



NEWSLETTER no 8 November 2018

We Will Remember Them

Dear Member

To commemorate the centenary of the Armistice we are focusing in this newsletter on war memorials and the impact that the Four Years' War (as it was initially described) had on one prominent Nottingham family.



At St Mary's in the Lace Market, the commemoration the night before Remembrance Day took the form of a performance of Verdi's Requiem. The cover of the programme showed a picture of the principal war memorial in the church, to the three Robin Hood battalions of the Sherwood Foresters, the work of H C Poole (above).

Although the Civic Party were at the city's war memorial on the Victoria Embankment, there was a good collection of people in the Market Square at 11 o'clock on the Sunday morning. Total silence fell as the hour struck, and that silence lasted for the best part of five minutes.

Up at St Barnabas's Cathedral a solemn requiem mass was celebrated at 11:15, with a sung performance of Duruflé's Requiem, itself composed in wartime France. The Last Post was performed by a choral scholar, and settings of two iconic war poems were sung: *The Soldier* by cathedral composer-in-residence Amy Summers and *For The Fallen* by cathedral director of music Alex Patterson.





From late October for a fortnight the cathedral was bedecked with a range of poppy wreaths

In our October newsletter we featured the rededication of a grave which honoured not only its occupants but all the civilian dead of the Great War. We also noted the restoration of the war memorial below Royal Standard House opposite the Castle, which also featured prominently in our last newsletter.. This was the location of a Remembrance Service on the afternoon of 11 November conducted by Revd Tom Gillum, vicar of St Mary's in the Lace Market, with some two hundred people in attendance including the bugler who had performed at our rededication in the Church Cemetery.

Nottingham is to get a new war memorial. This new work, by Letts Wheeler of Nottingham, is due for completion next Easter and will commemorate all Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's Great War dead, over 14,000 people.

The web entry says: "The Nottinghamshire WWI Roll of Honour War Memorial will be the first monument of its kind to incorporate a full list of casualties for the whole county, rather than for individual towns, villages and workplaces. The chosen memorial is an elevated, circular design allowing a protected space for reflection. A 5 metre high monument will feature in the middle of the memorial, explaining the purpose of the memorial and with space lower down for poppies to be placed in the lead up to Remembrance Day and other events. Lighting underneath these holes will create a stunning effect at night for visitors."

On 14 November the project was formally inaugurated when the first sod was cut near the site of the existing City war memorial.



Above: impression of new memorial



Left: Cllr Dave Trimble and HS examine the model

Right: silhouetted Tommy by existing City war memorial

Below; HS, Eddie Curry, head of Parks and Open Spaces, and architect Matthew Letts





Cllr Susan Saddington, Chairman of Nottinghamshire County Council, and Cllr Liaqat Ali, Lord Mayor of Nottingham, formally break the ground ready for construction

There follows an article by our Board chair Alan Bates:

The Hickings of Carrington Street

Introduction

When Nottingham City Council announced the Townscape Heritage Programme for the restoration of Carrington Street between the Midland Station and Collin Street, Nottingham Civic Society was asked to help by collecting historical information not just on the buildings but also on the businesses which occupied them over the years - and the people who ran those businesses. The idea was that such information would bring a social history dimension to a project which was mainly concerned with the renewal of the area's fabric and its economic regeneration.

George Hicking 1834-1902

One outcome of the research has been an understanding of the role of the Hicking family in the commercial life of the area since the 1860s. Patriarch George Hicking came to Nottingham as a young man to be stationmaster of the Midland Railway Station, but resigned the post after a few years to pursue commercial interests in the Carrington St area. The full story of his life, an extraordinary mix of tragedy and financial success, is for another time. The purpose of the current article is to focus on his second son and the impact of the Great War on his family.

Joseph William Hicking and Sons

Joseph William Hicking was born in Ashbourne, Derbyshire, in 1860 and baptised at St John's Church Leenside, Nottingham, on 6 January 1861; he was the second son of George Hicking and his first wife Mary (nee Prince). The census return for 1861 shows George as widower and stationmaster. In 1863, the year of his second marriage (to Sarah Duffin), he still held this post, but by 1871 he had left the railway and begun a career in commerce; in that year's census return he is described as a brewery agent. The next census (1881) reveals him to be a wine merchant and grocer employing 4 men and 2 boys; Joseph William is an assistant in the business, which had premises on Carrington Street Bridge.

In September 1887 Joseph William married Katherine Florence Cleaver at Lenton Priory Church, and by 1891 they were living in Musters Road, West Bridgford, with two young children: Harold Yeldersley (aged 2, his second forename being that of the hamlet near Ashbourne where his forebears had lived) and Frieda Mary (aged 1). Their father was by now in charge of the wine and spirits business, grandfather George having branched out into the textile trade as a lace dresser, a career path which he had persuaded his son by his second wife (William Norton Hicking) to follow - which he did with great success. Former factory buildings in Queens Road, now apartments, still display the name of Hicking Pentecost and are the physical evidence of the Hicking legacy; a company of that name survives, although its business is much diversified. William Norton Hicking himself, having achieved prominence in business and public life, was rewarded with a baronetcy in 1917 and took up residence in Brackenhurst Hall.

The wine and spirits business run by Joseph William was very successful, but it was not his only field of activity. The Hickings covered all bases, as they also built and owned temperance hotels in the vicinity of the Midland Station: the Gresham and the Portland in Carrington Street and the Granby round the corner in Station Street. At any rate 1901 sees him living in Lenton Road in Nottingham's Park Estate, his house bearing the name Yeldersley. By 1911 he had retired to Manor Park, Ruddington, that superior estate created by the energetic American entrepreneur Philo Laos Mills following the opening of the Great Central Railway to passenger traffic in 1899 and the building of a station at Ruddington. Wright's Directory of Nottingham 1910-11 shows the family living in Greetwell, a house designed and previously occupied by Gilbert Smith Doughty (and illustrated in *The Builder* in 1901). With Joseph William and wife Kate on census night 1911 were their three daughters and two of their three sons: Harold Yeldersley, 22, a lace manufacturer, and George Graham, 17, an articled clerk. Youngest son Francis Joseph was away at boarding school in Scarborough. Interestingly in the light of what happened later, there were others in the house that night: one Howard Wicksteed, who was to marry eldest daughter Frieda later that year, and his brother Francis, described as a Canadian fruit grower.

The Hicking boys and the Great War

Eldest son Harold Yeldersley Hicking (born 1888) did not follow his father into the wine and spirits business, but entered the lace industry, no doubt under the tutelage of his uncle William. At the same time he displayed an interest in part-time soldiering, gaining a commission in the Robin Hood Rifles in 1905. This commitment to the military seems to have been strong. Somehow he ended up in the Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (The Royal Canadians), which despite its nickname was based in Ireland, and after three years he

was appointed Lieutenant in the Army Service Corps. Something must have changed by 1913, however, because in that year we find him aboard the SS Mauretania, leaving Liverpool for New York en route to Canada. The passenger list describes him as a lace manufacturer, but he had little time to establish himself in any occupation in Canada because of events in Europe. He enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and in July 1916 found himself in France. After brief attachments to the Canadian Engineers and to the 10th Infantry Brigade as a transport officer, his main deployment was to the 46th Battalion of the Canadian infantry, familiarly known as the Suicide Battalion on account of its high casualty rate. During the last years of the war Harold Yeldersley Hicking was awarded the Military Cross and twice mentioned in dispatches.

In 1919 he retired from the army with the rank of Major and returned to Britain. By now his parents were living in Gloucestershire, and Harold took up residence in that county too. In 1942 he married Mary Christian-Hare in Bristol, but he died five years later, aged 59, and was buried in Cheltenham Cemetery. In June 2012 his medals came up for auction by a leading firm specialising in militaria. Described in the pre-sale catalogue as 'A Great War MC group of three', they were estimated to be worth £600-£700. On the day they fetched £920.

Harold's younger brothers were both of an age to volunteer. George Graham, born in 1893 and baptised at St Saviour's Church Nottingham on 30 November of that year, went to Broadgate preparatory school in Nottingham, then on to Uppingham, the well-known independent boarding school in Rutland. By 1911, a year after leaving school, he was an articled clerk living with his parents, but he turned his back on a professional career to emigrate - like his elder brother - to Canada. The passenger list of the SS Virginian leaving Liverpool for Montreal on 9 May 1913 includes the name George Graham Hicking, aged 19, clerk. Encouraged no doubt by earlier talk in his father's house, he took up fruit growing but returned to England at the outbreak of war to enlist in the Public Schools Brigade. He was soon commissioned and was to reach the rank of Lieutenant in the York and Lancaster Regiment. Sent to the Dardanelles in September 1915, he was invalided out with dysentery but was fit enough to report for duty again on 31 January 1916. Five months later, on 1 July, he was killed in action in the Battle of the Somme. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's notes on the Thiepval Memorial say that he was of the 6th Battalion, but according to historian Ray Westlake (*note 1*) this Battalion arrived at the Somme on 3 September from the Arras sector and it was the 8th Battalion which attacked Orvilliers on 1 July with the 8th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. They cleared the first German line but were checked at the second and forced to withdraw because of heavy losses; George Graham Hicking was one of the 635 casualties recorded.

Francis Joseph, third son of Joseph William and Kate Florence Hicking, was born in 1897 and baptised in St Peter's Nottingham on 21 October of that year. The 1911 census shows him to be a boarder at Bramcote School, Scarborough. Shortly afterwards he too started at Uppingham. On reaching the age of 18, he enlisted on 25 June 1915 as a private in the Honourable Artillery Company. Three months later, he gained his commission in the West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own.) Wounded in action in December 1915, he was evacuated to England, but he reported for duty again on 14 February 1916. By the summer of that year he too was in action in the Battle of the Somme. Remarkably and tragically, he was killed on the same day (1 July) as his brother George Graham. Westlake writes of the action that day:

‘At zero hour two companies moved forward on the left of the assault on Fricourt, clearing enemy lines with little loss. Supporting companies met heavy fire from machine guns and were almost annihilated; survivors counted back after dark. War Diary records loss of Commanding Officer with Second in Command and Adjutant and 22 officers and 750 other ranks.’

Another historian (*note 2*) writes of the casualties of the Fricourt assault: ‘They were victims of the failure by the commanders of XV Corps and the division to provide covering artillery fire.’

The date of these two young men’s deaths is of great significance: the First of July 1916, the first day of the battle of the Somme, the worst day in the history of the British Army, which sustained casualties of 57,470, including 19,240 killed. 60% of officers in action that day lost their lives, most of them young subalterns like the two younger Hicking brothers, not long out of public school and with little military training or experience. They and the men they led over the top at the start of the British offensive, most of them young volunteers who had joined up with their pals, were easy targets for the German machine-gunners waiting for them, untroubled by any artillery fire from behind the British front line.

Epilogue

The names of George Graham and Francis Joseph Hicking appear on the War Memorial outside Ruddington Parish Church (St Peter’s) and on the Roll of Honour inside. Because their parents moved to Buckinghamshire at some time during or just before the war, the names also appear on the Roll of Honour in All Saints Church Chalfont St Peter.

Notes

1. R Westlake *British Battalions on the Somme (1994)*
2. H Sebag-Montefiore *Somme: Into the Breach (2016)*

Information on censuses and family records (Births, Baptisms and Marriages) accessed through subscription to Findmypast.com

THIS YEAR’S REMAING LECTURES:

Tuesday 20 November 2018 7:30 at the Nottingham Mechanics: “Rufford Abbey”
Pete Smith takes a look at this grand Dukeries house during its Victorian and Edwardian heyday.

Tuesday 18 December 2018 7:30 at the Nottingham Mechanics: The Workhouse Storytellers
Life in Southwell Workhouse: A contrasting view of Victorian and Edwardian life and society.

The Mechanics is proving a popular venue for our meetings. It is warm and comfortable, and it has a bar open for food and drink before our meetings and open for a short time after.

NEXT YEAR'S LECTURES

As usual these will take place on the third Tuesday of the month at the Nottingham Mechanics, North Sherwood Street, beginning at 7:30 pm. A bar is open beforehand and for a short time afterwards.

Tuesday 15 January Kevin Powell

“A place to rest”

Kevin Powell recounts some of the stories behind memorials in Nottingham's General and Church (Rock) cemeteries.

Saturday 9 February 2:30 pm Paul Everson

The Maurice Barley Lecture in conjunction with the Thoroton Society
(please note day and time)

“Distinctiveness and Assimilation”

Recovering Viking-age stone sculptures in the East Midlands.

Tuesday 19 Feb John Beckett

“Sir Jesse Boot and the creation of public parks in Nottingham after 1918”

In the immediate aftermath of the First World War Nottingham acquired a number of major parks, several of them with substantial financial support from Sir Jesse Boot, Lord Trent. This lecture looks at the thinking behind the provision of parks, and at some of the practical realities of laying them out and maintaining them over time.

Tuesday 19 March Stephen Walker

“Moor Pond Woods, a thread in the web of time”

In the 18th century the Robinson family founded cotton spinning mills in the Leen valley, what is the evidence for their operation?

Tuesday 16 April Ian Wells

“You can't be serious”

Adventures in getting buildings listed.

Tuesday 21 May

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 15 October Elain Harwood

The Keith Train lecture in conjunction with the Thoroton Society

“Art Deco Architecture in Britain”

The lecture will look a little at American influences, the impact of the 1925 Paris exhibition, and at streamlined modern and the influence of Willem Dudok on architecture between the wars. It ties in with a book on the subject by Dr Harwood.

Tuesday 19 November David Longford

“The Show Goes On . . . ”

David Longford of the Theatre Royal describes the work and discoveries of the theatre’s Heritage Lottery-funded Archive project.

Tuesday 17 December

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Tuesday 21 January 2020

“Fifty Years On; has it all been worth it?”

Tom Huggon looks back at half a century with Nottingham Civic Society

(these details will appear in the programme card distributed in January)

Best wishes

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