

PARISH NOTES FROM THE PAST 100 YEARS AGO

PARISH NOTES FROM THE PAST 100 Years Ago



Reproduced in full here is this report that appeared in the Parish Magazine in May 1918. Not only does it illustrate the dangers and hardships of the Great War in France but the letter writing style is also interesting.

The story of the first day of the great German attack is very graphically told in the following words of a Choirman of St Mary's, Laira:

"I got a nice Blighty one in the left foot – first a machine-gun bullet, and then shrapnel in three toes. But cheer oh! I hope to be in England soon, for I am marked on my card. I am lucky to be where I am now. I had a rough time of it and was in the hands of the Germans, but got away with two officers.

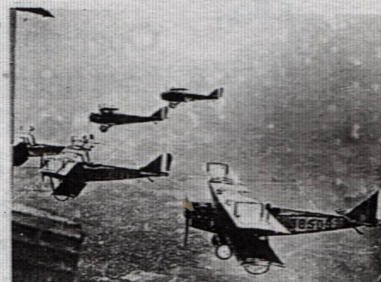


It was very misty, you know. Oh, how we did work! And how our brave men did fight! They were grand. The Germans had all my kit, even down to my boots, souvenirs and all. It was a very sad scene to see all the old people leaving their homes, some with two sticks, and no carts to take them. The officer I was servant to was shot in the neck, and I could do nothing for him. I don't know how I got through when the shell burst that wounded me the second time. I was nearest to it, yet strange to say, all the rest with me were killed, and cut to pieces. I shall never forget and see it all again every time I sleep.



Two prisoners who gave themselves up told us when the attack was coming off. After bombarding us for eight hours, the barrage lifted and, in less than five minutes we were surrounded by thousands of Germans. We were all prisoners, guns and men and everything. Fritz started to take us back. We went a long way and then some men started dropping behind, also two officers and I did the same. What happened after I cannot describe; it was all such a mix up. The cries of the

wounded, the bursting shells, our airmen's bombs, the rattle of the machine-guns make up a memory that will last as long as life; and I am indeed thankful to be where I am."



There was also a mention of Egguckland Church Choir member, Pte Fred Hurrell, who had been severely wounded in the recent fighting. It was said that his life had probably been saved by his steel helmet. He was in hospital in Lichfield and understood to be "doing well". And it was learned that another St Mary's "Choirman", Walter Hannam, was a prisoner in Germany.

PARISH NOTES FROM THE PAST 100 YEARS AGO

The harrowing reports of injuries and losses in the Great War continued:

"We have had to add eight more names to the Roll of Honour of the fallen. QM Sgt Frederick William Carter, RGA, had been at the Front ever since the beginning of the war. Private Charles Henry Burr, of the New Zealand Contingent, on the other hand, could barely have taken his place in the firing line before he fell. He was a choir boy in St Edward's before he emigrated with his parents to New Zealand.



Those of us who saw him in Eggbuckland last August were impressed with what a fine young fellow he had developed into. Pte Charles Stuart James, formerly a choir boy at Crabtree Mission Church, Sgt Maj Gallagher, after 21 years' service, and Pte Norman Herring were all killed on almost the same day. Pte Horace Herring, brother of the last, also died on active service. We sympathise truly with the families and may the fallen rest in peace.

We also hear with deepest sorrow that Sydney Richard Winsor is also killed. He was still a member of the Choir when he joined up, besides being a Cross-bearer. May God comfort his widowed mother. RIP."

"Our wounded are, as far as we know, progressing favourably. L Cpl Percy Adlard especially writes to say how comfortable he is in a London hospital and what care is there shown for all the wounded. Pte Richard Pengelley has been moved to Derriford Convalescent Camp and has visited us in the village. He had a wonderful escape, being the only survivor of a group in a shell-hole raked by machine gun fire."



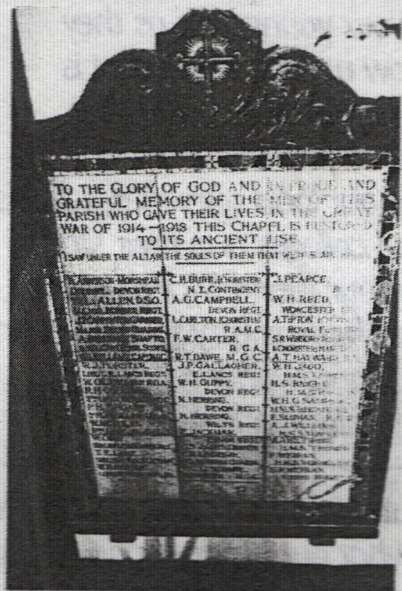
Despite all the worries and tragedies, life continued as normally as possible in the Parish. Preparations were being made for the fund raising Sale of Work in December as well as a forthcoming Confirmation. The Harvest Festival at St Mary's was held on 2nd October when the church was described as having been most tastefully decorated. Several ladies had contributed a total of ten shillings for altar flowers but sufficient flowers were received from other church members that the money was able to be donated toward the Laira Church Building Fund that still had the sizeable sum of nearly £1,400 outstanding.



PARISH NOTES FROM THE PAST 100 YEARS AGO

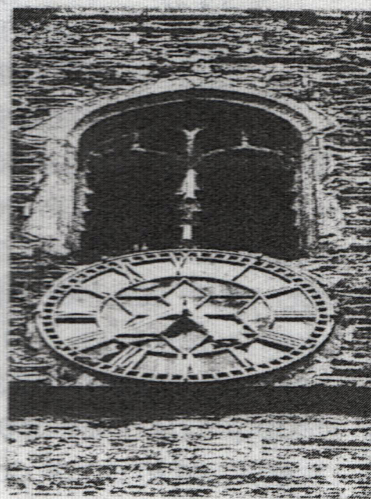


The Parish was quickly getting back into the swing of post war activities in February 1919 and concentrating on the more mundane routines and duties. The Vicar had received donations amounting to over £13 towards the cost of a war memorial in church. Many parishioners were also making regular contributions to the appeal fund for the building of St Mary's Church, Laira, the outstanding debt of which stood at £1,128.



It was reported that trees on the south side of the churchyard had been topped. The writer explained:

"For several years, owing to the long slender growth, they have been a menace to the cottages beneath them, and, when a gale has been blowing, have given us much real anxiety."



Another familiar problem, then as now, was with the church clock.

"It has had to be overhauled again to cure it of a perverse habit of ceasing work at a quarter to two."

A Rummage Sale had been held at the Vicarage on 12th February in aid of providing materials for the next bazaar. It produced £5.2s.0d (£5.10p) which was considered very good.

There were two weddings (19th & 22nd February) - Bertram John Boney & Winnifred Florence Rollin and John Thomas Corber & Bessie Jane Jackman.



"Both were very pretty functions, with the brides and bridesmaids charmingly dressed, and with large congregations of friends to witness them."

Thoughts were turning to and preparations being made for a Summer Sports Day. A dance in the school was held to raise funds for the event and a Sports Committee formed with the Vicar as President. They were to meet on the first Monday of each month.

On February 4th, the Vicar's Grandson, Ian Dixon Baker, was Baptised at Holy Trinity, Wandsworth.