

Biog 19 Lizzie Robinson, munitions worker, text

Morag Cross 11 December 2013

*****19.1**

The industrial scale and intensity of the First World War was unlike any previous conflict, including the practice of artillery bombardment of the enemy trenches, to 'soften them up' before infantry men were sent 'over the top'. 'The need for abundant high-explosive ... no one foresaw before ... the Battle of the Aisne (September 1914)'. In the winter of 1914-15, David Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer, started 'a shell and gun crusade', to increase output and bring the munitions industry under 'unified control ... During the fortnight's fighting at Neuve Chapelle in March 1915 our expenditure of ammunition was ... equal to that of the whole of the Boer War', (1899-1902). [Source: George A B Dewar, 1921, *The Great Munition Feat 1914-1918*, London: Constable, pp3, 24, 26-7].

*****19.2**

Difficulties included a lack of skilled workers, many of whom had been recruited 'by the haphazard and excited voluntary recruiting movement which ... insulted them if they hesitated (to enlist). [Source: George A B Dewar, 1921, *The Great Munition Feat 1914-1918*, London: Constable, p17].

*****19.3**

A manager of the National Projectile Factory at Cardonald in Glasgow told visiting journalists: 'At the same time Kitchener called for men ... the women ... stepped into the breach ... and saved the country ... without them we should have utterly failed.' [Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 January 1919, p4].

*****19.4 a and b**

In the Coalition Cabinet of May, 1915 (formed in reaction to the previous administration's handling of the war), Lloyd George was appointed as the first Minister of Munitions. He oversaw, and co-ordinated the output and building of factories, railways and other infrastructure required to supply shells and other ammunition to the troops and ships doing the fighting. [Source: George A B Dewar, 1921, *The Great Munition Feat 1914-1918*, London: Constable, pp 31-4; Records of the Ministry of Munitions and successors, including papers of David Lloyd George [Ref: MUN], Administrative History, National Archives Catalogue, at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk>].

*****19.5**

In July 1915, the Ministry of Munitions ordered three new factories at Mossend, Mile-End, and Cardonald in Glasgow. The Cardonald plant was designed and run by Wm Beardmore Ltd of Parkhead Forge, and erected by William Arrol Ltd. It was to manufacture 18 pounder, 6in and 8in shells, the 18-pounder being a standard mobile field artillery gun at the time. 'The first sod was cut on ... 30 August 1915 ... the first shells were ... accepted on 4 June 1916'. [Source: Robert Martin (editor), 'The History of the Factory', in *Souvenir of the National Projectile Factor*, Privately Published, January 1919, pp 3, 4; *National Factories Controlled by the Ministry of Munitions in ...*

Order of Establishment, Online Resource, at www.docstoc.com/docs/28285141/National-Factories-Controlled-by].

***19.6 a and b

The factory buildings alone covered 3.5 acres, and contained fifty-three 2-ton travelling cranes, and 620 electrical lathes. 'Prior to the war the employment of women on machinery of this nature had never been contemplated ... [being probably] beyond their strength ...[however] in a short time almost of all of the machines were 'manned' by women ... until there was not a single operation in the factory in which they were not engaged'. [Source: Robert Martin (editor), 'History of the Factory', *Souvenir of the National Projectile Factor*, Privately Published, January 1919, pp2-6].

***19.7

'Clogs, gloves and thick corduroy suits [were provided] for Crane Girls and Transport Workers in winter'. Welfare provision was taken seriously, with a canteen, trained nurses, protective clothing, and organised recreation such as theatrical performances, a football team, choir and in-house paper, the 'Cardonald News'. A crèche for children of servicemen's wives was planned, but the war had ended before it could be constructed. [Source: Robert Martin (editor), 'History of the Factory', *Souvenir of the National Projectile Factor*, Privately Published, January 1919, pp2-6; *Report on welfare work at Cardonald National Projectile Factory, 1916-19*, Ref: MUN 5/92/346/26, National Archives, London].

***19.8 a and b

The King, George V, undertook a four-day tour of Clydeside shipyards and marine-engineering works, in September 1917, 'to impart encouragement ... to the workers'. [*The Scotsman*, 15 September 1917]. A new order of decorations, for community or non-military war services, had just been created, called the Order of the British Empire, open equally to men and women. Indeed, during the King's visit, 'the large part played by the girl workers in the engine shops' was noted, and he spoke to women 'in their garb of blue, khaki and white (overalls)', operating saws, lathes and fixing boiler-plates in noisy machine-shops in Greenock and Port Glasgow. [Source: *Glasgow Herald*, 25 August 1917, p5; September 18, p5; *The Scotsman*, 15 September 1917, p6; 18 September 1917, p4].

***19.9

On 18 September 1917, the King presented his new honours at a public investiture at Ibrox Park. Lizzie Robinson was the first woman so honoured, in front of 60,000 spectators, including a choir of her colleagues who sang the National Anthem. She was employed at the National Projectile Factory, Cardonald, and received the Medal of the Order of the British Empire (now superseded by other awards), for 'devotion to duty ... she has not lost any time in a whole year's service ... working at very high pressure'. This was the best time-keeping in the factory, 'from 6am to 5.30pm for 18 months, including Saturdays and Sundays, and alternately on the night shift fortnightly'. [Sources: *Glasgow Herald*, 18 September 1917, p5; 19 September 1917, p8; *The Scotsman*, 25 August 1917, p8; 18 September 1917, p4; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 January 1919, p4; Robert Martin (editor), *Souvenir of the National Projectile Factor*, Privately Published, January 1919, pp21, 22].

***19.10 a or b

Elizabeth Robinson (Lizzie) was born in Alma Street, Govan in 1896, and was still living in the same street in 1918. Her parents, Andrew and Maggie, moved from County Antrim, Ireland, to Glasgow in the early 1890s, where her father worked as a labourer for the Clyde Navigation Trust, who controlled the ship traffic, quays, docks and dredging operations along 18 miles of the River Clyde. In the poor living conditions and poverty of Govan, the Robinsons had suffered the loss of five of their nine children by the 1911 census. Before the war she had worked as a message-girl for a laundry. [Source: 1911 Census; Statutory Register of Births, National Records of Scotland, at www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk; T R MacKenzie, 1915, *The River Clyde and Port of Glasgow*, in *Glasgow Chamber of Commerce Yearbook 1915*, London: Bemrose & Sons, pp149-50; Sue Light, personal Correspondence, and *Awards of the Medal of the Order of the British Empire to Women*, Online Resource, at <http://www.scarletfinders.co.uk/195.html>].

***19.11

At the Ibrox investiture, the three Victoria Cross recipients (H Christian, G McIntosh and S Frickleton), their fellow military awardees, and 'the king himself [were] in khaki ... It was indeed a khaki day'. Lizzie 'received a special ovation from the crowd ... The wounded soldiers gave Miss Robinson as she was passing them a special round of applause'. Other women 'who received the posthumous awards made to their husbands, sons or brothers also received marked tributes from the spectators'. [Source: *Glasgow Herald*, 19 September 1917, p8].

***19.12

Lizzie sent a studio photo of herself wearing her medal and munitions uniform, to the collectors of the newly-formed Imperial War Museum in 1918, who were already documenting the range of women's war work. [Sue Light, Personal Correspondence, and *Awards of the Medal of the Order of the British Empire to Women*, Online Resource, at <http://www.scarletfinders.co.uk/195.html>].

***19.13

Her colleagues included her in the 'Cardonald Alphabet', a comic tribute to their workmates:

'E is for Everyone - that's you and me'
'Our work's to provide shell size 8in HE' (*high explosive)
'... H are the 'Hows'* which our boys with a yell, (*howitzers)
'Send across to the Huns - 'Lads, let's give them ... (Censored)'
'... L is for Lizzie who ne'er lost a minute,
'Did you notice the 'Bulletin'?* Her photo was in it'. (*Glasgow newspaper)

[Source: Robert Martin (editor), *Souvenir of the National Projectile Factor*, Privately Published, January 1919, p23].

***19.14 a or b choose one