

28. Week Twenty-three of the War, and Treats in Neston

Little progress was being made in the war by either side at this time, and it was still practically stalemate on the Western Front. The 'Wirral Battalion' with a lot of last September's Neston recruits, was moving to Bournemouth where they were billeted in houses for a while, as a change from the tents at Codford.

Neston's Christmas 'Treats' appear to have often been held *after* Christmas (that of the Congregational Sunday School was last week for example). On Saturday this week over a hundred scholars from the church schools had their Treat, with tea in the top school (Liverpool Road), decorated with flags of the allies. After tea they trooped down to the Town Hall for entertainment, starting with carols from the young group that the Vicar's daughter, Jean, organised, followed by lantern slides and films of 'naval and military interest', commentary by Captain Scholey of the Church Army - and the Vicar. Mrs Barrett - a very useful lady - whose late husband had been Headmaster of Mostyn House then curate twenty-five years previously, gave out the prizes for good conduct, knowledge and attendance. Mrs Barrett, who played the piano, lived in the house that's now the carpet shop opposite to the church. The children all got a bun-loaf on leaving.

The Mothers' Union had their Christmas Treat on Thursday in the Town Hall, where around a hundred of them finally sat down to a festive meal, organised by several ladies of the town including the Vicar's wife, and Mrs Barrett. The Vicar said a few words, and some of the younger ladies including the Vicar's daughters, Lucy Harrison from Overdale on Hinderton Road, and her friend Gertrude Ritchie from Parkgate Parade, provided entertainment,

Let us be fair to Miss Ritchie's brother incidentally, who was one of the evening helpers at the hospital - his name was actually Guy, and not as written last week. The family had moved from their lodging with Swifts on the Parade and now lived at Prospect House, directly next to Mostyn House. Guy's day-job was a clerk but by August '15 he had joined a Public Schools Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, though he was discharged on medical grounds after twelve months with a heart condition. He survived until 1948.

Albert Littler was a leading light of the town's Concord Society, which organised concerts and musical events, and we encountered him last year performing at a Red Cross fund-raising concert in the Institute singing

"Let me like a soldier fall". This week Albert signed up with the Army Service Corps as a mechanical transport driver and by July he was driving with the Canadian Field Ambulance, where he gained the Meritorious Service Medal and eventually became Company Sergeant Major, and did not, as far as we know, 'fall' like a soldier or otherwise.

The Parish Church Committee discussed finances, and considered a personal canvass of the parish to enlist more subscribers to church funds as a falling-off of subscriptions followed the outbreak of war. A surprising number of social groups were being financed by the parish church: Neston and Little Neston Quoits Clubs, the Men's Club at Parkgate, Bible classes, various 'Treats' eg Mothers' Union at Summer and Christmas, the two Choirs', the Sunday Schools' and the Bellingers' Treats, the Navy Mission, Church of England Temperance Society, and the Young Men's Recreation Clubs. These were in addition to numerous other commitments including repairs to the bicycle for the Church Army Captain.

Here are some of the Red Cross Nurses from Voluntary Aid Detachment/62 (Neston) who worked at the Parkgate Hospital in early 1915, all with Red Cross certificates: Ethel Hargreaves, wife of a stockbroker from Parkgate Road, Annette English from Parkgate Square (father was 'of private means'), Miss Lucy Harrison from Overdale on Hinderton Road, Misses Whineray from Leighton Court, Mrs Alec Wood from the Manor House, Mary and Jane Niven from Aguilas on Leighton Road, Edith Hughes wife of the Grocer who was on the site of HSBC, Miss Cheshire from Hallwood (the original of that name on Quarry Road), Anne Prentice, whose husband had the ironmongers shop where Barclays Bank now stands, Mrs Blundell from Earle Drive, Mrs Read from Wood Lane, and Mrs Finch from The Cumbers in Ness.