St John's

Wimborne's other parish

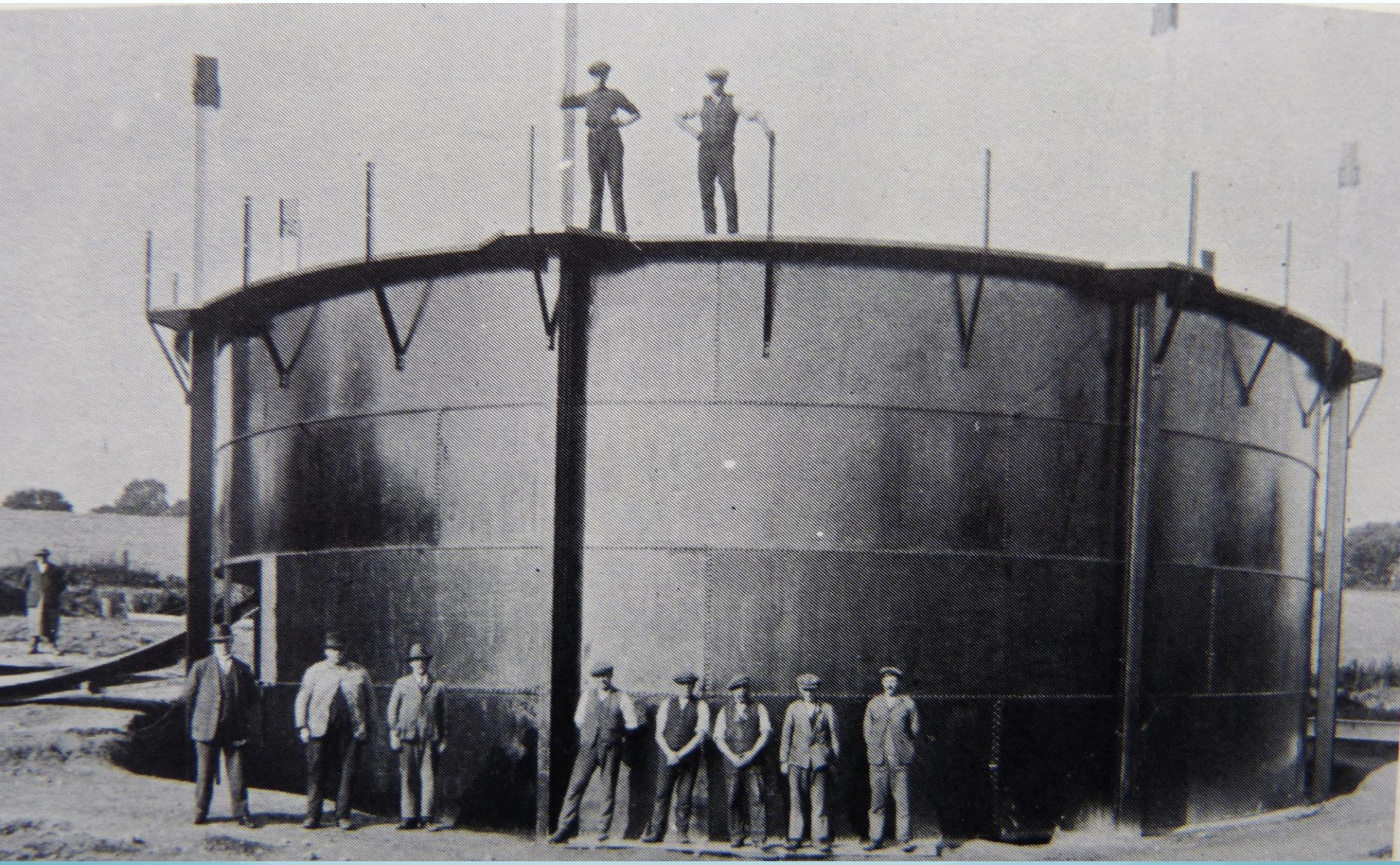
By Linda Atkinson

Map of Wimborne 1919

The new parish of St John the Evangelist was formed on the eastern side of Wimborne in 1876. It was needed because of the new buildings that had grown up since the arrival of the railway in 1847.

St John's Church

The parish served a network of roads mostly between Leigh Road and the river Stour. Apart from St John's Hill, there was little housing north of Leigh Road.



In 1914, Wimborne had mains water and gas but no electricity until 1929. This gasometer was built near what is now Greenclose Lane.

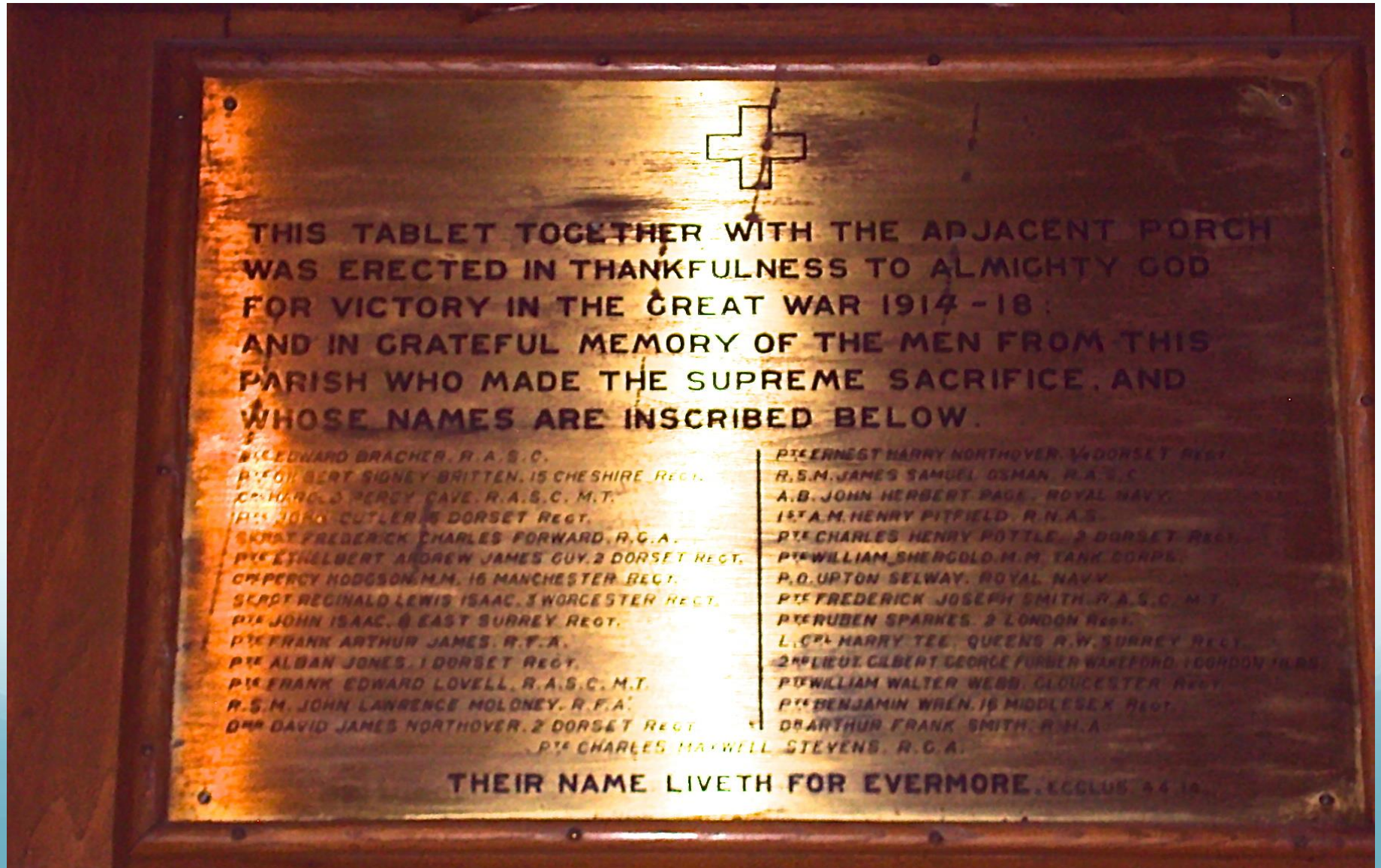
This map shows how Wimborne sat at the heart of a large railway network, so the railway was a very important employer in the town. There were also businesses like hotels and the agricultural markets that depended largely on the railway.

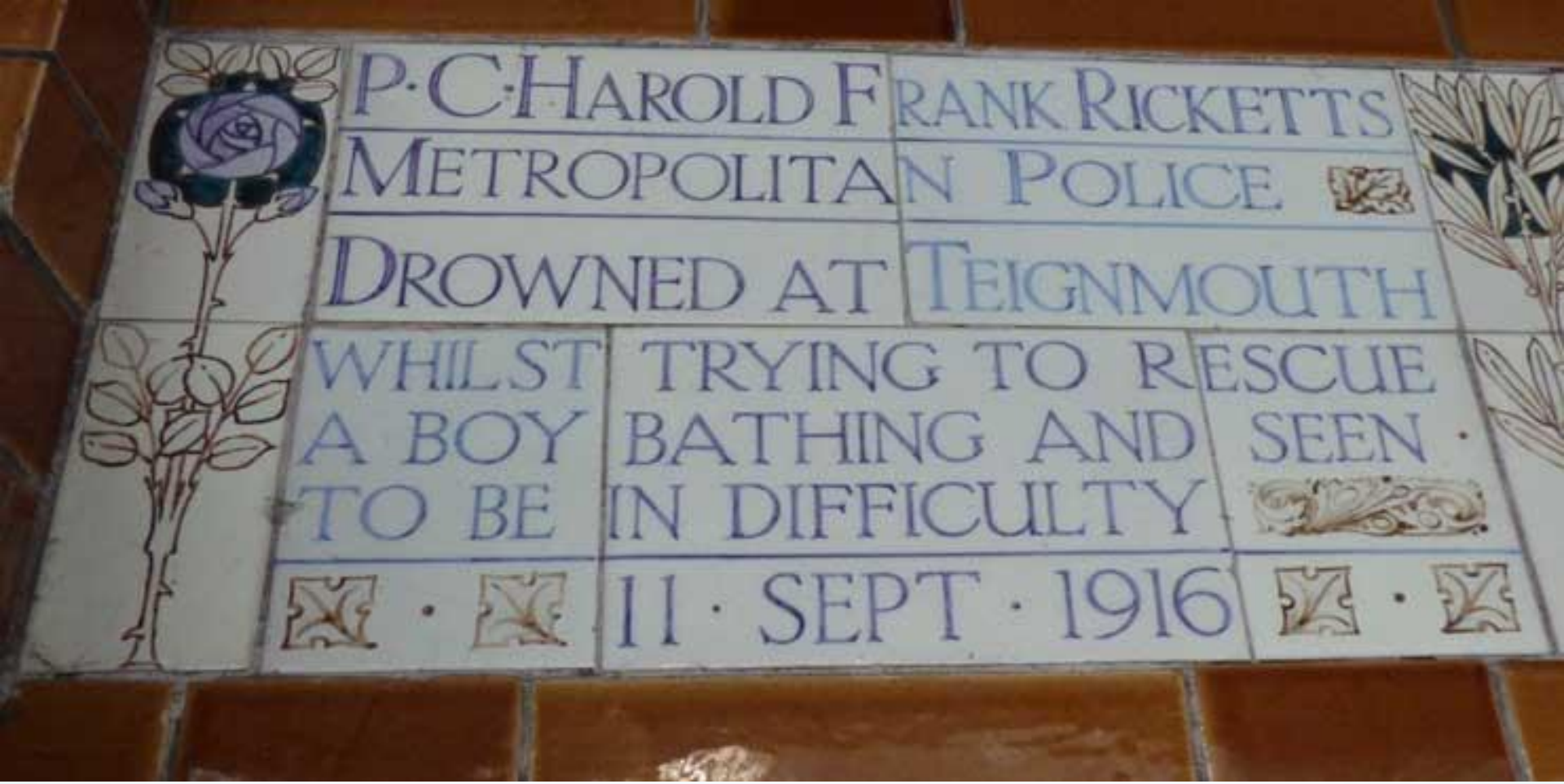
Sadly, from 1914, the railway was needed to transport men mustering for the forces and, all too soon, for bringing wounded men back to Red Cross hospitals in the area. Here, men are mustering in the station forecourt, with the Griffin Hotel (now demolished) in the background.

The war was beginning to affect other areas of daily life. In October 1914, the St John's School log , kept by the head teacher, notes that '...lessons are brought forward by 25 minutes to economise on fuel and light.'

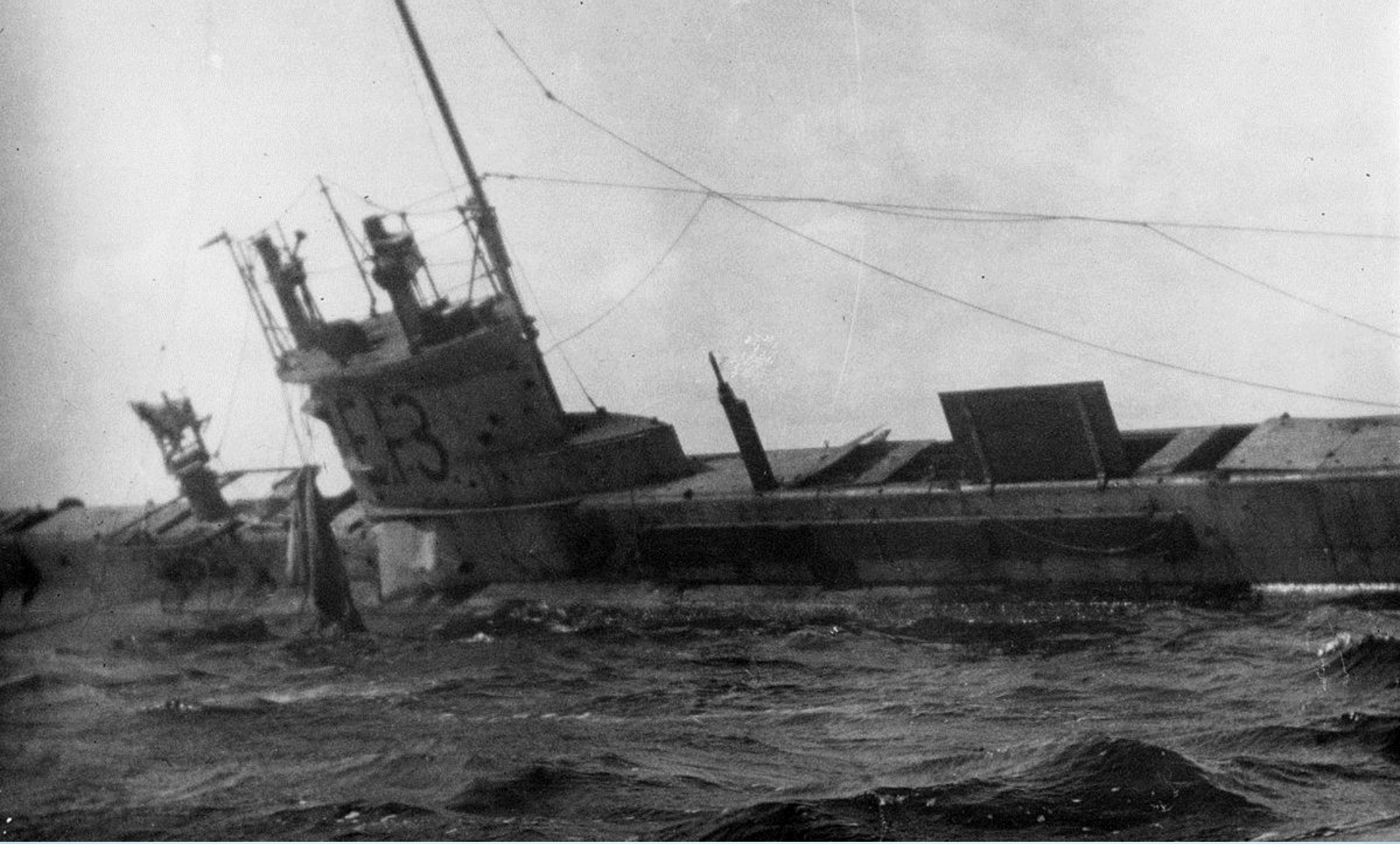
In November 1914, the Western Gazette and the Minster Parish Magazine reported that all the elementary schools in Wimborne were closed in order to be used as accommodation for 2200 troops. The schools were reopened after six weeks, having been cleaned and disinfected.

This is the first world war memorial tablet in St John's Church. About 30 men with connections to the parish died during their service with the Forces in the first world war; a few are buried in Wimborne Cemetery, some as far away as Iraq. Some have no known grave.





Police Officer Harold Ricketts, whose father was Superintendent at Wimborne Police Station, then in Poole Road, drowned while on his honeymoon in Teignmouth, Devon, trying to save people from a rowing boat overturned in the river. This is the plaque to his bravery in Postman's Park, London. His brother, who was in the Army, survived the war.



Arthur Long, Stoker in the Royal Navy, whose parents lived in Avenue Road, was among 15 crewmen of submarine E13 who were killed by German torpedo fire whilst the boat lay aground on a sandbank, pictured above, in neutral waters off Denmark.

Outraged by this breach of the rules of neutrality, Denmark brought the sailors' bodies back to England with full military honours. Wimborne came to a standstill as Arthur Long's coffin passed to the Baptist Church in Grove Road. Stoker Long is buried in Wimborne Cemetery.

Sgt Reginald Isaac, in this photograph, was killed in France in May 1918.

His brother John was killed in action in France in July 1916. Their parents, Frederick and Elizabeth Isaac lived in Station Terrace.

When the war ended in 1918, hundreds of thousands of families like theirs all over the country were mourning the deaths of loved ones lost in the conflict.