



The School and the First World War

4: CELEBRATION AND REMEMBRANCE

The Armistice was signed on the 11th November, 1918 between the Allies of World War One and Germany for the cessation of hostilities on the Western Front. As this message went around the world, people celebrated it. In fact, even though World War One was not officially over yet, Remembrance Day is still celebrated each year on that date.



Above, the last school photograph of George Howson, taken in July 1918. By January 1919 he was seriously ill and died on January 7th, some said broken by the War that took so many of his beloved pupils.



Modern day parade on Remembrance Sunday in Holt.



the right was taken in 1905, two years before the Officer Training Corps was established. Headmaster Eccles is standing towards the back. The man with the dark beard further to the front is Major (John Chambré) Miller, Housemaster of Bengal Lodge, and later, of Farfield.

Senior School celebration

At midday of the 11th November, an Assembly was held in Big School in which the headmaster, Mr Howson, announced the signing of the armistice. The whole School gave three cheers and the first verse of the national anthem was sung. In the afternoon, the O.T.C. (now the C.C.F.) paraded on the lawn next to Big School. They celebrated with a bonfire, fired three rounds and Captain Hammick addressed the School.

The day after, a 'Thanksgiving Service' was held in Chapel at 9 a.m. Special hymns and chants were sung, as well as a 'solemn Te Deum'. Mr Howson gave a speech in which he quoted a pupil 'It is not those who come back from the war who will be the most important for the future. It will be those who are now at the School.'

Junior School celebration

At the Junior School, a service was held to honour the day. However, housemaster D.A. Wynne Willson said that the service did 'not impress itself very vividly on my memory' and stated that it was 'not imaginative'. The School itself 'took it rather coolly' which can be understood for the boys might have been too young to fully understand the impact of the event. As well as the service, there were also processions of soldiers around town. When the official end of the War came in July 1919, a public dinner was held for 'returned soldiers' at which Wynne Willson gave a speech.



Wynne Willson, housemaster of Old School House

Then and now

The modern Combined Cadet Force (left) comprises 350+ pupils in three Sections (Royal Navy, Army & Royal Air Force). Membership is optional and provides access to a wide variety of activities including military training, shooting, adventure training and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The black and white photograph on



CHANGE AND RECOVERY

Under the leadership of J.R. Eccles the School flourished in the 20s and 30s, with numbers rising and gifted pupils such as W.H. Auden and Benjamin Britten to its name. Eccles faithfully continued the ethos instilled by Howson, ensuring that science had pride of place in the curriculum, and that pupils enjoyed their freedom to roam and study without the fear of corporal punishment. With his own progressive views, Eccles developed a cultured atmosphere in which boys were encouraged to think for themselves and contact with pupils in Europe was actively pursued.



Gresham's was awarded the Peace Medal in recognition of work towards international relations twice, in 1930 and 1932.

League of Nations Union

In 1920, the School formed a League of Nations Union, based on the larger organisation, to discuss international matters and relations. A vast number of schools took part, including Wellington and Christ's Hospital, each sending twelve students as representatives. Pupils travelled to Hamburg and then continued to Berlin, where they were greeted by the mayor of the town, before setting out on a tour through Germany where they were welcomed with 'utmost hospitality'. The students noticed that the traditional differences were enormous, although the countries were not that far away from each other. After they returned one of the English visitors was quoted as saying that the German people were "quite unlike ourselves". Later, some of the German representatives paid a visit to English public schools organised by Dr. Sturm-Kaiser, a teacher at the Friedrich Real Gymnasium in Berlin.

International Camp



Boys must learn group discipline from an album of photographs showing the Salem School in the 1930s.

A great work was done at Westerburg. Friendships were made which will withstand the test of separation; views were freely and openly exchanged, and while opinions frequently differed—even at the end—the spirit which pervaded all discussions was a genuine whole-hearted desire for peace and a determination to prevent, at all costs, the occurrence of another 1914.

Inter-school visits

Another initiative to widen pupils' horizons was the week-long visit by a group of German boys and two masters from the Kaiser Frederick Real Gymnasium in Berlin in October 1929. This followed up a link formed by Basil Fletcher earlier that year when he visited with a party from School. In March 1931, thanks to further groundwork by Fletcher during a year-long sabbatical travelling the world, Kurt Hahn came to Gresham's for a brief stay with a group of twenty boys from his remarkable foundation in Baden, Schule Schloss, Salem. Hahn's talk to the boys on the political situation in Germany was vividly remembered by those present. Mr Fletcher noted that the German boys showed a keen interest in methods of education here, "since Herr Hahn's system of training the character, mind, and body of his boys is not dissimilar from the Gresham system."



Physics teacher Basil Fletcher from a 1930 staff photograph.



Third formers visit the battlefields

Each autumn term third formers visit the battlefields as part of their history studies and carry out research on the fallen in the School Archives.



REMEMBRANCE

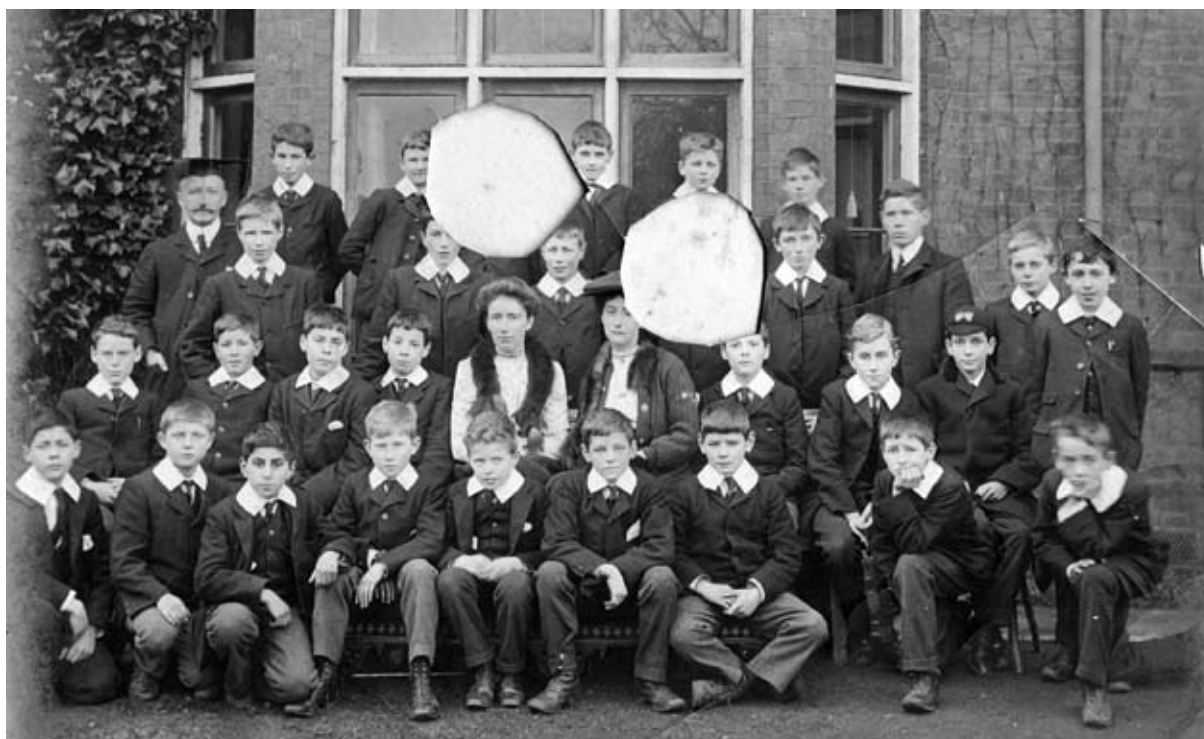


Old Boys killed who had been in the Junior House, and opposite each name I put in a circle the boy's head taken from the House group when he was 13 or 14, made in many cases 10 or 15 years before. Those little boys' faces in that memorial always seemed to me infinitely pathetic."

As part of remembrance, memorials were put up throughout the country. Mr Willson states that they 'varied enormously in appropriateness and beauty'. His favourite memorial stated: 'The men were very good unto us. They were a wall unto us on our right hand and our left.' Willson wrote in his memoir, "For my own Junior House I made an illuminated war memorial containing the names of all the

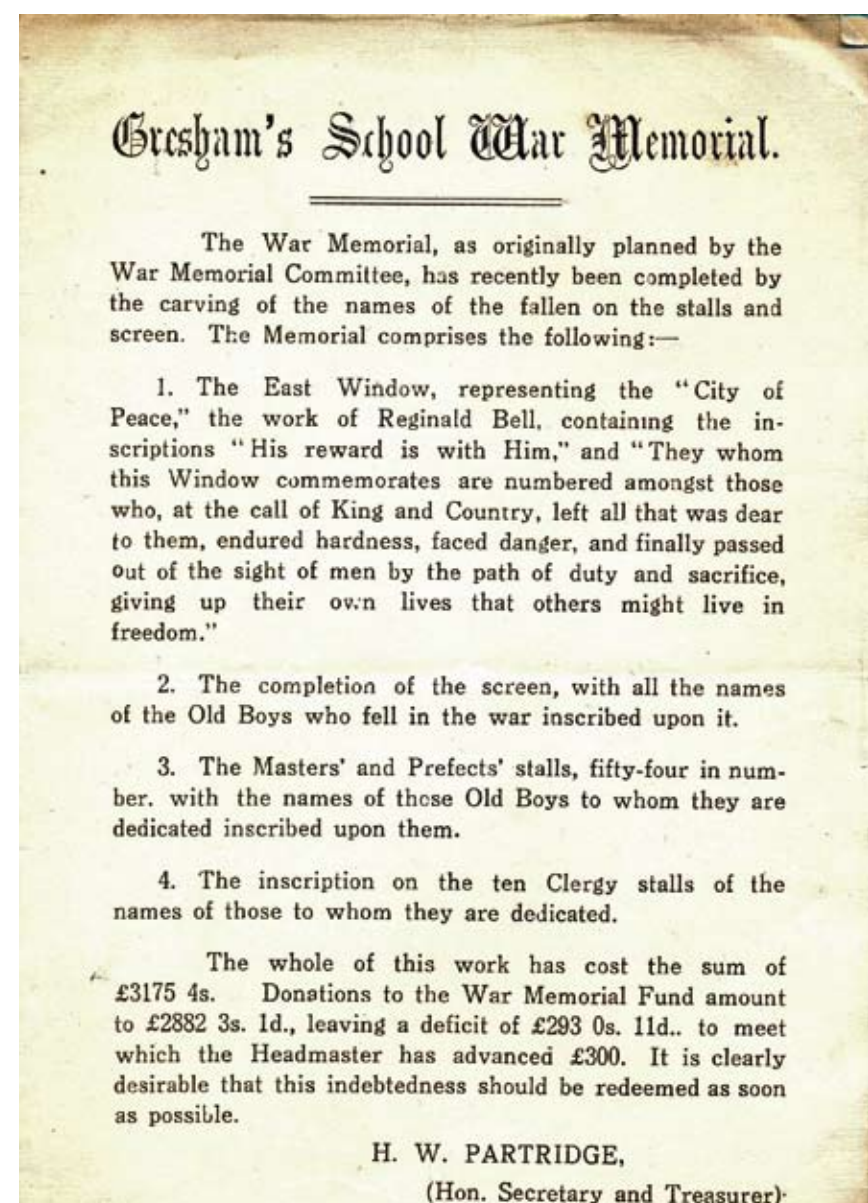


This beautifully crafted paper poppy was autographed by Earl Haig for the Holt Branch of the British Legion to raise funds for the "Annual Appeal for Ex-service Men of all ranks". It is now kept in the Gresham's School archives.

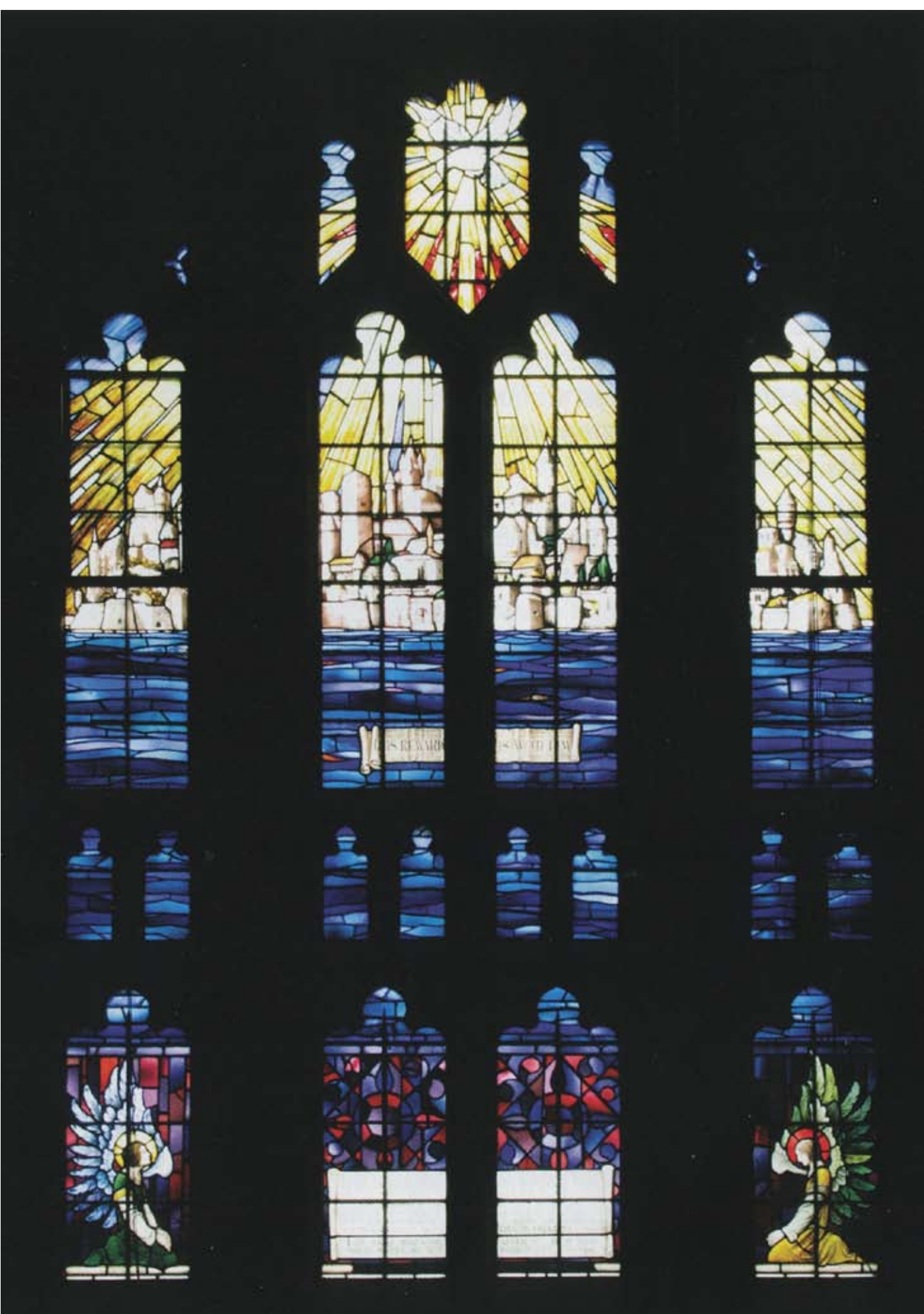


Old School House (Junior School) photo of 1906 from which Wynne Willson cut photographs for the Vellum Roll of Honour.

Chapel memorials



The newly built Chapel became a place of remembrance for the fallen. On the 6th of January, 1920, the Chapel Committee and the War Memorial Committee decided on the general plan for the stained glass windows and that the names of the fallen should be carved and gilded into six centre panels on the southern side as well as on memorial stalls. The tradition of the Chapel Service on the 11th of November at 11 a.m. was introduced in 1919 with two minutes of silence and the wearing of the poppy. This tradition still takes place today.



THEY WHOM THIS WINDOW COMMEMORATES WERE NUMBERED AMONG THOSE WHO, AT THE CALL OF KING AND COUNTRY, LEFT ALL THAT WAS DEAR TO THEM, ENDURED HARDNESS, FACED DANGER AND FINALLY PASSED OUT OF THE SIGHT OF MEN BY THE PATH OF DUTY AND SELF-SACRIFICE, GIVING UP THEIR OWN LIVES THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE IN FREEDOM. LET THOSE WHO COME AFTER SEE TO IT THAT THEIR NAMES BE NOT FORGOTTEN. 1914-1919.

Inscription on Memorial Window