

## Chapter 8: Grandad's Views on the War

Grandad, in general, did not write about his feelings or views in his diaries. So, it is not possible to judge exactly what he thought of the war. However, he clearly followed what was happening in the war with interest. He bought war magazines including "War" and "The Great War".<sup>1</sup> Some of the films he watched had a war theme, such as "Called to the Front"<sup>2</sup>, "The Child Killers"<sup>3</sup> and "Penalty Fits the Crime".<sup>4</sup>

I wondered what views if any, grandad's church, the Primitive Methodists had on the war. Grandad recorded that on 24 August 1914, less than a week after war had been declared, the lesson at class was on "peace". On 20 September 1914, he noted that there had been "a good sermon on the war by P Blatherwick" but grandad does not describe its content nor what made it good in his view. It appears that military personnel participated in services. In March 1915 "Captain Davis was at our chapel" and in April 1917 "went to class that Lance Corporal gave a lesson". Clearly, the chapel congregation were involved in and affected by the war. On 6 July 1918 grandad recorded that there was a "Grand Demonstration of Sunday School scholars etc towards building memorial for soldiers & sailors killed in the war. We closed at 2pm".

According to [other sources](#), before the outbreak of the First World War, the Primitive Methodist Church was largely a pacifist church. It had no chaplains in the armed forces, it fiercely opposed the Boer War, and was the most politically radical of the Free Churches. Primitive Methodism also had a precedent for practising passive resistance, in their opposition to the Education Act of 1902. However, once war was declared, in what was described as an astonishing U-turn, the Church changed the narrative. Instead of proclaiming peace, it now supported fighting against oppression. 150,000 Primitive Methodists served in the war, and 15,000 died. Some became stretcher bearers, others refused to kill and were imprisoned for their beliefs.

There was a war memorial at Bourne Primitive Methodist Chapel and presumably this commemorates those associated with the church who were killed during the war. The memorial was moved to Trinity Methodist Church sometime after Bourne closed, in the early 1960s. A [service of rededication](#) for the memorial was held in 2014.<sup>5</sup> It appears that the memorial was [in the care of Kirkby and District Conservation Society](#) for some time before this but it has now been [installed on the wall of Trinity Methodist Church](#) in the [rear car park](#).



War memorial in Kirkby that was originally in Bourne Primitive Methodist Chapel and that is now at Trinity Methodist Church. I am grateful to Helen Jay for supplying this photograph.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 27 for details.

<sup>2</sup> In [this film](#), an agent escapes from a German invasion ship and gets news to the War Office.

<sup>3</sup> Grandad described this as a true war story. I have not found more details of it.

<sup>4</sup> Grandad described this a French war picture. I have found a [reference](#) to it but no more details.

<sup>5</sup> However, that report only refers to 14 men but there are 15 names on the memorial. In Edith Searson's book(let) "I Remember" (p35), she noted that there were Memorial tablets for all men connected to Bourne who went to the war – 42 in total. She noted that ten did not return but this figure is lower than the 15 recorded on the memorial.