



Friends of Smithills Hall



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FRIENDS BULLETIN No. 19

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Friends of Smithills Hall Executive Committee

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Introduction

Welcome to the winter bulletin. This edition includes consultation with the Woodland Trust, the Slater Brothers sacrifice in WW1, and events around the Christmas period.

Consultation

On Wednesday 29th October I was invited to attend a consultation organised for the Woodland Trust. The Woodland Trust is currently in the process of purchasing the majority of the Smithills Estate from Bolton MBC. The Trust advised that they were talking to local people and partners about Smithills, so any future plans they develop for the

site can take into consideration local interests, concerns and ideas.

The site runs in a north westerly direction from the west of Smithills Dean Road all the way to the east side of the road that runs past the Winter Hill transmitter mast, south of Burn Edge and north of Smithills Moor. Land to the East of Smithills Dean Road and south of Scout Road (including Bryan Hey Reservoir) and around Smithills Hall will remain in the ownership of Bolton MBC.

Representatives of the residents of Smithills and Johnson Fold, HF/Ramblers,

CHA, Get Active, Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust, Conservation Volunteers, the Police and the Friends of Smithills Hall attended.

There was a wide ranging discussion of the group's views on how the area should be maintained and used. The main theme was providing leisure and educational activities for all ages.

This was the beginning of a wide ranging public consultation. **DW**

Smithills Chapel Memorial

The Slater brothers are the last two names on 'Those who Fell' centre panel on the Memorial. Their sad story is narrated below.

Gilbert Harold Slater 1892 – 26 November 1918 & Ernest Victor Slater 1895 – 24 November 1918

These two only children of *Frederick and Mary Slater* both died within two days of each other, only days after the Armistice of 11 November 1918.. Ernest is buried at Tournai Communal Cemetery Allied Extension, Hainaut, Belgium and Gilbert Harold at Cambrai East Military Cemetery, France.

In 1891 father Frederick and his wife Mary were living at 48 Dean Mills, Halliwell. Frederick was a "packer in Bleachworks" and Mary, who was also born in Bolton, was a "Traveller for Blue Manufacturer".

On the Census of 2nd April 1911, the Slater family were living in 10 Adrian Road, Smithills, off Halliwell Road, and near the junction with Moss Bank Way. Their father, Frederick, was aged 52 and was

employed as a "Package man" in a Bleachworks (presumably owned prior to 1900 by the Ainsworths before shares were transferred to the Bleachers Association) and was Bolton born. Mary, aged 45, was a self-employed "greengrocer" Also in the household was Gilbert Harold aged 19, who was working in a Bleachworks as an "Invoice Clerk", and Ernest Victor, aged 15 who was working in a greengrocer's shop presumably helping his mother as he is shown on the Census as a "Greengrocers Assistant". He is on the Smithills Chapel Memorial presumably because his father and brother were both working for the *Ainsworths*, and one son couldn't be included to the exclusion of the other.

Gilbert Harold: enlisted on a "Short Service Attestation" at Bolton on 11th December 1915 but now his trade is shown as "Grocer". He was single. On 20th May 1916 he was at No. 2 depot of the Royal Garrison Artillery, Fort Brockhurst, in Gosport.

In 1918 he was a sapper in the Royal Engineers attached to the



Signal Sub. Section 57th **Cambrai** Heavy Artillery Brigade, Royal Garrison Artillery when he died on 26th November 1918 aged 26 years. He was buried at Cambrai.

Ernest Victor: enlisted as a driver in the Territorial Force of the West Lancashire Division of the Royal Engineers on 13th July 1915 at St. Helens. Sadly at the top left of his 'Attestation' form appears the word "Dead". He was with the 421st Field Company, Royal Engineers when he died



on 24th November 1918 aged 23 years. He was buried at Tournai. *The two Slater brothers are buried 12 miles apart.*

Tournai The ***Bolton Evening News*** of 9th December 1918 had the following entry:

“Died on Active Service”

“SLATER – In loving memory of our dear boy, ***Ernest Victor Slater*** RE who died in a clearing station in Belgium November 24th 1918 aged 23 years.

SLATER – In loving memory of our dear boy, Sapper ***Gilbert Harold Slater*** RE Signals who died in a clearing station in Cambrai November 26th 1918.

***“The Lord gave and they are in His keeping still
Blessed be the name of the Lord.”***

And lower down is this entry –

“Mr and Mrs Slater desire to thank all friends for letters and sympathy and prayers in their great trial.”

Both were awarded the Victory and British medals.

The Slater brothers are commemorated on a stained glass window at St Thomas’ Church, Eskrick St, Halliwell, Bolton.

Ernest’s will made on 1 February 1917, in the event of his death, left “the whole of my property and effects to my Mother”



Slater Memorial Window St Thomas’s

Remembrance Sunday 2014



On Remembrance Sunday 9th November Friends gathered, together with Julie Spencer and Julie Lamara from the



Friends and colleagues gather for the placing of crosses

Council, for the first Friends wreath laying on the 1914-18 War Chapel Memorial. The short ceremony included readings and poems, and wreath laying by Bill Sheppard. It was followed by the placing of crosses outside the Chapel door where the Friends had recently grown poppies. It is hoped that this will become an annual event. Make a date in your diary to attend next year's wreath laying on **Remembrance Sunday, 8th November 2015.**

Ghost Tour

Another successful and enjoyable Ghost and History Tour was held on 13th November with guides Ann Marie Elliott-Clark, Dorothy Lee and David Williams.

Talk

David Williams gave a talk on the history of Smithills Hall through the ages, to a 15 strong reading group at Brightmet Library. It is pleasing to note that all signed up for a guided tour of the Hall two weeks later. The tour was a great success and may encourage more visits to the Hall.

Christmas decorations

Eight Friends spent Friday morning on 28th November putting up period decorations in Smithills Hall in preparation for Christmas. Their efforts are very much appreciated.

On the Sunday the Bennett Choir sang Christmas Carols in the Great Hall to a appreciative capacity audience which overflowed into the Pantry area! Mulled wine and mince pies were sold in the interval with the help of Friends' volunteers.

Christmas Social

The Christmas Social was held in the Hall on Wednesday 3rd December when speaker Graham Stirrup gave an

illustrated talk on 'Animals in War'. This was followed by a pie, peas and cakes served in the Dome Room.

Thanks to those volunteers who worked so hard to make this an enjoyable event.

Christmas Carols

The historic Chapel was the venue for the Friends' Christmas Carol Service held on Wednesday evening on the 10th December. Our thanks go to Rev. Vinnie Whitworth who conducted the service and the Rev. Michael Taylor (a Friend) who played the organ. Michael talked about the history and origins of some of the carols we sang and readings were given by members of the Friends.

Mulled wine and mince pies were enjoyed after the service.

The numbers attending are growing slowly year by year and we hope that more of you can join us in 2015.

Thanks

None of the above events would be possible without the support of a small group of volunteer Friends. Our thanks go to Joan Sheppard and Ruth Ellison for their splendid organisation and to Margaret Koppens, Dorothy Lee, Ann Marie Elliott-Clark, Derek and Stella Eccles, and Nora Sabini (apologies if I have missed anyone) for their valuable support – and to the Council staff at the Hall for their co-operation and help.

Ed.

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