

Great War Bulletin

No. 22...Newark...Monday 28 December 1914

CHRISTMAS ANGUISH ... 1

Son of Northgate family is a prisoner of the Germans

THERE was only Christmas anguish for Henry and wife Tacey of 102 Northgate, Newark, who have five sons fighting in the British forces around the world.

They received a letter from one of them, Fred, on the morning of Christmas Eve to say he was wounded and a prisoner in Germany.

They already knew he had been shot through both thighs during the Battle for Mons at the outset of this conflict.

But the military authorities had led them to believe that he was in a hospital in England.

As Henry was at work at Bishop and Son's maltsters, it was Mrs Tacey who opened the most distressing letter from Fred.

Needs clothes

He wrote that he had nothing to wear except what he stood up in (the light summer clothing he wore when he enlisted), was hungry and unhappy.

He beseeched them to send him 10 shillings as well as a shirt and cigarettes.

He gave his address as Gustron, Mecklingberg, Germany.

Mrs Tacey hurried off to the Town Hall to see Mayoress Annie Kew, whose Working Party continued to knit and sew clothes for Newark men in the serving forces.

And the kindly Mayoress instantly arranged for Fred to be sent a shirt, socks, muffler and other comforts plus home-made cake and a packet of cigarettes.

Mr and Mrs Tacey inevitably spent Christmas fearing the worst about their boy's health and long-term future.

What they do not know, of course, was that poor Fred would survive to appear on Newark's absentee-voter list compiled in the spring of 1918.

CHRISTMAS ANGUISH ... 2

Sleaford Road soldier killed

THREE days before Christmas, Mrs Ann Holberry of Sleaford Road received notification that her 28-year-old son, Private Harry Holberry, had been killed in action on the battlefield on 12 November.

In his last letter home he had: mentioned going through "strenuous fighting", confided that he hoped for a long rest after 14 days in the trenches, but revealed that he was called back into action within less than four hours.

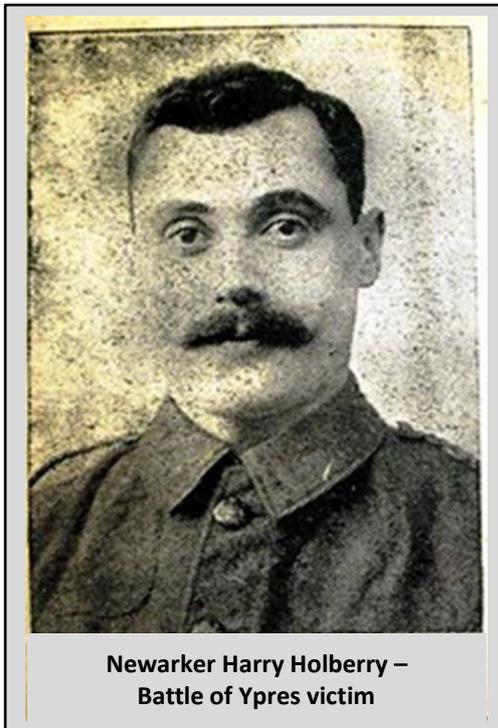
Harry worked as a brewer's labourer before he answered the call to arms and became Private 7271 Holberry in the 1st Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment.

Details of how Harry met his end were censored in 1914, but the official history of the regiment published almost two decades later records that he was merely one of the victims of the First Battle of Ypres, a French town of xx souls that became familiar to British soldiers as 'Wipers'. The history states:

"12th to 20th November inclusive, were days of almost indescribable misery, when only the inherent cheerful disposition of the British soldier kept his soul alive amidst desperate conditions.

On the 12th a hurricane of shell-fire swept the British trenches all day, and the Lincolnshire Regiment lost six more men killed and 23 wounded."

Cardiff-born Ann and her husband Henry had had 13 children. Among them, Thomas (42) and John (32) were bricklayer's labourers, Joseph (30) a tailor, Eliza (24) and Harriett (22) sewing machinists, Ada (20) a French polisher, Leah (17) a home help, William (14) and Christopher (12) were still at school – and as if they had a premonition they christened their grandson in 1910 ... Harry.



Sombre mood on Home Front

CHRISTMAS 1914 was so unlike any other that it is likely to live long in the memory.

Newark was shuttered and dull beyond description for three days.

The streets were deserted and desolate. The weather was in her most lugubrious mood, thus harmonising with the prevailing gravity.

Although some soldiers – nearly all of them

officers – were sent home on furlough, while others were left behind to man the trenches of the battlefronts.

It was little wonder that the soldiers who came home passed to and fro with serious mien and absence of joyousness, doing little to relieve the all-pervading seriousness of this exceptional Christmas-tide ... or that most people's thoughts were with those in foreign fields.

Follow Newark's trauma in The Great War as it happened 100 years ago this week

GREETINGS TO BRAVE BOYS

EVERY fighting men from Nottinghamshire received a 10-page Christmas card from the diplomatic and political hierarchy of the county, including Newark's Mayor Kew, who quoted Kipling ...

"E'en now the vanguard gathers,
E'en now we face the fray.
As Thou didst help our fathers
Help Thou our host today!"
Well played, Notts!



Sweet treats for the Workhouse inmates

THE inmates of Newark Workhouse enjoyed the gifts of buns and cakes by Mrs W E Knight, Christmas cakes by Mrs W B B Quibell of the Grove at Balderton, evergreens, tea, sugar, tobacco, sweets and toys by Mr and Mrs C Constable Curtis of Langford Hall; oranges and sweets by Mr W Fazackerley; figs and sweets by Mr S Foster; and evergreens by Mr W A Warwick.

Merriment for maltsters

AS in former years, Mr and Mrs H D Cherry-Downes of Gilstrap, Earp and Company gave a most enjoyable tea and entertainment at the Town Hall to more than 160 children of the maltsters employed by the firm.

Santa's in khaki, kids

ALL the patients at Newark Hospital received a present, especially the children, thanks to the efforts of volunteers. Santa Claus did not put in an appearance. The children well knew that he was wearing khaki and was otherwise employed overseas this year.

Tasty or tatty? Choc box controversy

CONFECTIONERS E E Oldham and Son of 48 Market Place introduced especially for Christmas a "very acceptable novelty" in the shape of a patriotic chocolate box tastefully embellished with the flags of the Allied nations.

The price: 1s 6d.

Newark Mayor John Charles Kew, down-to-earth coal merchant and proprietor of the *Newark Advertiser*, was not very impressed.

He professed serious concerns that patriotism was being commercialised to too great a degree at the time of a great Christian festival.

As for food, home-cured ham was 10½d a pound, sausages 7½d to 10d, smoked bacon (machine sliced) 1 shilling a pound, Cheddar cheese 11d a pound, finest currants or good currants 3½d a pound, St Ivel fresh butter 1s 4d a pound ... and tobacco 4½d an ounce.

An exhaustive search of butcher's and game shops by a *Newark Herald* reporter failed to discover any turkeys for sale ... not that many folk had either the inclination or time to cook a traditional festive meal.



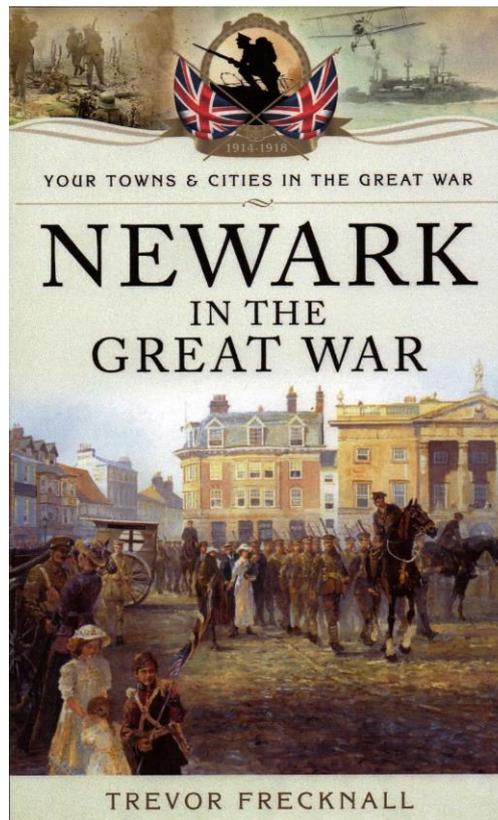
Mrs W E Knight, benefactor of Christmas buns and cakes to the inmates of Newark Workhouse, went on to become Mayoress when her husband succeeded Councillor Kew – and did much more voluntary work by continuing the Mayoress's Working Party – but became fatally ill before the War ended.

FARMERS DEFEND FOALS

MEMBERS at the 10th annual general meeting of the Newark branch of the Farmers' Union passed a resolution calling for the prosecution of folk who sell in-foal horses to the military because it was seriously depleting local stock.

George Norwood of Morton Manor, Fiskerton, was elected chairman with Laughton Harvey of Stapleford senior vice-chairman and Joseph Gibson of The Dairy Farm, South Collingham, junior vice-chairman.

Now read the full dramatic account of...



TREVOR FRECKNALL

£14.99 from WH Smith