

## World War 1 - Jireh Baptist Church, Chapel Street, Orrell

### WILLIAM MARSDEN DCM

Research into those from Jireh who fought in the First World War uncovered a forgotten hero; William Marsden the eldest son of William and Ruth Marsden. (See family tree)



William joined the 1/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment, the Liverpool Scottish. He was killed in 1917 aged only 19 years. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. His citation reads *"For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty when in charge of a Lewis gun. He pushed forward in the open and silenced an enemy machine gun which was holding up his platoon and afterwards when a hostile bombing squad was working down a communication trench he took his gun outside the parapet and by his fire prevented the enemy from passing a gap in the trench. He was the only man left in his team but he kept his gun in action throughout"*

He is remembered on the Cambrai Memorial in Louverval, France.

### EBENEZER ANDERS



A second known casualty from Jireh is Ebenezer Anders. His parents had been baptised by Henry Farrimond (the first pastor). Ebenezer joined the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment and was killed on July 23<sup>rd</sup> 1917, only six months after he had signed up, he was 33 years old. As a railway worker he did not have to enlist. He had worked for about 10 years as a railway porter at Upholland Station. Ebenezer was unmarried, he was buried in the cemetery at Messines, Torreken Farm no.1. At his parents' request his grave does not have a cross just a quote from Job Chapter 1 verse 21. *"The Lord gave the Lord hath taken away"*. Ebenezer was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. After his

death the church sent a letter of condolence to his parents who had recently moved to Bolton. His father, James Anders had been a member of Upholland District Council

for twelve years and had also represented the Upholland district on the Ashton and District Elementary Local Education Authority. They had lived at 9 Pimbo Lane Up Holland where James Anders had kept a grocery shop.

At the church meeting held on August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1917 it was proposed that a letter of sympathy be sent to Mr & Mrs Anders *"their son having been killed in France fighting for his country"*.

#### NEWSPAPER REPORT

### Former Upholland Councillor's Son Killed.



PRIVATE EBENEZER ANDERS.

Mr. James Anders, of 35 Halstead-street, Bolton, who is well-known in the Wigan district, on account of his public work, has received news that his eldest son, Pte. Ebenezer Anders, of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, has been killed in action. Pte. Anders, who was 32 years old and unmarried, joined the Army in January last. For about ten years he worked as a porter at the Upholland Station of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company. His father, Mr. James Anders, was before his recent removal to Bolton, for twelve years a member of the Upholland District Council, and he also represented the Upholland district for some time on the Ashton and District Elementary Local Education Authority.

## THE 1915 VOLUNTEERS

In August 1915 The Christian's Pathway Magazine published the names and photographs of men from Strict Baptist Churches around the country who had enlisted, this was before conscription was introduced in 1916. The men from Jireh are pictured below with the original captions. Additional information has been found for some of the men.





**Private E Dickinson, 1484 Hants Cavalry Yeomanry, no.1 Troop B Squadron.**

*Now in training at Bowood Camp near Calne, Wiltshire. He is the youngest son of Mr John Dickinson, who was for many years the esteemed deacon at Jireh Chapel, Pemberton."*

The Wigan Examiner newspaper of 15 March 1919 recorded his death.

***Pemberton Air Mechanic's Demise***

*"We regret to learn of the death of First Air Mechanic E. Dickinson, youngest son of the late Mr John Dickinson, Boundary House, Pemberton and brother to Councillor J. Dickinson of Dunecht, Orrell, which took place on February 23<sup>rd</sup> at the 41<sup>st</sup> Stationary Hospital, St. Other(?), France, following an attack of broncho-pneumonia, The soldier-airman, who was 33 years of age, some two years ago married the daughter of Mr James Irving of Penrith and it will be recalled that whilst on their honeymoon in Blackpool the bridegroom was arrested under circumstances of a military description which, whilst being personally annoying had the humorous side. The authorities "identified" Mr Dickinson as a man absent without leave took him to the police station and on the production of the official papers the officers were most lavish and humble in their apologies. The incident was reported in our columns at the time.*

*Mr Dickinson was for some years employed as an assistant to Messrs. Platt Ltd., Wigan and later was employed in Penrith. Some six years ago he proceeded to Winchester. Soon after the outbreak of war he joined the Hampshire Carabineers, later transferring to the Air Force. He saw a good term of service in France with the Kite Balloon Section. It was on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February that Mrs Dickinson, who is staying at Boundary House, was first informed of her husband's illness, which was so serious that permission to visit the patient could not be given and later she was notified of his death having taken place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> ult. Great sorrow is expressed towards the young widow, Councillor Dickinson and members of the deceased's family. The interment took place in France."*

Although Ephraim did not die during the War undoubtedly his time there contributed to his death. He may be commemorated at Longuenesse (St Omer) Souvenir Cemetery, Pas de Calais. Grave Ref: V.F.36

Ephraim Dickinson's father, John Dickinson was baptised on August 8 1882. He was Deacon from 1883-1906 when he died on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.



**Sapper Edward Dean, 6947, 121<sup>st</sup> Field Co., Royal Engineers.**

*Now in training. Stationed at the Barracks, Antrim, Ireland. Brought up in Jireh Sunday School. His parents and grandparents have been connected with the chapel for years."*

He received the 1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.



**Lance-Corporal George T Sherrington, 52034, 2<sup>nd</sup> HFA RAMC, TF, 152<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade, 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division, British Expeditionary Force, Field Hospital France.**

*He is one of the congregation at Pemberton. Was originally in St. John Ambulance Corps but volunteered on hearing that ambulance men were sorely needed. He is at the front.*

He went to the front on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1915. He was awarded the 1915 Star and British War Medal. Before the War started he married Anne and had two children. He worked as a Colliery Brakeman and his wife was a Cotton Weaver. On the 1911 Census they were boarding with Jane Ellen Barker, widow 56 years and her family of son James 23, John Thomas 20, both Coal Miner's labourers, Lucy Jane 17 Cotton Weaver and Henry 13, Assistant Coal Bagger. All living in 5 rooms at 15 Arundel Street, Newtown. James Barker became a deacon at Jireh.



**Private Colin Turton, 16<sup>th</sup> Platoon, D Company, 7<sup>th</sup> Service Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.**

*Now training in the Jellalabad Barracks, Tidworth, Wiltshire. Was brought up for a number of years in Jireh Sunday School until the removal of the family to Preston.*

He was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal. He became an itinerant preacher and sometimes preached at Jireh.



**Corporal J Worthington, 31949, 27<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, RAM Corps, 9<sup>th</sup> Division Train.**

*Now in France at the base of operations. He is the son of Mr Worthington, one of the congregation.*

His Service Record shows that he enlisted aged 26 years 7 months and lived at Orrell Mount, his next of kin is given as Walter but it is impossible to read the relationship. John survived the War and was demobbed 04/08/1919. His address is then given as 18 Osborne Road, Ashton in Makerfield. He was awarded the 1915 Star



**Gunner Percy Houghton, L24088, 171<sup>st</sup> Brigade, RF Artillery.**

*He is now training at St Anne's on Sea. Was one of the Sunday Scholars at Pemberton prior to his joining the forces".*

Wigan Observer 10th August 1918 recorded his injuries:-

#### **Twice Wounded and Gassed Once**

*Mr John Houghton, managing clerk to Mr Arthur Smith, Clerk of the Peace for Wigan and County Justices' Clerk, has received news that his eldest son, Gunner Percy Houghton of the RFA has been wounded in France and is now in the Red Cross Hospital, Great Western-road, Gloucester. Gunner Houghton, who is 20 years of age, enlisted in the early period of the war, being only 17 years old and prior to joining the Forces he resided with his parents at 2, Ridyard-street, Pemberton and was apprenticed as an electrician with Messrs. Heyes and Co., electrical engineers at the Water Heyes Works, Wigan. He has been twice wounded and gassed once while serving in France and this is his second time in hospital in this country. In a letter home Gunner Houghton says he is once again in Blighty after being wounded in the knee whilst going into action with the French and the Americans. Four comrades were hit with a shell, he himself sustaining a fractured knee, two being wounded in the arm and one in the face. "I thank the Lord for getting me out of a horrible battle which our battery suffered," he says. "Fritz put up a salvo of 5.9 shells right at the guns. I am all right now, but I have been through a lot of pain," Recalling his mother's birthday. He wishes her many happy returns of the day."*

Percy Houghton signed up on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1915 giving his age as 19 years and 262 days.

His Service Records are quite extensive. It clearly shows that he lied about his age, giving it as 19 years and 262 days. His job is recorded as electrician. The receipts exist for his receipt of his British War and Victory Medals in 1922 when he was living at 11, Swinley Road, Wigan. In

1921 Percy applied to join Lancashire Constabulary. A copy of the reference letter to the Army exists and their reply which describes his character as "very good".



**Driver John Kenyon, 56683, 105<sup>th</sup> Brigade RFA, A Battery.**

*He is the son of one of the members at Jireh, Pemberton and is now in training at Louisburg Barracks, Borden, Hants."*

His father Isaac Kenyon was baptised 7<sup>th</sup> June 1886 and died 20<sup>th</sup> August 1924. His mother Rebekah was baptised 1<sup>st</sup> January 1911 and died 30<sup>th</sup> December 1931.

**"Rifleman J Stanley, I Company, 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade, 11th Infantry Brigade, 4th Division, 16th Platoon, British Expeditionary Force**



(8) Rifleman J. STANLEY, I Company, 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade, 11th Infantry Brigade, 4th Division, 16th Platoon, British Expeditionary Force.

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On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1915 a photo of John Stanley appeared in the Wigan Examiner. It gives his address as Southern Street Pemberton and says he was injured in France in July 6<sup>th</sup>, and was in No 2 Canadian Stationary Hospital. The item in the Christian's Pathway was from August 1915. I do not know why there is a difference in the accounts.

It is not known what happened to all these men or if any others joined from the Chapel. Presumably others were conscripted but their names do not survive.

The Church Minutes make no mention of the War until July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1915 when it was stated "*in accordance with the suggestion made by the Strict & Particular Baptist Northern Union a special prayer meeting be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday in every month as long as the war shall last & that a minister be invited to attend each meeting & that the sum of 5/- be paid to the minister presiding to cover his expenses.*" These meetings were still being held in 1917 as an item from the October 31<sup>st</sup> Church Meeting shows. It was proposed that Mr Hughson and Mr Clough, the newly elected deacons, should "*take their turn of officiating at Special Prayer Meetings held monthly on account of the War.*"

The next mention is February 13<sup>th</sup> 1916 when a letter from Orrell Urban District Council was read by Mr W. Marsden. This was *“respecting the Lighting restrictions order.”* In response the church changed the time of the *“Sunday Prayer Meetings to 2:30pm and the evening service to 5 o’clock, week evening prayer meeting to be held in the school room as long as necessary.”* At the Special Church Meeting held on Wednesday March 23<sup>rd</sup> it was agreed that *“the times of the services be now put back to the usual times.”*

At the September 13<sup>th</sup> 1916 meeting it was *“resolved that on account of the Lighting Restrictions we have dark paper blinds put to the whole of the Chapel windows.”*

It is thought that the earliest photograph of the chapel is from World War 1 as it seems to show blinds at the windows. There is no date for this photo.

### **EARLIEST PHOTO OF CHAPEL**



The next mention of the War impacting on the life of the chapel is at the January 10<sup>th</sup> 1917 church meeting when *“Mr W Marsden read a letter from Mr Hawkins sec(sic) to the Strict & Particular Baptist Northern Union asking if the Church would support the Union in making an application to the Board of Trade for the reduction of railway fares for the ministers.”* The church supported the action. The same meeting agreed that *“Ministers remuneration be increased to the amount of the increased railway expenses.”*

At the November 7<sup>th</sup> 1917 meeting a letter was read from the Strict Baptist Northern Union regarding a court case about the enlisting of ministers of Military age who have been called up for service in the army. The cost of defending this case in the Civil Court had been about



£130 and the letter appealed for funds. It was agreed that a collection would be made in December.

In January 1918 the increased cost of living was recognised when the weekend allowance paid to the Miss Marsdens for entertaining visiting ministers was increased from 4/- to 6/-. Mr Barker commented "*that all foods & household necessities had in nearly all cases doubled in value.*"

After the War a Peace Thanksgiving Service was proposed at the June 16<sup>th</sup> 1919 church meeting

**This is an extract from "Kept" the history of Jireh Baptist Church, Orrell, Wigan 1851-2018**

**In 2018 Jireh Baptist Church merged with Pemberton Evangelical Church, Wardley Street. It is now known as Pemberton Free Grace Church.**