

# BEHIND THE LINES PREMIERE



SPENNYMOOR TOWN HALL  
21 OCTOBER 2018



## CONSCRIPTION & THE SOMME

The Asquith Government introduced conscription in January 1916, after much opposition. On 3 July 1915, the Spennymoor branch of the Women's Labour League resolved that "under no circumstances has a State the right to demand compulsory military service from its male citizens... The significance of this opposition nationwide led to exemptions being made in the Military Service Act (see poster below). Spennymoor's Local Tribunal first met on Friday 24 March 1916 and considered an application by a Spennymoor teacher of mathematics" (J I Leckie) and more than a dozen other applications. These included a son of an interned German pork butcher given exemption as there was no one else to look after the butcher's shop. The report reads:

A Spennymoor teacher of mathematics, and conscientious objector, said he could not take the military oath, and was of opinion that he could not render higher service than in the continuance of his present employment. He was willing to take ambulance work with the field ambulance of the Society of Friends.

The Chairman: We have no authority to appoint you to any particular work.

He was exempted from combatant service.

In his application to join the Friends Ambulance Unit, John Leckie stated that his reason for applying was to "alleviate suffering caused by the war". He mentioned serving in France and paid for his own training and uniform.

When the final meeting of the local tribunal was held in February 1919, the Chairman (Cly J G Shaw) recorded that it had met 41 times, heard 545 cases, given 27 absolute exemptions and exempted that 236 men passed into the army. Other evidence collected for Duchane at War suggests that five Spennymoor men were conscientious objectors who would not serve in any capacity. They were court martialled and sent to prison or to Home Office work camps.

### MILITARY SERVICE ACT, 1916

Any man who has advanced a claim for exemption from military service under this Act shall be liable to be called up for military service unless he has been granted a certificate of exemption under this Act.

### CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION

Must do no RECORD

THURSDAY, MARCH 2





ATTEST NOW

### THE SOMME

At the start of the battle of the Somme in July 1916, John Leckie joined Ambulance Train 11 based near Rouen. The work included transporting hundreds of allied wounded at a time from Casualty Clearing Stations such as Pocheville to Le Harve for evacuation by ship to hospital in England.

All the same Sister Kate Maxey was working at the No 3 General Hospital at Harve on the coast near Le Harve, receiving daily ambulance trains with hundreds of wounded men.

Robert Hunt and Joseph Willis were stretcher bearers at the front line.

## PATRIOTIC SACRIFICE




On 19 April 1916, a few weeks after the first Military Service Tribunal, a Patriotic Concert was held in Spennymoor's new Town Hall by the local branch of the W. Ladies' Antislavery Association. Council member Henry Copeland, introduced the concert and said "that our lives", C/o Copeland's estimate of those killed by April 1916 is now known to be an underestimate - current research estimates the figure to be 86. However, between April and December 1916 the impact of the war intensified and there were 135 deaths, as the carnage of the Battle of the Somme, which started on 1 July and lasted until the end of the year, was felt locally. The impact of the war was also being felt by the return home of wounded men who were disabled and in financial difficulties.

Only a tiny fraction of those who died were buried in Spennymoor - one of these was Captain Evan Talbot who died in hospital in London and was buried with military honours on Sunday 1 October 1916 at Spennymoor Cemetery after a funeral service at St Paul's Church. Many of Talbot's comrades had no known grave and families waited until after the war to hear that they were remembered on monuments such as Thiepval and the Victoria Memorial. The family of Edmund Frederick Eves, a Tyneside cricketer, wrote to the secretary in that they received detailed information about his death and how to find his grave (see below).

### IN LEAVING SERVICE OF

EVAN DAVID  
CAPTAIN OF THE  
GEORGE & HARRY JANE TRENCH  
OF BOMBAY  
KILLED IN WARREN BATTLE  
AT THE SOMME BATTLE  
SEPTEMBER 1916  
BY GEORGE TRENCH  
OF TYNESIDE

The opening of the new Town Hall, commissioned by the Urban District Council in 1913, was heralded by the Northern Echo with the headline "Spennymoor Advancing" (see above part of the newspaper's front page of 1 July 1913) - reproduced by courtesy of the Northern Echo. On 3 April 1916, the Town Hall was crowded for the first of many presentations to mark heroism in the war. A former Spennymoor territorial, Lance Corporal John James Robinson of the U.S.I. was honoured for awards of the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Cross of St George. There are also many examples in the local newspapers showing portraits of serving soldiers and sailors such as those below.


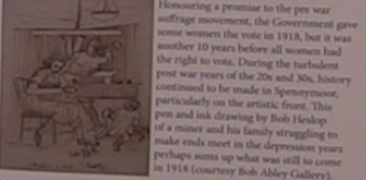





## WOMEN ON THE HOME FRONT

As the war dragged on through 1917 and 1918, it had new impacts on the people in Spennymoor - conscription meant that fewer men were available for work and the U Boat blockade meant that food was rationed (see poster and below). Women were called upon to manage this situation.

Robert: The Blood sisters with their brother, Thomas blood in his Post 1918 uniform.

Honouring a promise to the pre war suffrage movement, the Government gave some women the vote in 1918, but it was another 10 years before all women had the right to vote. During the turbulent post war years of the 20s and 30s, history continued to be made in Spennymoor, particularly on the artistic front. This pen and ink drawing by Bob Heskop of a miner and his family struggling to make ends meet in the depression years perhaps sums up what was still to come in 1918 (courtesy Bob Abbey Gallery).

The people of Tudhoe and Spennymoor who lived through the Great War all have individual stories to tell, their lives were both ordinary and extraordinary, tested by the global conflict that changed everything.


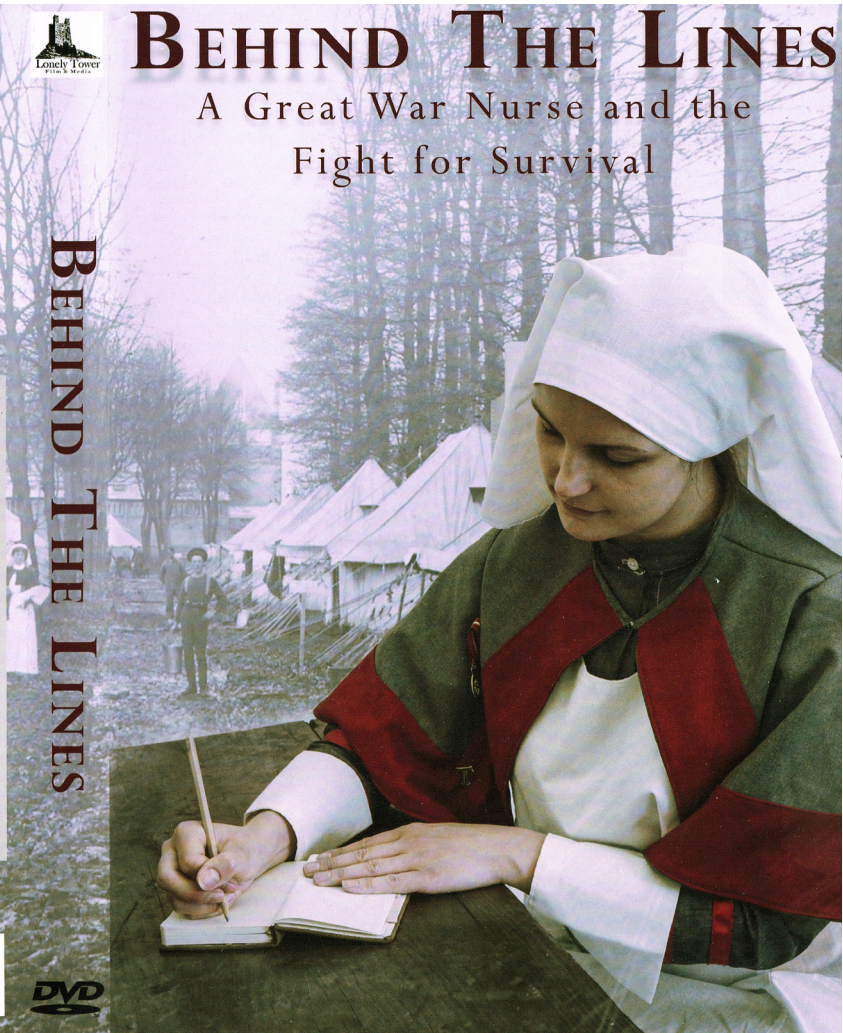
This documentary film tells the story of Sister Kate Maxey, of RAMC medics Joseph Willis and Samuel Bott, and of school teacher John Leckie.

Four individuals who fought to save lives, while the world around them burned.

# BEHIND THE LINES

## A Great War Nurse and the Fight for Survival

BEHIND THE LINES


14 hrs ago

# Town's contribution to war hailed in film

By Flossie Mainwaring-Taylor



Mark Thorburn

HLF North East  
@HLFNorthEast

Follow

Wonderful to attend the screening of Behind the Lines- Tudhoe and Spennymoor Local History Group's film focused on the medical services' contribution during the First World War. Great work by all involved #FWW



12:13 PM - 21 Oct 2018

Lonely Tower Film & Media @LonelyTower · 20h

At Spennymoor Town Hall for the premiere of 'Behind the Lines' ... Very exciting. The full film will be available online soon #FWW #ww1 #Durham #Spennymoor

