

FROM THE GARTON ARCHIVE

PICTURE OF THE MONTH 80 NOVEMBER 2019

Commentary by Peter Harrod and Chris Williams



It seems appropriate for the November 2018 Picture of the Month to remember those who served at the 4th Northern General Hospital in Lincoln during the Great War, and the thousands of patients who received treatment. This picture has been used before in Occasional Paper No 14, and is one of the most iconic in our collection. It seems to capture the atmosphere in this ward, which was once the main dormitory at Lincoln School, and is now the library at Lincoln Christ's Hospital School. No-one is smiling for the camera, least of all the unfortunate young man who has had his leg amputated. The picture speaks its own words, of course, but the following commentary, adapted from the article referred to above, supplemented by references to the school magazines, will add some context.

During the First World War the 4th Northern General Hospital occupied the buildings and fields of the former Lincoln Grammar School (later re-named Lincoln School and now Lincoln

Christ's Hospital School). It held 41 Officers' beds and 1126 Other Ranks' beds with over 45,000 men being treated there during the war. The Newport Cemetery in Lincoln, situated less than a mile from the School, contains 139 First World War graves.

The Editorial in the October 1914 edition of *The Lincolnian* reported that Lincoln School was in a unique position among the schools of England in having its buildings used as a base hospital by the RAMC during the War. In implying that the School had a choice in the matter (it did not of course), the Editorial went on to suggest that it was the bounden duty of the School to help the soldiers and sailors 'in our country's peril' with pride and at 'whatever personal inconvenience'.

During this occupation of the School the same Editorial also reported that those in authority utilised the six weeks of holidays after the outbreak of war to build a temporary school on Sewell Road which was 'excellent in every way'. Headmaster Canon R S Moxon, and the increasing numbers of boarders, lived in 'very comfortable quarters' opposite the School in Coldbath House, which was later demolished by a bomb during the Second World War. Arrangements had also been made for the Lindum Cricket Ground to be used for games, as the Wragby Road grounds were occupied by temporary hospital wards. After the War, the Hospital was apparently reluctant to return the buildings to the School, and it was not until the summer of 1920 that the pupils and staff were able to return to the Wragby Road site.

This may be indicative of the view that the War had not really ended. In fact the armistice on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month was effectively a cease-fire, and the Treaty of Versailles between the Allies and Germany was not signed until 28th June 1919 and registered with the League of Nations on 21st October. Also, there were many who believed that the end of fighting with Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey was merely a brief moment of respite before the next conflict between the constitutional monarchies and democratic republics which had survived the 1914-1918 battles and a new enemy. We should not underestimate the fear that Bolshevik Russia, newly empowered by the abolition of the monarchy in 1917 and then the slaughter of the Tsar and the rest of the Romanov royal family at Ekaterinburg on 17th July 1918, would soon seek the destruction of monarchies, democracies and capitalism across a weakened Western Europe. Not only did the 4th Northern General Hospital keep its hold on the Wragby Road until 1920, but a number of memorials from the period have inscriptions stating '*The Great War 1914-1919*'.

The recent highly moving services and other events commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the Armistice prompted historian and fellow archivist Chris Williams to wonder how the Armistice was celebrated at Lincoln School Lincoln Christ's Hospital Girls' High School, and I was asked to do some research on the subject.

To my surprise, I could find no evidence in *The Lincolnian* magazine that the momentous event had been celebrated at all. There may well have been a service or assembly of some kind, but it was certainly not recorded in those most reliable sources of evidence, possibly because the magazines had not been published with the same detail or frequency due to economic constraints. What is recorded in the magazines of that period is the obvious disappointment and frustration that the School was not able to return promptly to its premises on Wragby Road.

By contrast, the Christmas 1919 edition of the High School magazine reported the *Peace Celebrations*, organised by the Mayor of Lincoln, who had expressed the desire that all school children should have a day of festivities on the 15th July, 1919, Headmistress Miss Savill and her colleagues were of the view that all the children in the School should be involved, and a sports day was organised. Prayers were said at 9.30am, and the remainder of the day was an 'absolute holiday', except of a few unfortunate individuals who were obliged to toil over external examination papers.

In brilliant sunshine, the games were a great success, including the newly introduced chariot race, and the sack races which always caused great hilarity. Tea was taken sitting on the grass, and then excitement followed when prizes were distributed in place of the war-time rosettes. Although it is not explicitly stated, I am assuming that the games were held on the Ruston Playing Field, which at that time was immediately to the west of Lincoln Prison on Greetwell Road. Colonel Ruston had kindly made the field available to the High School for games.

The City festivities followed on 19th July, with water sports, and races on the Commons, culminating in dances during the evening. and a firework display. The article, written by sixth-former Edith Osborne, concluded by reminding everyone of the need for thankfulness that the nation had at last been delivered from the horrors of warfare.

Throughout the Great War, the High School magazines had faithfully recorded the efforts of the School to support the war, through collecting money for Belgian relief, organising concerts in aid of the Lincolnshire Prisoners of War Fund, and the Blue Cross Fund. Eight guineas were also sent to King George's Fund on Trafalgar Day, 19th October 1917. Senior girls were also involved in helping with the numbering of ordnance survey maps in connection with the national food supply and during the autumn, horse-chestnuts were gathered in response to an appeal stating that for every ton collected, half a ton of grain could be 'set free' for national consumption.

Although I am unable to find any reference to peace celebrations at Lincoln school, the December 1919 edition of *The Lincolnian* did report with pride that two Old Lincolnians had been awarded the Military Cross; C E Burge, a Lieutenant with the Yorkshire Light Infantry, and H F Jones 'for conspicuous gallantry in defence of his tank, which he refused to surrender after it had been put out of action.

Reference

Lincoln School in the First World War Occasional Paper No 14 from the Garton Archive at LCHS , by Peter Harrod and Chris Williams

