



THE ENDING OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN TENTERDEN

After lasting nearly four years and four months the great European War virtually came to an end on the morning of Monday 11 November 1918 by the signature of an armistice. The event was notified to the British public by a communiqué issued by the Press Bureau at 10.20 am that morning. In it the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, made the following announcement: The armistice was signed at 5 am and hostilities were to cease at 11 am that day.

Sunday 17 November 1918, the first Sunday after hostilities ended was known as "Thanksgiving Sunday" with suggested orders of service. It was a memorable day not only in Tenterden but throughout the length and breadth of the land. At the request of the Mayor, Alderman A R Boorman, a United Service was held in St Mildred's Church. In spite of the prevalent sickness (Spanish 'flu was widespread), the church was filled with a very large congregation. The church interior was decorated with flags. A large Union Jack floating over the chancel screen was a noticeable item of the decorator's work. The Mayor and members of the Corporation attended in full regalia. The Mayor was supported by Aldermen E Howard and J Sutton and Councillors E Apps, F Care, J Chacksfield, L K Davies, F Edwards, S Hook, H Judge, W Love, S Thirkall, E K Todd and J S Winsler. The military element comprised the Tenterden Company, 4th Kent VB, under the command of Capt L H Browning and Lieutenant W L C Turner, the wounded from the Tenterden Hospital (Clifton House) and also the nurses of the Hospital and the Tenterden Girl Guides. The service opened with the singing of the hymn 'Praise the Lord, His glories show'. The other hymns chosen for the occasion being 'Praise my soul, the King of Heaven' and 'Now thank we all our God'. The first special lesson, Isaiah Chapter 55, was read by the Rev J H Marshall (Baptist Church) and the second lesson from Ephesians Chapter 5, verses 10-18, by the Rev J E Clegg (Wesleyan Church). The sermon was preached by the vicar (Rev J A Babington) who took for his text 'What reward should I give unto the Lord for all the benefits he has done unto me; I will receive the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord'. At the end of the service the National Anthem was sung. The collection, which was on behalf of King George's Fund, amounted to £13/6/11 (Thirteen pounds, six shillings and 11 pence in old money which at that time was probably only a month's wages for a working man). In the evening Mr Harold Rylett gave a notable address on "The Victory" at the Old Meeting House (Unitarian Church) in Ashford Road.

However, it was not until Saturday 28 June 1919 that a peace treaty was signed. On that Saturday afternoon the two German delegates agreed the documents at Versailles which should bind their country to peace with the Allies. Whether these terms would be kept was then another matter. Paris went mad with excitement, London was excited to a lesser degree, but in the provinces hardly any demonstration took place. When the news arrived at Tenterden later in the day that the signing of the peace was an accomplished fact, steps were immediately taken to celebrate the event. In a very short period flags were flying from the church tower, the Town Hall and throughout the town. Early in the evening the church bells rang out a merry peal and the public assembled in large numbers in the streets, expressing their appreciation that at length the long look for peace had happened. Visitors to the town much enlivened the proceedings with a small display of fireworks.

A proclamation was issued ordering special services of thanksgiving for Sunday 6 July 1919 and that the great Peace Day would be Saturday 19 July 1919 when the nation would be given over to holiday. It was at one time expected that three days would be devoted to Peace Celebrations, but the output of the country's industries was so limited that the stopping of the factories was considered a national disaster. It was therefore hoped that work would be resumed in the country on the Monday. In Tenterden, the 19 July 1919 was celebrated on an elaborate and attractive scale.

The Kentish Express of Saturday 26 July 1919 reported:

Saturday was a great day in the ancient Borough of the Weald, one long anticipated and one that will long be remembered. The Corporation undertook that the day of days, in connection with the war should be worthy of the occasion and assisted by a large staff of willing hands, it can be confidently stated that their efforts met with the greatest appreciation. The long High Street with its beautiful trees, presented a very delightful picture. From tree to tree were flying flags of many nations, and many quite unknown to the expert, but they all played their part in the decorative display, thus being the corporate part of the scheme. The public had been specially invited to take their part by decorating their houses, and right well did they answer to the call. A prize was offered for the best decorated house, and also for the best illuminated house, which probably increased the care taken for individual effort. Mr S Winter, assisted by Mr H Kettle undertook the decoration of the Town Hall, and both gentlemen must be congratulated on their efforts. It was quite a picture by day and most delightful in its brilliance at night. The events of the day, with one exception, took place in the Recreation Ground, which had been turned by the decoration into quite a fairyland. A special entrance had been made for the occasion, which was a very fine feature and worthy of being particularized. The scheme was a frame of red, white and blue bunting most charmingly decorated with rose. "Peace, 1919", headed the work, which being cleverly arranged, was equally effective at night, being also worked out in fairy lamps. The early part of the afternoon was devoted to the children's sports, for which Mr R A Whiteman, who was indefatigable in this department,

had received 350 entries for the flat races only, and for which handsome prizes were to be won. That the ball was kept rolling can be judged by the fact that thirty-three races were got through in eighteen minutes. There were two quite original races, a "centipede" and a "cock-a-lorum" race. These greatly interested and amused the great crowd present. The next item was a particularly enjoyable one - the tea for the children, the Boy Scouts and the inmates of the Poor Law Institution. The children who were accommodated numbered just upon six hundred. So bountiful was the catering, that after the children had retired from the enclosure, hundreds of the parents were also provided with tea, although this was not an item of the programme. Next followed a very beautiful feature, the "Pageant of Freedom", given by the pupils of Gatesdene School (*now Elmfield Place*). The pageant was an artistic triumph, the various parts being beautifully portrayed and meeting with the greatest applause, as did also the very dainty dances which followed, given by the same school. Then we came to the sports for adults, in which the ladies played a great part. A Goal Running match between Tenterden and Bethersden ended in a draw at one stroke each.

Unfortunately the rain was making itself unpleasantly felt, which somewhat took away a little of the charm of the fancy dress carnival which, however, was very brilliant in the extreme. This was the great attraction of the day and great crowds watched the procession through the streets. A halt was made at the Town Hall for the judges who were stationed on the balcony to give their verdicts. Lady Drury, Mrs Palmer, and Mrs Munn-Mace judged the gentlemen and Dr Skinner and Mr H S Cluse the ladies. The carnival was quite a surprise to the sightseers, by reason of the very large number of entrants and the beauty of them. The procession was headed by the Tenterden town band, immediately following being three emblematical floats which were quite things of beauty of a particularly high standard. The first arranged by Mrs Simpson, which was awarded a special prize, depicted the Allies driving to victory. Miss N Bennett, representing Victor was driving tandem. Gracefully arranged on the float, Miss M Bishop represented Britannia; Miss L Care as France; Miss M Edwards as Belgium; Mrs Siminson as America; Miss Reeve as Roumania; Miss F Willsher as Italy; Miss D Edwards as Serbia and Miss N Edwards as Japan. The next float which was also of exceptional merit was arranged by Mr and Mrs Williams and portrayed "Peace with Honour", Belgium being represented by Mrs Bill, Italy by Mrs Brede and Mrs D Homewood, Uncle Sam by Mr Brede, Mrs Williams represented France and England. There was also another very dainty float representing the four seasons which was arranged by Mrs Browning. Next followed on foot the very large number of ladies and gentlemen, whose personal efforts with very varied characters greatly interested the crowd. The push cart prize was secured by Miss Fuggle as a Red Cross nurse, the cart being effectively decorated. A very excellent exhibit secured the prize for decorated bicycles, for Miss Gilbert, attired as a Jazz girl. A humorous decorated motor, containing a bride and bridegroom, caused much amusement, the identity of the lady remaining a mystery for the time being. A mounted cavalcade brought up the rear, Miss Rogers being awarded a special prize for a particularly prettily decorated pony, which the young lady was riding. At ten o'clock the dancers moved to the Town Hall, where a big time was spent till mid-night, Miss N Bennett supplying the music. The outdoor festivities concluded with a great display of rockets and flares.



Entrance to Morghew on the Smallhythe Road
 Back (L to R): Dolly Edwards, May Bishop, Meg Edwards,
 Nora Edwards, Nellie Bennett
 Front (L to R): Florrie Willsher, Lucy Bishop, Lillian Care,
 - Siminson
 Bennetts provided the men and transport

A most enjoyable and amusing feature throughout the day were the Tenterden Jazzers, who took part in everything and caused considerable amusement. Among their number was a clown – it would hardly be fair to mention his name – but he was a clown of clowns. Charlie Chaplin and the Clerical Jazzer also greatly distinguished themselves. There were also the Tenterden minstrels, a very popular turn. Lastly, it must not be overlooked that the Tenterden bell ringers let it be known at an early hour of the morn that the great festal day of peace was at hand, by ringing merry peals on the bells of the parish church. Mr F H Rogers received the prize for the best decorated house. For the prize for the best illuminated house, the judges came to the conclusion that they could not discriminate between those at East Court, the White Lion Hotel, Mr W Gibbs and Beach House, which they considered of equal merit.

The success of such an occasion depended naturally on the workers. The Mayor of Tenterden (Alderman A R Boorman) threw himself heart and soul into the work and was most ably assisted in every department. The whole of the entertainments were arranged under the chairmanship of Captain W L C Turner whilst Mr G L Turner carried out the arduous duty of honorary secretary.

References: Kentish Express

Jack Gillett

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