

## *The Certificate of Registration*

So what of the registration card which each person had to sign and preserve? It was primarily designed for use only as a means of notifying a change of address after which a new certificate

would be issued. It wasn't until an Amendment Act in 1918 that its production was made compulsory on demand by the police or an authorised person.

## References

*History of National Registration*, by S.P. Vivian National Archives reference CAB102/518.

National Registration: report of the Northwood Registrar. Minutes of the Ruislip-Northwood UDC 15 September 1915. (This was substantially reprinted in the *Ruislip-Northwood Chronicle* 17 September 1915)

Reports regarding National Registration were published in the *Northwood Pinner and Harrow Advertiser* on 2 July 1915, 23 July 1915, 13 August 1915, and 20 August 1915.

Reports regarding National Registration were also published in the *Ruislip - Northwood Courier* on the 23 July 1915, 13 August 1915, 20 August 1915, 27 August 1915, 17 September 1915, and 24 September 1915.

## *Military Tribunals in World War 1*

by Philip Toms

The result of National Registration in August 1915 had shown that the Ruislip-Northwood UDC area had 799 men between the ages of 18 to 41 and so deemed to be of military age.

A few months later, in January 1916, the first Military Service Act was passed as a result of the failure of voluntary enlistment to provide sufficient recruits. It called for the compulsory enlistment of unmarried men between 18 and 41. In May 1916 married men were brought within its scope and throughout the war further Acts extended the ages of men who could be conscripted so that by April 1918 the age range stood between 17 and 55.

The total number of men in our area that could be called up was, therefore, something of a moving target but there is no doubt that at the minimum some 17% of the population was affected by conscription.

## *The Ruislip-Northwood Local Military Tribunal*

When the 1916 Act introduced conscription it also allowed men to appeal against being called

up and Local Military Tribunals were set up to process such claims. A Circular was sent to local authorities spelling out how the Tribunals should be formed and operated, what exemptions were permitted, how men could apply for exemption, and also how they could appeal against decisions made by the Tribunals.

The receipt of this Circular led to a special meeting of the Ruislip-Northwood UDC on the 7 February at which the members of the Local Tribunal were appointed. The Circular recommended a membership of between five and 25 but the UDC settled on nine - who were all existing Councillors and all men even though the Circular advocated the appointment of women as well.

In addition there was a Military Representative. He had the right to be present at hearings, to ask questions, make comments, and even appeal against the decisions that were made. His role was to get as many men conscripted as possible.

The first Ruislip-Northwood Tribunal was held on the 25 February 1916 when 17 cases were held. Thereafter there were several hearings each month.

## *Reasons for appealing against conscription*

Unfortunately, the documentary evidence of the Ruislip-Northwood Tribunal is deficient because the official minutes book seems to have been destroyed many years ago. It is therefore necessary to rely on newspaper reports to get a flavour of the cases and we have to accept how the journalists reported the proceedings.

They do, however, give a fair indication of the reasons men were giving as to why they should not be conscripted. Some considered that they were in a reserved occupation and should not be called up while another reason often given was that the man was doing work of national importance. The Tribunal was, of course, judge and jury over the strength of each claim. For example, the headmaster of a boys' preparatory school in Northwood considered he was doing work of national importance. The Tribunal thought otherwise, but still allowed him two months exemption before he was called up.

Two other grounds of appeal were fairly straight forward, one was ill-health and the other was that a student should be able to complete his course of study. A Northwood man who had a bad knee had presented a letter from St Vincent's Cripples' Home to back up his claim, and was exempted. A veterinary student wished to qualify before being called up, and was exempted too.

There were many claims that serious hardship would ensue if a man was called up. A decorator from Northwood, for example, said his brother was already serving in the army and that he was the main support of his mother and younger brother. He was responsible for paying the rent and rates. If he enlisted it would mean closing down two businesses plus a tobacconists shop. The Military Representative was not impressed and the Tribunal wanted to see the business accounts before coming to a decision.

There were also many claims brought by businessmen claiming a serious affect to their business if their workers were taken from them. The Council itself felt this and claimed exemption for a number of its employees, including the Rate Collector, dustmen, roadmenders, gravedigger, and the Chief Officer of the Fire Brigade.

Several men cited more than one reason why they should not be conscripted, as did a man

living in Ruislip. He was an assistant organist at Westminster Abbey, Chapel Royal, and Buckingham Palace. He first claimed the exemption attached to Buckingham Palace – he asserted that as he was a member of the Royal Household the Act did not apply to him. This was overruled with the Military Representative saying that he did not think that the King would keep men back from his forces. The organist then claimed that he had his wife, her two sisters and a widowed mother dependent on him, while a brother had already been to war. All to no avail as no exemption was given.

Lastly, men could put forward a Conscientious Objection. One man had left his firm in Manchester when it was turned over to munitions work and had then served with a Friends Ambulance Unit in France. He then felt that this Unit was turning into a branch of the army and left that too. He was now claiming absolute exemption, which was denied. He said that he would appeal against that decision and this meant taking his case to a separate court, the County Appeal Tribunal.

## *The Middlesex Appeal Tribunal*

We are fortunate that the records of the Middlesex Appeal Tribunal have been preserved. The files for each appeal have been digitised by the National Archives and it is an easy matter to find the details of the men in our area that went before it. The case files provide the documentary evidence that is missing from newspaper reports covering the Local Tribunal and it is sometimes possible to put the two together to form a more complete picture.

There were 47 men who lived in Ruislip, Northwood and Eastcote who appeared before the Appeal Tribunal. All but four cases came through the Ruislip-Northwood Local Tribunal. Other local tribunals concerned with local men were Harrow-on-the-Hill, Hayes, Hendon, and Southall-Norwood. There were four cases where the appeal was made by the Military Representative against the decision of the Local Tribunal but in all other cases it was the individual man making the appeal. No documentation is available for one of the cases and this leaves 46 cases which can be analysed.

## *Analysis of cases*

Of those 46 cases three men withdrew their appeal prior to their hearings taking place. Thomas Heady's wife, for instance, wrote to say that her husband had taken a medical at Mill Hill and then joined the Royal Flying Corps. No reason was given for the other withdrawals.

## *Temporary exemptions*

Of the remaining 43 cases, 14 men were given temporary exemptions meaning that their call up date was delayed for various reasons (e.g. so that they could make adequate arrangements before they left home) although of course it still meant that they were being conscripted. The longest exemptions were for six months (three cases) but the majority were up to a month (eight cases) of which the most puzzling and extreme was that given to Reginald Freeman. The Notice of Decision dated 23 March 1916 states that 'the man is exempted from the provisions of the Military Service Act 1916 [and that] the exemption is from combatant service only and is temporary for one day from the 21 March 1916.'

Within this batch of temporary exemptions the case papers sometimes provide interesting snippets of information beyond the circumstances of the individual man. Bertie Pope, for instance, (who was given a month's temporary exemption in June 1916) was the foreman manager at the Northwood Cinema in Northwood High Street. His employers, Northwood Hall, Ltd. wrote the following letter to support his claim:

*'Pope is in our employ as Foreman-Manager at the Northwood Cinema and is the only man now in our employ competent to take charge.*

*The other members of the staff are:-*

*W. Mussett – Pianist, Age 18, who will, no doubt be called up under the Compulsory Service Bill now before Parliament.*

*Owen Stanley – Acting Operator – Age 15*

*Mrs. Pope – Attendant*

*W. Andrews – Film boy – Age 13*

*J. James – Cash boy – Age 13*

*Since Christmas last we have been without a qualified operator, notwithstanding that we have advertised and taken every step to secure one, and in January last we employed a youth aged 15 and placed him under Pope's supervision and for training. Unfortunately, this youth left us six weeks ago, and we have since had to employ*

*another youth (Stanley) of the same age: but for this change the present appeal would not be necessary.*

*As the members of the Tribunal are doubtless aware a heavy responsibility rests upon the operator. Any carelessness or inexperience might result in great danger to the audience. Stanley is not an experienced operator in as much as he has no knowledge of the apparatus which projects the picture. This apparatus is very delicate and requires careful adjustment and constant attention. Its perfect working is insisted upon by the County Council as its breakdown would probably result in fire. This work is now done by Pope under whose guidance Stanley is now working. Stanley is an intelligent youth and should be qualified in about three months.*

*In these circumstances, we ask for the conditional exemption of Pope pending the training of Stanley.*

*We may mention that three operators have left our employ and joined the Army and we make this appeal very reluctantly under trying circumstances, and not until our staff has been reduced to one competent man upon whom the safety of our audiences depend and whose place we are quite unable to fill...'*

As may be imagined, each man's circumstances were unique and it is not possible to draw general conclusions about them or say that one is typical. So the case of Ernest Linger stands by itself as an example of how one man went through the system:

## *Case Study: Ernest Linger*

Ernest Linger was the Licensed Victualler at Ye Olde Swan in Ruislip and was almost 30 when he was called up in 1916. At his medical he was passed fit for service abroad, but not fit for general service.

His grounds of appeal to the Local Tribunal were that he had sunk all his capital into the business when he acquired it in 1914. His solicitors had a letter from a firm of auctioneers and hotel valuers to the effect that:

*'it would be quite impossible to dispose of Mr Linger's interest in the Swan, [or] only at such a sacrifice that would mean financial ruin to him.'*

He further claimed that the business therefore provided the only income for his family; he had a wife and child plus he also partly supported his mother who was an invalid. He did all the manual

work, and claimed that the cellar work was too heavy for female labour, while his wife looked after the catering and hotel sides of the business. The auctioneer's letter also said: *'I do not consider the house a suitable one for a Lady to run alone. It would undoubtedly be a great hardship if this man had to sacrifice practically speaking his all'*.

This did not sway the Tribunal however for they decided that the business could, in fact, be carried on by his wife as was the case at four other licensed premises in Ruislip and they afforded him a one month exemption so that he could make the necessary arrangements before joining up. [One wonders if Ye Old Swan was a similar size to the other pubs: Eileen Bowlt in her article *The Metamorphosis of the Swan*, RNELHS Journal 2007 provides details of the inventory of the furniture, fixtures and effects that was taken when Ernest Linger became licensee in 1914.]

When he appealed against this ruling his exemption was extended to six months on the grounds that the Tribunal considered he would suffer serious hardship if he was called up owing to his exceptional business obligations. The Appeal Tribunal did, however, impose quite stringent conditions on the temporary exemption for he had to (a) join the Volunteer Training Corps within seven days, (b) carry out not less than 12 drills per month, (c) obtain his proficiency badge within a period of four months, and (d) he had to submit a monthly report from his Commanding Officer to the Local Military Representative that these conditions had been met.

These conditions were disputed. Linger's solicitor wrote to the Appeal Tribunal:

*'You will doubtless recollect that the Chairman stated that he was of opinion that it would not be suitable to leave a woman to manage a public house in the situation of Ye Olde Swan and that being the case six months exemption would not be applicable.'*

This was curtly rebuffed in the letter of reply:

*'I return the notice of decision which is quite accurate and in accordance with the note made at the time by the Chairman and the Clerk.'*

At the end of the six months (March 1917) Linger lodged a further appeal, this time adding that his wife was in a delicate state of health and expected to be confined very shortly. This application was refused although the Military Representative undertook not to call him up until the end of April 1917. The case papers end at this point and we must assume that he joined his regiment at this point.

## *Appeals dismissed*

The majority of appeals (22 cases) were dismissed with the Notice of Decision simply stating that the case had been considered by the Appeal Tribunal 'and that they have decided that the appeal be dismissed.' Two appeals came from men employed at the Northwood VAD hospital and their case papers add further information to that I gave in my article *The VAD hospitals at Northwood and Eastcote during World War 1*, RNELHS Journal 2007.

Arthur Rawlinson's occupation was recorded as a printer, stationer, bookseller and fancy goods dealer but he received support from Ellen Darlow, the VAD Commandant in a letter dated February 1917:

*'As Commandant of the Northwood VAD hospital which has been open for the last two and a quarter years and has now 100 beds, I desire to state my deep indebtedness to Mr. A. E. Rawlinson for his invaluable and almost indispensable honorary service. All our sick and wounded soldiers are transferred here from the clearing hospital at Edmonton which is twenty miles from Northwood. We are expected to fetch them by Motor Ambulance and for the last twelve months Mr. Rawlinson has invariably placed himself freely at my disposal and has driven our Ambulance when it was needed – sometimes at half an hour's notice in response to an urgent telephone call and sometimes making two or even three journeys in a day. It is absolutely necessary for me to have a chauffeur on the spot for this purpose and I am relying on Mr Rawlinson's help especially during the next few months as we expect that this transport work will become unusually heavy.'*

Similar support had been given earlier, in November 1916, to Arthur Stent, a builder and sanitary engineer's foreman:

*'Arthur Stent ... has worked for the last two years at [this] hospital. There has often been much work for him to do in connection with the sanitary arrangements, as the hospital has grown considerably, and at various times extra accommodation has had to be provided in the way of additional buildings. In all his work Stent has helped, and is still employed at the hospital thoroughly understanding the working of the hospital. I trust you will consider the advisability of [his employer] retaining this workman.'*

## *Appeals against medical grading*

Of the seven remaining cases five were appeals against how the man had been graded at his medical and in each case the Tribunal sided with the claimant that he should have received a lower classification than that given to him.

## *Exemptions*

Only two of the 47 men successfully appealed against conscription.

The first, Henry Baigent, was a cable joiner living at Ruislip Common and he had appealed against conscription on the basis that he should be able to continue in work in which he was habitually employed. The Appeal Tribunal agreed that it was expedient in the national interests that he should continue in his trade as a cable joiner but made it conditional on his continual employment with the Northwood Electric Light Co., and (a) joining and remaining in the Voluntary Training Corps, (b) carrying out as many drills as his commanding officer thought he was able, and (c) submitting a monthly report from his commanding officer to the local Military Representative that the conditions had been complied with.

The story behind the second successful appeal shows how drawn out the process could be.

## *Case Study: Frank Lavender*

Frank Lavender was the son of Reuben and Amelia who lived at Ivy Farm in Wiltshire Lane, Eastcote and was 27 when he received his papers. At the Local Tribunal in February 1916 he applied for an absolute exemption on the grounds of serious hardship. He was dealing chiefly in hay forage and chaffwood, was a horse dealer and also did contract harvesting for other farmers. Although the Military Representative objected to the claim, Lavender was able to secure a series of temporary exemptions while someone was found to do his work.

On the 8 September Reuben made a further application for the absolute exemption of his son saying that Frank was essential to the business because he did the whole of the farm work and that it was impossible to get anyone else in his place. This seemed to exasperate the Chairman who was reported as saying:

'You have had ever since Christmas [to sort this out]. This must be the last appearance. Your son was first described as a woodman but he has now been elevated to a farmer. What will it be next time?'

Nevertheless, a further one month's exemption, albeit with no further right to appeal, was granted. But, at the beginning of November Frank made another appearance. The Chairman then reiterated the position: last time he had been given a month's exemption on condition that there would be no further appeal - an arrangement that had been accepted. But Frank's solicitor then explained that the certificate of exemption had not stated this proviso and urged the appeal to go ahead to which the Chairman said that Frank could take his case to the Appeal Tribunal.

A final attempt to sway the minds of the Local Tribunal was made at the beginning of December. It was now claimed that Frank not only dealt with hay and forage but also attended to the horses and pigs, did the general farm stock work, and was responsible for deliveries too.

The case went to appeal in January 1917 and the case papers contain a deposition from the Local Tribunal saying that they were satisfied that Frank was not really a farmer but was in fact a dealer in wood etc. and that therefore he was not in a certified occupation, and that in their opinion there were no grounds for exempting a single man of 27 in these circumstances. Contrary to this, the deposition submitted by Frank stated that his work was described in the List of Certified Occupations under the headings of Farmer and Thatcher.

The date of the hearing was put back until after Frank had a medical and although the result of this is not documented the papers show that his case was put back once again, this time so that he could find work of national importance on the land at milking, ploughing or some work of similar character. Just ten days later he informed the Appeal Tribunal that he had entered the service of Samuel Young, a farmer of Woodoaks Farm in Rickmansworth, for the duration of the war. He would be working there three days a week apart from the haymaking season when he would be helping his father with getting the hay crop in at Ivy Farm. And we must assume that this is how he spent the rest of the war.

## *Conclusion*

The Ruislip, Northwood and Eastcote cases before the Appeal Tribunal showed that very few men were successful in appealing against conscription. It would be interesting to find out through an analysis of a larger sample of cases whether these results were typical of other Local Tribunal areas.

One wonders how the conscripted men fared, what engagements they were in, and how they managed civil life on their return after the war. Sadly, four of those who appealed did not come back:

John Bennett, a grocer from Northwood, was killed in action on the 21 March 1918 and is commemorated on the Northwood War Memorial.

Frederick Small, of Little Manor Farm Ruislip, was killed in action on the 3 March 1917 and is commemorated on the Ruislip Common, Ruislip and St. Martin's Church war memorials.

Arthur Stent, the builder and sanitary engineer who worked at the Northwood VAD hospital was killed in action on the 21 March 1918 and like Frederick Small is commemorated on the Ruislip Common, Ruislip and St. Martin's Church war memorials.

Joseph Walters, a concrete and plaster slab maker, was killed in action on the 17 February 1917 and is commemorated on the Emmanuel Church and Northwood war memorials.

## **References**

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