



Stockport in the Great War (Your Towns and Cities in the Great War)

Glynis Cooper

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Interest in the theft of cucumbers initially took precedence over news that war had been declared, but Stockport rallied quickly. Wakes week was cancelled, the local 6th Battalion of the Cheshires went to the Front and the town transformed half of its schools into much-needed military hospitals. Admirably, the remaining schools coped with double the number of children but education suffered little.

At the time, Stockport was two towns; the millscapes around the Mersey and the Goyt and the wealthier genteel suburbs bordering the Cheshire countryside. Economy and efficiency in the use of food and fuel was preached in the local paper alongside advertisements for silks, satins, velvets, furs and evening gowns. The cotton and hatting trades, transport and agriculture, suffered badly from loss of resources and manpower but resisted the use of female labour with great hostility. Food, fuel and lighting restrictions caused problems and there were accusations of profiteering and hoarding.

Always in competition with Manchester, Stockport folk did things their way. Following Zeppelin attacks on the east coast, street lights were ordered to be partially shaded. Manchester shaded its lights from the top, while Stockport shaded its lights from the bottom, causing confusion in the darkened streets below and prompting one wit to write that while Manchester was expecting attacks from Zeppelins, Stockport was clearly expecting attacks from submarines. However, despite much political and material disaffection, the townsfolk united firmly against the kaiser. This book is a timely reminder of how the local community worked together to provide munitions for the war, food parcels and comforts for the troops while 'keeping the home fires burning.'

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