

The Way We Were



The Villages On The Eve of War

On the eve of war

The 1912 Kelly's Directory gives the population of the four villages – Grimston, Roydon, Pott Row and Congham – as around sixteen hundred. This population was not much smaller than the present day but the demography was very different. There were four schools – one in each of the villages – and the total average attendance was three hundred. Conversely there were relatively few people over the age of sixty. There was a large population of young adults – those aged between eighteen and thirty – and despite the absence of motor vehicles the villages were noisy and bustling places.

The railway station at Roydon provided employment and carried goods and people into and out of the village. It ran to King's Lynn in one direction and towards Fakenham and Cromer in the other giving access to the surrounding villages. As Gayton did not have a station at this time it was a less accessible place than Grimston and considerably smaller.

There were two grocers in Grimston and another in Pott Row and in addition there were butchers and a "stationery and fancy goods store". Congham and Pott Row had sub post offices whilst the main post office was in Grimston. Coal and fish were delivered around the villages. There were six pubs around the villages and the Working Men's Club in what is now the Village Hall. Thus the villages provided most of what people needed and it is likely that for most people a trip to Lynn (or to the coast) was an "event" rather than part of a regular routine. There would have been a lot of people around the village at all times of day and our predecessors would have been surprised at how quiet the villages have become.



Life at Home

When philanthropists such as Rowntree made a study of rural life early in the century they were surprised to discover that poverty was just as prevalent in the country as in the towns and that poverty was found in all counties including Norfolk.

Agricultural labourers faced two big problems. Firstly there was the uncertainty of wages which could vary immensely from season to season according to the availability of work and no work meant no pay. Secondly there was the problem of the "tied cottage". This housing-with-job might be seen as a workers bonus but it could be taken to be worth about 1s/6d a week and wages lowered accordingly. Furthermore it was of variable quality and, most importantly, it was the cause of constant insecurity. Moving or losing your job meant moving or losing your home and many families moved house between the 1901 and 1911 census probably because the earner changed employer.

The majority of the labourer's cottages were four rooms, traditional "two-up-two-down" - well over half of the men killed in the war lived in houses with four rooms or less. The problem of living in a small house with only an outside toilet and possibly a shared tap was compounded by the large size of many families. There was a lower infant mortality rate in rural communities than in the cities and this was cited in the poverty reports as both a blessing and a curse. Amongst the war memorial families there were fourteen families with six children or more and five was about average. Thus eating, sleeping and day-to-day living was of necessity "cheek by jowl" and, as people have not changed, there must have been friction which was probably exacerbated as children grew into young adults. In such families it was no wonder that Mum and Dad sometimes had to rule with a rod of iron or the copper stick and it is also no wonder that men chose to spend evenings in the village pubs.

Mother was the linchpin of any family. A woman who could budget efficiently, cook well and was good with her needle was indeed worth a price above rubies as her skills could ensure the well-being and happiness of the family. It was genuinely true that, at this time "a woman's work was never done". It was the role of women to try and make the family budget stretch to cover expenditure and to provide a good diet although this was actually impossible and every family had a diet deficient to some extent usually in protein. Throughout the summer women were vigilant for anything they could preserve for the long hard months of winter and they made jam, jellies, and pickles and sometimes even wine. Almost all clothes were hand me downs or make do and mend. Some families were lucky enough to have a contact in one of the big houses or a family member who was better off and would hand down their clothes; some mothers may have found the odd 6d to contribute to a clothing club. In addition to shopping, cooking, cleaning, childcare and trying to keep clothes serviceable and mended women often took on work outside of the home, charring being a last resort. Mothers were the least well-fed in any family; many women rarely ate meat the bulk of which was reserved for the wage earner.

Fathers were busy outside the home. At some times of the year such as harvest they would work from dawn till dusk and often the older children would join them. Men whose work involved tending the livestock worked seven days a week and having finished work at dusk, the horsemen would be expected to return to the farm to settle the horses around 8p.m. Leisure time was minimal. Many families had large gardens in which they grew vegetables, kept chickens or maybe even a pig. These

gardens and allotments could be the families' sole source of food during hard times and it was in everyone's interest to help in growing the maximum amount of nutrition.

Children no doubt made the best of life. There was a freedom which cannot be imagined by today's children. With no cars, no large expanse of water nearby and a community in which most people knew each other if only by sight it was comparatively safe for children to run free once schooling and chores were over. However, girls were always expected to help their mothers in the home with washing, cleaning or caring for smaller siblings and with money scarce boys were expected to find paid work whenever and wherever they could. They might work for a local shop keeper or butcher before school or at weekends and although the pay was very little – probably about 9d (4p) a week – it made a big difference to the family budget. In most families work took precedence over school for purely economic reasons and any boy would take a day off school if a day's paid employment was on offer. Life became a little easier when more money started to come in i.e. when children began to earn and contribute to the family budget. Grown children working away - girls in service, boys in the army – would try and send money home whenever they could and this was especially welcome as it did not come with an extra mouth to feed. All families strove to avoid debt. On such a small income debt once incurred was extremely difficult if not impossible to repay.

Although there were probably some in the village who felt that "life isn't living it's just dragging along" ¹there were many others who found real happiness in their families, their gardens and the special days in the year. Others who were devout Christians would have found solace and comfort in their faith. The majority probably accepted their lot with stoicism and worked hard to make life as pleasant as possible.

¹ Rowntree, Beerbohm. "How the Labourer Lives", Thomas Nelson, 1917.

Going to work

The main activity of the community was agriculture. There are thirteen farmers listed in Kelly's Directory and these were supported by three blacksmiths (including Miss Mary Taylor) two vermin catchers and a mole catcher, a wheelwright, two harness makers, a threshing machine contractor, a sheep dipping contractor and Mr John Dodman Smith the vet. Most of the young men worked on the farms, others were employed in construction or on the railway. The average national wages before the war was 16/9 (approx. 87p) for a fifty-eight hour week. For agricultural workers it was around 13/- (65p) for uncertain hours; long "light until dusk" days in the summer and cold hard work in winter if enough work was available

Of those who lost their lives in the war the majority worked on the farms. Opportunities to do anything else would have been very limited. During the years leading up to the war the school records show that several boys earned a "certificate to work" showing that they had achieved level 5 (the highest level of achievement at Grimston School) but only one secured a place at Lynn Technical School presumably to study engineering or something similar. Opportunities for young men were limited but they were worse for young women. On the 1911 census a number of young women are listed with no occupation or "at home." One or two young women did escape the drudgery of domestic service (either in their own home or someone else's) by becoming apprentice teachers, in the pre-war years no boys were taken on in this role.

The Victorian class structure still held sway; it was easy to "know one's place". The local gentry were the village aristocracy. Mrs Elwes, a widow, lived with her children at Congham Hall whilst her sister-in-law Miss Violet Elwes resided at the other end of the village at Elder Farm. The elderly Everard siblings, Misses Geraldine and Constance and their brother Raoul, a JP, lived at Roydon Lodge. All of these people were living on their own means and they employed about a dozen domestic servants between them, none of whom originated from the village.

There is little evidence of "the middling sort" in the villages. One hundred pounds a year, often perceived by the Victorians as a middle class wage, was beyond the wildest dreams of most villagers who would think themselves extremely fortunate to earn half that money. In a community in which agriculture and manual labour prevailed there was little use for the clerks, retail assistants and supervisors who aspired to middle class status in the town. Certainly there were residents who probably thought themselves "a cut above" and these may have included those who owned and ran businesses as well as the professionals. Mr and Mrs Hammond were teachers at Grimston School for many years and raised a large family in the school house. It is certain that they were viewed as of the better sort and were loved and respected in the village but teaching wasn't a well-paid job and in 1912 Mr Hammond was supplementing their income by taking on the role of Registrar for Births and Deaths; Mr Tuddenham the Station Master lived with his wife and two little girls in the six-roomed cottage at the station and would surely have regarded himself as a little better than the farmworkers as did Mr Balding and Mr Grey the grocers and the lady post mistresses. The carters, publicans and tradesmen made a great deal more money than the average but their status in the village was probably defined more by roots than finances.

As everyone in the village knew their betters there was a considerable amount of cap doffing or tipping and a great deal of deference, this was accepted as the norm. If there was talk in the village

pubs of challenging the status quo most men would have been careful to avoid becoming too closely associated with such sentiments as it was dangerous to come to the landowner's attention as a trouble causer. Farming unions existed before the war – George Edwards started the Eastern Counties Agricultural Labourers Union in 1907 – but we have no way of knowing if workers in Grimston belonged to any such organisation or were interested in such things.

Whilst work for most of the men meant labouring on the farm, for women, who became wives and mothers, work probably was never ending and the burden of responsibility heavy. Women had to do the household chores, keep their families fed and reasonably clothed and in addition they also faced the enduring problem - and attached anxiety - of eking the family finances out to avoid debt, poverty and the workhouse Poor nutrition, hard work and multiple pregnancies meant that wives and mothers often experienced poor health.

The men who died early in the war in 1914 and 1915 were all regular soldiers or sailors and most families in the village had a son with the colours. The army seemed to offer an escape and a more exciting life to those who could cope with the brutality and discipline. The stories these soldiers brought home with them and the respect they inspired must have impressed many boys in the village. For most of the wartime volunteers and conscripts work at home had been tedious, hard and poorly paid and probably life sometimes seemed a dull and wearying daily grind. It is not surprising that the chance to wear a uniform, travel and experience new things might have seemed like an adventure and a short-term escape.

Going to School

The 1880 Education Act made school attendance compulsory between the ages of five and ten; further legislation in 1893 extended the age of compulsory attendance to 11, and in 1899 to 12.

Before the war there were four schools – one in each of the villages – and the total on school rolls was over three hundred. Mr and Mrs Hammond were teachers at Church Hill School for many years. Assisted by one or sometimes two apprentices they managed a school population of over one hundred ranging in age from five to twelve although some children did stay on longer. School entry as well as school leaving appears to have been a somewhat random event with children arriving and going throughout the year. As there were no school dinners children went home for lunch. The school day consisted of a morning and an afternoon session with a two hour break allowing time for children to walk home, eat and walk back. In rare cases where children lived too far away to walk home they were allowed to eat a packed lunch at school and play outside afterwards on the understanding that teachers were not responsible for them during that time. With all this trekking to and fro, the school day must have been very long especially for the smallest children and it is likely that many were reluctant to return in the afternoon

The number of pupils on roll at Church Hill between 1880 and 1910 was always over one hundred but attendance was usually well below that number. Children were absent for a range of reasons – the harvest, the Sandringham Flower Show, illness, bad weather (without cagoules or wellingtons small children walking to school would have quickly become soaked) and exclusion. Illness was a constant worry and any household suspected of having scarlet fever or measles would be quarantined, the parents told to keep all children at home. These measures were often applied to the neighbouring cottages too. Despite these precautions the school was closed in January 1914 due an outbreak of scarlet fever and in April of the same year a small girl called Bertha Collison died from the illness. During the thirty years 1880 – 1910 at least four children on the Grimston roll died as a result of complications of measles.

Another reason for absence was what we would call exclusion. Behaviour in school was not always good. The boys were guilty of stealing, bullying and being what Mr Hammond described in the school log as “insolent” “disobedient” and “a bad influence”. The use of the cane didn’t always improve this behaviour and one pupil attacked and kicked Mr Hammond requiring the intervention of the local policeman and the magistrates. In cases of bad behaviour the student was sent home with instructions to return with his father. When parent and child turned up there had to be a public apology and a pledge from the boy to do better although this wasn’t always complied with. Thus there is evidence of troublesome boys being shuffled between Grimston and Pott Row in an attempt to finish their schooling and avoid the Attendance Officer.

Assessment – monitored by the annual visit of the School Inspector and of the Diocesan Inspector – was at six levels. Most Grimston students achieved level 4 on leaving. Consulting the level descriptors, we can see that level 4 means only that most of our soldiers would have been literate or numerate. Those who failed to reach level 4 (or even levels 1, 2, or 3) simply remained illiterate and/or innumerate and went out into the world lacking those skills. Some boys gained a scholarship to Lynn Technical School and some girls went on to become apprentice teachers, these students had achieved level 5 or possibly even level 6. Boys could also gain a “Certificate to Work” and these boys also achieved level 5.

The school log book has references to some of the Fallen by name. **Lloyd Francklin** attended the school for just a year in between his mother’s marriages; **William Bird** was also a short term pupil.

Samuel Smith and his brother were often late (and were sent home as a consequence of this) whilst **Walter Hammond** was the model pupil. The **Mayes** family were plagued by ill health between 1893 and 1895 and **William Boldero** had to return to school in Pott Row after only a term at Grimston because the walk was too taxing for a child in such delicate health. Interestingly the army found him fit for service in 1916.

It is impossible to ascertain how parents and children viewed education. Whilst it was perceived as “necessary” to go to school and gain basic skills it is probable that for most people aspiration meant the hope of wages, home and a healthy family with the chance of a skilled job such as blacksmith, carpenter or saddler for the more fortunate or “clever”.

Going to the Pub

In the early years of the twentieth century the Temperance Movement was strong. There were temperance hotels in King's Lynn but there is no evidence that the movement had any influence in the village. There was an alternative to the pub – the Working Men's Club which was attached to the village hall and was given to the village by a benefactor. We cannot be sure how much it was used or what kind of atmosphere there was, it is possible that it was a temperance establishment in which case some of the men who were teetotal – often those involved with the Methodist chapel – would go there instead of the pub. Women did not go to the club or to the pub. The pub – usually a working-class establishment – was perceived as a male domain and to be seen in the pub would tarnish a woman's reputation beyond repair. During the war young women from the working and middle classes did begin to frequent pubs but this would not have happened in rural communities like Grimston where new ideas were slow to take root

The village had several pubs. Licencing laws before the war allowed children into pubs at the age of 14 which was the start of working life. Thus we might presume that once boys became "working men" they would go to the pub with their fathers although this would have depended upon Dad's willingness to take them. The pub was an escape for men; a place away from the children and the overcrowding that existed in most family homes. Men would have had a local, a pub in which they were a regular and it's probable that they rarely ventured into any of the other pubs. A pint of beer cost around 1.75 old pence in 1910. Although this sounds very little, family budgets were stretched and most men would have made a pint of beer last a considerable length of time. There may have been pub games in the pub – darts, dominoes or even cards although landlords were supposed to be strict about gambling on the premises – and there was conversation that would have been thought unsuitable for women's ears. We cannot know what exactly was discussed but there is no evidence that Grimston was a politically active community. Once the war started there would have been talk about events at the front and any news from men fighting would be passed on. In a society in which men were discouraged from showing emotion the pub was somewhere where bereaved fathers and brothers could grieve in their own way amongst their mates.

Only four of the pubs remain: The Three Horseshoes, The Anvil (Congham), The Union Jack (Roydon) and the Bell.

The Bell, which has been a pub since the end of the eighteenth century, looked very different in 1911; the landlord was Mr William Smith who had been established there since 1904. At the crossroads where the Bell stands there were two other pubs .The New Inn (now the Clock House) and the Bushell which was part of the brewery behind the shop.

The Bushell was run by Mr Robert Case. In 1912 he was fined for opening after hours when Sergeant Webb found Charles Phillippo drinking spirits at 11.30p.m. Mr Case and Charles attempted to put the policeman off by claiming that Charles was staying the night but unfortunately for Mr Case the police waited outside the pub until Charles left at



1.20a.m. Mr Case was fined £1.00 with costs. This didn't put him off running the pub; he stayed until 1916 when Charles Cobb, who was steward at the working men's club, took over. The New Inn landlord was Alfred Harrowing who also ran a butchery business.

The Chequers Inn no longer exists; it was demolished in 1960 after a lightning strike. Before the war William Bird the landlord lived there with his son, also called William, and daughter in-law. William had been a publican for most of his working life, his wife Matilda had died shortly after he took over the Chequers so his son and daughter-in-law were there to help him although William Jnr also worked as a game dealer. When his son joined up in 1916 William gave up the pub; he was in his seventies and without his son's support it's probable that he found it difficult to manage. Sadly William Jnr was killed in 1917.

The Three Horseshoes was the biggest pub in the villages – the 1911 census lists it as having twelve rooms. It was run by Mr and Mrs Braybrooke who took over from elderly Mrs Dunham in 1912. The old lady continued to live in the pub presumably as a paying guest. Roydon also had the Plough Inn which still stands in Low Road, Congham. This was run by Mr Turner; Robert Twaite took over in 1916. The pub now called the Union Jack was formerly The Blacksmiths Arms. At the time of the war it was situated at the station so would be the first pub people saw when alighting from the train. This must have made it popular with both visitors and those returning to the villages.

Pott Row had three pubs listed on the pubs of Norfolk site, two of which are still standing. At the time of the war Pott Row was the most densely populated part of the villages and these pubs would have been crowded and busy. The Tumble Down Dick and The Carpenters Arms are close together but each man had his favourite. The landlord at the Carpenters had a prosecution for "gaming on the premises". It seems that the gambling in question was somethings called "spinning" in which there were various prizes to be won. The cost was 6d which would have been far beyond most working men (if they were prudent) and the authorities took a very dim view of this and fined the landlord £2.16s and 6d - a substantial sum. In 1910 the pub caught fire and was rebuilt by Mr Spragg the builder of the village war memorial. There were similar problems with gambling in The Jolly Farmers. The Lynn Advertiser of 5th February 1909 records that licensee Thomas George Mann was summoned before the magistrates for allowing a guessing competition for prizes – guessing the numbers of seeds in a pumpkin. There were three prizes of four gallons of beer, two bottles of gin and twelve cigars all of which would have been very extravagant prizes for the villagers. Entry conditions or costs are not recorded. Mr Mann was fined 2s 6d with 11s 6d costs despite claiming that he was unaware these actions were wrong. It seems that the Tumbledown Dick has a less colourful past.

The Anvil at Congham was called the Elwes Arms although locals often referred to it as the "Snake and Arrow" a reference to the Elwes family crest. The Rennett family, who like several others, combined inn keeping with butchery, ran the pub for sixty years.

The village pubs did not welcome women or children although dogs were probably accepted. They sold only drink although there may have been pickled onions or eggs on the bar. All of the men who died in the war would have been regulars at one or the other of the pubs or at the Working Men's Club – every establishment would have been missing regulars by 1919.

When Things Went Wrong

Edwardian working class families lived life on a financial knife edge. The material well-being of the family depended upon the bread winner and the woman of the house. The former was under pressure to bring in enough money to at least feed and house the family whilst the latter had the responsibility of making that money stretch to cover the family's needs.

In the years preceding the war the government brought in measures to reform social welfare. Pensions were introduced in 1909 although they were far from universal. In 1911 the National Insurance Act was introduced to provide sick and unemployment benefit but this was restricted to certain industries and to the worker only

The agricultural worker always had an insecure career path. By its very nature agriculture is seasonal and the need for labour fluid; there was not always work and no work meant no pay. It has been estimated that on average, men would be paid for around forty-four weeks out of fifty-two.² In "off weeks" men would usually work hard on their gardens or allotments as these provided as much as 30% of a family's nutrition. However, it was probably at these times that families were more likely to get into debt and it is certain that Messrs Balding, Grey and Blake, the village grocers, each had a book in which credit was written, some of which was unlikely to ever be paid off. In 1913 Rowntree suggested that once debt rose above one pound it would prove to be impossible to clear without some kind of extra income in the household. It is more than possible that some village women owed money in all the village shops which must have added to their burden of anxiety.

Grocery debt was bad enough but even more worrying was medical debt. Even in families where men could claim money under the 1911 act there was no provision for families and it was often women who required medical help. In most cases babies were delivered without medical intervention although the mother would be attended and assisted by friends, relations and/or the local midwife. The 1902 Midwifery Act had ushered in training and supervision for midwives and thus, officially, untrained midwives were to be phased out. This did not happen immediately and in rural areas there was often no trained midwife to call upon. Therefore, in cases where there were serious complications the local doctor – Dr Woodwark – would be called. Rowntree estimates the cost of medical attendance in a confinement as between 9s (80p) and 1gn (£1.05). Should any member of the family require more prolonged medical treatment the cost could escalate to between 3gn (£3.15) and 10gn (£10.50). This bill would have to be paid off weekly or monthly and could make a big difference to the lives of families already living hand to mouth.

The death of a spouse was financially cataclysmic. If it was the wife who died the children would most often be rehomed with relatives as in the case of Frederick Brinkley and his sisters. If one of the girls was old enough to leave school she may take on the role of house keeper for father and siblings. If it was the husband who died the family instantly became dependent upon the kindness and help of others. Firstly from the land owner or farmer in whose cottage they lived, secondly from family and neighbours, who might donate food, clothing and may mind the children. Women, as in the case of Frederick's Spooner's mother, had to take work usually as a charwoman or a laundress.

² David Mitch, "Agriculture as a Career", Institute of Social History. www.llsg.nl/publications

The workhouse remained a location to be viewed with dread. Mr and Mrs Warnes were master and matron; they had worked all their adult lives in the workhouse system. The workhouse population was larger in 1911 than it had been in 1881 although for most people a stay in the workhouse was temporary. The workhouse census shows that people were in the workhouse for predictable reasons - pensioners, unmarried mothers, widows and those unable to work. There were more octogenarians in 1911 than in 1881 and more children. Only the names Smith and Boldero appear on both the workhouse roll of 1911 and the war memorial and it is more than likely, especially in the case of Smith, that these were not direct relatives of the fallen.

Social problems were probably as prevalent as they are today. Marriages may have been brought on by an ill-timed pregnancy although a surprising number of women in the village gave birth to a child or children out of wedlock which were apparently welcomed into the family. Once married divorce was unheard of, the cost would have been prohibitive; marriage truly was "for better or worse". We cannot know what went on behind the cottage doors in the village (although the neighbours undoubtedly did) but some historians have suggested that, for some women, having a husband away in the army represented an improvement in their quality of life giving more money, more food and respite from a difficult or abusive husband.

Some kind of crime – domestic abuse for example – was rarely prosecuted in Edwardian villages although it's likely that the perpetrators were known to many of their neighbours and probably the local policeman. Other crimes such as vandalism, anti-social behaviour and fighting were dealt with by the traditional "clip round the ear", the intervention of the local constabulary with a warning or with a sullen resolution between the parties involved. There was a court house in Grimston which included housing for one inspector (in 1911 there was Sergeant Webb but no superior officer) and one constable. Court sessions were held twice a week and the offenders came from a very large area including West Bilney, Sandringham and the Woottons. Sadly the court records for the war years have been lost but the Lynn News for 1914 reported crimes in Grimston and most were what we would probably call petty theft. Examples are Alfred Loades who stole wheat and barley meal from a Mr Clarke and Charles Skerry who stole barley meal and some fertiliser. Some more serious cases originate in different villages and generally it seems that Grimston, Roydon and Congham had low



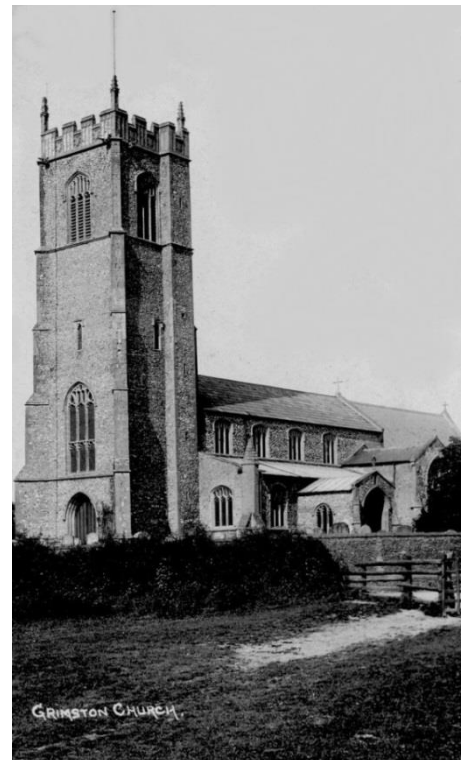
The Court House and Police Station

crimes rates and were safe and settled communities. Almost everyone was "in the same boat" and whatever their differences generally neighbours helped each other out when they could. They would need this community spirit in the dark days of the war when everyone lived in fear of the arrival of the dreaded telegram and every pre-war worry suddenly became insignificant.

Spiritual Matters

Although the church is often perceived as central to village life it is not possible to say what percentage of the population were regular attenders. The only survey of church attendance was carried out in 1851 some sixty years before the war and surprisingly it found that only a third of the population attended an Anglican church with the same number being non-conformists. In the years following the report Anglican churches, including Grimston, had undergone extensive restoration whether this had any effect on attendance in the village is unknown. It is most likely that whilst many villagers were non-receptive to religious doctrine they were attached to the church as a village institution.

There were four churches in the village – St Botolphs at Grimston , St Luke’s chapel at Pott Row, All Saints at Roydon and St Andrews at Congham. There were also two non-conformist chapels – one Wesleyan, one Methodist - at Grimston and Pott Row. The Reverends Alfred Ellaby , Herbert Thursby and Stewart Kirsley had the job of tending to the spiritual well-being of the parishes. Like many Edwardian clergymen they were all the sons of clergymen raised in comfortable upper middle class homes, alumni of Oxford or Cambridge, and whilst not quite upper classes were able to happily socialise and mix with them. Alfred Hall Ellaby lived at the old rectory (on Massingham Road) with his wife, two housemaids and two of his eight children; the older ones having moved out. The living of Grimston was worth £300 a year. The rector of Congham, Stuart Roper Kersey, followed his father into the job. He was granted the living worth £340 a year through his late mother. Rev Kersey lived very quietly in the large rectory with only one housemaid and his elderly governess who lived in his house until she died. The parish of Roydon was in the gift of Captain Howard of Castle Rising and the rector of Roydon, Rev Herbet Thursby, lived at Castle Rising. He also followed his father into the church although not into the parish. Despite this class gap there is some evidence that the rectors strove to understand the everyday lives of their flock and empathise with them.



At the beginning of the war the rector of Grimston played a lead role in Colonel Everard’s recruitment meetings. The Lynn News (December 1914) quotes: “He (Rev Ellaby) spoke of the splendid spirit of those at the front and hoped in the years to come many of them would have the honour of being among those who had served their king and country in the hour of need”. A Roll of Honour was regularly displayed at the church showing the names of the young men in the forces, but it also listed those who wanted to go but were medically unfit to do so. Throughout the war Rev Ellaby corresponded with many of the young men who had heeded the call and his notes on the fallen show that he felt a responsibility for all of his parishioners. No doubt the bond between rector and villagers was strengthened when the rector’s own son Cecil was killed at Gallipoli.

Several of the fallen were well-known to the rector. **George Mayes** was “a regular attender at evensong”; **James Smith** was a “St Lukes boy” whilst **William Stebbings** was a faithful member of the

church choir. During 1917 when the village suffered some of its worst losses there were regular memorial services at St Botolph's and St Luke's for those who had been killed. Rev Ellaby left the parish in 1918 before the end of the war to move to Thornham but returned for the unveiling of the war memorial on which his son's name was written.

Of the two hundred serving men of the parishes some would have been non-conformist and would have worshipped at one of the chapels in Pott Row or Grimston. **Gunner Jonathan Twite** who was killed in 1917 was a Sunday School teacher and honorary secretary of the Sunday School at Pott Row and was by all accounts much mourned by his young students as well as the chapel congregation

Sunday School

Sunday School was an important part of village life. The opportunity to send the children out for an hour or two on the one day of the week when there was no work gave parents a small amount of peace, quiet and private time. This was a blessing for couples living in the very tiny cottages usually filled with large families.

For the children it was worth attending Sunday School – we know it was held at both St Luke's and St Botolph's as well as at the Methodist chapel – in order to access the "treats" and prizes. Treats were funded by the local gentry and included an afternoon tea with games in the winter and an outing, sometimes to Hunstanton, in the summer. Prizes were handed out once or twice a year and these would have been awarded not only for Bible knowledge and work but also for regular attendance. Whatever these prizes were they would have been welcomed by children who rarely if ever, received a gift of any kind. As most children attended Sunday School, the war memorial men would have had a knowledge of the Bible which was far better than most modern people and we know that several of them took a Bible with them to the war.

What follows are pen pictures of every man on Roydon war memorial.

For the sake of brevity and ease of reference we have given each man one page or less but we have more information on some men which we are happy to share.

Please read the stories. They were our men and by remembering them we ensure that their names really do "liveth forever more".

Men of Roydon

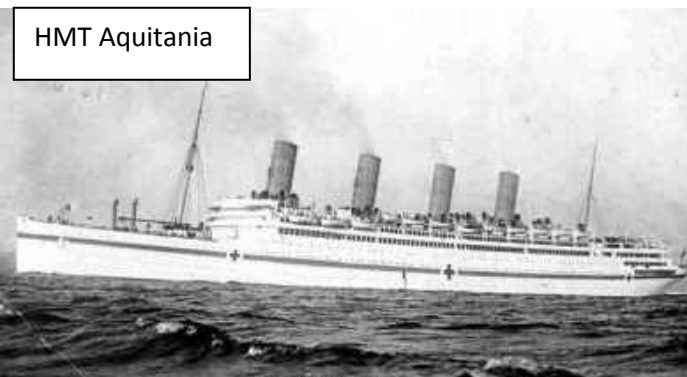
1915

Charles Crowe – died Thursday August 12th 1915

Charles Crowe was the son of Frederick and Susannah Crowe and was born in Roydon in 1893. Frederick was the only son in the family, he had three older sisters and one younger one called Olive who sadly died at the age of 8 in 1908. Frederick was a Grimston man and Susannah came from Ingoldisthorpe but in the years following their marriage they lived for a while in Warwickshire where the two oldest girls were born. The family returned to Roydon in 1889 and lived on Low Road where Frederick worked as a coal man and Susannah took in sewing. By 1901 Frederick had changed to work as a gamekeeper which was his original trade.

Charles did not follow his father into game keeping. In 1911 he was working as a butcher's apprentice probably with either Mr Harrowing or Mr Coe the two village butchers. Charles must have enlisted very early in the war or indeed been in the territorials before August 1914 as the 1/5th Norfolk Battalion of which he was part, was a territorial battalion officially formed in Dereham in August 1914.

The battalion set sail from Liverpool on 29th July 1915 on HMT Aquitania. The Aquitania was a Cunard liner pressed into service for the war; she would later become a hospital ship and serve throughout the war. The voyage to the harbour at Lemnos took just over a week and was, according



to the battalion diary, "uneventful". However, the journey was undertaken in the midst of a Mediterranean summer on a crowded ship and many men suffered from sickness and dysentery. On 6th August – to everyone's relief - the ship arrived in harbour. Lemnos, a Greek island, probably appeared quaint and picturesque and unlike anywhere Charles and his comrades had seen. Archibald

Barwick, an Australian soldier, described the place thus:

*It is very mountainous and steep. It has scarce a tree on the whole island though when we were first there the grass and clover were lovely and there were plenty of wild flowers growing everywhere.....there are little villages scattered all over it.*³

On 9th August the men again set sail boarding a ship called the SS Osmail which arrived at Imbros on the afternoon of 10th. The men did not disembark but waited there overnight and set off on the

³ Archibald Barwick diary, 22 August 1914-c.11 September 1915, pp.96-97]

following morning for Suvla Bay. They went ashore and dug in but immediately found themselves under fire from snipers. On 12th August the battalion attacked a strong Turkish post. The 1/5th Norfolk was on the right of the attack and they suffered very heavy losses, Charles was one of three hundred and fifty men lost on that day.

The battalion remained in the line until finally relieved on 15th. Such had been the chaos of the fighting that Charles was not confirmed as killed until the 28th August. There had been no time to bury the dead, Charles' body was lost and he is commemorated on the Helles Memorial.

1916

Arthur Twaite – died Friday 21st July 1916

Arthur was born in Roydon and lived all his life in the village. His parents, Martha (nee Hammond) and Robert were also born and raised in the village. Robert worked all his life on the land and Arthur was the youngest of a family of boys. He had two older brothers – Robert and Albert – and a younger brother called Victor who died in 1888 aged only one year. All of the boys followed their father onto the land; on both the 1901 and 1911 census they are all listed as agricultural labourers. In 1905, Arthur attested to join the 3rd Norfolk Militia. This was a forerunner of the Territorial Army and required men to do six months training and then decide whether to join the regular army which Arthur did not. He did however remain on the reserve for seven years. This caused some confusion in the military as when he went to join up in September 1914 Arthur insisted he had been “in the army” for seven years.

In 1914 Arthur joined the 8th Battalion Norfolk Regiment. As there is no evidence that either of his brothers fought – they would have been aged 34 and 36 respectively when conscription came in in 1916 –we can assume that Arthur was the only son to go to war. It was not unusual for men to appeal for exemption because they worked on the land and possibly this was the case with Robert and Albert although they may also have been exempt on health grounds.

Despite his previous service in the militia Arthur did not find military discipline easy. By the time he left for France in July 1915 he had already forfeited a total of 23 days’ pay, twice he was punished for disobeying orders and twice for being late back from leave. The battalion arrived in France on 25th July 1915 landing at Boulogne. For the remainder of 1915 the battalion was stationed close to Albert and took part in various small operations in that area but did not experience a huge number of casualties. On 1st July 1916 the battalion commander received the orders for the Battle of the Somme. The orders are a truly amazing set of papers covering everything from the issues of hand grenades to the orders for the battalion cooks and the establishment of listening posts to the route that should be taken by stretcher bearers. Much of this would of course prove to be quite unrealistic in the disorder that ensued.

On 1st July, the first day, the battalion were in action at Montauban Alley near Carnoy. The day started well with tea delivered at 5.30 a.m. and the initial advance moving quickly. By 8 a.m. they paused in Bund Trench having had no casualties. However, when they left the trench there was an attack by machine guns and so many men were killed or injured that the left hand side of the attack had no officers and the right hand only two subalterns. Despite this, with the leadership of their CSM the men pressed on and by 5.45.p.m. they had taken their objectives and made contact with the Berkshire Regiment on their left and the Queens Regiment on their right. However, around 8 p.m. the enemy set up a huge bombardment and by the time the battalion settled for the night they

had lost (killed or missing) another two officers and one hundred and fifteen other ranks. The night was quiet and the battalion spent the next day in the trenches with heavy shelling until they were relieved by the Suffolk Regiment in the afternoon of 3rd. Arthur had survived the first day of the Somme.

For the next two weeks the battalion was at "Grovetown Camp" (on the Albert-Bray road) or "Trigger Valley" in training. This training was necessary as new men and officers had arrived to join the battalion. On the 18th an urgent message arrived for HQ and they left Trigger Valley to bivouac overnight in the Talus Boise salient, just east of Carnoy. In the middle of the night, about 1.30 a.m., the Brigade Major arrived at the campsite and the officers departed for headquarters at Maricourt. At 4.00 am the men were woken and set off towards the south west corner of Delville Wood. Their orders were to take and hold the southern section of the wood. The attack began at 7.15 and, just like the 1st July, initially it went well. By 9.00 however, the battalion had become split and it was not until 12.40 that the wood was secure and other regiments in the brigade were sent forward to the attack whilst the 8th Norfolk held strongpoints around the south and east side of the wood. The battalion again suffered very heavy losses - three officers killed and seventy-eight men killed, thirty-six men missing. It is likely that Arthur was amongst the missing as his date of death is a little unsure but it was probably the 21st July. This means that either he had been wounded during the attack and died at the clearing station or he had been "lost" during the action. Arthur's family were apparently notified of his death on 10th August. Arthur has no known grave but is listed on the Ploegsteert Memorial.

Charles Eggleton - died Saturday July 29th 1916

Charles was born in Middleton. His father also called Charles was a farm worker and the family – Charles and four younger sisters – moved home with each job change. They lived at Fair Green when Charles was a child, then moved to Congham where he began work as a yardman and finally settled in Pott Row. Charles changed his job and worked as a bricklayer's labourer.



Charles volunteered at the very beginning of the war. Before signing on he married Alice Bunnett and they had two children in the subsequent two years. Charles joined the 1st Norfolks. This is surprising as the 1st Battalion, the Battalion in which George Mayes and Lloyd Francklin fought, was essentially a battalion of "regulars".

We can only presume they were short of men and thus received volunteers. Charles arrived in France in April 1915 and had therefore been fighting for a year before his death and it is probable that he had fought around Ypres and in France.

At the end of July 1917 the 1st Norfolk was taking part in attack on the village of Longueval. The attack began on 27th July but did not get off to a good start when the artillery barrage failed to lift at the correct time which delayed the infantry moving forward. Sadly the war diaries record a continuing difficult situation. In the opening minutes three officers were killed or wounded and an entire platoon buried by a huge shell. The left flank of the attack moved too far and lost touch with the centre and communication became almost impossible. However, the 1st Norfolk along with the 1st Bedfordshire were able to capture Longueval and take over one hundred prisoners and they received a letter from the Brigadier ⁴

To the 1st NORFOLK Regiment and the 1st BEDFORDSHIRE Regiment and some of the 16th ROYAL WARWICKSHIRE Regiment, who were able to get into the enemy with the bayonet, he offers his heartiest congratulations. He knows it is what they have been waiting and wishing for for many months.

The Norfolk Regiment had paid a very high price. Four hundred and thirty-one men were injured, killed or missing and thirteen officers were killed or wounded, two suffering from shell shock having been buried for a whole day. Charles had been wounded and taken to the 1st New Zealand Stationery Hospital, the hospital in which Siegfried Sassoon was also treated around the same time. The hospital, a large busy clearing station with three hundred and fifty beds, was close to Amiens. Sadly Charles died of his injuries on 29th July and is buried in St Pierre Cemetery, Amiens.

Mr and Mrs Eggleton received a letter from Charles just before he died saying that he was well. Thus it was a terrible shock to get news of his death almost immediately afterwards. As Charles was Mr and Mrs Eggleton's only son, and father to a young family, his loss evoked deep sympathy in the village and the rector made reference to it on the following Sunday morning.

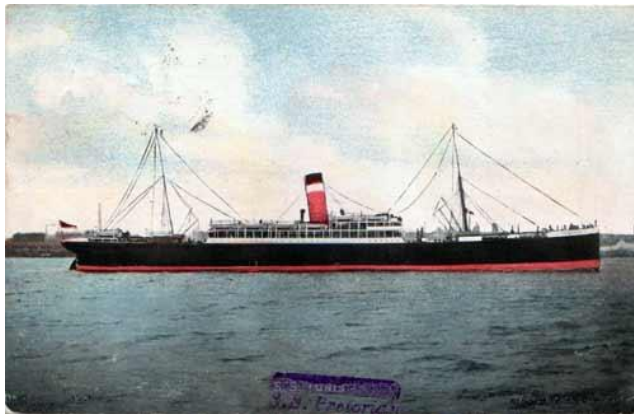
⁴ 1st Norfolk War Diaries, 1916 on Ancestry

1917

Albert George Hanslip – died 30th March 1917

Albert George Hanslip was born in 1892 to Mark and Augusta Hanslip and was one of six children having one older brother and four younger sisters. In 1901 the family lived in Roydon and Mark worked as a teamster on a farm. By 1901 young Albert and his older brother Charlie were also working on the land but in 1913 Albert decided to emigrate to Canada. This was a very bold thing to do especially as it seems from the passenger lists he went alone. Immigration to Canada from Britain peaked in 1913 and many young single men like Albert left to find work on Canadian farms. No passport or papers were required at this time but forms had to be completed if financial support from the government was required. Albert

travelled to Liverpool where he embarked upon the SS Pretorian of the Allen Line sailing for Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Pretorian was a large ship with space for six hundred passengers in steerage, she sailed the route to Canada on a regular basis, in 1913 the Allan Line had a ship leaving England every Thursday. The journey could take less than a week. Although Albert was travelling in steerage the steamships of the Allan Line were thought by the owners to offer considerable comfort and Albert



and his fellow passengers were provided with three cooked meals each day and reasonable sanitary provision. They could make use of a "travelling outfit" which was bedding and eating kit; there was a small charge for this.

It seems that once he arrived in Canada Albert moved west because his attestation papers of 1916 show him living in Alberta which is in the west of the country. He had crossed the country to work as a farmer.

Albert joined the 31st Battalion of the Canadian Infantry. This was a battalion raised exclusively in Alberta, they had already been in action on the Somme when Albert joined in 1916. In 1917 the Canadian Corps drew up plans to take Vimy Ridge which were approved by the British in March. The attack was due to take place on 8th April. The 31st were in the front line trenches at the end of March and were attempting, with the use of Bangalore Torpedos and machine guns, to cut the enemy wire and kill some of the enemy as they repaired those gaps. They succeeded in the first part but unfortunately not the second. They were due to leave the front line on 30th March being relieved in the evening by the 4th Yorkshires. We don't know how Albert came to be killed (or die) during such a quiet time but there were always casualties in the trenches caused by stray shells or snipers.

Albert is buried in Ecoivres Cemetery, there are over seventeen hundred men buried there many of whom are Canadians.

1918

Harry William Walker – died Thursday 22nd August 1918

Harry was born in Stanhoe in 1891, the son of Harry Walker and his wife Ann. Harry Snr was born in Stanhoe and he and Ann lived there in the early years of their marriage moving to Ann's home village of Grimston sometime during the 1890s.. On the 1901 census Harry Snr was working as a teamster on a farm and living at Roydon "on the common". The Walkers' neighbours were the Hanslip family who also had a son – Arthur George – killed in the war. Probably the two little boys played together when young. Harry had an elder brother and sister and by the 1911 both had left home. Fred had joined the police force and was living in a police hostel in Norwich , he planned to marry his fiancé Violet Wilkinson later in the year. Mabel was already married to a shepherd from Stanhoe called Barzillia Duffield and had a small daughter. Harry meanwhile was working as a labourer and living with his parents.

We don't know when Harry joined up or whether he waited to be conscripted into the army. He served in the Lincolnshire Regiment for a short time as well as the 1/5th Norfolk Regiment finally ending up in the 7th Battalion Norfolk Regiment. During the final months of the war there continued to be very fierce fighting as the Allies attempted to drive the Germans back towards Germany and the Germans bravely resisted. The British army was fighting battles on ground where it had fought battles in the earlier years of the war – sometimes more than once.

Bringing in a casualty , Battle of Albert 1918



As there are no war diaries remaining from the 7th battalion we don't know how or where Harry Walker died. However, the cemetery in which he is buried – Meaulte - gives some idea of the circumstances and location of his death. Meaulte, having been held by the British for three years, was evacuated early in 1918 when the Germans swiftly advanced. It was recaptured on the

22nd August, the day of Harry's death. The burials in the military cemetery were brought in from two other cemeteries and Harry was probably initially laid to rest in the cemetery called Sandpit cemetery which was created at an old camp on the Albert to Bray road and contained ninety-three soldiers. These men – including Harry - most probably fell in the fighting as the Eastern Division moved to liberate Albert and push along the road to Bray.

After the war



A community changed

Victory celebrations took place everywhere, there was universal relief that the long conflict was over. There was also however, a feeling of uneasiness created by the certain knowledge that nothing would ever be the same again. Of the two hundred plus men serving with the colours in 1916 over fifty would not be returning to the villages. Some of those who were returning would not be able to resume their old way of life. Sidney Stapleton had had his leg amputated, Charles Phillipso suffered the effects of a head injury; Samuel Barlow had been completely blinded and was in St Dunstan's Home; some men were affected by gas and several men had been discharged from the army as "disabled".

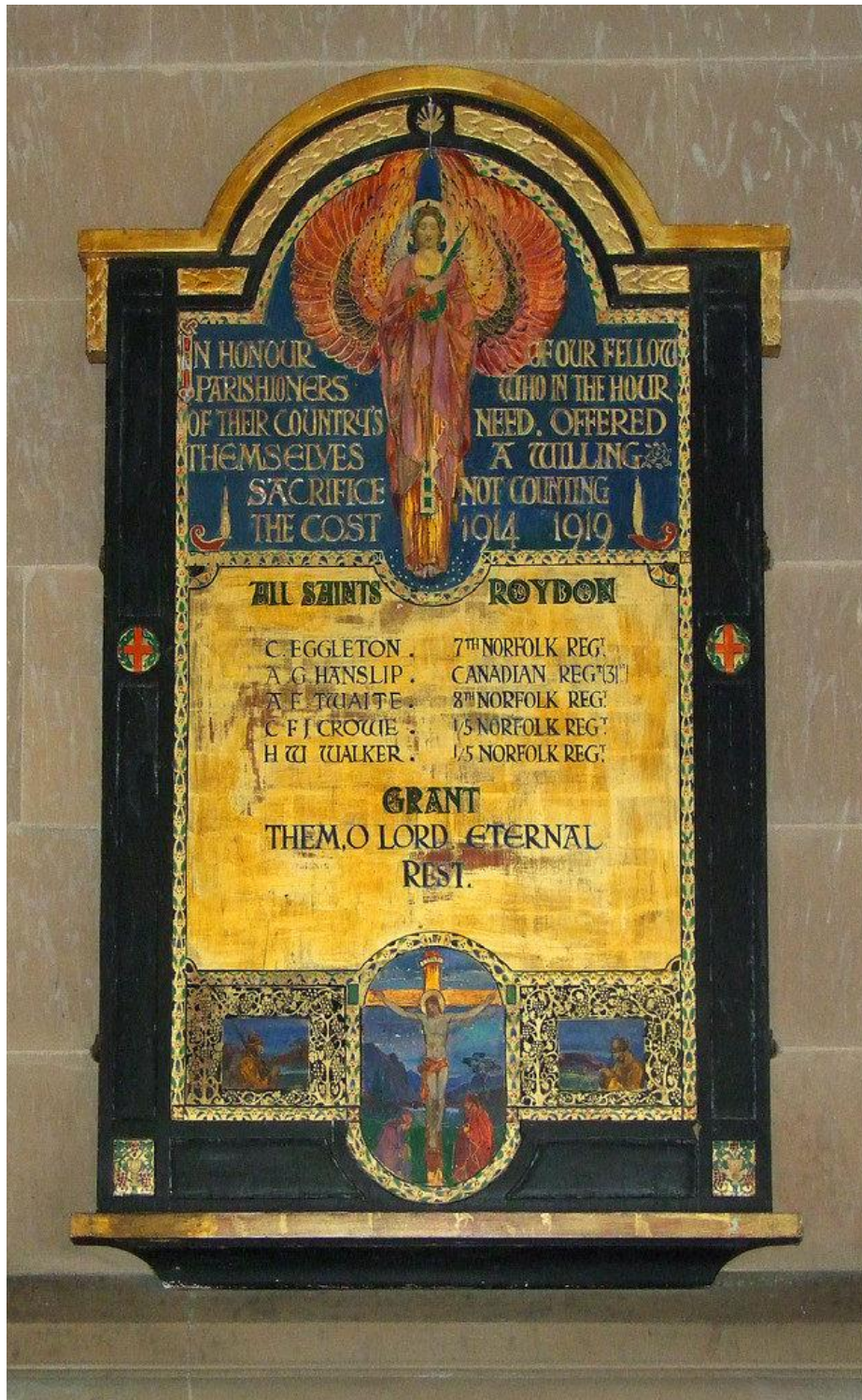
Some families had been almost destroyed by the war. The Padgetts, who in 1914 had four sons working on the land, had William and Arthur killed, Robert discharged with severe rheumatism and James with shellshock. Mr Blake, whose wife died during the war, had lost two out of four of his sons, young Stanley who was buried in the churchyard having died of illness without firing a shot in anger. The Mayes, the Buntings and Mr and Mrs Todd were all parents who lost two boys. Long Row was hit hard; the row of tiny cottages in Pott Row had the highest loss in the villages, five of the boys who grew up there were killed. Some men left young widows. Clara Twite, widow of Jonathan had scarcely had time to be a wife before becoming a widow whilst Alice Bird (widow of William) and Clara Mayes (widow of Ernest) were both left with families to raise alone on an army pension. At least three families – the families of Frederick Brinkley, Charles Eggleton and William Stebbings – lost an only boy mourned by sisters as much as parents. The death toll was seemingly random. There was apparently no reason why some families came through the war intact and relatively unscathed whereas others paid such a terrible price. Although men like Ernest Mayes had taken on a dangerous job (tunnelling) for most men life or death was very much a matter of chance and this made it even harder for bereaved families to come to terms with. It mattered not how kind and sympathetic neighbours were, if they had their sons home safely they were ill placed to comprehend the grief of those bereaved once or even twice. Some of those lost died after the Armistice; November 1918 was a dark month for the village – four men died either just before or just after the ceasefire

It was very difficult for the families to accept that they had no grave to visit. The villagers were accustomed to the loss of a child - it was not entirely unknown to lose a child through illness or accident – but the lost one was always safe in the churchyard and could be visited and cared for. This was not the case in the war. Those who had notification of a grave would never be able to visit (although their descendants would) and then there were those with no known grave. The "no known grave" tag forced families to accept the true horror of the war; it was impossible to protect relatives if they were given this information. The despair of loss was compounded by the certain knowledge that husband or child had lain unburied and by nagging thoughts about his final condition.

On 11th November 1918 the rector called for a service at 4 p.m. in St Botolph's. Although it was arranged at short notice word spread and the service was, according the Lynn News, very well attended. All the parish churches held a service of Thanksgiving on Sunday 17th November. On the last Sunday of the year there was a memorial service for the fallen and a collection was taken as a start to raising a memorial. £3 1s 8d (£3.07) was collected and whilst this may now seem a paltry sum it should be born in mind that most village families struggled to make ends meet on weekly incomes of around 15s (75p).

On June 28th 1919 the peace treaty was signed and the church bells pealed out. The village magazine reported that villagers spontaneously gathered at the church and a "joyful service" followed. There was an official national service on Sunday July 6th and on Saturday 19th the villages held a day of celebration all three parishes joining together. Mr Hammond, the head teacher, was called upon to form a committee to organise the day. The children - over four hundred of them – had sports and games in a field lent by Mr Taylor and the day was presided over by the Elwes family. Mrs Elwes handed out the prizes and her son Godfrey presided over a veteran's dinner in the evening which was attended by over one hundred servicemen. It was a valiant attempt to try and rekindle the spirit of the villages as it had been before the war.

Roydon chose to have a memorial board rather than a war memorial. Roydon was a small village in comparison with its neighbour Grimston and thus had lost fewer men. We don't know if the board was chosen for economic reasons or simply because it was so much more intimate than a stone cross. It was probably made by someone local and it was painted vividly in a 1920s style between Art Nouveau and Art Deco - an angel, a crucifixion and two small twilight images of soldiers flank the names of the five boys who never came back.



Their names liveth
forever more

