

## Some local accounts of the Armistice

The end of WW1 was abrupt, though not unexpected. The German military situation had deteriorated significantly since the failure of Operation Michael, the army's offensive in spring 1918. This, together with the mutiny of the German navy at the end of October and the total breakdown of social order, led to the despatch of a delegation from the German High Command to the Allied Supreme Commander, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

The Armistice, a cessation of fighting on land, sea and air, without a surrender, was signed in the railway carriage which Foch used as his office, between 5:15 and 5:30am on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 and came into force at 11am the same day.

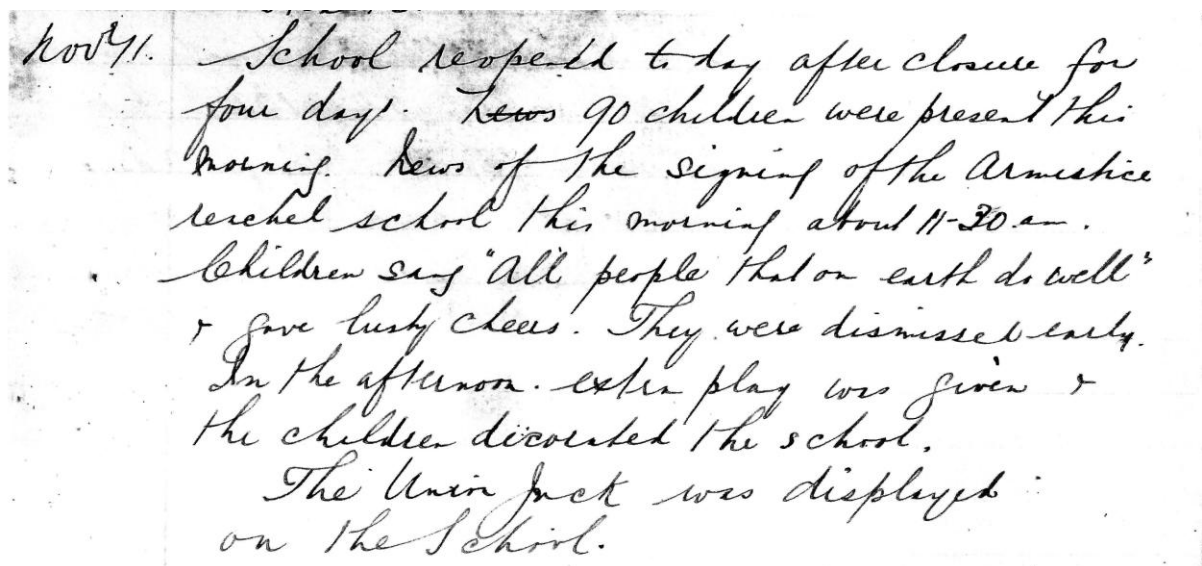
Back home, people waited for the news that the fighting had stopped.

Here are some accounts of how the news came to the local area, and what people's thoughts were on that day.

### Tom Appleby – headmaster of Kildwick School

Tom Appleby was the headmaster of Kildwick School from 1900 to 1926. Throughout the war years he had heard news of the death of 15 former pupils of the school, many of whom he had taught.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 he made the following entry in the school's log book.



Nov 11. School reopened today after closure for four days. News 90 children were present this morning. News of the signing of the Armistice reached school this morning about 11:30 am. Children sang 'All people that on earth dwell' & gave lusty cheers. They were dismissed early. In the afternoon extra play was given & the children decorated the school. The Union Jack was displayed on the school.

Kildwick School log book entry for 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918

Here's a transcript:

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**Note:** The four-day school closure reported was on the orders of the Medical Officer of Health and was the result of an influenza epidemic which had hit the village.

## Norman Green – a pupil at Kildwick School

It is possible that the news of the Armistice was taken to the school by Norman Green, one of the pupils.

Norman was the youngest son of William Green, the Farnhill butcher, and was 12 or 13 when the war ended. The family lived at 33 Main Street, which was later run as a butcher's shop by his older brother Edward. His oldest brother, Eric, was one of the Farnhill WW1 Volunteers.

Late in life, Norman wrote a memoir in which he recalled the end of the war and the return of his brother from a PoW camp.

*My eldest brother was the only one to join the Army in the war. He went on his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or perhaps before that in 1917 and after having trained, went to France early in 1918. Almost immediately the Germans started the last great battle of the war in March 1918 called "The Big Push" and thousands of British troops were overrun and captured. He was put to work in the coal mines in Westphalia and had little to eat. The Armistice came in November the same year. The prisoners broke out of prison in Germany and walked across Holland (a neutral country) and came back to England in a hospital ship from Rotterdam. I remember going to meet him at Kildwick station on his arrival with my carrier cycle and carrying his kit bag home.*

**KILDWICK AND FARNHILL**

**HOME AGAIN.**—Private Eric Green, Durham Light Infantry, eldest son of Mr. William Green, butcher, Farnhill, arrived home on Tuesday. Private Green was taken prisoner on March 21, 1918, and was imprisoned at Paderbion, Westphalia, where he worked as a miner. He returned to Hull on the steamship Londonderry.

**RETURN OF PRIVATE E. GREEN.**—Pte. Eric Green, eldest son of Mr. Wm. Green, butcher, Farnhill, has arrived at Hull from Paderbren in Westphalia, Germany, where he has been a prisoner since last March. Pte. Eric Green joined up in February, 1917, and served with the Durham Light Infantry. He was taken prisoner on March 21st this year, and has worked as a miner in Germany. He does not complain of harsh treatment and says he is in good health. Before enlisting he was a butcher in the employ of the Skipton Co-operative Society.

Keighley News, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1918 (upper) and  
West Yorkshire Pioneer, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1918 (lower).

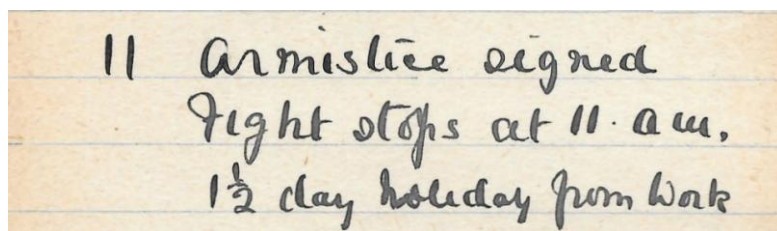
*The Armistice was a tremendous relief to everyone after all the losses and near starvation for over 4 years and I was still at school. The signing was expected at 11:00am on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1918 and just before 11:00 I was dispatched by the Headmaster to a Coal Merchant's office about a quarter mile away to await a telephone message. After receiving a message that the Armistice had been signed I ran back to school with the news but long before I got back all the factory hooters in Farnhill, Junction and Sutton were blowing, so my journey was an anticlimax. The factories blew their whistles (steam) so long that there was not enough steam left to run the mill and they were closed down for the day and all the schools closed too.*

**Note:** The Coal Merchant mentioned will have been William Sugden, who had a coal yard near Redman bridge and who lived at Holme Bank on Kildwick corner, opposite the church.

## William Whitham – of Bucklar Hill

William Whitham, originally from Haworth, lived at 9 Bucklar Hill with his two brothers, one of whom, John Spencer Whitham, was one of the Farnhill WW1 Volunteers.

Throughout the war he kept a diary, with quite succinct entries. This is his entry for 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918.



*Armistice Signed Fight stops at 11 am. 1½ day holiday from work.*

## Private Percy Walmsley – writing from hospital

Percy Walmsley joined the armed forces on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1914 as a member of 1/6 battalion the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment and commenced active service in France on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1915 – his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

He suffered from trench foot and frostbite in November 1915, and is known to have been wounded on more than one occasion. One of these, in March 1918, may have marked the end of his war service and a long period of hospitalisation.

On the evening of 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 he was in hospital, somewhere in England, from where he wrote a letter to his nephew, George Croft – clearly one of a sequence of letters the two exchanged.

Monday night Nov 11<sup>th</sup>

Dear George

*I was ever so pleased to receive your ever welcome letter tonight and pleased also to hear that you are in the best of health, as for myself I am getting on very nicely so I musn't grumble; you are trying to have me on a bit when you say "don't look at the writing" now how could I read it if I didn't look at the writing; I did look for the pictures as well; oh George give up kidding your uncle; but nuff sed, well we have got the hospital all trimmed up to celebrate the armistice which we heard had been signed this morning, it is hard to believe isn't it, and what a place to be in on such a day; this is no bigger than Kildwick Grange, so you can bet there is no life here except what we make ourselves; we are going to have a bit of (a) do tonight a sing-song or something. You will be pleased at having holiday from school aren't you, especially today I expect all the mills have closed down haven't they; wish I was in Farnhill tonight; but never mind we will have a good time when I come home on leave; which may not be long now, yes Alec had a poor do in the Rabbit trade I hope I have better luck with mine when I get them home; well George I don't seem to have much fresh news, I expect a letter from your mother tomorrow so I will wait and then send this along with the reply to your ma's. Well no more this time except best love to all*

*From your loving*

*Uncle Percy*

(Transcribed from the original by Helen Moran)

**Note:** Percy had an allotment, at the top of Starkey Lane, where he bred fancy rabbits which he exhibited at local shows.

The "Alec" mentioned was probably Alec Hargreaves of Kildwick. Rosemary Hargreaves, Alec's niece, recalls that Percy gave her one of his rabbits to keep as a pet.

