

11. News from Neston, six weeks into the War.

The men of the new 'Wirral Battalion' (13th Cheshires), including the forty Neston recruits, were experiencing a big change in their lives, being trained by Grenadier Guards on Salisbury Plain, with plenty of food and exercise, and looking forward to a rest day with a football match. Recruiting was really taking off, with hundreds of men arriving in Chester every day to join the colours.

Many Neston men, especially those who worked in Liverpool, were joining the 'Liverpool Pals' Battalions of the King's Liverpool Regiment, Lord Derby's scheme, which had seemed a good idea at the time, getting friends, neighbours or colleagues fighting alongside each other.

News came through that Lieutenant John Roland Beazley from the Lydiate, in Willaston, one of the local men seriously injured in the fierce fighting at Mons was in a French hospital and recovering. Private Richard Roscoe, who had served in India with the Cheshires for several years before going to the Front was in prison camp at Münster; his father was a fisherman from Badger Butts in Little Neston.

German internees were being housed at a disused factory in Queensferry, and further sites were urgently being sought by various bodies including Cheshire County Council. Suggestions from Wirral Rural District Council (which covered areas around Neston) included Hilbre Island, Heswall shore, and Burton marshes. None of these ideas were adopted.

Great excitement was caused in Parkgate this week by the arrival of two families of Belgian refugees. Thousands of them were fleeing the Germans' invasion of their homeland and were being dispersed around England's smaller towns and villages, and the Neston group were more likely to be "*killed by kindness rather than by Germans*" as one lady remarked. They were lodged in a house on the Parade which had been prepared for housing poor women and children from Liverpool, and looked after by a group of local ladies who were raising funds to support them till they found employment. Do any readers know exactly where the Belgians stayed?

A Neston Council meeting agreed, like most other employers, that families of workers serving their country should have their wages made up to what they normally received, and that the men would get their jobs back when they returned.

The Council's Health Committee scheme for refuse collection was announced in the hope that, like most other Wirral areas, the old privy-midden and open ashpit systems would be abandoned by a number of Nestonians who were reluctant to modernise. Galvanised iron bins were being distributed, though these were for collecting ashes – the householder was supposed to burn the rubbish, then put the ashes in the bin for weekly collection and dumping on one of four tips. For those without bins, the ashpits were dug out fortnightly. There were incidentally still houses who had not converted to using bins twenty years later.

Neston Institute Bowling Club, in the West Cheshire Amateur League had last season played 14 matches, won 7 and lost 7, a better record than Neston Cricket Club who out of its last 20 matches had won and drawn 4, and lost 12. On Saturday 12th in the Wirral Combination, Neston Parish Church played St Laurence's from Birkenhead and beat them by 6 goals.