

Kings Bromley Leap Frog Trail Launch Event

On Saturday 2nd March a packed Village Hall witnessed the launch of the William Grundy Memorial Plaque and the piece of play equipment, known as the 'Leap Frog Trail' on the Village Hall playground. Following the dedication of this area as a Centenary Field in Trust dedicated to the men who fell in WW1 last year, the Parish Council tasked the Kings Bromley Historians with making a bid to Motherhood & Loss/Big Ideas who fund equipment to be dedicated to mothers who lost children in WW1. The bid was successful and a piece of equipment was chosen by Julie Bamber and her Village Hall Committee.

Motherhood, Loss and the First World War is led by Big Ideas and funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), with additional funding from a National Lottery grant from the Big Lottery Fund. Its remit is to acknowledge the universality of bereavement as the defining experience of the First World War with a special focus on the impact on mothers — an overlooked aspect of grief from the period. The project is in partnership with Royal Holloway University of London and the Institute of Historical Research.

Allan Howard, Chairman of the Parish Council and Leader of Kings Bromley Historians welcomed everyone to the event and explained the background to it. Sue Hannam of the Village Hall Committee read out 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' by Wilfred Owen, 'The Soldier' by Rupert Brooke, 'Hero' by Siegfried Sassoon and 'Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep' by Mary Fry.



Allan then explained that in 1914 about 150 village men were of military age. Research by the Historians shows that there were over 100 combatants from the village, including one woman, a nurse. Some men would have been unfit and some in reserved occupations, especially farming. There are 16 names on the War Memorial. One in seven not returning is typical for the country as a whole. Not a lost generation, but a huge loss, especially for the families, the children, the wives and the mothers.

The Kings Bromley Village Harmony Choir, led by Kathryn Hopson, sang a set of appropriate songs, starting with 'Colonel Bogie', including 'Give us Hope', 'Keep the Home Fires Burning', 'Suffragette' and finishing with 'Sing' and 'This is Me'.



Allan went on to give a brief history of the five mothers who lost either multiple or only sons in the war:

Maria Simson. In 1914 Maria was 55 and a widow living in Alrewas Road. Her husband, William, had passed away just two years earlier. She lost three of her sons in the war: Edward, William and Frederick.

Sarah Sanders. In 1914 Sarah, 69, and her husband George, 70, were living in Manor Road. They lost two of their three sons in the war: George and William. To make it worse her husband George also died in 1916.

Agnes Gee. In 1914 Agnes was living with her husband in Church Lane with their son Frank and daughter Frances. Frank died in 1917. We have the letter telling Agnes of the death of her son and the unfinished letter that she was writing when she received it. Frances later married one of the brothers of William Grundy.

Augusta Lane married Ronald Lane, who was born and raised at Kings Bromley Manor. He became Major General Sir Ronald Bertram Lane CB, KCVO. They lost their only child George Ronald.

Adela Lane married Cecil Lane, brother of Ronald, who was also born and raised at Kings Bromley Manor. They lost two of their three sons, Newton Frederick Seymour and Percy Ernald.

Alison Howard read out poems written by pupils of the Richard Crosse primary school – Amy Barnes, Hannah Norton and Meg, Jess & Lark. They had recently visited the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas and in the poems imagined themselves as bereaved mothers.

Everyone then went outside to unveil the William Grundy plaque and the Leap Frog Trail. William Grundy was chosen as a typical representative of the 16 men who died in WW1 firstly as he was one of six brothers who served, and the only one who died, secondly because the Historians had a copy of the letter sent to his mother telling her of his death and thirdly because the house where he was raised is visible from the Village Hall. The plaque was designed by Jonathan Nason of Kings Bromley Historians who also took all the photos displayed here.



Ann Hussey, grand-daughter of William Grundy's brother Tom at the unveiling



Julie Bamber cuts the tape



Rowan Hopson tries out the equipment

We all then repaired back to the Village Hall where everyone could enjoy tea and cakes provided by the WI, inspect the plans for the renovation of the Village Hall and ask questions of Richard Kirkland of RJK Construction, our chosen building contractor.