

7. The third week of the war, and Neston men are leaving the town

Week three of the Great War and steady stream of Neston men were enlisting, but the big rush was yet to come. One of the town's several doctors, John Yeoman, (the only doctor to have a road named after him*), set a good example and was soon seen in khaki. He was one of the couple of thousand men of various sections of the Welsh Border Brigade at a huge camp at Eccleston; this included various yeomanry and artillery and a section of the Royal Army Medical Corps, and after a few days' intensive training the Brigade moved to various postings at home and abroad. Gordon Carr, also RAMC, was another of the first Nestonians to join the action. Douglas Griffiths and Albert Lewis were said to be already at the Front in Belgium.

Several Neston men including Major Pemberton were already at camp in Church Stretton with the 4th Battalion of the Cheshires. Also there was John Norman Hughes a gardener from Liverpool Road (died August 1918 and was awarded the Military Cross), and Tom Bushell a plasterer of Burton Road.

Dr Grant already had forty men turning up for lectures in ambulance brigade work, the quarter-master being James Hacking from Burton Road school, where meetings were being held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. They had borrowed stretchers and also made some from oddments given by local tradesmen. A car was bringing men from Puddington and Burton for the lectures.

Neston Cricket Club suffered another trouncing on Saturday 15th, this time at the hands of New Brighton at Rake Lane. Teams were gradually losing men as they went off to war and there were only two more matches after this one until 1919.

The schools (Neston C. of E. on Liverpool Road- the 'top school', and the 'Council school' on Burton Road) re-opened after the summer holidays on Monday 17th, with an unfortunate start for the Liverpool Road school as two of the infants' assistant teachers were delayed for a couple of hours because all passenger trains had been stopped for military trains to pass.

The women of the town were already knitting and sewing and turning out lots of 'comforts' for the troops. Khaki wool was available in Birkenhead market for knitting helmets, sweaters, scarves and socks. Browns of Chester was advertising shirtings, flannels and bandages to charitable

organisations and to the Red Cross groups, with reductions for big orders. Essential components of the comforts parcels, sent off to the bases and camps in the UK and to those who had already gone abroad, were cigarettes, 'Neston Woodbines' as one local called them, and chocolate.

Some old local habits persisted and fisherman William Milner of Mealors Weint was fined 2s 6d for fishing with a staked net, which caught the fish on the tides; he had only been fishing for flukes, he said, and did not know it was illegal.

Pressure was mounting on the men to join-up, and Chester Royal Infirmary's convalescent home at Parkgate had closed, and was being prepared for a different lot of patients.

*John Yeoman Close in Little Neston. There had previously been 'Yeoman House', a special school, on the site off Mellock Lane. Gunn Grove was named after the *son* of Dr Gunn, George Ward Gunn who was awarded the VC in World War II.