

## **26. Week Twenty-one of the War, and a quiet spell in Neston to end 1914**

Christmas presents financed by Miss Wulff's concert of last week were sent to Neston men at the Front, consisting of a box with a pipe, tobacco, cigarettes and three khaki handkerchiefs. Arrangements for these had been in the hands of Mr and Mrs Davies from the Grey House on Hinderton Lane (near the Hinderton Arms). Mr Davies' brother was a director of W.T.Davies & Sons of Chester, part of Imperial Tobacco.

Christmas Day was Friday, and the lads of the 13th 'Wirral' Battalion of the Cheshires, which included over thirty Neston men, had to stay in camp in Codford, Wiltshire, over the holiday period but were visited there by friends and relatives and Sir William Lever, as many of his Port Sunlight employees were there. They still had the temporary blue uniforms they had been issued with in September.

News that a well-known Neston officer had been rather seriously wounded on 19th December was just filtering through to Neston. He was Captain M.T. Cramer-Roberts of the 4th Gurkha Rifles, an experienced soldier who had been serving in Egypt and then transferred to France in early December. He had served in the Boer War where a brother had been killed. Another brother was also serving in this war, and a sister was working as a cook at the Parkgate Hospital. The family lived in Hinderton Road in one of the 'villas' (so-called) on the town side of the former police station.

On Monday (28th) a new recruit, another Hinderton Road resident, signed up with the Cheshire Field Company Royal Engineers in Birkenhead. John Edwards lived at 'Rockville' directly opposite to the Institute, and had worked as a groom. He was to have a busy war, embarking for Gallipoli in July and suffering a shrapnel wound to his shoulder in October. As Driver Edwards he had surgery in Cairo and suffered several further injuries eventually serving in the Dardanelles, Egypt, France and Belgium and being discharged in March 1919 with a disability allowance.

Special excursion trains were running from Liverpool and Birkenhead to Wirral stations including Neston and Parkgate on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, with a special timetable to Hooton for the racing at Hooton Park on Boxing Day.

Unfortunately no Neston men seem to have been involved in Christmas truces or games of football with the Germans,\* but there were matches on

Christmas Day back home. Neston Nomads were playing Llandudno, and Tranmere Rovers played Barrow at Prenton Park.

\*Relatively few men as yet were in the trenches in fact, but we would of course be pleased to hear if someone does have a record of any local lads being involved in interesting events on that Christmas Day. The 6th Cheshire Battalion, mainly from Stockport, were involved in the socialising.