



DERBYSHIRE • LEICESTERSHIRE • LINCOLNSHIRE

# East Midlands History and Heritage

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE • NOTTINGHAMSHIRE • RUTLAND

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## SPECIAL ISSUE



**PLUS** The fighting member back to 'The House' • Leicestershire's contribution to saving the nation and much more



# WELCOME



VOTE LABOUR 1918 (COURTESY WILL DYSON VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

Welcome back to East Midlands History and Heritage. This special issue focuses on the First World War and its aftermath, and we would like to thank particularly all those local historians and groups who've shared with us their research and the details of their activities.

We'd like to take this further by creating a permanent record via an online regional archive for your Great War research, stories, photos, memorabilia, letters, diaries, events, etc (see page 30). We're equally interested in what happened next, so what were the immediate and longer-term consequences of the war for local people and communities. For further details and advice contact us on [emhist@virginmedia.com](mailto:emhist@virginmedia.com)

**Dr Nick Hayes**  
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**Dr Katie Bridger, Dr Helen Drew, Hannah Nicholson**  
Assistant editors

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We now have a **group on Facebook** to help extend our network of academic institutions, students (undergrad and postgrad), local history groups, and the wider community, who are united by an interest in the history and heritage of the East Midlands area.

To post and comment, just join our group which you'll find by logging on to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and searching for East Midlands History and Heritage.

We're also on twitter  @EastMidlandsHH

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## So write for us

Let us have details of your news and events.

We'll take your stories about your community's history to a larger regional audience. We'd also welcome articles about our region's broader past. Articles are normally between 1500-2000 words long. Keep a look out, too, for matching images that will help illustrate your work (the higher the number of pixels, the larger we can make the image).

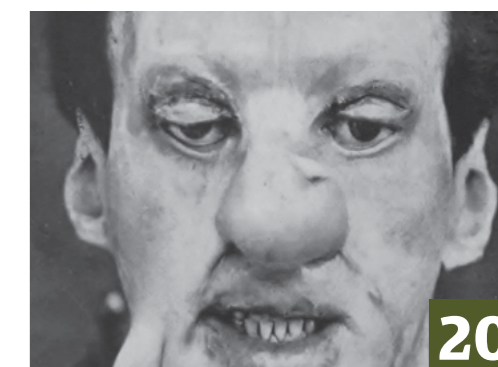
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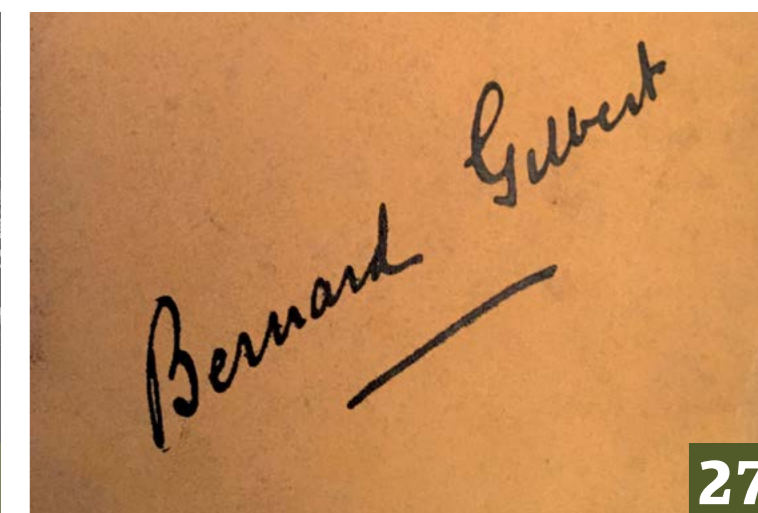
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# The fighting member back to 'The House':



OLIVER LOCKER LAMPSON (COURTESY GEORGE BAKER COLLECTION AND POPPYLAND PUBLISHING)

## Oliver Locker-Lampson, the Conservative Party and the 1918 Coupon Election in Huntingdonshire.

BY PROF BARRY DOYLE

On 14 December 1918, just one month after the end of the First World War and with many civilians struggling with the latter stages of the Spanish Flu epidemic, the United Kingdom went to the polls for the first general election in eight years.

The result was a resounding victory for the Coalition parties led by Lloyd George, the Conservatives performing particularly well, securing 382 of the Coalition's 523 seats. Yet this performance by the Tories was not necessarily expected based on their pre-war record when they had lost three elections in a row and had become uncomfortably embroiled in support for radical Ulster Unionists threatening mutiny and armed insurrection.

### *How did the Conservatives turn things around so impressively?*

How did the Conservatives turn things around so impressively? Historians assign their success to four factors: the Conservatives' whole-hearted support for the war effort and the war record of many of their MPs; better organisation and preparation than the other main parties; crisis and division in both the independent Liberals and the Labour Party; and reform of the parliamentary system which, while tripling the electorate, including 7 million women, also saw a major redistribution that created hundreds of single member urban and suburban seats. Looking at the general election in the newly created Huntingdonshire constituency offers an opportunity to explore these ideas and test the theses that Conservatives had all the advantages.

The central character in this story is the successful Conservative candidate at the 1918 Huntingdonshire election, Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson DSO. Locker-Lampson, the son of the poet, Frederick Locker, was educated at Eton and Cambridge. He made his money as a journalist before securing election to Parliament in January 1910 as the representative for the Ramsey division of Huntingdon. During the Edwardian period he was associated with the right wing of the Conservative party, in particular promoting the interest of working-class conservatism. During the First World War he raised his own armoured car squadron over which he retained control for the whole of the conflict. His squadron went to Russia in 1916 spending much of the war on the Russian and Bulgarian fronts. He built strong connections with the Russian military and was awarded CMG and DSO.

Locker-Lampson offers a good case study for understanding the Conservative victory in 1918 because of the survival of his business, constituency and military correspondence for the period 1912-20 in the Norfolk Records Office.

THE HUNTINGDONSHIRE POST.

**A MEETING**

FORMALLY TO ADOPT

**THE OFFICIAL COALITION CANDIDATE**

COMMANDER

**OLIVER LOCKER LAMPSON,**

C.M.G., D.S.O.,

WILL BE HELD ON

**WEDNESDAY NEXT, November 27, 1918,**

AT

**The Garage, Waldens Road, George Street,**

**HUNTINGDON,** kindly lent by Mr. Yarnold,

THE CHAIR WILL BE TAKEN BY

**The Right HON. LORD DE RAMSEY,**

at 4 p.m.

HUNTINGDON POST 22 NOV 1918 (COURTESY CAMBRIDGE CENTRAL LIBRARY)

The archive includes substantial evidence of how the constituency was managed, the effects of the electoral reforms, the confusion caused by divisions within the Liberal party and the importance of war service for candidates at the 1918 election.

Victory in 1918 was not a foregone conclusion as the Liberals had won both Huntingdon seats in the 1906 landslide and there was clearly a solid Liberal vote to draw on. Locker-Lampson's win, therefore, owed much to the way he and his team maintained their pre-war constituency work. Such activities included the members' subscription payments to hundreds of local associations and activities, especially working-class groups like Helping Hand Clubs, football teams and village charities. This had initially ended with the outbreak of the First World War but he maintained a campaigning team in his constituency – treasurer George Knights and agent Wallis Simpson – who gradually reinstated some of the payments and acted in other ways to keep the MP in the public consciousness. They maintained infrastructure and organization including keeping up registration and ensuring the smooth merger of Huntingdon and Ramsey (Locker-Lampson's seat) in 1917-18. They also worked hard to build the finances of the local party and sustain the membership. In the run up to the election they were able to mobilise activists across most of the constituency as well as liaising with Central Office to secure speakers and advice. ▶



His reputation and visibility were enhanced by the promotion of his war record wherever possible. Initially this consisted of noting that he could not respond to correspondence as he was on active service. He acquired a local newspaper and his team managed its content as well as taking advantage of other press outlets. In 1916 they fed a story highlighting his war record showing that Oliver, his brother Godfrey, and his two brothers-in-law were all officers in the forces serving with distinction. This was followed up with reports of his lectures on his experiences in Russia and similar publicity. Moreover, his war record came into play during the election. When he heard he was to be opposed by a Liberal who had not served, he contacted the Coalition Liberal organiser pointing out "I think I have seen more service abroad than anybody else in the House" and suggested this warranted an unopposed return.

Huntingdon was one of the rural counties to see two constituencies merged into one. Both Huntingdon (John Cator) and Ramsey (Locker-Lampson) had Conservative MPs elected in 1910. Cator was the senior member and therefore had first refusal on the new seat. After a brief period of uncertainty, he decided to retire leaving Locker-Lampson as the Unionist choice. But the local organization had less than a year to pull the two associations together, develop a county wide infrastructure, secure subscriptions after four years of political truce and get Locker-Lampson adopted by all of the local party. Knights and Simpson built on their nursing of the constituency in the first half of the war to deliver a unified party machine in time for the election despite the member's absence in Russia and the general lack of funds to oil the wheels of local patronage. In part, this was achieved by trying to broaden the base for party funding, an appeal for subscriptions sent in June 1918, noting that the extension of the franchise had meant expenses "were enormously increased, and the question arises whether the member or prospective candidate should be called upon to bear all costs, or whether in a free democratic community like our own, the rank and file also should support their views financially."

During the campaign itself his team played on his record – and the fact that his Liberal opponent, a famer called Grey, had not served. Local activist, D. Strangward Smith, noted "You in khaki have defeated field Grey abroad" and proposed a leaflet including:

**AS YOU WERE!**  
**(The fighting member back to 'The House' and his opponent back to his little Grey home in the west)**

His suggestions became more lurid as he observed that "most of the business men here think with me that Our Member should not lose his job

*having been away killing foreign pigs and that our farmer friend is better employed rearing English Pigs."* Another of Strangward Smith's letters advising on platform tactics was decorated with little slogans around the edge including "Locker did the fighting for the ladies. Ladies! Do the voting FOR LOCKER".

Although there was less evidence of a crisis on the left in Huntingdon – the local Liberals were well organized and committed and the Labour party insignificant – the election did highlight the confusion caused by the existence of two Liberal parties operating nationally. At the general election candidates backing the coalition were sent a letter of support from Lloyd George and the Conservative Party leader, Andrew Bonar Law, which became known as the 'Coupon'. In Huntingdonshire Locker-Lampson received the coupon while Grey was endorsed by the official Liberal party machine, led by Asquith. At first, this distinction was not clearly understood by the candidates on the ground and Locker-Lampson and his team spent some time trying to get the candidature of Grey withdrawn. Locker-Lampson contacted a number of figures in London before it was explained that Grey was a supporter of Asquith and the coalition managers were unable to influence the candidate.

Grey's candidature also led to an unseemly spat with the Lord Lieutenant of Huntingdon, Howard Coote, father of Colin Coote, who was contesting the Isle of Ely as a coalition Liberal. In a news story, it was suggested that the Lord Lieutenant was opposed to Grey's candidature and that Locker-Lampson was supporting Colin Coote. The Lord Lieutenant was livid at these public comments and demanded an explanation. He felt the Lieutenancy should be kept out of politics, but as a private citizen he would be voting for Grey. Coote also questioned the statement that support was being given to his son. Locker-Lampson was obsequious in his reply, blaming his agent for the claim that Coote opposed Grey's candidature. In the case of the Isle of Ely contest, he claimed that he had convinced the Conservative candidate, an old friend of his, to withdraw, giving Colin Coote a free run.

However, on the wider political issue, Locker-Lampson went onto the offensive, stating that "the bargain between Liberals and Unionists all over the country has been kept loyally by Unionists, but ill kept by Liberals among whom I must include yourself". Following a face to face meeting they made peace, with Locker-Lampson vowing to support Colin Coote "as a coalition candidate like myself" and Coote senior suggesting "some elements of the Country should forget old suspicions and endeavour to guide the country towards peaceful and sane regeneration".

Local Conservatives had to come to terms with two new groups of voters - younger, unskilled males and older, settled females. The party had a lengthy debate over whether to organise women in separate sections or have them as general members of the associations. In the end a complex

hybrid was established in Huntingdonshire with men and women having separate branches but joining the main central committees on an equal basis with districts left to form single branches if they preferred. The working-class voters were more of a challenge. Locker-Lampson had a track record of attempting to integrate workers into the unionist party, raising funds to support working-class Tories at the 1910 election and secretly funding a "patriotic labour" candidate at the 1915 Merthyr Boroughs by-election. As a result Locker-Lampson and his team made strong claims to represent workers in the face of ambiguous party definitions caused by the war and the coalition. Unionist supporter Strangward Smith claimed that Alderman Grey "poses as a 'Coalition-Lloyd George-Liberal-Labour' candidate and has support of the local Labour Party who hold open air meetings outside Tomson's at which they support Grey rather than Khaki".

Strangward Smith was also keen to show the significant working-class support he was able to mobilise both on the streets and at the poll. He claimed that despite "great poverty" in the district he canvassed "they certainly turned up well both at your mass meeting and at the poll". He also referred to an "orchestra" he had laid on and that "Controlling that crowd, fresh from Grey's meeting which they wrecked, and not offending one of them is something which I am rather contented about. They paraded the town afterwards to rid themselves of superfluous energy and to the disturbance of His Majesty's peaceable and sleeping subjects. Being soldiers and Coalitionists, they were admired and forgiven."

Playing the patriotic, veterans' card seems to have reinforced Locker-Lampson's image as a friend of the workers and helped him win a substantial victory on December 14, when he received 10,760 votes to just 6,416 for the Liberal candidate. But Locker-Lampson proved ill-suited to a rural seat like Huntingdonshire and by mid-1920 had secured the nomination for the Handsworth division of Birmingham in the fiefdom of his new mentor, Austen Chamberlain. Huntingdonshire did return a Unionist in 1922 but the seat was snatched by the Liberals in 1923 and again in 1929, becoming a Liberal National stronghold until the 1960s.

Evidence from Huntingdonshire suggests that the Conservatives did benefit from their support for the War. In rural constituencies they probably gained less from the redistribution of seats but were more able to mobilise new voters to their cause. The most interesting feature of this contest is the light it shed on the confusion in the constituencies caused by divisions within the Liberal party. However, the most significant finding is that the Unionists were better organised than their opponents and this was the key factor in their resounding victory. ▶

**Prof Barry Doyle**  
**University of Huddersfield**

**Further Reading:** Bryan Perrett and Anthony Lord, *The Czar's British Squadron*, (London, 1981). Nigel Keohane, *The Party of Patriotism: The Conservative Party and the First World War*, (Farnham, 2010). John Turner, *British Politics and the Great War: Coalition and Conflict*, (New Haven, 1992). Norfolk Records Office: OLL 2130/1-55, 322X4; OLL 2117/1-38, 322X4; OLL 2009/1-69, 322X3; OLL 2423/1-23, 322X6.

# The Bayley (Red Cross) Auxiliary Hospital, Nottingham 1914 to 1919

BY NIGEL WOOD

**As with most British towns and cities in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Nottingham benefited from the philanthropy of local families, and especially those involved in successful businesses.**

Two such families were the Birkins, who were major local lace manufacturers, and the Bayleys, leather manufacturers and colliery owners. In 1899 Sir Thomas Isaac Birkin donated Forest House and 3.5 acres of land in the city to the Nottingham Children's Hospital, whereas brother and sister, Thomas and Catherine (Kate) Bayley, were instrumental in founding in June 1875 the Nottingham Day Nursery on High Pavement for the benefit of working families. Two years later they added an orphanage on the same site. With the coming of war in 1914 it is unsurprising that once again these two families were at the forefront in providing support for those about to be engaged in the fighting.

It was realised very quickly that the likelihood of war casualties would create a great strain on the existing medical facilities in the city and that additional capacity would have to be provided as quickly as possible. Kate Bayley offered the Red Cross the use of one of her properties as an auxiliary hospital for the duration of the war and, along with her nephew, Dennis Readett-Bayley, the son of her now deceased brother, Thomas, she also financed the equipping of the hospital. The property in question was 7 Clinton Terrace, Derby Road, Nottingham. Dennis' sister, Muriel Katherine Huskinson, was appointed as Quartermaster and Secretary, a role she would carry out in an unpaid capacity until the closure of the hospital in 1919. Along with her husband, Percy Lambe Huskinson, she owned Langar Hall in Nottinghamshire, which would become a prisoner of war camp for Austrian and Hungarian soldiers in 1918.

The involvement of the Birkin family came through the youngest daughter of Sir Thomas, Ethel Lilian Birkin of Ruddington Grange, Nottinghamshire. Despite being from a wealthy family, Lilian was committed to nursing, having been a nurse since 1902. In 1910 she joined the British Red Cross Society, taking an active part in the organisation of the local branch as Joint Secretary. When war broke

out she became responsible for all arrangements for starting and equipping the War Hospitals in Nottinghamshire. In this she was aided by her Joint Secretary, Arthur Montagu Williams, a Nottingham solicitor, who would later be killed in action whilst serving with the 1/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Sherwood Foresters. Lilian was invited to become the Commandant and Matron of the Bayley (Red Cross) Auxiliary Hospital, a position she gladly accepted and where she remained until the hospital closed in 1919.

Clinton Terrace was one of the first stages of the development of the Park Estate adjacent to Nottingham Castle by the Dukes of Newcastle. The terrace comprised seven dwellings and was designed by the architect, Thomas Chambers Hine in 1855. It is located on a site on Derby Road overlooking The Park. According to *Wright's Directory of Nottingham and Neighbourhood 1915/16* Clinton Terrace was the home of the professional classes including bankers, architects and solicitors, with Number 7 listed as Bayley Red Cross Hospital (Miss Lilian Birkin, matron). The building was of four storeys with a basement and a garden to the rear. There was accommodation for 24 patients.

The hospital was opened on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1914. The first patients were a group of 20 Belgian soldiers sent from Lincoln Hospital as "convalescents". The German invasion of 'neutral' Belgium provoked national outrage, as did the destruction and atrocity stories that accompanied this. Not surprisingly, therefore, the arriving soldiers were met by enthusiastic crowds at Nottingham Midland Station, amongst them being 20 men of Player's (17<sup>th</sup> Nottingham) Detachment of the British Red Cross Society who transported them to the hospital.

One of their number was a soldier named Vanderstappen. His wife had been "held prisoner" in Brussels along with her 18-month-old child. However, "she did not lose heart and actuated by the indomitable ▶



## In the first two years from opening, some 500 patients had been treated and around 70 operations had been carried out.

*spirit of her race she succeeded in escaping*". Hearing that her husband had been wounded and was a patient in Nottingham she made her way there taking eight days to do so. By the time she arrived, however, he had already been transferred to a convalescent home in Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire. Lilian Birkin telegraphed the news of his wife's arrival to Vanderstappen and organised accommodation for his wife and child, who were to eventually stay with fellow Belgian refugees during the recuperation of her husband. In February 1916 the L'Independence Belge, the official organ for Belgians in exile, publicly acknowledged the kindness shown to Belgian soldiers and officers treated at the hospital. Particular mention was made of Lilian Birkin for devoting so much of her time to caring for the Belgians. The article closed with the hope that Lilian's services would be recognised in some way by the Belgian civil and military authorities.

Gradually, the mix of patients changed, as troops wounded at the front arrived. Not all, however, were direct victims of the war. In June 1915 the hospital provided emergency care for three members of the Army Service Corps who got into difficulties whilst attempting to rescue their horses from the Nottingham Canal at nearby Trowell. The horses had been turned out into a field next to the canal and a group of five or six of the animals went into the water but were quickly retrieved by the men. Unfortunately, almost immediately, two more horses went into the canal but this time sadly they drowned. Three of the men had to be rescued themselves and were brought out of the water in a poor state. The men, Corporal Goodwin, Driver Pashley and Driver Cuthbert, were taken by motor ambulance for treatment. Although reported as being in a grave condition they appeared to recover from their ordeal.



FROM THE TOP: CLINTON TERRACE, DERBY ROAD, NOTTINGHAM (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION); ALBERT WILLIAM MARRIAGE (FAU.QUAKER.ORG.UK); WALTER MELLING (FAU.QUAKER.ORG.UK).

In the first two years from opening, some 500 patients had been treated and around 70 operations had been carried out. The hospital also provided outpatients services such as physiotherapy and massage to aid recovery. The workload of the hospital continued to grow and by early 1917 space was running short. Fortunately, on the opposite side of Derby Road stood the Park Hill Congregational Church. Its schoolrooms were made available by the officers of the church. This increased the number of beds by a further 30, bringing the total to 54 beds. The new wards were officially opened on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1917 by the Duchess of Newcastle.

The nursing of patients was provided by a mix of paid nurses and unpaid volunteers, the latter being the majority. Harry Michie was appointed surgeon – an odd choice given his speciality was obstetrics. He also was unpaid. Indeed, overall only about a quarter of the staff associated with the hospital were salaried: the trained nurses, cooks, maids and other ancillary staff. Clerical workers, ward orderlies, ambulance, drivers, ancillary staff, and, of course, VAD nurses, were all volunteers. In addition there was a mascot, Jo the Parrot!

The majority of the staff were from Nottingham or the surrounding area but others were from further afield: the cook, Edith Lathbury, was from Tamworth; Anastasia Cooney, the hospital sister was from Cahir in County Tipperary, having previously served at Severals House Red Cross Hospital, Newmarket. Most of the day and night orderlies were volunteer members of Player's (17<sup>th</sup> Nottingham) Detachment of the British Red Cross Society but there were also two former members of the Friends Ambulance Unit, Albert Marriage and Walter Melling.

The Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU) was a volunteer ambulance service set up by members of the Society of Friends in 1914 to help provide opportunities for service for Friends during the World War One in line with the Quaker Peace Testimony. It was mainly

staffed by registered conscientious objectors. Albert Marriage and Walter Melling were members of the Society of Friends and exempted from military service on grounds of conscientious objection. Both were from the north of England and connected to the cotton industry but their life experiences prior to the war were somewhat different. Albert Marriage was a member of a long-established Essex family of corn millers and merchants. After leaving school he worked for his uncle, David Marriage, who was a partner in Marriage & Pinnock (Manchester) Limited, Cotton Spinners and Manufacturers later becoming the manager of the company's mill at Withnell, Lancashire. Walter Melling was ten years younger than Albert Marriage, the son of Robert and Margaret Melling. Robert was a Cloth Finisher (Walter became a cotton goods salesman).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LILIAN BIRKIN © IWM (WWC D8-4-29); MINISTRY OF INFORMATION V.A.D. PROPAGANDA IMAGE (PUBLIC DOMAIN WIKIMEDIA COMMONS); VOLUNTARY AID DETACHMENT (VAD) POSTER (PUBLIC DOMAIN WIKIMEDIA COMMONS).




By Christmas 1918, there were only eight patients remaining.

*"On Christmas Eve ... the eight decorated their hospital. Their staircase and the Rolls of Honour were draped with flags and holly, whilst gaily coloured streamers trailed across the walls and ceilings. On Christmas Day, there was a dinner with plum pudding and turkey and dessert, port wine and cigars. Then at tea there was a wonderful Blighty cake – with a little house on top and in the distance soldiers and miniature tanks coming home from war.*

*Roses were round the door, and mother outside it to welcome the soldiers. There was a Christmas tree, and relatives and friends of soldiers came in and there was a present for everyone."*

Patients continued to be admitted and treated at the hospital until early 1919. By the time the hospital closed on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1919 over 1600 patients had been cared for with many operations carried out by Harry Michie. Incredibly not a single patient died. One patient, Corporal Charles Carlin, Royal Army Medical Corps, was a noted cartoonist and impromptu entertainer of his fellow patients and would later marry Lilian Birkin.

Honours were bestowed on Lilian Birkin for her service by the British Government with the award of the Order of the British Empire and by the Belgian Government with the presentation of the Medaille de la Reine, Elisabeth.

To continue the treatment of recuperating wounded and injured servicemen following the closure of the Bayley Hospital, the Birkin family funded the Birkin Red Cross Clinic, which was located on Upper College Street, Nottingham. Lilian Birkin was appointed in charge of the nursing care. 

**Nigel Wood**  
Western Front Association

## By Christmas 1918, there were only eight patients remaining.

Albert was promoted to corporal on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1916. Later, in September 1917, he transferred to the Queen Alexandra Hospital in Dunkirk, where he became ill and was returned home. In December 1917, following his recovery, he was appointed to work as an orderly at the Bayley (Red Cross) Auxiliary Hospital. He continued working unpaid at the hospital until December 1918.

Walter served on AT 11 until he too fell sick and returned to England to recover in September 1916. When he returned to France in November he was appointed to the FAU Headquarters in Dunkirk before transferring to the Queen Alexandra Hospital. Walter continued working in the hospital until March 1918 when he left for home service in England. In April 1918 he joined the staff of the Bayley Hospital, renewing his acquaintance with Albert, and worked as an unpaid orderly until December 1918.



# “Peace Day”

## celebrations in Derby

— BY CHRIS GATELY —



“The Battle of Flowers” is not a battle that stands out in the annals of the history of World War One. It was, however, one of the most important for Derby; one which “nobody would ever forget.”

On Armistice Day the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 jubilant crowds in Derby danced in the streets waving flags and singing patriotic songs. To the delight of the influential local temperance movement, the *Derby Daily Telegraph* was able to report there was “no greater amount of Bacchanalian revelry in the streets”. Such restraint was hardly surprising as, by this time, beer was weaker than it had ever been, more expensive, and in short supply. A pre-war pint of beer cost 3d. By 1918, this had risen to 8d. Under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) beer strength had been reduced from the pre-war level of 5.25% abv. to 2.63% abv.

During the Great War the temperance movement had tried hard to influence the government to control, even ban, alcohol consumption on the Home Front. King George V even went so far as to declare his abstinence for the period of the war (except for medicinal purposes). An all out ban, however, was regarded as too extreme. Yet in Carlisle, where the large number of munitions factories had led to an enormous influx of workers creating, as Arthur Marwick describes “drink-sodden chaos”, public houses were indeed placed under Government control. This nationalisation of pubs was designed to ensure the amount of alcohol consumed by munitions workers was strictly controlled and became known as the ‘Carlisle Experiment’.

No pubs in Derby were nationalised, but they were still subject to new nationally-imposed shorter opening times, and laws that banned buying drinks for uniformed servicemen, buying rounds or “treating”. Both customer and licensee could expect severe fines if caught breaking the new regulations. The ‘Long Pull’ (where a measure of beer is served above the norm to encourage return-custom) was also banned. The lower strength beer was disparagingly called “Government Ale” or “Lloyd George’s Ale”. The government prohibited these terms being used in adverts as they regarded them as subversive, yet “Government Ale” was still mocked in music halls and newspapers. After the Armistice, the government allowed the strength of beer to gradually increase to a maximum of 4.46% abv., and the restriction on the volume of output from breweries was also removed.

Early in February 1919 the demobbed local Battalions of Sherwood Foresters started to return. First to come home were those who had been held as Prisoners of War (POWs). Greeted by the Lord Mayor at the town hall, they were treated to entertainment at the Derby Drill Hall. For those POWs who returned to Matlock, a Red Cross Victory Ball was held at The Pavilion to honour them. Here they were each presented with a silver cigarette case

**Prime Minister David Lloyd George announced that Saturday 19th July 1919 would be “Peace Day” and a Bank Holiday (in 1919 Saturday was a normal working day) so that, nationwide, people could celebrate the final end of the Great War.**

**A maroon rocket was then fired into the air to give the signal to the whole town that “The Battle of The Flowers” was about to commence.**

inscribed “Welcome Home”, paid for by the local Public POW Fund. Over the following weeks the 1st and 2nd Battalions Sherwood Foresters, plus the Derbyshire Imperial Yeomanry, came home and on each occasion crowds of locals cheered them as they marched to Derby Market Place to receive a civic reception. In Chesterfield an equally enthusiastic reception was given to their local 6th Battalion Sherwood Foresters.

On the 27th June, Derby’s own regiment the 1/5th Battalion Sherwood Foresters returned and received a ‘rapturous’ reception from the excited assembled crowds of local townfolk. Met by the Lord Mayor at Midland Road railway station, they marched through the town to the Market Place where, after a short address to the assembled crowd of on-lookers, the Medaille Militaire and Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) were presented to local hero Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) Bertram Ashmore Maddock for bravery at Hohenzollern Redoubt. He was then royally ‘entertained’ at the Royal Hotel, Victoria Street.

In Parliament Prime Minister David Lloyd George announced that Saturday 19th July 1919 would be “Peace Day” and a Bank Holiday (in 1919 Saturday was a normal working day) so that, nationwide, people could celebrate the final end of the Great War. In Derby, a “Peace Celebrations Fund Committee” was immediately formed by Alderman W. Blews-Robotham, who had been elected Lord Mayor only two days before the Armistice. It raised £5,434.16s.7d., including £100 donated by the Duke of Devonshire and various amounts from local companies, employees, and individuals. That this was a little short of the £7,000 target was thought to be due to the earlier overwhelming patriotic subscription support for “Tank Week”, when a tank was displayed in the Market Place, and “Victory Gun Week”,

which were held before the Armistice. However, the fund still enabled many activities and events to be held across the town and its surrounding areas.

The Lord Mayor announced that a special medal would be struck to be presented to all school children in the Borough of Derby. On Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July he visited 32 schools in the Borough, where he presented the medals to 25,000 school-children for “Endurance of the War on the Home Front”. The following day was designated “Children’s Day”, and street parties were held across the town and country. At many of these parties, each child was presented with an inscribed cup or mug as a keepsake of the day.

For “Peace Day” all public buildings had been lavishly festooned with decorations. The proceedings began at 8am with a combined peal of bells from five town churches. Two hours later a muffled peal was rung “in memory of those who had made the supreme sacrifice”. Fancy dress competitions were held, with prizes for Ladies and Gents Best Fancy Dress and Best Decorated Car and Vehicle. Winners were presented with their prizes by the Lord Mayor at the Market Place, in front of an assembled crowd. Miss Lillie Shrimpton as a bride’s cake and Mr S. Hulse as Mephistopheles – “The Kaiser’s Best Friend” took the honours. Trent Motor Traction, the forerunner to Trent Barton, and Mrs Preston won the prizes in the motorised category.

A maroon rocket was then fired into the air to give the signal to the whole town that “The Battle of The Flowers” was about to commence. Leading the “well armed” members of the procession, tricorne-hatted officials carrying large banners preceded the Lord Mayor’s car as it headed down the Corn Market towards St. Peter’s Street. The first “shots” came from the Mayor’s car as the Mayoress and her daughters opened up with a volley of roses aimed at the excited crowds lining the streets. The crowds retaliated immediately and confetti, provided to them for free earlier that day, filled the air. “The conflict raged furiously for as long as the ‘ammunition’ lasted”, finally leaving the streets of Derby looking like a carpet of flowers and confetti. Amongst the procession, one decorated dray draped with the “ingenious tableau” “From War to Peace” had aboard it ▶



BATTLE OF THE FLOWERS ORMASTON ROAD PARADE (COPYRIGHT CHRIS GATELY)



BATTLE OF THE FLOWERS ORMASTON ROAD PARADE (COPYRIGHT CHRIS GATELY)



PEACE MUG (COPYRIGHT CHRIS GATELY)





When "The Battle of Flowers" reached its peaceful end, ex-servicemen marched to the county cricket ground where a carnival of festivities was held.




FROM TOP:  
PEACE MEDALS PRESENTED TO LOCAL SCHOOL CHILDREN (COPYRIGHT CHRIS GATELY); 1919 CHILDREN'S STREET PARTY DERBY (COPYRIGHT CHRIS GATELY)

characters portrayed by female employees of Messrs. Newton Brothers Ltd. Derby, manufacturers of the aero wireless communication generator carried by the R34 air-ship on its recent return transatlantic flight to New York.

When "The Battle of Flowers" reached its peaceful end, ex-servicemen marched to the county cricket ground where a carnival of festivities was held. Coconut shies, roundabouts, dolly stalls, shooting galleries, music and dancing were on offer, as were many competitive sports events including running, cycling, tug-of-war and an open-air boxing tournament. Local champion middle-weight boxer Sherwood Forester Sergeant Harry Curzon DCM put on a personal worthy display followed by his "White Hopes" amateur pupils. For this ticket-only event, each ex-serviceman received free admission for himself and two friends, a free lunch, and 10 shillings worth of tokens to spend as they wished. Unsurprisingly perhaps, they appear to have spent most of this in the refreshment tents. Uniquely Derby pubs had also been granted an occasional license, which extended opening hours to 11pm. With the strength of beer now back at near pre-war levels, the result was perhaps inevitable. A grand fireworks display finally brought the joy and celebrations of the day to a conclusion. Everyone, without doubt, would look back on the day's activities as a great success and something to remember for ever.

However, in the August edition of the Derby temperance movement monthly publication *Temperance Bells*, a less positive view was taken. It "condemned

and deplored outstanding features" of the Cricket Ground celebrations. "Drink brings disappointment and disgrace". The "superabundance of beer provided parties responsible for the sad sights witnessed with but one idea - Beer firstly, more beer secondly and thirdly beer again. An inadequate supply of non-alcoholic drinks was a distinct encouragement to excessive drinking, leading to the exploitation of those who, having undergone the stress and strain of war, should be spared undue temptations to indulgence". The Derby Free Church Council took a similarly dim view and passed a resolution: "There was an excessive provision of intoxicating drinks and an inadequate supply of non-alcoholic beverages". The *Derbyshire Advertiser* was a little more charitable, accepting that "Zeal outran discretion" but adding "drunkenness on the County Cricket Ground was universally condemned".

It was, after enormous sacrifice, a time to celebrate the end of the "War to End All Wars". People were in an optimistic mood looking forward to a future of peace and prosperity, a land fit for heroes. This, after all, had been the day of "The Battle of The Flowers" and Derby had won. 

Chris Gately BSc, MA

# 'These splendid lads'

## LEICESTER'S CLARENDON PARK IN THE GREAT WAR

BY JOE HALL

During the Great War the small south-Leicester neighbourhood of Clarendon Park lost over 100 of its young men. On some streets one could walk for two minutes among the densely-packed Victorian terraces and pass the houses of up to thirteen men killed. Records show that only three of the suburb's thirty-three streets avoided losing residents, although the imperfect state of the surviving documents suggest that even these may have their hidden casualties.

Perhaps the worst affected house in the neighbourhood belonged to Henry and Eliza Bree of 252 Avenue Road Extension. The first loss came in August 1917, when their 21-year-old son Arthur was killed. Only eight days later 19-year-old Oliver also fell, and within nine months Harold had died of wounds in a London hospital, aged only 25. The Bree household was not the only one in the area to suffer multiple casualties, but the loss of three sons halved their pre-war household family of six.

The effects of such losses as these were not confined to individual households, but rippled through the wider community. This can be seen in the log book kept by Mr Scattergood, headmaster of local school St John's. Many entries show that former pupils now in the army sent letters to their old headmaster, and even visited the school when they could. When the school suffered its first casualties Scattergood's affection for his former charges – boys he had watched grow into young men – is laid bare. On May 16<sup>th</sup> 1915, Alfred Coleman was killed in an attack on German trenches. Two days before this he had also been involved in a hard fight which had driven his unit back to a river. With injured all around, Coleman and three others managed to drag many wounded from the water to a place where they could be tended to. Three weeks later news of his death reached St John's. With a heavy heart Scattergood noted it in the log ▶





CORNER OF ST LEONARDS ROAD AND CLARENDON PARK ROAD FACING EAST TOWARDS QUEENS ROAD, TAKEN BETWEEN 1912 AND 1918. VISIBLE FROM THIS SPOT ARE 11 HOUSES WHICH SUFFERED A LOSS DURING THE WAR, INCLUDING 193 CLARENDON PARK ROAD, HOME OF LOCAL SCHOOL CARETAKER ARTHUR PEARSON WHO DIED OF WOUNDS IN 1917.

Often those at home would never know the details of their loved ones' final moments, but occasionally letters would be sent back to grieving families by those who had been present at the end. One such letter concerns Ernest Read, formerly of 75 Montague Road. Ernest enlisted with the Leicestershire Regiment in 1915, and fought through much of the war. He was reported missing sometime during the large German offensive which began on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1918, and on the 28<sup>th</sup> he arrived at a hospital in Étapes having suffered gunshot wounds to the abdomen. With Ernest close to death, a Maori chaplain from the New Zealand Expeditionary Force named Hoani Parata stopped to minister to him. In a letter Parata later sent to Ernest's parents, we learn that Ernest had crawled 700 or 800 yards after being wounded. He was also in a "great deal of pain", but was aware that Parata was with him, and even managed to repeat the Lord's Prayer. His last words were also recorded by Parata: "Tell my mother that I loved her to the end and everything that belongs to me is for her... tell her I died doing my duty and fighting for my

**Often those at home would never know the details of their loved ones' final moments, but occasionally letters would be sent back to grieving families by those who had been present at the end.**



SGT ERNEST READ, 2/4TH BTN, THE LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT. SON OF WALTER AND KAREN READ OF 75 MONTAGUE ROAD, CLARENDON PARK. REPRODUCED BY THE KIND PERMISSION OF LIAM MCCARTHY.

book, but focused his thoughts on the fact that he had saved so many, finishing the entry with: "We are proud he attended this school, and that he gave his life for others". At the top of the page Scattergood also pinned a newspaper cutting which detailed Coleman's exploits.

Another entry, on June 10<sup>th</sup> 1918, noted the death of former pupil Private John Baker. Aged only 20, John had lived with his mother at 103 Lorne Road before the war. After noting his death, the log book states: "He had the sweetest disposition of any boy I know. The loss of these splendid lads is very painful to the headmaster and class teachers." A week later, thirty-seven-year-old George Cramp of 67 Lorne Road, formerly 'First Assistant' to the headmaster and now a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Royal Garrison Artillery, paid a visit to the school. One can only imagine the conversation between Cramp and his headmaster Scattergood, both painfully aware of the many boys they had nurtured through their schooldays who would never return. Perhaps Cramp intended to resume his place at the school after the war, but he was destined to suffer the fate of so many of his pupils, dying of wounds seven days after the Armistice of 1918; another blow to the already overwhelmed Scattergood.

The loss of so many young men doubtless changed the mood and makeup of the tightly-packed community, a change which must have been most noticeable to those who returned from overseas. Herbert Cooper of 74 St Leonards Road arrived home in 1919 after being released from a POW camp in Merseburg, Germany. He had been captured during the German offensive of 1918 and at first had been classed as missing. By 1918 'missing' had been shorn of some of the hope it embodied in earlier years of the war. Now it could just as easily - and perhaps more likely - mean that a loved one had been lost forever in the mud, or extinguished utterly beneath the violence of artillery fire. To be informed that Herbert was safe, albeit in enemy hands, made his wife Alice one of the lucky few.

If Clarendon Park was a different place to that which they had left upon enlistment, those who fought and returned could also be much changed. Francis Nixon of 138 Lytton Road left England in 1915 as a young man of 23 and returned in 1919 much weakened by illness, with hearing loss caused by gunshot wounds to the face and ear. His first task would have been to console his grieving mother, who had lost her youngest son Albert only a month before the Armistice. Elsewhere, Fred Slough returned to his wife Matilda at 56 Lytton Road having lost the use of a hand to a bullet wound. Next door at number 54, Ernest Allen had to live with the lifelong effects of being gassed. Less visible but equally debilitating were the injuries suffered by men like James Mattock of 16 Adderley Road. Having been discharged with 30% pension after suffering from "Disorderly Action of the Heart" - which today would be classed as a stress disorder akin to PTSD - Mattock returned to his wife and two children but struggled to receive the pension he was owed.

Whilst losses occurred steadily throughout the war, certain events could also scythe through communities, claiming many local men in a single day. George Knight of 21 Cradock Road was killed during what has been described as the Leicestershire Regiment's blackest day; the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt on October 13<sup>th</sup> 1915. The attack resulted in over 3,000 casualties, most of which came in the first few minutes. Before the war George had been an errand boy, and was only 18 when he fell. Other local men killed during this engagement include George Harding Lines of 2 West Avenue, Albert Bass of 14 Leopold Road, and Robert Gamble of 6 Bulwer Road.

## Those killed are often described as men, but many were in fact only on the cusp of manhood.

Country". The letter then takes a personal turn as Parata offers his own condolences to Ernest's mother: "My heart goes out in sympathy to you. Being a married man myself with a family, I know how much Mothers have to go through in bringing sons into the world and caring for them until they reach the stage of manhood. I often think and say that the women who wait at home have a much harder time than we men out on Active Service."

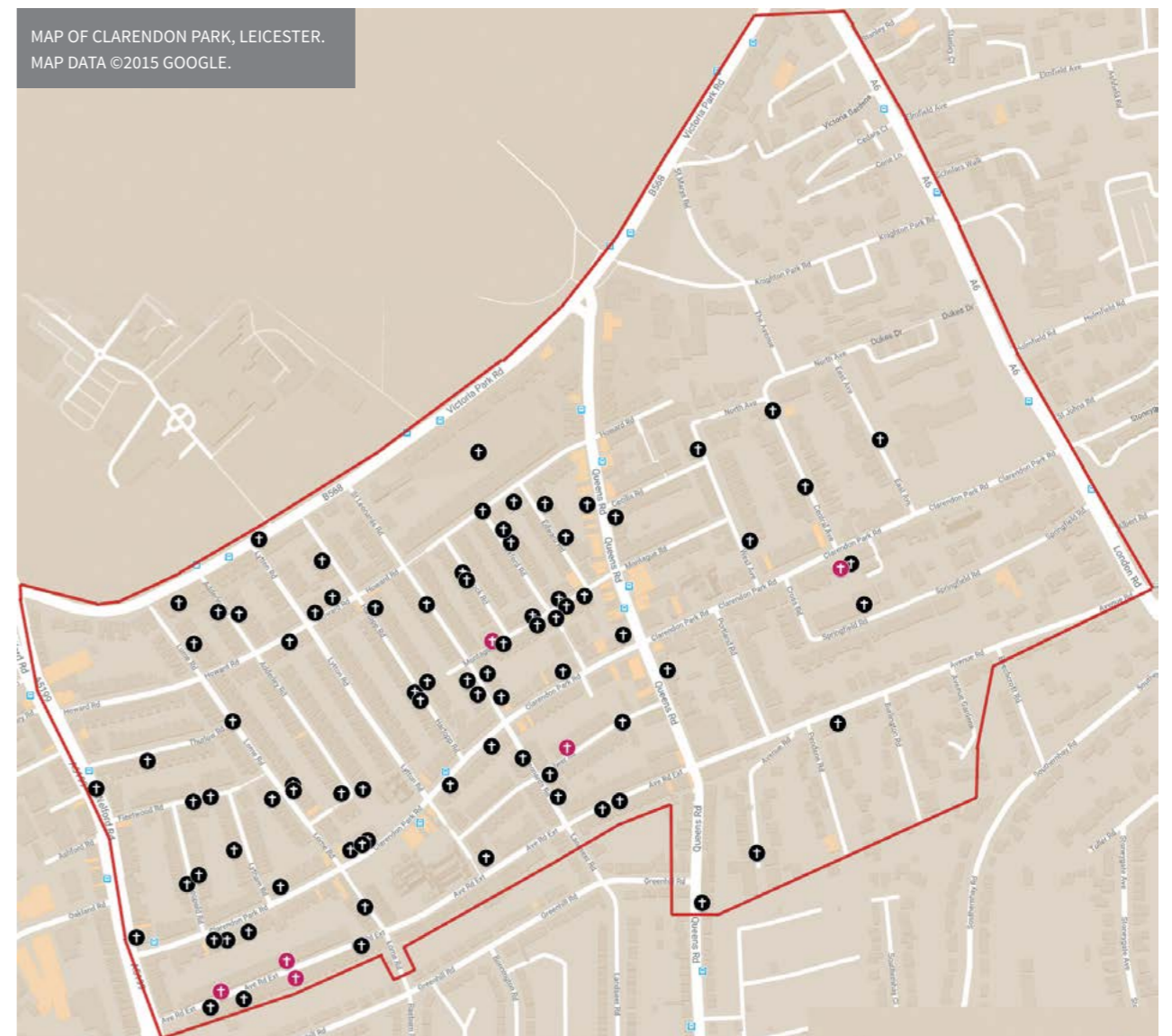
Ernest Read was 23 when he died. Those killed are often described as men, but many were in fact only on the cusp of manhood. Twenty-six of those killed from Clarendon Park were aged just 20 or under, including the 18-year-old Jon Everitt of 112 St Leonards Road who died fighting with bayonet and trench-club to take German positions at Givenchy in April 1918.

When peace finally came Clarendon Park's residents, like those in every neighbourhood across the country, turned their thoughts to remembering the fallen. Whilst those few who had died of wounds back in England had graves their families could easily visit, most were not so accessible. Many were buried across France and Belgium, some were further afield, and a significant number of families had to cope with their loved ones having no known grave at all. William and Emily Jarvis of 90 Montague Road exemplify the pitiful situation in which this could place

families. On January 16<sup>th</sup> 1916 their son Frederick died of wounds received during the Battle of Sheikh Sa'ad in Mesopotamia, and was buried at Basra. In May of the next year they lost another son, Charles, at the Battle of Arras in France. Charles' body was never recovered, and as such he had no known grave. Two sons to mourn, one commemorated on a cold stone memorial in France, and one beneath the sand 2,800 miles from home.

In 1921, the vacated military hospital adjacent to Clarendon Park opened its doors as University College Leicester. It was founded as a living memorial to those local men who had lost their lives in the Great War, in the hope that future generations would achieve the potential they could not. It is perhaps fitting, therefore, that so many students have today made Clarendon Park their home, attending lectures on the campus above which flies a flag emblazoned with the motto: *Ut vitam habeant* - "that they may have life".

**Joe Hall**  
Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society

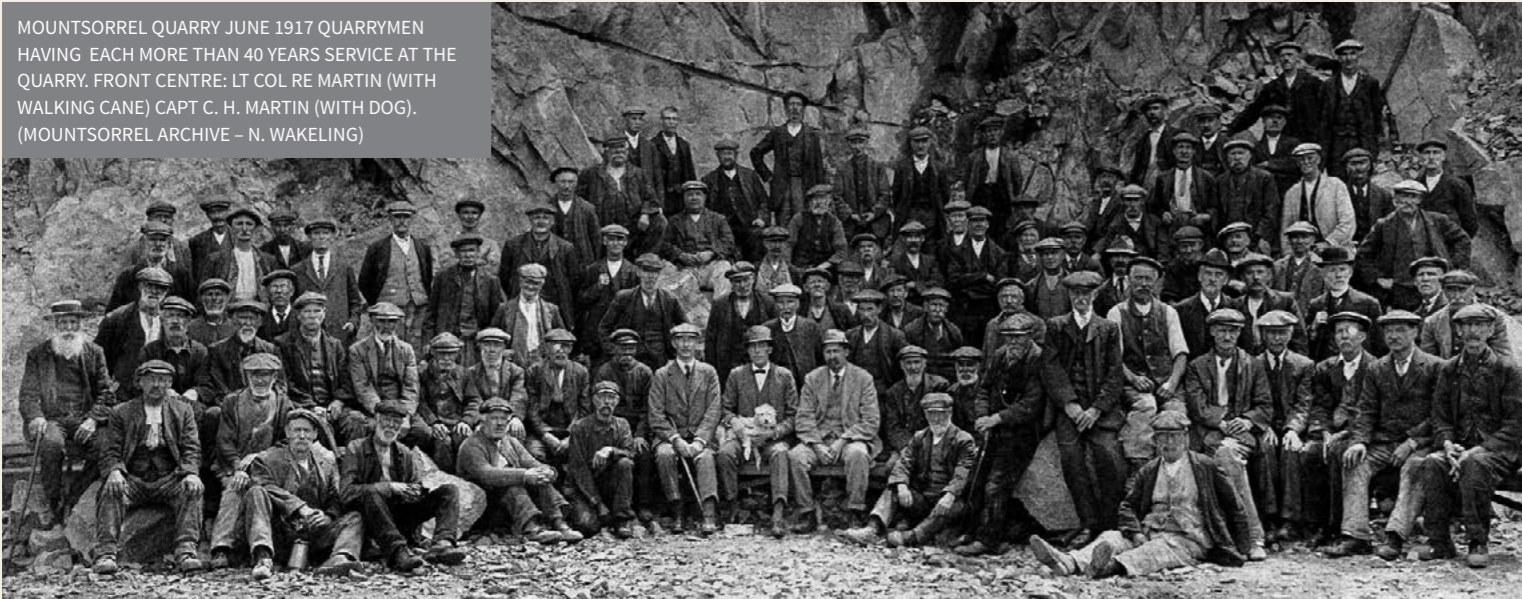


>> The red outline denotes the neighbourhood's boundary. Black crosses show the houses of those killed, and red crosses show houses which suffered multiple losses. The closely-packed terraces mainly found in the western part meant a higher population density in this area, and as such it was the most severely affected.



BY LINDA TYMAN

MOUNTSORREL QUARRY JUNE 1917 QUARRYMEN HAVING EACH MORE THAN 40 YEARS SERVICE AT THE QUARRY. FRONT CENTRE: LT COL RE MARTIN (WITH WALKING CANE) CAPT C. H. MARTIN (WITH DOG). (MOUNTSORREL ARCHIVE – N. WAKELING)



# The effect of the First World War on Mountsorrel Quarry

For many years Mountsorrel in Leicestershire has been famous for its pink granite, reflected in its use for the village's war memorial. This exceptionally hard stone has been used throughout the country, one of the most notable examples being on the forecourt of Buckingham Palace. Mountsorrel has been involved historically with quarrying for many centuries, but the industry was developed on a much larger scale in the late eighteenth century.

Once it was discovered how to work the stone into more regular shapes and sizes, it became ideal for buildings such as churches, bridges and schools. With better management and working methods, the quarry industry became increasingly successful, so that by 1870 it employed between 500 and 600 men. By 1900, 200,000 tons of stone a year were being extracted. At this time 600 men and 30 boys, who earned on average 30 shillings and between one and three shillings per week respectively, were employed at the quarry. By the beginning of the First World War, the quarry was one of the biggest employers in the village. The company provided cottages, a hospital and a school for the village in addition to employment at the quarry.

The Mountsorrel Granite Company's (MGC) association with the armed forces – and in particular the Territorial Army – began well before the outbreak of war. In October 1913 the Company agreed to sell a piece of land to the County Territorial Association for the re-erection of a Drill Hall, the previous one having burnt down, near the Company cottages on Loughborough Road. The conveyance of this land to the Leicestershire and Rutland Territorial Association took place in the same month.

When war was declared in August 1914, several of the directors of the MGC who were already serving members of the Territorial Forces became rapidly involved in active service. These directors were from the Martin family. William Martin had taken over Mountsorrel's quarries in 1844. The Mountsorrel Granite Company was incorporated in 1876, with all shares being held by the family. Major Robert Edmund Martin, the Managing Director, was Second in Command, 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment (and was later promoted to Lt Colonel in command of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion). His brother, Major William

Francis Martin, the Company Secretary, was C Squadron Commander, Leicestershire Yeomanry and their cousin, Captain Charles Hamilton Martin, a Director, re-joined the Leicestershire Yeomanry as Assistant Adjutant. Another cousin and Director, Captain Gerald H. Martin, was serving as a regular army officer in the King's Royal Rifle Corps. For the length of their army service, they each had a reduction in their annual salary from the MGC.

to enlistment greatly affected production. For example, in 1915 the number of setts (rectangular units of quarried stone) produced in the Granite Company quarries was only 7,649 tons, as opposed to 14,060 tons in the previous year. Kerb production in 1914 was 1,095 tons but by 1915 it had fallen to only a third of that number.

The shortage of workers in the quarries was so acute by 1916 that the War Office was asked to

service of those present was 40 years, but the longest serving had reportedly worked in the quarry for 75 years. These older quarrymen were joined by two Martin cousins, Captain Charles Hamilton Martin and Lt Col Sir Robert Edmund Martin, both of whom had returned to their roles in the Company having been invalided out of the Army following injuries at the Battle of Frezenberg and the Hohenzollern Redoubt respectively in 1915.



By August 1917, a much greater demand for manpower saw men with little military training being rushed to the Front.

In the absence of these key men, who between them were the decision makers of the company, additional directors were appointed to run the quarrying business for the duration of the war.

Aware of the potentially disastrous effect on the village community of the loss of earnings amongst quarry families, MGC issued a letter on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1914 which stated that 10 shillings per week would be paid to the wives of all Territorials and Army Reservists in their employment who were called up for military service. This arrangement also applied to the widowed mothers of single men, who relied upon their sons' earnings for their living. The payment was to continue until the County Committee – or any other body dealing with the matter of supporting the families of serving men – decided what action to take. The amount provided by the Granite Company was then potentially subject to change.

By mid-August 1914, 32 quarry employees had been called up for military service. In August 1916 33 quarry employees departed for the Front, having assembled at the Granite Company offices before marching to Sibley station, accompanied by the Mountsorrel Band. The loss of quarry workers

authorise the retention of necessary labour. The average working week in the quarries at this time was 56 hours, or until it became too dark to see properly. By 1919 this figure had reduced to 48 hours per week, with the quarries closing at 5.15pm and 5pm on a Friday. A further attempt to address the lack of workers was made when the Company Chairman agreed to contact the War Office to arrange for a squad of prisoners of war to be employed at Mountsorrel quarries. This was to be enacted as soon as the weather was suitable for them to live under canvas. The additional workforce was eventually provided by 30 Austrians and three Poles who were interned aliens and not prisoners of war. They were billeted at the Mechanics' Institute and were not permitted to travel beyond a radius of five miles without guards accompanying them. The villagers generally accepted these men as they were perceived as aliens rather than enemy soldiers. By mid-March 1919, these internees had all left the village.

In summer 1917, there was cause for a small celebration to mark the long service of many of the older quarrymen still at work and an informal group photograph was taken. The minimum

Many Mountsorrel quarrymen were already serving in the Territorial Force with 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Leicestershire Regiment at the beginning of the First World War. They were rapidly joined by others who quickly volunteered. There was also a good number of Regular Army Reservists working in the quarry and they quickly left to re-join their former units. It is impossible to put an exact figure on the number of men who left in those first months but we can identify 113 Mountsorrel men who worked in the quarries and served during the war. Of these, 47 served in Quarry Companies RE and a further eight served in associated units such as Road Construction Companies. There were a further four men who do not appear to have had a quarrying background but served in the Quarry Companies, two of whom were in the boot and shoe industry prior to the war. Each Quarry Company had two bootmakers in its ranks to ensure that repairs could be made wherever the men were at the time. Of those who were not transferred to Quarry Companies, 21 had either been killed or invalided out of the Army before the demand for quarrymen arose. ▶



As the First World War developed into static trench warfare, and the size and complexity of the armies on the Western Front grew, so did the need for military road and rail construction. The demand came for raw materials and the men to obtain them from quarries. The first two companies, 198<sup>th</sup> and 199<sup>th</sup> Quarry Companies Royal Engineers (RE), were formed in the summer of 1916, and the men were gathered at the RE Tunnelling Depot at Clipstone in Nottinghamshire. After the companies were moved to France in August 1916, they came under the control of the Director of Works there.

By August 1917, a much greater demand for manpower saw men with little military training being rushed to the Front. Along with the new recruits, professional quarrymen who were already serving in the Army were transferred so that their trade skills could best be used. Men of the 1<sup>st</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Battalions, Leicestershire Regiment were transferred, through the Divisional Engineer unit, North Midland Field Squadron RE, to the new Quarry Companies. These men are believed to have been amongst those who formed 328<sup>th</sup> and

## There was always a constant risk of accidents in quarry work

329<sup>th</sup> Quarry Companies RE in France. They did not receive any proper military training and weapons issues were minimal. On arrival in France, the majority of the units went immediately to the area of the Marquise-Rinxent quarry complex, northeast of Boulogne in northern France.


Men were required to work on a shift system through the day and night, and the shift continued until the required amount of stone had been quarried. A quarryman writing home described that at Marquise-Rinxent "we were split up into 3 parties for separate quarries and where I had to go was called the Happy Valley or Heureuse and was about 1 ¼ miles away but we have to rise at 5 and go to work at 5.45 and work till 5.30 with ½ hour for breakfast and 1 ¼ hours for dinner ... for a company like ours we have to turn out 300 tons for the 24 hours work ... The quarry is called Beaulieu and I am working the first week on day work".

It was not unusual for Quarry Company men to remain in France long after the Armistice was signed as the Quarrying Companies were needed to assist the French and Belgians with the rebuilding of their roads. Furthermore, because these units were formed late in the war, the men had to wait for demobilization until those who had been called up before them had been discharged.

Mountsorrel men served with nine different Quarry Companies, mostly in the Marquise-Rinxent quarry complex. But even here, although well behind the front lines, they were still vulnerable

to enemy attack from the air. Additionally, there was always a constant risk of accidents in quarry work. It was due to such an accident that Mountsorrel man, 262380 Sapper Cecil Porter of 324<sup>th</sup> Quarrying Company RE was killed on 1st April 1917. On 25<sup>th</sup> September 1917 the Beaulieu quarry within the Marquise-Rinxent complex was bombed by enemy aircraft, resulting in the deaths of two Mountsorrel men, 196184 Sapper John Henry Pick and 196206 Sapper Harry Slingsby, who were both formerly employed by the Mountsorrel Granite Company.

Major William Francis Martin was killed at the Battle of Frezenberg. His elder brother Robert, having survived the war, later became the Chairman of Leicestershire County Council from 1924 to 1960. He recalled: "I remember the astonishing effect with which the Mountsorrel quarrymen wielded their picks and shovels when it came to digging trenches, under my cousin's command in the stone quarries of northern France, they produced roadstone in quantities which astonished the authorities".

It took some considerable time for Mountsorrel to return to normal after the disruptions of war. The return of many of the quarry workers, for example, gave rise to housing shortages in the village. The Granite Company considered addressing this problem by obtaining former army huts for accommodation, together with a canteen and baths. Nevertheless, quarrying in Mountsorrel carried on, and indeed continues to this day. There is no doubt, however, that the war had a substantial effect on the quarry industry, not least in respect of the 24 employees who gave their lives in defence of their country. 

Linda Tyman  
Mountsorrel Heritage Group

MOUNTSORREL VILLAGE WAR MEMORIAL



# The Sherwood Forester and the surgeon who changed the face of plastic surgery

BY SIÂN LIDDLE

In January 1917, during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres, Second Lieutenant William M. Spreckley of the 16<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment) suffered a gunshot wound to the face and lost his entire nose. The eldest son of a Nottingham lace-maker, by 1918 Spreckley had become a defining figure in the pioneering developments in plastic surgery instigated by the First World War.

Around 60,500 British men suffered facial injuries during the Great War, including gunshot wounds, severe burns and shrapnel lacerations from exploding shells. Before 1914, an injury like Spreckley's would have been considered a death sentence, but as weaponry advanced, so too did medical care at the front. Men with whole sections of their faces blown away or burned beyond recognition were surviving and being transported back home for specialised medical care, and by 1915 a ward at Cambridge Military Hospital, Aldershot, had been dedicated solely to the treatment of facial injuries. This is where Spreckley was admitted on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1917, under the care of New Zealand surgeon Harold Delf Gillies.

In 1916, the Battle of the Somme had sent an unprecedented number of servicemen back to England with severe head wounds, rendering the 200 beds at Aldershot wholly inadequate. As a result, surgeons had appealed for a specialised hospital to be established for facial injuries on an Imperial basis, and, as a consequence, Queen's Hospital was founded in Sidcup in July 1917. It became known as WWI's major centre for maxillo-facial and plastic surgery, and Spreckley, along with hundreds of other facially injured servicemen, was transferred there.

Gillies, who had been instrumental in the hospital's conception, was appointed lead surgeon, and conducted thirteen of the fifteen surgeries that Spreckley underwent during his reconstructive treatment. Gillies noted in his 1920 book *Plastic Surgery of the Face* that Spreckley's appearance on admission "was that of a large crater in the middle of the face which normally was filled by the nose". After multiple surgeries, Gillies described the aesthetic results of Spreckley's 'plastic operations' as "truly remarkable", asserting that Spreckley's treatment "by skin-grafting the intranasal aspect of the new nose marks a definite stage in the advancement of rhinoplasty."

Due to the high number of facial casualties during the First World War, the team of surgeons at Queen's were afforded the opportunity to experiment on an unprecedented number of patients, and almost every area of reconstructive surgery saw significant advancements. One of the most groundbreaking methods produced during this period was the "tubed pedicle flap procedure", developed by Gillies to dramatically reduce the chances of infection during skin grafts by forming a tube of living tissue that remained attached at either end, thereby retaining a strong blood supply. Able Seaman Willie Vicarage, admitted to Queen's on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1917 with cordite burns, was the first patient to undergo this experimental procedure.

Vicarage had received severe burns to the face and hands while onboard H.M.S. Malaya during the Battle of Jutland. During the first tubed pedicle flap procedure, Gillies had attached the pedicle directly from a healthy area of skin on Vicarage's chest to a damaged area on his nose, and though the reconstructive results were highly successful, the experience for Vicarage was less than comfortable. The tube, attaching Vicarage's face to his chest, severely constricted his movements, meaning that he was unable to turn or raise his head for weeks until the next stage of the process could commence. For some ▶



## Due to the high number of facial casualties during the First World War, the team of surgeons at Queen's were afforded the opportunity to experiment on an unprecedented number of patients, and almost every area of reconstructive surgery saw significant advancements.

patients the pain of this state was intolerable, as in the case of Lance Corporal J. Spicer of the 11<sup>th</sup> Lincoln Regiment, who opted for his treatment to be abandoned and for his "hand to be removed from [his] nose, as he was unable to bear the pain any longer".

It was not only pain that moved some men to opt out of further plastic treatment, but also the higher risks that accompanied experimental surgeries. Second Lieutenant Henry Ralph Lumley of the Royal Flying Corps was admitted to Gillies' care fifteen months after sustaining severe burns as a result of a plane crash at his graduation ceremony from The Central Flying School of the RFC, burning out his left eye and leaving the right practically blind. There came a point in Lumley's reconstructive treatment when Gillies had to decide "whether to give this unfortunate airman a further year's rest or whether to carry on with the procedure, knowing that the latter might not succeed."

Gillies noted in his aforementioned book that Lumley himself was "bitterly disappointed and exceedingly depressed at the thought of having to wait another long period, and it was feared that he would not wait so long". Against his better judgement, Gillies decided to continue with an experimental "single replacement method" that promised far faster reconstructive results, but at a greater risk to the patient. The operation initially appeared successful, but soon after both the chest area and the face became infected, and Lumley died at the age of just twenty-five.

Lumley's depression over his injuries, and the suicidal implications in Gillies' words "it was feared that he would not wait so long", paint the picture of a man who viewed his injuries as a fate worse than death, and this grim outlook was not uncommon among other patients at Queen's. Private Wordsworth enlisted voluntarily on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1916 and served with the 8<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Yorkshire and Lancashire regiment. Five months after enlisting he was posted

to the Somme, and on 1<sup>st</sup> July he suffered what he described as the "loss of [his] left eye combined with a g[h]astly disfigurement." In his recollections, written whilst still a patient at Queen's, Wordsworth defined a facial wound as "one of the worst afflictions that can befall any person".

The outlook concerning facial injury differed from patient to patient, and many servicemen tried to look for the best in their situation. In his book Gillies wrote of burns patient Vicarage: "How a man can survive such an appalling burn is difficult to imagine, until one has met one of these survivors from fire, and realised the unquenchable optimism which carries them through almost anything." In another case of cheerful resignation, a Private of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, with a heavy wound to his cheek caused by a shell, "was found one morning looking in the mirror and smiling with the remaining side of his face. His excuse for his amusement, he explained to his medical officer, was that he was thinking 'phwat an aisy toime the barber would have in future.'"

There is no question that the treatment these servicemen underwent, and the dedication of their surgeons to develop more successful reconstructive methods, had a groundbreaking effect on the advancement of plastic surgery. The end of the war did not mark an end to this work (Queen's continued to treat casualties of war until 1925), and it did not mark an end to the struggles experienced by disfigured servicemen in daily life.

Loss of limbs was a relatively familiar sight in post-war Britain, as amputation had existed for thousands of years before 1914, but the new, unprecedented survival rate for severe facial injury presented society with an entirely unfamiliar kind of war casualty. Accounts from descendants of Queen's patients relay some of the prejudices and discrimination that servicemen experienced as they attempted to reintegrate themselves into post-war society.


Facial patient Harold Twinn's granddaughter described how, when her grandfather and his wife had a child, "people crowded around the pram, expecting the baby to have inherited his father's deformities", and there were also occasions of "people calling out unpleasant names as they walked down the street". In another case, Walter Ashworth's granddaughter told how her grandfather's employer had promised that his position as a tailor would be waiting for him when he returned from service, "However, they had not expected him to have facial scars and so refused to let him work in front of shop as a tailor, and relegated him to the back of shop where he was demoted to simple jobs. It upset him so much that he gave his notice."

Aversion to facial disfigurement was not a universal issue in post-war Britain, and when Ashworth's fiancée called off their engagement due to his wounds, his granddaughter later explained that

*"One of the lady's friends happened to be my grandmother and she was so disgusted about the lady's actions that she started to write to my grandfather in hospital and went to see him. They became engaged and later married in Halifax."*

Spreckley's scars certainly did not hinder him from building a family life. He married in Nottingham in 1921, had eight children, and lived to the age of 80. After being wounded in Belgium Spreckley had been granted the rank of honorary Lieutenant, and was discharged from Queen's for the final time on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1920, two and a half years after first receiving his injury. He remained indebted to the surgeon who had treated him, and named his firstborn son Michael Gillies after the man who had reconstructed his face.

Harold Gillies himself was knighted in 1930 for his war services and continued with his reconstructive work throughout World War Two and until his death in 1960. He made many significant contributions to the development of surgical techniques throughout his lifetime, but it was his work during, and in the years following, the First World War, that solidified his enduring legacy as 'the father of plastic surgery'.

Spreckley's treatment is described by Gillies as a defining turning point in the advancement of rhinoplasty, but he was just one of seventy servicemen from East Midlands regiments who were treated at Queen's for severe facial injuries during WWI. Admitted between the ages of eighteen and forty-one, each of these men underwent plastic operations in order to reconstruct some semblance of their original appearance before injury, and in doing so played an important part in the long journey of development that has led to modern day capabilities in plastic surgery. 

**Sian Liddle**  
Nottingham Trent University



<<  
STAGES OF THE FIRST  
TUBED-PEDICLE  
FLAP PROCEDURE  
CONDUCTED BY GILLIES  
ON BURNS PATIENT  
WILLIE VICARAGE,  
ONE OF THE DEFINING  
RECONSTRUCTIVE  
METHODS DEVELOPED  
DURING THE FIRST  
WORLD WAR.

>>  
PROGRESS PHOTOS  
DOCUMENTING  
THE RESULTS OF  
SPRECKLEY'S  
RHINOPLASTY, FROM  
TOTAL LOSS OF  
NOSE TO COMPLETE  
RECONSTRUCTION  
THROUGH GILLIES'  
EXPERIMENTAL SKIN-  
GRAFTING METHOD.

**Further Reading:** [www.gilliesarchives.org.uk](http://www.gilliesarchives.org.uk).  
**Dr Andrew Bamji**, *Faces from the Front: Harold Gillies, The Queen's Hospital, Sidcup and the Origins of Modern Plastic Surgery*, (2017). **Joanna Bourke**, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (1996). **Harold Gillies**, *Plastic Surgery of the Face Based on Selected Cases of War Injuries of the Face Including Burns, with Original Illustrations*, (1920)





# Leicestershire's contribution to saving the nation from starvation

The food shortages and ensuing crisis which occurred in 1917-8 changed not only the course of the war but also world history. In the case of Russia, food shortages were a key underlying factor in precipitating the 1917 Revolution and the rise of the Soviet Union.

In Germany food shortages led to the so called 'turnip winter' of 1917, which effectively helped to undermine commitment to the war effort and contributed to the country's defeat. Yet rather surprisingly, despite Britain's precarious dependence on imported food, the country managed to avoid the worst consequences of the shortages. Britain pursued a two-pronged approach to deal with the wartime food shortages. On the one hand, the government attempted to increase domestic food production by encouraging, and later directing, farmers via a ploughing up campaign, to increase their arable acreage. On the other hand, the Ministry of Food implemented a series of measures, eventually culminating in a programme of food rationing, ensuring a more equitable distribution of available food supplies.

Nonetheless, an overarching judgement of this kind takes little consideration of the plethora of local initiatives which were implemented prior to the introduction of compulsory food rationing in 1918. Surprisingly, despite the fact that Leicestershire was transformed more than any other county by both the wartime food production campaign and locally based initiatives to improve the distribution of food, its contribution to saving the nation from starvation has attracted scant attention.

Prior to the outbreak of the first world war more than 60 per cent of the country's food originated from overseas. In the case of bread, more than 80 per cent of the wheat used was imported, consisting of hard grained wheat from Canada, the US and Australia, which were an essential requisite in baking the type of white bread the population preferred. Meat imported, either chilled



FIGURE 1: PUBLIC CAMPAIGN BY WOMEN'S LAND ARMY (COURTESY LEICESTERSHIRE RECORDS OFFICE)

or refrigerated, accounted for more than 50 per cent of total consumption, and came from Argentina, Australia and New Zealand. It was this dependence on imported food, coupled with the long distances involved, that meant Britain's food supplies were vulnerable to disruption, the consequences of which could have been devastating for the country's ability to continue with the war.

There were marked regional variations in the type of farming which prevailed in Leicestershire. While all the county was dominated by pastoral farming, in the western areas dairy and sheep farming were

complemented with arable cropping, whereas in the eastern parts of the county beef farming dominated, and in particular the fattening of beef cattle on the high-quality pastures which prevailed in the area. This mixture of enterprises ensured that the county was better served in terms of local food supply than many areas that were dominated by either livestock or arable farming.


A food crisis, precipitated in 1916 by an impending poor wheat harvest in Britain and North America, together with the growing threat of unrestricted submarine warfare, forced the government finally

to intervene in a more coordinated way. Cold wet weather during the summer of 1916, compounded by a general deterioration in the condition of the land caused by a reduction in the area of fertility enhancing root crops, suggested that crop yields in Britain would be considerably lower than usual. The outlook for wheat crops in America was also particularly poor. It was the overwhelming need to increase the production of arable crops in particular which prompted the government to implement a ploughing up campaign, converting pasture land to arable cropping. This was ▶

**flocks of people came from outlying areas to stand in queues, often two hundred yards long and six deep, with many being forced to go away empty handed.**



**LEICESTER**



**Food Economy Campaign.**

**WAR COOKERY  
RECIPES**

**AND HOW TO USE THEM**

prepared by the Staff of  
**The Municipal Domestic Subjects  
Training College,  
St. Martin's, Leicester.**

PRINCIPAL - MISS MORTON.

**Price 2d.**

complemented by the Corn Production Act 1917 which provided high guaranteed prices for wheat and oats.

By 1918 the area of arable land in Leicestershire had increased by some 30 per cent from pre-war levels, or twice the national average. The Women's Land Army, particularly, played a key role in enabling this to take place. As local records reveal, members of the WLA proved more than capable of undertaking tasks such as ploughing, activities which had been regarded as the exclusive preserve of men. Demonstrations of women ploughing helped to convince farmers of the vitally important contribution they could make to the wartime food production campaign. Not only was the mobilization of the Women's Land Army much more effective in Leicestershire but the labour supply was further facilitated by the employment of large numbers of village women, the employment of school children during the extended school holidays, and the use of POWs to work on the land.

The Leicestershire WLA also played an important role in persuading people to change their eating habits, encouraging

Poster campaigns stressed the need to consume less bread and encouraged the eating of bread produced from flour which had been diluted by a variety of other cereals, including potato flour.


*“almost all revolutions start because people wait in crowds for food”*

consumers to eat locally produced food as opposed to relying on imported food (Figure 1). Poster campaigns stressed the need to consume less bread and encouraged the eating of bread produced from flour which had been diluted by a variety of other cereals, including potato flour. The Editor of the *Post* in Leicestershire received from the Ministry of Food a sample loaf containing 10 per cent potato flour. Outwardly the loaf was attractive, the crust crisp and brown, and when cut was of good colour. The taste was reported as excellent and the Editor successfully appealed to the public to trial wheat substitutes. The Municipal Domestic Subjects Training College provided a variety of recipes to encourage the use of a variety of substitutes as well as organizing cookery demonstrations and tasting sessions to facilitate this (Figure 2). These provided a popular way of persuading local people to bake their own bread using barley, rye, rice, oats and maize.

According to William Beveridge, later to become famous as the architect of the welfare state, it was the introduction of compulsory food rationing that alleviated the food crisis. In particular, Beveridge eulogised the achievements of the second Food Controller, Lord Rhondda, arguing that his thirteen months as Food Controller heralded the “*Heroic Age*” of food control. Yet food rationing was only introduced in 1918, and by then a multitude of local initiatives had been taken to ensure a more equitable distribution of food in order to prevent malnutrition. Leicestershire authorities were proactive in this respect. The county, for example, was one of the first areas to introduce butter and margarine rationing. In addition, it sought to encourage consumers to change their eating habits. For example, in order to reduce meat consumption, the local authorities introduced and popularized the idea of two meatless days a week when no meat, poultry or game could be served or consumed in any public eating place.

In 1917 the events of the Russian revolution became a matter of concern for the British establishment. A number of commentators both in the press and government highlighted what was regarded as the “*evil of the queue*”; The Herald noted with alarm that “*almost all revolutions start because people wait in crowds for food*”, while the more conservative *Times* speculated that food queues were a “*fertile source of grumbling and discontent*”. By November 1917 Inspectors were reporting that in Birmingham there were long

queues for butter and margarine, as well as concerns that munitions workers who were unable to queue due to their work commitments would be unable to secure supplies. By mid-December, reports from London described instances of as many as 3,000 people, including mothers with their children, waiting in thick fog and intense cold for margarine. In Lichfield flocks of people came from outlying areas to stand in queues, often two hundred yards long and six deep, with many being forced to go away empty handed. For many this appeared to be the period when the war on the home front reached its nadir. Such experiences led to social unrest which spilled over into strikes and walkouts among industrial workers. While queues were evident in Leicester, they were less severe than those in many other urban areas. This was at least in part due to the pioneering efforts of the local authorities, in conjunction with retailers to address the shortages, prior to the introduction of compulsory food rationing. The county also benefited from being located in a mixed arable and livestock agricultural area. Local cattle markets were still very active with a good supply of livestock for sale. It was well served by a multitude of smaller livestock markets including Ullesthorpe, Hinckley, Loughborough and Melton Mowbray, where farmers remained committed to ensuring that livestock marketing continued in a more regular and orderly way. Efforts were made to complement the supply of beef, sheep and pork with not only wild rabbits which were readily available but also horsemeat.

Despite the country's dependence on imported food, Britain successfully avoided the worst effects of the food shortages which played a key role in changing the course of history. While it is tempting to attribute this to the introduction of rationing during Lord Rhondda's ‘Heroic age of food control’, this interpretation fails to take into account the multitude of local initiatives which were implemented. In Leicestershire this was evident not only in terms of the wartime increase in the arable acreage ably assisted by the efforts of the WLA, but also through efforts to ensure a more equitable distribution of the available food supplies. This took the form of a variety of locally based initiatives to encourage the population to amend their diets. 

**Prof John Martin**  
University of Leicester

The support and assistance provided by the Century of Stories project in being able to undertake this investigation are gratefully acknowledged.



FIGURE 3: FOOD QUEUE IN FRONT OF HOME AND COLONIAL STORE (COURTESY OF LEICESTERSHIRE RECORDS OFFICE)

FIGURE 2 WAR COOKERY RECIPES (COURTESY OF LEICESTERSHIRE RECORDS OFFICE)



# Working for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

BY MEGAN KELLEHER

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) commemorates the more than 1.7 million men and women killed in the two World Wars in more than 23,000 locations and more than 150 countries and territories.

Of these, around 1.1 million of those in the CWGC's care are casualties of the First World War. The founding principles of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (or as it was initially known the Imperial War Graves Commission), as outlined in the 1918 Kenyon Report, are:

- Each of the dead should be commemorated individually by name, either on a headstone or on a memorial.
- Headstones and memorials should be permanent.
- The headstones should be uniform.
- There should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank, race or religious belief.

The commission was formally established in May 1917, but its real work began after the armistice. Once land for cemeteries and memorials had been guaranteed, the enormous task of recording the details of the dead began. There were thousands of *ad hoc* cemeteries in northern France and Flanders (and elsewhere). By 1918, some 587,000 graves had been identified and a further 559,000 casualties were registered as having no known grave. Some 5,000 volunteers were tasked with exhuming, and where possible identifying, and then reburial of the bodies they found. It took the volunteers around seven years to do this. The land in which they were buried was given by the French and Belgium governments 'in perpetuity'. With some exceptions, none of the British, Imperial or Dominion war dead was returned home.

I started work for the CWGC some seven months ago, initially as a Centenary Intern and then as the Public Engagement Coordinator for the East Central area of the United Kingdom. As an intern, I was based in Belgium for four months primarily at Tyne Cot Cemetery and Memorial, and the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial. The best part of the job was engaging with the public: talking about the work of the CWGC and the sites, supporting research

and I love ensuring that the men and women in our care continue to be remembered. Being able to visit so many sites looked after by the CWGC, from the small battlefield cemeteries to the large concentration cemeteries, meant that I was able to find out about so many ordinary individuals, some of whom undertook extreme acts of bravery, and to place this within the wider context of the conflict.

My work as the Public Engagement Coordinator means that I'm now actively involved in Community Engagement programmes and projects across the counties of Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland. Through this, I can continue to deliver information about the work of the CWGC in the United Kingdom and worldwide through giving talks, supporting site visits and signposting useful research tools. The United Kingdom has so many war graves in the care of the CWGC: ranging from single graves in a local churchyard to major sites where large numbers of war dead were laid to rest.



TYNE COT CEMETERY PASSENDALE (AUTHOR ZEISTERRE CREATIVE COMMONS)

All talks and site visits are free of charge. These can provide a useful starting point in exploring local histories and the First and Second World Wars more generally. This could be in preparation for a visit to the battlefields or to foster an interest in local or familial history.

You may wish to become a supporter of the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation. Thirty pounds per year will enable us to fund education and activities and create our ambassadors of the future. For more information on how to support us, please visit [www.cwgc.org/support-us](http://www.cwgc.org/support-us).

For more information, or if you would like to arrange a talk or site visit, please email [megan.kelleher@cwgc.org](mailto:megan.kelleher@cwgc.org).

**Megan Kelleher**  
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

# 1918: the perspectives of a Lincolnshire home front poet

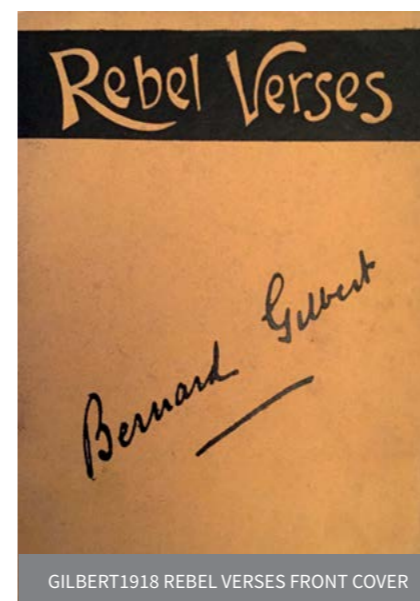
BY ANDREW JACKSON

One hundred years ago, Bernard Samuel Gilbert (1882-1927) published *Rebel Verses*. It was his third and final collection of poetry produced during the war years. His work gives an impression of the consequences of war for individuals, local communities and society as a whole, and points towards the legacy that would have to be contended with in the conflict's aftermath.

The Lincolnshire-born Gilbert had started to develop a career as an author just before the First World War. During the war years he published *Gone to the War and other Poems in the Lincolnshire Dialect* (1915), *War Workers and Other Verses* (1916) and *Rebel Verses* (1918). *The Rural Scene* (1923), containing 28 poems within a section entitled 'War', brought together many of the poems from the wartime volumes. Gilbert served in the Ministry of Munitions in London during the war. His poetry frequently mirrors that of the more well-known soldier poetry, expressing hardship, terror, melancholy and homesickness. The more significant and distinctive of his poems focus on the Home Front, particularly as it affected rural communities. The voices of women – farmers' wives left to work the land, anxious mothers, 'land girls', and the widowed – sit as prominently as those of the male farmers and labourers, regularly featuring the sounds and words of the regional dialect.

Gilbert's *Rebel Verses*, written at the end of the war, is, perhaps understandably, a darker selection of poems on the rural working class that Bernard Gilbert than he generally gave voice to in his writings, being radical in content and sentiment. 'There Aint no God' conveys the theme of grief and loss, on this occasion through the father's voice:

*There aint no God!  
Coz if there were –  
My boy what's under foreign sod  
Would be alive, and here;  
Instead of which young Porter  
What never listed when he orter –  
Has his farm;  
And braunges yonder safe away from harm.* ▶



GILBERT 1918 REBEL VERSES FRONT COVER



Gilbert is particularly critical of those who, protected by reserved-occupation status, sought to profiteer. His is the voice of a bitter, divided community. 'There Aint no God' conveys the senses of grief and loss, but also of resentment and jealousy, that would extend in to the war's aftermath. The Lincolnshire dialect word 'braunges' means swagger. As he later explained the 'young Porter' was the son of a farmer of a large farm. The words of the poem continue:

*Poor lad! – he went –  
I can't forgit that night –  
While Porter laughed him outer sight;  
Now – he is spent:  
Porter's all right.*

Through the prism of community and personal grief, it mattered little that reserved-occupation status was deemed necessary at a time of food shortages as the German submarine threat rose sharply. Inequality of sacrifice and profiteering was one of the emotional corrosives of the war that ate away, as Arthur Marwick notes, at "social ideals" until many could see only the "bitter contrast between those who had fought and suffered, and those who had stayed at home and waxed fat."

Gilbert's 'The Labourer's Hymn' speaks, too, of anger and the threat that might accompany the returning labourer-soldier:

*To save the land for your children,  
who denied their country's wage,  
Our sons have left their homes to  
fight, to guard your heritage:  
When they return – Ah! Woe to you  
before their righteous rage.  
Our sons shall trample you and yours  
in their bloody and righteous rage,  
Who hid at home in shelter whilst they  
paid for the land its wage:  
They fought and died for the Land;  
and they shall enter their heritage.*

It relates, perhaps, also to the long view of the rural labourer's experience, rather than whether the war would deliver some form of revolution and restitution. Farm labour incomes pre-war were roughly half those of skilled industrial workers. They remained underfed, and heavily deficient in protein and many in calorie intake. Yet Gilbert's predictions were misplaced. It was in the industrial cities, rather than in the countryside, that agitation flared up in the closing phases of the war and the years that immediately followed, spurred by unemployment, wage rates and food prices, rather than securing landed-property reform.

One of the few comic poems in *Rebel Verses* is 'Give Soldiers a Vote?', an attack on the corrupted governing political system, where vested interests held sway placing "Politics First" above the national good and even the prosecution of the war itself.

*Great Scott! Don't you see  
How we stand on the brink?  
Give soldiers a vote?  
They would say what  
they think:  
And from power and pay  
We should rapidly sink.*


*So don't talk about it,  
Don't mention it now;  
Let the men go to the war  
And the women to plough;  
We Statesmen will govern ...  
The Lord, He knows how!*

It's true that pressure before and during the war to further extend the franchise to include women and all men continued apace (finally realised through the Representation of the People Act of February 1918). Yet this is more an ironic voice, particularly critical of the "we": of existing elites, of self-serving politicians, of those self-removed from the direct prosecution of the war. In short, it is another poem about us and them.

Through the final years of the war and in the aftermath, the wounded and crippled soldier would feature as an enduring legacy of the war. Around 500,000 soldiers were left seriously disabled. Of these 250,000 would face the return to 'Blightly' as amputees and some 10,000 would have to cope with blindness. Gilbert's 'Charing Cross 1916', published in *Rebel Verses* (1918), offers a retrospective on the arrival of the casualties from the Battle of the Somme, Britain's first major prolonged campaign that deployed Kitchener's volunteer civilian army raised in the first year of the war. As did the war artist, John Hodgson Loble, Gilbert captured the poignancy and spectacle of the procession of the maimed, and with that the separation between civilian and soldier.

*Round Charing Cross in carrion row  
The crowd press in; a sight to see;  
Their mouths agape; their eyes aglow,  
With morbid curiosity.*

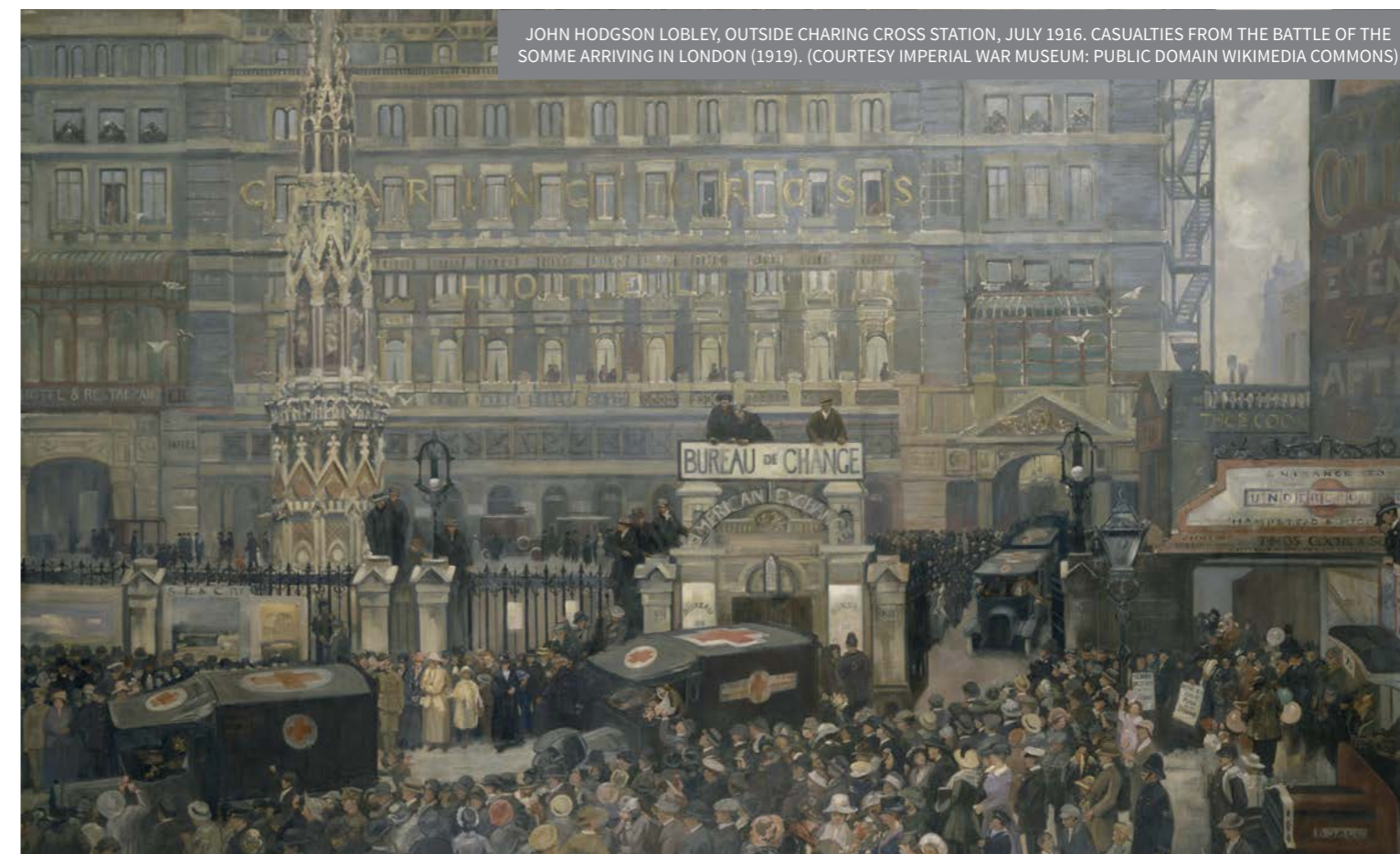
*Those twisted limbs, those bandaged faces!  
Humanity all broken down  
The ghostly grim procession races:  
Hell's handicraft in London Town.*

The war poems published, or in most cases republished, in Gilbert's *Rural Scene* of 1923 are set within the years of the conflict. However, the war's legacy for the lives of communities can be inferred, including: senses of grief and loss, lingering anger and jealousy, and coping with permanent injury and disability. In the 1923 collection he adds nothing of the more positive sentiments that greeted the war's close: of joy, celebration and relief. Gilbert's poems remain little known, even within his own county. Nine years after the war, he died, aged 45. His work, in general terms, belonged rather to an older, pre-First World War age, no longer remembered. 

**Andrew Jackson**  
Bishop Grosseteste University

**Further Reading:** Bernard Gilbert, *Gone to the War and Other Verses in the Lincolnshire Dialect* (Lincoln, 1915); Bernard Gilbert, *War Workers and Other Verses* (London, 1916). Bernard Gilbert, *Rebel Verses* (London, 1918); Bernard Gilbert, *The Rural Scene* (London, 1923); Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War* (Cambridge, 2008); Andrew Jackson, '1916: The perspectives of a Lincolnshire home front poet', *East Midlands History & Heritage*, 4 (2016), 6-7; Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (London, 1965), Jay Winter, *The Legacy of the Great War: Ninety Years On* (Missouri, 2009).

BILLINGHAY, GILBERT'S PLACE OF BIRTH; WAR MEMORIAL (COURTESY RICHARD CROFT: PUBLIC DOMAIN WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)



JOHN HODGSON LOBLEY, OUTSIDE CHARING CROSS STATION, JULY 1916. CASUALTIES FROM THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME ARRIVING IN LONDON (1919). (COURTESY IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM: PUBLIC DOMAIN WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)



# The Great War and its consequences: Building an archive



PAUL NASH, WE ARE MAKING A NEW WORLD (1918)  
(COURTESY IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM)

The last four years have been particularly busy ones for local history groups, associations, archives and museums. The impact of the Great War continues to hold great sway over our collective memories. That so much activity has taken place at a local level is as a testimony to the continuing interest in this important part of the nation's identity, and the connections between local communities and this past. We would like to give your work as much publicity as possible, and to share what you've done with others.

Thus, during 1919 East Midlands History and Heritage plans to curate an online archive to collect and record your familial and community memories and histories. To get the project started, we'd like:

- details of what you've done and achieved over the past four years in terms of new research and commemorative activities.
- histories of your area – how did the Great War affect local families and communities? What happened after the war? How was the war remembered, what (if anything) had changed? Did people expect change?
- We can take short summaries, reports or histories – of say 250-500 words – or something more substantial if you have been engaged in detailed research.
- we'd like pictures too: of artefacts, memorials, memorabilia, events, particular aspects of past.
- Other forms of evidence: letters, diaries, photos, newspaper cuttings.

Just email [emhist@virginmedia.com](mailto:emhist@virginmedia.com) for further information, advice or with your material.

Opposite you'll find some of the information already sent from local groups in Northamptonshire

## Remembering the Great War in Northamptonshire

**Burton Latimer Heritage Society's Great War project:** Member Tony Dacre spent 15 months researching the lives of the 104 men whose names are on the War Memorial, producing detailed biographies which are in folders in the Museum. Summaries of these, including photos, were converted into posters by the British Legion for display in the Millennium Gardens. Research has begun on the rest of the 500+ men on the Roll of Honour. Using these biographies, year 5/6 children from St Mary's CE Primary Academy have "Adopted a Hero" to focus on for their WW1 project. We staged an exhibition, "Burton Latimer's Heroes", in the Heritage Museum 1<sup>st</sup> Sep – 1<sup>st</sup> Dec dedicated to the local men who fought, using material from our archives and on loan from local families. Two battles were featured in detail: Trones Wood and Aubers Ridge, in which 10 of these men died.

### Daventry Museum's activities for the World War One Centenary:

To mark the 100 years since the end of the First World War, Daventry Museum staged an exhibition reflecting on the end of World War One and its impact on post-war Daventry. To commemorate the lives of the 114 soldiers from Daventry who died during the First World War, the museum invited local Daventry schools and community groups to make and decorate a small model chair to represent each individual soldier.



PHOTOS OF DAVENTRY SOLDIERS

These unique chairs were displayed at the museum and then given to those who wish to remember a soldier by promising to set an empty seat at their table on Remembrance Sunday.

**Irthlingborough Historical Society and Methodist Church** jointly organised an evening to commemorate the centenary of the ending of World War One. The Historical Society had previously completed an in-depth book, *In Memoriam*, detailing all those men from Irthlingborough who died during the war, so it was felt equally important to commemorate those men who survived and the women who had been left behind to 'just get on with it'. The evening was on the theme "A Brave New World" with its emphasis on the men returning home and the community to which they came back. The dinner was based on the one given to soldiers returning in 1918, with the courses as near as possible to the original. Between each course various enactments, both serious and amusing, were given by members of the Church and Society, detailing historical figures who had been prominent in shaping the town's development.

They then moved forward to 1918 to hear from wives and families about the hardships encountered during the war and what it meant to have their menfolk returned to them – men who carried the scars, both physical and mental, of what they had seen and endured. They also heard from a "factory owner" who had benefited from, and was reluctant to lose, a cheap female labour force – his contribution was very noisily received!

### Rushden Transport Museum First World War Commemoration:

In 1914 a local young man, Harry Morris, sat on the platform of Rushden Station. With him were his older brother Frank and twenty other local men. On the footbridge were their loved ones waving



BRAMCOTE MEMORIAL HALL, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE:  
HOW MY OWN COMMUNITY CHOSE PHYSICALLY TO  
REMEMBER THE GREAT WAR

them off to war. In 2014 the chance discovery of a photograph of this event directed Rushden Transport Museum's focus for commemorating the events of the First World War. Harry never returned. He was killed in action in 1917 in the Battle of Passchendaele. The acknowledgement of his sacrifice, a certificate sent to his Chelveston family, along with family postcards, have been the focus of the display.

The feature photograph, hung on the wall of the station, remains as a lasting reminder of those who gave everything. They used compilations of the *Rushden Echo* to provide insights into local life during the period of the war. Their focus then turned to the women's suffrage movement and the support it gained, recognising woman's contribution during the First World War, featuring an eye catching 'Votes for Women' scarecrow and decorated bike conveniently timed for the Women's Tour cycle race, Rushden to Daventry leg.

### SPRATTON REMEMBERS THE GREAT WAR:

The small village of Spratton commemorated all the young men from the village who served in the First World War. One of those who died was the first airman ever to be awarded a Victoria Cross. The Lord Lieutenant for Northamptonshire unveiled a commemorative stone to Lt William Rhodes-Moorhouse VC RFC exactly 100 years after his daring flight over Flanders fields. They also held a large weekend event attended by the Great War Society, which erected a 1915 style army encampment. Vintage vehicles and aircraft were also on display as well as numerous stalls and exhibitions. The event was finished with a flypast of two replica aircraft from Sywell aerodrome. A book about the life of Lt Rhodes-Moorhouse was launched with talks by Vernon Creek of the RAF Museum at Hendon and the author, Enid Jarvis.

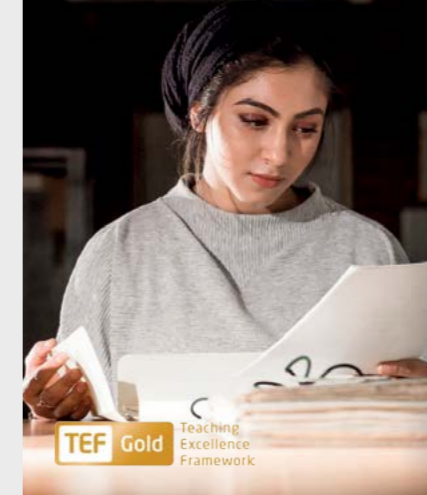


SPRATTON COMMEMORATIVE BENCH

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Spratton Local History Society spent two years researching all the young men from the village who served in the war using the Roll of Honour in St Andrew's Church as their starting point ([www.sprattonhistory.org](http://www.sprattonhistory.org)). The Society then examined how the women of the village contributed to the war effort. A distinctive World War One bench has been purchased from Daventry District Council.

### West Haddon: The Hundred Heroes project:

This has been a 4-year community research project, exploring the lives behind the names on the village Roll of Honour for 1914-18, and the nature of the village community they left behind them. Someone noticed that there were just over a hundred names on the Roll, so it became the Hundred Heroes project.

It featured a display in the church each Remembrance Sunday, spotlighting a particular family or individual featured on the Roll. An annual Tea and Memories gathering in the village hall was held to provide a forum for local families to come together over old village views and meet past neighbours to jog memories. They collected stories and copied pictures. A book *100 Heroes of West Haddon* was published last Armistice Day, in conjunction with an exhibition including the last four years' displays, and other photographs relating to source materials.

**Dr Nick Hayes**  
Editor





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