

From the Archivist:

St Cuthbert's Church during World War I

In 1911 Rev Arthur Luckman, the former Archdeacon of Calcutta took up the post of rector. He was the church's third rector. From remarks in the Register of Services Luckman appears very interested in the weather. Notes of bad weather are added. These of course may have been added to explain poor attendance at a service. He also carried out some important work with the soldiers who were stationed at Redford barracks during the war.

On the night of 2 April 1916, two zeppelins flew over Edinburgh. L22 dropped bombs on Leith, then a major port, and on the Grassmarket. Eleven people were killed and twenty four injured. Even before this attack the city authorities had ordered a blackout. Evening classes came to an end and public baths were closed at sunset. Some city shopkeepers during March of this year were prosecuted for insufficient blackout cover.

Times for Evening Services varied. The normal time for the service to begin was 6.00pm but in February 1916 it was brought forward by one hour. During the lighter nights it returned to its former time. Then in October it returned to 5.00 before being brought forward even earlier to 4.00 in November. The Vestry took out Aircraft Bombardment Insurance which cost the church £7. 17sh. 6p. – a large sum for those times. In January 1917, Sir Oliver Riddell provided blinds so the church could be blacked out during the Evening Service. Since street lights would be unlit, travelling to and from church could have also proved difficult.

In 1915 Colinton Tramways planned to build a terminus opposite the church. Colinton was not yet part of Edinburgh at this time. The expansion of the city, which brought many of the suburbs under the control of Edinburgh's Council, was not passed until after the war. Then all the tramways were brought together and the city's cable car system abandoned. The Vestry spent £142 on opposing this. The reason for this opposition to the expanding public transport system is not given in the minutes. The cost appears totally above anything a small church like St Cuthbert's could afford. (The wife of a soldier or sailor with two children only received an allowance of a little over £1 a week." Sir Oliver Riddell however gave the money to the church so he must have approved of the decision.