WHAT DID WORLD WAR ONE REALLY DO FOR WOMEN?

Audio slideshow transcript: Keeping the home front moving

Narrated by Kate Adie, writer and broadcaster

The war involved everyone and as men headed for the front, women began to enter every part of the workforce.

Hundreds of thousands were in factories manufacturing artillery shells and handling dangerous explosives.

Over 100,000 nursed in hospitals at home and abroad, many set up specifically to deal with wounded and traumatised soldiers.

Women took up work in shops, banks and offices in droves. In the Post Office thousands helped sort and deliver the 12 million letters a week crossing the channel.

Relatively better pay and conditions, with women's union membership tripling to over a million, led to a greater sense of independence, though the wages were usually half those of men in identical jobs.

The work broadened opportunities. Tens of thousands joined the transport network. They drove trams. They collected fares on buses and the tube. They issued train tickets, worked in signal boxes, but were not allowed to drive trains, only clean them.

Many had worked before the war but over 1.5 million were working for the first time, alongside over a million who volunteered to keep society going by fundraising, housing refugees, running canteens and clubs, knitting garments and providing medical supplies for troops.

The countryside saw the Women's Land Army formed to persuade women to undertake the drudgery of agricultural work, never very popular but vital in the last years of the war.

Women volunteered to patrol as police but were not given the powers of a constable. However, visible and authoritative, they sounded a new note in public life.

Even the hallowed football pitches saw women take to the field. Here are the Sterling Ladies team in daring new-fangled shorts, having just defeated the Handley Page Ladies FC at Cricklewood. Another example of how women's lives changed on the home front.