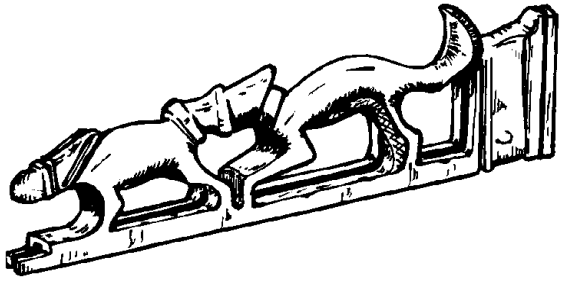
Ampthill & District Archaeological



& Local History Society

Ampthill Camp in WWI
A Small Exhibition

Kevan J. Fadden.

Kitchener's Compelling Call



Bedfordshire's Response

Ampthill Camp in WWI

Ampthill Great Park played a very important role in the First world War as it became the site of the Ampthill Training Camp formed by Herbrand Arthur Russell, 11th Duke of Bedford in 1914 to train the local raw recruits who “Answered Lord Kitchener’s Call to Arms”. The camp was operational by October 1914 largely funded by the Duke at his own expense of £22000. The troops were trained in all aspects of soldiering before passing out in six months time to be sent in batches to the Western Front, France and Flanders. Most were used to bolster the regular Bedfordshire Regiment Battalions.

The Training Camp was operational until October 1916 when conscription of all single men between 19 and 41 was introduced.

2235 men were trained and they went on to serve with great distinction, 707 never returned. A memorial to the fallen inscribed with their names was erected after the war, to a design that complements the 18th Century Katherine’s Cross already on the plateau, at a point where the troops marched past the Duke of Bedford on their way to Ampthill station and thence to battle.

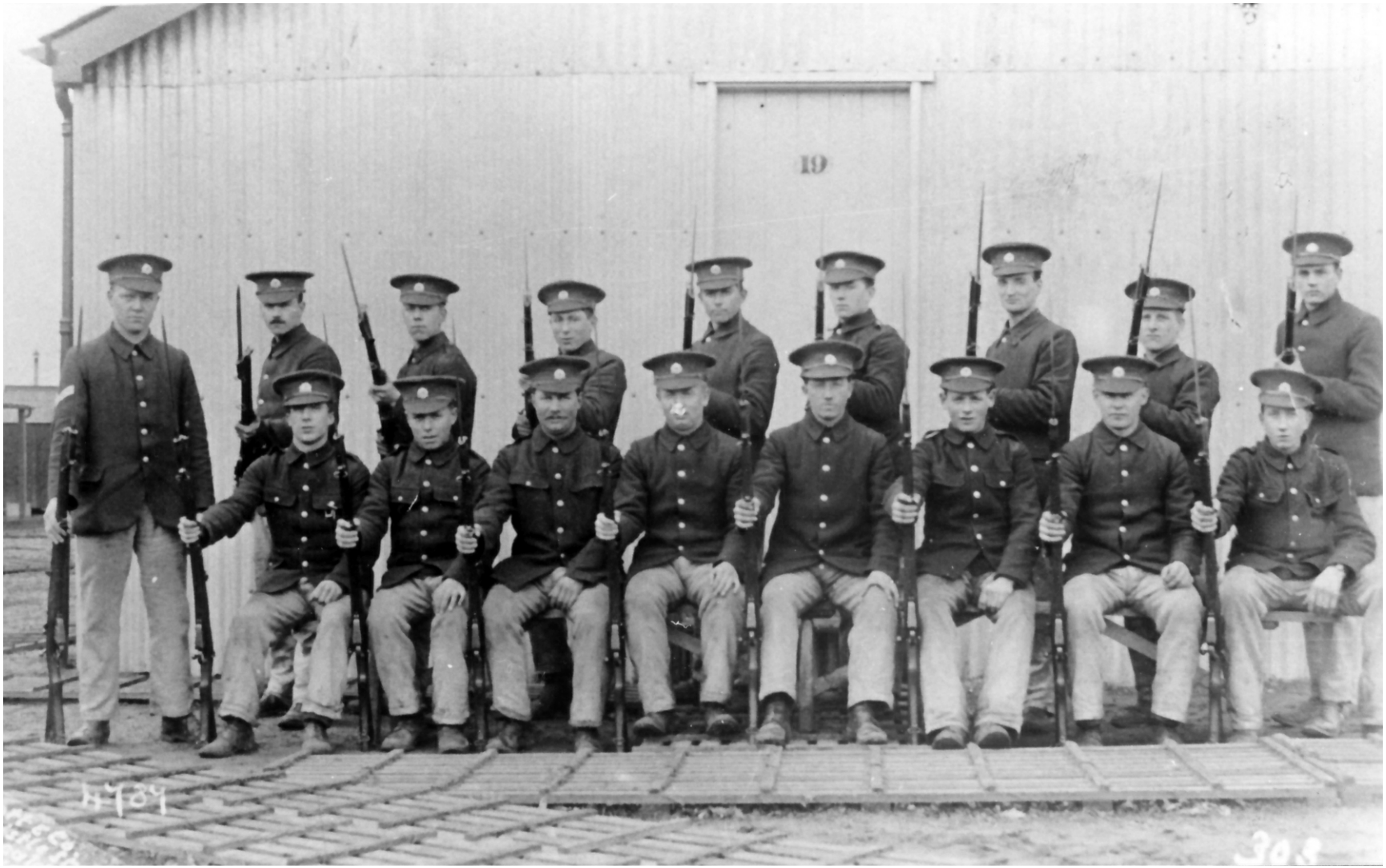
In 1916 the Camp was re-designated Number Nine Regimental Command Depot to treat wounded troops returning from the Front, the Duke again providing medical equipment and aid to help comfort the soldiers.

The camp was very successful, over 8000 troops were treated and more than 3500 were returned to duties.



The Camp in Ampthill Park

The trees in the background line the Ampthill - Woburn Road



A Squad of troops pose for a photograph.

Probably taken on completion of training, some look suspiciously youthful to go to the front.



Marching at ease through the park led by a Bugle band



WWI Mobile Workshop in Ampthill

Heavy duty lorry with back that splits open to form a workshop



WWI Field Kitchen in Ampthill Park

Ash & Clinker from the boilers were found in excavations June 2009

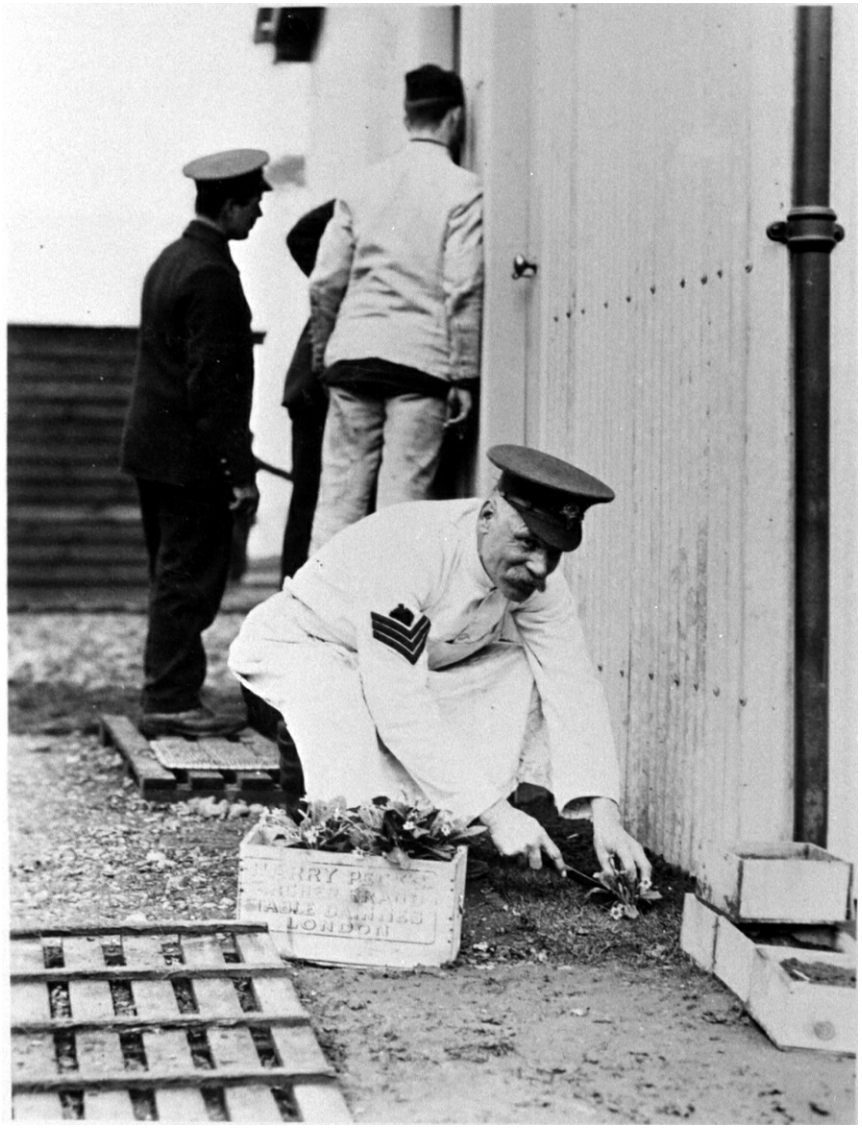


Ready to Serve: Sergeant Major with his Kitchen Staff



The Sergeant Mess, a portable writing desk in the foreground.

The difference in head-dress probably reflects the regiments they were conscripted from.



Sergeant Major’s Garden



Beer on Tap?

Lighter Moments



WWI Wedding. Thought to be brother to Robert Pinny's Grandfather



A popular postcard. It must have reflected the feelings of all young couples



Recently Restored Memorial to the 707 who fell

After “The War to End All Wars.”



After the War: Captured German Gun on the Firs Early 30’s

Photo Mrs Alice Barnes taken by her husband Clarence

Was the writing on the wall for WWII?



A popular Cartoon. Should we be nice to the Germans?

Ebert President of Germany, Poincare French President, who tried to rebel against the Treaty of Versailles.