

### **30. Week 25 of the War, and a big event in Little Neston**

The Royal Navy had a minor victory at Dogger Bank in the North Sea on Sunday when a German cruiser was sunk, something of a British morale booster at least. HMS Roxburgh was an armoured cruiser, used for protection duties in the North Sea, but was having a refit this month. On Tuesday, George Swanborough, a stoker from that vessel married Jessie Jones from New Street, having been allotted four days' leave and then it was back to Devenport. George had already spent over ten years in the Royal Navy and continued for the rest of the war.

A big event on Wednesday, the eighth annual ploughing match of Little Neston, Willaston and District Ploughing Society was greeted with beautiful weather to welcome visitors. It was held at the farms of Joseph Mealor (White House Farm) and Thomas Jones (Rock Farm). Competitions included Ploughing, Horses, Hedging and Ditching, Turnouts, Setting In and Weighing Out, (no, I don't know!). Lots of farm people, local and from as far as Darlington and Stockton-on-Tees, had dinner and tea in marquees, and listened to a speech by the Chairman, Oswald Dobell from Leahurst, who spoke of conquering German "Hogs" and was of the opinion that before the next gathering, Britain and her allies would have shown the Germans that right was really might, and not might right.

The opportunity to raise funds was not missed of course, Raby farmer John Turton collected for the Red Cross, and J. Mealor and Sons donated a plough for auction and the takings went to the National Relief Fund. Joseph Downey who worked for Mealors of White House Farm won a second prize as a teams-man in the Digger section. Joseph, whose father worked at the colliery, later enlisted in the Army and was in the Machine Gun Corps. He died at the end of November 1918 from influenza whilst in England. He is buried in St Winefride's church yard. His older brother Thomas joined the Bantams and was killed in action in September 1917.

Wednesday night saw the last of the series of lectures at the Presbyterian school room, with a talk on touring in the Alps. Yet another Whist Drive fund-raiser was held on Saturday, this time at the Parkgate hospital, organised by Mr Hacking and the men's Ambulance Brigade for the nursing staff and patients, including the Belgians that were still there. The week before, the Girls Friendly Society held its annual tea and social in the Town Hall, where sixty members of this girls' social group (no connection with Female F.S.) enjoyed a concert and dancing. The Vicar's two daughters performed a sketch, "If it ain't one thing 'tis another", Miss

Ritchie from Prospect House on Parkgate Parade did some humorous recitations, the Vicar gave a short talk on "The Influence of Women", and the ubiquitous Mrs Barrett presided.

If one exhausted the various attractions in Neston, the Birkenhead theatres were still providing 'seasonal' entertainment in the way of pantomimes, Dick Whittington, Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, with advance notice of Harry Lauder in February at the Argyle. Sinbad the Sailor and the Band of the Grenadier Guards were coming to Chester in addition to numerous feature films often accompanied by war news.

Sir Norman Hill, (house at bottom of The Runnell), Secretary of the Liverpool Steamship Owners Association, was featured in the press when he commented on the problems with the Liverpool dock workers. Around forty-two ships were reported to be held up and waiting for berths, and the dockers were being blamed and labelled as unpatriotic by some. Labour relations with various sectors were a problem throughout the war years. Lady Hill was commandant of Neston Red Cross Detachment.

Private George Butcher from Hinderton Road, (see Week 19), had written to his family again. The Liverpool Scottish, one of the first units of Territorials to be sent into action on the front line in France, have been in the thick of things and lost a lot of men through illness. George had been a few yards away when one of their most popular officers, Lieutenant Kendall, Birkenhead Park Rugby player, was shot and killed by a sniper. 'The Scottish' were now having a well-earned rest period out of the trenches with a football-match and a concert. It was bitterly cold, and he thanked his family for the 'hose-tops', the footless stockings worn with a kilt.

No football to report as Nomads were supposed to be meeting Cammell Lairds this Saturday but the match was cancelled. Things were somewhat chaotic in the local football scene, though the town had hopes for the first round of the Pyke Cup in the West Cheshire League against Harrowby (from New Brighton) next Saturday.