



## THE GIRLS WHO MADE GRENADES

### *The Warmley Grenadiers*

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This is Warmley High Street about 100 years ago near where it now joins with Stanley Road.

Just behind these houses was a small factory called 'Crane's Fireworks' where the workers played an important part in the Great War.

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**Contractors for the Firework Display for  
the Oddfellows' Bristol A.M.C., 1896.**

Fireworks, Coloured Lamps, and Chinese Lanterns always on sale at the above address. All kinds of Amusements, Artistes, and talent of every description provided at the lowest possible prices.

**Works: WARMLEY, BRISTOL.**

This is an old newspaper advertisement for the Crane's Firework Factory in Warmley. Look at what they made.

When war broke out in 1914 a fireworks factory was an obvious place to turn into a munitions factory

It already had a work force used to dealing with dangerous materials and suitable buildings. They just needed to make it bigger and employ more workers.



# ON HER THEIR LIVES DEPEND



Girls were not allowed to fight at the front. They could find work at home that was really valuable if they wanted to make a worthwhile contribution towards the the war effort.

Young girls were highly sought after by munitions factories as they were said to be quick and have nimble fingers for the work.

Before the war many young girls were in low paid work, maybe as house maids or shop girls.

As munitions workers they would work better hours and earn much more money because it was dangerous work.



Before the war, it was traditional for women to stay at home, especially once they were married and had a husband and family to look after.

These girls were part of a new trend of working women. Whilst the men were away at war they were discovering a new independence.

The factory workers posing for the camera above, are mostly young women. There are a few men over 40 years. Some of these men may have been no longer fit enough to fight but could still work.



As they came into the workplace the girls changed into their work clothes.

They wore a thick fireproof grey overall with a hat or bonnet to tuck their hair into and wooden clogs with rubber soles when working

They would be inspected everyday.

They were not allowed to wear anything metal, not a hook or a hairpin, in case of sparks that might cause an explosion.



The girls enjoyed sport in their spare time, forming a Tug-of War team they called themselves the *Warmley Grenadiers*.

They had great fun playing against other girl's factory teams.

Look at their team kit, long dark skirts and white shirts, with dark bows and stout boots.





This is the girls in action at an event playing the girls from the nearby Douglas motor bike factory.

It was a popular event with many spectators in the stands and on the field, all dressed up for the occasion. Women's sports like this, along with football and hockey were very popular at this time, part of the new found independence of women.





Image: ©IWM

The huts the girls worked in were made of corrugated iron where they would freeze in winter and bake in summer.

When the girls were packing the boxes with the grenades. They would often put in a little note, to cheer up the soldiers at the front.

These were commonly known as a 'Billy Do' from the French 'Billet Doux' literally translated means 'sweet letter' or love letter.

When the rustic leaves are falling  
And your mind from care is free,  
While of athen's you are thinking,  
Will you sometimes, think of me.

Yours M. Hill  
April 15<sup>th</sup> 18

York Street  
Downend

Errors like straw upon the  
surface flow;  
He who would search for pearls  
must dive below;

Yours  
M. Hill

Down on the shore there lies a rock  
And on it is written for-get-me-not  
D. J. Jones.  
16-1-40.

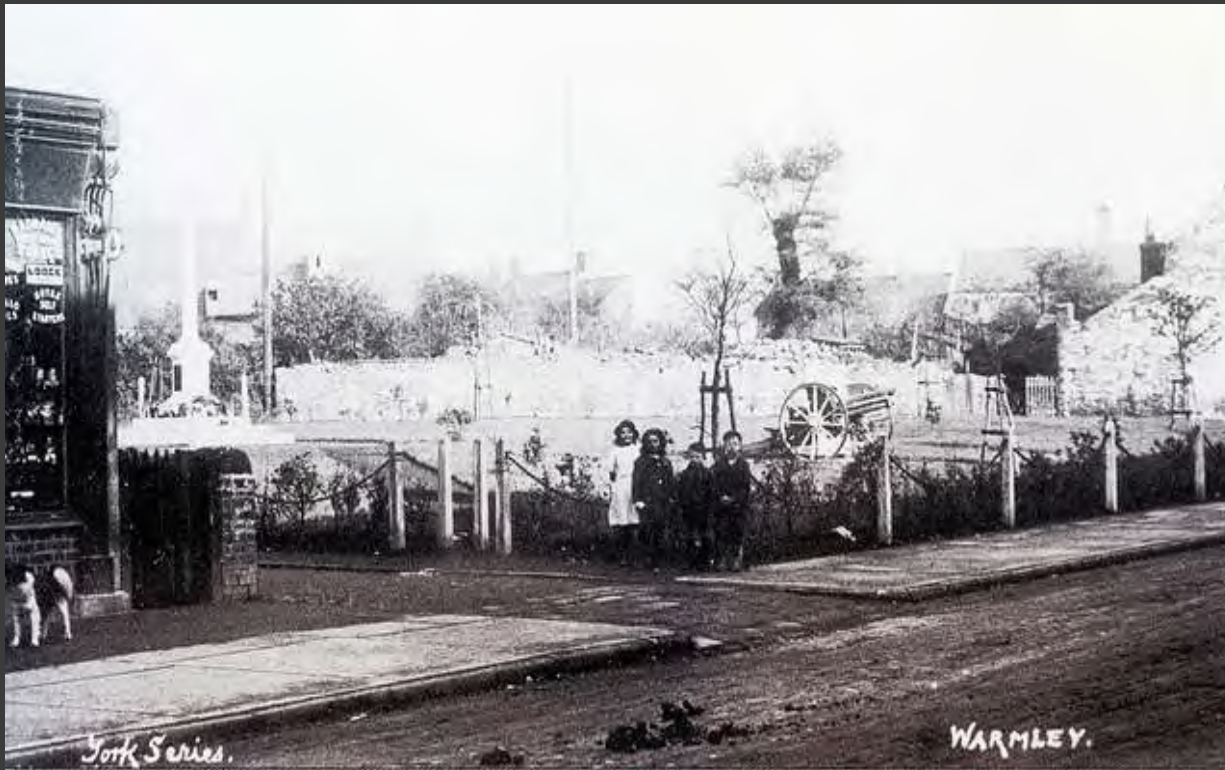
## Billy Do's

These would be in the form a short saying or a poem and were very popular at the time.

The girls must have imagined the brave young soldiers finding these Billy Do's as they opened the boxes of grenades and being cheered up by knowing that the girls at home were thinking of them.

The girls often received replies to their Billy Do's, some with kisses and some in foreign languages!

One lady is even said to have married a soldier she got to know through writing these Billy Do's.



The factory had a good safety reputation throughout the war. Nearly one hundred workers produced ten million grenades, making a substantial contribution to the conflict.

Seventy five million grenades were said to have been produced nationally during the First World War





The unveiling of the war memorial on the corner of Stanley Road, Warmley. The money was raised by local people, to create a park and erect a memorial to all those that had died in the war. The park and the memorial are still there, though the cannon was taken away in the Second World War to be melted down for armaments.

Many of the local girls stayed on as the factory went back to making fireworks. Others returned to domestic life.

But their world had changed forever.

**This Learning Resource has been produced by the South Gloucestershire in the First World War Project 2014 – 2018**, a public engagement project commemorating the centenary of the First World War.

The people of South Gloucestershire served in the armed forces, became nurses and worked in factories. They made aircraft, motorbikes and boots for the servicemen: even the horses were sent to the front line of The Great War. This project tells the stories of the contribution that South Gloucestershire made to the First World War.

## THE GIRLS WHO MADE GRENADES - The Warmley Grenadiers

KS 2/3

The children will learn how some of the local girls of Warmley played their valuable part in the war effort making grenades and keeping up the morale of the troops at the front

**National Curriculum: History/English.**

The story of the factory girls of Warmley who made 10,000,000 hand grenades or 'Mills Bomb' during the First World War. They played sports and also wrote poetry or 'Billy Do's and tucked them into the boxes of grenades for the soldiers to read, to keep up their morale on the battlefield.

### Teachers Information

#### **This Learning Resource Contains:**

- A PowerPoint presentation
  - Accompanying Teacher's Information and suggestion notes for each slide
- (Downloadable with this PowerPoint on the SGC project website)
- Activity – Writing poems
  - Other First World War Project Learning Resources
  - Feedback form

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