

# HERTS PAST POLICING

Recording life on the beat in Hertfordshire



DIGITAL LEARNING RESOURCE

## Soldiers in town

### Suggested Questions

Hertfordshire was a training ground for troops going out to the First World War. Troops were mainly stationed in Watford, Bishop's Stortford and St Albans. With all the soldiers coming to Hertfordshire for training they needed to be billeted in local homes. It fell to the police to accompany the billeting officers when they went round homes to tell you how many soldiers you would be putting up – for a pittance! The effect on local areas of having thousands of young men billeted and training in your town was enormous.

The documents in this collection can be used to look at:

#### Arrival of soldiers

- How local police helped out when the soldiers came to town

#### Attitudes to Billeting

- Initial enthusiasm for billeting quickly waned in some areas

#### Reckless and badly behaved soldiers

- The local police had to deal with many incidents of bad behaviour involving the young soldiers
- Some incidents concerning the billeting soldiers involved theft

#### Stampeding horses

- Having troops in the town also meant a large number of horses

#### Christmas with the troops

- Many soldiers found themselves away from home at Christmas

These are suggested questions that could be used to answer the themes above by selecting different documents

### *The process of billeting*

Where were billets found for 25 officers?

Where has the police officer made enquiries about billeting?

Where did most of the soldiers sleep?

How much notice did people get that they would be hosting soldiers?

### *Reactions to billeting*

How did the town react to the arrival of billeted soldiers?

Imagine how it felt to see your town full of soldiers carrying guns

Why were some billeting arrangements considered unsatisfactory?

What view of the soldiers do the documents give us?

Where did some of the soldiers choose to stay in preference to their billet?

Why were some of the less well off hosts disappointed?

The author says that the “poorer section of the community acted splendidly”. What does this sentence reveal about attitudes of the time?

Did all billeting families treat the soldiers well?

### *Reckless and badly behaved soldiers*

What sort of bad behaviour did soldiers take part in?

What enquiries did the police make?

What were the range of punishments they were given?

Why do you think some of the incidents were dealt with quite leniently?

What reasons might you give for so much bad behaviour and pranks by the soldiers?

### *Stampeding horses*

What other incidents occurred when soldiers were billeted in towns?

Why do you think there were so many horses?

### *Christmas for the troops*

What was the attitude of locals to the troops in their town over Christmas?

What was organised to cater for the troops at Christmas?

Despite all these efforts to entertain the troops, how do you think it really felt to be away from home at Christmas?