



NOVEMBER UPDATE FROM THE TRUSTEES OF THE LEIGH AND BRANSFORD MEMORIAL HALL

“At the going down of the sun and in the morning We will remember them” – from ‘For The Fallen’ by Laurence Binyon

At 11am on Monday 11 November 1918, fighting ceased along a 400-mile stretch of land running across Europe known as the Western Front, effectively ending The First World War. By the end of 1918 almost every household in every village, town and city in every parish in England had been impacted by the Great War. Over half of the estimated total of 8.7 million British Army soldiers, volunteering or conscripted over those 4 traumatic years, lived in England.

In our own parish a total of 177 men fought and 30 were either killed or badly wounded. It is therefore a remarkable testament to our parish ancestors that despite all the trauma, heartbreak and losses suffered during those 4 years, just 13 short months later, the Memorial Hall had been conceived, planned, financed, and built on an acre of land generously given by the local landowner, Frederick Paget Norbury.



The original Hall itself was officially opened on 20 January 1920, to be managed, as the document in our archive sets out, *“in the interests of social welfare, to improve the conditions of life . . . without distinction of political, religious or other opinions by the provision of facilities for recreation and other leisure-time occupation.”* In other words, rather than erect a large memorial monolith to honour the memory of those men, our parishioners chose to build a ‘living’ physical space, in which all members of the community could meet and spend some ‘free’ time together. And the

word ‘free’ is important here because although this War was about many things, ultimately our soldiers were fighting to preserve our way of life and our freedoms.

In total the names of the 302 brave men and women who fought in *both World Wars* are recorded on two large plaques hung either side of the folding partition doors at the one end of the original (Small) hall. The Hall has changed somewhat over the intervening 105 years, but what hasn’t changed is its primary purpose – to provide a safe meeting place available to everyone in our wider community in which to spend memorable time together at one or more of the wide variety of over 375 events taking place there each year.

I like to think that in a profound sense, these brave men and women continue to be an essential part of our Hall’s history, still watching over us and guarding our freedom. It’s as if by having their names on permanent display *inside the building* they have become honoured guests at each and every event. A reminder, if you will, that without their selfless service there would be no Memorial Hall, let alone the day-to-day democratic rights and freedoms we now take for granted.

Remembrance Sunday this year falls on **9 November**, It honours those who served and sacrificed in World War I, together with all those who served and died in World War II and more recent conflicts. The day is a time to remember the service and sacrifice of all Armed Forces personnel, their families, emergency services, and civilians affected by conflict. And here in our small parish community we do the same.

Over the past twelve months the two Memorial Hall Planters, that now run alongside the south facing wall of the building, have been carefully restored in time for Remembrance Sunday. The top photo shows how they

looked just before the final stage of this year's planting. Since then, Barrie Thornley, our volunteer expert gardener has symmetrically planted a few hellebores, choisyas and abelias all of which continue the red, white and blue colour scheme. In the spring he will add over 100 small white thalia daffodil bulbs and steel blue osteospermums. I hope you agree that

over the past few months, Barrie has created a truly splendid memorial 'garden' (which, by the way he has now pledged to tend for the next couple of years) dedicated to the lasting memory of our Parish Heroes.

Jon Gamble, Chair of Trustees

