

ALLIED TROOPS CONTINUE TO HOLD

THE STALEMATE WAS ALMOST CONTINUOUS THROUGHOUT 1917

with opposing armies gaining and losing the same few hundred yards week after week, with the same horrendous loss of life.

The USA had declared war on Germany during the early summer of 1917, mainly on the basis that they had several merchant ships sunk by U boats whilst they were still a neutral country.

On March 21st 1918 the German high command launched a spring offensive against the allies on the Somme.

No 122521 L/CPL Frank Moss MM of the machine gun corp. was killed in action on the 24th March 1918 aged 20; he lived at "The Limes" on Chester Rd Middlewich.

On April 10th 1918 Driver William Ankers died of his wounds, he was in the Royal Field Artillery, aged 28. In all 17 men from Middlewich were either killed in action or died of their wounds during March and April of this year.

During 1918, 43 Middlewich men died either in France or the Middle East.



BUSINESSMEN'S WEEK

The population of the country were getting 'war weary' by 1918; during the spring the government launched a new nationwide initiative 'Businessmen's Week'. The larger businesses in Middlewich decided on a target for the week of £12,500, enough to buy 5 aeroplanes at £2,500 each. The Chairman of the inevitable committee was Mr J W Harrison and the secretary Mr E L Earl; they were entrusted with the task of pulling this initiative together on behalf of the MUDC. They succeeded to such an extent that £22,000 of war bonds were taken up in the week, enough to buy 9 aeroplanes. The main purchasers were: Brunner Mond and Co £5,000, Electro Bleach £5,000, Henry Seddon and Co £3,000, Mr Stainer Hutchins £1,000, Mrs Roylance Court £350, Mrs Kay £150 plus many smaller amounts. The Nationwide result of the Businessmen's week was the raising of the amazing sum of £20.5 million. Nationwide the towns and villages whose population was under 10,000, which included Middlewich, raised enough to buy 4,500 aeroplanes at £2,500 each! This nationwide achievement was tremendous by any standards and certainly raised the country's morale.

ROYAL SILVER WEDDING CELEBRATION

At home during the round of fund raising events for the various war committees there was one event that was different from the normal summer activities of Garden Parties, Fetes etc. At the beginning of June 1918, Mrs Kay and Mrs Roylance Court had an idea to celebrate the silver wedding of the King and Queen. On behalf of the Red Cross they rented a room in the Town Hall for the evening from 5pm to 7pm. Anyone wishing to celebrate the silver wedding could offer a piece of unwanted gold or silver to the Red Cross Branch to auction for the care of the soldiers and sailors in the 2 hospitals. It was a tremendous success.

ALLIED VICTORIES

In France the tide of conflict appeared to be turning in favour of the allies, the Australians and the Americans secured the village of Le Hamer on the 4th July. On the 15th to the 18th of July the second battle of the Marne took place, the German army lost 168,000 men in 3 days. This allied victory carried out by the French, Americans and British heralded the beginning of the allied Aisne-Marne offensive on the 18th July, the German Army began to retreat. August brought a series of defeats for the German Army, at Amiens, Albert and Montdidier. Many German prisoners were taken during August and September as the allies gained control of the Hindenburg line. As news of these victories and the large number of prisoners captured reached England, the spirits of the population rose. On the 20th October the German submarine offensive was abandoned followed by the rumour that the German High Service Fleet had mutinied.

Other events in November followed in quick succession,

on the 14th November all U boats were interned, on the 21st the German High Seas Fleet surrendered to Britain and on the 27th the Germans evacuated Belgium.

At the end of November, the Parish Church together with the UDC decides to erect a memorial in the church vestry, at this time in the Lady Chapel, in memory of the heroic dead. Mrs Roylance court gave £1,000 for her late husband, her son (killed in action) and the late Sir Andrew Walker. Apart from this memorial the general feeling in the town was that the memorial should take the form of public baths. With the end of the war the two Red Cross hospitals, at Brooks Lane and Ravenscroft Hall, were being run down. The Brooks Lane Hospital was closed on 21st January, 1919 and on that day the Duchess of Westminster visited the hospital to give a personal "thank you" to Mrs Kay, the nursing staff and the band of workers that had spearheaded the fund-raising and donations.

A total of 682 men had been nursed back to health at both hospitals. Mrs Kay was awarded the OBE for her leadership with the Red Cross. Later the Duchess visited the Town Hall and the packing room (the POW parcels operation) and took tea with the returned POWs and their families. Entertainment followed with choral and solo items, at the conclusion of which the National Anthem was sung, together with three cheers for Mrs Kay.

In April 1919 the Board of Trade lifted the restrictions on various commodities, plus imports and exports, hopefully to begin a new revival of trade, but this did not include fuel, gas, glass, hay and straw, leather and wool.

Middlewich Day Committee.
(Registered under the War Charities Act, 1916).

A GARDEN PARTY

WILL BE HELD AT
RAVENSCROFT HALL, MIDDLEWICH,
On Wednesday, 19th June, 1918
From 5 p.m. until 10 p.m.,
IN AID OF THE
ITALIAN RED CROSS FUNDS.
Entertainments. Dancing.
ADMISSION (inclusive of Tax, if any) 1/6
Children " " 1/-

MEMORIAL

The war relief committee at their meeting in May 1919 resolved that a memorial to the fallen, bearing their names, be erected in the parish churchyard at a cost of £400, and the secretary Mr C F Lawrence was instructed to contact sculptors. The previous scheme for baths being too expensive. This unitary action by the war relief committee, who had not consulted or contacted any other organisation in the town including the MUDC, was the beginning of a series of proposals and counter proposals that dragged on for 16 years.

ARMISTICE SIGNED

It was becoming general knowledge that the war was not going to last much longer. The Daily Mail revealed during the beginning of October that Bulgaria had surrendered unconditionally to the allies and that Max Von Baden was the new chancellor of Germany. An intermediary in Switzerland invited President Wilson of America to take up the question of peace and to communicate to this end to all opposing forces. Two days after the Kaiser abdicated and fled to Holland, the armistice was signed at 5am on November 11th and all fighting ceased at 11am. The news of the armistice was received by Supt Sutton at the police station and immediately communicated to the Town Hall, and a notice was posted outside. The good news spread very quickly throughout the town, flags were hoisted on the Town Hall and the parish church. The Rev Fortnum ran into the main hall of the Council School shouting "The war is over"

By midday the streets were festooned with bunting and flags all the school children were given a half days holiday, and many of the workers were treated the same. Arrangements were quickly put in hand for a united service of thanksgiving in the Parish Church at 8 o'clock that evening, as the evening wore on the church began to fill up and by 8 o'clock it was full to overflowing with people standing in the aisles, in the porch and outside.

The attendance included the Chairman, officials, the council, Mrs Kay, soldiers on leave, choirs, scouts etc. After the moving service had ended the Male Voice Choir, with Mr Brady as its conductor, assembled in the Bull Ring with many of the congregation to sing hymns. As they sang townspeople from neighbouring house and streets joined them until a large crowd had gathered. The thanksgiving was tinged with sadness, no doubt many people thinking of the loved ones who would never stand in the Bull Ring again, never see the Narrowboats on the canal from the bridge, never hear the church bells.

Peace Celebrations Planned

During the summer of 1919 it was obvious to the entire town that the discussions, proposals and counter proposals were getting out of hand, and getting nowhere. This impasse was only brought to an abrupt halt by the discussions in the Council Chamber about how to conduct the Peace celebrations to be held at the end of July. This was decided without a great deal of Argument.

Saturday July 19th was the day chosen for the peace celebrations, for several weeks before, the population had been preparing for the procession, bunting and flags hung everywhere in the main streets and everyone was looking forward to seeing the societies in their finery and the comic characters that were always so popular. The procession began to assemble in Sutton Lane, the church bells had been ringing for a couple of hours in the morning and now after dinner they were ringing again. The Centenary band led the way followed by a large number of ex-service men, in ranks of four their men's medals glinting in the sunlight, former N.C.O.'s took up their positions on the right of the several columns, the Red Cross nurses and the men of the Red Cross detachment came next, the Red on their uniforms made a splash of colour in front of the white robed druids with their banner,

they wore black scarves in memory of their society members that did not return home. The Friendly Societies in their outstanding liveries of green, black and gold were next. The numerous comic characters came behind the Friendly Societies, clowns, men dressed as women, tramps, decorated cycles etc. The centre of the procession was taken by the Chairman of the council Mr George Dean in his Mayoral robes, accompanied by the members of the council and senior officials. The scouts bugle band followed and headed a vast number of schoolchildren dressed in their Sunday best and carrying flags or streamers on sticks, the Catholic school girls stood out in their white frocks and pink sashes.

PEACE PROCESSION

Captain Moss, Mr H Cambridge and the Rev J W Fortnum were the procession marshals. They set off from Sutton Lane into St Anns Road, over the canal bridge and so into Newton Bank, at this point the procession stopped in front of a large crowd. Clapping and cheering throughout the route, many people lined the footpaths to greet the large procession. At Newton Bank speeches were made by the chairman of the council, Canon Child, The Rev J Summerfield and the Rev J W Fortnum. The National Anthem was sung and the procession reformed to carry on over Newton Bank, right at the Golden Lion and down Chester Rd, Wheelock Street, Lower Street, Leadsmithy St, and Lewin Street where it halted at Victoria Square. At this point the whole procession dispersed to go to their various schools and halls for tea. In the Victoria Building 300 soldiers and sailors sat down for their

meal, a knife and fork tea, there was no shortage of food and beverages of all descriptions.

After tea a second procession was formed, behind the centenary band, to arrive at Ravenscroft hall to be welcomed by Mrs Kay OBE. The procession consisted of school children, ex-servicemen and various comic characters and the ex-servicemen took part on a slow bicycle race and the tug of war plus the 100 yards dash. The children enjoyed the egg and spoon race, the needle threading and the chance of a piggy-back in the 50 yards dash. The centenary band played a selection of music during the evening sports. The prizes were distributed by Mrs Kay and Major General Broadbent. The very successful day was rounded by a dance in the Town Hall.

MIDDLEWICH
PEACE CELEBRATIONS.
SATURDAY, JULY 19TH, 1919.

Programme--

- 1-0 Scholars to assemble at their Sunday Schools.
- 1-45 Band, Discharged Soldiers & Sailors' Scouts, Red Cross Detachments, Friendly Societies and others to assemble in Sutton Lane, Canal to Lewin St.
- 2-0 Procession to move off via Sutton Lane, St Anns Road, Newton Heath, Newton Bank, Chester Road, Wheelock St, High Town, Lewin St.
- 2-30 Procession arrive Newton Bank, where the National Anthem will be sung.
- 3-30 Procession arrives Lewin St. for Dispersal. Scholars to move off to their respective Schools for Tea.
- 4-0 Scholars Tea.
- 4-30 Soldiers and Sailors' Tea at Victoria Buildings.
- 5-0 Band and Scholars to form Procession in Lewin St. and march to Ravenscroft.
- 5-30 Commencement of Sports.
- 6-15 On arrival at Ravenscroft all who have been Prisoners of War are requested to proceed to the Band Stand, where Mrs. Kay O.B.E., President of the Comforts Committee, will hand them £1 each from the Comforts Fund in lieu of the Christmas Boxes which they were unable to receive while in the enemy's hands.
- 7-0 Band to play for Dancing.
- 8-0 Soldiers and Sailors' Dance in Town Hall.
- 9-0 Presentation of Prizes.

If sufficient entries two prizes will be given for the
Best Decorated Cycle
Best Comical Costume on Cycle.
Most Original and Humourous
Costume Marching.
A Tug of War Consisting of Teams of Eight men. Confined to Soldiers and Sailors. Entries to be made to Sports Secretary not later than 2 p.m.

An appeal is made to Householders and Tradesmen on the route of Procession to Decorate their Houses and Premises.