

Our Local Times

World War 1 in our area – its effect and legacy

Written by Clements Hall Local History Group, York

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Clements Hall Local History Group is a group of people who are interested in the history of our neighbourhood in York. We have received Heritage Lottery funding to explore the impact and legacy of the First World War in our area which covers South Bank, Clementhorpe and Nunnery Lane. Looking at newspapers of the time, searching online, and exploring local archives we have learned how the war caused misery and upheaval and changed lives for our local residents, often through generations.

Here are some of their stories...



Millfield Road Peace Celebrations, 1919. Image courtesy of Hugh Murray.

We are lucky to have a photo of the people from Millfield Road in 1919, who, in common with all our local residents, were affected to some extent by the war.

Volunteers

Jon Reginald Parker and his brother Lawrence Edwin Parker were only 15 and 17 when they started volunteering with the Red Cross as hospital orderlies in York in 1918. They lived at 46 Millfield Road.

An opportunity to entertain

War gave Winifred Brown and Blanche Humble a chance to use their

musical abilities in Miss Guy's Ladies' Orchestra. Winifred of 14 Millfield Road played the piano in concerts for the troops around York.

Born in the wrong place

Joseph Holub was born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire but had married a York woman called Adelaide in 1891 and lived at 7 Millfield Road. It is highly likely that

he and his family suffered insults and prejudice during the war on account of his name and nationality. This might have been difficult for his four daughters, two of whom taught at Scarcroft School.

Aircraft

In 1913 when Thomas Noel Herbert was 17 the first aeroplane in York landed on the Knavesmire. Thomas could not then have known that he would become an anti-aircraft gunner and see action in France. He suffered the effects of poison gas in 1918 but survived the war. He had lived at 66 Millfield Road.

Dressings made from moss

In 1916 Ada Kirby of 25 Millfield Road was married with two young children. She was also working as a volunteer at a Red Cross depot in Coney Street making dressings out of sphagnum moss for the war.

Contribute to our group

Contact us via Clements Hall on:
01904 466086 or email
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Zeppelin damage to 13 Upper Price Street, May 1916. Image courtesy of Hugh Murray.

Zeppelins come to York 1916

On the night of Tuesday 2 May 1916 York's first Zeppelin passed over York causing 9 deaths and 40 injuries.

There were no searchlights or anti-aircraft guns at that time and many injuries were caused by residents going on to the street to investigate the source of the unfamiliar noises that night.

Fatalities

Police and members of the Volunteer Training Corps recovered the bodies of George and Mary Avison from the wreckage of 13 Upper Price Street on the morning of Wednesday 3 May. They had been married for 45 years. Emily Chapman of 6 Nunthorpe Avenue was killed outside her house. Her father Gerald spoke of hearing six bombs drop in rapid succession. His wife Ada and daughter Norah were unable to attend Emily's funeral as they were injured and in York County Hospital.

Damage

There was damage to property in many streets including:

Millfield Road; Nunnery Lane; Nunthorpe Avenue; Nunthorpe Road; Price Street; Scarcroft Road; Upper Price Street

Air raid warnings

Air raid warnings continued through the war in our area. The Bar Convent received at least thirteen air raid warnings from March 1916 to April 1918. Watson Hirst, headmaster of Cherry Street School, wrote of air raid warnings causing absences from school on account of tiredness and anxiety. There were another two air raids in and on the outskirts of York during the war. There were no further fatalities.

An influx of strangers

Accident on the Knavesmire

In 1915 the 5th Reserve Cavalry Regiment was stationed on the Knavesmire, which was described by the *Yorkshire Gazette* as a former 'popular pleasure ground'. Florence Attenborough of 102 Knavesmire Crescent and Florence Lazenby of 96 Knavesmire Crescent were deeply distressed on the afternoon of 13 April 1915 when they saw Private David Whyte of the 5th Reserve Cavalry Regiment thrown and killed after his horse bolted on the Knavesmire. He was from Perth, Scotland.

Soldiers as far as the eye can see

The photograph of Albemarle Road, then known as Albemarle Terrace, was taken in relatively tranquil times before the war. This scene changed dramatically in 1914 and, by September 2014, 1,500 members of the 5th Reserve Cavalry were sleeping in the racecourse grandstand. It was not long before the Knavesmire became a tented village of military personnel. Men were also billeted and accommodated all over the city. They came from far and wide. Volunteers at Southlands Wesleyan Methodist Chapel joked that they had to learn a



Albemarle Road around 1900. Image courtesy of Hugh Murray.

new language as there were so many Scottish soldiers with strange accents passing through the city.

Nurses and medical staff

While many people from our area volunteered in hospital and ancillary services, many professional medical staff came to York. Some of these worked at Nunthorpe Hall VAD hospital, which was situated near Coggan Close and Philadelphia Terrace. Sister Mary Heasley had been born in Belfast, trained in London and came to Nunthorpe Hall probably in 1917. Evangeline Priestman worked

as a masseuse at Nunthorpe Hall and came from Bradford.

Refugees

Germany's invasion of Belgium in August 1914 caused thousands of Belgian citizens to flee to Britain, where they were homeless. The Bar Convent provided accommodation and education for the refugees and we know that the Convent provided a house on Kensington Street for some of them. Southlands Chapel also housed a family of refugees in a house on River Street.

Opportunity and change

Women workers at Terry's

In 1895, there were about 200 employees at the Terry's factory in Clementhorpe. The vast majority were women working on piecework with no female office workers. Women entered the offices from 1915 as the male staff went to war. Gladys Dwyer did not have far to travel to work when she started in the costing department in 1916. She lived at 23 Vine Street with her grandparents; her parents had both died young. Two other young women who joined Terry's offices during the war were Hilda Cleasby of 54 Kensington Street and Norah Fowler of 54 Scott Street. Gladys and Hilda were only 14 years old when they first went to Terry's and they were still working there in 1922.

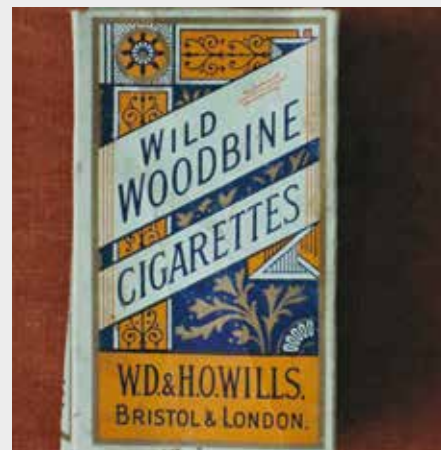
Changes in production at Terry's

Before the war Herr Hoffman from Berlin had been a regular visitor to York as his firm Hoffman and Tiede supplied Terry's with beautiful

fancy boxes for some of their Christmas lines. Terry's stopped trading with Hoffman and Tiede during the war. Sugar became more and more expensive and difficult to import during the war and this affected Terry's. A large amount of sugar was imported from Germany where they produced it from beet. As a result of sugar shortages Terry's turned their confectionery production towards chocolate and away from boiled sweets and lozenges. Frank Lowther of Finsbury Street would have witnessed all these changes. He retired from Terry's in 1941.

Fish and Chips – a good investment

George Brook bought the fish and chip shop at 1 Ebor Street in November 1914 as a business to support his wife and children. By 1916 he was serving hundreds of soldiers and considered extending his hours to cater for local munitions workers coming off night shifts.



Cigarettes

Tobacconists in garrison towns like York saw sales of cigarettes soar. People collected cigarettes to send as comforts to the troops. Residents of Windsor Street, Adelaide Street and Philadelphia Terrace organised regular collections of cigarettes for the military patients in Nunthorpe Hall hospital throughout the war. Consequently local shops that sold cigarettes such as Charles Potter's grocer and off licence at 1 Vine Street saw sales increase dramatically, particularly as the shop was on the route between the centre of York and the Knavesmire.



Workers from the lozenge department at Terry's in the 1900's including Frank Lowther of 57 Finsbury Street. Image courtesy of York Explore



Southlands Wesleyan Chapel. Image Courtesy of Hugh Murray

Volunteers

Time and manpower

1914 – 1918 was a time of crisis and people in our area rallied round to support the war effort. They gave their time and donated gifts and money for the military when they were often hard pressed themselves as men of working age left to join the armed services. By May 1917 Watson Hirst, headmaster of Cherry Street School, wrote in the school log book that many of the boy pupils were asking to be excused from lessons so they could work for local tradesmen in York who were very short of manpower.

Rest and recreation

In 1914 Southlands Wesleyan Chapel, as it was then called, opened its doors as a place of rest and recreation for soldiers in York. Space was made available for them to write letters home to their nearest and dearest and by October 1915 over 20,000 letters had been written from

the writing room at Southlands. In December 1914 260 men attended a concert followed by a supper in the gallery. All these activities depended on local volunteers. Emily Elders from Scarcroft Road and Mrs Arthur Daykin from 20 Richardson Street were two of the regular volunteers. Additionally, congregation members Mary and William Whitworth gave small parties for soldiers at their home at 42 Scarcroft Hill to make them feel less homesick. Blanche Humble of 12 Scarcroft Hill was one of the many locals who provided musical entertainment at concerts at Southlands and at other venues in the city, including the YMCA hut at St George's Field.

Help for the sick and wounded

Frederick Hardgrave had run a grocer's shop at 14 Bishopthorpe Road in 1913. He worked as a volunteer ambulance orderly

throughout the war and conveyed sick and wounded soldiers around York. Mary Metcalfe, whose husband ran the butcher's shop at 1 Bishopthorpe Road, gave her time to work as a cook and general assistant at Clifford Street military hospital. John Carrall of 5 Cygnet Street was 52 at the outbreak of war and initially became a voluntary medical instructor at the Assembly Rooms. In 1915 he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps. He survived the war. His son John Edwin Carrall died in 1917 of wounds received in action.

E. ELDERS,
Baker and Confectioner,
7, SCARCROFT ROAD.
Home-made Potted Meat a Speciality.
NOTE.—All Pastry and Bread sold at our Establishment is Home-made.

Advertisement from Southlands Messenger, 1915.



Moss Street Peace celebrations, 1919. Image courtesy of Geoffrey Shearsmith.

Living together through the war

The picture above shows residents of Moss Street celebrating the official end of the war in 1919. Most residents were those who had stayed at home through difficult times. The end of hostilities was welcomed but people had experienced war in very different ways and colleagues, neighbours and even family members had very different feelings about the peace celebrations.

Neighbours

In November 1915, John and Mary Jackson of 15 Brunswick Street learned that their son Robert had died of wounds in the fighting in Belgium. A few months later, their neighbours, Arthur and Agnes Smithson at 17 Brunswick Street received news that their son Harry Smithson was missing in action in France, and went through 1916, 1917 and most of 1918 with no more news about whether he was alive or dead. In November 1918 Harry Smithson sent his parents a postcard from a prisoner of war camp

in Germany to say that he was fit and well and ready to come home. By then, Mr and Mrs Jackson had had to cope with the news that a further two of their sons, Matthew and George, had been killed in the war.

Colleagues

George Broadley of 41 Russell Street and John Cade of 7 Clementhorpe were colleagues before the outbreak of war. George and John had worked at Isaac Walton's tailor's shop in Parliament Street, York. George was a conscientious objector who refused

to engage with the war and spent time in prison for his beliefs. George's brother Harry had enlisted with the Durham Light Infantry in 1914 and was demobbed in 1919 while George was still doing hard labour in Wandsworth Prison. A question was raised in Parliament in 1919 asking whether George's sentence could be remitted. John Cade was killed while serving with the Lincolnshire Regiment in 1916 and left a wife, Pauline, and a baby, George Cade.

Family

Rhoda Precious of 1 Swann Street was buried at St Mary's Bishophill in October 1918. She died from the influenza pandemic that claimed millions of lives worldwide. Her brothers had been too young to fight in the war. It is thought that the poor conditions amongst service personnel had contributed to the origin and spread of this disease. Rhoda was only 23 and engaged to be married.

World War 1 in our area – its effect and legacy

World War 1 affected every nation, city and individual who had been involved long after the cenotaph was unveiled in Whitehall in 1920. In our area there are many memorials to the people who died as a result of the war – at St Clement's Church, Southlands Methodist Church, Scarcroft School and Rowntree Park. It is estimated that around eleven to twelve per cent of British service personnel were killed as a result of the war. This is a shockingly high figure, but it is important to remember that the vast majority of men who fought did come back from the war. Many returned with horrific and life-shortening injuries. Their experiences and the experiences of those on the home front influenced them and subsequent generations in all sorts of ways.

In the Spring of 1915 Private John Jackson wrote to Southlands:

'The silence of all the men who are or have been at the front, or the horrible sights they have witnessed or the privations through which they have passed is remarkable.'

He was then preparing to go to the front. He came home to York on six days leave in October 1915. The Reverend Freeman from Southlands Chapel took the opportunity to talk to him about his experiences. He found that John had picked up the silence of the fighting men and wrote:

'John... was very reticent...you had literally to drag from him any information you sought'

By 1918, Private John Jackson from 15 Brunswick Street had been gassed, and wounded twice.

This publication is our attempt to make the impact of the war in our area heard and considered.

Acknowledgements

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Sources

If you require further details about the sources used in this publication please see our website at clementshallhistorygroup.wordpress.com or contact **Clements Hall Local History Group** via Clements Hall on **01904 466086** or email enquiries@clementshall.org.uk

Contribute to our group

We will continue to explore the impact and legacy of the First World War on our local area. We are always grateful to receive information and help with this, and welcome new members. Contact us via Clements Hall on **01904 466086** or email enquiries@clementshall.org.uk

