

20. Week fifteen of the War, and winter looms in Neston

Winter was fast approaching, and wet and stormy weather persisted in the town for several days, causing the Liverpool Road schools to report pupil numbers down as parents kept the children at home. An outbreak of measles, coughs and colds soon followed.

The Council's Roads Committee bought in a good winter stock of clover hay from Walter Dodd's Rose Farm in Little Neston, wheat straw from Arthur Scott's hay and corn dealers store at the corner of Bridge Street and Station Road, plus a stack of broad bran and whole oats. Mr Tozer was the former contractor for removing the manure from the council stables (5s 4d per ton), now taken over by Dodd for 4d less.

The Finance Committee, having studied a report on purchasing the private Hinderton Estate Electric Light Works at the top of Blackeys Lane decided against the idea and it was to be more than a decade before there was a public electricity supply.

On Wednesday 18th, at another of the series of lectures at the Presbyterian school-room, Mrs Clement Jones spoke about her tour of north Brazil, with lantern slides. From the Chair, Lady Bates of Hinderton Hall gave the thanks, and pointed out that Mr Clement Jones would have been assisting, but he was away serving his country, which prompted a round of applause.

The wounded Belgian soldiers were on the point of leaving the Parkgate Red Cross Hospital and re-joining the fray, but the Parkgate refugee families were settling down for a prolonged stay. Mrs Gladstone (Burton Manor) who was involved in a good number of charitable ventures between here and Chester, took with her the father of one of the families, a blind pianist, when she attended an event at Newgate Assembly Rooms in Chester, organized by a group dedicated to teaching skills to the blind.

Solicitor Eustace Harrison, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Territorial 6th Battalion of the Kings Liverpool Regiment, went off to Liverpool to join his men in training for war; he loaned his home, Denna Hall, for the use of a Belgian lady, Madame de Villiers, said to be the wife of someone of some significance. But we shall see in a few years' time that Colonel Harrison is remembered locally for something more important - providing the Comrades Hut and initiating the Comrades movement in Neston.

Many thoughts must have been turning to the welfare of the men in France and indeed under canvas in England over the coming weeks, as the Red Cross committees including Neston's, worked on knitting articles to keep the men a bit warmer. Wirral shops advertised woollen comforters, head wraps, mufflers, mittens, gloves, undercoats, sleeping helmets and knitted helmets in addition to the desperately needed socks- in grey, khaki or navy. Lots of 'comforts' for the Cheshire Regiment had been sent from all over the county- the usual stack of knitted goods, blankets, peppermints, chocolate, boric powder and of course tobacco and cigarettes.

Many Neston men who had signed up to do their bit were still in training camps in various locations in England and would not be dispatched to the Front for a few months. Fred Anyon, 22, lived at 10 Brook Street and was a fireman on the Great Central Railway, the Wrexham/Bidston line. He had been one of the men lining the station platform on (see pic from that week's AMA) to head to Chester on 7th September to meet up with the Port Sunlight men when the Wirral Battalion (13th Cheshire) was formed. Fred had in fact joined the Territorials (4th Cheshires in Birkenhead) when he was only 17 and had, like many working class men at that time spent his holidays with the Territorials at camp in Conway, Caernarvon, and Aberystwyth. Looking ahead to Fred's war: In 1917 he was transferred to the Royal Engineers and the 32nd Light Railway Operating Company, one of the units working the narrow gauge railways for army use at the Front in France. Sapper Fred Anyon was demobilized in May 1919. Did he come back to his old job on the local line?