

Dulwich Hamlet – 1914-1919

By

Roger Deason

1913/14 saw Dulwich finish fourth behind London Caledonians in the Isthmian league. George Shipway became the second Hamlet player selected for the England Amateur team. The annual Easter tour saw Hamlet visit Germany, winning all three matches. January 1914 saw a celebratory banquet held to mark the club's 21st birthday. In those 21 years the club had risen from being a small old boys club, dedicated to those who attended Dulwich Hamlet school, playing on parks pitches in front of a smattering of friends and family to being one of the biggest amateur clubs in London.

As Britain slipped towards war, Dulwich Hamlet Cricket Club, Dulwich Hamlet was a multi-faceted sports club in 1914, were in action. Their match at Guard's Depot (Caterham) was abandoned. The opposition were ordered off the pitch to prepare for mobilisation. A youthful Edgar Kail was the Hamlet Cricket Club scorer that day. Post-war, Edgar would become the last amateur footballer capped by England whilst on the books of an amateur team. The club's address is now Edgar Kail Way.

On September 4th the Isthmian League abandoned the 1914/15 season. 130 Isthmian registered players were with the colours, including 20 from Dulwich.

Many football teams quickly folded for the duration, including F.A. Cup winners Clapham Rovers and up-and-coming local Intermediate side Dulwich Wood, who had lost 16 players to the forces. Neither would re-form.

On September 5th the football pre-season friendly at Guard's Depot was cancelled. This was a regular pre-season fixture in the days when teams only played one pre-season match. More than one report exists of a well refreshed Hamlet team having to dash for the last train home. The Guards however were otherwise engaged on active service in France.

The Senior team trial match proceeded at Champion Hill. The Senior team was the Reserve team in modern parlance, the reserves were the Third team – their 1913/14 goalkeeper would lose an eye and win the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Dulwich St Barnabas were the fourth team, firmly affiliated to Dulwich Hamlet despite the name.

Hamlet club secretary George Wheeler, assistant head at Dulwich Hamlet school, was in Switzerland when Britain entered the war and was advised by the government to stay there temporarily, Pa Wilson stepped up. George was prone to flu, Pa had previously covered him.

Lorraine, known as Pa, Wilson was involved in the club's foundation and was the crucial off-field figure in the club's early years. A childhood rugby fan, Pa believed sport to be both educationally and physically beneficial, influenced by his strong Christian faith. Prior to building up Hamlet, Pa volunteered with Dulwich College Mission in Walworth. This offered sporting opportunities to the less fortunate.

1914/15 admission was fourpence for men, tuppence for boys and free for women unless it was an amateur cup game when all had to pay six pence.

In a sign of things to come Oxford City didn't travel on September 12th, an internal trial game was played. The following week the Isthmian League match at London Caledonians was replaced by a friendly at Ilford, drawn 3-3.

Impact on player availability was immediate, missing were half back Eddie Bescoby, playing partner George Popple played – both were territorials as were the Lawrence brothers.

George Shipway was absent, serving as a despatch rider in Aldershot, Eddie Rengger was also serving with the forces. 1913/14 top scorer George Stevens had signed for Clapton Orient whilst Hussein Hegazi didn't return from Egypt due to the political situation.

The first known Dulwich footballing fatality is Dulwich Wood player Pat Mahon, one of 527 men lost when HMS Aboukir was torpedoed on September 22nd 1914. Two other ships were also lost. In total 1,459 sailors died.

On September 26th Dulwich drew 1-1 at Nunhead, The Sportsman newspaper noted that nearly the entire Hamlet first team had enlisted. The nature of trying to get a team out in war is perhaps shown by the fact the team showed five changes from the programme line up, which had included that well known player "A. Blue".

On October 10th Nunhead visited Champion Hill, the match programme stated: -

"Are there not some present today who could enrol themselves in the King's Service? Listen to the words of a great Britisher. "I envy the man who has this chance and seizes it. I pity the man who has it and refuses it."

The patriotic nature of this comment, and others, leads to suspicions that Pa was an adherent of muscular Christianity.

The programme included a 35 strong roll of honour listing all playing members, football and cricket, past and present known to be serving. The roll of honour appears in all known war time programmes. By the end of the war over 100 men had enlisted.

Pa and George funded a newsletter called News of the Pink and Blue Brigade which was distributed to those serving and their families throughout the war. Three copies, out of nineteen issues, are known to survive.

Dulwich Hamlet consistently acted as an unofficial recruiting wing for the forces. This recruiting drive reached its zenith when Crystal Palace visited on November 28th 1914. Hamlet old boy Billy Millward made a guest re-appearance. Hamlet distributed a leaflet informing spectators that Billy would assist with enlistment into the Royal Sussex Regiment.

Post-war, Pa recognised that not all had appreciated this leaflet, though he stood by it. This is the only known acknowledgement - not all were keen on the club's position. In other match programmes local recruitment offices addresses appear, with the suggestion that spectators may wish to enlist.

The usual charitable collections held at the match were donated to war related charities. The Nunhead match saw £5 1s 11 pence raised in aid of Belgian Relief. Dulwich baths were taken over by Belgian refugees early in the war. Camberwell Council voted to evict them; ex-Hamlet player Tom Rose was one of those to vote in favour.

Several scheduled opponents dropped out during 1914/15, including the Oxbridge universities. Matches were arranged against Newportonians, Richmond Association and army sides, the first being the Sportsman's Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. Aided by Patsy Hendren and Andy Sandham, both future England cricket internationals, and Hamlet old boy Jack Rawling, the soldiers won 4-0.

Established players were increasingly absent as time passed. Goalkeeper Bert Coleman enlisted, George Popple and Cyril Northam were in camp by November, both went to France over Christmas. At least six men served as special constables and were often absent on police business, including first teamer Harold Clegg, the Clarkson brothers and Beardwell brothers.

Consequently, men on the fringes of the first team and some who had long since ceased to play for the first team, such as veteran ex-captain Doddy Wight, made up the numbers. As the season passed the Hamlet team noticeably weakens.

On October 24th the programme, v Catford Southend, stated: -

"Last Saturday two youths on the ground said, "we will go when they fetch us". What an idea of duty. Another said, "three of us are married now" Surely the marriage increased the call rather than excused it."

The Kittens unexpectedly won 1-0.

Dulwich now had 40 men in service, aged up to 38 and standing 5' 4" upwards.

The club went further on November 7th in the Leytonstone programme: -

"Let's put this quite plainly. The young man who is sound in body, and has not got a greater call of duty elsewhere and has not come forward, should to be made to come, if he will not come voluntarily."

Dulwich won 3-2, Leytonstone started with 8 men. Two players arrived during the match. Short-handed teams were an issue, particularly as war progressed, with Dulwich occasionally impacted.

Hamlet suffered their first loss on December 14th, Private Walter Lawrence Royal Bucks Hussars died. The Hussars were deployed to Great Ryburgh, Norfolk, to guard against a possible invasion, on November 17th. A pre-war territorial, Walter was one of four brothers associated with the Hamlet.

On February 12th 1915 Dulwich defeated 12th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment 4-0. Based in Aldershot, where they guarded the railway, the battalion replaced the trigger-happy London Rifle Brigade in that role. Initially the Londoners antics had been mildly amusing, arresting a man as a suspected spy for writing a letter whilst waiting for a train at Farnham station, blasting away at unidentified lights in a wood near Farnham and shooting a scarecrow near the railway line in Alton, believing they had found a spy.

However, after the Rifle Brigade shot dead a deaf and partially sighted Aldershot resident on August 20th 1914, believing he was a spy refusing to obey orders to halt, they were withdrawn.

Dulwich rarely played outside London during the war however on March 20th 1915 they lost 2-1 at Oxford City. The travelling squad named to the press included “A.N. Other” suggesting issues finding an eleven. Hamlet played much of the match with ten men due to an injury to veteran Doddy Wight. It was one of Oxford City’s last war time matches. Oxford City Strollers, founded in November 1915, played on.

On April 10th Dulwich lost 2-1 at home to Croydon in the South London Charity Cup Semi Final, the match programme said

“...now lads, there is work for you and your country wants you. Do you want the war to drag on over another winter? If not, do your duty now.”

The second loss sustained was Lance Corporal Ernie Vasey of the London Rifle Brigade, killed on April 27th 1915. Ernie, a Geordie by birth, signed from Woodford Town ahead of the 1908/09 season, one of the replacements for the Buck brothers who had walked out on Dulwich.

Whilst with Dulwich, Ernie won his London F.A. badge and appeared in the F.A. Amateur Cup semi-final. He departed in the middle of the next season, signing for Leytonstone. Ernie lived in East London.

A pre-war territorial Ernie’s battalion travelled to Eastbourne for their annual camp on August 2nd 1914 but were returned to London to prepare for war. They mobilised on the 5th and slept on site from the 10th, departing for France on November 5th. Ernie was killed when a rifle grenade entered the trench.

On May 25th 1915 Rifleman Stan Peart, 1st Surrey Rifles, was killed. Stan was born in Australia, moving to South London in 1895. A noted schoolboy sportsman, arguably a better cricketer than footballer, Stan was also a good athlete and swimmer.

Prior to winning the Southern Suburban League with Hamlet in 1910/11 Stan played against Dulwich St Barnabas for Bellenden Old Boys. He was killed in action at Givenchy whilst acting as a bomber, a role often fulfilled by cricketers and known to other soldiers as ‘the suicide squad’.

Dulwich Hamlet sat out the 1915/16 season. Public confirmation seems to have been via the Daily Mirror on August 29th 1915. However, the club wrote to the players in April 1915 stating that that unless circumstances changed it was very unlikely that the club would play on, adding that they felt it was “*quite wrong to do so*”. The club believed fit men should be on war work or in the forces and not playing football.

The ground was being loaned out without charge to forces teams, the club also provided the match ball. Admission was free for spectators, collections were taken for war charities. 3rd Battalion Scots Guards were a familiar sight at Champion Hill with ex-Airdrie forward T. McConnell scoring numerous goals. The following season the Guards played some home games at Highbury.

Hamlet played just one game in 1915/16, a belated 50th birthday present for Pa Wilson saw a Hamlet XI lose 2-1 to the Scots Guards over Christmas. The fixture nearly fell through, Dulwich decided to only play men in the forces, invalided out or ineligible for service and told the Scots Guards to find their own opponents, unable to field an eleven. Eventually ten

soldiers and one sailor lined up for the Hamlet. Few of the Scots Guards team lived to see 1917, McConnell was amongst those killed.

On May 21st 1916, the Civil Service Rifles were in reserve when the Germans attacked. Lance Sergeant Archibald Andrews was winning a game of cards when ordered forwards. This was viewed as unlucky by soldiers, Archibald predicted he would die in the action. Officially killed on the 21st he probably died in the early hours of the 22nd. His company were sent up Vimy Ridge without artillery or machine gun support. They effectively ceased to exist.

The son of a Portsmouth cemetery caretaker, Archibald moved to London after getting a plum job in the Civil Service. He featured for the Hamlet first team but didn't quite make the grade and moved to Civil Service FC. Archibald is erroneously named on Dulwich's war memorial; a correction plaque was unveiled on Remembrance Day 2017.

Dulwich lost two men on July 1st 1916, opening day of the Battle of the Somme, both at Gommecourt where troops had been ordered to make the imminent attack obvious in the hope the Germans would send re-enforcements in from other parts of the line due to be attacked.

Sergeant George Popple, was the best player the club lost. Pop was selected for the England Amateur team trials in 1913/14 and the 1914 English Wanderers tour. Probably killed by shellfire before he left the trenches, George had previously been wounded.

The second fatality was Rifleman Reg Astill, one of two brothers who represented Dulwich Hamlet Cricket Club. His brother, Ernie, returned to England suffering from shell shock the same day.

On August 2nd 1916, the club lost a key figure in its history. Tom Rose moved to London from Grimsby in 1903 to take up a position as a teacher, joining a Dulwich team playing on parks pitches. Tom scored a hat trick on his Hamlet debut the only man known to have done so. Despite this Tom was switched from centre forward to the wing. He initially faced several challengers for the position, including 15-year-old Vivian Rosewarne, probably the youngest man to play senior football for the Hamlet.

Tom won through and featured as gates rose to the thousands. He helped the club enter the Isthmian League, dropping out of the first team in 1909 – the year the club rose to national prominence via the FA Amateur Cup – reputedly somewhat overweight.

Tom was important locally, he sat on Camberwell Council as a Municipal Reformer – code for a Tory – and wanted to become a Member of Parliament. Tom enlisted in the artillery battalion raised by Camberwell Council two weeks after recruiting commenced in February 1915.

Recruitment, initially strong, was struggling, Tom's enlistment together with a local Tory party agent gained the battalion substantial publicity. It was probably no co-incidence, the battalion was commanded by the local Tory MP, well known to both Pa and Tom. The MP had also been guest of honour at Dulwich's 21st birthday banquet in January 1914.

The battalion did much of their training on Champion Hill, the army wanted to requisition the ground. Pa's Tory contacts seem to have saved the ground. It was loaned for training purposes but remained under Hamlet's control.

Tom received a minor shrapnel wound on July 19th 1916, however, infection set in. His family received two letters in the same post, one warning he was seriously ill, the second confirming his death. Tom also represented Dulwich Hamlet at cricket.

The next loss was Commander Louis Seidel, Uganda Volunteer Reserve, on August 14th 1916. Louis attended Dulwich Hamlet school. His parents and step-father were German. The area had a large German population pre-war, Champion Hill was sometimes known as Little Germany. Known to us as a Dulwich St Barnabas player, Louis emigrated pre-war and appears on the Uganda Railway Company war memorial.

His brother William also died, fighting as William Spencer. The first son of Dulwich to die, Lieutenant John Wissman killed on September 15th 1914, was also the son of German nationals. John's first child was born in January 1915. The number of people with German connections killed fighting for the British forces is an overlooked aspect of World War One. The road I live on lost three.

On August 26th 1916, The Sportsman newspaper announced that Dulwich Hamlet would return action in 1916/17, using junior players, aided by occasional senior members on leave, special duties or wounded. The one playing member who had not enlisted was seemingly not welcome.

This decision was probably driven by the army's interest in the land. The deal Pa struck with the army stated the ground would be used for football every Saturday in season. Away games were a rarity.

In an interview prior to his death, Edgar Kail stated that some of the subsequent opponents bore a remarkable resemblance to a Dulwich reserve eleven due to the need to use the ground. His Friday evenings were sometime spent knocking on doors, locating volunteers to make up numbers.

On October 1st 1916, Rifleman Frank Hagger went missing on night patrol. Frank was on the fringes of the first team, Vice-Captain of the 1914/15 Senior Team, and part of the 1913 Easter Tour of Holland. Frank was the sailor who played in the Christmas 1915 match, he was then serving on a Q Ship – a ship that looked like a civilian ship to lure U-Boats to the surface, at which point hidden weapons were revealed. HMS President is the sole surviving ship of this class.

After a scratch internal game on October 7th, Dulwich were hammered 8-0 by the Scots Guards on October 14th. This was despite the Guards being weakened by a recent draft of men to replace casualties sustained on the Somme.

October also saw Townley Park fold. A lack of bodies made it impossible to carry on, the club decided to fold rather than to suspend activities. Their remaining funds were donated to war-related charities.

Townley Park were once Hamlet's main rivals as the biggest local team, Dulwich won through due to the Buck brothers defecting from Townley Park to the Hamlet and the Parkite's decision to join the Amateur Football Association in 1907.

Dulwich struggled for players given how many had enlisted. A core of local teenagers, including Edgar Kail, previously used to maintain the ground, were now first teamers. An

appeal by George Wheeler is believed to have attracted Reg Luetchford, Andy Kempton, Sam Laycock, Bob Aspinall, Bill Dash, E.A. Mortleman and the Nicholls brothers to the club. Jack Guilliard also began to feature. Given their ages it is perhaps unsurprising that for much of the season it proved to be men against boys.

On November 11th 1916, Dulwich lost 6-0 at Guard's Depot. Two wounded men and nine youngsters could not cope with a team featuring two pre-war professionals. The press noted goalkeeper George Hudson was 16 and that one of the backs, probably Jack Guilliard, was 17 but failed to notice how young Edgar Kail was.

Results that season were erratic, there were several bad days. However, in January 1917 Horse Transport Depot were beaten 16-2. Sergeant Bill Davis scored either 7 or 8, depending on which report you believe. Dulwich's teams were now typically youthful, featuring few over the age of 18. The club gave selection priority to available members serving in the forces, which sometimes added experience.

On December 1st 1916, Private Reginald Walker of the Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment) was killed. Little is known about his involvement with the club.

Visitors such as Thornville, who won 3-1, did not pull big crowds. In January 1917, Pa Wilson reported the average gate take that season was just £2, with 25% lost in Entertainment Tax. The clubs' finances were being exhausted.

Players were paying their own transport costs, all but essential ground maintenance work was being delayed. However, the club was heading for serious financial trouble. This time Pa either couldn't or wouldn't take up the slack, something he did numerous times in the club's early years.

Two men were lost on March 31st 1917. Private Willie Clarkson was Captain of the Senior Team for 1914/15. His brother, Alistair, was one of the most promising juniors associated with the club pre-war. One Clarkson brother featured in the 1913 tour that saw Ajax defeated 4-1. Both represented the club at cricket, Willie played at Guard's Depot the day the opposition walked off the pitch to prepare for war. He was due to return to England, to study for a commission, at the time of his death.

The second loss was Rifleman Reg Wheeler who died of wounds. Known to us as a Dulwich St Barnabas player, he was the son of the groundsman at Dulwich Cricket Club and a high standard cricketer. Reg left a widow.

On April 12th 1917 Leonard Rawling was killed. He left Hamlet for Dulwich Wood pre-war and was a key figure in their rise to Intermediate status. Leonard lost his place in the Hamlet team to the Lawrence brothers and had featured for the Sportsman's Battalion against Hamlet earlier in the war.

On April 24th 2nd Lieutenant William Nixon was killed. William broke into the Hamlet team prior to going to the front, receiving rave reviews. One match report described him as probably the finest outside right to represent the club.

On April 29th 2nd Lieutenant Frank Marsh was killed. Frank was Vice-Captain of Dulwich St Barnabas for 1914/15, the last man to hold the position. The club did not re-start post war, all teams were subsequently known as Dulwich Hamlet. After serving in the ranks, Frank was

commissioned by the Royal Marines Light Infantry. He died at the Battle of Gavrelle Windmill, the bloodiest single day in the history of the Marines.

Unsurprisingly, given the ages of the players, Dulwich were the weakest of the three Isthmian league teams playing on in 1916/17. Leytonstone and Nunhead were the other two. Many games that season were against forces teams. 1916/17 saw Hamlet win 8, lose 11 and draw 3. Crucially though, they played and retained control of their ground.

The summer brought two more fatalities. On June 7th Dulwich Hamlet school old boy Lance Corporal Gilbert Chignall was killed in action.

On June 18th 2nd Lieutenant Eddie Bescoby, pre-war first team half back partner of George Popple, died from wounds received four days earlier. Eddie was a native of Guestling, near Hastings, where his father was the school master and a leading Conservative.

Eddie broke into the first team in 1913/14. A pre-war territorial Eddie, a civil servant, transferred to a reserved job working at a secret site in Norfolk. He went out of his way to be allowed to serve. After training in Lichfield, where his path crossed with Frank Marsh, Eddie was commissioned by the Royal Fusiliers on March 26th 1917.

Eddie embarked for France on April 12th but didn't see action until June 14th when he was fatally wounded during the Battle of Messines, probably bayoneted. He was seemingly doomed to die from the moment he was wounded, left at a field hospital until death rather than transferred to a military hospital behind the lines. Eddie was formally called Edgar but appears on the club's war memorial as Edward. A correction plaque was unveiled on Remembrance Day 2006.

Early in 1917/18 the financial issues became a crisis. The ground cost one hundred pounds per year to run even if un-used. There wasn't enough money coming in. The club's financial reserves had been depleted earlier in the war. Pa Wilson asked The Sportsman newspaper to publish an appeal for donors, the newspaper hoped someone who had done well out of the war through munitions or similar would step forward. This didn't happen, small donors saw the club through.

On December 8th 1917, Charles Train won the Victoria Cross in action near Jerusalem. Pre-war Charles was a member of an official Dulwich Hamlet Easter touring party to the Netherlands. It is believed he was a friend of Hamlet players through work rather than a player.

1917/18 saw Dulwich playing a mixture of army teams, their presence became erratic as the war position worsened with short notice fixture cancellations and re-arrangements adding to the financial woes, and civilian teams such as Crescent, Mildmay and Nunhead.

On January 26th 1918, Nunhead visited Champion Hill, returning home defeated 2-0. Newspaper reports state some fans were a little too partisan. Dulwich agreed, calling off the season's two remaining matches against Nunhead. Motor Union Assurance from Acton filled both slots.

A reminder of the impact of war upon civilians came on February 20th 1918, George Wheeler's wife lost her father. He died at Pevensey, where he was living temporarily. His Margate house was one of forty damaged during an air raid by Gotha bombers based in

Ghent, injuring eight. Eighteen Margate residents were killed by enemy bombs during the war.

On March 21st 1918, the Germans launched their Spring Offensive. One opening day casualty was Acting Brigadier General Colsey Millward of the Royal Sussex Regiment. Known to Dulwich as Billy, he seems to have joined the club together with Ernie Vasey – the two played cricket together for Leyton Wanderers.

Billy left the Hamlet after taking a job on the Argentinian railways in 1910. In August 1914, he was back in Britain on holiday, resigned his job and enlisted. His father, Arthur, was in charge of recruitment in Eastbourne for what was effectively a pals battalion. Arthur was a prominent Tory and friendly with the Earl of Lonsdale, who founded the battalion. Arthur had played first-class cricket and was the first man to score a goal for Kidderminster Harriers. His striking partner on that day was a man named Colsey.

A few weeks later Colsey was fatally wounded on the pitch, Arthur named his new born child William Colsey Millward. Post-war Arthur became a cricket test match umpire. Billy was a good fast bowler, playing for Worcestershire seconds. It is believed that Billy played at Wimbledon in the gentlemen's doubles, reaching the quarter final with his cousin. He subsequently umpired in the Davis Cup.

Billy rose from Private in September 1914 to Acting Brigadier-General when he lost a leg in March 1918, one of only three August 1914 civilians to attain the rank.

Known to Dulwich as Billy, he served as Colsey Millward. On three occasions during the war he was dug out after being buried alive. Colsey won the Distinguished Service Order, Croix de Guerre and appears, anonymously, in a poem by famous war poet – and friend – Edmund Blunden.

Colsey remained in touch with the Hamlet throughout his life and is buried at Pevensey, near Eastbourne Borough's ground. Colsey's DSO is on display in Eastbourne, the red and blue ribbon has a distinctly pinkish tinge.

The Spring Offensive cost the life of 2nd Lieutenant Ernie Astill. Ernie, a Dulwich Hamlet cricketer, had been evacuated back to England suffering from shell shock on July 1st 1916, the day his brother Reg died. The club were notified by old boy Sid Beales, he spotted Ernie's name on a list of the missing whilst working at HQ.

On April 29th committee member Len Bawcutt had a narrow escape, a bullet entered his neck, exiting through his cheek, missing his spine. Len subsequently served as club Chairman.

1917/18 was a better season for the Hamlet in term of results. The boys were becoming men. Fred Pilkington was featuring, adding to the youthful talent. Some who figured in the team turned 18 and were called up, forcing further line-up changes. For example, in goal where George Hudson departed to war. Fortunately for the club, Edgar Kail turned 18 days after the armistice.

Summer 1918, saw two casualties, on August 6th Sergeant Jack Butler – who served as Captain and Vice-Captain of the Reserve team in the run up to war - was killed.

On August 25th Private Sid Beales, who notified the club of Ernie Astill's death, was declared missing. The 1919/20 club handbook states the club lost 21 men during the war. It appears

that Sid was declared dead during its compilation as his name appears in the list of the 22 dead.

Sid and his brother Percy were leading figures in Dulwich Hamlet's cricket team. Both represented the club at football, Percy was the better footballer, featuring in the 1909 F.A. Amateur Cup Semi Final.

1918/19 was a season of two halves. Dulwich Hamlet Cricket Club put away their kit in late September. The footballers held a trial match the following week. An appeal went out for army sides to contact Dulwich if they wanted a game, the fixtures were hard to obtain as few sides were now playing.

The season saw the re-appearance of Joe Honeysett, permitted by the policy of picking players who were serving. A Dulwich player in his youth, the family emigrated to Tasmania, to run a chicken farm. His father founded the Tasmanian Football Association. Joe founded South Hobart FC. Serving with the Australian infantry in Birmingham, Joe secured a day's leave to pull on the pink and blue once more.

The season opened on October 7th with a 7-4 win over Charlton Athletic. The following week Mildmay were vanquished 7-1.

On October 19th the club lost Sergeant Robert – or Bert - Lawrence of the Royal Field Artillery, killed when a shell struck his billets. Bert had won the Distinguished Conduct Medal at Hooge, after using signalling flags in the middle of the battle when the telephone wires were cut. He was the brother of the first casualty, Walter. Another brother landed in France the day Bert was killed. Bert had served on the Western Front since the early days of British involvement the war.

The final casualty was sustained on November 6th 1918. Percy Sills of the Labour Corps was employed as a telephonist in Grimsby when taken ill with Spanish Flu. After his death Percy's colleagues refused to confirm they were happy with his treatment. The circumstances surrounding Percy's death were later raised in the House of Commons.

The final war time game saw Charlton Athletic defeated 3-1 on November 9th. Edgar Kail, now a prolific scorer, grabbed one of the goals. Captain Alistair Clarkson returned from war service. Other familiar faces returned before Christmas, including George Shipway, George Hudson and Arthur Beardwell.

The first peacetime fixture saw Royal Naval Experimental Station defeated 6-1.

On December 11th 1918, representatives of the London based Isthmian League teams met and agreed to re-start in January, West Norwood, Oxford City, Tunbridge Wells and Woking sat the half season out. Seventy-three men associated with 1914 member clubs are known to have died during the war.

The Sportsman announced that Dulwich expected to line up as:

T. Moyse, Andy Kempton, Fred Laycock, Fred Pilkington, Jack Guilliard, Dick Jonas, A.F. Weston, W. Smith, G. Powell, Edgar Kail and Ernest Sivier.

The core comes from the youngsters who played during the war, with two new signings. T. Moyse was an England schoolboy international however the return of future full England

international goalkeeper Bert Coleman from war saw Moyses drift out of senior football. George Hudson left Dulwich for the same reason, becoming first choice at Nunhead.

Pre-war Dick Jonas played for Shepherd's Bush, who disbanded in 1915. Queen's Park Rangers took over their Loftus Road ground. Having moved to South London he reputedly decided which Isthmian team to sign for by tossing a coin.

Dick became a key clubman, a driving force behind the building of the Champion Hill stadium demolished for the current stadium.

Dulwich finished third in the Isthmian mini-league, won by Leytonstone. The 1919 South London Charity Cup was won, defeating Charlton Athletic 2-1 in the final. Perhaps the unluckiest man was Leslie Drake, he became a first choice forward only to see his career ended by injury.

In the squad image shown, the men with their names picked out in bold are known to have represented the club during the war. Additionally, Walter Beardwell almost certainly did.

The boys were now men, and surprisingly experienced in senior football. 1919/20 would turn out to be the most successful season the club has ever enjoyed. They won just about everything they entered, including Isthmian League and the F.A. Amateur Cup.

The cup winning team lined up:

Bert Coleman, Fred Pilkington, Leslie Bowker, Jack Guilliard, Dick Jonas, Fred Sweeting, George Shipway, Edgar Kail, Bill Davis, Sid Nicol, D. Fuller with Young and Eddie Rengger as reserves.

Most of that team are familiar from the war years.

During the celebrations Pa surely thought back to 1917/18, when he appealed for funds to keep the club alive. How close the club came to folding vanished from our history.

Bert Coleman, Fred Sweeting and Sid Nicol perhaps thought back to October 1914, when they were part of the Hamlet team unexpectedly beaten by Catford Southend, Frank Hagger and Willie Clarkson, team-mates that day, were no longer alive to celebrate.

Jack Guilliard and Edgar Kail perhaps thought back to November 1916, when they featured in a Dulwich team thrashed 6-0 at Guard's Depot. Fred Pilkington couldn't get into the team.

Then there are the men who missed out. George Pople, Eddie Bescoby and William Nixon would have been strong candidates to play had they lived. Alistair Clarkson never hit the heights expected of him and was largely forgotten. A war injury probably cost him his place in the history books.

Whilst we know of the playing members who died, we will never know how many others associated with the club suffered. We do know of one tragic case.

Future Dulwich Hamlet player, and Shropshire cricketer, Arthur Riseley lost his father Gunner John Riseley on September 11th 1917. His mother, Edith, collapsed and died three weeks later. Arthur was still a child.

Twenty-three years later December 14th 1940, whilst engaged on war work, Arthur was sent to his own bombed out house in Merton. In the rubble his wife Emily lay badly wounded, their children, four-year-old Jennifer and two-year-old John, had died. Other men who feature in the club's World War One story would be impacted by the Second World War. Billy Millward was central to the provision of first aid and civilian defence in his part of Sussex. Vivian Rosewarne's son would become one of the most high-profile British casualties. Dulwich Hamlet however were still playing, something that had looked unlikely at points during World War One.

Biography

Roger is a native of Wolverhampton but became a familiar sight following Dulwich Hamlet home and away from 1991 – 2001, whilst living in London. He now lives in Aldershot and still watches Dulwich occasionally. Roger has also worked on aspects of the history of Aldershot, including the pubs, breweries and horse racing. His work on Aldershot during World War One saw him advise Aldershot Military Museum, Aldershot Command and Rushmoor Council during their 100th anniversary commemorations. His input was recognised with an invitation to the National Service of Commemoration held at Westminster Abbey on November 11th 2018.





George Popple



Billy Millward DSO

Dulwich Hamlet 1918/19



Back Row: W.R. Beardwell, **R. Luetchford**, F. Holdsworth, **A.R. Beardwell**,

Middle Row: *H.W. Hardy*, J. Ransom, **H. Clegg**, E. Bunce, **R. Thompson**, **A.F. Evans**, A. D. Ramsay, **E.H. Coleman**, **T. Moyse**, **S. Knight**, R.H. Jonas, *G.C. Wheeler*, *L. 'Pa' Wilson*

Front row: F. B. Young, **A.F. Weston**, **E.J. Kail**, J. Willard, **C.E. Rengger**, **W.J. Davis**, **F. Pilkington**