

SPECIAL CONSTABLE IN UNIFORM



Jim Clarke from
Edmonton in Special
Constable uniform. No
local photograph has been
found

SPECIAL CONSTABLES

Within a week of the Declaration of War, Parish Councils arranged meetings to enrol Special Constables and recruits for the regular army.

7 August 1914 - Joseph Larter went on guard on Eynsford Viaduct as a Special

Eynsford Parish Council held a recruitment meeting in Crockenhill and another in Eynsford in mid-August.

How many Special Constables were recruited locally is unknown, but 60-70 men from Eynsford and a similar number from Crockenhill volunteered for the Armed Forces at the meetings.

Special constables acted much as Air Raid Wardens did in World War Two.

References to Special Constables in Parish Council Minutes show them to be under resourced.

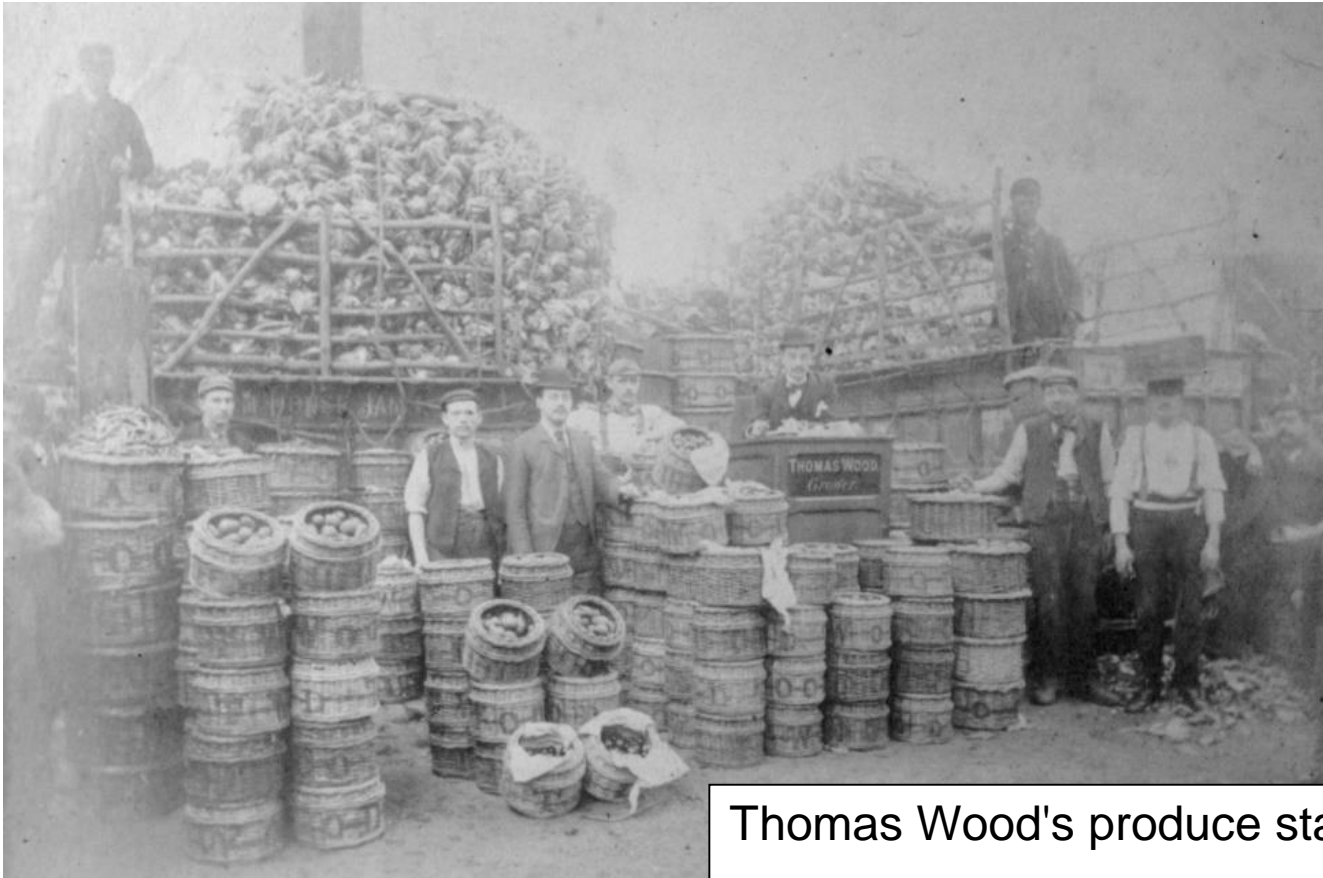
1917 - Eynsford village wanted Special Constables to be on night duty during air raids.

1918 - Farningham wanted Special Constables to have shrapnel helmets to protect them when on night duty.

ALECK CLEMENTS - SPECIAL CONSTABLE IN CROCKENHILL

Aleck Clements, a local farmer, exempt from military service because of the vital need to keep up food production, volunteered as a Special Constable. His wife's diary mentions many occasions when he was called on duty before an impending air raid.

- 8 September 1914: Sworn in and went on duty with Ansell Everest at 7 p.m.



Aleck did much of his trade in Borough Market, near Southwark Cathedral, to which he would travel overnight, and return early next morning. Fitting in his duties as Special Constable was not easy, and he lost many hours sleep, and must have been very exhausted.

Thomas Wood's produce stand at Borough Market c.1900

ALECK CLEMENTS - SPECIAL CONSTABLE IN CROCKENHILL

17 October 1914:

10.30 a.m. Aleck back from Borough Market
11.30 a.m. Caught train to Maidstone
8.20 p.m. Arrived home, lost earlier train
9 p.m. - 1a.m. On duty

17 November 1914:

9.40 a.m. Home from Borough Market
Caught train back to London
Went to fruit tree sale
Home in time for cup of tea
7 p.m. - 11 p.m. On duty

26 January 1915

Aleck to go on special duty 7 p.m. to
7.30 a.m. but came home at 12.10 p.m.

24 March 1917

Aleck on duty as Zepps on their way.
Home before 9 p.m. Zepps had turned back

24 September 1917

Aleck called out at 1 o'clock. Air raid.
Heard the Chislehurst gun fire

28 September 1917

Men called at gate for Aleck to go on duty as air
raid, but he was at Gosenhill getting men and
vans off to London

31 March 1918

Aleck on duty 12 p.m. to 5 a.m.
Two hours at Eynsford tunnel, and
two hours at Petham bridge with
Ansell Everest, Jack Peck and
Arthur Wise

1 April 1918

Aleck came home 6.30 a.m. from duty
2 hours rest, then back to work

ARTHUR MEE SUSPECTED OF ESPIONAGE



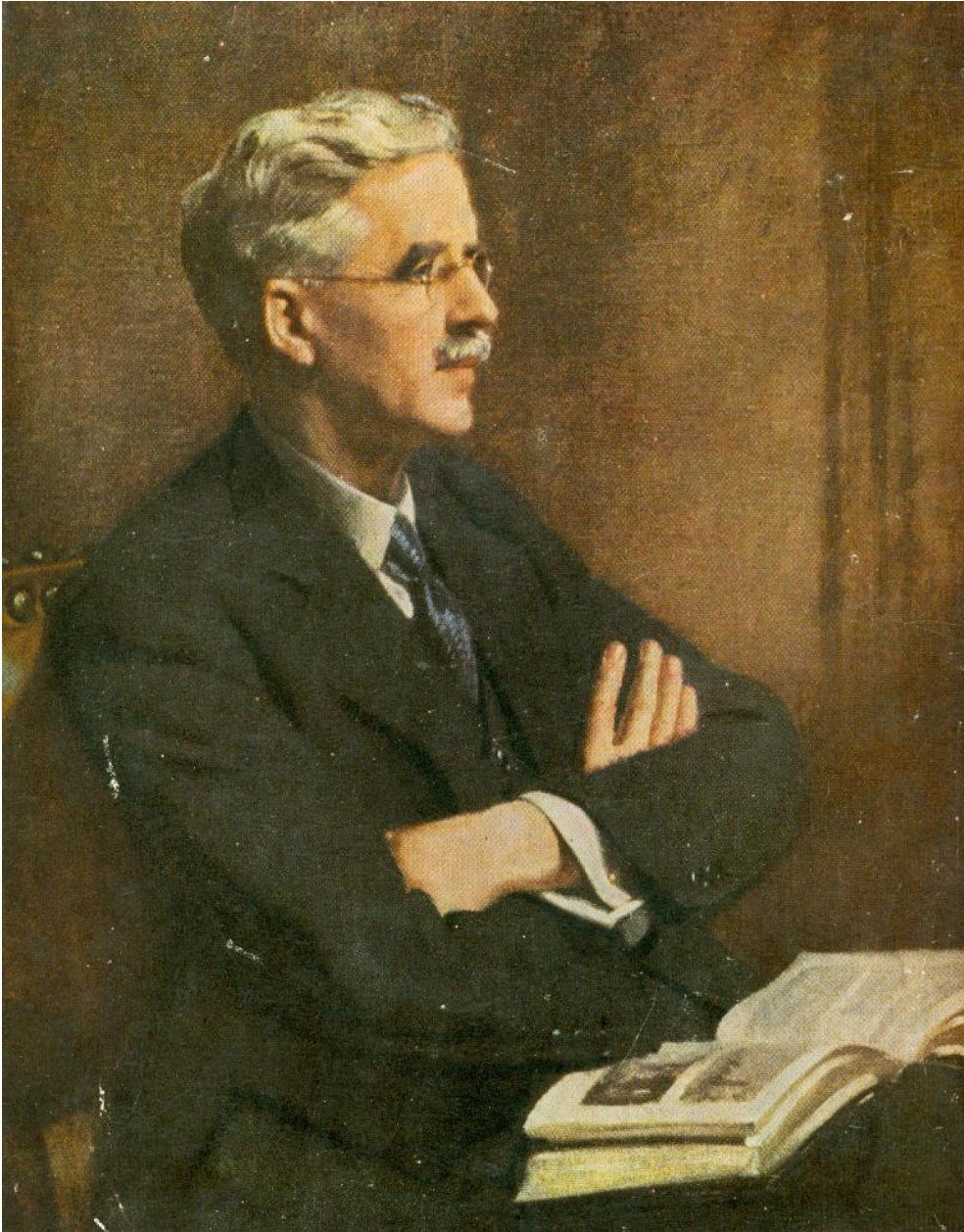
Arthur Mee's new house 'Eynsford Hill' newly built by 1913, stark on the hilltop

Arthur Mee, compiler of *The Children's Encyclopaedia*, moved into a house 'Eynsford Hill', which he had newly built by 1913, overlooking the Darent Valley. It was one of the first to have electric lights, which villagers would see going on and off.

As he was not well known in the village when war began, the flashing lights, which might be seen on

at midnight, led to the rumour that he was a German spy. This was unfair, but he wrote to a friend that he would not deny the rumour, but would have minded less if people had said he had murdered his mother, than label him as a German.

ARTHUR MEE



Arthur Mee was, in fact, very patriotic. In 1917 he published *Arthur Mee's Gift Book For Boys And Girls Who Love the Flag'* and gave all proceeds to The Red Cross.

No nobler thing can happen to any boy or girl than to be born upon this precious isle set in a silver sea, from which has gone out to the ends of the earth a spirit of freedom, a love of truth, a thirst for knowledge, a yearning for justice, a faith in God, a hope for immortality, without which the world could never be the happy place it is to live in."

Little Treasure Island: Her Story And Her Glory