

St Helens 100 Years Ago - January to June 1916



St Helens 100 Years Ago This Week is a 700-word article posted every Sunday at 2pm on the Sutton Beauty & Heritage [Facebook Page](#). This document is a compilation of articles – written by Stephen Wainwright – which describes events that took place between January and June 1916.

January 1916

The year began with the annual New Year's Day breakfasts for 3000 poor children at 12 centres in St Helens. This event was organised by Joseph Bithell Leach of the estate agency / auctioneers and first began in 1885. As well as tucking in to a substantial meal, entertainment was provided for the kids, many of whom would not normally receive a breakfast when out of school. After attending the centres, the Mayor Henry Bates of Sutton Hall visited Providence Hospital to present gifts to wounded soldiers. Also on New Year's Day, the league match between Saints and St Helens Recs was played in a gale for 17 minutes but then abandoned.

On the 5th suspicions were raised at a meeting of St Helens Council that the company commissioned to build cooling towers for the borough's electricity plant could have a German connection. Before the war it had had a German name but now bore a "very high-sounding British title", as Councillor Turner put it. This was 18 months before King George V did exactly the same when he changed the name of the Royal Family from Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to Windsor.

Despite a world war being fought, the police still brought fairly trivial prosecutions. On January 10th 1916, Sutton Moss firelight merchant Walter Barrow appeared before St. Helens magistrates for using a cart that didn't have his name on. P.C. Robinson told the bench that the words 'Sutton Moss' were on the cart but Barrow's name had gone. Barrow interjected that there was "More than that gone. We have been nearly washed away down at Sutton Moss. We have been just the same as Robinson Crusoe on an island". The constable who served the summons explained to the court that bad weather had led to three feet of water being in Barrow's house. The firelight man was fined half-a-crown to add to his troubles.

Also on the 10th French artiste Marcel Leblanc was sent to prison for a month for entering St Helens without a passport and proper permission. This was yet another act that was due to appear at the Hippodrome, who didn't understand St Helens's strict war-time regulations, as they didn't apply to many other towns on the music hall circuit. The furious Frenchman - who had an English wife who performed with him - said he would write to the French Consul to complain about his treatment. A week later soldier James Reade was given a 3 months prison sentence for begging in

St Helens. It was revealed in court that he had 35 convictions, mainly for burglary, and had spent 20 years of his life locked up.

On January 22nd Maud Beirne of 1 Edgeworth Street, Sutton was also sent to prison for 3 months with hard labour for receiving stolen goods from her 10-years-old son Gilbert and a boy called Unsworth, who had been on a nicking spree from local shops. The chairman of the magistrates said it was the worst case of receiving that he'd known and the sentence was nothing like Beirne deserved. Four months earlier, Gilbert's 15-year-old sister Mary had been sent to a reformatory for 3 years for receiving stolen money from her friend Eliza Davies. The girls had used the money to visit Manchester where they were arrested after behaving in a 'depraved manner'.

On the 25th at Liverpool assizes, Margaret Roberts was sent to prison for 7 days for bigamy, having first been married to a man called Owens of Sutton Heath Road. Bigamy happened fairly regularly then with divorce being frowned upon. On the 28th police Inspector William Jackson – who had been in charge of the Sutton district for 23 years – retired and received a stirring tribute from the County Coroner Sam Brighthouse. Two years earlier Jackson had had his nose broken by P.C. William Weaver of Mill Lane, after the inspector had found his constable on his beat apparently drunk.

A seaman called Robert Hall was sent to prison for 6 months by St Helens magistrates on the 29th for fraudulently obtaining food and lodgings and stealing a watch. The sailor had turned up at Mrs. Hewitt's house in Woodville Street in St Helens on November 2nd dressed in naval uniform and wearing a war medal. Hall claimed he'd served on HMS Lion, the Royal Navy's flagship battlecruiser and had been wounded. However he decamped with a watch without paying, after telling his landlady that he was going to draw £49 that was due to him. Hall was arrested after leaving prison at Manchester after being convicted of a similar offence. Although actually a seaman, the rest of his story was a fabrication.

On the last day of January, Sgt. Shaw told the St Helens Magistrates that a strange event had occurred on the previous Saturday night. In arresting George Sloane, who had been 'assaulting people right and left' in Liverpool Road, bystanders had given the police a round of applause. "It is a most unusual thing", said the sergeant, with the police more accustomed to being abused and even assaulted after making an arrest on the streets of St Helens.

February 1916

A long list of casualties from the Western front was published in the local papers on the 3rd February, which included two St Helens Pals who'd been wounded. On the 5th there were rumours that German Zeppelin airships were airborne in the vicinity, but these proved false. Two days later the Liverpool Echo reported that the body of an unknown man had been recovered from the St Helens Canal, near a lead works. He'd been in the water for a fortnight and was found wearing a blue serge suit. On the 8th February it was reported that the Mayor Henry Bates of Sutton Hall had held a meeting with the owners and managers of all the St Helens works. The purpose of the get-together was to formulate a plan to reduce light emissions that might assist the feared Zeppelins or 'Zeps', as they were generally known.

Also on the 8th the Mayor – who was also chief magistrate – presided over the annual licensing meeting for St Helens, where the Chief Constable reported that drunkenness was on the wane. Arthur Ellerington stated that 474 persons had been prosecuted in 1915, down from 525 in the previous year. He said there was still too much drinking among women and he said: "stringent measures should be taken to cope with the evil". The mayor also declared that 10.30pm was going to be closing time for cinemas and billiard halls and pubs were also to have shorter hours. That same day Cowley Girls School advertised in the Liverpool Daily Post for a very experienced French teacher, offering an annual salary of £125, rising to £160.

On the 9th the inquests on three St Helens children, who'd each died after being burned or scalded, were held. One of the youngsters was Mary Lane, aged 18 months of 1 Clock Face Road, who'd pulled a can of boiling water off a table onto herself. Also on the 9th soldier John Martin pleaded guilty to stealing a prize-bred fox-terrier from the Clock Face Hotel. He'd simply walked into the hotel yard and helped himself to the puppy. Having a bad military record, Martin was sent to prison for 2 months.

Also on that day, the body of the man found in the canal, was identified by his sister as Arthur Unsworth. He'd worked for Pilkington's all his life but had been out of work for some weeks. An inquest was also held on 17-year-old Ernest Taylor of Rookery Lane in Rainford, who'd thrown himself into the canal at Earlestown, seemingly because his solicitor employer in Cotham Street had ticked him off. Finally on the 9th it was revealed that a collection in St Helens in aid of the Mayoress's fund for comforts for the troops on the front line had raised £250, the equivalent of about £12,000 in today's money. On the following day the Mayor announced that as a precaution against Zeppelin attacks, street lighting was to be switched off in St Helens and householders were to be instructed to 'obscure' all their windows. For their part manufacturers had agreed to screen their furnaces and prevent any light being reflected skyward.

There was a tragic end to Spencer Cliff's visit to his soldier son at the Oakdene Military Hospital in Rainhill on February 12th. Upon returning to St Helens Junction station, the 54-year-old from Keighley dropped dead on the platform. Three days later Joseph Ellwood Anderson, an American seaman, was fined 20 shillings for entering St Helens without permission, a prohibited area for 'aliens' during the war. He'd previously met a Sutton girl in Manchester while on shore leave and decided to visit her in St Helens. Anderson was told to go the Town Hall to register but not having a passport, was locked up by the police. Also that day colliery day wageman Robert Corkill of 150 Sherdley Road and Carl Bligh – described as a French-Irishman – were remanded in custody accused of attempting to set on fire a St Helens munitions factory. It was claimed that Corkill had turned on the taps of oil vats placed over the furnaces at a Ravenhead smelting works. Although Bligh's only crime appears to have been that he had been born in Germany. Both would later be sent to prison for 6 months.

Despite the war, Cruft's dog show went ahead as normal with J. Woosey and J. Stronach of Claughton Street winning first prize in the collies junior dogs and bitches section with their pooch snappily named 'St. Helens Simplicity'. On the 17th Nathaniel Houghton, an engineer from 56 Bickerstaffe Street, was sent to prison for 6 months with hard labour for 'making statements likely to prejudice the recruiting, training, and discipline of his Majesty's forces.' At one point he'd stood at the bar in the Fleece Hotel while recruiting was taking place and said: "Only the scum of the Earth join the English Army. If the Germans landed here and came to St. Helens, I would be the first to meet them at the station, shake hands with them, and show them up the main street". Strange how he thought that German invaders would come by train! This led to a fight and a window being broken. His employer pleaded for leniency saying there were signs Houghton was deteriorating mentally and he'd been drinking too much. Despite this testimony the bench decided to send him to prison as a warning to others.

On the 18th February Lewis Ogle – who was an engineer at a works at St Helens Junction – was fined £2 16s 6d for driving a motor car, supposedly at over 30mph, as he journeyed through Peasley Cross to the Raven Hotel. He told the magistrates that it was quite impossible to travel at that speed on that stretch of road. After they had delivered their verdict, the unimpressed Ogle said: "Well, I will say good-bye to St. Helens." On the 23rd, fourteen-year-old William Cunningham was tragically killed by coal tubs while working at Ashton Green Colliery. On the 25th at midnight the swing bridge at Blackbrook over the St Helens canal underwent repairs, meaning that boats could not pass through for at least a week. The month ended with three young Japanese pedlars

being sentenced to Walton Gaol for a period of three months after selling paper ornaments in St Helens without registering. However the Home Office would be requested to discuss the case with the Japanese Embassy and if they could provide assurances about the prisoners, they might have their sentences commuted.

March 1916

On the first day of March it was reported that 15-year-old Edward Horsley of Parr Stocks Road had been killed at Ashtons Green Colliery. On the same day in the Liverpool Echo, the Coop Cinema in Baldwin Street was advertising for an operator (projectionist) who was ineligible for war service. The pioneering Weisker Brothers had begun screening films at the Coop in 1907. One brother lived at Sutton Grange by Sherdley Park for a while.

On March 2nd Robert Corkhill of Sherdley Road was imprisoned for 6 months and fined £60 for attempting to set fire to a St Helens smelting works. Corkhill denied the offence, saying he'd been living in the USA, Canada and New Zealand for some years and had no idea how he'd got into the works. A furnaceman said he saw smoke coming from the direction of the furnace and Corkhill (who wasn't employed there) was running away. Also on that day the inquest took place on master clogger Robert Crest of Haresfinch Road, whose body had been found in the canal after he'd been missing for three weeks. It was reported that Crest had been depressed as he had one son in France and another in Liverpool Infirmary, although the coroner thought it was probably an accident.

Also on that day it was revealed that there was an unwritten rule at Cowley Girls School banning any females from St Helens from teaching there. In fact it was claimed that nearly all secondary schools in the country practiced discrimination against local teachers. A resolution was passed unanimously at a meeting of St Helens Education Committee not to enforce such a hard and fast rule. Well-known fruit merchant William Norbury was fined 12s. 6d. on March 3rd for using a flash light in George Street. A man's hat had been blown away by the wind and he was helping him find it in the black out but was spotted by the police. Three days later Dr. Harry Guthrie of Lancots Lane was fined £4 for driving his motor car with the headlights on. Both these cases concerned breaches of the newly-introduced black out regulations, designed to prevent German Zeppelin airships from easily picking out targets.

I wonder if the case at St Helens County Court on March 8th 1916 was the first time in the town that a dodgy car was the subject of a summons? William Grimble of Market Street in St Helens claimed £40 for breach of warranty from J. Saggerson, a cyclemaker whose business was in Prescott High Street. At the hearing Grimble told the judge that the car steering was in a bad way and its second gear didn't function. He also said that the car would do nothing like 25 miles an hour, as had been guaranteed by the defendant. Joseph Corrigan of the Automobile Company of St Helens gave evidence that the car was not roadworthy. However in a curious judgement, the judge ruled in favour of Saggerson, essentially saying that it was Grimble's fault for buying the car without driving it first and seeking expert advice.

Speed was also the issue on March 10th when Henry Sumner was fined 20 shillings for driving a motor waggon at nearly ten miles an hour along Prescott Road, which was almost twice the speed limit! His motor vehicle was only licensed to travel at 5 mph. Also that day Suttoners were shocked to learn that Dr. Bird had died from pneumonia at the young age of 33. He'd cared for Sutton folk as assistant to Dr. Tom O'Keefe of New Street for less than three years but in that short time he and his wife had become very popular. It's also not a great advert for the medical profession when doctors die young and it reminds people of their own mortality.

Also on the 10th there was more evidence of people struggling to get used to the new lighting regulations. Thirteen St.Helens shopkeepers and residents were fined between 5 and 10 shillings

each for showing too much light. In a number of cases, shopkeepers had simply left their front door open. Also on that day sympathy was extended to the mother of 6-year-old Thomas Worthington, who had died at home after his clothing was accidentally set alight. She'd left him alone with three other children in order to go out washing. No criticism was made of Mrs. Worthington at her son's inquest. Instead the Coroner said he would give money to the police to buy her a better fireguard and also grant her £1 from his poor box.

Although domestic service in the past is often portrayed on TV and in films as having taken place in large houses (eg. Downton Abbey & Upstairs Downstairs), far more females found work in better off small homes or in busy places like pubs or farms. Often they would live away from home, like Elizabeth Ratcliffe from Bold, who became a maid in a farmhouse at Glan Conwy, near Colwyn Bay. On March 11th the inquest on her dead child took place, the infant having been discovered by the police stuffed inside a bed in a spare room. The 20-year-old claimed the child had been born 'stone dead' and the father was a soldier, who'd been killed in the Dardanelles. Two doctors who conducted a post-mortem said they believed the child had died through 'inattention at birth'. Elizabeth didn't attend the inquest, having been committed to Conway Institution. This would have been under the cruel Mental Deficiency Act of 1913, which put so-called 'feeble-minded' and 'moral defective' females into institutions, sometimes for the rest of their lives. Many vulnerable girls had simply had an illegitimate child and a number ended up in Rainhill Asylum.

In an article published on March 14th the Liverpool Daily Post wrote: 'The neighbouring town of St. Helens has an excellent name in the matter of recruiting. Large numbers of the men have joined voluntarily for any branch of the services where they are wanted'. Another piece on the page commented how: 'A smartly-dressed young conscientious objector said he would not mind serving in the Navy, only he objected to their awful trousers.' Also on the 14th, Mary Winstanley, who kept a farm in Warrington Road in Bold, appeared in court charged with keeping cattle and pigs in insanitary conditions. Her defence solicitor claimed that she was in her 80s, although my checking of records suggests she was actually in her early 70s. She might have exaggerated her age to get sympathy, although it was not uncommon for people to not know exactly how old they were. Police Inspector Fraser had for 15 years patiently tried to get her to improve the state of her farm, which he described as a public nuisance. The farmhouse kitchen and bedrooms were dirty and the smell from the pigsties and cattle shippens caused many complaints from passers by.

Five separate accidents at five different St Helens collieries took place on the 15th, causing five men to be taken to St Helens Hospital, with a range of injuries including a dislocated hip, broken arm, head and internal injuries etc. On the 16th it was announced that Verdun Street was to be the name of a new road in St Helens, although it no longer appears to exist. A St Helens War Tribunal on the 17th heard an appeal from Albert Helsby. He asked for exemption from being called up on the ground that he was the last of seven sons able to support his invalid father. Five brothers were serving in France and another was in training in England. Albert's mother produced a letter from the War Office congratulating the family on having sent so many soldiers. The Chairman of the Tribunal, Alderman John Forster (who served as town mayor in 1900) added his congratulations and gave the seventh son exemption.

On the 18th Karl Johansen, aged forty-five, of 28 Fleet Lane, was killed at the Sutton Heath Colliery through a roof fall and 14-year-old Norman Jones from Gartons Lane broke his leg at Sutton Manor Colliery. At a meeting on the 19th, St Helens MP Rigby Swift called for men in reserved occupations to be brought into the army. James Seddon, the former MP for Newton (and failed council candidate for West Sutton ward), added that it "was amusing to see how eagerly unskilled workers had posed as skilled engineers, &c., in order to do their bit, if it would save their skins".

A curious event occurred at the Clock Face Hotel on March 20th at the inquest on Thomas Kelly, who'd died at Bold Colliery. The jury were signing their names to their verdict of accidental death,

when a man called William Jelley hurried into the room. He told the coroner that the dead man was not Kelly but his brother Albert Jelley (23) who'd been living at 18 Powell Street. So the coroner simply altered the name on the death certificate.

On the 22nd March an unnamed railway shunter from St Helens unsuccessfully appealed against the local tribunal's refusal to grant him exemption from service saying: "I cannot inflict death on my fellows, because I hold that war is inconsistent with the teachings of Christ". However he'd never thought of conscientious objection until he'd read about it. On the following day three cloggers appeared at the St Helens Tribunal to argue that their trade was a reserved occupation – meaning they wouldn't have to go to war. Many people tried to get out of conscription by saying they were conscientious objectors or in reserved occupations but few were successful.

A peculiar prosecution took place on the 24th when two actors, who were performing at the Theatre Royal, appeared in court charged with treating each other to alcoholic drinks! In order to reduce alcohol consumption, the government had in October 1915 introduced a No Treating Order, as part of the Defence of the Realm Act. On the 16th Constable Perkins had been sitting in the Swan Hotel in Corporation Street when he saw Charles Longden and John Aitken buying a drink for one another. As a result of the prosecution the actors were both fined £2.

On the 26th Baxters Chemical Works in Sutton caught fire but the blaze was brought under control after two hours. The firemen had to wear respirators because of the sulphur fumes, which was a little unusual in those days. On the following day a soldier called Owen Mooney from Stanley Street was sent to prison for 6 months. Not only was he an absentee from the 3rd South Lancashire Regiment but after being arrested for breaking windows in his father's house, he'd attacked three police officers. Mooney had been arrested on three previous occasions for being an absentee from the army.

On the last day of the month teacher Ernest Everitt of Dentons Green Lane appeared in court as an absentee under the Military Service Act. The 31-year-old had become notorious for the controversial statements that he'd made while appearing before military tribunals in St Helens and Liverpool. Everitt had angered many by saying that he wouldn't raise a finger to stop a German from 'ravishing' his sister and would only teach or encourage people to honour the King as a man and not as the King. He was fined £2 and handed over to the military authorities.

Also on the 31st, John May and Fred Chabot, who were members of a company performing at the Hippodrome, were fined 20 shillings each for treating each to drinks at the Black Bull. Husband and wife Edmund and Margaret Laird faced the same charges but were let off with a warning after the clerk of the court raised a legal point. He said husband and wife were in law a single person but apparently the new regulation made them two. With a bit of uncertainty as to whether a man buying a drink for his wife was legally buying one for himself and so not breaking the law, the couple were simply told to be more careful in future!

April 1916

On April 1st newspapers commented on popular April fool's tricks of the time, which included sending a boy to the chemist's for a pennyworth of pigeon's milk! One Scottish paper said that the most common joke was to send a lad a mile or so to hand a letter to someone. But when opening the letter the recipient read the line: 'Never laugh and never smile, but send the gowk (fool) another mile'.

On the 3rd seventeen more St Helens people were fined for not completely observing the blackout, which had been introduced to foil German Zeppelin airship raids. Most were shopkeepers, including the manager of a butcher's and a Church Street confectioner. Apart from at Bold in 1918,

St Helens never suffered any Zeppelin raids, but there was a tremendous fear of them. On the same day Vincent Rimmer, a glasscutter of Windleshaw Road, appeared in court charged with being a military absentee, having ignored the notice sent to him in March ordering him to join up. Rimmer was handed over to the military authorities. Single men who had wanted to claim exemption from conscription through being in a reserved occupation were supposed to have applied by March 2nd. The police were now rounding up those men aged between 18 and 41 who had failed to report to the army.

On April 4th the inquest on miner Samuel Brown took place. The 59-year-old had been killed down Sutton Heath Colliery by a collapse of the pit roof. Such accidents, often through insufficient roof supports, caused many of the deaths underground. A St Helens Council meeting was held on the 5th in which the Mayor Henry Bates of Sutton Hall said there was a smallpox outbreak in the district and warned residents to take precautions. Smallpox caused up to half a billion deaths worldwide during the 20th century before it was eradicated in 1979.

On the 6th April 35-year-old Peter Anders of Albion Street was fined £20 and handed over to the army, for not reporting for military service. The average weekly wage then was less than £2, so £20 was a hefty sum. Some tried drastic measures to get out of being sent to France. Edward Flood reported to the army at the Volunteer Hall in St Helens on the 6th and promptly cut his throat. Two weeks later he appeared in court charged with attempted suicide, which until 1961 was against the law. Superintendent Dunn told the Bench that the conscripted man had not fully recovered, but Flood was still discharged from the court into the custody of the military.

The St Helens Tribunal met again on the 7th to consider more applications for exemption from conscription, which could come from individuals or their employers. The St Helens Co-op asked for 27 exemptions, mainly for shop managers. All apart from two were granted, with 125 Co-op staff already serving in the forces. An unnamed St Helens farmer was granted exemption for a farm hand until the hay harvest ended in May. Although he now employed 7 women to replace his many male hands who were fighting in France, he said women were not strong enough to stack the hay!

Michael King got into a fight with a man named Kennedy on the 9th at the Prince of Wales Hotel in Junction Lane. Patrick Goodison went between the pair to separate them but later discovered that his watch, chain and medal were missing. Police Sergeant Harvey went to King's lodgings at 8 Alice Street in Sutton and found the items inside King's pockets. On the following day the colliery daywageman appeared in court saying he'd no idea how King's possessions had managed to find their way into his jacket. The magistrates were unimpressed by his defence and fined him £1.

On the 10th William Crosby, described as a well-known St Helens butcher, returned home on a week's leave from the front. Within hours the soldier had got himself drunk and after being refused beer in the Griffin Inn in College Street, smashed a glass panel in the door on his way out. He was fined 11 shillings in court two days later. That same day the controversial conscientious objector Ernest Everitt was sent to prison for two years with hard labour at a military court martial. The Cowley teacher had created a storm in St Helens by declaring that he wouldn't stop a German from 'ravishing' his sister and would only teach children to honour the King as a man and not as a monarch. Everitt had previously said that he wouldn't serve in the army in any capacity – not even as a non-combatant, such as a stretcher bearer – and he clearly meant it.

The week began with Henry Bates, the Sherdley Estate manager, receiving a letter at his Sutton Hall office from the wife of Colonel Michael Hughes, who owned Sherdley Hall. Writing from Thornham Hall near Eye in Suffolk, Edith Hughes said the dreaded German Zeppelin airships – which she dubbed "devils from hell" – had flown over their rented estate: "We've had a most unpleasant 10 days of Zepps and guns and God knows what....one went right over the back of the house. I'm really

not frightened of them but am so tired that I promptly had a heart-attack, which was useful just at that moment, and I am much ashamed of myself.”

There might be a war on but the St Helens Canine Association still had a record number of entries for their dog show on the 13th April, which was held at the Fleece Hotel. This was not the same Fleece that many can still remember, as the old Church Street hotel was demolished in 1931. The best in show was awarded to P. Cook’s bulldog called Haydock Dragoon.

Two days later 13-year-old Tom Roberts from Pocket Nook was sentenced to 6 strokes of the birch rod for breaking into Middlehurst’s shop in Higher Parr Street and stealing cigarettes and chocolates. He passed some of his ill-gotten gains onto his 14-year-old pals John Helsby and Patrick Cain, who were each fined £1 for receiving. Roberts was said to have broken into shops on numerous occasions and his mother was criticised for keeping him at home scrubbing floors and doing housework. This horrified the magistrates who ordered Mrs Roberts to immediately find her wayward son work. It was revealed in court that John Helsby’s mother had had 19 children, 12 of whom were alive.

On the 16th the Ormskirk Street Congregational Church commemorated the tercentenary of Shakespeare’s death with a special service. On the following day coalman Ernie Crouch of Leach Lane in Sutton advertised his ‘good sound business’ for sale in the Liverpool Daily Post, as he was joining the army. In the next column was an advert for a screening at the Olympia in Liverpool of D. W. Griffith’s highly racist film Birth of a Nation, which they described as the ‘8th wonder of the world’.

On April 17th three St Helens café owners, with premises in Church Street, Baldwin Street, Corporation Street and Higher Parr Street, were prosecuted for breaking gaming laws. They each had ‘clown machines’ installed in which customers inserted a halfpenny (or penny in some cases) into a slot at the top, which released a miniature football. The ball dropped down the other side of the machine, where stood the figure of a clown with a cap in his hand, controlled by a handle. The aim of the game was for the player to catch the ball in the clown’s cap by moving the handle, for which he or she would win twopence. The makers of the simple amusement argued that it was a game of skill but the magistrates at a further hearing fined them £20 - £25 each. These were big fines when £2 a week was a decent wage.

On April 19th St Helens Council’s Parks Committee discussed whether female gardening students, who were working for free in Victoria Park, should be paid. These days their two month stints would be called a work placement but the Chairman of the committee, Alderman Peet, didn’t think they should be employed at all, saying: “We don’t want them, and would rather do without them... a man had to be with the students all the time, and that meant that he was wasting his time.”

On April 20th Henry France died from injuries received at Lea Green Colliery. The 61-year-old had suffered a brain seizure and was then run over by coal boxes. Henry had been a survivor of an explosion at the colliery in 1893, which badly burned him and six other mineworkers and killed Evan Jones of Junction Lane. On the same day John Noble, an American from Boston, appeared in court after making threats to blow up St Helens. He was charged with entering a prohibited area and making ‘false statements likely to cause disaffection’. On the previous day Noble – who said that he had come over as a stowaway – was in the Finger Post Hotel asking about the local munitions works. He then went into Heaton’s chip shop and alarmed people by saying he was a Hun who was going up in an aeroplane that night to blow up St Helens! At another hearing on the 28th, Noble said he was drunk at the time, but that didn’t impress the magistrates who sentenced him to six months hard labour.

Also on the 20th Thomas Middlehurst of Higher Parr Street was fined 20 shillings for keeping his son off school, so he could sell sweets at a picture palace. Two days later Sutton's own Ernie Proudlove fought against a boxer called Young Tomkins in the Prince's Theatre in Preston, with Tomkins from Horwich retiring in the 7th round. Ernie lived in Herbert Street and later in the year would become Lancashire bantamweight champion.

On the 24th April two boys were given six strokes of the birch rod for a series of 'creeping' thefts from shops, while the owners were in their back rooms. Twelve-year-old John Creese had crept into a shop in Duke Street and stolen 15 shillings from the till, before creeping out on his hands and knees. He shared his ill-gotten gains with his 13-year-old mate Richard Hale of Albion Street, who was keeping 'nix', the colloquial term for look out. They also stole six gross of picture postcards from Jane Adamson's shop in Church Street, chocolates from Walter Fairclough's premises in Westfield Street and 22 shillings from butcher Anthony Ground of Cambridge Road.

Sergeant Anders, who had put the pair under surveillance, finally collared the lads one Sunday afternoon in Baldwin Street, after spotting them trying a number of shop doors and attempting to remove post from letter boxes. Creese then began to creep into an open toffee shop before Anders pounced and the creeping crime wave was brought to a close. The birch was seen as a short, sharp, shock and the police administered the punishments at their police station or at the court itself. Girls used to be birched or whipped but that stopped in the 1820s.

On the 25th April Thomas Glynn, an 8-year-old boy from Campbell Street, was given the birch after stealing a purse from the paybox of the Oxford Picturedrome. The Duke Street cinema had been opened four years earlier and would later be known as the Plaza and Cindy's nightclub. The boy told the magistrates that he and another lad had been keeping watch on the paybox and had crept in when the attendant was absent.

Chief Constable Ellerington told the court that there was a problem in St Helens with boys roaming the streets and creeping quietly into shops in order to steal, sometimes on their hands and knees. The lads waited until the shopkeeper was in a back room and if they were seen, would make up some excuse. Often they would claim that they were seeking an empty box in order to send parcels to soldiers. The rise in juvenile delinquency was blamed on many boys being in large families, with their fathers fighting in France and mothers unable to control them.

The 43rd annual meeting of St Helens Hospital took place on the 27th, in which it was announced that the number of patients admitted during the year had been 1,314, with many of them wounded soldiers. It was also stated that large extensions were being planned for the hospital, including its first maternity ward. Although infant mortality was declining, maternal mortality of new mothers was on the rise and health campaigners argued that hospital births would be safer. However it took until 1926 before the new maternity ward was opened and even then some were sceptical. The Mayor Sir David Gamble said at the time that he believed the "experiment" of a maternity ward would be a success. But if not, the hospital would have a room available for general use.

On the 28th April four bookmakers from Manchester and Liverpool were each fined between £10 and £20 for taking bets at an event on the Sutton Commercial football ground at St Helens Junction. Thomas Hanson had stood on a raised platform of bricks and wood while announcing the odds, with his mate Albert Cunningham standing by his side taking bets. In court Hanson denied the offence, saying he suffered from rheumatism and had stood on the platform on the wet ground to keep his feet dry! Illegal bookies regularly stood on a platform at sports events in order to make them conspicuous to pundits, although that also made them more visible to the police.

On the 29th it was announced that Sutton doctor Fred Tough, who'd gone to France with the Royal Army Medical Corps, had been promoted in recognition of his 'devoted services at the front'. He

received the Order of St John of Jerusalem and would later be promoted to Major. Dr. Fred attended to Sutton folk from about 1907 to 1921.

The 29th was also the last day of the Northern Rugby Football Union season, which in 1922 became the Rugby Football League. Saints beat Swinton 5-3 and St Helens Recs lost to Leigh 0-8, with Dewsbury becoming league champions.

May 1916

On the 1st of May Frederick Milsop of Park Road in St Helens appeared in court after threatening his wife with a razor while drunk. "It was all a cod", he told the magistrates, "I did it to frighten the missus"! Two days later John Corbett from Hard Lane was sued in St Helens County Court for not paying a builder £8 2 shillings for work done to the roof of his house. Corbett told Judge Thomas that he'd assumed the contractor was doing it for free as "an advertisement" for his business, adding that he thought the workman was being a "jolly good sport" about it. That was before he got the bill! In fact he was very lucky to have got the work done in the first place as builders and other workmen were hard to find during the war and they certainly didn't need to advertise. A building firm that might normally employ 20 workmen, would only have had two or three who hadn't gone to France.

That evening Trooper Thomas Eliot of the South Notts Hussars was found wandering around Peasley Cross. He'd been invalided out of Egypt but couldn't remember how he'd got to St Helens and which hospital he'd been in. Not only did St Helens Hospital and Providence Hospital take many injured soldiers from all over the country but there were also three convalescent homes in Rainhill (Oakdene, Oaklands & The Tower) and in other nearby places. On the following day Wigan railway clerk Herbert Cowley was discovered at Blackbrook lying on a colliery branch line with his head cut off. The theory was that the 23-year-old had hitched a ride on top of a coal train while travelling to friends at Clock Face but had fallen off and then been run over by the wheels of the coal wagons.

On the 5th of the month William and Mary-Ann Bishop of Frazer Street, near Jackson Street in St Helens, appeared in court charged with cruelly neglecting their children. Their house was reported as being in a very bad state of filth and neglect, and although they had a decent income, spent it all on drink. As was often the case the woman was treated more harshly, with Mary-Ann being sent to prison for 3 months but her husband was only fined £5. The glass tube gatherer was even given 5 months to pay his fine, which was unusual. On the following day Sutton's boxer Ernie Proudlove from Herbert Street defeated Billy Winkley at Preston in the sixth round of a ten round bout.

On May 7th the death of 63-year-old Robert Hall Durie of 5 Cotham Street occurred. He'd been a dentist in St Helens for almost 40 years, one of few such professionals that the town had at that time. Lowly paid folk couldn't afford dentist's prices and many would instead employ the services of a 'lightning tooth extractor', such as William Mitchison, who worked in St Helens Market. In 1906 eight-year-old Joseph Johnson lost his life after Mitchison pulled out two of his teeth but left in their stumps and blood poisoning set in.

For many people dental care didn't exist and the only treatment was extraction. Some could get their local doctor to pull their aching teeth, such as Dr. Edward Casey of 1 Junction Lane, who practised in Sutton from c.1882 to 1909. Writing in the St Helens Star in 1983, 94-year-old Catherine Williams said the Irishman would charge sixpence for each painful extraction, although if a child didn't cry or shout, the tanner would be returned. Catherine added that Dr. Casey had been a character of "unusual rarity" and a "Godsend to the many starved children of those days". Incidentally dentist Robert Durie was related through his wife Eliza to the Griffin family, who for decades kept a furnishers and a photographer's studio on the corner of Westfield Street and

Ormskirk Street. Griffins Victorian portraits of St Helens citizens are regularly auctioned on eBay. Eliza's brother Alfred Griffin had in 1911 opened the first purpose-built cinema in the town, which initially was known as the Electric Theatre before changing its name to the Scala.

The name of controversial conscientious objector Ernest Everitt from Dentons Green Lane cropped up once again on the 10th. Just to recap, the Cowley teacher had infuriated many in St Helens by declaring that he wouldn't stop a German from 'ravishing' his sister and would only teach children to honour King George V as a man and not as a monarch. After refusing to serve in the army in any capacity, Everitt had on April 10th been sent to prison for two years with hard labour.

A London-based group called the No Conscription Fellowship now took up the schoolteacher's cause and published a leaflet attacking his sentence. They made Everitt out to be a martyr, who was 'fighting the old fight for liberty'. Andrew White and Allan Macdonald Laing were members of the group's Liverpool branch and on May 10th they were both sent to prison for a month for distributing the pamphlets. Freedom of speech was severely curtailed during the war under the wide-ranging Defence of the Realm Act, which permitted prosecutions against anyone whose actions might in any way 'jeopardise the success of the operations of His Majesty's forces'.

On the 11th St Helens's Chief Constable Arthur Ellerington was elected vice-president of the Chief Constables Association of England and Wales. In 1928 Ellerington made the national news for several weeks after a dispute with the Council's Watch Committee, which led to a 17-day board of inquiry. On May 12th Stephen Wood of 170 Elephant Lane was prosecuted for not closing his shop on a Thursday afternoon. Religious leaders in St Helens had fought for many years during the second half of the 19th century for the introduction of early closing on Thursdays, concerned about shop staff working very long hours. Saturday then being payday was the worst day of the week, with many assistants employed from 8 – 9am until midnight. By 1916 not that much had changed, apart from children being protected from working late hours, and the introduction of a Thursday half-day holiday. Retailers who chose not to observe it could be fined, as happened to Mr. Wood.

Also on that day at Liverpool Assizes, a private company called the National Film Agency (NFA) brought an action against St Helens Corporation, after their Cinematograph Committee had banned the film 'Five Nights' from being shown at the Hippodrome. This was because the romantic melodrama had a little bit of nudity, although it had been granted a British Board of Film Censors certificate. The Hippodrome had entered into a contract with the NFA in which the music hall agreed to pay £40 to screen Five Nights over five days. Upon being banned by the council from showing the film, the theatre in Corporation Street refused to pay the company the rent money, hence the court case, although the NFA chose to sue the council. After hearing the evidence, the judge decided to reserve judgement in the case. Although a music hall theatre, the Hippodrome had in 1903 become the first place in St Helens to have regular film screenings, which were shown in between performances by the on-stage acts.

Also on the 11th two plumbers were granted exemption from conscription at the St Helens Military Tribunal after the hearing was told that there were hardly any plumbers left in the town and sanitary work was being neglected. Two days later almost £300 was raised in St Helens in a collection towards the town's YMCA hut appeal. This was a national YMCA scheme to provide soldiers with places to rest and enjoy recreation, either at the front or in military camps and railway stations in Britain. The St Helens branch of the YMCA claimed to be the first in the country to pay for a hut in France, although the Germans later destroyed it. A further appeal in St Helens in 1918 to replace the large structure, which included a dormitory and recreation facilities, raised the huge sum of £10,000.

On the 15th May portrait painter Frank C. King, who had been commissioned to paint two portraits of the Beecham family, sued Sir Joseph Beecham for £72 10s. He claimed this was the outstanding

amount, which was disputed by Beecham. At the suggestion of the judge the two parties consulted and agreed on a settlement.

On the 18th of the month George Thompson was sent to an industrial school for 5 years by St Helens magistrates. The 11-year-old had run away from his Liverpool home on ten occasions and kept being found wandering the streets of St Helens, sometimes in the middle of the night. Industrial schools were created to deal with juvenile delinquency and to teach youngsters a trade and were for those yet to commit a serious crime. For those children that had, they were despatched to reformatories, which later became known as approved schools. Also on that day three lads from Lyon Street, near Prescot Road, were given six strokes of the birch for stealing coal from the waggons of a firm called Midland Pottery to start a fire on waste ground.

“For the sake of yourself and the children, you must go to gaol for four months”, said the chairman of the magistrates to Nellie Davies on the 19th. It’s unlikely that Nellie from 65 Water Street agreed with that statement but she had been warned nine times over the past year about keeping her children in a ‘wretched state’. Nellie was separated from her husband and was sharing a single bedroom with her four kids, which Dr. John Donnellan (of Westfield Street) told the court was in an “indescribably bad” condition. Her husband had gone to live in Warrington but he did send her 20 shillings a week, so Nellie did have something (although not a lot) to live on.

With the Easter Rising in Dublin having ended just three weeks earlier, the scale of Irish involvement in the Great War was revealed at an event in Burnley on the 21st. It was stated that 6000 Irishmen from St Helens had gone to fight in France, with over 30,000 from Liverpool. The Irish contribution to WW1 on behalf of the British became an embarrassment to the Irish Free State when it was formed in 1922 and veterans were not well treated.

Earlier that day at 2am British Summertime had been introduced for the first time, following a campaign led by builder William Willett, the great-great-grandfather of Chris Martin of Coldplay. Early one summer morning about 1905 after riding his horse near his Kent home, Willett noticed that many house blinds were still drawn. He considered that daylight was being wasted and so had the idea of daylight saving time. Nothing was done for some years but the outbreak of war made the issue more important because of the need to save coal and boost production.

The Summer Time Act had only been passed on May 17th, so there had to be a rapid education of the public with simple instructions of what to do. The Liverpool Echo ran a lengthy article on the 20th under the headline ‘The Great Advance’, which said: ‘Pa and Ma, and the grown up sons and daughters, should come to an agreement to have an official “putter on” or the clock - and time - may be scandalously ill-treated.’ The Daily Express commented on the challenge of getting young children into bed when the sun was shining, as the kids would suspect an ‘elaborate plot’ to get them to bed early. Of course if Willett had been riding his horse early in the morning in Sutton, he’d have found that the coal miners, railway and industry workers were all up and at work and not lazing in their pits as in Kent!

The week began with a remarkable rescue after Alfred Glover from Charles Street slipped down a steep bank into deep stagnant water. The 4-year-old had been playing with his pal John Ashcroft on Hardshaw Street when the accident happened. John was horrified at what he’d seen and ran home screaming. This attracted the attention of Harry Houghton, who was eating his tea at his parent’s house. Harry was a corporal in the 1st Field Company of the West Lancashire Engineers, who was home on leave from France and he immediately dashed off to the pit.

The soldier dived in and found the little lad lying unconscious in six feet of water among thick mud and he brought him to the bank. Alfred was revived with the help of Margaret Dale of Bramwell Street and despite the minutes spent underwater, was seemingly none the worse for his experience.

On June 19th the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society presented the father of Harry Houghton with a silver medal to pass onto his hero son, who was now back with his unit. Margaret Dale was also handed a certificate of thanks for her part in saving the little boy's life.

Empire Day was celebrated in St Helens on May 24th, with the Mayor Henry Bates of Sutton Hall visiting a number of schools in Sutton. He also went to the Queen's Recreation Ground, where schoolchildren from Rivington Road School performed patriotic songs. Empire Day was celebrated in Britain and her colonies annually between 1904 and 1958, with bonfires often lit and fireworks set off.

On the following day 10-year-old William Wilcock appeared in court charged with stealing a postal packet from the letterbox outside Nutgrove Post Office. The crafty lad from Leicester Street in Thatto Heath had discovered that at certain times of the day the letterbox would become full, allowing him to easily extract a letter. It was decided to prosecute William because the boy had previously been in trouble for stealing coal and he'd also committed thefts at school. His father John was serving in France and his mother Mary had seven children to look after. The magistrates decided that 6 strokes of the birch rod would put him to rights and they also put the boy on probation.

An extraordinary case went before St Helens magistrates on the 26th when Robert Critchley of Victoria Road in Rainhill was charged with persistent cruelty to his wife. In fact as was pointed out in court, he was very lucky not to have been charged with murder. The bricklayer had left for work at 5am one morning after turning on the gas in the couple's bedroom and deliberately closing the window and door. Two hours later his wife woke up with a suffocating feeling and smelling gas. Critchley said he'd only done it to frighten her because on occasions he'd come home from work to find his wife absent and his tea not ready. Mrs. Critchley said they'd only been married 18 months and her husband had treated her badly. After the gas incident she'd left home and was now seeking a separation order. The magistrates granted it and ordered Critchley, who was joining the army in three days time, to pay his wife £1 a week maintenance.

On the 27th it was reported that the St Helens Medical Officer of Health had said that 10,000 children in England and Wales were dying every year from measles. Dr Cates stated that the death rate from measles amongst infants of unskilled labourers was almost four times as great than children from middle and upper classes. This, he claimed, was often because poor people's houses were not kept clean. In 1968 the measles vaccine was introduced and only two (unvaccinated) children have died in the UK during the last 10 years.

On the 29th June 37,000 people visited the Royal Show in Manchester, the annual agricultural show/fair organised by the Royal Agricultural Society. In the dog exhibition King George V won the gun dog championship and St Helens Sensation – owned by barman John Woosey from Claughton Street and dentist George Stronach of Duke Street – easily won the collie championship. Most of the toy dogs on show lay on cushions lined with costly textures and wearing what was described as 'dainty shawls'. Some of the pampered pooches even had their coats perfumed with scents! This luxury was a world away from the slaughter that was taking place in France, with the horrendous Battle of the Somme only two days away.

June 1916

On June 1st St Helens magistrates ordered Mary Murphy from Johnson Street in Parr to be kept in custody for 8 days after attempting suicide. Mary worked as a shop assistant in an Ormskirk Street confectionery shop and had rowed with her boyfriend. The magistrates were told that the 17-year-old had a history of flying into a passion when not getting her own way. After having a 'slight

difference' with her young man, Mary bought some salts of lemon from a chemist's and was caught taking them.

On the following day the Sutton Empire cinema (a.k.a. Sutton Bug) was prosecuted for screening a film after 10:30pm. They were fined 20 shillings, despite explaining that their projector had broken down and the film was being run through by hand, which caused a delay. The wide-ranging Defence of the Realm Act of 1914 imposed limits on the opening hours of places of entertainment and the police were keen to enforce even minor infringements.

Labourer Joseph Rigby was found on the evening of the 3rd lying unconscious on a small piece of waste ground on the corner of Foundry Street and Salisbury Street. The 59-year-old had suffered what was described as 'shocking injuries' to his head and died in Providence Hospital on the following day. Investigations revealed that Rigby had quarrelled with a labourer called John Towey, who lived in the same lodgings and they had decided to fight it out. A charge of manslaughter was laid against 42-year-old Towey but he was later found not guilty at Liverpool Assizes. A doctor told the court that Rigby had been so drunk that he might have simply fallen and fractured his skull on a brick.

Monday 5th was supposed to be Whit Bank Holiday but St Helens' shops and works decided to open as usual due to the war, although the local school kids still enjoyed a day off. Also on the 5th, the author of a pamphlet that championed the cause of conscientious objector Ernest Everitt was revealed. If you recall, he was the teacher from Dentons Green Lane who had refused to serve in the army in any capacity. A pamphlet entitled 'Two Years' Hard Labour for Refusing to Disobey the Dictates of Conscience' had flooded the country and a number of men who had distributed it had been put in prison. The author was Bertrand Russell, who would later become a world-renowned philosopher, historian and Nobel laureate. In 1916 the pacifist was a lecturer at Trinity College Cambridge and the St Helens case was his first rung on the ladder to becoming a household name.

Shocked that people were being sent to prison for distributing his pamphlet, Russell had turned himself into the police and on the 5th appeared at the Mansion House Police Court in London. The Lord Mayor of London presided and spared Russell a prison sentence. Instead he was fined the large sum of £100 and then dismissed from his position at Trinity College. The magistrates might have been influenced by the fact that Russell came from an aristocratic family, with his grandfather having twice served as prime minister.

An inquest on the sad death of William Harper of Rodney Street, near Boundary Road, was held on the 7th June. The 48-year-old widower had cut the gas pipe that went up his bedroom wall and then he lay with his mouth over the open end until death came. On the following day St Helens Council announced that their Lighting Restriction Order had so far saved them the substantial sum of £2000. Street lighting had been curtailed in the town since February, so as not to act as a guide for the feared Zeppelin airships. However the order was also proving to have a financial benefit for the council.

Of the few personal possessions that people owned in those days, watches were one of the most prized. Watch thieves often ended up in court and on June 8th it was Vincent Skepper's turn. The 14-year-old from Spray Street in Dentons Green was another lad who was too clever for his own good. Vincent's father Jesse ran a laundry and the boy worked for his Dad returning washed articles. While in one customer's home, Vincent pinched a silver watch, leaving in its place a cheap, metal one that he'd previously stolen. As soon as questions were being asked about the missing silver watch, the boy abandoned it in a public toilet in Lowe Street. The lad wrapped the timepiece inside a note that he'd written, in which he blamed another boy for the theft. Surprisingly Vincent wasn't badly punished, with he and his father ordered to pay £2 sureties for good behaviour.

On the 9th of June 15-year-old John Hennesey and 17-year-old Harry Bennett from Elephant Lane were admitted to St Helens Hospital after being buried by a fall of the pit roof down Sherdley Colliery. It took two hours to extricate Bennett from the rubble.

During the war strangers who visited St Helens were treated with some suspicion and they needed to be very careful what they said. On the 10th an unnamed man gave two convalescing soldiers a treat by taking them in his motor car to their parents' homes in St Helens. To give the men some time alone with their families, he went for a walk in the town and while strolling down Park Road asked someone a couple of innocent questions about the local chemical works. The cry quickly went up that he was a German spy and what was described as a huge crowd soon assembled and roughly handled the man. Fortunately the police were quickly on the scene and the Good Samaritan was able to explain himself. In those days whenever there was some sort of incident, crowds assembled rapidly, as if out of thin air. In part that was because people then lived in much quieter homes than today, with no TV or radio, and many lived somewhat drab lives. Front doors were regularly left open, so a rumpus out in the street would easily be heard indoors and quickly bring out residents hungry for excitement.

You rarely hear of people being prosecuted for bigamy these days with marriage having gone out of fashion for many and the ease of divorce. However 100 years ago bigamy was a not uncommon charge and punishment could be severe. On June 12th Lewis Pennington, a 27-year-old soldier in the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, appeared before St Helens magistrates, having married Annie Owen two months earlier at Holy Trinity church at Parr Mount. Pennington had only met his bride, who lived at 2 Arnold Street in Peasley Cross, the day before the wedding, the pair having conducted their short courtship by letter. Annie was a widow and her brother-in-law had acted as matchmaker, not knowing that his friend was already married. In his defence Pennington told the court that his first wife had not given him a minute's peace during their four years together and they were constantly quarrelling. He also blamed his mother-in-law, as was often the case! At Liverpool Assizes eight days later Pennington was jailed for six months.

A licence transfer sessions for St Helens' pubs was held on the 13th, presided over by Ald. Charles Bishop. The former mayor told the hearing that male publicans should leave their pubs in the hands of their wives while they get work in munitions factories. Two days later an odd excuse for the theft of an £8 tent from the YMCA was offered in court by the solicitor representing 12-year-old John Phillips from Brynn Street: "He is a boy scout, one of the Buffalo patrol, and has wanted to bring the Wild West nearer home." Mr. Garner added that it was "simply love of open-air life" which led to the theft. This romantic explanation didn't impress the magistrates, who ordered the boy to be brought back to earth with six strokes of the birch rod!

Sutton's champion boxer Ernie Proudlove from Herbert Street won again on the 14th, after beating Kid Harris in Wigan on points. But he lost three days later in Newcastle to Curley Hughes of Glasgow after a 15 round bout. These days it's unthinkable for Martin Murray to fight twice a week and Ernie also did a full shift down the pit!

The St Helens police were always on the look out for strangers in the town, who might be deserters from the army or avoiding conscription. On the 16th Thomas Hall from Manchester appeared in court charged with being absent from the Army Reserve. The 26-year-old had been working for a circus in St Helens and had told DS Anders when questioned in Park Road that the army had twice rejected him. Hall's claim that his discharge papers had been destroyed didn't impress the police and he later admitted that he'd been telling lies. The circus man was fined 40 shillings by the magistrates and handed over to the Army.

Also on the 16th Walter Richards appeared in court in St Helens summoned for knocking down a street lamp in Chancery Lane, Parr. The motor lorry driver worked for a Bolton tanner's and had

tried to manoeuvre his waggon between a tram and a gas lamp. He didn't make it and his large load caught the lamp breaking it into three pieces. Richards' firm was ordered to pay £6 damages.

The death on June 5th of Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, when the ship on which he was a passenger struck a German mine, had been a big blow to the country. The war hero is remembered today for the 'Your Country Needs You' posters more than anything else. On the 18th a special memorial service for Kitchener was held at St Helens Parish Church, which was attended by a large congregation. The vicar, Rev. Baines, said Kitchener had received the "eulogy of the great and the gratitude of an empire". It's hard to imagine such a service for a politician or military leader taking place in St Helens today.

On the 19th John Murran and Michael Toher, described as Irish labourers, appeared in court after collecting 14s 11d from drinkers at the Park Road Inn. The pair told Constable Moore that the money was to pay for a solicitor for a friend, who was facing a charge of manslaughter. However the prosecution claimed that the collection was really for beer money and the Bench decided to make an example of the pair, jailing them for three months. Sentences for Irish people were often more severe than for non-Irish.

On the 21st June there was more evidence of the merit of having bobbies on the beat, after Constable Rigby nabbed William Hartley. The labourer from Accrington wanted a new pair of boots and he thought that at 1:40am he could safely break into a boot shop in Bridge Street and help himself to a pair. However in those days the street bobbies were never far away and after PC Rigby heard the sound of breaking glass, Hartley was soon having his collar felt. Within hours the bungling burglar was in court, where he complained to the bench that the constable hadn't allowed him time to get hold of a pair of boots!

Two days later the inquest was held on Alfred Hardy of Fisher Street in Sutton, who had died from apoplexy down Bold Colliery. The 63-year-old had worked down the pit for 20 years and for much of that time had also run the Boilermaker's in Hoghton Road. His son Billy later described his father as a "victim of his own liquor, being a drunkard ever since I could remember him, and a great bookie and gambler". Writing in his autobiography, Billy Hardy said he himself had been drinking from the age of five and wouldn't go to bed in the Boilermaker's without a glass of beer. After his youthful experiences, it's not surprising that Billy preached against the evils of drink, first at the Methodist Chapel in Herbert Street, before founding the Emmanuel Mission in Helena Road.

On the 21st June a lengthy Liverpool Echo special report on women and secrets was published, which repudiated the reputation of females as being gossips. It stated that the war had shown that ladies were just as capable of keeping secrets as men, although women secretaries were still excluded from Cabinet meetings. Most of the censors in Liverpool were women - who would also have censored St Helens mail - who the report said: "have given every satisfaction".

On the 22nd June the owners of Berrey's mattress and bedding factory at the corner of Tontine Street and Naylor Street were counting the cost of an overnight fire. The blaze gutted their works and badly damaged offices and an adjacent house. The damage was estimated at costing around £2500 - a lot of money in those days. On the following day four-year-old Richard Sharrock from Hoole Bank Street drowned in the St Helens Canal. Such accidents in the town's many waterways were very common a century ago.

Also on the 23rd, thirty men appeared in court charged with gambling after a big police raid in Blackbrook on the previous Sunday. They were caught playing pitch-and-toss under a railway bridge. This is a game in which the player who throws a coin closest to a mark gets to toss all the players' coins, winning those that land heads up. These days it would be considered harmless fun but 100 years ago catching those engaged in pitch-and-toss was a police priority. Although the

Blackbrook event was on a large scale with 70 men involved and they were also gambling large sums. Twenty of the men were from Haydock and most were fined £1, the best part of a week's wage. The magistrates described pitch-and-toss as a "very mischievous practice" that had to be stopped.

On the 29th June 17-year-old Ralph Ashcroft of 8 Graces Square in Sutton was sent to prison for three months for repeatedly stealing bikes. One of his thefts was a bicycle belonging to Robert Baxter of Burtonwood, which had been left in a shed at Bold Colliery. Ashcroft flogged the bike for 10 shillings, while adopting the name of another youth employed at the pit. The police visited the latter but the buyer of the stolen bike exonerated him. Ashcroft had two previous convictions for cycle theft and had been discharged from the 3rd South Lancashire Regiment for being under age. Graces Square, where Ashcroft lived, had been built adjacent to what had been Sutton Workhouse, with Sherdley Primary School and its playing fields now occupying the site.

Also on that day Bertrand Russell appeared at London's Guild Hall to appeal against his £100 fine for writing a leaflet attacking the prison sentence given to conscientious objector Ernest Everitt. He was the Cowley schoolteacher from Dentons Green Lane who had been given two years hard labour for refusing to serve in the army. Russell's appeal was dismissed with the Bench not giving a reason. The man who would later become a world-renowned philosopher, historian and Nobel laureate, was from a wealthy, noble family but refused to pay the fine, as he preferred to go prison. However Cambridge Police foiled his plan to become a martyr for the conscientious objector cause. They raised the cash by confiscating Russell's valuable book collection and then auctioned them off. However Russell's pals also foiled the police by buying the books back for their friend at the auction!

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