

CARDALL'S CORNER

November 2015

Keep the Home Fires Burning

By Val Brodie



Southam Heritage Collection's next exhibition, opening January 5th 2016, will take its title from the World War One song composed in 1914 by Ivor Novello:

*Keep the home fires burning,
While your hearts are yearning,
Though your lads are far way
They dream of home.*

We are hoping to capture the emptiness of separation, and their hopes of a safe return and to try to recreate a touch of their memories of home. There will be kettles, irons, crockery, children's clothes, christening gowns, shawls and ladies combinations (!)...and more. We need to borrow some dolly pegs for the washing line (have you got some tucked away?) and other 'bits and bobs' to recreate home in 1915/16 – can you help?

It will be a great chance to display things from the collection, and items of clothing that have been generously donated in the recent past. Have you got anything that might be loaned to the exhibition? We need hats, bags, shoes, a few coins...anything that a household might have.

We have pictures of children taken in large groups outside their schools, but otherwise what was life like for them in the dark days of the war? Toys, dolls, books and games have rarely survived. If you have anything that belonged to a child at this time we would love to see it to photograph, or to borrow for display.

We continue to amass our collection of family stories from Southam and surrounding villages for the *Southam WWI Centenary Archive* and will be using some of the amazing photographs that have come to light. Portraits of young recruits taken before they set off for action, photographs of troop ships, pictures of suited divers wearing incredibly heavy helmets, postcards of vast encampments, and fragile letters and cards that the men sent home. We shall be telling their stories – many harrowing, some tragic, others of desperate survival.

At home, folk raised funds for the troops. Miss Irwin collected 3,000 eggs a week for the national egg collection, whilst concerts and plays were put on in the town and area. We have been scouring the local papers in the Warwickshire County Record Office for details of public life in the town and nearby villages.

The Collection now has a lockable display facility (provided with funds from Southam Town Council) where pieces of value can be on show - items such as medals, letters, trench art and death pennies are things descendants are willing to loan if they know they are secure. We were very fortunate in having such treasures on display last winter and we hope to extend that display – please get in touch if you would like to share your family memorabilia.

So, if you think you have anything which could be part of the exhibition, ring for a chat 01926 812179, drop in and see us any Tuesday morning 10.0-12.0 at Vivian House, Market Hill where the exhibition team, Chrissie, Val and Chris will be waiting to meet you.

For more information email cardallcollection@hotmail.co.uk, find us on Facebook: Southam Heritage Collection or visit our website www.southamheritage.org

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Keep the Home-Fires Burning
(Till the Boys Come Home)
words by Jean Nuyelle - music by Lotta Garland Ford