

19. The fourteenth week of war in Neston; some men go off to fight and one is back for good.

In the first week of November, one hundred years ago, Turkey (or the Ottoman Empire as it was then called) joined in the war against Britain, Russia and France. As more of the world became involved it was clear that many more men were needed and recruiting campaigns forged ahead. A wet and windy Wednesday saw a group of local men who had joined the 4th Cheshires leaving Neston station, and others were also joining various units this week. A Roll of Honour naming those who had enlisted was displayed on the church door, and the vicar urged Neston men to avoid the shame of not being on the list; Police Sergeant Bee also made it his duty to point out to the young men the pride and honour that would come with being involved.

Perhaps a boost to recruitment came after Saturday, when Lieutenant John Roland Beazley, one of four serving sons of E.A. Beazley from the Lydiate was awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honour by the President of France for his actions at Mons. He had been badly wounded in the thigh at that encounter and was still in a convalescent hospital.

William Oxton, 24, was one of the several miners who signed up with the 4th Cheshires (Birkenhead-based Territorials now training in Northampton) this week. He survived the war but was wounded several times. Thomas Wynne, 20, underground labourer at the mine, one of six children of the Wynne family living at 8 New Street, went through training but was discharged the following April with arthritis of the shoulder. Thomas Tudor, a near neighbour and again an underground labourer who joined that Tuesday, was discharged three months later as he could not see in the dark as a result of working in the mine, and would be unable to shoot a rifle. Robert Tudor, his brother, a nursery gardener also joined this week as did William Barnes, and New Street must have been quieter as around a dozen men left at the same time. Some of the fishermen also 'left their nets'. Solomon Rowlands, council labourer, from Golden Lion Yard was on the list and was one of the few locals who ended up in the new RAF in 1918.

William Coventry, 31, had been a career soldier in the Scots Guards for ten years but injured his knee on the march to the Front on August 16th, and was discharged as no longer fit for service after being in France for just forty-one days. So he was now back in Deeside Cottage near the colliery with his army career over. He was given a job in William Fleming's firm, Neston's largest building company, which was doing a lot of work at this time, and was just completing the Roman Catholic church in Saltney. Flemings had also just completed a huge extension of St Werburgh's R.C. church in Chester.

A couple of Willaston boys were tracked down by their local constable after money had gone missing from Hadlow Road Station office. Enquiries led him to a certain family, and it was found that a bedroom door key could actually open the booking office door; in addition to cash a search had revealed goods including bread, a ham shank and a number of toy pistols made in Germany. The father of the older boy had to pay 10 shillings and the lads were promised by the magistrate that they would no doubt be getting the thrashing they deserved.

In the West Cheshire League on Saturday the Nomads at home met Prescott and lost 2-1 in a keenly fought game. The sports page reporter of the Birkenhead Advertiser claimed that Neston Nomads were in fact all from Birkenhead, and it has to be said, they do not feature Neston names: Parsons, Phillips, Taylor, Townsend, Smith, Thomas, Ridyard, Metcalfe, Finney.

At Codford camp, the 'Wirral Battalion' which included Neston men, played a match against the Lancs Fusiliers who were also training there, and beat them 1-0. Football was evidently no less popular a century ago than it is now.