

47. Weeks 54 and 55 of the War in Neston and casualties begin to mount.

Midges were presenting a major problem this month, and residents were being driven demented by them, despite various methods recommended for dispatching the black insect things that were infesting the inside and outside of houses.

The Institute (now Civic Hall) was being leased by the Congregationalists whose timber church was next door, where the British Legion now stands. Finances of the Institute were not looking good for the church, with a falling off of receipts from billiards, football and catering, on account of (as with so many other such establishments) the current war circumstances. The July meeting saw that debts were growing, and Mr Maxwell had agreed to hire the hall for an extra night each week for his film shows, making it three nights per week. Another idea, which has obviously been tried for at least a century, was to economise on electricity lighting.

There were around 220 children attending the Sunday Schools, and the women's meetings were prospering, but there were never more than a handful of adults at morning services though 50-100 on Sunday evenings. The musical aspects of the services were poor, the demands of war on the choirmaster cutting down practice sessions; at the August meeting the choirmaster and organist resigned. The boy scouts' numbers had dropped and the scout master and his assistant were now in the Army.

It was said that there were difficulties in running the Institute because of ill-repute left over from its days as a political club. It had been built as a Liberal social club and had suffered some problems involving A.G.Grenfell, Sir William Lever, licensing and the temperance movement. But an answer to some of the problems was on the horizon and the building was to find a new use in 1916.

Two Neston-born men of different regiments died on the same day, 10th August, at Gallipoli: Alfred Smith of 6th Battalion King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment) and Daniel Taylor of the 6th Battalion South Lancs Regiment. The men were not actually living in Neston at the time they joined the war.

Another casualty from Gallipoli was fisherman Robert Roscoe of the Birkenhead based 4th Cheshires. His father was a Little Neston fisherman of Badger Bait, and Robert was lodging in Liverpool Road when he

signed up. He had landed in Gallipoli on 9th August and was soon reported as missing but his death was not confirmed until November 1916. The 4th Battalion was in the thick of it, many casualties were listed at their Grange Road West HQ in Birkenhead.

Alfred Lawton of the Royal Army Service Corps, an apprentice electrician in Neston, died of pneumonia in early August, soon after arriving in France.

The Salvation Army Depot, (probably Whiteways Joinery workshop on Park Street) was opened as a soldiers' reading and writing room, stationery being supplied by the local newsagents. On account of an increase in needy cases, a session was going to be held every Monday morning in the Town Hall by the Soldiers and Sailors Families Association, who were responsible for dealing with financial support for the families of the men in uniform. Mrs Gamon, of Leighton Banastre, the joint secretary, was dealing with any emergency cases that called at her home.

There was not a lot of serious crime at the moment – Robert Ouldred was fined 2s 6d for allowing his dog to stray in prohibited hours, and Joseph Holmes 10s for using obscene language in Little Neston.

The Parkgate Entertainers, on whom we have reported in past months, were organised by Ithiel Lloyd ('of independent means') who lived at Parade House, the building between South Cottage and Little Lane, on the Parade. They were gaining a reputation for putting on a good show, and this week they were raising money for Chester Girl Guides, who were camping in the area. The location was the cricket field of Mostyn House and the scene was illuminated with car lights, lent by Mr Cameron of Neston, and fairy lanterns. Florrie Parry, 13, was the star turn, with a series of male impersonations, and such numbers as 'Boys in Khaki'. Other local performers were Frank Robinson with 'My Wife's Cake', 12 year-old-Isiah Fewtrell from Dover Cottage with 'We Were all North Country Lasses', and Winnie Parry rendered 'Land of Hope and Glory'.

It was back to lessons at the church school on Liverpool Road on August 16th, though quite a few of the children were not being moved up a standard for Arithmetic – some familiar names, including Edna Swift, Lily Young, George McIver, Martha Norman, Lily Peters, William Hill and Joyce Prosser were obviously not mathematicians.

Thanks to Ian Norris for additional information on casualties.

This article covers roughly August 13th -27th 1915