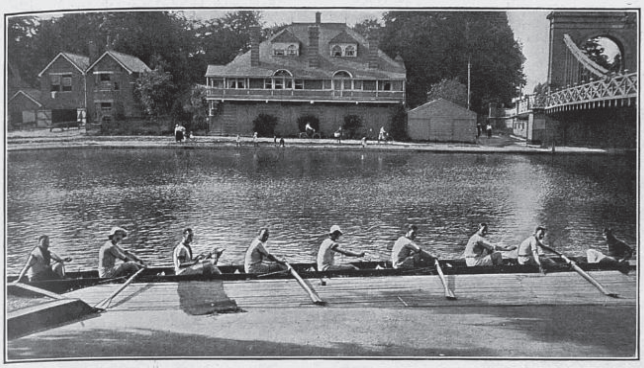
Rowing at Marlow during the War

When war broke out in summer 1914, many Club members rushed to volunteer for service. By 1915, 62 Club members had joined the armed forces, including all the members of the eight and two fours which had represented the Club in 1914. By 1918, the number who had enlisted in the armed forces had risen to over 100 Club members.

Understandably, competitive rowing was largely suspended for the duration of the War. However, Club members did boat on a number of occasions when they were home on leave and this was often reported in the local newspapers. From 1915, troops were regularly brought to Marlow for training before going to France on active service. In the summer of 1915, a detachment of Grenadier Guards stationed at Bovingdon Green dug training trenches at Marlow Common which are still visible today.

To demonstrate its commitment to the war effort, in 1915 the Club arranged river sports for the Grenadier Guards and, in the following year, organised a regatta for the Royal Engineers who were quartered nearby. The Royal Engineers threw a pontoon bridge across the river in front of the Club and a river concert in the evening raised £23 18s 10d for the fund for British Naval Prisoners of War.



A MARLOW ROWING CLUB SERVICE EIGHT.

The Marlow R.C. had an eight out last Saturday for the first time since winning the Grand Challenge Cup at Reading Regatta on August Bank Holiday, 1914. The crew was composed of six oarsmen who have been on foreign service, and two of the older members training with the V.T.C. It was probably the first best boat eight seen afloat on the Thames since the war broke out. The crew was composed as follows:—Bow: F. B. Harman (hon. secretary), V.T.C. (2) Cpl. F. H. Jackson, H.A.C. Wounded in France, now on home service. (3) Capt. H. J. Cupper, Oxon and Bucks. L.I. (mentioned in dispatches). On leave from France. (4) Sergt. J. F. Higgins, H.A.C. Returned from Egypt to take commission. (5) Sergt. F. W. Clark, Royal Bucks Hussars. Time-expired and rejoining. (6) Bomb. F. S. Fisher, H.A.C. Returned from Egypt to take commission. (7) Capt. H. J. Boyton, 1st City of London Regt. Wounded in France, now on home service. Stroke: W. Davis, V.T.C. Cox: F. G. Hill (Borlase School), V.T.C.

In 1917, the Club assisted the East Anglia Royal Engineers who were stationed in the town to arrange a Services Regatta on Saturday 8th July. The Club entered a scratch eight, which won by ½ length. A similar crew also raced at a Royal Flying Corps Regatta at Reading on 25th August.

In 1918, some rowing was done during the season, by members either discharged or home on leave. Two eights went out on December 27th, not long after the Armistice had been signed. Two Regattas were also organised by the Club for the blinded ex-servicemen from St Dunstan's. It also helped run a similar event at Abney House, Bourne End.

Grenadier Guards at Marlow Rowing Club, June 1915.
Photo courtesy of Michael Eagleton.

The Royal Engineers constructing a pontoon in front of the boathouse.
Possibly 1915. Photo courtesy of Michael Eagleton.

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