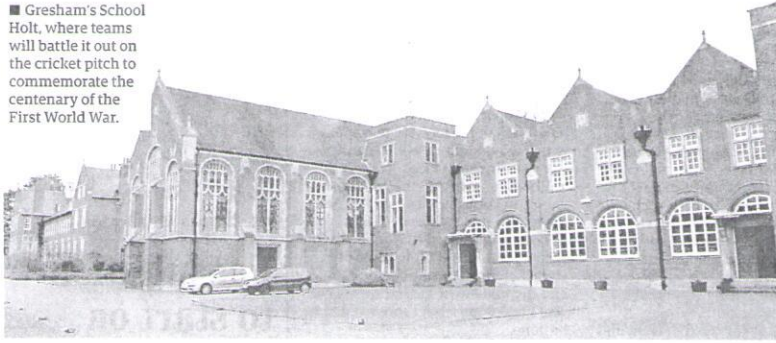


## FEATURE

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■ Gresham's School Holt, where teams will battle it out on the cricket pitch to commemorate the centenary of the First World War.



# Flower of youth whose dreams ended in tragedy

As the nation marks the centenary of the First World War, **RICHARD BATSON** looks at how an innocent north Norfolk school cricket match brings into sharp focus the horror and tragedy of conflict...

It was just an end-of-year school cricket match during a sun-baked idyllic summer. But it turned into a snapshot of the horrors of the First World War.

A picture of the Gresham's School first team from July 18, 1914 shows 11 smart boys in spotless white trousers and dapper blazers looking forward to batting, bowling and fruitful lives ahead of them.

But within months the teenagers would be pitched into the bloodbath of trench warfare – many as officers because of their school officer cadet training – leading their men “over the top” into a deadly barrage of German bullets.

Six of them would not return and now lie buried in battlefields across the Channel.

Five of the old boys' opposition team also perished, meaning half the players in the match of July 18, 1914 never bowled, batted or breathed again.

The match still takes place every year and is being staged on July 18 this year to mark the poignant centenary.

Because it falls after the end of the school term, and most of the pupils have gone home for summer, this year's match will be a school versus invitation clash.

Organiser, deputy head Simon Kinder, said the cricket fixture dated back to Edwardian times. This year's game marked the start of a series of events marking the centenary of the outbreak of the war.

Mr Kinder said the school did annual trips to the war battlefields and graveyards, but the most poignant moments were researching the stories of

fallen former pupils and seeing the names on memorials.

“You can talk about the loss of 20,000 lives on the first day of the Somme but the students' stories bring home the reality of war,” he added.

Looking at the 1914 picture was a sobering reminder of “futures snuffed out” by the conflict.

“As a teacher you see pupils' hopes and aspirations – so a school losing a fifth of those that served is very powerful.”

Among the guests at this year's match will be Richard Jefferson whose father, Julian, played for the school.

Mr Kinder said: “He should have been going to see the test match against India at Lords but he is coming to see our match instead.”

The match starts at 1.30pm on Friday, July 18, at Gresham's School, Holt, and the public is welcome. It will raise funds for two charities – Walking with the Wounded and Holt Young Carers. The match and centenary has also triggered a republishing of the book *When Heroes Die*, telling the stories of the 108 Gresham's pupils and three staff who died in the First World War.

It was first released by former Gresham's history teacher Sue Smart in 2001 but new research has thrown up more stories to update it. It will be launched in September.

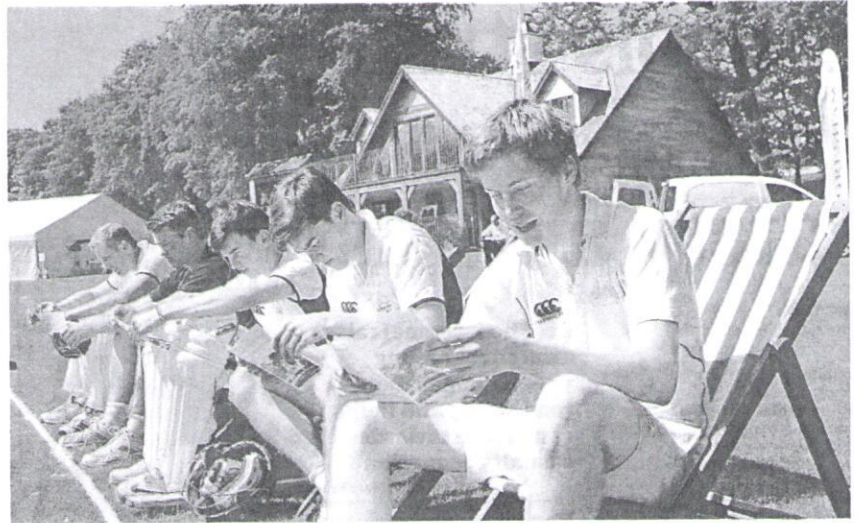
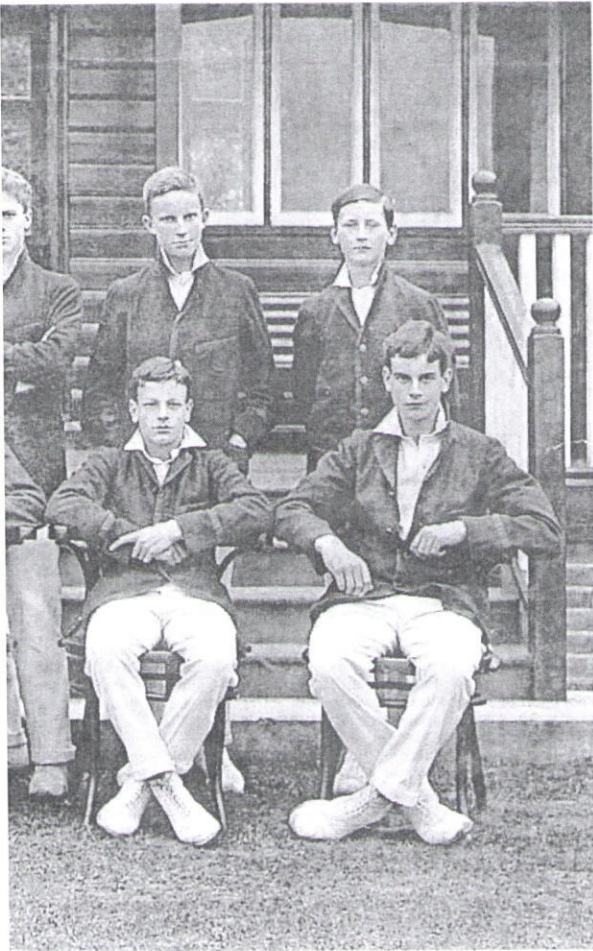
The school is also holding a special service on October 15 to mark the anniversary of the first of Gresham's boys to be killed. It will be held in the school chapel which is dedicated as a memorial to the fallen pupils, whose names are on a roll of honour and on seats.

■ Above, George Howson, reforming head teacher of Gresham's School from 1900 until his death in 1919. Under his leadership, a new School Chapel was completed in 1916.



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NEWS



■ This poignant letter was the last letter home written by young Cuthbert Hill, who was serving in the Royal Navy aboard HMS Invincible. He was killed in action in May 1916. The young Cuthbert (C A Hill) is second from right in the back row.

My dear Mummy,  
 P.S. I thank you for your last letter. I hope that letter had come to reach you as we were on the move. It was very windy when we first arrived up here but for the last two days it has been quite calm. There are most extraordinary news here regular school meets last night I was out

back again. It was rather funny meeting her because I had forgotten that he was in the baby at all. I will write again some time in the middle of the week love to all.  
 Perhaps I love  
 From your loving son  
 Cuthbert

His last letter. He was killed in action in the great battle of Gallipoli May 31st 1916

■ Top picture shows Gresham's senior school cricket team, who will pay tribute to those players who died in the First World War when they play a commemorative match on Friday.  
 Picture: KAREN BETHELL

■ Above, Gresham's 1914 cricket team. Back row, from left: CD Wells, R A Fitzgerald, J A Nicholson, D W Jacques, C A Hill, J Jefferson. Front - C R H Farmer, J H C Woodbridge, A H Graves, J F Laverack, C H Steven. Six of these young men did not return from the First World War.

■ Right, Gresham's present First XI: Back row from left, Mark Sorell (visiting cricket coach), Will Wright, Jack Webster, Tom Hancock, Oly Flux, Tom Sheridan, Tom Perry-Warnes, Kieron Peters, Al Horsley (First XI coach). Front row, Jack Park, Patrick Sheridan, Matthew Barker, Edmund Parker.

■ Left, Winter landscape along the River Somme in late 1916 after the close of the Allied offensive. Left, British infantrymen marching towards the front lines in the River Somme valley. Pictures: PA

