

Dear Members,

I have a few follow-ons from our October Update regarding the centenary of the First World War Armistice.

Firstly, I have learned no more about GH Tatham Patton or William Leefe Robinson, the two men awarded the Victoria Cross in WWI. However, I discovered another VC with local connections: Noel Mellish, who is commemorated in Great Dunmow by a small plaque near the war memorial. Although not a local man, he was educated at Saffron Walden Grammar School. He served as an army chaplain to the Royal Fusiliers during WWI. In 1916 he rescued many wounded soldiers from trenches, an act of selfless courage that was recognised by the award of the Victoria Cross. Some time after the war he served as vicar of Great Dunmow for 20 years.

Great Dunmow is one of several local towns and villages that marked the centenary with an exceptional display. The town displayed hundreds of poppies, especially along the High Street and beside the war memorial. Littlebury's church had a striking display outside and a pictorial record inside. It may not be too late if you wish to view these displays.

Last month's article appeared in Elsenham's parish magazine and was read by a gentleman who contacted me to say that three of the seven men whose deaths are commemorated on the Newrells memorial were his great uncles. He sent a copy of a family photo of the three men together with their sister who, in due course, became his grandmother. The very clear photo depicts two of the men in army uniform and the third, their younger brother, in his boy scout's uniform.

Here is a copy of the seasonal article that will, hopefully, appear in your parish magazine in December. It was written by one of our trustees, Tricia Moxey, who is a botanist.

*Mistletoe has become a symbol for the festive season.*

*Large clusters of pale green mistletoe are revealed as the leaves fall in November from the branches of apple, hawthorn, lime and poplars. This semi-parasitic plant takes water and some nourishment from the host tree. Clumps producing the sticky white berries are often guarded by Mistle Thrushes as the berries attract other species eager to eat them. The seeds are spread from tree to tree as the birds try to remove the sticky flesh from their beaks and wipe them on a suitable branch. Germination is slow, but once established the clumps grow larger year on year and in some cases seem to overwhelm the host tree.*

*As a plant which is sensitive to the chill of winter, mistletoe is rapidly becoming well established in the eastern regions of England as our winters are tending to become warmer. Festoons of mistletoe on suitable trees can be seen in parts of our local area including Hatfield Forest, Saffron Walden, Quendon, Newport and other villages.*

*There are many seasonal traditions associated with this intriguing plant which was thought to have magical powers especially if found growing on Oaks. Within many European cultures its evergreen boughs were used to symbolise eternal life. Mistletoe and holly were used to decorate houses during the time of the winter solstice to*

*remind people that the circle of life would continue. Mistletoe came to symbolise good luck and love in life.*

In last month's member update, I said that I would be signing books on November 24 at Bishop's Stortford TIC. Unfortunately, that has been postponed, but I am looking forward to signing a few more books and perhaps meeting Society members on the following Saturday. I will end this Update with the same paragraph that completed our latest parish magazine article - with a seasonal promotion for the Society's book .

*If you need inspiration for a Christmas present, please consider the Society's book, "The Hundred Parishes: An Introduction". It can be purchased at local Tourist Information Centres and some local bookshops. The principal author, Ken McDonald, will be on hand to sign copies at Saffron Walden TIC on Saturday, December 1st between 10:30am and 12:30pm.*

Should you be in Saffron Walden then, please come and introduce yourself.

Ken McDonald

Secretary, The Hundred Parishes Society