

### **31. Week 26 of the War, and Wirral farmers are having problems .**

The international situation was now beginning to have more effect here in Britain; farmers were having problems getting men because so many of them had signed up to the colours. It was reckoned that 'not one farmer in a dozen in Wirral' had the full complement of men. Suggestions were made to use schoolboys on the land, though not met with enthusiasm, while the idea of getting women to do milking was not popular with the women themselves, and the milkmaid was a thing of the past. Irish labourers would be coming over to Wirral in Spring as usual it was hoped.

A recent court case featured a Ness man, William Smith, who had reportedly punched Bernard Rice in the face on Christmas Eve in a grocer's shop in Neston, breaking his jaw; Rice, 56, was a live-in farm labourer for Major James Grundy of Haddon Hall, Ness, a somewhat inaccessible building just visible from the High Road. Grundy was a member of Wirral Rural District Council that covered that area, and his father had been one of the poor-law guardians.

Major Grundy was one of the first volunteers last August for the Neston Volunteer Defence Force which was still getting itself organised; a debate had ensued as to who would pay for their hire of the drill hall under the Town Hall, and the gas. The Volunteers were often regarded with some suspicion by the authorities as shirkers trying to escape military service, and never really found a useful role, though invasion was still feared at this stage of the War.

Burton was en fete on Saturday for the silver wedding anniversary of the Burton 'Squire', H.N. Gladstone and his wife. He was third son of the late prime minister and had been in Burton Manor for ten years. Maud Gladstone, in particular, was very active in the local war effort, and was very much involved with the Parkgate Red Cross Hospital. The village hall was decorated, and holiday attire donned by the tenantry. A solid silver candelabra was the gift from the villagers, suitably engraved. The longest serving manor employee presented the couple with a silver salver. Mr Gladstone made a speech of course, and pointed out that a family member of under two years of age was busy shooting 'Germans' at the Manor, (laughter and applause) and that their nephew, the squire of Hawarden where the family estates were sited, had joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers. By mid-April life was to change drastically for the family, but this weekend was a celebration, and Mrs Stone from the Manor made a huge cake and all the tenants had a slice.

On Wednesday Mrs Gladstone was predictably busy in Burton running a concert in the village hall for the Blue Cross Society, fund raising for the welfare of animals involved in the War. The hall was now decorated with patriotic flags and Mrs Gladstone performed on her violin, followed by others giving recitations, a minuet danced in costume, patriotic songs and a short play by the young ladies of the district. Several of the wounded soldiers from Parkgate were in the audience.

On Monday night the popular group the Parkgate Entertainers also known as the Deeside Fisher Lads and Lassies, under their leader Ithiel Lloyd, who lived on Parkgate Parade were again in action. They were entertaining the Bantams, the small stature soldiers of the Cheshire Regiment, who were lodged in a school in Rock Ferry whilst training.

Harrowby, the team from New Brighton, despite having some of their best men gone to fight, were still the top force to be reckoned with in West Cheshire football, and beat Neston 3-1 in the first round of the Pyke Cup. This was the last season it was played until after the War. Pykes the Jewellers were the sponsors up to very recently, but have now of course ceased trading....did Nomads ever win it?