He was sleeping in a hut behind the lines, along with a number of companions, when a bomb burst and there were a number of casualties. His commanding officer says the hut was blown to pieces and it was unlikely that he could have survived. Prior to enlistment he was a watchmaker with the West Calder Co-operative Society.'

'Mr M Grimley, 27 Dee Street, West Calder, has been informed that his son Gunner Daniel Grimley of the Tank Corps has been awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the field. He has been 4 years with the colours and fully 3 in France, where he has taken part in much of the heavy fighting. Four of Mr Grimley's sons enlisted, showing a very patriotic example.'

'We regret to announce the death from wounds received in action of Private Michael Devlin, whose home is at 9 Dee Street, West Calder. Private Devlin was the youngest son of Mr Hugh Devlin, Muirhall, West Calder. He enlisted in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in September 1914, and had been through most of the heavy fighting of the war.'

'He was invalided home to England but made a good recovery and was sent back to the fighting line. In 1917 he was awarded the Military medal for bravery in the field. The incident which won him the medal was as follows: 'An officer and a squad of fully 20 men were cut off. They held on fighting however until they were nearly all killed or wounded. The officer and men arrived safely back in the British lines and Pte Devlin was complimented on the bravery he had shown and was awarded the military medal'.'

'He had been in all the severe fighting since the big offensive started in the spring of this year. On the 22nd September he was wounded in several places, and lay on the battlefield for a day and a half before he was picked up. On being taken to the base it was found that he had sustained four gunshot wounds and he was sent to Bellahouston Hospital, Glasgow, where his wife visited him. Everything possible was done for him, but he succumbed to his wounds on Friday of last week.'

'The body was brought home to West Calder, and was interred in the Cemetery on Monday afternoon with full military honours. A firing party from the Black Watch accompanied the cortege to the graveside and an impressive service was conducted by the Rev Father Chase. Three volleys were fired over the grave and buglers sounded the 'Last Post'. A large crowd assembled to see the warrior who had fought the good fight, laid in his last resting place. Previous to enlistment Private Devlin was employed as a miner at West Mains colliery. He leaves a widow and seven of a family.'

'Mr and Mrs McGowan, 33 Tweed Street, West Calder, have just heard from their son Pte Thomas McGowan, of the Royal Scots, attached to the Highland Light Infantry, stating that he has won the football cup and medal in India, and that he is sending the cup and medal home. Pte McGowan has also made a name for himself in the army as an expert boxer, having won no fewer than 7 medals in boxing contests. He and another two brothers enlisted at the outbreak of the war, and by a strange coincidence all three were in the line in the Somme battle. One of the brothers has fallen, and another has been discharged owing to the breakdown in his health. Pte McGowan has been wounded four times.'

'Lieutenant James Brash DSO, Seaforth Highlanders, son of Mr Robert Brash, Society Place, has been severely wounded. We regret to learn that it has been found necessary to amputate a foot and that he is in a very critical condition. His father was telegraphed for to go to see him in France this week.'

The Germans eventually had no choice but to agree to Allied peace terms and at 5am on November 11th the German delegation signed the Armistice document in a railway carriage in the forest of Compiègne in France.

'The welcome news that the Armistice was signed by a German representative on Monday morning reached our office by telephone at about 11 o'clock.'

'The news spread rapidly through the district.'

'In a few minutes the church bells were ringing, and flags which had evidently been kept ready for the happy day were soon flying from flagstaff's, from shop fronts and from many dwellings.'

'A joint thanksgiving service was arranged at the parish church and bills were quickly distributed throughout the district.'

'The shops closed for the afternoon and workmen ceased operations for the day. Everywhere there were manifestations of joy at the end of the war and the prospect of 'the boys' coming home at an early date.'

'The parish church was crowded with a large and reverent congregation in the evening. It was evident that the solemnity of the occasion, as well as the joy, had touched the heart of the people.'

'All three ministers were in the pulpit. Dr Anderson opened the proceedings with a prayer of thanksgiving to God for delivering victory and read the Old Testament lesson. Mr Swan led the people in a prayer of thanksgiving and read the New Testament lesson. Mr Crichton led the congregation in prayer for our soldiers and sailors, our Royal Family, our Statesmen, the wives and sweethearts who had toiled at home through four years of war, our wounded and dying and for a purer and better world to live in.'

'The service, which was short and impressive, was brought to a close with the National Anthem and the benediction.'

'On Tuesday, while the workpeople were still celebrating the end of the war, several barrels of beer were being delivered from a lorry to a local licensed premises. When the carter was in the premises two men boldly took a barrel of beer from the lorry and rolled it up the street.'

'They passed into the Happy Land and placed the barrel against the bridge which crosses the railway. By this time a crowd had gathered, the bung had been taken out, and the men were proceeding to help themselves to the contents. Meantime the carter had reported the matter to the police, who proceeded to the spot and took possession of the barrel.'

'At Edinburgh Sheriff Court on Wednesday two men were charged with the offence. An agent, who defended them, said it had been done more for a joke

than anything. In view of the peace celebrations, the Sheriff took a lenient view, and let the men off with an admonition.'

'With a holiday spirit abroad owing to the end of the war, excellent business has been done at the local picture House this week.'

'The shale miners and oil workers are being given a holiday tomorrow and their full pay to celebrate the signing of the Armistice.'

The only blight on these celebrations was the influenza epidemic that was still sweeping the district. And just to prove that life went on as normal, there was a burglary at the C.O.O.P, with the thieves attempting to blow up a safe using a detonator.

It is tempting to think that with the first Christmas of peace fast approaching, the village could breath a sigh of relief and put all thoughts of war and conflict behind it. That was not the case, for the events of 1914-1918 had touched the hearts and minds of nearly all. Many had lost a loved one or were related to or friendly with a family that had suffered bereavement.

Most of the lads who had joined the 'colours' were still abroad and would not see home until the following year. The work of the churches and the women's war work party continued for at least one more winter.

'Harwood UF Church have sent parcels abroad containing currant bun, oatcakes, sardines, chocolate, oxo, cigarettes, candles and a writing pad, the latter article being gifted by the children of the Sabbath School, along with a photograph of the Reverend Crichton and a prayer written by one of the Sabbath School.'

'West Calder parish Church are sending 136 parcels to soldiers who are on the Roll of Honour. Each parcel will be to the value of 6 shillings and in addition a pair of socks and a pair of mittens have been provided by the ladies.'

'Tommy is so often on the move that it is little wonder a parcel occasionally fails to reach him. We have just learned of a parcel that left West Calder 15 months ago. It was sent to Egypt in search of its owner. Failing to find him, it passed right up the front in Mesopotamia. Again the search was fruitless and it next tried India. After wandering about India for a time, it came back to other spheres of war and recently somewhat seedy but still intact it reached the sender in West Calder, 15 months after its departure. The sender is keeping it as a souvenir of the war.'

The last service of the year in the Parish Church was a memorial service for the 109 men from the parish who had given their lives. 'A programme containing the order of service and the names of all the men who have given their lives for the country has been printed for the occasion'.

Earlier in the year there had been moves afoot to commemorate the war dead on a national scale.

'The Committee of the National War Museum are anxious to make, as far as possible, a record of the war in photographs which should be of permanent and historic value for all time. In this section it is considered very desirable to include photographs of all officers and men who have given their lives, or who have received honours and decorations during the present war. The Committee of the National War Museum, therefore, appeal to the friends and relatives of officers and men in both services for such.'

The Advertiser had its own plans.

'A proof of the Parish Roll of Honour will be on view at the Advertiser office next week. It is very desirable that the names of all men who have made the supreme sacrifice for their country in this great crisis of our history should appear on the list. Much care has been expended in ensuring that the list is as correct as possible; but those who have lost relatives might kindly check the list before it is printed in booklet form.'

Plans for a substantial memorial were a way in which the village and many other communities like it in Scotland, tried to come to terms with the losses and show that the sacrifice had not been in vain.

'Memorial to our Fallen Heroes - under the auspices of the parish council, a public meeting was held in the Masonic hall on Monday evening to consider a proposal to erect a memorial to the local soldiers who have fallen in the present war. Unfortunately the night was very stormy and the attendance was not so large as had been expected. A general conversation took place however when it was found that all present were in favour of the proposal to erect a memorial to the lads who have in such a self-sacrificing spirit given their lives for our safety.'

'The opinion was expressed that we should aim at raising a sum of at least £500 in order that a memorial worthy of the occasion should be erected. The question of a probable site was also talked over, and some favoured the placing of the memorial in the cemetery, while others suggested its erection in front of the Public Library. Mr Drummond as chairman of the Parish Council explained that the site which the Council proposed was in the centre of the old portion of the cemetery and they thought this would make a very suitable site. As already stated, however, no decision was come to and the settlement of the points will be left to the public meeting to be held later.'

A committee was later elected of representatives from three of the parish churches, the school board, the parish council, one of the Addiewell churches, the West Calder and Westwood shale miners, the limestone miners and the managers of the oil and mine works. The C.O.O.P and Merchants Association members were ill at home with the influenza.

At the start of the meeting an appeal was made that the committee carry on its deliberations in a dignified and unified manner, as befitted the memory of the fallen. Three proposals were put for the form that the memorial should take - a plinth in the grounds of the library, topped by the figure of a Royal Scot; an institute building; or a recreation park - before the meeting got out of order and the discussion abandoned.

Some of the immediate concerns in the parish can be seen in the questions that were asked of prospective parliamentary Labour candidate Colonel Hope at a rally held in the 'Poly' hall.

'Would he pledge himself to work for the end of conscription?'

'Would he oppose the efforts to bring military training into schools?'

'Would he support a bill to disenfranchise conscientious objectors?'

'Would he support the unconditional release of conscientious objectors from prison?'

'Would he support prohibition during demobilisation?'

'Would he support war widows being made as financially secure as if their husbands were still alive?'

There was a great mass of demobilised soldiers about to flood home.

In November a branch of the Discharged Soldiers and Sailors Federation was established in the village in an attempt to ease the transition from military to civilian life.

Those able bodied who returned home from the various war fronts had difficulty in settling back into their pre-war civilian occupations. In many cases their jobs had simply gone, or been filled by the army of women who now demanded recognition of their war service. It was easy for the government to promise 'a land fit for heroes', but very difficult for it to deliver.

Life was even more difficult for those who had in some way been maimed or wounded.

'A flag day will be held in the village tomorrow on behalf of the Surgical requisites Workshops, where limbs are provided for our disabled soldiers. The cause is a most deserving one and we hope there will be a hearty response.'

The government had been reasonably speedy in changing the official compensation available.

'A new scale of allowances to disabled soldiers has been outlined by the government. Single men after paying their board and lodging will have a clear 10 shillings left. The present allowance (27s 6d) will remain, but where the

board and lodging cannot be obtained for 17s 6d the balance (up to 7s 6d) will be paid by the local War Pensions Committee. Married men who live at home, while training, are to have their allowance increased by 7s 6d - a married man living away from home will receive the same allowance as single men, while his wife will receive a separation allowance of 13s 9d.'

Wartime unity was quickly put under strain.

'There is a report is circulating in the village that those who organise flag days get ten per cent of the proceeds for themselves. This is nonsense. It is a public duty to contradict the statement wherever it is made.'

A lecture at the People's Hall in December dealt with the treatment of disabled soldiers and sailors and the need to retrain them for work. In reality, many of them could never hope to return to any kind of normality.

There was obviously a great hatred for Germany and a feeling that she should 'pay' for the war that she had caused. These feelings can only have been intensified when local soldiers returned home to tell about their experiences as prisoners of war.

'George Forrester, Thomas Lindsay and James Johnston have reached home after having been prisoners of war in Germany. Pte Lindsay suffered badly during his internment and says many of our lads succumbed in Germany. He was forced to work in a coal mine. The hours were long and prisoners were kept in the pit until they had dug a certain quantity of coal each day, irrespective of the state of their health. He is convinced that those who came through the experience will never forget it as long as they live.'

That Germany was suffering there could be no doubt.

'On Tuesday evening a number of soldiers from Lanarkshire who had been prisoners of war in Germany returned home. One of them said when the Armistice was signed the German soldiers left the ranks, regardless of their officers, and made for home. Even those who were guarding the prisoner's camps felt free and many of the prisoners simply boarded trains or set off on foot for Holland. In the part of Germany where he was food was very scarce and many people seemed to be on the brink of starvation. The tea the people got was in reality not tea at all. For tobacco they had some mixture of dried leaves. Germany had a substitute for everything but men. He was a farmer in civil life and was greatly surprised when he reached Scotland and heard what wages farm workers were getting now, but a smile lit up his face when he heard what sheep and bullocks were selling at, and an egg at 7d greatly tickled his sense of humour. When told the price of a bottle of whisky he dryly remarked he would be a teetotaler for the rest of his life.'

Above all, the war had changed the 'old order'.

The Rev Thomas Crichton of Harwood UP Church delivered a sermon on the 'restlessness of the age.'

'The war (he feared) had not lessened the restless roving spirit. The industrial and social unrest that they found in all countries today ... made many hearts quake, and drove many to the belief that the stability of ordered government and civilisation was seriously threatened.'

He could not have realised just how prophetic his words were, with a second European War just over twenty years later!