

HOMWORK HELPSHEET / REVISION FILE

BACKGROUND

Scotland lost a higher percentage of soldiers than any other country. During the Great War 680,000 Scots enlisted in the army and 120,000 of these men were killed. This was a loss of %. The losses for the other countries of the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Ireland was around 14%). There was hardly a town, village or family which did not lose some of its best young men. The sense of loss was felt by the whole nation and people were determined that the young men who sacrificed their lives should not be forgotten.

The soldiers who did come back expected life to be different after the war. They had been promised 'a land fit for heroes'. They expected jobs, decent housing and a chance to build a better future for themselves and their families. Some things did change. All men over 21 and women over 30 were given the vote. However the country faced serious economic problems. Scotland's traditional heavy industries had boomed during the war but after 1918 shipbuilding, coal, iron and steel and textiles went into decline leading to very high unemployment. For many Scots the only way out of poverty was to emigrate and start a new life in another country. This situation persisted throughout the 1920s and 1930s and it was not until Britain began to rearm that the Scottish economy recovered and unemployment fell.

- Monuments to those who died in the war were put up in every town and village in Scotland. Each usually had a bronze or brass plate with the names of the dead. In many churches, schools, golf and bowling clubs etc plaques with lists of dead pupils or club members were displayed.
- The public donated money for a National War Memorial. This was opened in Edinburgh Castle in 1927 as a focus to commemorate all of Scotland's war dead. In the National War Memorial holds the Book of Remembrance containing the names of all Scots who died in the war.
- In 1921 the British Legion, Scotland was set up and Field Marshal Douglas Haig was its patron. Poppy day was started soon after to raise money for war wounded. Remembrance Sunday became a national event and a minutes silence in honour of the war dead was held.
- After 1918 unemployment in Scotland increased quickly. Government orders for warships and munitions stopped and the old industries could not find new customers. Markets had been lost during the war and other countries were making ships and producing coal and steel much cheaper than Scotland could.
- Many new industries such as automobiles, chemical and electronics grew in the 1920s. But the skills of the Scottish workers and the old factories and shipyards were not suitable for light industry. Most of the new jobs created went to the Midlands and the South of England.
- In 1918 unemployment in Scotland was only 2% by 1930 this had risen to 27% more than a quarter of the working population did not have a job. Unemployment was not only a problem in the industrial areas. Farming was more mechanised so there were fewer jobs and the Highland continued to suffer from a lack of employment.
- The government had no solution to this problem and encouraged people to emigrate to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. This would reduce unemployment and provide people with the chance of a better future. To encourage people to leave the government offered free passage on a ship to ex-servicemen.

The 1920s saw the highest ever emigration from Scotland. By 1930 8% of the population had left to start a new life abroad.