

## **5. Neston – and the outbreak of war.**

By the Bank Holiday weekend at the start of August, it was clear that war was highly likely; several countries were mobilising their forces and serious ultimatums were being presented.

Although Britain did not declare war on Germany until Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup>, Naval Reservists were being called to Birkenhead on the Bank Holiday Monday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, for sending to various ports, and several Neston lads were involved, including one whose wedding had been planned for that day.

Parkgate had basked in sunshine all day Monday, with hundreds of visitors on the shore. A couple of days previously a porpoise, (like a small dolphin) had been stranded on the sand and excited some interest. It was finally dispatched by fisherman Charles Fewtrell. A day-tripper had fallen from the sea-wall and seriously injured herself, but she was taken to Dr Gunn's house where she was treated.

The Congregational church choir had their turn for a day out in Ellesemere, and a picnic for Neston's Independent Order of Rechabites (a temperance Friendly Society for men and women which met at the Institute) was organised for Barnston Dale, a favourite location for trips out. The Hooton Park (now Vauxhall's site) race meeting had commanded a near record crowd on the Monday.

Britain's declaration of war, not unexpected by now, came on Tuesday evening, and by the next day a small group of Army Reservists from Neston, who had already served but were liable to be called up in case of war, were on their way to Ireland. They were off to join the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment in Londonderry, who were soon to be shipped to Le Havre. Major Pemberton of The Mount, on the High Road, son of the chairman of Neston council, was on his way to join the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Cheshires, who were Territorials and were sent to Shrewsbury for their first few weeks. The big rush of men volunteering to join up was yet to come, and *Your Country Needs You* did not appear for another month.

Just as in the bigger towns, there was a spell of panic buying of foodstuff at the very start of the war, with a rapid increase in prices, not helped by the banks being closed for several days. Some shopkeepers were forced to close for a while as they couldn't cope with the crowds. Neston had - in those days - several small grocery businesses such as J. Pearsons on

Bridge Street, the Co-op, Mann & Crosthwaite on High Street, John Rees by the church, plus the dairy in Brook Street, fish and game shops and greengrocers.

Neston was eager, as was the rest of the country, to play a part in the war in the next few weeks as more men went away, and of course, some died. Many of the townspeople became keenly involved in various groups for fund-raising and home-defence, for caring for refugees and injured soldiers, for making munitions, for making hospital dressings and garments, and growing food when the u-boats became active later in the war. Life was about to change for many Nestonians.