



Boro legend Jackie Carr, who was with the club before and after the First World War



The Boro and the 'great crisis': Middlesbrough Football Club in the early months of the First World War



The Boro side prior to the First World War

The privations of war as seen at Ayresome Park



The Middlesbrough side featured in the Aston Villa programme in their final match of the 1913-14 season

ON September 9, 1914, Boro fans departed Ayresome Park content following the Boro's 2-0 victory over West Bromwich Albion. A month later, the men who had stood on the terraces at the club's Ayresome Park home ground were heading off to the Continent for a conflict that would be 'over by Christmas'.

Here Manchester Metropolitan University historian and Boro fan **Dr Tosh Warwick** looks back at life at Ayresome Park from the outbreak of war up to the festive period, which failed to bring the expected end to hostilities...

The footballing truce on Christmas Day between British and German sol-

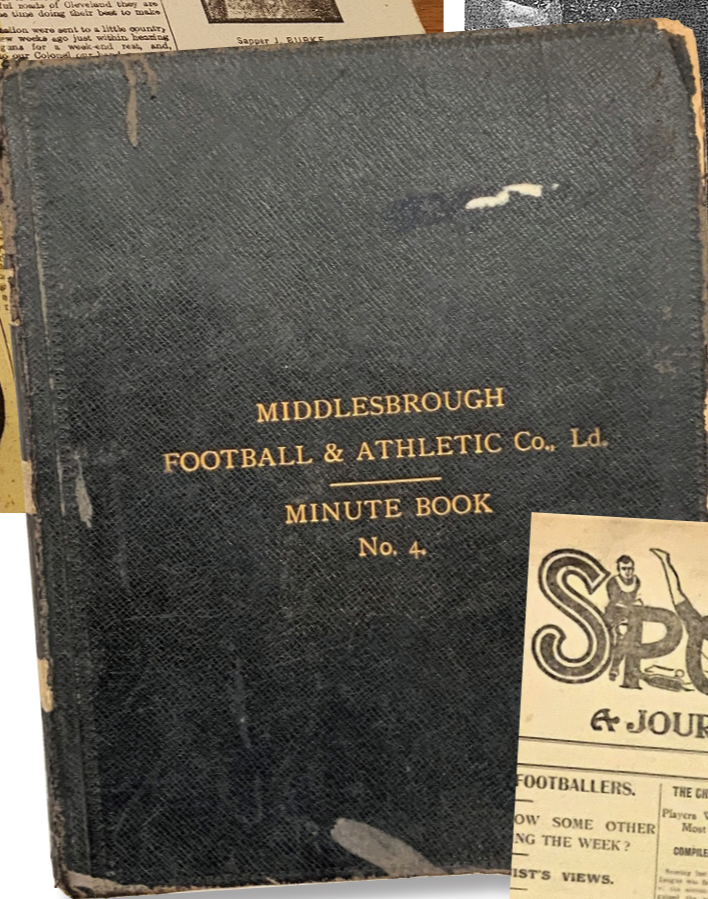
diers dominates discussions of the beautiful game in the context of the First World War. A delve into the Middlesbrough FC archives, and specifically the minute books of the club during the war years - some extracts of which are reproduced here for the first time - reveals a different perspective on the war.

Middlesbrough Football and Athletic Club's Minute Book No 4 is particularly revealing of the ways in which the everyday operations of a professional football club combined with the extraordinary circumstances of the First World War. The records provide an insight into the concerns of the directors, the balancing act of organising matches alongside preparations for war, and the ways in which the Boro mobilised as part of the town's efforts to support the various casualties, charitable appeals and crises brought about by conflict on the Continent. The war brought about notable changes in the management's interactions with, and roles within, the wider community.

In June 1914, as the club prepared for the new season, the Ayresome Park directors rejected Middlesbrough Rifle Association's application for financial support. By August, the club had granted permission for the workingmen of the Middlesbrough Rifle Club to use the

range at Ayresome Park. In September, arrangements were made for the Rifle Club to use the ground on Sundays and other convenient days for the "purpose of military drilling, shooting etc.", with access extended as conditions in Europe deteriorated. By the end of September, Middlesbrough players had been trained in the use of the Lee Enfield Rifle under the instruction of Inspector Seymour.

Support for the war was advocated, and often dictated, by the Football Association. The meeting of the directors at Ayresome Park on August 17, 1914 reported the receipt of a letter from the Football Association declaring: "I am instructed to inform you that consent is given for the August Practice Matches being played ON and After the 15th instant, upon the condition that the Gross Receipts of the Matches are paid to the Prince of Wales's National Relief Fund." The



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Middlesbrough Football Club minute book



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A note on secretary Tom McIntosh's desire to join the war effort

Mrs Metcalf Jan 4th 1915

Following week, Boro's secretary read a letter from the FA confirming that future practice match receipts could now be given to the Prince of Wales Fund, local funds or charities. A couple of days later, a friendly was arranged with Hartlepool United in aid of the War Fund, with receipts divided between the two towns.

The war, however, had a detrimental impact on some fundraising efforts locally, with the ongoing conflict seeing the Medical Charities cancel a proposed fireworks display at Ayresome in September 1914. By October, the Boro were supporting the town's wider efforts to support the Belgian relief fund by allowing a collection and sale of Belgian flags on October 17 at the 1-1 'Tees-Tyne' derby draw against Newcastle United, while the club also announced a donation to the fund at the Allied Sportsmen's meeting. Beyond Boro matches, Ayresome Park was also used for charitable efforts of various causes, including the O'Mara Opera Company using the ground for a charity

match. As recorded in Menzies' book, the efforts of Boro chairman Phil Bach and former chairman Alf Mattison on the Western Front manning the Middlesbrough Ambulance are detailed in the club's minutes.

They record donations for soldiers' clothing and the directors' proposing that: "The heartiest appreciation be extended to Mr Phil Bach, Chairman, and to Alderman Alf Mattison, an ex-chairman of this club, on the honourable duty they have undertaken in giving their assistance to the Red Cross Section of the Allied Forces on the Continent. We instruct our Secretary to convey to them our heartfelt wishes for their safe return from their labours in this great crisis."

As well as assisting fundraising, the Middlesbrough directors supported calls from the FA and War Office "desiring clubs to do all they can to help recruiting etc.". The club agreed to "give every facility and assistance to recruiting at our matches and also to any speakers who may care to attend".

Special provision was made for soldiers attending matches at Ayre-

some Park and by November 1914, the club were in receipt of recruiting posters issued by the FA to member clubs.

Despite the clear changes that occurred following the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, it would be misleading to suggest war conditions meant all normality had disappeared. The minutes still record the day-to-day operations of the club, including reports on players, finances, injuries, transfers and even disciplinary issues in the Boro dressing room - including bad language!

Yet the final note in the club's minute book for 1914 was a sign of more notable changes to come: "Secretary intimated his desire to join Teesside Battalion of Kitchener's Army and after discussion, it was decided to offer him, provided he joined, one half salary and the situation to be kept open for him on his return."

Tom McIntosh would ultimately return to Teesside to manage the Boro before enjoying trophy success with Everton. However, many associated with Middlesbrough Football and Athletic Club would not be so fortunate...