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The first soldier to die in the war

By Daphne Chamberlain

An appalling number of men and boys were slaughtered in the First World War, which started 100 years ago this summer. One young Finchley boy was the first soldier to die. By a tragic irony he was both too young to have joined the army, and met his death two days before hostilities officially started.

John Parr, born in Finchley Central, lived for a time at 49 Bedford Road before his family moved to North Finchley, and attended Holy Trinity School. Lying about his age, he joined the army at 14 years and 10 months. When he died, on 21 August 1914, two days before the official outbreak of the Battle of Mons, he was still only one month past his 17th birthday.

Barnet War Memorials Initiative will be creating a monument to young John in Lodge Lane, and telling his story around the borough, but every death was a tragedy. Now is the time to remember others too.

Arts Festival

Geoffrey Hanson, director of the East Finchley Arts Festival, has been asked to feature memorabilia, poetry and music from World War 1 in this year's programme, and is asking for contributions. He says: "There must be memories, documents, letters etc., dating from that time which local people will have, and which we could use at the event."

News travelled much more slowly then. I have seen several letters (including one in my own family), written by anxious relatives asking if anyone has had any news from their loved one. Letters, photographs, postcards, perhaps the dreaded telegram, memories handed down ... all will be welcome, and will bring

back the living person behind the names on our war memorials. if you can contribute to this project. Our contact details are always on page 2.
Please let us know at *THE ARCHER*

War talk

Local resident and historian Peter Hart will be giving a talk on life in the trenches of the First World War on 12 April at East Finchley Library at 2pm. Also present from 10.30am to 3.30pm will be four members of the 10th Battalion Essex Regiment re-enactment group, who will be demonstrating the equipment and kit used by your average Tommy during WW1.

Somewhere over East Finchley

As the wet winter finally gave way to spring sunshine at the start of March, The Archer's John Dearing took this wonderful photo of a rainbow arching over Viceroy Parade. So where's the pot of gold?

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