

Living through WW1 in three Norfolk Broadland Villages Neatishead, Irstead and Barton Turf



Three Villages, Five Exhibitions, 2nd – 10th August 2014

3 villages, 5 exhibitions, 9 days – after many many hours of work, our exhibitions were enjoyed by all those who visited from all parts of Norfolk and further afield. They were “amazed”, “fascinated”, “enthralled”, “educated”, following their visits to our Community Heritage Group’s five exhibitions in our beautiful churches. Some thought they would get round the churches in a hour and soon realised they would have to return the next day to give each exhibition the time it deserved. Even the rain and the winds didn’t keep people away. There were reunions of old school friends, laughter heard while memories were stirred and shared. Thank you so much to everyone who helped make the first major event of our WW1 project such a success.

Some of the people I spoke to who visited Irstead, but were not from our villages, shared stories of uncles and grandfathers who played their part in WW1 and fought for their country. Some of them returned but some sadly did not – but none should ever be forgotten. As the next part of our research begins, we will be concentrating on our three villages and trying to discover more about those men who fought in the war and returned. Over the last few months we have acquired much information from local people, but we believe our lists are nowhere near complete. Perhaps your memories have been stirred and you just might be able to help us some more.

The following three men, one from each of our villages, fought in WW1 and were fortunate enough to return – some of you may know of them or their relatives, but many may not. **John (known as Jack) Pestell** from Irstead who enlisted on 5th June 1916 was given an Honourable Discharge from the Royal Garrison Artillery as he suffered a gunshot wound on 28th May 1918 and had to have his arm amputated – returned to live in Neatishead and became a familiar sight riding his tricycle, given to him after his discharge.

Then there was **Albert Grimes** from Neatishead who is mentioned in an article from 'The North Walsham & District Parish Magazine - January 1918:- through the initiative of Mrs. Neave, Albert Grimes was presented with a fully equipped wagonette and horse, for the purpose of helping him (a disabled soldier) to obtain a living with the help of his pension. In this scheme Mrs. Neave was ably assisted by Messrs Callow and Lockett, who with untiring energy and resource, bought everything to a successful issue.'

And from Barton Turf there was **William John (Billy) Yaxley** who joined the Royal Naval Reserve Force on 1st March 1916 aged 24 and took the train to Chatham Naval Barracks on 6th March. He served as a naval gunner attached to merchant ships, mainly travelling between Ireland and Bilbao in Spain, but was shipwrecked when on the way to Russia. In the small lifeboat he was the only one who could row in the storm. He was discharged on 7th February 1919 and returned to Barton Turf. There are so many stories, though these are real-life stories from The Great War, and we hope to uncover more over the next year, to complete the Rolls of Honour for our villages

On the final Sunday a very moving service of “Words and Music for Remembrance” was held at St Peter’s Church Neatishead and the “Songs of Praise” at St Michael and All Angels Church, Barton Turf, brought our nine days to a fitting close. Thank you to Pauline and Barbara respectively for organising these.

It just leaves me to invite you to our next Open Meeting in the New Victory Hall on the afternoon of Sunday 9th November from 2.30pm for us to show you what has happened since these exhibitions.

Claire Penstone-Smith, Chair, 01692 630580

Neatishead, Irstead and Barton Turf Community Heritage Group

Secretary: Mrs Carol Horner, Westwood, Horning Road, Neatishead, Norfolk, NR12 8YE

Email neatishead@sky.com; Tel 01692 630342; www.nibchg.org

