

First World War centenary

We shall remember them

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the armistice of the First World War, over the next few weeks **Ann Cullis** from Bath and North East Somerset Council will highlight some of the events happening this November and look back at events and projects over the last four years in B&NES

Lance Corporal Arthur Hendon, service number 17030, was a young soldier from Bath who is commemorated on the City of Bath War Memorial.

The son of William and Emily Hendon of Coronation Avenue, Bath, Arthur was in the 7th Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry. He was killed in Flanders on July 12 1916, at the age of 21 - most likely in the first Battle of the Somme, where 60,000 casualties were incurred in 13 days.

He is buried in Vlamertinghe Military Cemetery in Belgium, the resting place of 1,166 casualties - and a long way from home.

Arthur Hendon wrote this poem, which was found in his pocket:

*Some day, not now, shall the results be seen
Of what is happening in the while between
The ceaseless strivings and the heavy cross,
The bitter failures and the heavy loss,
Some day, not now, we'll understand the scene
Of what is happening in the while between...*

*Some day, not now, the part-ings will be o'er,
And we shall meet in heaven to part no more;
The heartbreaks shall be healed, the wounds embalmed,
The sea of human life be ever calmed.
Some day! But now, a while, the tears and grief,
And then the victory, joy, and relief.*



Picture: Allen H. Hanson/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

The Labour Corps insignia on the gravestone of Private Russell David Smith

Picture: B&NES Council

'Overwhelmed by number of soldiers coming into hospitals'

Bath's first hospital was the Royal Mineral Water Hospital. But in 1915, the Government started to requisition buildings that could be used as hospitals, and to identify places where new, temporary hospitals could be built. One of these was Combe Park on the edge of Bath, which opened as Bath War Hospital in April 1916.

The story of Bath War Hospital was told in the exhibition Acts of Kindness, The Centenary of Bath War Hospital (June-October 2016); <http://www.bathwarhospital.org/>

Wounded soldiers endured a cross-Channel boat to one of the south coast ports, and from there an arduous train journey to which ever war hospital was able to accommodate them.

Nurse Kathleen Ainsworth, whose letters are in the Bath Record Office, writes of being almost overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of wounded men arriving at the hospital. Many had to be put up in emergency wards in marquees.

A typical soldier was Private Russell David Smith, a skilled bookbinder from Walthamstow. He was in the Labour Corps, providing auxiliary support to front-line troops. Wounded, he was brought back to England and taken to Bath War Hospital where he died in 1917. His gravestone, with the Labour Corps insignia of entrenching tools, is in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission plot in Locksbrook Cemetery. Bath is a long way from his home in Walthamstow. The dedication on his gravestone from his wife Alice reads:

'We who loved him miss him most'

Peace Oak Planted

There was music and dancing until 10pm. It rained so hard, people got soaked, but the dancing carried on regardless.

The 1919 Peace Memorial Oak is still in Sydney Gardens, and is to be re-dedicated in July 2019.

Lasting memorials built to honour those who lost their lives

the war before they could finally be built.

The War Memorial at the entrance to Royal Victoria Park was paid for by public subscription, and was unveiled and dedicated in 1927.

This year the City of Bath War

own war memorials - all except two.

These are Thankful Villages - those very few places where all the men who left to serve in WWI returned. In Chelwood, four men served and returned; and in Wool-

ley, 13 men served and returned.

Sons' heroism remembered

sacrifice of the parents'

Nearby is a portrait of Alderman Hatt.

In July 1919, Alderman Hatt (by then Sir Harry) was amongst the dignitaries who planted the Peace Oak in Sydney Gardens on Peace Celebration Day.

Plaque commemorating Alderman Hatt's sons Arthur and Edward who died within two months of each other in 1916

Picture: B&NES Council



organise the city's peace celebrations, which were on a colossal scale. The *Bath Chronicle* headlines a week later on July 26, 1919 read:

Peace enthusiasm not damped by rain

Jubilations in the downpour

Vast concourse attends choral

thanksgiving

Grouds in the parks

5,000 guests at Mayor's garden party

Bath's beacon blazes brilliantly

Around 30,000 people attended

the Royal Crescent celebration

event. There was a procession from

Covering the 1919 peace celebrations attended by more than 30,000 people

Milsom Street, a service of thanksgiving, brass bands, three cheers for the King and the troops, and the release of 250 pigeons symbolising doves of peace.

The Mayor's Garden Party Service Men Entertained in Sydney Gardens