

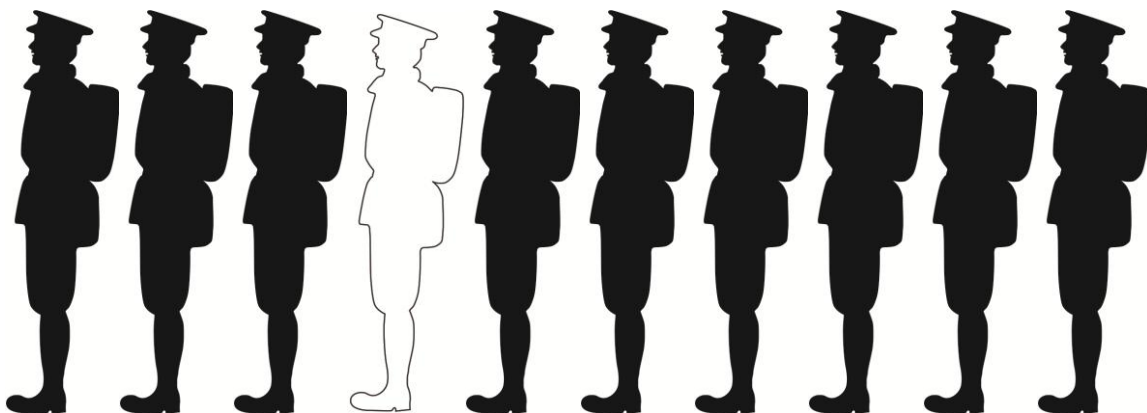
The Great War

Our Community Commemorated

Holmes Chapel at the End of the War



Booklet 12: Rod Cameron



Holmes Chapel and District U3A Local History Group

Holmes Chapel and District U3A Local History Group

In 2011 the Holmes Chapel & District University of the Third Age (U3A) was set up in the village and one of the activities under its umbrella was a local history group. This attracted people who had been involved in research in the past as well as some new volunteers eager to learn more. After an initial period of encouragement and training for the newcomers it was decided that the group would work together on a topic - The Story of Holmes Chapel during the First World War.

This is one in a series of booklets describing different aspects of life in Holmes Chapel before, during and after the First World War.

Local History Group Members 2017/18: Rosemary Baxter, Margaret Berry, Cath Cameron, Rod Cameron, John Clowes, Peter Cotton, John Cowburn, Stella Freer, David Halton, Gwen Hayhurst, Barbara Jackson, Alan Perrin, Val White, Julia Wilson & Janet Yarwood.



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Introduction

This booklet follows on from the series of booklets that the Holmes Chapel U3A Local History Forum published at the centenary of the start of the First World War in 2014. It covers events in Holmes Chapel largely after the end of the War.

However, Booklet #12 does not cover the story of the return of our servicemen. We will be in a much clearer position to understand their full stories after the 1921 census is published in January 2022...

The war caused both directly and indirectly, a variety of changes and attitudes which affected the life of the community. The immediate response of the people of Holmes Chapel was to commemorate the loss of the men killed during the war and information is provided here, of the stories around several memorials produced in the community to remember the men. At the same time, the men returning, were supported and encouraged to create their own Comrades Club. The celebrations for the end of the war are recorded but these were tempered or delayed by the Spanish Flu which killed at least six residents of Holmes Chapel.

The war also triggered major social changes including the enfranchisement of all men and most women within a few years; and the rigid control of licensing hours. These would have directly affected the community of Holmes Chapel.

Finally, the eventual fate of the Belgian refugees, who had brought the war so much closer to rural communities such as Holmes Chapel is described.

1 All change at St Luke's Church

Trial Parish Merger

Towards the end of the First World War, there was a trial merger of the parishes of Goostrey, Holmes Chapel and Brereton.

At the annual Easter Vestry meeting held on Tuesday 10th April 1917, the Vestry gave its sanction to a scheme proposed by a Joint Committee of Clergy and Laity of the Deanery *"of uniting some of the smaller Parishes in the Deanery, during the War, so as to enable some of the Clergy to undertake other National work, and under this scheme it was suggested that the Parishes of Brereton, Church Hulme and Goostrey might be worked for the duration of the war by two of the Incumbents, and the remaining Incumbent released for other work."* Rev Armitstead explained that should the scheme be approved by the Bishop *"each of the three Parishes concerned would probably be asked to sacrifice one Morning Service every three weeks"*.

Later in the May 1917 Parish Magazine, the vicar writes: *"The scheme for amalgamation of Parishes has now been sanctioned by the Bishop, and it is probable that the Vicar of Goostrey will shortly be set free to take up work under the National Service scheme, and that the Rector of Brereton and myself will work the three parishes between us."* He hoped that there would be no dropping of any regular services, although he anticipated that the timings might have to be changed.

In the June Magazine, he mentions the scheme for combination of the Parishes, saying that after *"two or three weeks, it seems to be working quite satisfactorily as far as we clergy are concerned."* The only problem arose with the Sunday School, but the Head-teacher of Cranage School, Mr Hodgkinson took the vicar's place when necessary.

The Rev Armitstead wrote in the August 1917 Parish Magazine *"I am afraid that in all probability there will be no Morning Service in our church on Sunday August 12th. The Vicar of Sandbach is laid up and unable to take any service at present, and his Curate Mr Ware has not been at all well, and it is essential that he should have a holiday before the winter comes on. In order to facilitate this, I have been trying for some weeks now to get someone to take the services at Sandbach during August, but so far I have not succeeded in finding anyone to help, and therefore we feel bound to act on the advice of the Bishop of Chester, to close Sandbach, Goostrey and Holmes Chapel Churches alternately for one Sunday morning during August, and so set free the Vicar of Goostrey and myself to help at Sandbach."*

The fact that Rev Armitstead refers to the sequential closing of Sandbach, Goostrey and Holmes Chapel churches in August would seem to indicate that the trial merger with Brereton church had ended, and the Vicar of Goostrey had returned.

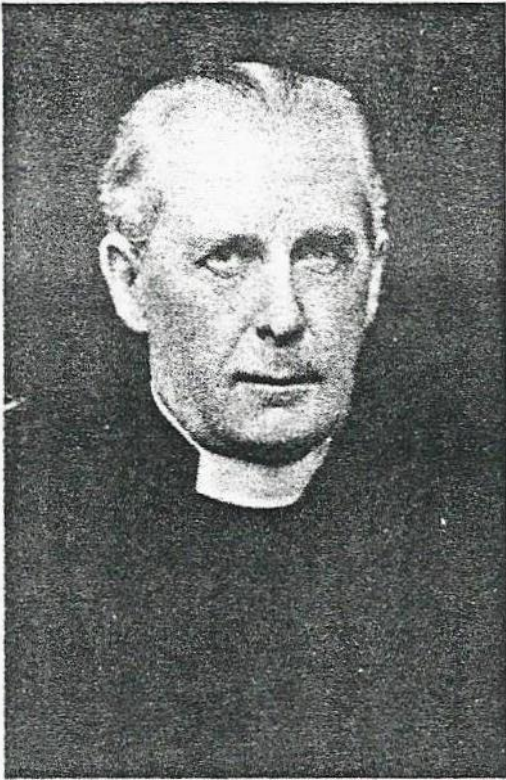
Rev John Hornby Armitstead

In the October 1918 issue of the Parish Magazine, Rev Armitstead wrote: *"As most of you probably know I shall shortly be leaving Holmes Chapel and returning to Sandbach. For very many reasons I shall greatly regret leaving Holmes Chapel after having spent nearly 20 years among you. I shall have a further opportunity of referring to this later on, as I do not expect to leave Holmes Chapel until about the middle of December 1918"*. The reason for his leaving Holmes Chapel was the death of his father, the Vicar of Sandbach.

In the May 1919 Church Newsletter:

Resignation of Rev J H Armitstead

"It is with very real regret that we have to record the resignation of



THE VEN. ARCHDEACON ARMITSTEAD, J.P.,
Vicar of Sandbach. Patron.
Vicar of Holmes Chapel 1899—1919.



THE REV. F. S. G. GARDNER-BROWN,
Vicar of Bullinghope, Hereford.
Vicar of Holmes Chapel 1919—1922.

the Rev J H Armitstead who has been Vicar of this Parish since 1899.

His departure was signalled by a gift from the Parishioners, but all feel how much they owe to his life and work here, and any token of affection could not fully interpret how dear he is to Holmes Chapel people and what a very deep feeling they have for him. His life of ordered industry, his real interest in all that concerned Holmes Chapel will not readily be forgotten, and he may be assured in his new work at Sandbach that the prayers and hopes of his old Parish go with him, and we can here reiterate the hope that is freely expressed on all sides that he will very often come over and see us and realize for himself the affection and esteem in which he is held.

Mr Armitstead appointed as his successor the Rev F S G Gardner-Brown, who read himself in on 9th March 1919."

Presentation to Rev J H Armitstead

“At the beginning of January the parishioners parted very reluctantly with their friend and Vicar the Rev J H Armitstead. It was felt that he could not be allowed to go without the parishioners giving him some small memento of the love and respect in which he was held. An appeal for the purpose met with a wide-spread response, subscriptions coming from nearly every house in the Parish.

On Wednesday 22nd January, Mr Carver presided over a large gathering of subscribers in the Assembly Rooms. Mr Ford as Senior Warden presented Mr Armitstead with a fine example of Jacobean Chest and a Sheraton Mirror. Mr Carver, Mr Ford and Mr Hulme expressed the feelings of the parishioners at the loss of Mr Armitstead. “Mr Armitstead thanked the subscribers for their handsome presents and for the help and sympathy they had given him in his work in the Parish.

We wish God Speed to Mr Armitstead in his new work as Vicar of Sandbach, and our love and gratitude for his 20 years of unceasing kindly care of the parish will go with him in his new labours.”

On 1st February 1919, the Crewe Chronicle reported:

Holmes Chapel - New Vicar

“The living of St Luke’s has been accepted by the Rev S F G Gardner-Brown, MA, who hopes to take up his duties towards the end of March. Mr Gardner-Brown is the son of the Rev Gardner-Brown, English chaplain at Rome. He graduated from Cambridge and was ordained deacon in 1905 and priest in 1906. He was for about two years a curate-in-charge of Aldenham, and has been chaplain to the Forces for four years. The living is in the gift of the Rev J H Armitstead, vicar of Sandbach.”

2 Spanish Flu

**“I had a little bird.
It’s name was Enza
I opened the window
And in-flu-enza.”**

(1918 children’s skipping rhyme)

Spanish Flu or the 1918 Flu Pandemic was an unusually deadly influenza pandemic that occurred between March 1918 and December 1920. It infected 500 million people around the world, and resulted in the deaths of 50 to 100 million (three to five percent of the world’s population). At the time, newspapers reported that only 6 million had died, and people were even shocked by that small number.

To maintain morale, wartime censors minimized early reports of illness and death in the UK, France, Germany and America. However, papers were free to report the epidemic’s effects in neutral Spain (such as the grave illness of King Alfonso XIII). This reporting created a false impression of the seriousness of the Spanish outbreak, thereby giving rise to the pandemic’s nickname of Spanish Flu.

The second wave of the flu was much deadlier than the first. The first wave resembled typical flu epidemics: those most at risk were the sick and elderly, while younger healthier people recovered easily. But in August 1918, when the second wave began, the virus mutated to a much deadlier form which predominately killed previously healthy young adults. It is postulated that the strong immune reactions of young adults ravaged the body, whereas the weaker immune systems of children and middle-aged adults resulted in fewer deaths among those groups.

The Symptoms were discussed in great detail in the Crewe Chronicle on 22nd February 1919: *“Of the cases commonly known as influenza there are two kinds. One is the true influenza, characterised by the sudden onset of fever, with pain in the head, back and limbs. This*

may occur without any catarrhal symptoms whatever; but there is generally some cough, and the patient's resistance to the omnipresent germs of pneumonia is lowered. The other and much larger group of cases appears to be the 'feverish cold', which is always with us in winter in this climate. For various reasons, it is present in an exacerbated form, and again leaves the patient unduly susceptible to pneumonia infection. Lowered resistance to disease, owing to war conditions and mental and physical strain, all conduce to the disease. While its seriousness is minimised by precautions in the early stages, such as going to bed, maintaining an even temperature in the bedroom, taking plenty of hot gruel, and inducing perspiration to reduce the feverishness. The weakness after an attack is a signal that no undue risks should be taken during the period of convalescence, fatal consequences being brought about by pneumonia, which develops with startling rapidity."

"About a fifth of those infected developed pneumonia or septicaemia. Often this progressed to heliotrope cyanosis, a lavender hue of the skin that signalled shortage of oxygen and imminent death. Onset was devastatingly quick. Those hale and hearty at breakfast could be dead by tea-time."

When an infected person sneezes or coughs, more than half a million virus particles can be spread to those close by. The close quarters and massive troop movements during the end of the First World War hastened the pandemic, and probably both increased transmission and augmented mutation. The war may also have increased the lethality of the virus, as some speculate that the soldiers' immune systems were weakened by malnourishment, as well as the stresses of combat and chemical attacks, thereby increasing their susceptibility.

*By Royal Warrant of Appointment
during Third Government*



JEYES' FLUID

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JEYES' SANITARY COMPOUNDS Co., Ltd. 54/55, Cannon St., London.

Influenza

Bovril Ltd. wish to express their regret at the shortage of Bovril during the recent Influenza epidemic.

The proprietors recognising that are deprived of building powers may more easily fall to the epidemic, their utmost to in supply, but the lack has seriously hampered still hampers—the efforts made to collect em, and it is hoped that will soon be increased release of men for factories.

It is suggested consumers who have of Bovril should be chasing at present, leave the available those who have no need of it at this crisis.

OXO

Fortifies the System against
INFLUENZA INFECTION.

SPANISH "FLU" AND GAS.

WONDERFUL CURES BY THE OLD REMEDY—VENO'S LIGHTNING COUGH CURE.

Lt. Corporal A. J. Turner, of the 4th Essex Regiment, writes:—"I was in hospital, and lying opposite me was a sergeant in the R.F.A., who had been badly gassed. It was awful to hear him coughing night and day. Knowing Veno's, I told him of it, and from the first dose all the fellows in the ward noticed a decrease in his coughing. In six weeks that same man proceeded to a convalescent hospital in my company. Two men and myself affected with Spanish "Flu" found instantaneous relief in Veno's."

VENO'S LIGHTNING COUGH CURE is the world's supreme remedy for Coughs and Colds, Lung Troubles, Asthma, Bronchitis, Nasal Catarrh, Hoarseness, Difficult Breathing, and Influenza. Specially recommended for Whooping Cough and other Bronchial Troubles in children. Prices: 11d., 1s. 3d., and 3s., from Chemists and Stores everywhere. (p11)

The epidemic attacked different parts of rural Cheshire at different times. For instance, the Congleton Chronicle reported on 27th July 1918 that *“The flu epidemic which has swept over Congleton, was perhaps at its height last week”*. The Crewe Chronicle reported on 9th November 1918, because of the severity of the epidemic that *“the hours at Crewe cemetery have had to be extended for funerals, it being often nearly dark before the services are completed and mourners able to leave.”* However, the epidemic in Northwich was only being discussed in the local papers on 22nd February 1919.

In Holmes Chapel, the first mentions of the flu are in the Head-teachers’ logs for the two schools. On 10th October, the Head of Cranage Church of England School, Mr Hodgkinson reported *“Influenza epidemic began suddenly. 10 cases reported today.”* And a week later on the 17th, *“33 cases of influenza. School closed until 4th November.”* The closure was later extended until the 18th November by the medical officers.

At Holmes Chapel Mixed School the Head, Mr Oakes reported on 16th October that *“The attendance this morning is very bad, as Spanish Influenza has broken out. Ten children who are absent are known to have the complaint, while others at school seem to show symptoms of the same complaint.”* On the following day he reports *“The attendance this morning was only 58% of the numbers on the roll[125]. Hence the registers were not marked. After consultation with the Medical Officer, he authorised closure of the school until 18th November on account of the outbreak of influenza.”*

The local papers reported that *“Influenza has broken out in Holmes Chapel, and at the Paper Mills on Tuesday 15th October 1918, 13 persons, who became affected were compelled to cease work.”*

A number of functions in the village were cancelled as noted in the Parish Magazine & local papers:

On Fri 25th October 1918: *"The epidemic has spread to an alarming extent during the week, and there is hardly a family which has quite escaped. More than 30 cases among the boys at the [Saltersford] College are reported. The whole of the female staff are affected."*

At the Social Club, *"there should have been a Dance on 25th October 1918, but owing to the influenza epidemic, this had to be cancelled."*

On 18th November, when the Mixed School reopened, the Headmaster Mr Oakes was reported as *"suffering from pleural pneumonia"*, and only returned to work on 16th December.

A Jumble Sale planned for 23rd November 1918, was postponed for a fortnight *"in consequence of the severe epidemic of influenza which has been raging in the Parish for the past few weeks"*.

In the New Year, the epidemic returned to the Mixed School. On Friday 17th January 1919, the Head reports *"Attendance has got worse day by day this week. This morning 40 children are absent suffering from colds and croup."* On the following Monday, he reports *"Today only 60 children were present out of 125. There is every symptom of a whooping cough epidemic or some chronic throat and bronchial trouble. I saw Dr Bennett about it today."* By Thursday 23rd, *"As 73 children were away today, and as the complaint seemed to have taken on the nature of an epidemic I wrote to Dr Meredith Young giving him full particulars."* On Friday 24th, *"The attendance is worse this morning. Only 51 out of 125 are present."* The Head received instructions at midday to close the school until 3rd February. The Head was again off sick with a *"severe cold"* on 18th and 19th March. This may have been due to lingering after-effects of the flu.

On 24th May 1919, The Crewe Chronicle reported the quarterly Medical Report of Dr Bennett, the District Medical Officer, given to Congleton Rural District Council. He said that *"there had been 55 deaths in the Sandbach district, seven in Holmes Chapel, and two in the Congleton sub-district."* He later stated that *"With the exception of 1915, the death rate was higher than it had been for many years. That was due to the influenza epidemic. Although there had been ten deaths from influenza, yet 20 deaths had taken place among people over 70 years of age, and who might have lived on but for the epidemic."*

In the papers, the following local deaths were linked to the epidemic:

Mr Walter Neville Denby of Green Bank died Sun 27th October 1918, aged 53 years, *"a victim of the influenza epidemic, which developed quickly into pneumonia. He leaves a widow and two children. He was employed as a designer at the Paper Mill."*

Mr William Postles Junior of Cranage Road died Mon 28th October 1918, aged 32 years, *"another victim of the influenza epidemic."*

Mr George Pierpoint of Lease died Sun 3rd November 1918, aged 41 years, *"a victim of the influenza epidemic, who later contracted pneumonia. A farmer, he leaves a wife and three children."*

Mr George Cartwright of Macclesfield Road died on Wed 6th November 1918, aged 52 years, *"from pneumonia. He was employed by Mr Stubbs as a carter. He leaves a wife and four children."*

3 Armistice Day

In November 1918, Holmes Chapel village was at a low ebb. Not only had 28 members of the community died at the Front over the past four years, but also Spanish flu had broken out a few weeks earlier. Both Cranage School & Macclesfield Road County School were closed because of the epidemic on Wednesday 16th October, and did not reopen until 18th November. Flu also impacted the Paper Works on Tuesday 15th October when 13 were compelled to cease work. A dance was cancelled on 25th October due to the epidemic, and four deaths were reported in the newspapers as being due to influenza between 27th October and 6th November.

The Crewe Journal reported of Holmes Chapel on 15th November:
"As soon as the good news reached the village on Monday the local mills ceased work, and the employees were given three days holiday. Work was also suspended at the railway station. An abundant display of flags and bunting was soon in evidence, and peals were rung on the church bells until nearly midnight."

The December 1918 Parish Magazine reported that:
"On Wednesday evening, November 13th, a Solemn Service of Thanksgiving for the Cessation of Hostilities, and for the victory granted to us and our Allies was held in our Church, and was attended by a very large congregation, composed of all denominations. On the following Sunday we again met in Church to offer up our heartfelt thanks to God for his great mercies, and again the services were attended by large congregations, especially in the evening when the Church was packed as it generally is at a Harvest Festival. The offertory during the day amounted to £13 6s 0d and will be used for the purpose of erecting some suitable memorial in our Church to all those men from the Parish who have fallen in the war. What form this memorial shall take has not yet been decided."

4 The First Remembrance Day

The first Remembrance Day was held on 11th November 1919. Prior to this, national “*Days of Prayer*” were held annually. In the Parish Magazine for December 1917, the Rev Armitstead writes: “*By the request of the King[George V], the first Sunday in the New Year, 6th January (1918), will be observed throughout the country as a day of National Prayer and Thanksgiving to Almighty God. The offertories during the day will be given to the joint fund of the British Red Cross Society, and the Order of St John of Jerusalem, for the benefit of our sick and wounded soldiers and sailors.*”

I trust that all of us will take our part in the Nation’s Prayers and Thanksgivings on that day, and also contribute liberally towards the offertory.”

The previous Day of Prayer was held on Sunday 31st December 1916.

On 15th November 1919, the Crewe Chronicle reported how Remembrance Day was celebrated in Holmes Chapel: “*The anniversary of this great day was observed with all respect by the people of Holmes Chapel district. At 10:40 am the boys of the Training School and the children from the school paraded in the Square. There was also a large crowd of people. After singing “Fight the good fight”, Capt. H S Rees of the Training School Cadets addressed the assembly in the absence of the chaplain. Two minutes before 11 o’clock the band of the Training School sounded the Last Post, and then followed two minutes of silence. The National Anthem played, and for half an hour the band gave selections.*”

But how did the two minutes silence come to be? The Remembrance Day silence originated in Cape Town, South Africa where there was a daily three minutes pause. A description of the event was cabled to London, from where word spread. A letter was written to the War

Cabinet on 5th November proposing that this became an official part of the annual service on Armistice [Remembrance] Day. The letter was accepted, and immediately approved by George V.

The following Press Statement was released from the Palace:

"Tuesday next, 11 November, is the first anniversary of the Armistice, which stayed the worldwide carnage of the four preceding years and the victory of Right and Freedom. I believe that my people in every part of the Empire fervently wish to perpetuate the meaning of the Great Deliverance, and of those who laid down their lives to achieve it.

To afford an opportunity for the universal expression of their feeling, it is my desire and hope that at the hour when the Armistice came into force, the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, there may be for a brief space of two minutes, a complete suspension of all our normal activities."

5 The Village War Memorials

- The Debate

As already mentioned, by the end of November 1918, when the December Parish Magazine was published, it had been decided that the offertory collected on the first Sunday after the end of the War, which amounted to £13 6s 0d would *“be used for the purpose of erecting some suitable memorial in our Church to all those men from the Parish who have fallen in the war. What form this memorial shall take has not yet been decided.”*

Also in the same Parish magazine is the following paragraph:

“A fairly well attended Meeting was held in the Holmes Chapel School on November 22nd, to consider the question of erecting some fitting Memorial to all the gallant men from our parish, 28 altogether, who have fallen during the war. It was unanimously decided to erect a Memorial of some sort. A further Meeting, to which all parishioners are invited, will be held in the Holmes Chapel School on Thursday December 5th at 7 pm to further consider the matter, when it is hoped we shall be able to come to some unanimous decision.”

The Nantwich Guardian for 29th November 1918 gives a more detailed account of the debate:

“War Memorial

A meeting was held on Friday evening in the Macclesfield Road School to decide what from the memorial to fallen soldiers should take. The Vicar (Rev J H Armitstead) presided and stated that the total number of men from the parish who had made the supreme sacrifice was 28, and he was sure it was the wish of all that some permanent memorial be erected to their memory.

Mr W Oswald Carver of Cranage Hall, who by the way, is the owner of the Village Assembly Rooms, proposed that the memorial should

take the form of a new east window in the Parish Church, as memorial services had been held in the church for the fallen men of all denominations.

Mr Rowe said he considered the meeting to be one of the most important ever held in Holmes Chapel. He considered the memorial should have three essential points – permanent, ornamental and useful; and proposed that a tower or column be raised in the Square, near Mr Harrington's shop, a lamp erected above it, and the lads' names engraved on the column. Mr MacDowell seconded Mr Rowe's proposition.

Mr J Green proposed that the memorial take the form of a building erected as a memorial hall. Whatever sacrifice we made could not be compared with the sacrifice of those noble lads who had given their lives.

Mr Williams seconded Mr Green's proposition and said a public hall was most certainly required. He was aware that Mr Carver had bought the Assembly Room in the hope of meeting the requirements of the public, but they did not want a "patched up" place. Mr Williams also criticised Mr Rowe's suggestion, as it would form an obstruction to the traffic if carried out. He did not, however, oppose Mr Carver's proposition but suggested that they might have both the window and the hall.

Mr Tom Toler suggested that the meeting be postponed for a fortnight to give each one present sufficient time to think over the proposals. Everyone had given of their best in this war, and it was undoubtedly our duty to pull together and make a beautiful memorial to the dear lads who had given their lives.

Mr Hodgkinson had been asked to suggest that playing fields be opened as a memorial – Mr Hoyle supported Mr Rowe. Mr Green said

that although they were discussing a memorial to those who were gone, they must not forget the lads who are returning – Mr Whitburn emphasized the fact that they must have somewhere for our returning village boys to spend their evenings. It was painful to see them wasting their time in the streets. He favoured the idea of a memorial hall, not tied to any conditions, and to be attractive and instructive by containing music and a good library.

Mr Carver thought that unless someone took a very deep interest in a memorial hall it would be most difficult to manage.

Mr Williams seconded Mr Toler's proposition to postpone the meeting. Mr S Oakes also supported Mr Toler and suggested that there was a possibility of an increase in the rates if a hall were erected.

The Chairman [Rev Armitstead] said he felt very strongly that there must be a memorial inside the Parish Church. He did not want anyone to feel that he had "gone back" on them, but he would be very sorry indeed if some memorial were not placed in the Parish Church.

It was ultimately decided to postpone the meeting until December 3rd
Also reported in the Nantwich Guardian for 13th December 1918:

"War Memorial

A further meeting was held on Thursday last week to decide on the form of the memorial to the men from the parish who have fallen in the war. Three proposals were put forward:

(1) that the memorial should be a monument erected in the village square; (2) that a cross should be erected in the Parish Churchyard; and (3) that a memorial hall should be erected; and after much discussion the proposals were put to the vote, and the meeting decided in favour of the monument in the village square. A committee was formed to deal with the matter.

With the departure of the Rev Armitstead, there is an unfortunate hiatus in the production of the Parish magazine. The next mention of the Memorial fund is in the Churchwarden's accounts published at Easter 1919, when the fund had grown to £18 18s ½d.

Between Easter and July 1919, the Memorial Committee had reversed the decision of the meeting of the 3rd December 1918 to erect a Monument in the village square in favour of a stained glass window in the Parish church. The reason for the reversal will probably never be known, but possibly:

- the Rev Armitstead felt there should be a memorial within the church
- the money collected by Easter 1919 was short of the amount required
- Oswald Carver favoured the East Window, and may have offered to partly finance it
- a Memorial Hall might have been too expensive, and was also felt to be "difficult to manage"

- The East Window

There is a paragraph in the July 1919 Church Newsletter:

"War Memorial

A Meeting of the Church War Memorial Committee was held in the Vestry on June 22nd. Present: The Vicar (Chairman), Messrs Carver, Ford, Hodgkinson, Hulme, Reiss, Toler. It was decided to apply for a faculty to place a Window at the East end. The Window has been designed by Mr H Lonsdale who is in the first rank of artists, and it is hoped to place a Coloured Drawing of it at the West end of the Church very shortly so that all parishioners may inspect it."

In the August 1919 Church Newsletter:

“War Memorial

The Vicar and Major T Toler representing the Church War Memorial Committee attended a Consistory Court at Chester Cathedral on July 14th, and were granted a faculty to place a new east window in the Church and two tablets on the east wall. The names of the glorious and immortal dead will be inscribed on the tablets with a suitable inscription and the date 1914 – 1919. It is hoped that the work will be put in hand very shortly.”

In the 19th July 1919 Crewe Chronicle:

“CHESTER CONSISTORY COURT – WAR MEMORIALS IN CHURCHES

At Chester Consistory Court on Monday, the Chancellor (Sir Philip Baker Wilbraham, Bart) heard a number of applications for faculties authorising memorials in churches of those who have fallen in the war.”

“HOLMES CHAPEL MEMORIAL

The vicar and wardens of Church Hulme, otherwise Holmes Chapel, were granted a faculty to remove the plain glass from the east window of the church and to insert in lieu thereof stained glass showing “The Crucifixion”, also to erect on the east wall three tablets. The stained window and the tablets are intended as a memorial for the men of the parochial chapelry who fell during the war. The cost will be defrayed by voluntary contributions.”

No 1920 Church Newsletters are currently known to exist. So it is not possible to report on the machinations of the Village War Memorial Committee during 1920. But by January 1921 in the newsletter:

“War Memorial

It is hoped that the East Window, which is to be erected in the Church as a memorial to the men of Holmes Chapel who died for their country in the war, will be unveiled shortly after Easter, and we take

this opportunity of asking all those who have not yet subscribed, to send their offering either to the Vicar, the Churchwardens, or to the Union Bank of Manchester. The delay in carrying out the scheme has been due to the death of the artist, but it is hoped that all difficulties with regard to the work are now overcome."

In the June 1921 Church newsletter:

"Unveiling of the East Window

On Sunday Afternoon, May 8th, the East Window was unveiled in the Church by Lieut. General Sir Beauvoir de Lisle. The Church was crowded and the service was in every way worthy of the occasion. The Vicar was assisted by Canon A G Child who read the lesson, and the Rural Dean who said the Dedicatory Prayers. The Band of the Training College conducted by Bandmaster Lieut. Allen added a beauty and dignity to the service. General de Lisle gave a short and inspiring address in which he said that the window was not only a memorial to those who have given their lives but also a reminder to us for those no less heroic souls whose lives have been spared. The Choir also maintained the high traditions of Holmes Chapel, and Miss Ford is most warmly to be congratulated for the earnest enthusiasm which in this service as in all her work, is so marked a characteristic."

In the August 1921 Church newsletter:

"War Memorial Window

The Accounts for erecting the East Window are now coming in, and it would appear that the cost will be about £470. The amount of subscriptions falls about £50 short, and we take this opportunity of asking all who have not yet subscribed to send their donations to the Bank, the Vicar, or one of the Churchwardens without delay. When we bear in mind how willingly men gave their lives for us we should give no less willingly of our substance so that their sacrifice may not

be forgotten. We should bear in mind that the window is to be a token, not only for ourselves, but for future generations, that we were not unmindful of those who gave their lives for us."

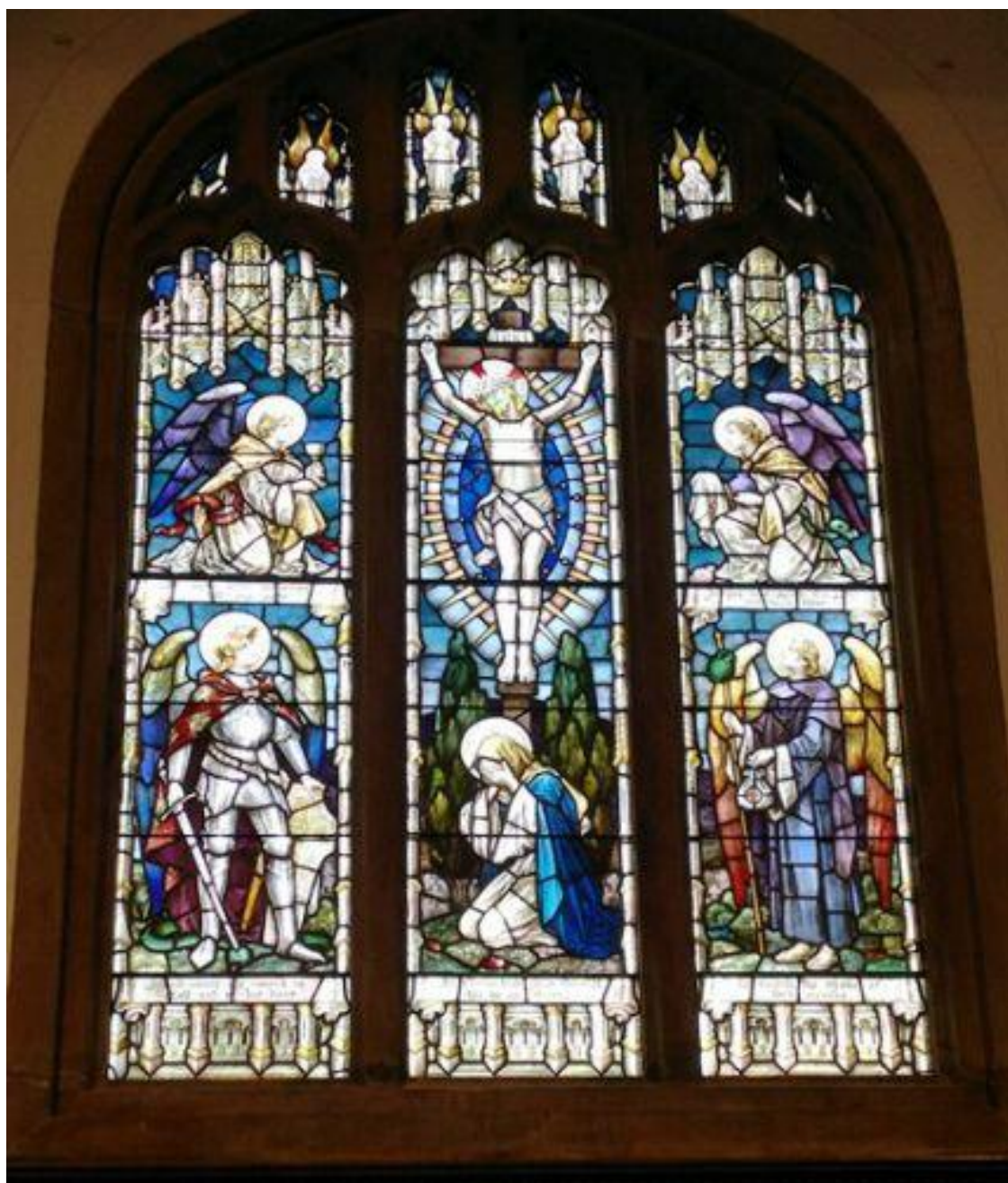
According to Rosemary Scott in her *History of Holmes Chapel* (1974), *"The cost of the window was £493 8s 2d, which was raised by public subscription.*

Rosemary Scott described the window as follows:

"In the centre light is represented 'The Supreme Sacrifice'. The cross of Christ is surrounded by a cloud of glory, and at its foot is His mourning mother. The text below is Ephesians 5 : 2 'As Christ hath given Himself for us an Offering'.

The north light represents above, the Angel of Pain, holding the Cup of Sorrow, and below, the Warrior Archangel Michael, treading underfoot the Serpent, the symbol of evil. The texts are: 'Look upon mine affliction and my pain' (Psalm 25: 18) and 'I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand' (Ezekiel 30:22).

The south light represents, above, the Angel of Pity bearing the linen cloths and spices, and below, the Archangel Raphael, the Healer, holding a pilgrim's staff, a pitcher, and a bag on which is a red cross. The texts are: 'In His loves and in His pity he redeemed them' (Isaiah 63: 9) and 'He healeth the stroke of their wounds' (Isaiah 30: 26). In the background are cypresses and a field planted with crosses. In the tracery are angels in attitudes of adoration and sympathy."



The East Window and the plaques either side of it

- Cranage School Memorial

As reported in the Crewe Chronicle on 10th September 1920, there was another memorial unveiled in the Parish:

“Unveiling Ceremony

There was a large attendance at Cranage School on Friday afternoon when the war memorial was unveiled by the Rev J H Armitstead (vicar of Sandbach). It takes the form of a beautifully carved oak tablet, subscribed for by the scholars. The inscription runs as follows: ‘We give thanks to God always for you all. Cranage. Old scholars of this school who laid down their lives in the great war. A.D. 1914 – 1918’ then follow the names of the fallen:

Horace Barnard, James Billington, Harry Blease, Samuel Bolshaw, Geoffrey Broome, Alfred Brown, Arthur Butters, Leonard Cumberlidge, George Harrision, George Henshaw, Alec Mottershead, Charles Street, Fred Street, Harry Steet, Joseph Stubbs, Sidney Thompson, Harry Upton.

The Vicar (the Rev F S G Gardner-Brown) conducted a short service, and the hymns ‘Christ will gather in His own’ and ‘For all the saints who from their labours rest’ were sung.

The Rev J H Armitstead in unveiling the memorial said he could not tell them how grateful he was in joining with them to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of those ‘old boys’ of the school whose names appeared on the memorial. He congratulated the school staff and the children upon their successful efforts in providing that beautiful tablet. They ought always to keep in their minds, fresh and bright, the memory of those who had made the supreme sacrifice. When they thought of them it was only natural that they were possessed with a feeling of sadness. Those lads were not really dead; they were alive today in Paradise. They who stayed at home would never forget the

terrible price that had to be paid in order to win the war, and their thoughts that day were entirely with those men whose names they were commemorating. The children attending that school, and the children who would attend in years to come would have before them a noble example of self-sacrifice, honour and duty.

The proceedings concluded with the Benediction pronounced by the Vicar."

Since the closure of Cranage School, the plaque is now located on the West wall of St Luke's above the stairs on the balcony.



The Cranage School Plaque

- The Carver Memorial

Mr & Mrs Carver placed a plaque on the east wall of the south aisle of St Luke's:

"To the memory of Oswald Armitage Carver, second son of William Oswald and Kate Bentley Carver, of Cranage Hall, captain East Lancashire R. E. (T) who died of wounds in the Gallipoli peninsula, in the Great War on June 7th 1915; and also of his brother Basil Armitage Carver, youngest son of the same, second lieutenant, 6th



(Inniskilling) Dragoons who died of mine gas poisoning in France in the Great War on August 21st 1916. seeking to save the lives of his men overcome in a tunnel he lost his own life. Morte Vivam"

- The Roll of Honour



A further item to mention is the Roll of Honour. It is located on the West wall to the right of the door when facing the East window, is a Roll of Honour naming everyone in the village who fought in the War.

This is believed to have been presented to the parish by the Reiss family in memory of their son Willoughby who fell in the War.

It lists 211 of the 225 men who volunteered.

- The Village Memorial Hall

Later in the 1920s, a Memorial Hall was built by the Village at Saltersford College. There was supposedly a plaque on the inside naming the ex-students and teachers who died in the First World War. The Hall was demolished when the college was closed in 1954.

- The Cenotaph

The Cenotaph in the churchyard was first commissioned in 1954, when it was laid flat, located inside the Churchyard boundary opposite the Estate agents. It was moved to its current location in October 1988, and re-dedicated on 23rd October 1988.



6 Peace Day Celebrations

Although 11th November 1918 marked the end of fighting, negotiations continued at the Paris Peace Conference until 1920. The Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28th June 1919. To mark the end of the War, a Bank Holiday was declared for Saturday 19th July 1919.

The August 1919 Parish Magazine provides a wonderful description of the Parish celebrations:

“The Holmes Chapel Peace Celebrations were held on 19th July 1919, and thanks to the unflagging energies of the various committees was a magnificent success. A procession formed of ex-servicemen, children, members of the various lodges, the Parish Council, school children, hospital nurses, the training school with their band, left the Macclesfield Road School shortly before 2pm and all joined in a Service of Thanksgiving in the square. The Vicar gave a short address in which he paid a tribute to the heroic dead and reminded all that we are left behind to carry out the purpose for which they gave their lives.”



“After the service the procession was reformed and marched to the cricket field where an excellent programme of sports was got through. Tea was at 4pm and roughly 1000 people sat down and did full justice to the first class fare that was provided. After tea the sports were concluded and at 7.30 the prizes were distributed by Mrs Gardner-Brown.”

The cricket field was located at the corner of London Road and Station Road.

“When all rendered such yeoman service it would be difficult to single out anyone for praise, but our very warmest thanks are due to the ladies who worked so hard at the tea, to Mr H S C Rees and the Sports Committee, and to Mr S Oakes who has been an indefatigable and untiring Secretary. Dancing was indulged in during the evening and was kept up to a late hour.”

The Crewe Chronicle reported the event on 26th July 1919 as follows:
“Having raised a sum of £350, the whole of the Inhabitants of Holmes Chapel, Cranage and Cotton were entertained to a first-rate Peace Tea on Saturday. After the procession formed at the schools, a service was conducted in the Square by the Rev Gardner-Brown. The names of fallen soldiers were read out. The people then assembled on the cricket field, and were provided with tea in large marquees. It is estimated that two thousand (sic) people were entertained. The training School Band was in attendance and played for dancing. There were also sports for young and old. Mrs Gardner-Brown presented the prizes. The village was gaily decorated.”

7 The Representation of the People Act 1918

Although there would have been little visible effect on the lives of the inhabitants of the village as a result of this Act, it was the start of a profound change in society.

The Representation of the People Act 1918 was an Act of Parliament passed to reform the electoral system in the United Kingdom. Also known as the Fourth Reform Act, it was the first to include practically all men in the political system and began the inclusion of women. It was given Royal assent on 6th February 1918.

The Third Reform Act in 1884 had only given the vote to 60% of male householders over the age of 21. There was concern that millions of soldiers returning from the First World War would still not have been entitled to vote in the long overdue election. The last election had been in December 1910. The Parliament Act 1911 had set the maximum term of a Parliament at 5 years, but an amendment to the Act postponed the general election until the end of the War.

The issue of the female right to vote, and the Suffragette Movement came to prominence in the twenty years before the First World War; although little was achieved, despite criminal and violent campaigning. At a conference in 1916, a militant suffragette even called for the voting age to be lowered to 18 which would have had the result of overthrowing the male majority. In the end, the Act widened suffrage by abolishing practically all property qualifications for men, and by enfranchising women over 30 who met minimum property qualifications. The enfranchisement of women was accepted as recognition of the contribution made by women factory workers in support of the war effort.

The size of the electorate tripled from the 7.7 million who voted in 1910 to 21.4 million by the end of 1918. Women now accounted for about 43% of the electorate. Had women been enfranchised based upon the same requirements as men, they would have been in the majority because of the loss of men in the War. This could well explain why the female age of 30 was used.

The first General election using the new system took place on 14th December 1918, only one month after the Armistice. Vote counting did not start until 28th December 1918.

This Act gave 8.4 million women the vote. The Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act 1918 was passed in November 1918 allowing women to be elected to Parliament. Full electoral equality for women did not occur until the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act 1928.



8 Pubs and Opening Hours

For many years, a goal of the Temperance movement led by Protestant nonconformists had been to reduce heavy drinking by closing as many pubs as possible. In 1908 Prime Minister H H Asquith – although a known drinker – took the lead by proposing to close about a third of the 100,000 pubs in England and Wales, with the owners compensated through a new tax on surviving pubs.

Restrictions were tightened further by the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) of August 1914 (See also Booklet #9 – Rules and Regulations) which along with the introduction of rationing and censorship of the press for wartime purposes, restricted pub opening hours to 12 noon – 2:30 pm and 6:30 – 9:30 pm. Opening for the full licensed hours was compulsory, and closing time was firmly enforced by the police.

The origin of the British Lock-in was a reaction against the changes to the licensing laws at the start of the First World War, which curtailed opening hours to stop factory workers from turning up drunk and harming the war effort. The “lock-in” is when a pub owner lets drinkers stay in the pub after the legal closing time, on the theory that once the doors are locked, it becomes a private party rather than a pub. Patrons may put money behind the bar before official closing time, and redeem their drinks during the lock-in so no drinks are technically sold after closing time.

At the end of the War, there was an assumption on the part of the working classes that opening hours would revert back to the pre-war timings. However this view was not popular in the other classes of society. Two views from a Brewer and a Magistrate were reported in the Crewe Chronicle:

On 26th April 1919, *“Sir Archibald Salvidge, managing director of Beal’s Brewery Company, Liverpool, which owns 300 licensed houses”* declared in an interview with a *“Times”* journalist:

“While I am of the opinion that a case might be made out for the opening of licensed premises at 5 in the afternoon instead of 6 as at present, in order that working men leaving their work at this hour after an arduous day of toil should have facilities for obtaining reasonable refreshment, still I am confident that it is unwise at the moment to open licensed premises, whether they be public houses, hotels or clubs, during the afternoon hours between 2:30 and 5, when people are at work or should be at work.” “The old conditions, when hours ranged from 6 in the morning until 11 at night, I trust will never return, and whilst I hold no brief for the Board of Control, and do not doubt that in many matters their decisions were not marked by wisdom, still, I do admit that many of the restrictions which the Board enforced have proved to be for the benefit of the community and the trade.”

On 9th August 1919 the paper reported a letter written to *“The Times”* from a Magistrate Mr R V Bankes, *“KC formerly of the Chester & N Wales Circuit, and currently of the Metropolitan Police Court Stipendiaries”*, as follows:

“Everyone is down upon ‘DORA’ and wants to see all restrictions upon liberty removed. May I say one word about the restrictions upon the hours of opening licensed premises? In this district, these restrictions have been, in my opinion, an unqualified benefit of the highest order. Not only has drunkenness decreased as by magic, but serious cases, assaults on the police, upon wives, midnight broils, and the like have also been enormously reduced in number. The streets are quiet at an early hour, the children get to bed, and the pandemonium which formerly prevailed at 1:30 am no longer happily exists, I am not a

teetotaller. Good drink, in reasonable quantities is in my opinion, a good thing; but I do earnestly hope, and so do the experienced police officers in the district that we shall not revert to the old hours."

It would take almost 100 years for opening hours to be relaxed to any great extent. The Licensing Act 2003 which came into force on 24th November 2005 allowed pubs to apply to their local councils for the opening hours of their choice.



The George & Dragon and The Bull Inn



The Red Lion Hotel

9 **Whatever happened to the Belgian Refugees?**

The Belgian refugees in Holmes Chapel village had all left by September 1915. But what ultimately happened to the other refugees in neighbouring towns and villages such as Sandbach and Congleton?

As mentioned previously (in Booklet #4 – Refugees Come to the Village), the Belgians appeared to the British to be strange and alien, and vice versa. With their displacement, and loss of property, it can be assumed that they suffered from depression. The Crewe Chronicle on 13th March 1915 reported a suicide:

“Belgian Refugee Commits Suicide – Wanted To Go Back To Antwerp. One of the Belgian refugees named Joseph Detiege, residing at the Cottages in Sandbach, committed suicide on Thursday evening last in the loft of the stables adjoining the house. The affair created a sensation in the town, for deceased had become well known. It appears he had been very depressed of late because of the probable loss of his money and property in Antwerp, where he was a diamond cutter. He had also suffered much with bronchitis and asthma.

Christophe Declercq, who runs the Online Centre for Research on Belgian Refugees and whose great-grandfather was a refugee, has said “There was a jubilant feeling of going to get ‘The Bosche’ and the ‘plucky little Belgians’ fitted into that narrative. It was often the case that if you didn’t have a refugee staying with you, you knew someone who did, they were treated rather like pets.”

The mystery of what happened to the Belgians is solved by a report on the 29th March 1919 in the Crewe Chronicle: *“Belgians Depart. After a sojourn of over four years, the refugee Belgians and their families left on Saturday morning for their native country, taking advantage of the free passage under the repatriation scheme. With*

their departure we are reminded of the memorable night in Sept 1914 when they first claimed the hospitality of Sandbach, were housed, clothed and fed by a sympathetic people. It was only a few hours before they had fled from the German hordes, willing to endure anything rather than suffer the horrible persecutions which befell hundreds of their countrymen who remained behind."

That the Belgians were grateful for our support cannot be denied. On 12th October 1920, a memorial was unveiled at Victoria Embankment Gardens in London. A statue by the Belgian sculptor Victor Rousseau was given to the British nation. Belgium was represented at the unveiling by Princess Clementine of Belgium, several members of the Royal Family and the Belgian Prime Minister Delacroix. The memorial is proof of Belgian gratitude to the people of Britain who had accommodated the Belgians so well during the First World War. Representing the British nation was Lord Curzon, the then Foreign Secretary and friend of the Belgian King Albert.



The Belgian Memorial in Victoria Embankment Gardens, London

10 The Comrades' Club & The Mothers' Union

After the War, there were a number of Clubs and Societies set up in the village – for example a local branch of Toc H was maintained in Sandiford Cottage for a number of years.

In the Church newsletter for October 1919:

“Formation of ‘Comrades’ Club’

A largely attended Meeting of ex-service men and others was held in the Macclesfield Road School on Thursday September 4th at 7:30 pm. Major T C Toler was in the chair supported by Lt J W Richardson representing the Comrades of the Great War, and the Vicar [J H Armitstead at this time].

The chairman opened the proceedings and outlined briefly the aims and purpose of the Comrades Club and expressed a hope that Holmes Chapel men would start a branch for the benefit of the Parish.

Lt J W Richardson in a speech of great power and force, followed the chairman and gave a detailed explanation of the objects of the ‘Comrades of the Great War’, and appealed to the meeting to maintain that spirit of unity and comradeship which held them together at the front.

The Vicar put before the meeting the main purpose for which they were called together viz: the formation of a club for men which should be non-political and non-sectarian, self-supporting and independent. On a general motion it was decided to form a branch of the Comrades and proceed as soon as possible to start a club.

The Vicar was unanimously elected First Captain and Chairman of the Comrades and of the Club. Major Toler was elected Treasurer, Mr P Sankey, Secretary, and the following gentlemen were appointed to serve on the Committee: Messrs. R B Bright, H Bright, F Burgess, T Costello, H Venables, W Stubbs.

The meeting, which was throughout marked by a feeling of great enthusiasm and unity, augers well for the future of the Comrades and their Club."

"Comrades' Committee

Weekly Meetings of the Comrades' Committee have been held at the Vicarage, under the chairmanship of the Vicar, and while, at the moment of going to press, we are unable to give details, we are glad to be able to state that sufficient money has been guaranteed to buy a hut and start with the furnishing. It is important that all Holmes Chapel men should do their utmost to bear a share in the cost of starting the Club so that the responsibility may be borne by all. Particulars can be obtained from Mr P Sankey at the Post Office."

In the December 1919 Newsletter:

"The Comrades' Club

The Comrades' Club held their Opening Meeting on Nov 6th and gave an excellent Concert before a very full house. Thanks to the services of Mr W T Johnson a first-class humourist was secured at the last moment, and his contributions to the success of the evening was by no means small. Numerous ladies and gentlemen gave their services and we owe them a real debt of gratitude.

On Nov 10th a General Meeting was held, a house committee elected and rules drawn up.

The Club is now in full swing and we hope that any residents of Holmes Chapel who have surplus easy chairs will send them to the club house."

After the war, the Mothers' Union also formed a branch in the Parish.

In the Mar 1921 Church Newsletter:

"Mothers' Union

On Wednesday, Feb 2nd, the first meeting of the Mothers' Union was held at the Vicarage, and was fairly well attended. It is hoped to hold meetings of our branch fortnightly at the Vicarage, and all Mothers who wish to join should give their names to Mrs Gardner-Brown.

On Feb 16th, Mrs Paget came from Chester and gave a most inspiring address which was listened to with great attention and interest. The objects of the MU were briefly outlined, and all felt that it would be the means of help to the spiritual life in the Parish.

The next meeting of the Mother's Union will be held at the Vicarage at 2:30 on Wednesday March 9th and fortnightly after that date."

In the November 1921 Church Newsletter:

"It is hoped to hold a Sale of Work in the Assembly Rooms on Nov 25th. The members of the Mothers' Union have been working for some months and have made great efforts, and at their wish the proceeds will be given to purchase new Psalters and Hymn Books for the Choir. During the afternoon there will be a short Dramatic Entertainment and in the Evening there will be a Whist Drive.

The members of the Mothers' Union would be very glad to receive gifts for the Produce and other Stalls and they should be sent to the Assembly Rooms early on 26th November. Charges of admission to the Sale of Work and to the Whist Drive will be announced later."

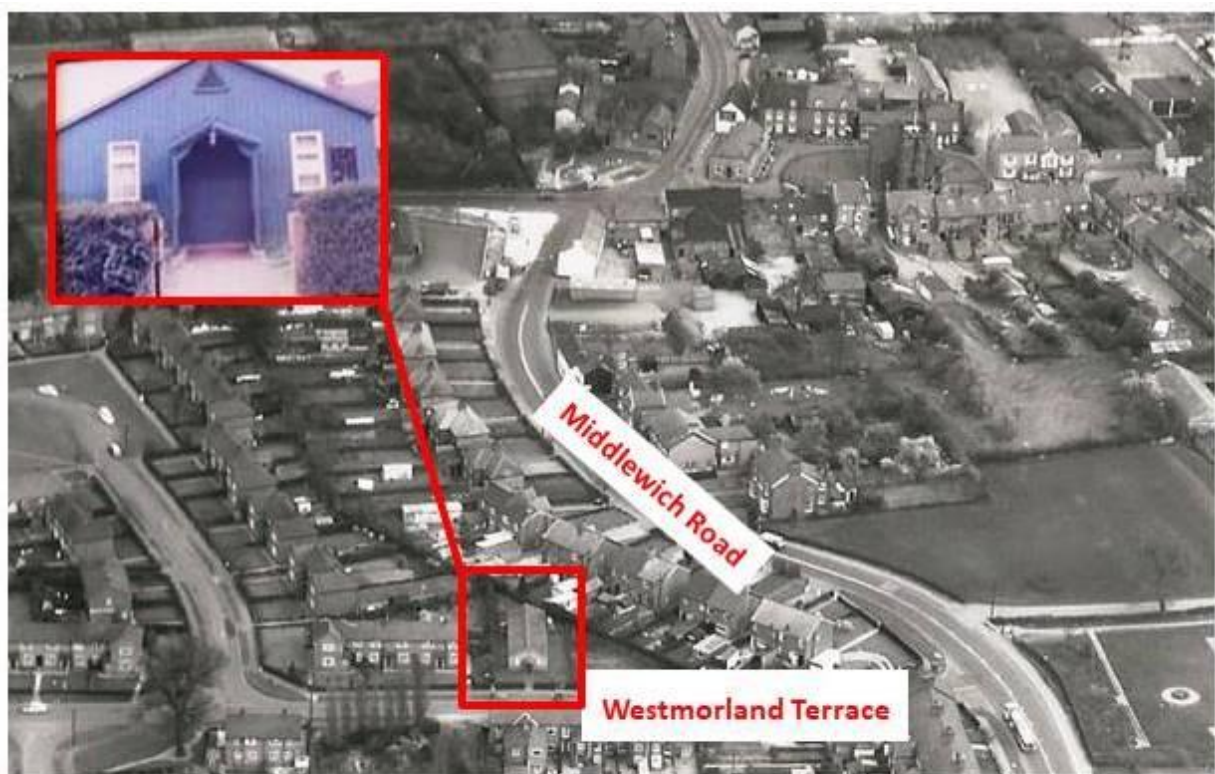
It would seem that the Mothers Union initially transferred from the Vicarage to the Assembly Rooms. No documentation has yet been

found, but it can only be assumed that the Comrades' Club only lasted for a few years, and by the late 1930's their wooden hut had been taken over by The Mothers' Union.

The building known as the Mothers' Union Hut was located on Westmorland Terrace. In later years, it was known as the Church Hall, and was only demolished when the permanent Church Hall was built behind the Cooperative Supermarket.

The aerial photograph below shows the village in the early 1970s – the old George & Dragon has been demolished, and the road is being widened.

Bessancourt, and the Co-operative car park are yet to be built.



The Mother's Union Hut, originally the Comrades Club Hut

Conclusions

This booklet has described some of the events which occurred in and around Holmes Chapel at the end of the First World War. It is based on information obtained from the Parish Magazine of St Luke's church, local newspaper reports and earlier histories of the Parish. Some of this information had not previously been analysed.

It is important that we should not underestimate the effects of the war and the relief the village population must have felt at its end. This goes some way to help explain the efforts to commemorate the losses.

We should also remember that a significant proportion of the village population travelled a considerable distance, certainly further than most inhabitants; met very different people; had seen a completely alien world; had a range of profound experiences that would change their views of their world radically. Their return home must have caused ripples in the life of the community for many years.

Booklets in this series produced by the Holmes Chapel U3A Local History Group:

1. Holmes Chapel before the War
2. Village People 1914 – 1918
3. The Men Who Went to War
4. Refugees come to the village
5. Beating the Drum – Recruitment and Communication
6. The Community Response
7. Feeding the People
8. Rationing During the War
9. Rules and Regulations
10. Education
11. Life Goes On
12. Holmes Chapel at the End of the War

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