

Researching the First World War in Explore York's Archives



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Introduction

- I come from Explore York Libraries and Archives, which manages the libraries and archive service on behalf of City of York Council.
- Primarily going to focus this talk on identifying individuals rather than general local history, including some information you can find elsewhere in York and online.
- Will then also look at some of the other sources you can use to research the First World War, primarily relating to York.

Breakdown of session

- Getting started
- Serving personnel
- Conscientious objectors
- War casualties
- Finding out more
- Further information

Getting started

- What do you already know? Gather as much information as you can.
- Birth and marriage information
 - » Ancestry.com
- Where did they live and work before they were called up?
 - » 1911 census
 - » Trade directories
 - » Electoral registers



Old photographs



explore

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War service

- Did they serve overseas during the war?
 - » Service records
 - » Medal cards
 - » Regimental histories
- Did they serve at home?
 - » Business records
- Were they a conscientious objector?
- Did they die during the war?
 - » CWGC
 - » Coroner's records

Service records

- Over half of the records relating to serving military personnel in the First World War were destroyed in an aerial bombing attack in September 1940.
- Only a 40% chance of finding a service record for someone who served.
- The rest were very badly damaged, but have been microfilmed.
- Copies are available to view at The National Archives at Kew, London, and on Ancestry.com.
- Very detailed, with full address and description, next of kin details and sometimes a medical history. Can also include information about discipline and occasional bouts of drunkenness!

Medal cards

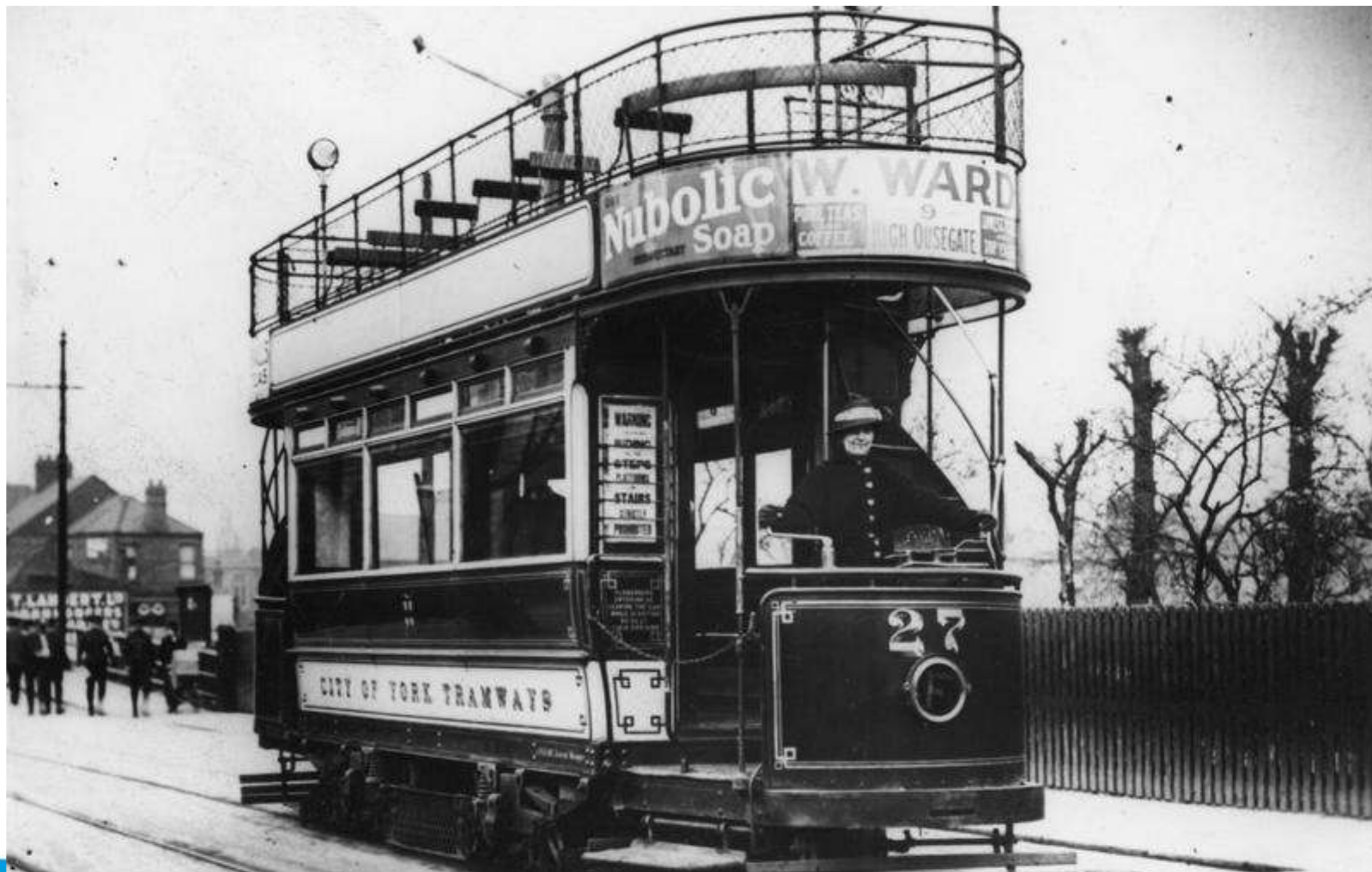
Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
STEPHEN	A S C	Pvt	Inf 2/13/264
<i>William</i>	— — —	— — —	— — —
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks
VICTORY	RASC/101 B 89.	9039.	bc (L) 29-4-19
BRITISH	— do —	— do —	
15 th STAR	RASC/6 B 4	4717	
Theatre of War first served in	(B) Egypt		
Date of entry therein	20.11.15		

K 1380.

Regimental histories and war diaries

- Surviving regimental war diaries can be found at the National Archives at Kew, or online through their website (for a charge).
- They vary greatly in detail, and most do not contain details of individual soldiers.
- They will, though, contain details of where regiments were and the action they were caught up in.
- It might also be worth looking in your local library for published histories of particular regiments during the First World War.

Those who served at home



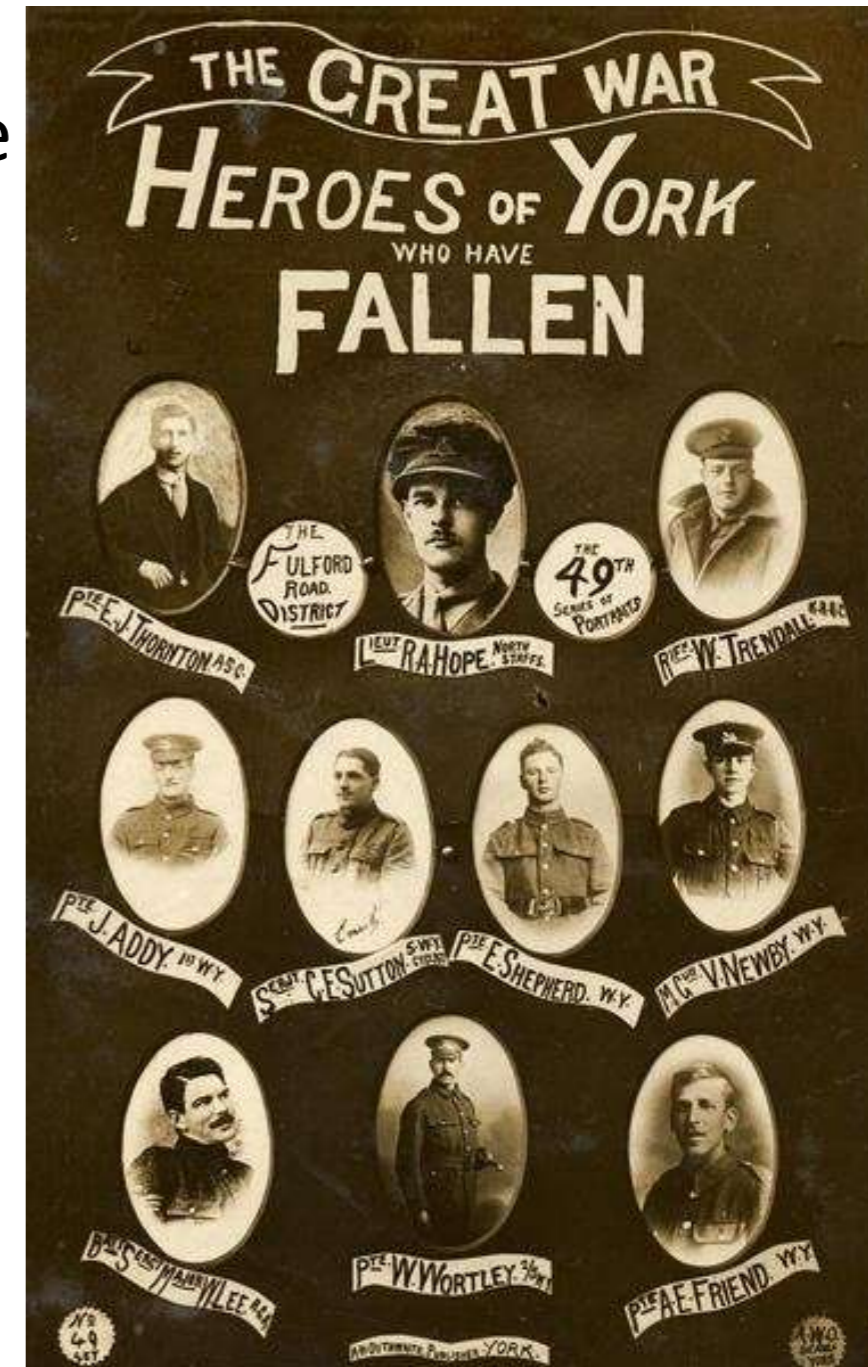
Conscientious objectors

- In 1921, the Ministry of Health determined that all records relating to cases of exemption from National Service (conscription) should be destroyed, apart from the Central Tribunal.
- This means that very few records actually survive.
- At a local level, papers of individual conscientious objectors may survive in archives.



Casualties on active service

- Details of casualties who died on active service are held by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, who are still responsible for grave sites and memorials both in the UK and overseas.
- You can find details of casualties on their website: www.cwgc.org.



Other sources and casualties at home

- Don't forget local newspapers – many contain obituaries of those killed, details of those injured and information on medals received.
- They will also note any incidents at home e.g. civilian casualties and general information about life in the First World War in the local area e.g. Fundraising appeals etc.
- Information about civilian casualties will also appear in coroner's records, which can be accessed at local record offices. Transcripts usually appear in the newspapers as well.

Finding out more

- At a local level, archives services hold a lot of information about the First World War which you might never have thought of.
- I'll look at some of the archives held at Explore York Libraries and Archives here, but this is not an exhaustive list by any means. Get in contact with local archives services to find out what other records they have on the subject.
- Don't forget the Yorkshire Film archive, either, as they have moving film relating to the First World War in York.

The Chocolate Letters



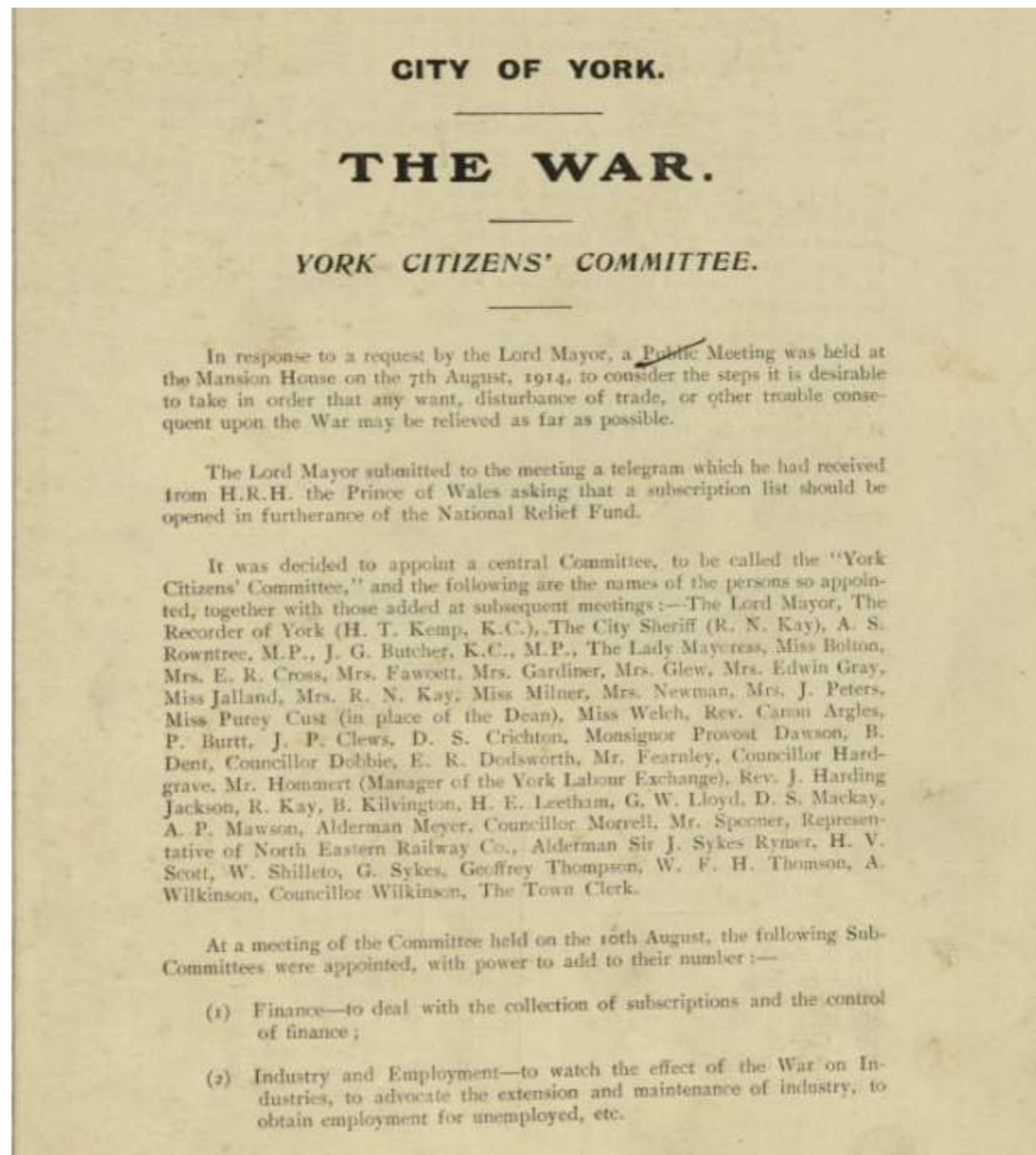
The autobiography of Millicent Price

- 16 -

neighbour, but their shining brown and yellow faces attracted the wasps. Behind the wall was a terrifying and witch-like old woman, more fear-making than any wasp. If our balls flew over, she hurried from the window where, like a spider, she kept malignant watch over us. In indescribable garments, one over-lapping the other; with a straggling grey mop of hair and a flourishing stick, she hurled curses at us from her side and confiscated our playthings. Only in moods of great temerity dare we play under her nose our boisterous games.

After a time the mud patch was asphalted over and the sunflowers disappeared. Only the sparrows, like more mobile mice, pattered over the harsh surface, and a toad hid behind a broken brick, appearing to my delight, two summers following. The rest of the yard was given over to a pile of coke, a laundry shed and gear. We were not however denied the bliss of nearness to nature. Although our house was embedded in streets and shops, along the Hull Road, after passing a

Records of York Citizens Committee



1 2 3 4 5 6 7

PLAN OF YORK

ELPHINSTON COLLEGE



TO NORTH

TO HARRGATE

TO LEEDS

MICKLEGATE STRAY

TO HARRGATE

WILLIAM SESSIONS
PRINTER & PUBLISHER.

21/1916

MAY 2/3

SEPT 25/26

Explosion Bombs marked this +

Council records

- Council minutes refer to the issues regarding injured service personnel coming home and finding work, and the efforts made to try and employ them.
- Information about the erection of war memorials, and the creation of rolls of honour of those who served.



Further information

- National Archives website (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)
- Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org).
- Imperial War Museum (<http://www.iwm.org.uk/>)

- Explore York Libraries and Archives First World War Pinterest board (<https://uk.pinterest.com/yorkexplore/first-world-war-collections-guide-explore-york-lib/>)

Thank you!
(and any questions?)

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