

The First Armistice Anniversary Commemorations

“Ely paid its silent tribute to the fallen, the eleventh hour hush being everywhere observed. The bells of St Mary’s church pealed forth at an early hour and again at night, and shortly before 11 a.m. several residents assembled in the vicinity of the War Shrine on the Market Square, it having been arranged that a deputation from the local branch of the Comrades of the Great War should place a laurel wreath on the structure which bears the names of the Ely men who laid down their lives for King and country. The scene was a deeply impressive one. Some few minutes before the appointed hour Capt. Bendall and Mr A. E. Meadows (Hon. Treasurer of the local branch of the Comrades of the Great War) arrived at the Shrine, replaced some of the dying chrysanthemums on the ledge and made the structure as neat and tidy as the wintery conditions would permit. In the meantime other comrades and members of the general public had put in an appearance. Major Goodwyn L. Archer being amongst those who took up their stand near the monument. On the stroke of eleven Capt Bendall affixed the laurel wreath to the top of the Shrine, using tri-coloured ribbon, and when the Jam Factory buzzer sounded perfect silence was kept, the male members of the crowd removing their hats. For what seemed longer than two minutes tryst was kept with the dead. There could have been no more fitting response to the King’s, request, characterised as it was with the greatest reverence and solemnity. There was a fair congregation at Matins at Ely Cathedral.....At 11 a.m. the Dean asked those present to remember with thanksgiving and with all honour before God and men all those who have died giving their lives in the service of their country. Silence was kept for two minutes, after which there was an anthem followed by the Commemoration versicles, collects and grace. The Dead March was played by the organist. At Evensong the Bishop of Ely was present, the “Last Post” was sounded, and the National Anthem was sung. In the schools lessons were stopped at 11 a.m. for a brief space and teachers explained the meaning of the Great Silence. There was a general cessation of work in all the business houses, and it was in the true sense of the word, a day of remembrance. A full parade of officers and other ranks stationed at Ely took place at the Park at 10.50 a.m. Precisely at 11 a.m. the flag was lowered to half mast, and the “Last Post” was sounded, officers saluting and other ranks standing to attention. At the completion of the prescribed two minutes the flag was hoisted to full mast and the parade dismissed. Capt E Rivers-Smith M.B.E. was in command. – a number of parishioners of St Mary’s parish assembled in the Parish Church where, after the silence period, a short service of prayer and intercession was conducted by the Vicar.”