

From the Newspaper Archives

West Cumberland at War

November 1918

THE LOCAL DECLARATION OF THE ARMISTICE.

STIRRING SCENES.

On Monday morning, about half-past eleven, a rocket was fired at Whitehaven. It was a beautiful morning, clear sunshine, and no wind. It was not a ship ashore—what was it? The siren fire-alarm struck up its wail. What could be the matter? The siren began to imitate shrieking hysterical laughter. Ah! It's the news of the signing of the armistice. A second rocket went off. Then one vessel in the harbour—perhaps the only one there was in these days—set up its horn, blowing with all its might. The pits and works did not take up the story; but St. Nicholas Church bells began to ring. People were all out of doors and everybody was asking everybody else, as in the old-time popular air, "O Willie, we have missed you," "An' are ye sure the news is true?" Every one was taking it for granted that it was; but no one seemed to be able to vouch by personal knowledge for its authenticity, even although it was known that the news had been announced by Mr. McGowan, Chairman of the Bench, at the Magistrates' Court then sitting. All that was known for certain was that the news had come by telephone and telegraph from south, east, and west—Liverpool, Barrow, Newcastle, Carlisle, and Glasgow. There was nothing official, but every one was willing enough to believe true what everybody was wishing should be true; and for once in this great war the wish was father to a legitimate offspring, and there was no disappointment. As it was realised that the armistice had been signed, and that battle had ceased to rage on land on sea or air, that the great fight for Right against Might had been fought to a triumphant finish for Right, and that now there was an end of the long night-mare of this world tragedy, the bosoms of not a few began to agitate, throats to constrict, and eyes to threaten inundation.

14 November 1918

The first cases of Spanish Flu are freely reported in Spain where there is no wartime censorship. Austria-Hungary signs the armistice with Italy, effective 4 November.

The closing phase of the Hundred Days Offensive and the Battle of Sambre plays out.

In Germany Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates and a republic is proclaimed. In Austria-Hungary Kaiser Charles I abdicates.

11 November – Germany signs the Armistice of Compiegne.

11.11.11 – the end of fighting – "the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month."



PRIVATE W. DAWES, BORDER REGIMENT.

Mr. and Mrs. W. Dawes, of Plumblands Lane, Whitehaven, have received information that one of their sons, Pte. Wm. Dawes, Border Regt., has been killed in action. The sad news was first conveyed in a letter from a soldier in a Labour Company, who had buried Pte. Dawes.

7 November 1918. Image from County Annual 1919

PUBLIC NOTICES.

ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH, WHITEHAVEN.

THANKSGIVING FOR PEACE.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17.

SERVICES:

8-0	Holy Communion
10-45	Morning Prayer
2-30	Children's Service
6-30	Evening Prayer
	2661

14 November 1918

FURTHER DEATHS FROM THE FLU. AT EGREMONT.—The influenza epidemic continues to claim more victims. The deaths reported on Tuesday were Mrs. Wilson Nicholson, of Cringlethwaite, wife of Mr. Wilson Nicholson, the master tailor at the Co-operative Society. Deceased, who is 48 years of age, came to Egremont from Moor Row some years ago, and had a host of friends throughout the parish. She leaves a husband and two children.—Mr. Robert Todhunter, a young man residing with his wife's parents at North-road, is another victim. A native of Hensingham, he was apprenticed to the grocery business, and moved to Barrow to follow his trade. He later entered the munition works there, and afterwards went to Lowca, but indifferent health caused him to relinquish this work and return to his former employment at the Egremont Co-operative Society. He had only recently resumed work after a long illness, when attacked by the influenza and pneumonia. His wife and children are also confined to bed.—Two little girls, daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Cockbain, Church-street, Egremont, have also passed away, at the age of seven and twelve years. The father, who is in the Army, was wired for, and got here in time to see his children alive. The other children are also confined to their bed.—Another child victim is Eva, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jackson Bell, of Lamb-lane, Egremont.—It is with deepest regret that we have to record the death of another daughter of Mrs. Graham, confectioner, Ada Graham being the fourth victim in this household in less than a week. The sympathy of everyone in the town goes out to Mrs. Graham, in this her great trouble. Several more in the household are seriously ill, but we hope they will soon be restored to health and strength.

28 November 1918

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DRIGG SOLDIER KILLED IN ACTION.

The sad news of the death of Corpl. John Hird came on Saturday last, when Mrs. Hird, of Stubble Green, Drigg; received a note stating that her son had been killed in action, by machine gun fire, on October 20th. Corpl. Hird enlisted in the Border Regiment in September, 1914, and after training went to France in Sept., 1915. He has there put in over three years' service, and was only once slightly wounded by a piece of shrapnel in the left shoulder. He was 23 years of age, and before joining the army was an apprentice with Messrs. J. Whittle and Son, Ltd., Whitehaven. This is the second son Mrs. Hird has lost in the war; Lance-Corpl. Joseph Hird having fallen in May last. Official news came to hand on Monday, and also a letter from his C.Q.M.S., of which the following are extracts:—"Dear Madam,—I am writing to inform you of the death of your son, Corpl. J. Hird, of C Company, 7th Borders. He was one of my best lads. Some men who knew him found his body, and took his personal effects from him, these were handed over to me, as they knew we were chums. Your poor son was killed in action on the 20th inst. (October). He was caught by machine gun fire, and there is no doubt as to his death. I made a point of seeing Jack before they went up, and as he marched past I called to him and wished him luck, and he was quite cheery. I know full well what you have lost, for a better fellow I never wish to meet. He was one of the very best, and his death has affected me greatly. I have known him for a few years, and during that time I found out that he was a lad of sterling probity.

7 November 1918

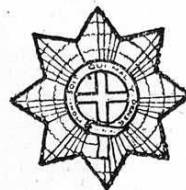
The GUARDS

"THEY'VE sent for the Guards." Time and again that message has put fresh heart into tired men, fighting against desperate odds. Time and again, when all seemed lost, the Guards have saved the day.

"It was a crucial moment in the first fighting before Cambrai. The Huns were breaking through on our right. Everything depended on the Guards. I saw them go into action. They marched into that hell of shot and shrapnel as steadily as if on parade. They prevented a disaster to the whole British line. I cried with pride as I saw the matchless gallantry of the Guards Division on that raw November morning."—Thus a young Officer who took part in the battle.

Life Guards, Horse Guards, Dragoon Guards—Grenadiers and Coldstreams—Scots and Irish and Welsh—they are the flower of our fighting manhood. You are proud of them all: grateful to them all. But what are you doing for them? Do the one duty assigned to you—the one thing they expect of you—

Keep on buying
War Savings Certificates



Badge of the
Coldstream Guards.

War Savings Certificates cost 15/6 each. Their value in five years' time will be £1 each.

At any time you may give notice that you want your money back with any interest due. You can buy War Savings Certificates from any Money Order Post Office, Bank or Shopkeeper acting as Official Agent.

If you have not yet joined a War Savings Association it is your patriotic duty to do so. Apply to the Secretary of your local War Savings Committee, or write to the National War Savings Committee, Salisbury Square, London, E.C. 4.

21 November 1918

LITERARY.

LOCAL AND OTHER VERSE.

PEACE.

The nightmare passed—
The eyes, half-open, see the real world.
The tortured mind is soothed
With knowledge that the terrors hurled
Throughout the dreadful night
Are vanished. Reason conquers fear,
And Dread's dark wings are furled.
The mind is free.

The people freed, their spirit cleansed
by War's
Unpitied night,
Labour and pray that they may henceforth
live
In Reason's light.
Ashton-on-Mersey.

J. R.

21 November 1918

CLEATOR SOLDIER KILLED

We regret to record that Mrs R Lancaster, Hilden Cottages, Cleator, has received information from France that her husband, Signaller R Lancaster, of 51 Siege Battery, RGA, has been killed. Before joining H M Forces in December 1917, he was a clerk in the offices of the Cleator Mills, where he had practically worked all his life, and was respected and esteemed by the workpeople for his kind and courteous manner, and his willingness at all times to help any good cause. He went to France in June of this year. He leaves a widow and little girl and parents – Mr and Mrs A Lancaster, Trumpet Terrace.

Signaller Lancaster had been walking between the billets and the guns when a shell landed very close and he was killed outright.

21 November 1918

PEACE CELEBRATIONS AT ST. BEES.

On Monday morning when the news of peace arrived at St. Bees enthusiasm prevailed. The school bell was rung by the master (Mr. Hartley), then when the ringers were gathered together, the church bells rung out a merry peal of joyous music, under the leadership of Mr. Wm. Dixon, many lady ringers being amongst them. The village looked bright with flags and festoons, whilst over the school flew the large Union Jack, underneath being the German flag reversed (brought home by one of the old boys). The village band turned out, and as evening came on the boys from the school paraded through the village accompanied by their drum and fife band, carrying torches and causing excitement throughout the place. Afterwards followed the service of thanksgiving in the Old Priory Church, when most people attended, also the boys from the school.

14 November 1918

The Treaty of Versailles, which formally ended the state of war between Germany and the Allied powers, was not signed until 28 June 1919, five years after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which directly led to the War. The official end of World War One came on 10 January 1920 with the first meeting of the League of Nations in London.

THE wonders of the past
THANKSGIVING week have culminated in a tremendous crescendo, the fall of Lucifer and his angels, and the sealing up of the hell of war at least for a season—let us hope for ever. Our thoughts have been running on those grand choruses of "The Messiah"—"Hallelujah" and "Thanks be to God," and we are sure the same thought if not so specifically referred to musical expression will be in the hearts of very many of our readers. Innumerable homes will be happy in the relief that the human slaughter has ceased and is not likely to be resumed. What are the feelings of those of the boys at the front who live to come home it would be hard to realize. Probably they will hardly be able to realize them themselves. Toll for the brave who have fallen in the cause of humanity and whose memory future generations will continue to bless. And let us prepare for the home-coming of the living heroes and take them to our hearts with the glad welcome they so richly deserve. We remember in this glad hour all our Allies of every clime, and will keep them knitted to our hearts in warmest affection; and we will not forget that it is the gallant men of our Navy and no less gallant men of the mercantile marine who have made this great victory possible.

14 November 1918

PRESENTATION TO A MILITARY MEDALIST AT MORESBY.

On Tuesday, at the Walkmill Colliery Office, Pwte. John Lyons, of Whitehaven, was presented with a gold watch and chain, in recognition of his having won the Military Medal. Mr. Thomas Moore, delegate at the bye-product plant, presided. Mr. Moore explained that it had been intended to have a public presentation, but owing to Pwte. Lyons' father's death it was thought better to present it quietly. Pwte. Lyons joined the colours in November, 1914, being only then 17 years and 11 months old. He had, therefore, just completed four years of active service.—Mr. W. Graham, jun., manager at Walkmill Colliery, in handing over the watch and chain, said it gave him great pleasure in presenting the watch to one of his own workmen. Pwte. Lyons worked on the bye-product plant from a boy, and he hoped he would now soon be discharged and come back to his old place of employment. He congratulated Pwte. Lyons on his gallant conduct, and said that the medal was recommended by Colonel Little, of the 5th Borders, for the gallant soldier carrying dispatches through a heavy bombardment at Ypres, on November 8th, 1917.

21 November 1918

PARTON SOLDIERS WOUNDED, GASSED, AND MISSING.

Pvt. Henry Hull, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Hull, of Parton, writes home to say he is in hospital in France, having been wounded in the thigh. His elder brother, Pvt. John Hull, has just returned to the front after a few weeks leave from Salonika.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Barr, of Parton, have had a letter from their son, Pvt. Thomas Barr, Border Regt, stating that he has been wounded, and a card came later from London, where he had just arrived. The injury is to the toes, and will probably necessitate the amputation of at least the little toe. This is the second time he has been wounded. His younger brother, Pvt. Henry Barr, is also wounded, and in hospital in France.

Pvt. Henry Whale, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Whale, sends word to his parents that he has been wounded in the right arm and right thigh. Pvt. Whale has only been in France five weeks. His parents anxiously await further particulars.

Pvt. John Robert Stubbs, M.M., son of Mr. Joseph Stubbs, writes home that he has been gassed, and is in hospital suffering from the effects.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ferguson, after some inquiry, have been informed by the War Office that their son, Pvt. William Ferguson, Welsh Borderers, has been reported missing. Pvt. Ferguson was in the habit of writing once or twice weekly, but six weeks ago his communications ceased. One of his chums belonging to Distington gives the information that on returning from an attack Pvt. Ferguson was one who was left behind, probably wounded. An effort was made to rescue them, but the Germans were observed carrying in the wounded. No further information is yet to hand.

Pvt. William Smith, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Smith, who for many weeks has been on the list of missing, is now reported to be a prisoner of war.

7 November 1918

KELLS SOLDIER WINS MILITARY MEDAL.

—Private Jas. George, of the Whitehaven "Pals," has sent word to his sister, Mrs. Jane Walsh, of South Row, Kells, that he has been awarded the Military Medal for bringing down an enemy aeroplane, and wounding the airman, who, when taken prisoner was found to have valuable information. The machine was a scout and was dropping bombs on our men. Private George brought it down in the British lines. Private George worked at Wellington Pit before joining the "Pals," when that Battalion was first formed. He was half-back in the Broughton Rangers before the war.

7 November 1918

WHITEHAVEN.

A Whitehaven soldier, Private Tom Johnston, East Yorks, son of Mfs. S. and the late Robert Johnston, of 24, Back Row, New-houses, Whitehaven, admitted to hospital on the 27th September gassed, died on Saturday. Twenty-two, in the Army about seven months, previously he was a haulage hand at Ladysmith Pit. His father lost his life in the Wellington Pit disaster.

Another Whitehaven man gassed in France is Gunner G. Atkinson, a Wellington Pit man, who has died in hospital at New Zealand. 24 years of age and single, he had had three and a half years' service in France. Another brother is serving in France.

14 November 1918

WHITEHAVEN WAR MEMORIAL.

THERE was some talk of a suitable war memorial, and the preservation of a list of the Whitehaven natives who took part in the war. Is there to be any such memorial, and what form should it take? One suggestion we have heard almost took our breath away at the magnificence and the audacity of it. But after all it might be conceivably achievable, and if so it would be a great and worthy effort. What is it? Nothing less than this—that the Town Council should approach the Earl of Lonsdale and his Trustees and see whether by any possibility they would consent that the borough should purchase the Castle and grounds—the Castle as a Town Hall and the grounds as a public park. The grandeur of the idea does not need to be elaborated. It jumps to the eyes straight away. There are two queries attached to it, but we needn't meet difficulties half way. Would the owners rise to the occasion; and if they were willing, could the borough finance the scheme not only in regard to purchase but maintenance. We mention the idea for what it is worth; and it does seem to be worth considering. As Mr. Grant says about impending national problems, let us look at this thing in a big way, looking forward a generation or two. Before unrestrained freehold resulted in overcrowding of courts and consequent slums, Whitehaven was at first a garden city, as old plans show—one of the best laid-out towns in the Kingdom.

28 November 1918

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The issues of the *Whitehaven News* covering the time of the Great War were indexed by a group of volunteers in an eighteen-month long project undertaken to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of war, and to act as a lasting memorial to all whose lives were touched by the events.

We will remember them.