**Toys**

War changed children's lives - and their toys too. A toy cupboard before the First World War might have held a wooden hoop, a spinning top with a whip to make it whirl round, a skipping rope, a bag of glass marbles, a leather football, a rag doll or some painted toy soldiers and board games such as snakes and ladders or the new game of blow football.

By 1914, people could buy Christmas crackers decorated with Dreadnoughts (British battleships). Shops offered toy machine guns and a new board game about sinking German submarines, called 'Kill Kiel'.

Teddy bears had been a new craze in the early 1900s. The German toymaker Richard Steiff made the finest bears of all but when war broke out, German teddies were not available to buy. British toymakers rushed to make “patriotic” British bears instead.

Battery powered toys hadn't been invented. Toys that moved did so by clockwork mechanisms.

Plastic was unknown, so toys were made of cloth, wood, leather, metal or china. There were very few motor cars on the streets, so there weren't many toy cars in the nursery either. Instead, children played with toy trains made from wood or tin.

When war came, many factories stopped making toys altogether, they switched to turning out uniforms, bombs and bullets. However, a newsreel film from 1916 shows injured soldiers and sailors making Christmas toys for children.