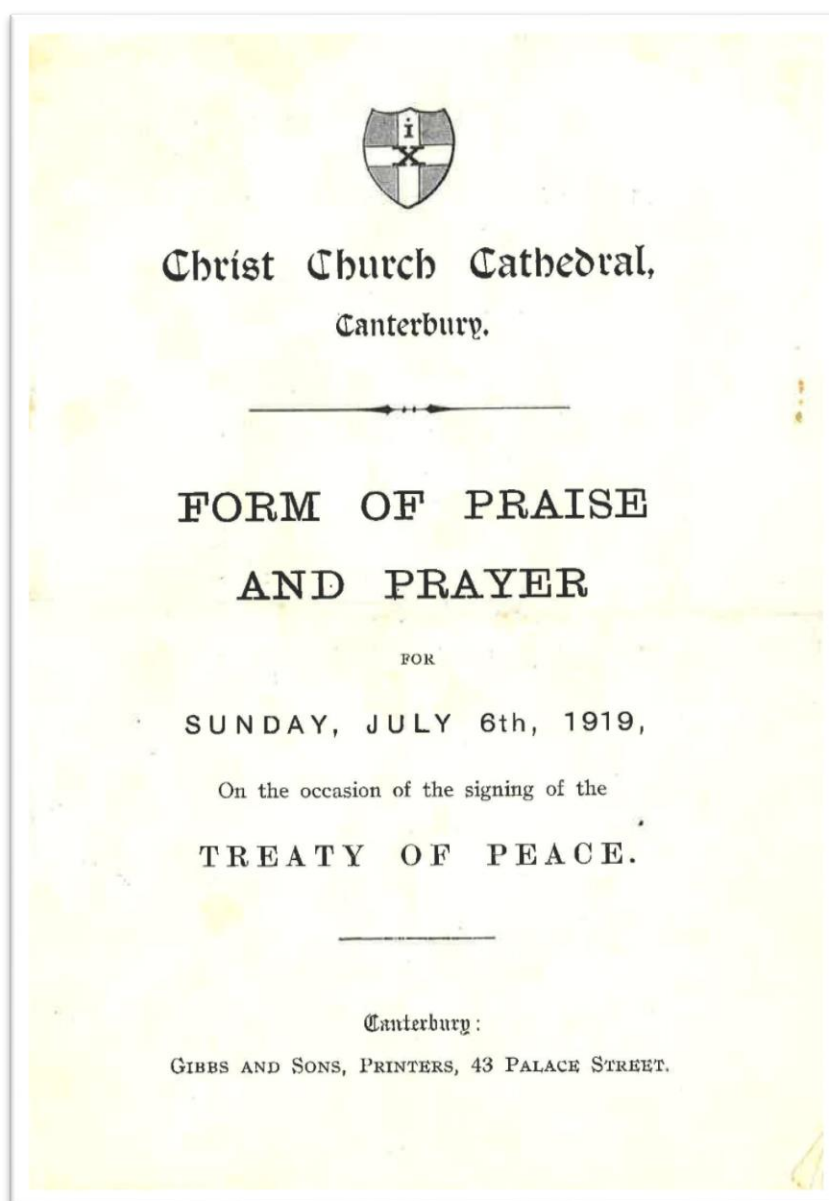


## 8. Lest we forget



With the end of the War school life returned to normal. Boys no longer faced the prospect of being called up to serve in the armed forces. Sporting fixtures against other schools were resumed. Numbers rapidly recovered and were soon greater than they had ever been.<sup>1</sup> New members of staff arrived, including JB Harris, who joined in the summer of 1919 and would stay for 40 years. In general, the long term impact of the war on the nature of School was less than it might have been. This was partly a result of the profound conservatism of Algernon Latter, Headmaster until 1927. He did his best to preserve – or rather re-create – what he saw as the virtues of a Victorian and Edwardian establishment.

<sup>1</sup> Total numbers were: 1918 Trinity 187; Michaelmas 196; 1919 Hilary 197; Trinity 202; Michaelmas 220; 1920 Hilary 233; Trinity 251; Michaelmas 265.

Although the main priorities of the boys were (in varying orders) work, sport, food, hobbies and social life, it was not easy to forget the War altogether. The March 1919 *Cantuarian* contained seven obituaries of casualties, and there were a few more over the following year.<sup>2</sup> The building of the war memorial served as a continuing reminder of the conflict and there were numerous events, both national and local, that provided opportunities for commemoration and an emerging ritual of remembrance.

The Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919, marking the official end of the War, and on Sunday 6 July the Cathedral ‘Service of National Thanksgiving for the signing of the Treaty of Peace’ was attended by a large congregation, including the School.<sup>3</sup> There were prayers “that Peace may be true and lasting”; for the League of Nations; for the British Empire; for all who have suffered through the war; and for “those who have fallen in the service of their country”. For once there is a small insight into a pupil’s reaction to these events. A letter from sixteen-year-old Douglas Hayes (KSC 1915-19) dated 6 July [1919] to ‘Dear Phil’ reads:

We have just come back from a special afternoon service in the Cath. If ever you come down to Canterbury, my advice is, never go to a service in the Cathedral above all things a Sunday morning service.

We had a ripping time on Peace Day, our celebrations consisted of P R E P. & then to put the finishing touch we got precisely  $\frac{3}{4}$ hr off “to celebrate the occasion of the signing of Peace.”

Extract from Algernons speech on that occasion.<sup>4</sup>

The School had its own Memorial Service on Sunday 27 July 1919, the day before Speech Day.

#### MEMORIAL SERVICE

There are certain events in one’s life which become indelibly stamped on the memory and which seem to stand out apart from everything else, never to be forgotten. Such a one was the service, in memory of O.K.S. who had made the great sacrifice, held in the School Chapel on July 27th. There were present many parents and O.K.S. filling the chairs down both sides of the ambulatory, and with the Dean and Chapter there were about 340 in all.

At this point there were read out by the Headmaster the names of all those Old King’s Scholars who had given their lives for their country. It was accompanied by a most intense silence, with the School standing at attention. The congregation then sung Hymn 428 and the Headmaster delivered an address. It was most fitting that he of all men, should speak on such an occasion. He took as his subject ‘Duty’. It seemed impossible, he said, for the pride of Britain’s manhood to have been killed for no purpose; there must be some great work for them to do elsewhere. Speaking of those scholars who had had a fine career before them, he

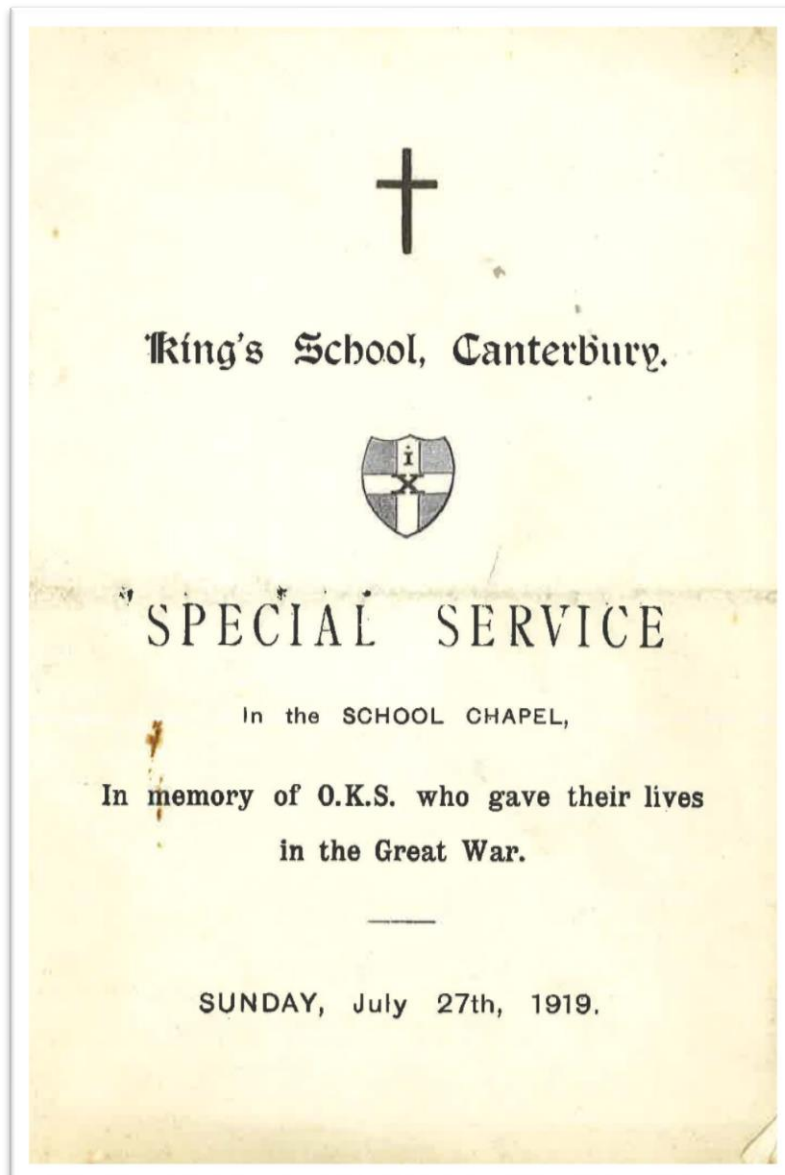
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<sup>2</sup> The *Cantuarian*, March 1919, pp. 710-3. See also July 1919, p. 738; November 1920, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> K.G. 12.7 1919: “The congregation (standing and sitting) numbered over 3,000...” The main Canterbury celebration was on Saturday 19 July. See K.G. 26.7.1919: ‘The Great Peace Day’.

<sup>4</sup> Copy of letter is in KSC Archives box W1. This particular service was on the Sunday afternoon, at 3pm.

mentioned Charles Adams, Willie Potts, James Yates, and Roland Brinsley Richards, and of those athletes who seemed to be in the prime of life, Arthur Fluke, Ross Ferguson, Digby Watson, George and Roland Jukes, Wilfred Lucas, and Roland Gordon. Words fail to express what could only have been felt by the heart, for the address by its very simplicity was the more inspiring and impressive. After a few minutes silent prayer Hymn 437 was sung and the Blessing given by the Dean. Then followed what was perhaps the most impressive part of the service; the Dead March in 'Saul' was played on the big organ and the Last Post sounded by the school buglers. It was the last mark of respect that could be offered to those who had died for their country.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> The Cantuarian, November 1919, p. 5. See also K.G. 2.8.1919. The hymns were: 428: 'The Saints of God! their conflict past'; 437: 'For all the saints'; and also 165: 'O God our help in ages past'. A copy of the service sheet is in KSC Archives: Scrapbook 1, p. 57. 34 OKS signed the visitors book on 27 July and a further 22 on the 28th. More may well have attended.

This occasion must have been a remarkable one. On the previous evening Lionel Reay, housemaster of Langley House, had been found dead in his laboratory. The coroner would later rule that it was death by ‘misadventure’, but the circumstances were unusual and rumours abounded. On the Monday, the Commemoration Service was held, but the rest of the Speech Day events – the Speeches in the Chapter House, prize giving and the garden party – were cancelled.<sup>6</sup>

For several years after 1919, the School service on the Sunday before Speech Day was a Memorial Service and the preacher was the Headmaster. (In the school calendar it is referred to as ‘Memorial Service’, or on a couple of occasions as ‘War Memorial Service’, for the rest of the 1920s.) As many OKS came to Canterbury for the weekend, when there were sports fixtures on the Saturday and Sunday, it was an obvious opportunity for collective remembrance. In the 1930s, there is no indication in the calendar that this was a memorial service, but Tony Dean, at King’s from 1934 to 1940, recalled that on Speech Day: “After the cathedral service and commemoration sermon, the School processed back to the Green Court and, as each boy reached the War Memorial, he cast his rose at its foot – and then usually departed with all speed on his summer holidays!”<sup>7</sup> The custom may well have originated with the memorial service and the OKS weekend. By 1939 it was enshrined in the ‘blue book’ – The Customs and Privileges of the School – which stated: “Speech Day: Everyone buys a red rose after breakfast and wears it until after Speeches when it is placed on the School War Memorial.” To some extent, therefore, the School’s own remembrance of the War was detached from Armistice Day.

From 1919 to 1939, commemoration of the war was partly dictated by national example. On Armistice Day 1919, ‘the Great Silence’ was observed at the temporary cenotaph in Whitehall. In Canterbury, Bell Harry tolled and the civic dignitaries gathered outside the Guildhall. There is no record of a Cathedral service on the occasion, nor of any King’s School involvement.<sup>8</sup> The Archbishop’s visit three weeks later on 1 December 1919 was an opportunity for him to reflect on the significance of the School’s contribution to the War:

In replying to the Dean’s speech, His Grace expressed his great joy and satisfaction at finding the School in such a flourishing condition. He said that, in his opinion, the reason for this efficiency was that the glorious records and examples of O.K.S. who have given their services and in many cases their lives for their country, were continually before us, reminding us that it is our duty to them to do our best to make our School, our Country, our England a better and more profitable place for our having been in them. He then spoke for some time about the things which the war has produced, and took poetry as an example. Nearly every School has one representative or more, recording deeds of his School and Country in verse or prose, in particular Rupert Brooke, Julien Grenfell and Dyneley Hussey. This shewed, he said, that Schools must have an effect, nearly always a subconscious effect, on a boy’s mind. The King’s School being

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<sup>6</sup> K.G. 2.8.1919 has reports of Reay’s death, the coroner’s enquiry and the funeral.

<sup>7</sup> OKS Review 2003-4, p. 48: ‘Some recollections of pre-war life at King’s’.

<sup>8</sup> K.G. 15.11.1919.

under the shadow of the Great Cathedral, which is the pivot about which our religion turns, was full of this subconscious force permeating our minds and forming our thoughts, although we were unaware of them.

His Grace ended by saying that it should be the aim of every boy to make his School proud of him and to benefit by him, so that in years to come, people will say that that School is famous by reason of the example set by those who have gone before.<sup>9</sup>

At Speech Day in 1920 – in effect the first since the end of the War – it was the turn of the Headmaster to comment on the conflict:

The information that they had collected regarding Old King's Scholars and their service in the war was now more or less complete, and it was one of which they were justly proud. To the best of their knowledge there were some 850 Old King's Scholars who served. Of these 141 passed beyond, 256 were wounded, and no less than 630 decorations were won. (Applause.) Everybody who had heard anything of their School knew that they had got a V.C. They had an abnormal proportion of D.S.O.'s and Military Crosses – no less than 57 D.S.O.'s and 106 Military Crosses.<sup>10</sup>

Latter went on to provide an update on the state of the War Memorial Fund, as well as on gifts from families and friends of fallen OKS, notably Anderson and Gough, before turning to school numbers and the 'tone of the School'. In particular he attacked "a certain small minority of notoriety hunters with facile pens" who had written novels "which were supposed to represent public school life". His opinion that "by far the most important part of education was the formation of character" was then taken up by the Dean.

He thought it was perfectly absurd and ridiculous that there were books written by people to disparage the public schools of this country. There was one answer to them which was quite sufficient – the late war. The public schools then rose to the test in a manner which was to their lasting honour and the honour of the country. (Applause.) They could not have had the response which was made in the war unless the spirit prevailing in the public schools – a spirit which had been fostered during the last hundred years – had been of the highest moral and typically English character. (Applause.)<sup>11</sup>

The Archbishop, Dean and Headmaster were typical in their retrospective justification of the War by the expression of pride in the way that the School's old boys had served their country and the reassurance to relatives that deaths had not been in vain. They were also typical in their glorification of the public school spirit. There is even a case for saying that the King's School was more of a 'typical public school' under Latter's regime than it had been before the War. And there is a certain irony in Latter's attack on the 'notoriety hunters' as Alaric Jacob, who joined the School two years later, would write a novel entitled *Seventeen* and the autobiographical *Scenes from a Bourgeois Life*, both of which drew on his

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<sup>9</sup> The Cantuarian, March 1920, p. 58. Dyneley Hussey was an OKS. His book of poetry *Fleur de Lys* had been published in 1916.

<sup>10</sup> K.G. 7.8.1920. Cf. The Cantuarian, November 1920, p. 100 for an abbreviated version of this report.

<sup>11</sup> K.G. 13.11.1920. Cf. The Cantuarian, November 1920, pp. 100-1: again the school magazine provides a much abbreviated version.

Canterbury experiences. The memoir included this damning indictment: “The headmaster, mutilated by an enormous moustache that made him look like a despondent walrus, had almost no contact with the contemporary world. Virgil and Wisden’s Almanac blocked the door of his mind, letting little else through. He died without hearing of Marcel Proust.”<sup>12</sup>

The national commemoration on 11 November in 1920 focused on the burial of the Unknown Warrior. On 10 November the train carrying the body from Dover had stopped at Canterbury shortly after 6.30 pm on its way to Victoria Station – and Westminster Abbey. “Crowds of people, numbering several thousands, were assembled at the Canterbury East Station or lined the approaches, to do honour to the ‘Unknown Warrior’.”<sup>13</sup> The following day there was a service in the Cathedral.

This morning at 11 a.m., being the hour at which the Armistice was signed in 1918, a large congregation assembled in the Nave of the Cathedral; and when the hour struck, a solemn silence was observed for two minutes, in commemoration of the Dead who fell in the war; after which the Hymn was sung: “O God, our help in ages past” and a short service followed, consisting of the Lord’s Prayer, Psalm CXXIV, and some Prayers.<sup>14</sup>

It is not known if the School was present on either occasion.

In October 1921 the OTC did participate at the unveiling of the Canterbury War Memorial in the Buttermarket by Earl Haig.

On Monday, October 9<sup>th</sup> [in fact 10<sup>th</sup>], Earl Haig unveiled in the Butter Market a Memorial to the men of Canterbury who fell in the Great War. The Corps was requested to line the streets on this occasion. On Earl Haig passing between the ranks the General Salute was given. We were subsequently commended by Earl Haig on our general turn-out and on the “Present”. The marching off on that day was particularly good.<sup>15</sup>

A year later on Armistice Day, there was a “great citizens’ service in the Cathedral”, followed by the unveiling and dedication of the City’s name plaques.<sup>16</sup> The inscription was fulsome: “In grateful commemoration of the officers non-commissioned officers and men of Canterbury who gave their lives for God King and Country in the Great War 1914-1919 this memorial was erected by their proud and thankful fellow citizens True love by life true life by death is tried live thou for England we for England died.” Men were listed alphabetically by surname, with initials and military honours. Some OKS were recorded here, namely Eric Bing, Ross Ferguson and John Wachter, but some were not. Basil and Geoffrey Maclear, both born in Canterbury and sons of Warden Maclear of St Augustine’s College, as well as Percy Maclear, also born in Canterbury, and Arthur Fluke, who lived in Canterbury, were omitted,

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<sup>12</sup> Alaric Jacob, *Scenes from a Bourgeois Life*, p. 68. *Seventeen* had been published in 1930. On public schools in the post-war period see Seldon and Walsh, pp. 215-23.

<sup>13</sup> K.G. 13.11.1920.

<sup>14</sup> K.G. 13.11.1920; Canterbury Cathedral Oblation Book: CCA-U3-100/5/16.

<sup>15</sup> *The Cantuarian*, November 1921, p. 217.

<sup>16</sup> K.G. 18.11.1922: ‘Armistice Day at the Cathedral – Impressive Service at the Cathedral’.

and the Trueman brothers were recorded at Blean.<sup>17</sup> Wachter was on the King's and the Simon Langton Grammar School memorials as well as on the city's.

When the School's own memorial was in place it provided a focus for commemoration – but initially only to a limited degree. In 1922, for example, “On Armistice Day a wreath from the school was placed at the foot of the Cross.”<sup>18</sup> It seems likely that this then became a regular occurrence, though the nature of any ceremony is unknown. One of the illustrations in Kernot's *British Public Schools War Memorials*, published in 1927, shows several wreaths on the memorial, but there is no record of when this photograph was taken.<sup>19</sup> At the same time the Memorial Court was a place for ‘ritual gatherings’ such as the award of colours, as intended. School photographs in the 1920s and 1930s were taken with the war memorial in the centre and the Cathedral in the background. As the area around the Norman Staircase had been the venue for team, form and school photographs before the war, this may not have seemed quite such a meaningful change.

On Speech Day 1923 the Headmaster had expressed grand hopes for the significance of the memorial: “The memorial to his mind was going to play a great part in future School Life, in impressing on coming generations the all-important spirit of comradeship.” In practice, this aspect of the memorial was limited precisely because it was at the centre of the school. Boys passed to and fro, gathering under the arches to read the noticeboards or visit the tuck shop. They soon got used to it and any deeper meaning faded.

Amidst these commemorative events it is worth noting that some things were not done. The intention as expressed at the Caxton Hall meeting in July 1918 to honour those who had served as well as those who had died and in particular that “the names of those who have served shall be put somewhere in the School” was not followed up. The main emphasis in the post-war era and indeed up to the present day was, in various ways, to focus on the fatalities. No Book of Remembrance was created and there was no memorial publication. A letter in *The Cantuarian* of November 1919 from ‘O.K.S. of 1918’ proposed that something more substantial than the ‘Alphabetical List’ might be produced as a lasting reminder of the School's part in the war. The writer concluded: “It might be practicable to accompany the list of those who have served with brief paragraphs about all those who have fallen, together, if possible, with a photograph of each.”<sup>20</sup> Nothing came of this and the King's School never had anything comparable to the monumental *Tonbridge School and the Great War of 1914 to 1919* published in 1923.

Apart from the construction of the war memorial, the most visible reminders of the War after 1918 were the German guns in the Mint Yard. A trench mortar and carriage was presented by the War Trophies Committee early in 1919: “in order to recall to future generations the part played by both Officers and Cadets of the Contingent in preparing

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<sup>17</sup> For discussions on the creation of the tablets with names for the Canterbury War Memorial, see: Peter Donaldson, *Ritual and Remembrance*, ch. 3. Edward ‘Mick’ Mannoek VC was included, despite having been born in Brighton. The relevant correspondence, including letters about Ferguson and Wachter, is in the Cathedral Archives: CCA-CC-W/14/2.

<sup>18</sup> *The Cantuarian*, March 1923, p. 124.

<sup>19</sup> C.F. Kernot, *British Public Schools War Memorials*, p. 50. The trees show the photograph was taken in winter, so the wreaths must be from Armistice Day.

<sup>20</sup> *The Cantuarian*, November 1919, pp. 37-8.

candidates for commissions during the Great War”.<sup>21</sup> Two more guns – a field gun and a howitzer – appeared soon afterwards.<sup>22</sup> One of the guns can be seen in School photographs of this period and another in a contemporary watercolour of the Mint Yard. The School became so used to them, however, that any significance was soon lost. A short poem ‘On the German Guns’ in *The Cantuarian* of November 1926 reflected wittily on their neglect:

Such spoils a Roman Emperor would draw  
With milk-white steers and martial pageantry  
Up to the temple on the Capitol.  
Yet these, these trophies of a nation’s pride,  
These spoils of victory, these gifts of Mars,  
These products of a people’s agony  
Unnoticed, hidden away, are only used  
For bicycles to lean against, or toys for babes.<sup>23</sup>

Soon afterwards, they were gone. According to a later account, “the guns and howitzers that once decorated the Mint Yard mysteriously disappeared during the summer holidays of 1928...”<sup>24</sup> If there was an explanation for this, it was not recorded.

In 1923 the School went to the Cathedral service on Armistice Day. This was attended by the Mayor and Corporation as well as by troops from the garrison. It was thus a civic occasion with a significant military presence, and indeed the School Officers’ Training Corps under Captain Egerton Jones was noted as present.<sup>25</sup> However there is no evidence that the School was mentioned in the service. Thus Armistice Day was part of a more general commemoration, not specific to the School and not particularly remembering the OKS killed. The hymns were ‘O God our help in ages past’ and ‘O valiant hearts’; there were prayers for ‘those who have fallen in the service of their country’ and for the British Empire; and the collection was for Earl Haig’s Fund for Ex-Officers and Soldiers. It is quite possible that this was the first occasion on which the School went to an Armistice Day service – perhaps because it was on a Sunday.

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<sup>21</sup> *The Cantuarian*, March 1919, p. 727.

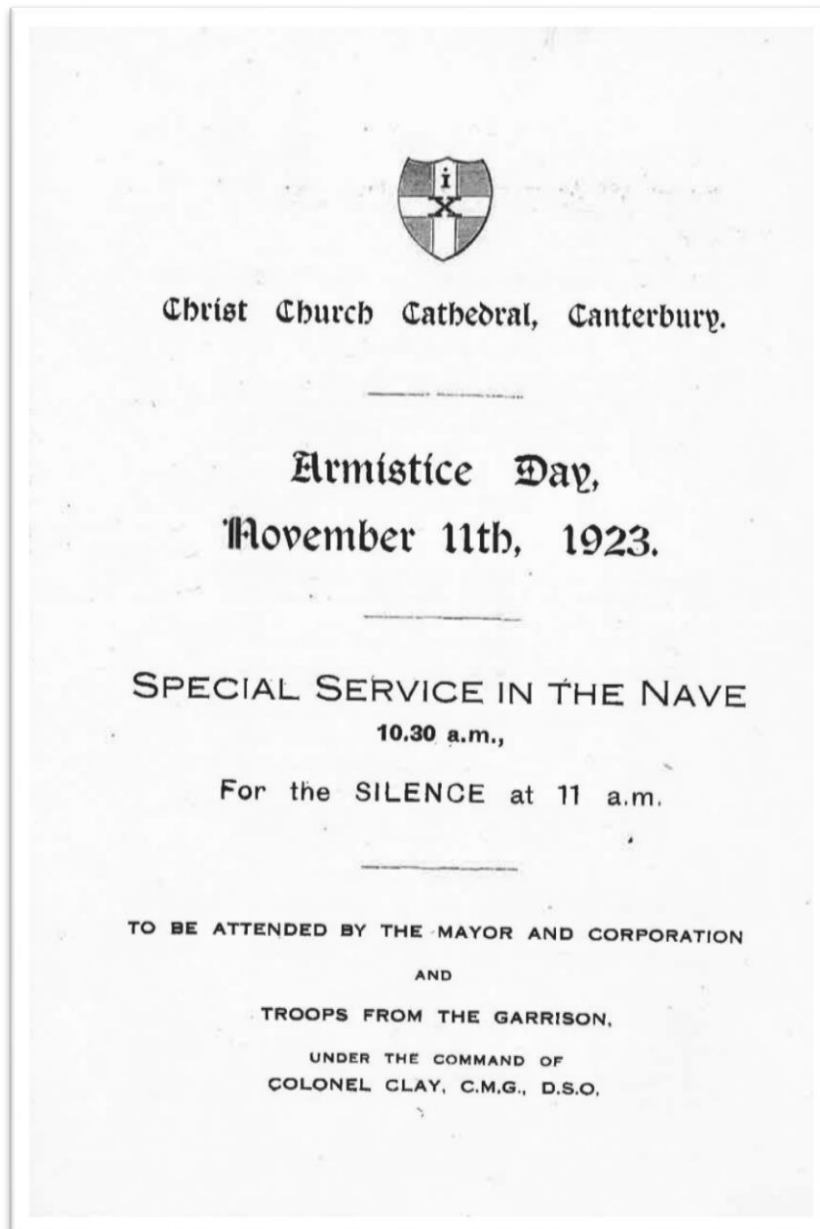
<sup>22</sup> *The Cantuarian*, November 1919, p. 16: ‘In addition to the Trench Mortar, a German Field gun has been presented to the School by the Authorities, and is standing in the Mint Yard. With regard to the former, Mr. Biggleston O.K.S. has very kindly had it cleaned up and oiled.’ *The Cantuarian*, March 1920, p. 57: ‘A third gun in the form of a captured German howitzer has been presented to the School.’

<sup>23</sup> *The Cantuarian*, November 1926, p. 654. A letter on p. 658 from ‘The Gun’ plaintively asks: “Cannot I be restored to my rightful position at the bottom of the Parry steps?”

<sup>24</sup> *The Cantuarian*, July 1932, p. 529. It is not clear why this happened, but it may have been related to the re-asphalting of the Mint Yard and other improvements.

<sup>25</sup> *Whitstable Times* 17 November 1923.





To some degree the Toc H ceremony provided the School with its own commemoration. In 1923 it was reported: "Last term two delegates from the school, the Captain and House-Monitor, accompanied by Mr Mayne, received the Toc H lamp from the Prince of Wales at the Guildhall. The lamp was officially handed over to the Head Master and will eventually be placed in the Chapel."<sup>26</sup> A book of Special Services and Prayers, in Birley's hand, has prayers for this service. It includes: "With proud thanksgiving let us for a moment remember in silence before God those who made the supreme self-sacrifice in the Great War – & especially those from this School" followed by Binyon's "They shall grow not old" (mis-quoted, as often).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The Cantuarian, March 1923, p. 124. Cf. Lamp of Maintenance – Arrangement of service, & prayers: KS Copies of Notices pp. 300-1.

<sup>27</sup> KSC Archives: Special Services & Prayers.

From 1924 to 1935 it seems that the School regularly attended the Cathedral's Armistice Day service even though the calendar and *The Cantuarian* do not mention it.<sup>28</sup> The *Kentish Gazette* noted their presence in 1926: "Three hundred King's School boys were seated on the steps leading to the Choir, and at other points of vantage..."<sup>29</sup> A school notice reads: "Armistice Day Nov 11<sup>th</sup> 1931: Second period will end at 10.25 and the procession form up to move off at 10.30. Last period School at the usual time."<sup>30</sup>

In the early 1930s letters from the Sampson brothers, Anthony and Edward, for once provide some detail. Tony Sampson, of The Grange 1932-37, wrote to his parents on 13 November 1932:

Friday was Armistice Day, and we went to a service and the 2 minutes' silence. Although the Cathedral is a big place, all the seats in the Nave were occupied, and there were a large crowd of people standing. (I am enclosing the 'programme'.) We had to sit on some steps leading down to the Nave.<sup>31</sup>

Both Sampson brothers attended the Sunday 11 November 1934 service. Tony reported:

There is no need to tell you that today was Armistice Day (but, by now, I have done so!) We had the morning service in the Nave (instead of in the Choir) this morning with all the Mayor & Corporation (etc. etc), the Archbishop, and all the other local personages...

At the afternoon service, 'Tich' Mayne gave an unusually good sermon about the Toc H and after it the School's Toc H lamp was lit. It had first been lit by the Prince of Wales in about 1922, when it was given to the school.

This can be compared with the account of the same day from his younger brother Teddy (The Grange 1934-39):

There was a lovely service today in the Cathedral as it is Armistice day. Two buglers sounded the "Last Post" and then the "Reveille", it must have been very hard because of the echoes. In our afternoon service the "Toch H" lamp was lit by Mr Maine, who is going to resign his post as School Chaplain.<sup>32</sup>

Such reflections are rare, but if the evidence from Mass Observation's surveys of Armistice Day is anything to go by, it is likely that schoolboy responses were equally varied.<sup>33</sup>

One of the first things Headmaster John Shirley did when he arrived was to create a chapel in what had been the tuck shop. This was always known as the Memorial Chapel, though the Order of Service for the opening on 13 July 1936 is entitled 'Dedication of the Chapel' and there is no mention of any connection with the War. The report in *The Times* merely noted, after a long historical description, that it was fitting that the building had

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<sup>28</sup> The orders of service for 1923 as well as for 1925, 1928, 1929 and 1932 can be found in the papers of JB Harris. KSC Archives C 6.

<sup>29</sup> K.G. 13.11.1926.

<sup>30</sup> KSC Archives: Notices from Nov: 1931, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Copies of Sampson letters: KSC Archives box A 63. Cf. K.G. 18.11.1933: "Behind the altar were seated King's Scholars in their surplices."

<sup>32</sup> Copies of Sampson letters: KSC Archives box A 63. Cf. *The Cantuarian*, December 1934, p. 310, which, unusually, mentions the 'Special Service in the Nave on Armistice Sunday' and the Toc H ceremony. Cf. K.G. 17.11.1934 for a full report on the service: "Boys of the King's School occupied the Nave steps."

<sup>33</sup> Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory*, pp. 164-72.

reverted to sacred use “since it adjoins the War Memorial Court and Cross of the King’s School”.

That November a new tradition was born:

Instead of attending the cathedral Armistice Service, the School held its own in the Memorial Court. The service was conducted by the Headmaster and the Chaplain. The Captain of School laid a wreath of poppies on the memorial. The Last Post was played by A.M. Dean.<sup>34</sup>

John Goudge described the ceremony in a letter to his father:

This morning being Armistice Day we were let off the first period so that we could go to Communion in the School chapel and come back for breakfast at 8.30. At eleven o’clock everyone assembled in the Memorial court and we sang a few hymns and had the two minutes Silence and then went back to work. The singing out of doors without any accompaniment was quite effective.<sup>35</sup>



Armistice Day Service, 1938 (Photograph by Tony Wortham)

There were various opportunities in the 1920s and 1930s for more general reflection on the War alongside this evolving pattern of commemorative events. Perhaps surprisingly *The Cantuarian* never included any articles looking back on the War. The *Holme House Gazette* however published two in 1924. ‘Thanet’s raid history’ – on enemy attacks in the Great War – was by Edwin Lewis (Holme House 1919-25), whose home was in Cliftonville.

<sup>34</sup> *The Cantuarian*, December 1936, p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> John Goudge, letter to his father, 10.11.1936. (The letter was started on the 10<sup>th</sup>, but continued the following day.) KSC Archives box A 68. Tom Stapleton merely noted in his diary: “Wet. Service by the memorial.” KSC Archives box A 107.

This ended: “Canterbury passed unharmed owing to the mist which hangs over it at night, and it was a sure haven to many Margatonians during the worst period.”<sup>36</sup> In the December issue, next to an article on ‘Three Swiss Lakes’ – “one of the most delightful trips imaginable” – the magazine included ‘A Tour of the Battlefields’ by third former Robert Bruce. He was the son of Lt Col Malcolm Bruce of the Indian Army, and went into the army himself. His piece is about Knocke, Nieuport and the Ypres area, with an account of Hill 60 where “bodies are still being dug up in great numbers... The people who dig up the bodies keep them on Hill Sixty until they have got twenty, they then send them back to their respective countries.” There had been an article on the field of Waterloo earlier in the year.<sup>37</sup>

*The Cantuarian* did however publish a poem entitled ‘His Friend’ – ‘A remembrance of the Great War recalled by Armistice Day’ by ‘X.Y.Z.’ – in 1925:

The battle raged around him;  
The bullets whistled by;  
His friend lay wounded before him;  
He cannot let him die.

Did he fear for his own life?  
Was it for self he cared?  
A friend in need was lying,  
All dangers must be dared.

Over the top, ’midst shrapnel hail,  
With never a tremor he ran;  
’Midst shrapnel hail out over the top,  
To save the unconscious man.

The burden gathered in his arms,  
Back to the trench he sped;  
He has reached the brink of safety,  
Only to fall – shot dead.

It was just a friend had called him,  
And he had answered the call,  
It was not to have Fame or Glory,  
’Twas just for a friend – that’s all.<sup>38</sup>

The War was not obviously part of any syllabus, but occasionally war-related topics appeared as subjects for prize essays. In 1920, English Essays for the Sixth Form included ‘The League of Nations’.<sup>39</sup> In 1930, the set book for the Middle School History prize was

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<sup>36</sup> Holme House Gazette, Easter 1924, p.

<sup>37</sup> Holme House Gazette, Christmas 1924, p. 163.

<sup>38</sup> The Cantuarian, December 1925, p. 506.

<sup>39</sup> School List, Midsummer 1920, p. 16.

Carey and Scott's *Outline History of the Great War* (1928), a work with numerous illustrations, including battlefield maps and photographs, and in 1934 it was Ramsay Muir's *Political Consequences of the Great War* (1930).<sup>40</sup> David Clarke's talk to the Marlowe Society on Rupert Brooke in December 1929 barely mentioned his war poetry, though he read 'The Dead' and 'The Soldier', noting that "these are deservedly the best known".<sup>41</sup>

Although many OKS had visited the School during the War – and Fleming-Sandes had been feted – none seem to have returned to tell of what they had lived through. In the inter-war years, however, several lecturers came to speak on aspects of the subject. The first was OKS Dr Harold Wachter, who addressed the Harvey Society on 23 November 1918 on 'My medical experiences in France'. "At the end of the lecture, he passed round some murderous weapons and various pieces illustrating his lecture."<sup>42</sup> In July 1922 Commander Sir Norman Leslie lectured to the Corps on "the question of aircraft", providing much detail on their role in the War.<sup>43</sup> In October 1925, Captain Alfred Carpenter VC of HMS Vindictive gave a lantern lecture on 'The Blocking of Zeebrugge'. "It is impossible in a short space to do justice to Captain Carpenter's manner of relating this epic story, and we trust that all our readers are sufficiently patriotic to know the main facts intimately."<sup>44</sup> In 1926 the Dean, George Bell, spoke on the League of Nations just a few days after the signing of the Treaty of Locarno.<sup>45</sup>

In November 1931 Admiral John Harper, author of *The Truth About Jutland*, spoke on the Battle of Jutland.<sup>46</sup> In November 1932 Paul Edmonds, the composer and artist, lectured on 'The Siege of Kut': "we were very interested to hear of and see an unusual aspect of the Great War. So many books and plays are written about the 'western front', so many films are produced, that we tend rather to forget the other theatres of the war."<sup>47</sup> In December 1937, OKS Sir Percy Sykes spoke on his role in 'Persia and the Near East during the Great War'.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps most remarkable was the Tenterden Society lecture on 'World Politics' given on 8 February 1937 by R. Palme Dutt of the Communist Party and editor of *The Daily Worker*: "The Great War exposed the Imperialist Movement and disillusioned Liberalism, the expression of capitalism at its height trying to hide the divisions of class society..." The President of the Society was the 'Red' Dean, Hewlett Johnson, and *The Cantuarian* noted that "other speakers this term include Mr. Hannen Swaffer, Mr. George Lansbury and Mr. Brian Goddard".<sup>49</sup>

Members of staff were also a potential source of reminiscences and information. Military honours were first added to the listings of masters in the rotulus from Michaelmas 1927; before that only degrees were noted. Norman Birley, the Headmaster from 1927 to

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<sup>40</sup> School List, Michaelmas 1930, p. 8 and School List, Midsummer 1934, p. 18.

<sup>41</sup> The text of his talk is in the KSC Archives, box A 102: DK Clarke.

<sup>42</sup> *The Cantuarian*, December 1918, p. 704.

<sup>43</sup> *The Cantuarian*, November 1922 pp. 113-4.

<sup>44</sup> *The Cantuarian*, December 1925, p. 474. Carpenter's book 'The Blocking of Zeebrugge' was already in the School Library: see *The Cantuarian*, March 1922, p. 28.

<sup>45</sup> *The Cantuarian*, March 1926, p. 521.

<sup>46</sup> *The Cantuarian*, December 1931, p. 421.

<sup>47</sup> *The Cantuarian*, December 1932, p. 589.

<sup>48</sup> *The Cantuarian*, December 1937, p. 239.

<sup>49</sup> *The Cantuarian*, March 1937, p. 121.

1935, was notable in having been awarded both the MC and DSO.<sup>50</sup> He gave a talk on the Great War to the Walpole Society in 1931, speaking on the causes, the War itself and the results. His account of the war itself “was made even more interesting by the stories of some of his own experiences”. He repeated the talk in 1934.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, JB Harris, housemaster of Holme House from 1920 to 1936 and Lower Master from 1933, had also served and won the Military Cross, but he rarely spoke of the war.<sup>52</sup> Alan Baker, who was in School House from 1930 to 1935, recalled being taught by Arnold Egerton Jones: “the great thing was to divert him onto his exploits as a machine gunner in the First World War. ‘Sir, Sir, what was it like to mow down the Huns?’ His answer was always: ‘It gave me the utmost satisfaction.’”<sup>53</sup>

The Debating Society provided one of the main opportunities for boys – and occasionally masters – to express their opinions on topical matters. The 1921 debate on the motion that ‘The League of Nations will fulfil its purpose of preventing War’ was notable for a comment from the Society’s president, the Revd Alfred Mayne, housemaster of Langley House: “Though adopting a pacifist view he was compelled to acknowledge a warlike feeling whenever he thought of the Germans.”<sup>54</sup> (He had served as a Chaplain in the War and been awarded the Military Cross.) Over the next ten years, pressing issues of international relations were sometimes discussed, yet the reports in *The Cantuarian* do not indicate that the speakers referred to the Great War. The 1926 motion that ‘the principle of nationality is the curse of the world’ was lost 8-53; in 1929 ‘the policy of disarmament is undesirable for the British Empire’ was approved by 30-21; while in 1932 a debate on ‘conscientious objection to fighting for one’s country is unjustifiable’ ended in a tie 18-18.<sup>55</sup> Curiously it was in a 1933 debate on ‘professionalism is detrimental to the true spirit of sport’ that Richard Evans made a comparison with mercenary warfare of the Middle Ages and went on: “How much finer was the team spirit which actuated the British Army during the Great War!”<sup>56</sup>

The prospect of another war in the 1930s may have encouraged looking back as well as looking forward. A *Cantuarian* 1932 editorial, commented on the Sino-Japanese situation: “It is our earnest prayer that we may never be involved in a great world war again, but the clouds are blackening...”<sup>57</sup> The following year Tom Stapleton recorded in his diary that “Mr Birley read paper by headmaster of Harrow on the meaning of Armistice Day to the younger generation.” This was the League of Nations Union message, presumably delivered at the school service on Sunday 12 November.<sup>58</sup> It is an important reminder of how quickly the War disappeared from the living memory of schoolboys. By 1933, the oldest boys in the school

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<sup>50</sup> Seldon and Walsh, p. 115. Ralph Jukes, who became Headmaster of the Junior School in 1927, also had the MC.

<sup>51</sup> KSC Archives: Walpole Society minutes: 12 December 1931; 1 December 1934.

<sup>52</sup> *The Cantuarian*, July 1919, p. p. 766.

<sup>53</sup> Alan Baker, *An Ordinary Englishman* (n.d.), p. 30.

<sup>54</sup> *The Cantuarian*, November 1921, p. 208.

<sup>55</sup> *The Cantuarian*, March 1926, pp. 545-6; December 1929 pp. 145-6; December 1932, pp. 630-31.

<sup>56</sup> *The Cantuarian*, March 1933, p. 43.

<sup>57</sup> *The Cantuarian*, March 1932, p. 469.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Stapleton, *Diary 1933*. King’s School Archives, Box A 107. Stapleton had entered the senior school in September 1933. Dr Cyril Norwood, Headmaster of Harrow, prepared an Armistice Day Peace Message for schools of the Empire.

had been born in 1914; the youngest were post-war children. To all of them the war was history.

By 1938 the prospect of another war was very real and the question of evacuation was raised at a Special Meeting of the Governors on 28 September. The general feeling was that the School should leave East Kent, and the Atlantic Hotel, Newquay in Cornwall or Taymouth Castle in Perthshire were possible destinations. “While the question was under discussion, the meeting heard that Herr Hitler had asked Mr Neville Chamberlain, Signor Mussolini and Monsieur Daladier to meet him at Munich on the 29th September, and it was felt that there was now a definite hope of a European war being avoided.”<sup>59</sup>

When war did break out the immediate effects were significant but limited. School numbers fell, partly because “it prevented some two dozen boys, living abroad, from returning”. Several masters were called up and others soon followed. The Cathedral crypt was prepared as an air raid shelter and trenches were dug in the Green Court.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand the School remained in Canterbury and it was not until Dunkirk that the decision was taken in May 1940 to move to Cornwall – “away from the activities of German bombers”.<sup>61</sup> The Second World War thus presented new challenges.

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<sup>59</sup> Governors minutes, 28 September 1938, p. 260.

<sup>60</sup> The Cantuarian, December 1939, pp. 5-6.

<sup>61</sup> The Cantuarian, July 1940, p. 44.

