

Major milestone for project as second year of research begins

By ALAN FIDLER

Project co-ordinator

THE Tynemouth World War One Commemoration project was formed a year ago by a handful of people who believed the significant loss of life suffered by the community should be remembered in a manner which recognised the sacrifice of many local families.

In just 12 months more than 60 willing volunteers, who work at home, in the Local Studies section of the library and from the project base in Room B9 at the Linskill Community Centre, have been recruited.

The aim, to develop a biographical record of each of those killed or died as a result of the war based on the Roll of Honour compiled in 1923 by the *Shields Daily News*, is harnessing new technology to provide the most complete details that can be unearthed about each casualty and present it in an accessible form to be made available online.

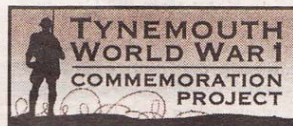
The progress made to date means the project target of making the detailed database available on the internet by August 2014 will be achievable.

What is remarkable is the large amount of historical material in relation to family histories and significant events in the war which is being offered to assist the research.

In 1915, many believed the war would be brought to a conclusion within the year.

The German advance in the west had been halted and a line of trenches stretched from the North Sea coast of Belgium to the Swiss border.

An old pre-1914 school atlas will not show the North Sea



but the German Ocean – only one of the examples of early political correctness imposed in the wave of anti-German sentiment which was to grow throughout the period of the war.

The Royal family changed their name to the house of Windsor from the rather less appealing Saxe Coburg Gotha.

The winter-time brought a slackening of activity on land but no let up at sea.

The toll of casualties in the borough was mainly amongst men at sea, whether in the Royal Navy or the many merchant vessels carrying vital supplies to aid the war effort and feed the nation.

This week's list of casualties shows a number of men from the borough serving together on ships which were lost.

HMS Viknor was lost off Tory Island on the north coast of Ireland on January 13.

Previously named the *Ataro* and later the *Viking*, she had been a Royal Mail ship but was converted to service as an armed merchant cruiser.

Twenty-five crew were members of the Royal Naval Reserve of Newfoundland, then a dominion from Canada.

Only one body

was recovered of the Newfoundlanders and is buried on the Scottish island of Colonsay.

The others are commemorated on the Newfoundland Memorial to their missing at Beaumont Hamel, where they suffered grievous losses in the savage fighting in the final battle of the Somme campaign in November 1916.

The local casualties from the *Viknor* – there were no survivors from the 295 aboard – are remembered on the Royal Navy Memorials at Plymouth and Portsmouth.

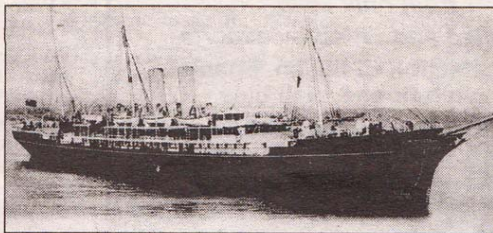
The year began with high hopes which would be dashed in the abortive campaigns of April and September at Ypres and Loos.

The loss of local men in 1914 was only 51 of the approximate total casualties the project has identified – 1,700.

The number escalated as spring campaigns began.

The army was being reinforced rapidly by reservists and territorial soldiers.

Anyone who wishes to learn more about the project is welcome to visit the workroom at the Linskill Community Centre – Mondays to Fridays from 10am to 4pm – or visit our website. And anyone who wants to get involved or may have material they think should be included in the project should get in touch.



HMS Viknor, which was sunk off the coast of Ireland on January 13, 1915.