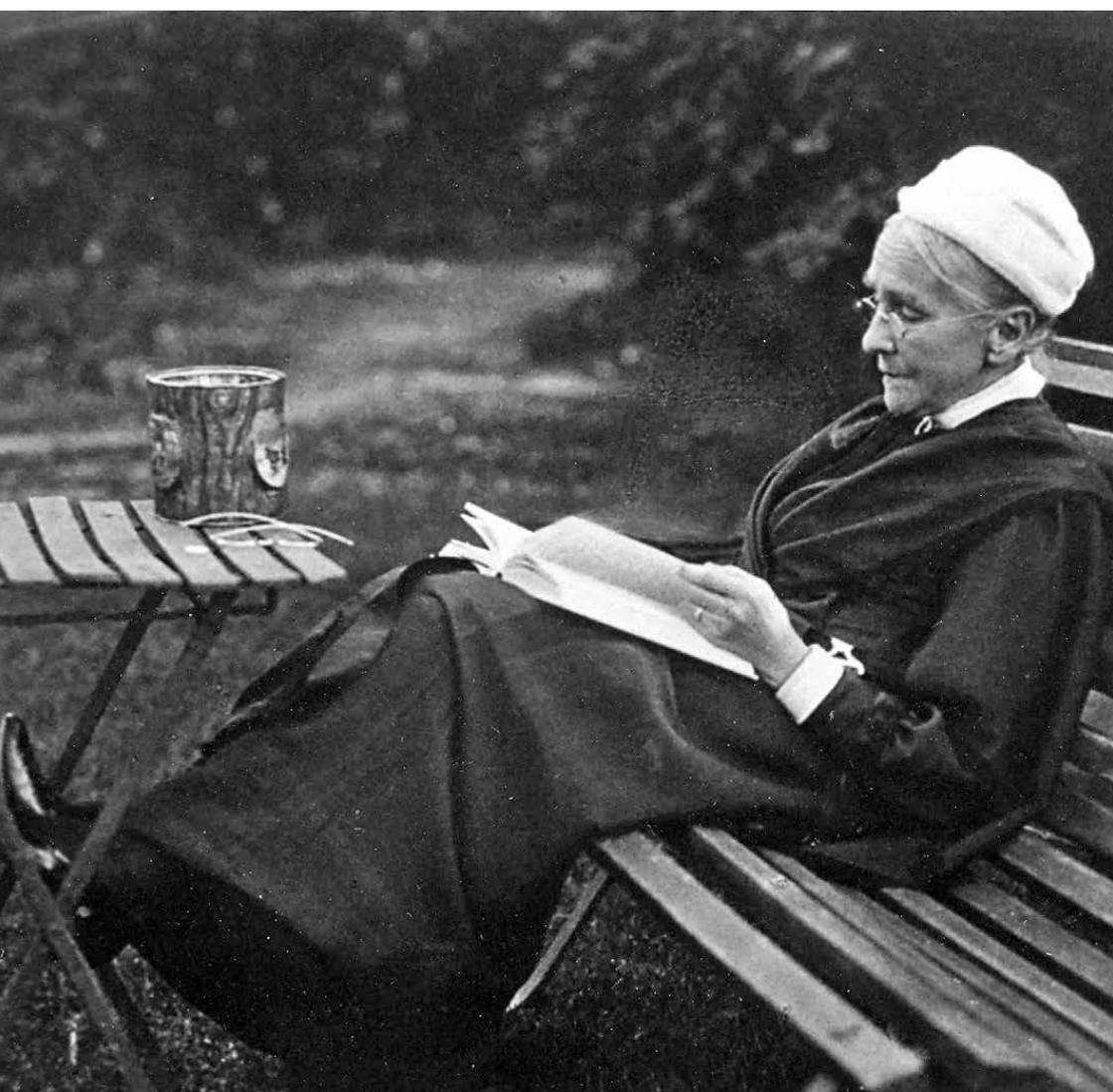


**Agnes Tiarks
War Diaries
1914 to 1918**





Foxbury from the west

This short booklet includes edited contents of the private diaries of Agnes Tiarks (1840-1923). Thanks to Anne Page, who gave me access to the diaries, and to the Chislehurst Society Ribbons Collection for the images on pages 9, 10, and 12. Other images are from the Tiarks family collection.

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May 2015*

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Introduction

Agnes Tiarks was 74 years old when war was declared in August 1914. Her husband had died three years before, and had left her a life interest in Foxbury, the large house in Kemnal Road, Chislehurst, Kent, which had been built for her family in 1877. Three of her ten surviving children still lived with her at Foxbury. She had 20 indoor servants and roughly the same number of 'outside' servants, looking after the extensive grounds, covering 57 acres, which were given over to a mixture of pleasure gardens, farmland, and rough countryside for shooting.

Her husband had left Agnes well provided for, she was in reasonable good health, and had regular visits from most of her very wide family. As late at June 1914, there appeared to be little to trouble her privileged life style.

However, she had more reason than most to be fearful as the war threat grew. Her fortune was based entirely on her husband's income earned as a partner in J.H. Schröder & Co, a London based Merchant Bank, which had extensive business connections with Germany. Her eldest son, Frank, was now a partner in that firm, and he and she had a network of family relationships with German nationals.

Agnes had kept a daily diary ever since 1860, and she maintained this throughout the war years. Her diary entries can be extremely brief, even cryptic and difficult to understand, but they have an immediacy that is attractive, with plenty of occasional nonsense and fun. She was also notoriously absent-minded; her obituary explained: "her left hand knew not what her right hand did"!

Despite these reservations, I have used her diary entries to piece together a glimpse into the domestic lives of Agnes and her family at Foxbury during the Great War. I have not attempted to correlate these entries with official or independent accounts of these events, nor to expand into details that are not referred to in her diary.



Agnes Tiarks

The outbreak of war

On 29 June 1914, Agnes wrote in her diary “*The assassination of Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand and his Wife*”, but along with most in England, she probably didn’t think much more of it. It wasn’t until 30 July, after her son Frank had come home from the City, that she first expressed “*war anxieties*”. Only three days later, on Sunday 2 August her diary entry was “*Germany declares war*” and that she “*felt bewildered – went early to bed*”. And then on 5 August: “*England declares war on Germany*”.

Agnes read *The Times* every day, and with Frank working in the City, a Director of the Bank of England, she was kept up to date with all the latest news. For the next few months, she makes almost daily reference to the war news and speculation: 1 September 1914 “*Indian Troops arrived in France*”; 7 September “*Germans neglecting Paris*”; 29 November “*News from Russia promises great things...*”. But the news become worse, and her references to specific war news steadily dropped off.

The appalling events in the Dardanelles in May 1915 were among the last regular reference she commits to her diaries, with comments of British Prisoners being massacred (20 May), and the loss of HMS Triumph and HMS Majestic (26 and 28 May). Perhaps by that time Agnes, like many others, was becoming inured to the bad news, and was just getting on with her busy life. Or perhaps it was simply too depressing to keep on reporting bad news?

Occasionally over the next four years she did report major events; the news that stunned most of England on 6 June 1916: “*Lord Kitchener and his staff lost off the Orkneys in the cruiser Hampshire – can it be true?*”, and on 4 April 1917, that “*America joins in against Germany*” – then “*American Troops arrived in France*” in late June. But the Somme offensive gets no mention, and there is little reference to the outcomes of important and deadly battles such as Vimy Ridge or Passchendale.

Only when the tide turned in the allies favour in 1918 did Agnes once again start to report on war events.

First things first!

Her son Frank was in partnership with Baron Bruno Schröder, a German national, in the firm of J.H. Schröder & Co. On the declaration of war the Baron was liable to be arrested and his assets confiscated. Schröders was one



Frank Tiarks

of the largest City merchants (later called merchant banks), and this would have had a significant impact on the City, which was already reeling from the collapse of international liquidity. It would also of course have been ruinous for Frank Tiarks. Within days, Frank, acting with the Bank of England, and the Government, had obtained both naturalisation for the Baron, and protection of the partnership assets.

Not everyone thought this was a good thing, and Schröders, both the firm and the family, became the target of criticism in newspapers, with questions in Parliament. It also resulted in discrimination against the firm, which effectively became dormant for the next four years.

Agnes may not have understood all the implications of these events, but enough to make comment on them in her diary: 4 November 1914 "*Frank's attack by the Evening News*", and 28 November "*The name of Schröder – Lloyd George*", when he defended the naturalisation decision in Parliament.

Bruno was not as contrite as he perhaps should have been in some of his conversations with Agnes: 16 November "*Bruno hopelessly showing his sympathies [towards Germany]*".

More alarmingly, as Frank became more concerned that Schröders would be permanently shunned in the City, Agnes writes of "*talk of the liquidation of the firm*", and "*the future becomes serious*", just after the national outrage at the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915. And in October that year she asks: "*The good old firm done for by the war – how about the future?*".

Foxbury – war economy

But just because Frank had managed to save the firm, at least for the time being, this did not mean that things could go on at Foxbury unchanged. Within days of the declaration of war, Agnes records that “*Frank on telephone advising strict economy*”. The head gardener, John Lyne, was “*quite eloquent and willing*” about further economy measures in June 1915, and on 22 July, Agnes wrote that she had prepared “*plans for reducing show of silver*”. Was it regarded as socially unacceptable to display wealth at a time when many were suffering hardship, or was she worried about an increase in burglaries?

Henry Tiarks had introduced some elements of farming at Foxbury after he had retired from the City, but now, in the midst of war, even more of the estate was given over to growing food. All the fields were “*treated with basic slag – chicken runs ploughed on*” in February 1915. In July, Agnes noted “*plain signs of war economy on our land – cabbages, potatoes, turnips, instead of flowers*”, and loam was brought in from New Eltham that month as the tennis lawn was dug up, with more “*manure from Woolwich*” arriving in August 1916. Frank now made regular visits to oversee the running of the farm activities, and Agnes herself often went: “*in my pony chair to poultry and pigs and new calf*” (November 1915). They produced their own milk and eggs: 36 eggs reported on 18 December, with 10 chickens in a new incubator in February 1916.

Because of shortage of staff, as men left to fight in France, Agnes’ daughters did some of the work: 20 January 1916 “*Aggie chain harrowing Homefield with pony and Peter Pugh*”. Drainage had to be seen to in April 1916, and a new pedigree bull was purchased in May that year, while Aggie continued to work on the land “*Mowing with pony machine*” in July 1917. Further animals – heifers pigs and sheep – were purchased. Some were moved on “*Sold our 19 sheep*”, 19 February 1918, and some were slaughtered for food “*Own Sheep killed*”, 28 June 1917.

Surplus produce was sold: “*potatoes ready for market*” on 21 January 1916, though the sums were not huge: “*Aggie to Bank and took my £1.15s.8d – farm produce*”, November 1916. But a few months later, in May 1917, “*Lettuces were sold for £8.13s*” – a much larger amount. But costs were high too. In February 1915, Agnes had to pay nine of her men 1 shilling a week extra for the duration of the war, and on 6 July 1917 an “*enormous*” bill for £353 was received from Wilkins in the High Street for “*Farm Food*”. Slowly but



*A prize bull at
Foxbury Farm*

surely, farming became a normal part of Foxbury activity, as Agnes' entry of 8 March 1918 implies: "*Another litter of Rabbits. Nellie took my cheque to bank – £44.7s.6d – cow and calf – her buying our little pigs*".

The farm was required to maintain records, particular in respect of milk production, and it is clear that this was a worry to Agnes. Indeed, for the first time, Foxbury was now subject to inspection by Government officials. An Urban Council Surveyor had turned up to look over Foxbury in November 1915, and Inspector Hoare arrived at Foxbury on Easter Monday 1916 about the outside "*lights and striking clocks*" – obviously to be turned off so as not to help the enemy. Further restrictions were introduced in 1917, requiring even more paperwork "*land papers to fill out*" on 23 January, and as rationing was introduced in late 1917, all staff had to have "*Food Control Duties*" read out to them. The Food Inspector, Mr Boothman, came to inspect everything in January 1918, and Mr Thomas, from the Zion College, came in April to "*look through my books*".

The rationing rules "*bewilder me day and night*", Agnes wrote in March 1917, but by 11 April, she noted that "*rations were more reasonable*". Nevertheless, one can almost feel Agnes' anguish as she writes in January 1918 that "*Frank came and we talked of our hoarded tea and sugar – have sent 30lbs brown and 20lb white to the Cottage Hospital. Our tea must be reduced*".

With restrictions introduced on the consumption of bread, sugar, meat and milk, it is not surprising that Agnes records with relief in March 1918 that "*skim milk to be more plentiful*". For the first time in her adult life, however, Agnes was now having to worry about the availability of supplies:

on 3 November 1917 she wrote: “*milk scarce – butter more so – tired head*”. In August she noted that: “*Cheese was to be rationed and weighed out*”. “*Fish days*” were introduced in March 1918, and Agnes and her daughter “*went to make sure of some bacon*” at Bromley market at the end of February.

There were also restrictions on fuel. In October 1917, Agnes wrote of “*plans to burn less coal*”, and on 15 July 1918, “*Cockerell’s man, Powell, came about future coal, gas and electricity rations*”. A month later, Powell was back, “*helping and advising for two hours*” regarding “*Our forms to fill in for heating and lighting*”, which daughter Aggie had to complete by the end of August.

War comes to Chislehurst

Within days of the outbreak of war, Frank sent his “*two horses to Aldershot*” to be used for the war effort. The army was already in Chislehurst; Agnes “*Saw artillery on the Common*” as early as 17 August 1914, and regularly afterwards. The army was looking for properties for its use, and Frank offered them the use of the grounds of his burnt-out house in Kemnal Road. “*Lt-Col Taylor asked to look at Woodheath Grounds*” in December 1914. A year later, Agnes wrote of “*An anti-aircraft gun on the cricket ground*”.

Apart from this, the threat of hostilities did not come near to Chislehurst until quite late. Agnes reported news of the German bombing of coastal towns – Hartlepool, Whitby and Scarborough – in December 1914, and raids over Yarmouth and Cromer in early 1915. The Cromer raid was particularly worrying for Agnes, as some of her grandchildren had been sent there for



Horses being collected in Chislehurst, 1914.

safety by her daughter Mathilda.

Agnes, probably alongside everyone else, was fearfully fascinated by the Zeppelins, now being used by Germany to bomb mainland Britain. When they were reported to be bombarding Southend in May 1915, and in particular when she “*heard about Zeppelins about London at last and at Brentwood*”, it was clear that the war was coming closer and closer to home. The first major attack she witnessed was on 13 October 1915: “*Saw and heard Zeppelin attack 9.30. Again at midnight – all but I on terrace. They saw the Zeppelins – I stayed in bed. Damage to London not half told – 20 deaths*”. This was when anti-aircraft guns were first positioned in and around Chislehurst.

There appears to have been a lull in attacks, until August 1916, when there were “*Zeppelins...near the mouth of Thames*”. At 1.30am on 25 August the Zeppelins returned, “*I slept through all the noise. Aggie heard all but would not disturb me. Nelly and the maids saw and heard it all. They were over Lewisham*”. The threat was now enough to call for defensive measures, and on 27 August, Agnes referred to “*Preparations in cellar for our shelter in there if necessary*”. However, the Zeppelin threat was short lived – they were proving easy to shoot down: “*One more Zeppelin down in flames at midnight*”, 2 October 1916.

Not so the newly emerging aeroplanes, which were being deployed by Germany over England from June 1917: “*We heard the air raid over London – in our peaceful garden. Bombs dropped in the City, great damage, many killed and*



*Ambulances
queuing
on the High
Street*

injured". In July, "*Big air raid at 11pm – great noise*", and then by September 1917 they became a regular event: 24 September, "*Air raid over London – 8pm to 9.45. Firing noise terrific though not close here. All of us and nurse down in the cellars...*". On 25 September, "*Another raid began at 7.30pm. Servants in the cellars for a short time*". The Foxbury cellars were solid and secure, and family members travelled to use them. Daughter Nellie and her husband often came during night raids.

The raids became less frequent after the intensity of September, but were still occasionally, and poetically, reported by Agnes: 6 December 1917, "*Raid, 4.45am for one hour. Woke Aggie, children and Sophie. Searchlights, moon and stars, and a lovely silence after raid*".

A "*great noise of explosion*" in the early morning of 13 February 1918 was at first thought to be another raid, but this was the explosion at the Rainham explosives factory. This completely destroyed the factory, which was producing TNT for war use.

The last raid mentioned by Agnes was on the night of Whit Sunday, from 11pm for two hours. The next day, 20 May 1918, Agnes wrote of the "*bomb hole on the common – many windows smashed*".

Helping the wounded

Chislehurst came face to face with the horrors of the war when Red Cross ambulances started to arrive here bringing wounded soldiers. On 5 October 1914, Agnes first recorded the arrival of the ambulances. On 14 October, her daughter Sophie was "*summoned at midnight to prepare for wounded. She and others scrubbing Holbrook House. They arrived at 10am.*" On 16 October "*More wounded coming to Hornbrook House*", and at 3am on 17 October "*Wounded arrived 3am Hornbrook House. Sophie at work all day with the wounded. Self to Holbrook Hospital in chair at 12*". On 25 October, she was "*all day with the Belgians*" and on 27 October Sophie got home at 11pm and was back on duty again at 6.30am. Sophie appears to have thrown herself into the role energetically. She was allowed a day off on her 35th birthday on 10 March 1915, but from 31 March was on night duty for a month.

Sophie's work with the Red Cross continued throughout the war, both as a volunteer in the hospitals, but also increasingly as a supervisor. She was involved in a court-martial in May 1918 at one of the hospitals, and was eventually appointed "*Commandant at the Gorse*" on 30 September 1918,

which was celebrated at a dinner at the Bull's Head Hotel on 3 October. The Gorse was a large house in Manor Park Road given over as a VAD hospital. It was obviously going through a refit during October, and Agnes was pleased to go on 31 October 1918: "*To Gorse Hospital with Sophie – so bright and well-prepared for re-opening tomorrow*".

Sophie was not the only daughter who worked with the wounded soldiers. Her sister Aggie got involved from time to time in the hospitals, but more often was involved in inviting soldiers to Foxbury and elsewhere as they recovered from their wounds: April 1915 "*Aggie walked with the soldiers*"; 15 May "*Aggie and 7 soldiers – the Rector to tea*"; 14 June "*Aggie walked with the wounded*"; 5 July "*Aggie fetched soldiers to the hay field – three who could not walk – tea and strawberries*". And so it went on, with blackberrying, tea in the dining room, and soldiers to see the wedding presents laid out at Foxbury when Nellie was to be married. Aggie and Sophie even took four car-loads of soldiers to the pantomime in February 1916.

It appears that Aggie may have formed an attachment to one of the soldiers, but it came to nothing and in September 1917 Agnes writes that "*All our thoughts on Agnes's disappointment*". After that Aggie appears to have withdrawn from her war work, and devoted herself to running Foxbury, with her mother handing over the house keys to her at the same time.

Frank goes to war

We have seen how Frank was caught up in the City in the first few weeks and months of the war. He continued to be involved in City and financial



*Injured soldiers
at Holbrook
Hospital.*

issues throughout the war, making a tour of the Bank's branch offices in May 1915, and holding talks with other Directors at Foxbury: "*Frank and Mr M Norman at 3 – a grave and yet humorous visitor*". The family was happy to entertain Montague Norman, the future Governor of the Bank "*Emmy, Nelly and Aggie and Mr Norman walk to the drill of new recruits*", 10 July 1915.

And yet Frank was keen to do as much as he could for the war effort; he was after all only 40 at the start of war. As soon as he felt his City responsibilities were settling down, he turned his attention to more local matters. On 10 November 1914 he attended a Rifle Corps Meeting at Chislehurst Golf Club, and on 16 November he was at a meeting about setting up a Veterans Corps in Chislehurst. On 24 November Frank was addressing a meeting at St Mary's Hall on the formation of the Volunteer Training Corps, and the first drill meeting was held a week later. Frank was appointed Sergeant, and he set about a regular programme of drill and exercise. He also started drilling the outside male staff at Foxbury, starting at 7am on 28 December: "*Saw Frank drilling the gardeners*", wrote Agnes, and again the following day.

The VTC was a forerunner of the Second World War Dad's Army, generally older men or those in reserved occupations, but in the early days of the war, it was also a chance for young men, not yet called up, to develop their soldiering skills. Throughout 1915, Frank was involved in drilling his men whenever and wherever they could. They had rifle practice at the Working Men's Club in Bull Lane, and longer, more strenuous, marches and other exercises in and around north Kent: 16 May 1915, "*Frank 6 mile march with Rifle Vol Corps*"; 20 June, "*Frank's VTC and other platoons signal from roof to Foxbury Hill fields*"; 2 July, "*Frank motored to measure march for men*".

Many of the men joined up or were called up, and on 9 July 1915, Frank "*presided at soldiers' farewell supper at St Mary Hall*"; a number of those would never return home.

Frank was keen to do more. He had been a midshipman in the Royal Navy before he resigned his commission to join his father in the City. When he was approached by the Admiralty in May 1917 to work for them, he didn't hesitate: "*Frank will once more be in the Navy (Admiralty Work)*", wrote Agnes on 15 May. She probably had little idea what work Frank was doing, but she comments on his "*Lovely naval uniform*" on 31 May, and was concerned on 6 September that "*Frank was very tired. Night and day in Admiralty*", and expressed her hope that "*Frank is safe and resting tonight*" during an air raid

on London on 30 September.

In fact Frank had been recruited into Naval Intelligence, working in the famous Room 40, led by Admiral Sir Reginald Hall, who paid a visit to Foxbury in June 1918: "*Frank came with Adml Hall between 3 and 4*". If his work on tracking enemy submarines is not recorded in Agnes' diary, his other two war jobs (actually post-war) receive even less attention from his mother. Frank was present at the formal surrender of the German fleet at Rosyth in November 1918: "*Frank joined Michael as interpreter for time of ship surrender*" is all Agnes says. Michael Hodges was the naval commander charged with accepting the surrender of the German Fleet. He and Frank had been midshipmen together in the 1880s and formed a lifelong friendship (Hodges had married Frank's youngest sister, and so was his brother-in-law as well); there was no question but that Hodges would ask for Frank to be his interpreter at this historic event.

The second post war role required Frank to spend six months in Cologne. Agnes notes that Frank had to travel there, but did not say, and may not have known, that Frank had been appointed Civil Commissioner advising the British Army of Occupation on the financial aspects of feeding a starving German population.



Lovely Naval Uniform; Frank at home.

For King and Country

Agnes had a complicated and extended family. With ten surviving children, more than twenty grandchildren and dozens of nephews and nieces, one might think she should have had more family members involved directly in the war than most. The great surprise is that she refers to so few of them; even fewer were casualties of the war, and none were killed.

Grandson Henry Booker called "*in uniform, going to France tomorrow*" on 28 Feb 1915. Another grandson, Ralph Lubbock, Margaret's son, followed a week later. Ralph was quickly "*gazetted 1st Lieut*" on 28 August, and in January 1918 he "*won the Military Cross*". Ralph's younger brother, Mark, joined the Canadian medical corps in April 1917, and two nephews, Victor Tiarks and Phipps Tiarks joined the Flying Corps.

Percy (Puck) Hare was Agnes' son-in-law. It is not clear how the 46 year-old was involved in the war, but Agnes refers to Puck being on active service in Egypt during 1916, while in 1917 he was involved in training new recruits to the army. He was "*weary of training recruits*" he told Agnes on 30 July 1917, but was sent on a number of different UK postings, including Blackpool and Bracknell. He was finally sent abroad, to Salonika, in April 1918.

Michael Hodges, already mentioned, another son-in-law, was the best-known member of the armed forces in the family. At the outbreak of war he was Naval Attaché in Paris, where he stayed until November 1915. He was then sent to Salonika, present day Thessalonika, to support the advances in Mesopotamia. In March 1916 he was "*away on HMS Monarch*", and on 14 August he was appointed "*to the Indomitable*". Finally on 24 March 1918 "*Michael Commodore on flagship 'Revenge'*", a position that put him at the heart of the naval war in the North Sea, and the surrender of the German Fleet in November.

Agnes' daughter-in-law, Jessie Follett (Herman's wife), had a brother, Francis, who was an early casualty in November 1914: "*in a London Hospital – shoulder wound*", but he quickly recovered and went back to survive the war. His cousin John Follett was not so lucky, "*shot through the heart*", as Agnes reports in October 1918.

Two of Agnes' daughters, Margaret and Edith, had married Lubbock brothers – Hugh and Arthur, sons of Sir Nevile Lubbock, who himself was the younger brother of Sir John Lubbock, later Lord Avebury. Another Lubbock brother, Ernest, was killed in December 1917, and Agnes was contacted first:

“News from Colonial Office – Ernie Lubbock missing – ship torpedoed. The Colonial Company wired me for address details of Ernie’s relations.”

A number of Foxbury staff enlisted, although Agnes doesn’t mention them all. Jarrett was the first to leave on 13 February 1915, with Creamer enlisting in the 1st Suffolk regiment in March, and Thompson in December. Frank assisted another servant, Harold Clark, at the Bromley recruiting office on 11 March, and Harold joined the Royal Navy before going abroad on 13 September. Harold was a favourite of Agnes, a young boy of only 17 who had worked at Foxbury since leaving school. She recorded his death in action in her diary entry of 21 February 1917.

James Driscoll was another servant who died – recorded on 17 August 1915 – and news of the death of John Forrest reached Agnes on 6 October that year (he is not recorded on the Chislehurst War Memorial).

Agnes knew many of the young men of Chislehurst who died. On 21 June 1915, she *“heard of three young men killed in action – Hugh Tindall, Powell, and Oscar Senhouse”*. The most tragic entries relate to the two sons of her friend and doctor, Mr Lawson. His younger son, Cecil, was killed in action on 3 October 1915. A month later, his elder brother Rex went back to France, and was awarded the Military Cross, but in 27 August 1916 Agnes reports *“Rex Lawson – killed”*. Mr Lawson was a regular visitor to the house afterwards. Agnes also took care to visit the mothers of others wounded or killed. She heard that a friend’s son, John Cooper, was wounded on 15 November 1916, and went round to see his mother a few days later.

The Servant situation

The biggest problem for Agnes, with the most mentions in her diary as the war progressed, was the servant situation. Many servants left Foxbury to fight or to work in the munitions factories and elsewhere, and it became increasingly difficult to maintain a full household of staff. Even George Dovey, Frank’s manservant, left temporarily to work in the munitions in March 1916.

Staff had been leaving since the beginning of the war, but by 1917, staff were all too aware of the range of opportunities outside domestic service, and a trickle had turned into a flood. Jean Batchelor gave notice on 13 February, *“leaving for war work”*, with five maids giving notice three days later. Agnes and her daughter sought to replace them, but found they were getting replies

from “*odd men and maids*”. She couldn’t find a scullery maid at all, and Louisa Hall, the “*new under housemaid*”, left a few weeks after starting because she was homesick, while Gertrude, the new laundry maid, gave notice on 2 May 1917. A new cook was engaged on 17 May, bringing her own kitchen maid. A new nurse, Mrs Giles, accepted a place on 21 August, and Bucklow, a new laundry maid, started on 4 September, but they were not good enough, and had to be replaced. On 17 October three maids left, and on 24th, Selina announced she was “*leaving at four days notice to be a bus conductor*”.

It was particularly difficult to get a replacement for her Hall boy. On 29 October 1917, in the middle of “*laundry difficulties*”, she had to take a “*small new boy – Edward Thompson – on trial*”, but he got lost in a snow storm at Biggin Hill in December, and never came back. At the end of February 1918 she reported that “*we engaged Edward Phillips to come... Very small, but there are so few boys*”.

The laundry staff caused Agnes “*headaches*” after Gertrude’s “*washing disaster (yellow woollens)*”. It was getting too much, and Agnes admitted that she now had to hire people “*carelessly as to references*”. She was losing her touch, and her temper, and after a row on 27 June, when three of her kitchen staff resigned, she wrote “*Shall I ever settle my kitchen again?*”

Meanwhile she had to take care to retain her loyal German servants, including Emma Calsen, now her housekeeper, and Marie Buls. They had to



An earlier photograph of some of Foxbury staff

be taken annually to the police station at Blackheath to renew their special permits to remain in work at Foxbury.

Agnes keeps it together

While all this was going on, Agnes was keen that family life should continue. She loved having her grandchildren around her, and was happy to put them up at Foxbury whenever she could. Mathilda's children were rescued from Cromer after that town was bombed in January 1915, and Rika's children came to stay when she was hunting for a house while her husband Michael Hodges returned from France.

Agnes expressed her concerns about Margaret, her eldest daughter. Her husband and two sons were away at war, and Margaret found it difficult living in their large house, Gorringe, with just her daughter Mary: 17 December "*Margaret and Mary returned to their sad home*". Margaret became depressed and morose, and it was a relief to Agnes (it shows how much the war had changed expectations) when Margaret got herself a job in a munitions factory in London in April 1918 "*Margaret for one night – succeeded about employment*".

When Agnes' son Herman became seriously ill with pleurisy in August about her concerns whenever Frank or Sophie were ill. She also grieved when her "*poor old friend and head gardener, John Lyne, died...He came to us from Mr Schlüsser in September 1890...with old Baron Schröder at the Dell about 1862*".

Her sense of humour did not desert her, and she took reported such things as the activities of mice in the house, and on 23 August 1916: "*A bat in Frank's bedroom disturbed him, and me, and Aggie – an accident in one's life!*"

She also did what she could do for the war effort. In her seventies Agnes was not able to volunteer at the hospitals, but she was able to sew sandbags! Mrs Edlmann came to visit Foxbury on 14 April 1915 "*about sand bags*". On 5 May Agnes "*made two sandbags with Aggie's guidance*". "*Emmy's sandbags*" are referred to a few days later, and on 15 June Agnes went "*to Sidcup for sandbags*". On 16 July she reports "*Sandbag sewing early*", and so it went on. The image of Agnes and her friends sewing sandbags each day is a surprising one, but reassuring that everyone was doing what they could to help!

Peace at last

In early August 1918 Agnes started to make entries again about the progress of war. It all seemed to come right suddenly: “*War news good*” is a theme throughout the month. She notes the “*German big retreat*” on 3 October, and finally on 12 October that “*Germany accepts our terms and asks for Armistice*”.

On 11 November “*Edith telephoned at 10. Armistice signed – fighting to cease at 11. Aggie and I on the [Royal] Parade heard the maroons. Aggie and the children put up the flags, and England [the gardener] the flagstaff. Margaret brought description of joyful excitement in London.*”

With a reference to the Victory Ball at the Albert Hall on 27 November, and a final visit from the fuel controller on 29 November, the war was over, and was not referred to in her diary again.



It's all over - Agnes relaxing in the grounds of The Foxearth with daughter Aggie, and two grandchildren

