

In the beginning.....



St Anne's Church, on Salusbury Road, is home to a plaque which commemorates 31 servicemen from the parishes of St Anne's, Brondesbury, and Holy Trinity, Kilburn, who died in World War One. The parishes (now combined) stretch from Chamberlayne Road in the west to Kilburn High Road in the east, and from the railway line south of the park to the railway line north of it.

Every year, on Remembrance Sunday, prayers are said at the plaque to honour the names of these men and the Last Post is played, but as far as we know their families no longer live locally. All we knew of them for many years were their names.

To mark the centenary of the ending of the Great War, or the War To End All Wars, as it was also known at the time, a group of local people decided to find out where they came from, how they lived, and where they died. Their stories form the basis of this exhibition. Steve Crabb, the main energy behind this research felt that telling their stories in isolation wasn't sufficient: they deserved to be put in a wider context of place and time. Some of this exhibit attempts to describe how Queen's Park developed in the years before World War One, what it was like in 1914, and how the war affected local people – including those who chose not to join the war effort.



'Queen's Park' is as much a state of mind as a tangible geographical entity. For this research, Queen's Park relates to the original Boundaries of St Anne's Parish roughly everything between the railway lines and from Chamberlayne Road in the west to Donaldson in the east, which are the boundaries of the Queens Park Area Residents Association (QPARA) and for many years were the boundaries of the old Queen's Park council ward. Some purists might argue that Queen's Park should be limited to the old showground site. Others might argue that it's all just a fancy name for West Kilburn, as the police station and library prove.

Of course, the 31 men named did not just come from Queen's Park, however we define it – some of them came from deeper into Kilburn, and some of them lived outside the parish boundaries but came to be commemorated on the plaque because they identified with the area in some other way. Some came from the other side of London or as far away as Yorkshire and only had a brief acquaintance with the area. No matter – they all deserve to have their stories told.

We have also told the stories of some of the men who chose not to support the war effort, in many cases because of profound personal beliefs. Many of them endured great hardship as a result.

Steve Crabb, June 2018

Queen's Park in the Great War: 1914

War was declared on the bank holiday weekend at the beginning of August 1914.



“Never since the institution of Bank Holiday have we witnessed one so remarkable as Monday last. The holiday crowds, the gaiety and life, were conspicuous by their absence. In our streets were to be seen only anxious people eagerly waiting for the various editions of the newspapers as they came to hand.” (8 August, the Kilburn Times)

Animated scenes followed during the week as men were coming in to report themselves ready to head to war.

“All along the route there were wild scenes of enthusiasm and an immense crowd awaited their arrival in the High Street, Harlesden. They were continually cheered, hats and handkerchiefs were waved in the air and good wishes were shouted from hundreds of windows as they passed by.”

On 18 September the Kilburn Times reported that 36 members of St Anne's were already serving or preparing to serve in the military.

Frank Nolde, Albert Nason, Sidney Gabriel, Thomas Meech, Charles Meech and Charles Winter were all killed in the war. The others were

**John Gilbert (of Linden Avenue),
William Crawley (older brother of Ernest, who died in the war),
Arthur Tozer (a medical student, of Donaldson Road),
Allan Chidley,
Cecil Nason (Albert's brother),
Frank and Harold Easton (of Windermere Avenue),
Frederick, Arthur Sweetman and Frank Sweetman, George Cox (Clifford Gardens),
Joseph Matson (Radnor Road),
Jack Rilis,
Arthur Rushbrooke (Wrentham Avenue),
Richard Cust,**

**Wilfrid Jervois,
Walter Hawes, Walter Alfred Hawes,
Harry Hawes (Dudley Road),
Arthur Spittle (Hopefield Avenue),
Edward Garside,
Ernest Tanton,
Reginald Vale Hadd,
Rubin Moss,
Robert Priest (Winchester Avenue),
Henry Bolt,
George and Arthur Taylor (Charteris Road),
Alfred Taylor (Glengall Road)
Maurice Odell Tribe, the vicar's son.**



Queen's Park in the Great War: 1914

11 September, the Kilburn Times reported on the first general meeting of the newly formed Lonsdale Rifle Club, which already had 50 members. The club was based at Mr HK Wilkinson's garage at 10-12 Lonsdale Road,

“Already several members of this vigorous, though young, club show promise of becoming excellent shots, and thus forming a fine body of sharpshooters for defence if needed,” the paper advised. “

A munitions factory opened on Salusbury Road, in the building next to Salusbury School where the Fitness First gym is today.



A dark side to the war fervour.

On 21 August the Kilburn Times reported on a “Startling Incident At Old Oak Common” - two cleaners on their way to work were nearly killed by a nervous sentry guarding the railway line who fired three shots, just missing one and clipping the other on the ear.



On 25 September the Kilburn Times reported that a painter called William Turner, age 48 and from Paddington, had been called up in front of a magistrate for inciting a crowd to wreck a German baker's shop in Shirland Road on a Saturday night.

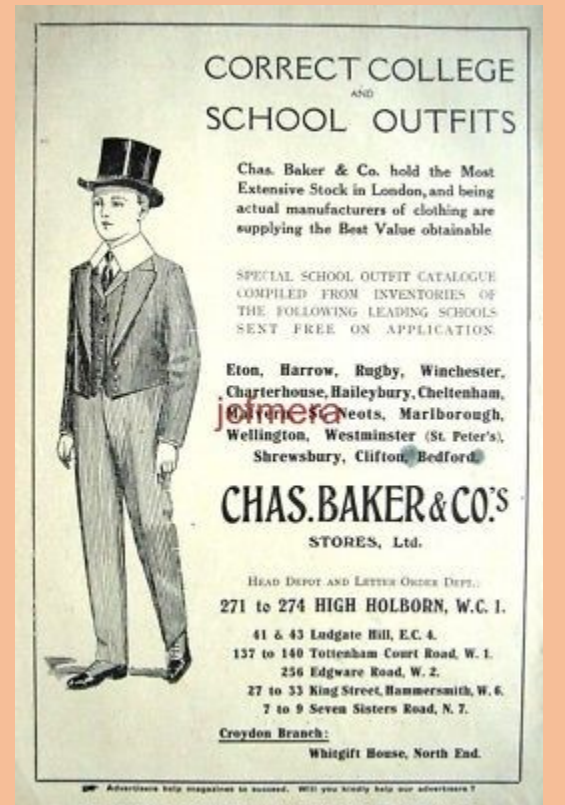
On 23 October the paper published a letter, signed “A True Patriot”, from someone urging locals in Brondesbury, Kilburn and Cricklewood to boycott bakeries run by Germans and Austrians.

“These shops, for all we know, are probably more or less a hot-bed of spies... Moreover, much to my disgust, people are still to be seen buying from these day by day; the persons offending are the female sex.”

On 30 October, the paper reported on another frightening incident involving a man who was the worse for drink: a John Woods of Craven Park mistook a fellow railway passenger for a German spy, and restrained him from leaving the train by grabbing him by the throat every time he tried to get up. The ‘spy’ was in fact a tailor from Devon. Woods’ solicitor accepted that his client had made a mistake but said “at the same time, he [does have] an accent...”

Queen's Park in the Great War: 1915

Judging by the Kilburn Times, the war had still not altered life in Queen's Park too profoundly by the start of 1915. The first issues of the new year carried giant advertisements for the latest fashions in women's underwear, while Charles Baker & Co of the Edgware Road advertised school uniforms, illustrated with a drawing of a top-hatted Etonian schoolboy.



Local people were clearly determined to help the war effort any way they could. On 8 January the Kilburn branch of the Soldiers and Sailors Families Association announced that there would be “a tea and concert” at Salusbury Road School for the wives and mothers of servicemen.

A week later HJ Gandy, local secretary of the Stationers Association, wrote to the local paper to urge people to support a petition to Willesden Council, calling for shops to close at 8pm instead of the standard closing time of 9pm. This had been opposed by the Kilburn Chamber of Trade on the grounds that shoppers would simply take their trade elsewhere. Nonsense, thundered Mr Gandy! Would they go to the West End, where shops already close at 6.30?



In January the Kilburn Times also reported on the opening of clubs for soldiers wives, “who need cheering up in this depressing war time. They cannot be always singing as a tonic ‘It’s a long, long way to Tipperary’, and sometimes the real loneliness is very overpowering,” the paper reflected. One of these clubs was about to be opened at 3 Harvist Road, in rooms lent by the Electric Railway Company, by the Willesden Women’s Local Government Association. Donations of chairs, tables, floor coverings, curtains, tea cups and saucers would be gladly accepted.

At the end of January Willesden Council organised a recruitment meeting at Harvist Road School. The Government were looking for 92,000 volunteers a month at this time, but most months they fell far short of this total. January 1915 was one of the few months when voluntary recruitment exceeded 100,000. Politically, however, conscription was not yet palatable. In fact the chairman of the meeting at Harvist Road, in his opening remarks, said “The very word compulsion [is] abhorrent to every real Englishman,” although he went on to remind his audience that “as a nation they were fighting for their very existence”. Alderman Pinkham reported that Willesden had so far supplied 5,000 recruits for the armed forces.



Another military hospital opened at 16 The Avenue. ‘Beech House’ was funded and run by the West Hampstead Division of the Red Cross. As the war progressed the hospital expanded into number 18 next door, eventually hosting 81 beds. Patients at Brondesbury Park and Beech House played cricket against each other.

In April, St Anne’s put on a pantomime – Sleeping Beauty. The church had run pantomimes for several years before the war, but it only decided to continue the tradition in 1915 after “very serious consideration” – not least because the male cast members from previous productions were all either serving at the front or in training. However, a new cast was recruited and it was judged one of the best ever staged by the church, with “scarcely a dull moment”.

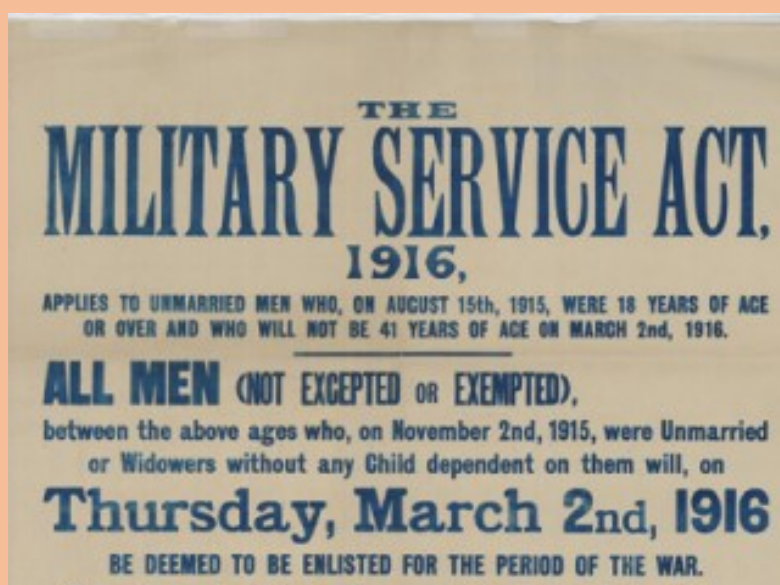
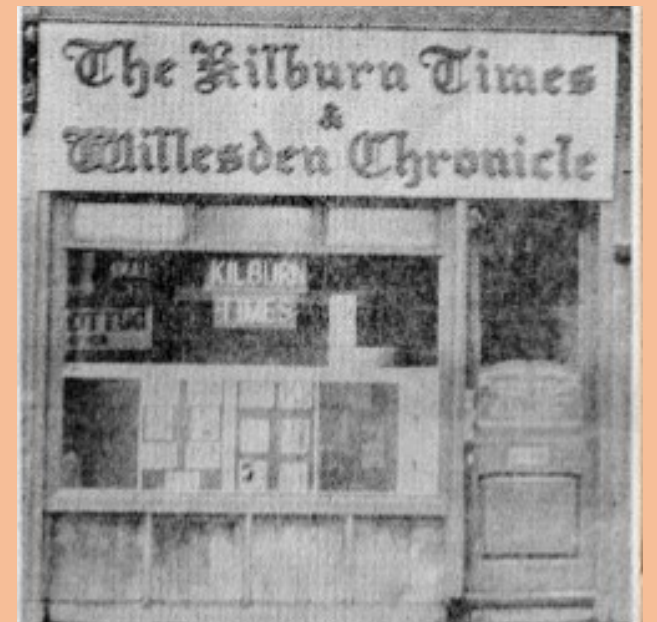


The following month St Anne’s vicar, Odell Tribe, left the church for a new parish in Haddenham, Ely. He was the original curate-in-charge when St Anne’s was first erected as a corrugated iron shed and had led the parish ever since. He was succeeded by Frank Stanford Morgan. Sadly Tribe died just two months later, of septic poisoning.

Queen's Park in the Great War: 1916

The second full year of war opened on a much more sombre note than its predecessor. The full-page ads for corsets had disappeared, replaced by advertisements for hats and coats. Even Charles Baker & Co had dropped the top-hatted Etonian in favour of a universal image of a schoolboy in an overcoat.

In February Mr SRF Freed wrote to the local paper to bemoan the failure of his campaign to persuade Willesden Council to rename Hanover Road, “Willesden’s only German Street Name”. As it is still there now, it seems Mr Freed was to remain disappointed.



In January, the Military Service Act introduced compulsory conscription. In April, the Kilburn Times reported on the prosecution of three men who had failed to report for service, including Albert Bates, a 24-year old chimney sweep of 13 Salusbury Road.

July passed with no mention of the Battle of the Somme, despite the first day of the battle being the costliness of the entire war in terms of British casualties. By mid August, though, giant ads were appearing in local papers for a documentary film, ‘Somme Battle Pictures’, which contained apparently real footage of the battle. The advertisements promised that “This graphic and stirring official war film brings the heroism, the tragedy and the glory of the battlefield vividly before your eyes.” It puts great emphasis on the numbers of German prisoners captured and the devastating impact of British shelling on German lines. There was no sense that the battle had not been a complete success.

In September, the Kilburn Times reported that the Rev A Lindsay Skerry, assistant priest at St Anne’s, had been recalled to active service. “Mrs Skerry and myself greatly appreciate the many kindnesses shown us by many members of the congregation, and our stay here will always remain a bright and sunny spot in our memories,” Rev Skerry wrote.

Later that month, the paper reported that Mrs Hewitt, of 49 Percy Road, Kilburn, had seven sons serving in the army.

The mood did not get any lighter as the year progressed. The Military Appeals Tribunal was now in full swing hearing men’s cases for not getting sent to the front, and every issue of the paper contained at least a couple of reports from Alderman Pinkham’s sessions (see The Appeals Tribunal).

There was a report in the autumn of the death of a soldier’s wife from the Harrow Road. Annie Walter (50) was killed when a live shell her husband brought home from France exploded. The coroner noted that it was “quite ordinary” for servicemen to bring home souvenirs like this, and there had been a number of accidents as a result. The Government was now clamping down on the practice.



Another war-related fatality was reported in November. Hilda Stranks, age 33, of Malvern Road, died of heart failure as a result of her intense fear of Zeppelin raids. On the day in question there were no raids, but she became convinced she could hear banging which signified that a raid was coming. Her brother-in-law found her lying comatose on her bed, and she died shortly afterwards.

All in all, 1916 was a very grim year on the home front.

Queen's Park in the Great War: 1917

As far as the home front was concerned, 1917 seems to have been a more optimistic year than its predecessor. Advertisements for corsets reappeared in the Kilburn Times (although smaller than in 1915), and Charles Baker was once more appealing to the parents of Etonians and Harrovians; bling was allowable once again.

At the same time, the German blockade of British trade was also having an effect – for the first time in the war, 1917 saw stories about adulterated milk (watered down with some of the fat removed) and short weight bread.



Some of the Staff and Wounded at the Brondesbury Park Military Hospital.

At the start of the year St Anne's reported that the Rev HF Newton had replaced the Rev Skerry as assistant priest, and a concert was held at the church which raised over £10 for the Brondesbury Park Military Hospital.

April also saw a concert performed at St Anne's by the 13th Hampstead Boy Scouts, headquartered in Lonsdale Road. The scouts performed songs, piano solos and humorous sketches. The performance was attended by Alderman Budd, deputy mayor of Hampstead, who "takes a keen interest in the scout movement".

May 1917 saw the opening of the new wing of Brondesbury Park Military Hospital, with room for a further 50 patients. So far 1,150 men had been successfully treated at the hospital, the Kilburn Times reported.

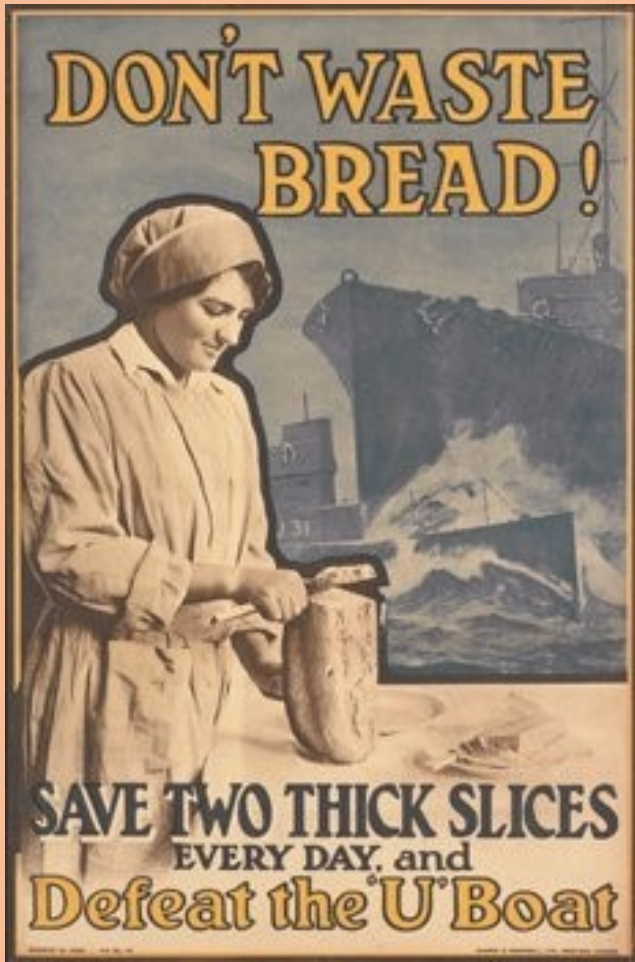
In June an extraordinary flood hit west London: a huge amount of rain fell in a short amount of time, and the drains simply couldn't cope. This caused acute distress to many poorer people who saw their homes flooded, particularly in south Kilburn, where basements were flooded to a depth of three or four feet and milk churns and other large items were seen floating down the streets.

On 7 July 22 German 'Gotha' bombers attacked London. The closest they came to Queen's Park was Hendon, and no bombs fell anywhere near the area, but the local paper reported that there was great excitement over the raid and large amounts of shrapnel from British anti-aircraft guns fell in neighbouring streets.

In August, an editorial in the Kilburn Times reflected the author's frustration with critics of the way the war was being managed: "When anyone asks me when this horrible war is going to end," he wrote, "I feel inclined to retort: 'When you put every ounce of energy into doing the duty that lies nearest to you to that end.' The question is often uttered by men and women who are not doing a single thing towards winning the war – some are even performing that most cowardly and criminal of actions, backbiting the Government and the Army and Navy and Air Service, and criticising the leaders and fighters and workers shoe latches they are unworthy to unloose. Yet they would be woefully aggrieved if one told them that the guilt of the bloodshed of many of our gallant men is as truly on their heads as it is on the bestial Huns, from whose frightful domination of the free peoples of the earth the latter are struggling in this awful welter."

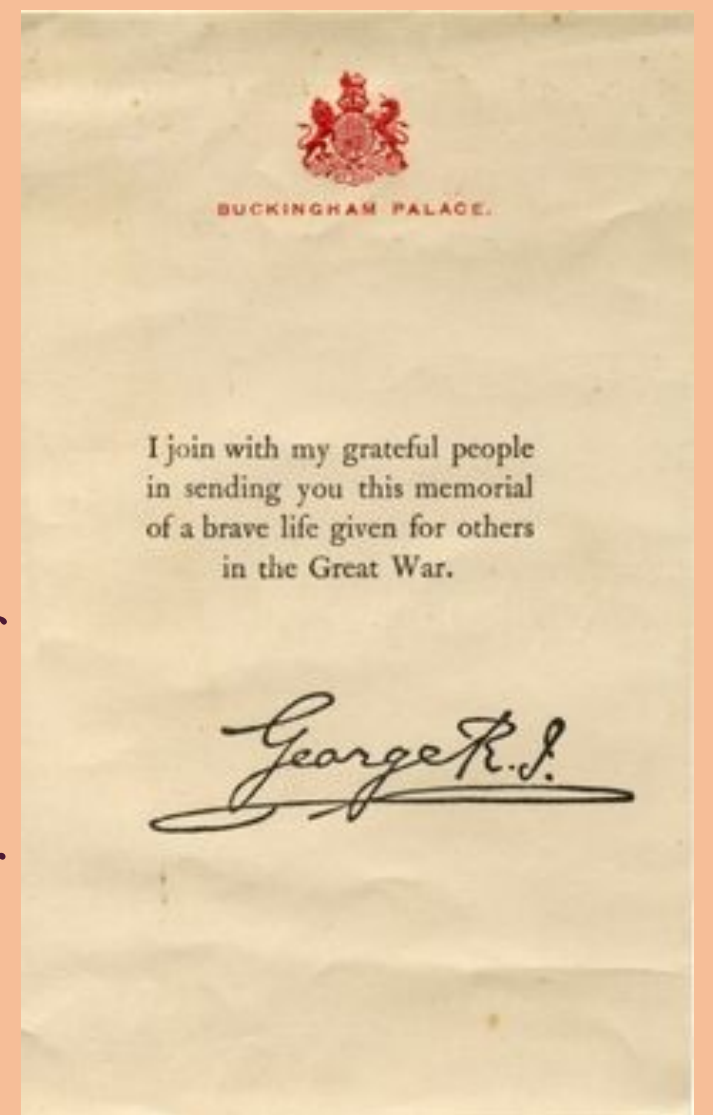


Queen's Park in the Great War: 1917 cont...



August's papers generally reflected the increasing pressure on food supplies on the home front. There were articles advising people on how to cook tough meat and how to find substitutes for potatoes.

At the end of September, there was a memorial service at St Anne's for members of the congregation who had died in the war. By this stage over 200 men of the parish were at the front, and 19 were known to have died, including Frank Hallett, Clement Le Seuer, Albert Nason, Charles Winter, Melvin Sims, Richard Biddlecombe, Herbert Taylor, William Davies, Sidney Gabriel, Harry Mills and Arthur Meech, all of whom are commemorated on the plaque at St Anne's. The other eight were Leonard Woods, John Oulet, Reggie Elson, Edwin Gordon, Frank Bevis, George Tindall and James Glendenning. A Roll of Honour commemorating all 19 was unveiled in the church. The choir sang Nare's anthem 'The Souls of the Righteous' and the hymns included 'Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand' and 'On The Resurrection Morning'. The vicar paid tribute to the memory of the fallen and expressed the hope that in future, kings and their ministers would express only the will of their people, in which case there was little doubt that there would be an end to war.



In October, it was announced that a number of public buildings had been designated as air raid shelters, including the police station on Salusbury Road and Kilburn Park underground station. Later that month a young man from West Hampstead was fined 20 shillings for shouting 'all clear' in Warwick Avenue underground station in the middle of an air raid, while some 2,500 people were sheltering there, "as a joke".

December saw the annual meeting of the 13th Hampstead Boy Scouts at St Anne's. The troop was now eight years old. It was founded by Frank Hallett, who had died at the front in 1915 after only a few days in the trenches, with six original boy scouts, all of whom were now in the army (and one of whom had been killed). At the time of writing in December 1917, 15 members of the troop were on active service.

Queen's Park in the Great War: 1918

On New Year's Eve, as 1918 was ushered in, the vicar of St John's, Kilburn, gave a sermon warning against the "insidious attempts which were being made by many disloyal people, known as pacifists, to bring about a premature peace". He cautioned his congregation to "Set your face resolutely against the worst enemy that this country has – not the German, but the pacifist, the peacemonger, who would barter your birthright, your liberty and your honour, as well as your country's welfare, for the sake of a cheap and worthless peace. Better that the country should fight to the last until nothing is left than have that peace which would give Germany the power of renewing this terrible conflict a few years hence." After the stroke of midnight the Rev Martin wished everyone a happy new year.



In January it was reported that Sergeant Sherley, a long-standing resident of 85 Keslake Road, had been awarded a Military Medal and Bar. In July 1917 he had taken charge of his unit after all his officers had been killed or wounded and then single-handedly captured a German pill-box which had been pinning down his men. Under his command his men had captured over 100 German soldiers. In September, Sherley had again taken charge of his unit when all his officers had been incapacitated, despite being knocked out temporarily by a shell.

February brought more evidence that the German blockade was causing serious problems with food supplies. One page alone of the Kilburn Times contained articles entitled 'Grocers and the Price of Coffee', 'Food Prosecutions', 'Willesden Food Control Committee', 'New Cricklewood Allotments' and 'Brondesbury Allotments'.

In July, the tireless Colonel Pinkham, chairman of Willesden District Council as well as the Military Tribunal and prospective parliamentary candidate for Willesden West, made an appeal at the Kilburn Empire on behalf of the "Smokes for Sailors and Soldiers in Hospital Fund". Thus far, he reported, the fund had provided 126 million cigarettes to servicemen in hospital, 276,000 pounds of tobacco, 268,000 cigars and 27,600 pipes. The paper ended its report by commenting that this "will forge yet another link in the chain of affection which links together the wounded in our hospitals and the man who has so unsparingly devoted himself to their comfort and welfare since the outbreak of the war".

In October, it was announced that a home for Belgian refugees at 7 Harvist Road, which had housed three Belgian families since the start of the war, had now been returned to its landlord.

In the same month it was reported that rifleman Frank Webster, of 8 Montrose Avenue, was now a prisoner of war in Germany. His father, Mr WJ Webster, was a former warden of St Anne's. Frank wrote to say he was being treated well.

Meanwhile reports of Spanish influenza were increasing in frequency.

Finally, in its edition of 15 November 1918, the Kilburn Times was able to report that the Great War was at an end. At 11am on Armistice Day, 11 November 1918, people in the streets "cheered as they have never cheered before". Factory sirens were sounded, flares set off and guns fired into the air.

"Let us trust that [our war heroes] have for ever prevented a recurrence of such a war as the one whose ruthless imbecility has tortured the world these four years."



Women in the Great War



In 1914, when the war began, women did not have the right to vote. However, Kilburn and Willesden had played an often overlooked role in the campaign for Women's Suffrage in the years before the war. In his article 'The Suffragettes in Kilburn', Dick Weindling describes the career of Eleanor Penn Gaskell, a local leader in the campaign for votes for women.

Gaskell was secretary of the Willesden branch of the London Society for Women's Suffrage, and a regular speaker. She was arrested only once (in 1908, for obstruction) but she was clearly very active in the movement. She nursed the militant suffragette Emily Wilding Davison at her home in Harlesden after Davison was released from prison in a weak state after being on hunger strike. This was a year before Davison was killed when she was struck by the King's horse at the 1913 Epsom Derby.

Suffragettes boycotted the 1911 census as a matter of principle. Eleanor's husband noted that:

'A number of women suffragists spent the night of 2nd April (census night) in my house. As members of a disenfranchised sex they object to giving any particulars concerning themselves for the purpose of enumeration under a census act in the framing of which their sex has had no voice. They base their objection upon the principle that government should rest upon the consent of the governed, and as I myself uphold this democratic principle I do not feel justified in filling up any particulars concerning them against their will.'



As well as being politically engaged, women in Queen's Park in 1914 also tended to be economically active – as long as they weren't married. Married women were expected to manage the home; only two of the mothers or wives of the men commemorated on the St Anne's plaques worked – Walter Wells' wife was a live-in domestic servant, and therefore did not have a home of her own to manage, and William Davis' wife was a charwoman.

However, their unmarried sisters and daughters were fully employed.



At 26 Montrose Avenue Lena Slade was manager of a confectioners. At number 30 Beatrice and Mabel Bigwood were typists. At 32 Florence Parker was a milliner, as was Hannah Jacobs at number 34. Charles Penny (one of the men on the St Anne's plaque) had three sisters; two of them were teachers and one was an 'art needleworker'. Sydney Bourne's sisters were dressmakers, as was Thomas Meech's.

As the war progressed, women increasingly moved into traditionally 'male' occupations to free up men to go to the front. There were women drivers, women police, and many women worked in munitions factories.

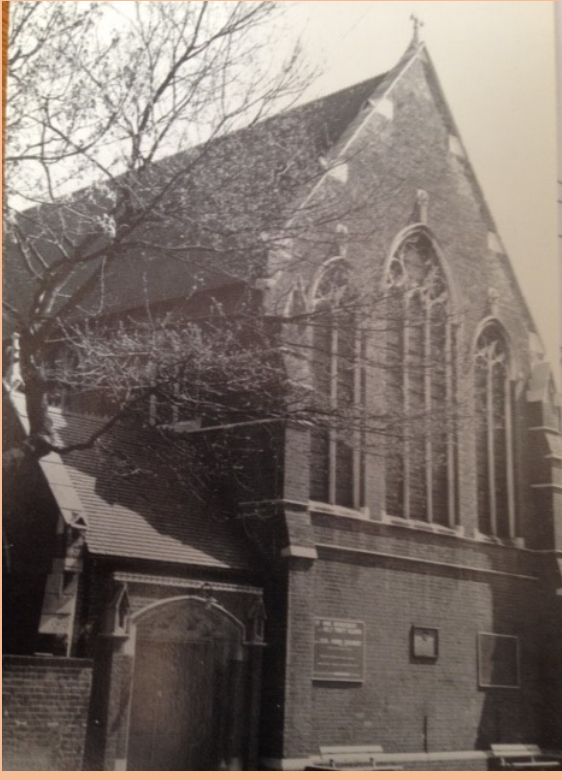
In June 1916 the paper reported the formation of a Middlesex Women's War Agricultural Committee, whose duty was to compile a list of every woman willing to work whole or part time for local farmers or other employers. Later that month Elinor Gaskell wrote to the Kilburn Times to urge local women to volunteer as fruit pickerson a farm in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire.

By January 1917, lady "dustmen" were at work in Willesden, equipped with "semi military costume". Their appearance "created quite a sensation" according to a newspaper report.

Also in January 1917, the Kilburn Times published an editorial complaining about the large amount of bonuses paid to women teachers. In the following edition Ethel McKenzie, honorary secretary of the Willesden Women Teachers Association, pointed out that "girls, infants, and special schools have always been staffed by women, and in addition two-thirds, maybe more, of the present staffs of boys and of mixed schools are women teachers", who anyway were paid far less than men teachers.

Under the circumstances it was hardly surprising that a large proportion of bonus payments should go to women teachers.

Religion in Queen's Park



In 1914 the Anglican parish church for Queen's Park was **St Anne's**, on Salusbury Road, as it still is today (although the Victorian Gothic church erected in 1905, which sat 750, was demolished 20 years ago due to irrecoverable subsidence). The sudden growth of population in the area in the 1890s inspired the London Diocese to build a tin 'mission' church on Salusbury Road, which ministered to a new parish carved out of parts of Christchurch, on Willesden Lane, St John's, Kensal Green and Holy Trinity, Kilburn. (Holy Trinity was founded in 1867; the church stood on Brondesbury Road where Kilburn Square is today. It burnt down in 1950 and the ruins were demolished in 1970.).

The vicar in 1914 was the Reverend Odell Newton Tribe BA, who lived at the vicarage on Salusbury Road. He was assisted by a curate, the Rev Leonard Stanley Beale; Leonard lodged with the Nasons in Lynton Road (see chapter 13). Holy Communion was at 8am and again at midday on Sundays, Sunday School was at 3pm and there was Evening Prayer at 7pm. During the rest of the week there was Morning Prayer at 10am and Evening Prayer at 7.30.



The synagogue on Chevening Road, erected the same year as St Anne's, was led by Rabbi Harris Myer Lazarus, MA.

The only other formal house of religion in Queen's Park was St Andrew's Presbyterian Church on Salusbury Road, next to the library. St Andrew's was presided over by the Rev T Finlayson Darroch, of 35 Priory Road. Services were at 7 and 11 on a Sunday and at 7.30 on Wednesday evenings. In 1972 the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Church of England and Wales came together to create the United Reformed Church, and in 1998 the URC sold the old St Andrew's building and moved into the new St Anne's and St Andrew's building further up Salusbury Road.



The nearest Baptist chapel was Ebenezer, on Carlton Vale, and the nearest Catholic church was the Church of the Sacred Heart on Quex Road, Kilburn.

The minister of the Kensal Rise Methodist Church, on Chamberlayne Road, was Alfred H Blomford.

