

## NOTTINGHAM'S MEMORIAL TO ITS DEAD

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### UNVEILING CEREMONY

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#### IMPRESIVE SPECTACLE ON THE VICTORIA EMBANKMENT

The Armistice Day anniversary of 1927 will long be remembered by the citizens of Nottingham for it marked the unveiling and dedication of the city's tribute to her dead – the Arch of Remembrance on the banks of the Trent.

**There is no need at this stage to describe afresh what is generally conceded to be one of the finest memorials in the country. Suffice it to say that it has been erected by the City Council on behalf of the citizen general, and forms a magnificent entrance to the park presented to the city by Sir Jesse Boot, and has been highly praised on all hands by experts and public alike.**

**Only yesterday it was described by Sir Andrew Pettigrew, a prominent Glasgow citizen on a visit to Nottingham, as the finest memorial in Great Britain.**

The sun shone brilliantly on what proved to be a most impressive ceremony. Despite the wintery touch in the air, many thousands of citizens flocked to the scene.

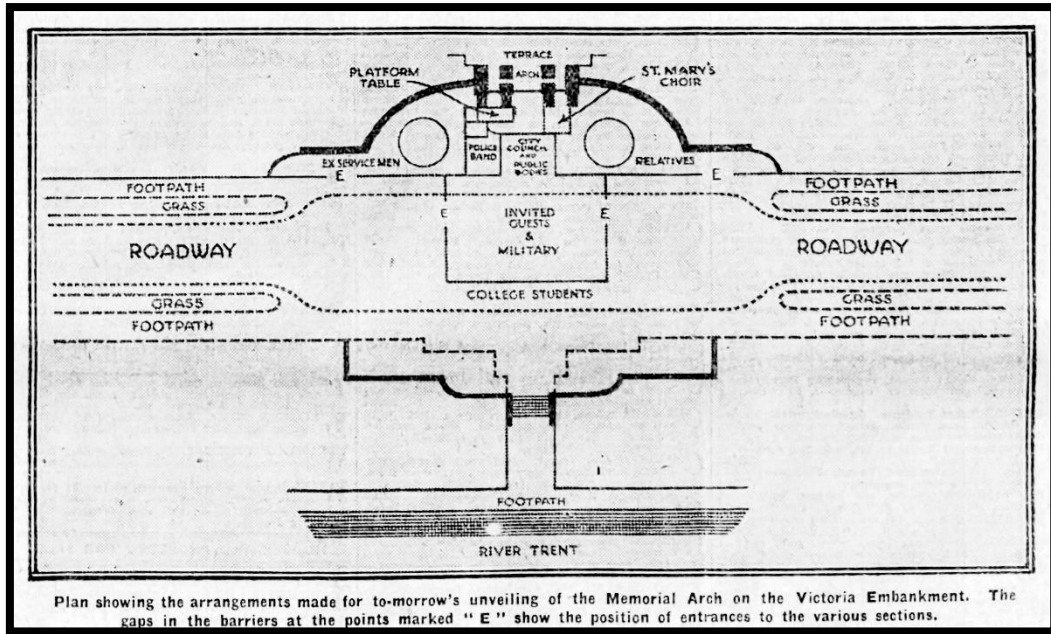
#### COUNCIL'S DIFFICULTIES

Ex-servicemen who had marched from Queen's Walk were accommodated in a special enclosure reserved for them in front of the memorial on the Wilford Bridge side. For near relatives of the men who made the supreme sacrifice in the Great War similar provisions were made to the Trent Bridge side. One woman was noted for wearing no fewer than five medals.



The feature of Armistice Day celebrations in Nottingham was the unveiling by the Mayor, Ald. Edmund Huntsman, of the city's fine Memorial gate at the Victoria Embankment. The photograph shows the crowd listening to the speeches after the unveiling.

The civic party, which drove from the Guildhall Mayor and Mayoress (Ald. E and Mrs. Huntsman, the Lord Lieutenant of the County the Duke of Portland), the Sheriff and Mrs. Pollard, the Rev. Geoffrey Gordon (vicar of St. Mary's Church), the Town Clerk and Mrs. Board, the President of the Nottingham Free Church Council (the Rev. J. Arnes), the Mayor's Chaplain (the Rev. Simon Jones), the chairman of the General Purposes Committee (Alderman J. E. Pendelton) and Mrs. Pendelton, and the City Engineer, (Mr. T. Wallis Gordon). Illness prevented the Bishop of Southwell from attending to dedicate the memorial, the lordships duties being performed by the vicar of St. Mary's.



*Nottingham Post, Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November, 1927*

The 7<sup>th</sup> (Robin Hoods) Battalion, the Sherwood Foresters paraded un the command of Lieutenant Colonel W. R. Rook and detachment from the following units were also present: The Depot, Sherwood Foresters, the 240<sup>th</sup> Field Battery Royal Artillery, No. 3 Company, 45<sup>th</sup> North Midland Division Royal Corps of Signals, the Nottinghamshire Branch of the British Red Cross Society, No.5 (North Eastern) District of the St. Johns Ambulance Brigade and the Nottingham Squadron of the Legion of Frontiersmen<sup>1</sup>. The Nottingham and Nott's United Service Club was represented By Colonel Sir Lancelot Rolleston<sup>2</sup>, Messrs. C. Parker and C. R. Sands. Many representatives of the City Council, the magistrates, University College, and other bodies, including the West Bridgford Urban Council (Captain W. H. Belton chairman and other members). Lady Bentinck and Mrs. Charles Birkin were among the ladies present.

During the period of waiting the City Police Band (conducted by Inspector Hewit) played appropriate selections, including Tipperary and Land of Hope and Glory, A monster Union Jack concealed the entrance.

In a brief speech prior to calling upon the mayor to unveil the memorial Alderman Pendleton recalled it was a little over eight years since the Corporation out of a deep sense of gratitude to erect a memorial to the former citizens of Nottingham who had given their lives during the war. In a supreme moment of wisdom, the Corporation decided that the necessary cost should come out of the common fund of the rates in order to make it a truly representative tribute of the citizens.

They met with unforeseen difficulties and had consequently taken a long time to fulfil what they had in mind. Their first difficulty was by no means peculiar to Nottingham. It was to get unity to the particular form of memorial. Numbers of useful and valuable suggestions were made at a town's meeting

<sup>1</sup> The Legion of Frontiersmen was a civilian organisation formed in Britain in 1905 by Roger Pocock, a former constable with the North-West Mounted Police and Boer War veteran. Prompted by fears of an impending invasion of Britain and the Empire, the organisation was founded to be a field intelligence corps that would watch over and protect the boundaries of the Empire.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Sir Lancelot Rolleston KCB DSO Commanding Officer of the South Nott's Hussars. In 1900 he along with his regiment took part in the Boar War where he distinguished himself when he led a charge against the Boers to try to rescue 500 British prisoners of war. During the charge he was shot and his arm was broken by the bullet. Eventually, after recovery, he rejoined the regiment and fought in many battles. He was a leading figure in Nottingham and was appointed Deputy Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff. He was also very involved with the Boy Scouts for more than 30 years, finally retiring as County Commissioner in 1940 at the age of 93. He died the following year at his home, Watnall Hall.

and through the Press, but it was not until Alderman Radford came forward to the committee with a suggestion that a scheme upon which they could get unity was found.

Alderman Pendleton paid tribute to Mr. Radford for his very fine judgment in suggesting that form of memorial.

Alderman Pendleton referred to the appropriateness of the mayor being asked to perform the sacred ceremony, adding that there were few men in the city or county who could perform it more fittingly. In conclusion he made an earnest plea for peace: "Let the spirit of peace cast itself into our very soul and then these men will not have made the sacrifice in vain."

### MAYOR'S ELOQUENT TRIBUTE

The singing of the hymn "O God our help in ages past" was led by the robed choir of St. Mary's (conducted by Mr. Vernon Read) and accompanied by the City Police Band. The Rev. Geoffrey Gordon said a special prayer, the President of the Free Church read a passage of Scripture St. Matthew V verses 1 to 10<sup>3</sup> and offered a second special prayer.

The chairman of the General Purposes Committee (the committee in charge of the erection of the memorial) explained the circumstances in which the form of the memorial was decided upon, and touched on the unavoidable delay that occurred in the fulfilment of the scheme.

Alderman Pendleton call upon the mayor to unveil the memorial, which his Worship did with the declaration, "To the glory of God and in grateful memory of the men of Nottingham who gave their lives for King and Country in the Great War I unveil this memorial."

No sooner had the great Union Jack fallen away from the gate than buglers of the Robin Hoods sounded the "Last Post" a great hush fell upon the assembly as distant sirens could be heard announcing the arrival of eleven o'clock. This silence was unbroken until the sirens were again heard. These were the most solemn and impressive moments of a memorable occasion.



The Mayor of Nottingham addressing the assembly after the unveiling of the Memorial. The Duke of Portland, Town Clerk, and the Chief Constable are seen in the photograph.



**Left:** The child of a wounded ex-serviceman placing a bunch of chrysanthemums at the foot of the Memorial. **Right:** Nott's County footballers placing poppies at the cross.



Impressive picture. The new Memorial with a cross of Flanders poppies in front.

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<sup>3</sup> See appendices.

The heartening notes of the Reveille came from the buglers, and the mayor proceeded to deliver an address which touched all with bounty and evident sincerity.

The mayor said that any speech made so soon after the great silence could only have the effect of marring that sanctity which the silence has so mysteriously brought into their souls. Be that as it might. Any words that need to wake remembrance of the valiant dead should, they would agree, to be free of any vain glory or boastfulness, and should be, above all, should words of sincerity and truth drawn from the deep walls of the heart. They might properly think that on an occasion like that they might have been addressed by someone of higher authority, with experience that lay nearer to the stupendous efforts of the war and someone whose lips were touched with a loftier eloquence than his. But he thought after that silence no man could do justice to the theme he had to handle.



The Two Minutes Silence. The scene in front of Nottingham's War Memorial as the huge crowd paid tribute to the memory of the fallen.

Nottingham's effort was worthy of the whole city. At least 40,000 men went from this city to the Great War, and it is the absence of exact records, they might fairly estimate that at least 10,000 of those citizens laid down their lives. His purpose that day was not to review the course of the war, but to pay some tribute on their behalf to the memory of those who made the great sacrifice.



Memorial Arch 1927

**BACK TO 1914:  
DAYS THAT WILL NEVER GROW DIM**

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**DOUBT PUT TO THE TEST**

The sunny days of August 1914, would never grow dim, he ventured to think, in the mind of every Englishmen who lived through them. He well remembered at that time they were in their frequent moods of self-depreciation. Thoughtful people, thoughtful men, look at the surface of things, and were in the habit of saying that material prosperity and the cushions of luxury had weakened the fibre of the nation's manhood.

It was not an infrequent suggestion that if some foreign ruler, bent upon conquest – a Philip of Spain or a Napoleon – were again to threaten the national safety, they would never find those manly virtues in the state of things would serve the bulwarks of their defence.

That doubt was suddenly, as they knew, put to the test. The test came suddenly and dramatically – a test, let it be said, without any desire to belittle the deeds of the past, at the side of which any trial which the country has heretofore known was child's play.

They of mature years held their breaths as they beheld the disaster of wars, like an irresistible avalanche sweeping down upon them. The blood ran faster in their veins even at that distance of time as they recalled the calm, brave attitude and bearing of the young men of that period who went first – 1,000, then another, then another – in rapid succession of numbers to the colours to face that terrible terror.

It is true that the preacher said that one generation passed away and another cometh, and if he might be allowed to alter the words slightly, he would be allowed to say "The valour of the race, like the earth in which we dwell, abideth forever." Those men who sprang forward to the call of great ideals. It would be perhaps true to say, as they were plain, ordinary men in the main like themselves, that they yielded to what they conceived to be their plain duty. Be that as it might, they fought for ideals, and supreme among those ideals was after all that was over, and peradventure victory was achieved, then the nations on the earth might be linked together in cords of mutual understanding and brotherhood closed for ever.

**MEN FROM ALL CLASSES**

Those men who came from all classes to fight for their country, and many men who had seen so little of the face of beautiful England, of its streams and meadows and woods, and many who had grown pale at the desk, men from the counter, from the factory and the mine, all at one, and even men whose horizon was that of the slum, and whose pleasures in life were such as they get in it's the squalor and hardship – all at one with the man highly placed and favoured in the land, in the readiness to serve; all at once in the face of the enemy in the heights of valour which they reached.

He had thus far spoken in the main of the men who went of their own free will. They were entitled to that distinction: but their all distinction disappeared. Those who went under compulsion of law very soon shown by their deeds that they were cast in the same mould.

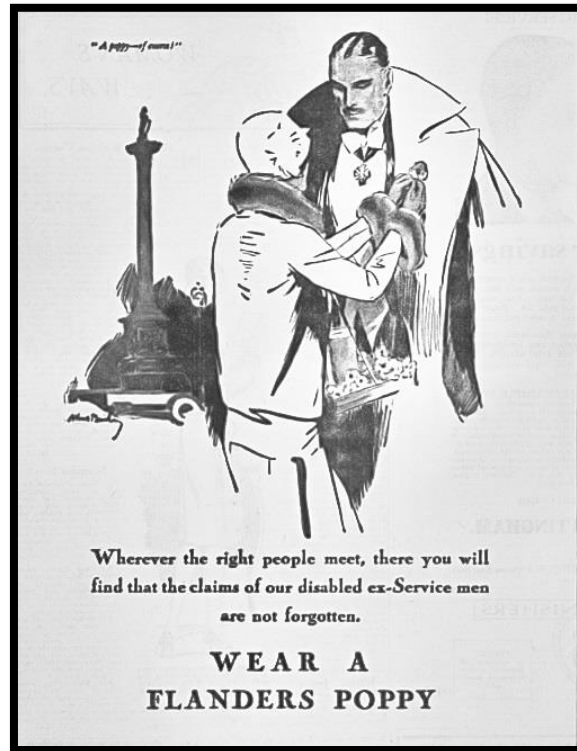
He would pass over what the war meant to his martyrs. As those men moved in civil life among their friends, they themselves drew a veil over those things, and he would not presume to draw that veil aside. This we did not know; that death reaped in the curse of those four years a dreadful harvest. A great schoolmaster looking back recently over this career, paused and exclaimed, "Ah! But my best work lies buried in Flanders!"

The sons of Nottingham lay in the trim well cared for graves in Flanders and France; but many more of them lay.

Tombed with no remembrance o'er them? As the poet said, in Mesopotamia in Egypt, in Gallipoli; in the depths of waters wherever the ocean rolled.

But there were those whose sacrifice came short of the finality of death who they should remember gratefully – the wounded, the cripples, young men with wrecked nerves, with minds shorn of some of their brightest faculties. Broken careers, and the wreckage of war had left them in its train in human experience – they thought painfully of all that today.

The women who for four long years of suspense never knew what it was to have cruel anxiety absent from the secret places of their hearts, bore today invisible wounds, which time may soothe, but will never heal. "Oh, if we could go back and undo it all!" we sometimes thought. As the ancients said, not even the gods could undo the past.



*Nottingham Evening Post, Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November 1927*

**The moving finger writes, and, having writ,  
Moves on; nor all your piety and wit  
Can lure it back to cancel a line,  
Nor all your tears can wash out a word of it.**

Was it all loss? God forbid that we should think so. Out of all this came a great and precious example. Ready to serve the land of our birth, courage, example, comradeship – all those things shone out of the darkness of this tragedy. "Let us look," said the mayor "in this scene we have met today, which we devote to this memorial purpose. It is wonderfully suggestive. The Trent – 2<sup>nd</sup> the smug and silver Trent," as Shakespeare called it – flowed at their feet as it had flowed before civilisation began, a mute witness of man's long efforts "to rise on the stepping stones of his dead self to higher things."

"And that memorial, noble and impressive, bearing on the front the motto of their ancient city. Never was that motto better placed proclaiming its truth. Brave deed did not die with themselves. Like stars that perished in the heavens, their light shone long after they had ceased to be.

"That" concluded the mayor," is the message which our monument proclaims to the present and to the future; and today, citizens of Nottingham humbly, thankfully, reverently, we dedicate this memorial to the men of Nottingham who perished in the Great War. We do it with just pride in the memory of them and of their virtues and achievements, and with the prayer that in God's good time the ideals for which they fought and died many become realities in the lives of men."

## Appendices

### Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount (NIV)

**5** Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, **2** and he began to teach them.

**3** “Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**4** Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

**5** Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.

**6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.

**7** Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.

**8** Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.

**9** Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.

**10** Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.