

The Hard Years of War – Kaustinen During Wartime

War Touched Every Life

The wars of the twentieth century transformed life in Kaustinen. The men of the municipality served in all of Finland's wars, while on the home front women, children and the elderly kept everyday life going through the difficult years. War left its mark on homes, farms and working life, and its effects continued to be felt long after peace had returned.

The War of 1918

In 1918, Finland was drawn into a civil war, also referred to as the War of Liberation and the War of the Citizens. These different names reflect the varying interpretations of the conflict. In Kaustinen, it was regarded primarily as the War of Liberation. A total of 94 men from Kaustinen took part in the war. Five were killed in the Battle of Hauho Church in April 1918. They were buried in the Heroes' Cemetery in Kaustinen, where a memorial was erected soon after the war.

The Winter War and the Continuation War

The Winter War began on 30 November 1939. Men from Kaustinen fought mainly on the Karelian Isthmus, where they lost thirteen comrades. After the Interim Peace, many men from Kaustinen served in Infantry Regiment 29 during the Continuation War. The regiment advanced as far as Petrozavodsk, but the cost of the war was heavy: a total of ninety-three men from Kaustinen lost their lives.

On the home front, women of the Lotta Svärd organisation carried out many essential duties. In Kaustinen, the Lottas kept watch from the church tower and contributed to food services, medical care and equipment supply, among many other tasks.

A Moment of Peace

As the Winter War ended on 13 March 1940, Corporal Veikko Finnilä wrote in his diary:

"After 11 o'clock, not a single shot was fired by either side... We felt as if we had been born again."

These words from his wartime diary capture the immense sense of relief that peace brought to the Finnish soldiers serving at the front.

The Price of Peace

Many men from Kaustinen also served in the Lapland War, during which German forces were driven out of Finland. Although the guns eventually fell silent, the war left a lasting mark on the community.

A total of 114 men and women are buried in the Heroes' Cemetery of Kaustinen. The memorial was designed by the Kaustinen-born artist Ilmari Wirkkala. The cemetery stands as a reminder of those whose lives were changed by war and of the enduring truth that peace can never be taken for granted.

Photo: Infantry Regiment 29 – The Route of Advance

Kaustinen Heroes' Cemetery

Veikko Finnilä