



# The Hourglass



The Newsletter of Flintshire Record Office



Spring 2014

## Flintshire's First World War Effort – H.M. Munitions Factory, Queensferry



*Female workers at H.M. Munitions Factory, Queensferry, c.1915 - Ref: PH/51/154*

In 1915, during the First World War, it was realised that Britain was not producing enough artillery shells to sustain the fighting at the Front. A 'shell crisis' arose, which saw David Lloyd George heading the new Ministry of Munitions. He immediately launched into the urgent task of building munitions factories across the country. The assistance of leaders in each county was needed. In Flintshire, an enthusiastic retired businessman, Mr Buckley, offered his services to the Government and led both the local Flintshire and North Wales Area War Committees.

One of the new munitions factories was built in Queensferry, Flintshire, on the derelict site of a former engineering firm, Willans & Robinson, boilermakers, who still held the lease from the Hawarden Estate. The factory itself and two jetties were built very quickly and the Admiralty placed restrictions on the use of the River Dee by any other vessels at night. Soon, the explosives Tetryl, TNT and MNT were being manufactured there, as well as Guncotton. The site increased and eventually covered 343 acres. The Munitions Factory employed

7,325 staff and 70% of the workers on the chemical process were women. The railway line served both passengers and goods transport and a fire station, police station, and hospital were on site.

By 1917, thanks to the new munitions factories and their women workers, the British Empire was supplying more than 50 million shells a year. By the end of the war, the British Army alone had fired 170 million shells.

Flintshire Record Office holds much fascinating material, in the archives of the Dee Conservancy Board (ref: DC/), Flintshire County Council (ref: FC/C), and Llewellyn-Jones & Armon Ellis, solicitors for the Hawarden Estate (ref: D/LJ) relating to the factory. These chronicle the dispute between local landowners and the Ministry of Munitions, the war effort by Flintshire people, and the enormous changes made to the landscape and environment by H.M. Munitions Factory, Queensferry.

By Sue Copp, Archive Assistant



*Munitions Factory at Queensferry, c.1915 Ref: PH/51/97*

Flintshire Record Office, The Old Rectory, Hawarden, CH5 3NR  
Tel: **01244 532364**; Fax: **01244 538344**; e-mail: [archives@flintshire.gov.uk](mailto:archives@flintshire.gov.uk)  
website: [www.flintshire.gov.uk/archives](http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/archives)

## Researching the Fallen: Flintshire's War Memorials



## Britain's Smallest Colliery Workers?



On 4th June 2014, the Record Office will be hosting a training session for researchers on the Flintshire War Memorials project. Researchers will be looking into the stories behind the names on war memorials across Flintshire. In the training session they will be learning about some of the documents held here and how they can be used in their research. The results of their work will be mounted on the website:

[www.flintshirewarmemorials.com](http://www.flintshirewarmemorials.com). Anyone interested in becoming a researcher for the project should contact Viv and Eifion Williams via the website.

Just one example of a Flintshire soldier who lost his life was Fred Birks of Buckley. He was born in Hawarden in 1895. We hold his World War 1 Memorial Index Card (D/DM/181/Buckley/ F5) at Flintshire Record Office. He joined the army in 1914, aged only 19 years, and is pictured here in his uniform (Ref: PH/11/334).



He achieved the rank of Lieutenant but was tragically killed in France in 1917, aged 22 years. He was awarded the Victoria Cross, which is the highest military decoration, for valour 'in the face of the enemy'. His elder brother, Samuel, also served in the First World War but thankfully returned home safely in 1919. No fewer than 114 men from Buckley appear on the War Memorial.

The Record Office will also be holding a First World War themed Open Day on **2nd August 2014** which will include a workshop on researching First World War soldiers' histories, further details to follow.

A cutting from an unidentified newspaper in our collections (ref: D/DM/952/2) records that James and John Smith, brothers, of Buckley in Flintshire, were claimed to be 'the smallest colliery workers in Great Britain. James is 36 inches high and John 30 inches. They are in charge of the miners' lamps at Buckley Colliery.' The newscutting is undated, but John and James were possibly sons of Charles & Ann Smith of Pentre, their father being also a Collier. Their baptisms were recorded in the Buckley parish register in 1880 and 1884 respectively. This photograph probably dates from c.1910.

## Calling all Writers!

If you have you been researching Flintshire's history in the Record Office and are considering writing an article on your subject, the editors of two local history journals would welcome submissions for publication. To discuss further, please contact Dr R. Paul Evans, editor of the Flintshire Historical Society Journal, e-mail: [pevans@denbighhighschool.co.uk](mailto:pevans@denbighhighschool.co.uk) or Paul Mason, editor of the Clwyd Historian, e-mail: [carylmason@aol.com](mailto:carylmason@aol.com)

## Recent Accessions

- AN 4765** – J.H. Jones, Driver with Royal Field Artillery, records and photographs, c.1914-1915.
- AN 4777** – Programme of Pageant, re: History of Church in Wales, at Bagillt, 1920.
- AN 4807** – Records of the English Congregational Church, Bagillt, 1850-2009.
- AN 4811** – Records of Denbighshire and Flintshire Ladies' Golfing Association, 1924-2002.
- AN 4818** – Apprenticeship Indenture of John Worrall, Bricklayer, of Golftyn, 1881.

If you have any comments or suggestions for **The Hourglass**, please contact The Editor, tel. **01244 532364** or e-mail: [archives@flintshire.gov.uk](mailto:archives@flintshire.gov.uk)

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