

Life in Marlow

Spring of 1917

What life was like

We are researching what life was like on the 'Home Front' in Marlow 100 years ago. Here are some of the events in the town in the Spring of 1917.

Bad weather in April

The weather in Britain in early 1917 was particularly poor and there was no improvement in April, with heavy snow, high winds and low temperatures all being experienced in Marlow. The Sports Day at Borlase School that was planned for early April was postponed for a month.

The price of potatoes

By 1917, the country was beginning to experience food shortages as a result of German submarine attacks on shipping convoys and insufficient production at home. Maximum prices were introduced for some foodstuffs such as potatoes to limit the risk of people going hungry. But not everyone followed the regulations and in April, the Marlow Petty Sessions fined John Bryant, of Queens Road, £1 for selling potatoes above the maximum prices.

Cases of stealing food

The local newspaper reported a number of cases of people stealing food. In May, two women from Dean Street were each fined £1 for stealing vegetables valued at 10s from the property of William Chappell in Marlow Bottom. A month later, three boys were found guilty of stealing 10lbs. of bread from the temporary Army mess room at Spinfield.

Troops in Marlow

A detachment of the East Anglian Royal Engineers was billeted in the town. They played hockey matches against the local Marlow Casuals, a mixed team consisting of women and cadets. They also organised a local sports day on Borlase sports ground, ending in a promenade concert in the evenings.



The Royal Engineers Drivers' football team, stationed in Marlow during the War



Dean Street, Marlow, shortly before the First World War.



Boating on the river was a popular activity before the War. This is a photo of the Fisherman's and Waterman's Regatta from 1913.

Sunday 13 May saw the start of the 'river season'. The 11.45am fast train from Paddington to Maidenhead and Marlow was almost filled with 'boating folk'. Despite pressure to limit the domestic consumption of petrol, Marlow was full of cars and taxis, with many of the men home on leave from the front.