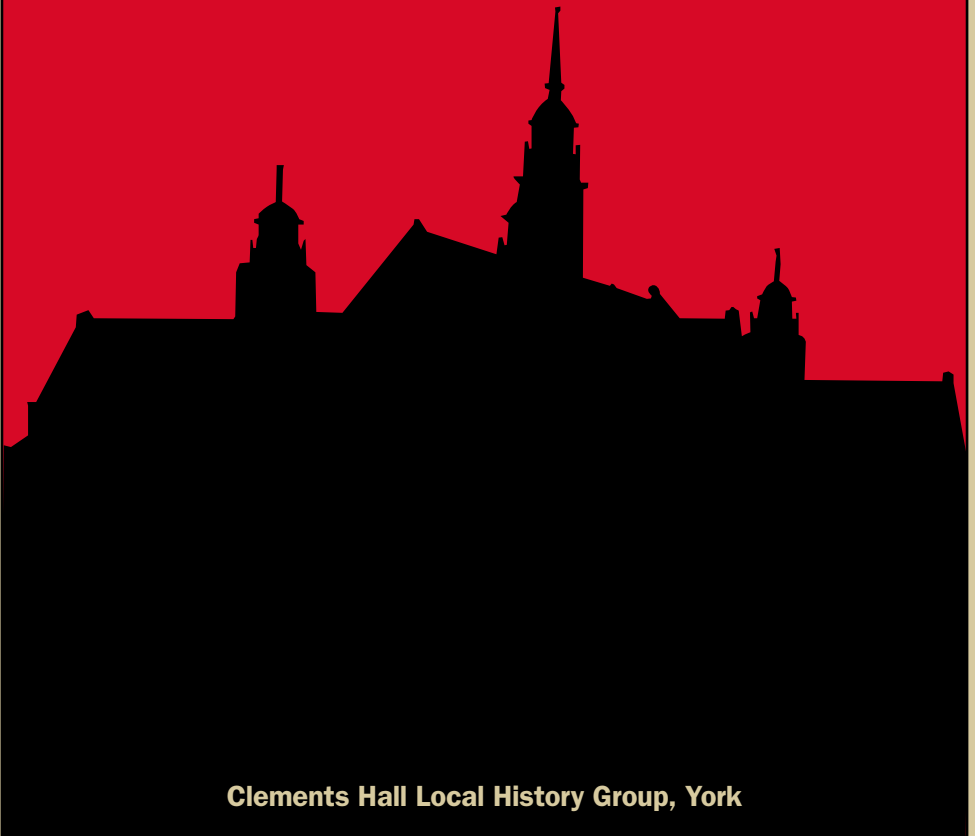


# **SCARCROFT SCHOOL YORK**

## **IN WORLD WAR 1**



**Clements Hall Local History Group, York**

## Contents

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	3
EARLY YEARS . . . . .	5
DISRUPTION . . . . .	7
TOMMY BROWN: BILLETED SOLDIER . . . . .	9
SCOUTS . . . . .	11
GIRL GUIDES . . . . .	13
SCARCROFT FAMILIES AT WAR . . . . .	14
George Helstrip . . . . .	14
The Youngs . . . . .	15
The Toes . . . . .	15
Arthur Aked . . . . .	16
Arthur Birch . . . . .	17
WOMEN AND THE WAR . . . . .	18
TEACHERS . . . . .	19
LETTERS HOME . . . . .	20
CHOCOLATE: A GIFT FROM YORK . . . . .	22
AIR RAID . . . . .	23
CHILDREN AND EMPLOYMENT . . . . .	26
CHILDREN AND THE WAR EFFORT . . . . .	26
IMPACT OF SPANISH FLU . . . . .	29
LEGACY OF WAR . . . . .	30
CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	32
AFTERWORD BY MANDY MORRELL . . . . .	33
Sources . . . . .	34
Further reading . . . . .	34
Acknowledgements . . . . .	34

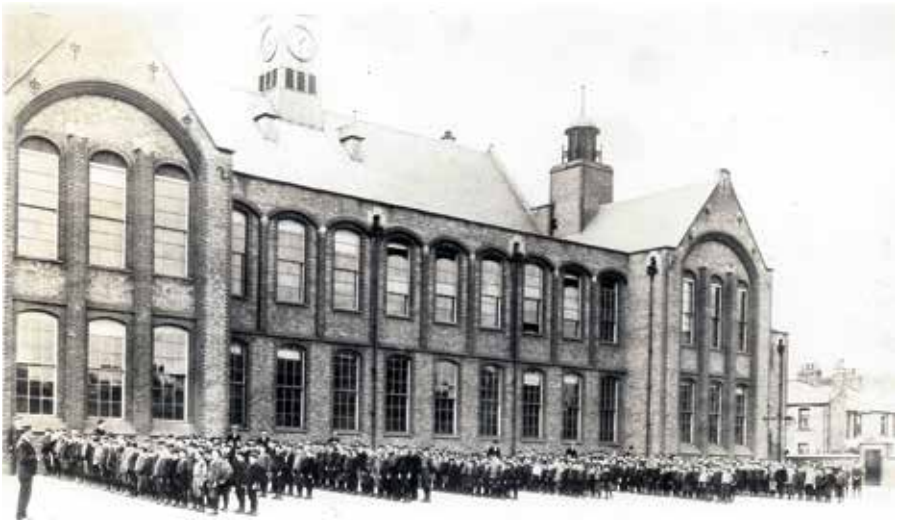
## INTRODUCTION

This is the story of one York elementary school during World War 1. Drawing on a range of sources, including newspapers, correspondence and Scarcroft School archives, it tells how a school community held together amid the disruption of war, and how it made its own contribution to the war effort. We discover soldiers billeted at the school en route to the war front, staff and former pupils who fought and in some cases did not return, and women and children in unfamiliar roles as workers and volunteers.

Scarcroft School is at the heart of its community, with thousands educated there since 1896, often several generations of the same extended family. At the outbreak of war in 1914 there were three times as

*Scarcroft  
School pupils  
in class lines,  
c. 1912–13*

© Scarcroft  
School, York



many pupils as today, with much larger class sizes and different teaching methods. This account shows not only how the war impacted on the school, but also what it felt like for staff and pupils – and how the surrounding streets briefly became a theatre of war with the aerial attack of 1916.

The 1870 Elementary Education Act made provision for elementary education of all children and established school boards to oversee and complete the network of schools and to bring them under some form of supervision. The Act required that every school district should have sufficient public schools, affordable and acceptable to the many religious interests. School boards were empowered to support the education of the poor, and religious education was to be non-denominational. Schools catered for children up to 14 years. They were for the working class, and provided a restricted curriculum with an emphasis on reading, writing and arithmetic. They pursued other aims including social-disciplinary objectives (acceptance of the teacher's authority, the need for punctuality, obedience, and conformity). School was compulsory up to the age of 12. At 14 some pupils were awarded scholarships to continue post-elementary education. Working class young people often continued their education through denominational schools and Adult Schools. Scarcroft Road Evening School was the largest in the city with 610 students enrolled in 1913.

## EARLY YEARS

York School Board was elected by ratepayers to build and manage schools where required. Scarcroft Board School opened on 10 August 1896 on Micklegate Stray with two halls and 21 classrooms for 1,200 children. The school was designed by York architect Walter Brierley and had woodwork and metalwork shops for boys, and a domestic science block and instruction in typing and shorthand for girls.

With an expanding local population Nunnery Lane Board School had opened in April 1895 for infants and standard one, up to the age of eight. The following year 48 of its children transferred to the newly-built Scarcroft School, and Nunnery Lane School closed. 306 infants registered in the first term at Scarcroft, including

*Domestic  
science class*  
© Scarcroft  
School, York



75 from St Clement's Church of England School, Clementhorpe. The Infants department was on the ground floor, with Miss A. Page headteacher from 1896 to 1930. Holtby Robert Morrell was headteacher of the Mixed (Junior and Senior) School from 1896 to 1926.

In 1906 the school was renamed York Scarcroft Council School. Numbers increased, with 336 infants enrolled in 1898. By 1910 there were 852 children in the Juniors and Seniors, and 323 in the Infants.

The school had an orchestra, and success in inter-school sports, winning the Schools Football Cup in 1908-09, 1909-10, 1910-11 and 1912-13. Henry Duck appears in the photo of the team that won the trophy in 1909. The following year he was awarded a scholarship to Archbishop Holgate's Grammar School

*Scarcroft School orchestra, c. 1913*  
© Scarcroft School, York





*Scarcroft  
School football  
team 1908–09*

© Scarcroft  
School, York

and was later a pupil teacher at Scarcroft. After starting medical studies he was conscripted into the Royal Garrison Artillery as a Gunner. He survived the war and practised as a GP in Easingwold for many years. His older brother William, previously a clerk with the North Eastern Railway, was killed on active service in 1915.

## DISRUPTION

**W**hen war was declared on 4 August 1914, York received notice from the military that some schools were required for billeting troops, and plans were made to accommodate 5,721 displaced children. Scarcroft – close to the Knavesmire, a potential military



training site – was among the schools required, and did not open as planned on 10 August that year. Holidays were extended and temporary school buildings sought and secured. Half the number of infants went to Nunnery Lane Mission Room, and half to Carr Lane Adult School. The Heads were notified that these premises were also required by the military. Staff agreed a scheme of work that could be delivered in the open air, and sought a field for organised games. However, by 20 August Scarcroft School was told that the temporary buildings would not be required after all. Parents were informed via the press and the school opened.

The army subsequently used the school from early December 1914 to 14 April 1915. School apparatus was packed, and alternative accommodation secured. Infants walked under supervision to Castlegate Council School with classes from eleven o'clock to one, and from two to four, with trams for those with long journeys. Older children were relocated to Fishergate School, though this too was soon needed for army billeting.

Military requisitioning was repeated over the winter months of 1915–16 when pupils relocated to Southlands Methodist Church and the Cooperative Hall in Railway Street (now George Hudson Street). Billeting resulted in substantial damage to furniture and equipment, and troops had a weekly sum docked to cover replacement costs.



## TOMMY BROWN: BILLETED SOLDIER

**T**ommy Brown from Tyneside enlisted in the 6th Northumberland Fusiliers in November 1915, and arrived at his training billet at Scarcroft School the next month. He wrote nearly 50 letters from York to his parents in Drummond Terrace, North Shields. Drafted to France in July 1916, he was awarded the Military Medal for 'heroism' and 'bravery'. Brown was taken prisoner in March 1918, and placed in a prisoner of war camp at Dülmen, Germany, and later transferred to Limburg, also in Germany. He returned home, via Hull and Ripon, in December 1918.

Tommy trained in bombing, signalling and musketry in York, though he suffered from poor eyesight. After failing a transfer to the Royal Flying Corps he was placed in the signalling section. He wrote of the mud he had to endure while doing drill. While initially a bit depressed he was soon 'as happy as a lark' and expected to get home for Christmas. This did not happen, but he received parcels from home, with chocolates, cakes, sardines, biscuits – and khaki handkerchiefs, a diary and

*Thomas  
Baker Brown*  
© University of  
Newcastle Library  
Special Collections



5359,  
9th Platoon,  
6th Company  
6th N.Y.  
Scarcroft School  
York.

Here at 1.45 pm. It was impossible to get out. The M.P. only allowed certificates and a letter out at dinner time. Packer & Telt to telephone to Pa but he said he was unable to get through. I couldn't get out to send a telegram to Pa so I just had to wait before I

My dear Mother,

to be surprised

Our first glance at York was not very encouraging but it was nearly dark on arrival and I expect it will improve when we see it in the daylight.

There are an awful lot of soldiers in the schools and seems about the same rough style as at Acl.

On arrival at the school we were divided into 2 parties and I am now with Brown & Jackson along with some others in the

There are an awful lot of soldiers in the schools and seems about the same rough style as at Acl. On arrival at the school we were divided into 2 parties and I am now with Brown & Jackson along with some others in the 6th Co. Platoon.

aristocratic part of the City. I am writing this in the Assembly Rooms here which is a sort of A.M.C.A. for soldiers so you'll have to excuse writing as the pens here are something like those supplied at North Field Post Office.

Give my love to Father, George and Hazel.

Your loving son,  
Tommy.

P.S. Don't worry about me I shall get a champion.

First letter home from Thomas Baker Brown at Scarcroft School to his mother after he had joined the army, dated 5 December 1915

postal orders. Christmas dinner was goose, pudding, lemonade and cigarettes, with a 'magnificent feed' at the Assembly Rooms – 'a sort of YMCA for soldiers' – on Boxing Day.

In the evenings Tommy met other lads from North Shields at the Assembly Rooms. Here he spent most of his weekly pay of six shillings and sixpence, docked for laundry, insurance and barrack damage. There was ping-pong, and a 'fine feed' for four pence. Hot public baths were four pence too, and there was music hall and theatre. He visited the panto *Robinson Crusoe* at the Empire, and the revue *More* at the Theatre Royal, where stalls were half price for soldiers. He also enjoyed *The Man Who Stayed at Home*, the spy thriller by York-born Harold Terry, a grandson of the York confectioner Sir Joseph Terry. This popular play reflected fears about German spies, prevalent at that time.

*Edward (Eddie)  
Hawthorne  
Junior in scout  
uniform*

© Hawthorne  
family archive

## SCOUTS

**B**oy Scouts were trained as messengers for the War Office. In September 1914 a Scarcroft teacher, Edward Hope Hawthorne, was appointed head of a temporary scout school, comprising two large classrooms at Brook Street School, off Clarence Street.





*Scouts  
harvesting in  
World War 1*

© & produced with  
permission of The  
Scout Association,  
Heritage Department

Scarcroft boys were among 120 selected from York scouts by Cecil Molyneaux, acting chief scoutmaster, who taught at St Paul's School, Holgate. The timetable included handicrafts, field geography, practical drawing and arithmetic. Boys spent alternate weeks in military service – for example, guarding railway lines, coastguard duty, and harvesting – and at school. Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Scouts, visited on 8 December 1914, and later wrote to the chair of York Corporation's Education Committee commending Hawthorne's efforts.

Edward Hawthorne later enlisted and was attached to a Royal Navy medical unit. He served in Gallipoli and France.

## GIRL GUIDES

**B**aden-Powell also inspected local Girl Guides. He valued their work in preparing warm clothing for men at the Front, making bandages for hospitals, learning first aid and cooking for the wounded. Later in the war, Guides greatly expanded their activities, tending allotments and helping with the harvest, collecting wastepaper for recycling and acting as messengers for the army and government offices.



photo courtesy of Regional Archivist, Girlguiding NEE



## SCARCROFT FAMILIES AT WAR

Over 500 former Scarcroft pupils and teachers served in the military in the war and the school memorial commemorates 66 who lost their lives. Notices were placed in the local press asking bereaved families to submit names, two families each losing two sons. Combatants served in the Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Flying Corps (later the Royal Air Force).

### George Helstrip

George was born on 1 August 1899, and moved to 15 Cygnet Street in 1904. He attended Scarcroft School from 1904 to 1914, later trained as a clerk, and was conscripted in 1917. He joined the Civil Service Rifles, and in March 1918 was sent to the Western Front where he transferred to the Rifle Brigade. He returned from Belgium in March 1919, was stationed at Catterick, and at Ripon where he guarded German prisoners. He



*George Helstrip  
(extreme right,  
arms folded)  
at an army  
training camp*

© Helstrip  
family archive

was demobbed in December 1919. On leaving the army he worked as a clerk for the North Eastern Railway, later London North Eastern Railway, then British Rail, until retirement in 1965. He died in Filey in 1983.

## The Youngs

William Young was killed in action on 11 October 1916. He had four brothers in the army and one of them, Corporal Herbert Duncan Young, a former Scarcroft pupil, was presented with the Military Medal by the Lord Mayor in the school hall. The *Yorkshire Evening Press* on 6 September 1918 reported he had shown bravery when a shell burst under his lorry while delivering ammunition to the front line. Under heavy shell fire, he and the second driver helped the wounded and cleared dead men and horses from the road while waiting for the breakdown party. The Young family ran Young's Hotel in Petergate (now the Guy Fawkes Inn). Corporal Young's father and uncles had served in the Volunteer Force.



*George Helstrip  
in scout  
uniform with  
his parents  
George senior  
and Lydia*  
© Helstrip  
family archive

## The Toes

Local attitudes towards the war varied, even within the same family, such as the Toes, who lived in Victoria Street, Nunnery Lane. John, the eldest son, served



with the Territorial Force Reserves in 1917. His brother Arthur joined the Royal Flying Corps as a 2nd Lieutenant at 18 years of age. Power-assisted flight was in its infancy and the life expectancy of pilots was low. His squadron participated in the '100 days offensive' on the Western Front from August 1918, which helped bring the war to an end. Arthur was killed on a bombing raid on 27 October 1918, shortly before the Armistice, and is buried in France. He is commemorated on the Scarcroft school war memorial.

However another brother, Herbert, a post office clerk, was one of York's first conscientious objectors to appear before a military tribunal in March 1916, following the introduction of conscription. He had attended Old Priory Adult School, and declared 'all war is immoral and contrary to the teaching of Christ'. Despite Mrs Horner Thompson, a Quaker, speaking for him at the tribunal, his case and subsequent appeal were dismissed. Herbert was willing to undertake alternative (non-military) service of national importance and it is assumed this occurred. The consequences of his principled stance on his widowed mother, his siblings and neighbours is not known. Men out of uniform were reviled in some quarters and white feathers (for 'cowardice') handed to them.

## **Arthur Aked**

Arthur Aked lived on Wentworth Road. Before the war he was a draughtsman with the North Eastern Railway (NER), following family tradition. His grandfather, grandmother, uncles, father and older brother had all worked on the railways.

He enlisted in 1914. Writing home to his brother William, sister-in-law Beatrice and nephew Stanley in August 1917, he remembers his old school: ‘... how does little Stanley like school, tell him to remember me to my old teachers Miss Page and Miss Whittaker. Just fancy in a few years he will be swanking in a boy scout uniform and how proud I shall be of him’.



*Arthur Aked  
wounded,  
before returning  
to the Front*

© Aked  
family archive

Arthur died, aged 25, and is buried in Buffs Road cemetery near Ypres in Belgium. His obituary in the NER staff magazine states he ‘...was killed by the bursting of a shell on 29 November 1917, while engaged in railway construction abroad’. In the NER Battalion ‘...his marked abilities and keen interest... gave the promise of considerable advancements, had his life been spared, whilst his bright and cheery disposition endeared him to all’.

## **Arthur Birch**

Arthur Birch’s father wrote to the school Head in December 1919 to say Arthur had died of pneumonia, aged 28, in February 1919 ‘...after serving four years and two months in the Dardanelles, Gallipoli, Egypt and France’. Before the war he had been a clerk with a gas company. He was a Sergeant in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and had been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal.

## WOMEN AND THE WAR

**W**omen joined the labour force in the war. These included former Scarcroft pupils. Some manufactured munitions in factories at Cooke's, Bishophill, and at Barnbow in Leeds, a 200 acre site making shells. 35 women died in an explosion at Barnbow on 5 December 1916. Five of the 35 were from York including Mary Carter, aged 22, of Fetter Lane, Bishophill, who had previously worked at Rowntree's. Mary, and Eliza West, aged 53, of Trinity Lane, are named on the St Mary's Church, Bishophill war memorial. Women also worked in other

*A woman driving a York tram during World War 1*

© Explore York Libraries and Archives



occupations including on trams, and the railways. Among them was former pupil Rachel Oldfield, who in 1911 had lived in Dale Street and was a packer at Rowntree's during the war.

## TEACHERS

In this period there were 'pupil teachers', aged between 14 and 18. They were paid a small sum to teach each week, their work closely watched by teachers and inspectors. If they did well they could go on to qualify as teachers. One teacher – Edward Hope Hawthorne – had a son, John Eric, who was a pupil teacher at the school. Likewise George Louis Robinson taught standard six during the war and his son, Cecil, was a pupil teacher in the 1920s.

School Heads were increasingly worried about losing male staff to war service, especially as there had been a slowdown in recruitment of male elementary school teachers before 1914, when alternative occupations increased for those with the right qualifications. In December 1915 there were 97 male elementary school teachers in York, of whom 57 were of military age. 22 of these were by then in military service. A further 15 had voluntarily attested under the Lord Derby scheme to be called into active service when required. 20 remained, 9 of whom had been rejected on medical grounds.

When teachers enlisted they were replaced with training college students. Female teachers, previously expected to leave on marriage, were now asked to

remain teaching. The Government's Board of Education urged a redistribution between schools to share the burden, but accepted that unqualified persons could be temporarily appointed to fill vacancies. The Corporation agreed that any teacher enlisting would keep his post and receive full salary should he be sent to the Front. If not required for active service he would receive full salary, less military service pay. In 1916 this policy was amended to take into account those who had voluntarily attested.

At the start of the war headteacher Morrell had eight male teachers. By September 1914 Edward Hawthorne had transferred to the Scout School, prior to enlisting. Edward Clifford and P. Bennett enlisted in 1915, as did two of the four teacher trainees, and C.A. Heron in 1916. George Louis Robinson and sports master D.J. Creegan were conscripted in 1918. The Corporation applied to the military tribunal for total exemption from military service for Scarcroft teacher F.A. Causfield. By June 1918 the loss of male staff from York schools prompted a Heads' deputation, including Morrell, urging the Education Committee to resist further conscription.

## LETTERS HOME

**P**ostal services were vital for morale during WW1 and a huge national effort ensured men and women overseas remained in contact with loved ones at home. Letters between enlisted Scarcroft teacher Edward Hope Hawthorne and his sons reveal how they kept in

touch. This correspondence began when Edward trained at Crystal Palace in London in February 1915 and continued until his last letters in September 1916, when he was sent by hospital train to Boulogne, prior to transfer to a military hospital in Bristol where he died.

In March 1915 he wrote on the voyage to the Mediterranean: 'I am now aboard a crack liner. She is as big as a little city and you could almost put the Station Hotel aboard'. There were hot baths, a calm sea, schools of porpoises, and cheap tobacco. 'I am as brown as a mahogany sideboard.' As letters were censored he was unable to say where he was but hinted: 'If you look in the scout book our time is given at 11.23 when English time is noon so that you can find out where we are.'



*Edward Hope  
Hawthorne in  
uniform*

© Hawthorne  
family archive

Hawthorne sent his best wishes to former colleagues via his son John Eric. And he mentions Percy Morrell, the headteacher's son, who travelled to the Dardanelles with him. Most letters were optimistic but he later complained about flies in Gallipoli: 'If you can invent a decent fly catcher guaranteed to catch millions at once we shall all be grateful.'

As well as letters and parcels of Greek chocolate, Turkish Delight, local coins, used cartridges, and the official newspaper – the *Peninsula Press* – he sent



*Edward Hope  
Hawthorne's  
Gallipoli mug*  
© Hawthorne  
family archive

home his enamel mug from Gallipoli which ‘...had an adventure with Turkish shrapnel’. The holes are visible in the mug which he was holding at the time.

Hawthorne also received parcels: ‘Tell Mother I got her birthday cake safely but not yet the rice cake.’ Later he wrote from France that ‘...when we have not been wading through water we have been struggling through mud...La Belle France may be alright on picture post cards...’. In return he got news of John Eric becoming head boy at Archbishop Holgate’s School, and leading cadet corps expeditions. His older son Eddie enlisted in the Seaforth Highlanders.

## **CHOCOLATE: A GIFT FROM YORK**

**A**t Christmas 1914 the Lord Mayor, John Bowes Morrell, and the Sheriff of York, Oscar Rowntree, organised a gift of chocolate to York servicemen showing they were not forgotten, and as a reminder of home. The chocolate came in a pressed steel tin



with a hinged lid, printed with a design incorporating the flags of the Allied nations and an inscription. Each tin contained a solid block of Rowntree's chocolate wrapped in paper.

Many acknowledged the gift with a letter of thanks. Leonard Acomb, 79 Millfield Road, was serving with the Expeditionary Force. His father, Thomas, wrote that Leonard had enjoyed the chocolate. Leonard was a motor driver and fitter on enlisting in August 1914. He served in the Royal Army Service Corps, and was demobbed in 1919.

## AIR RAID

**G**uidance on air raid precautions was sent to schools as early as 6 February 1915. Much was left to the discretion of the Head in the event of a daytime raid when children were at school. With sufficient warning children would go home under the guidance of their teachers, while those from a distance would be taken into nearby houses. Fire drill had to be practised more frequently, to enable children and teachers to leave quickly. A list of local doctors was prepared, and teachers instructed on how to act in an emergency.

On the night of 2 May 1916 there was a warning – domestic gas lights lowered – and this was followed by the first aerial attack on the city. A Zeppelin droned over the neighbourhood, dropping bombs that led to death, injury and damage to property. The local deaths were Emily Chapman, aged 28,



*13 Upper Price Street after the 2 May 1916 Zeppelin bombing*  
© Hugh Murray collection

in Nunthorpe Avenue, and pensioners George and Sarah Ann Avison in Upper Price Street. This event had an impact on staff, pupils and families. The following day Morrell noted ‘...much damage...in the neighbourhood of the school and the people are much alarmed. In consequence attendance...has been disturbed’. And Miss Page, Infants Head, wrote of poor attendance for the rest of the week: ‘Many of the children had had no rest and were in a nervous condition.’ Attendance at the school also dropped following subsequent air raid warnings.



Eye-witness accounts appear in the school archives. These are letters from Wilson Kirby, Chief Claims Clerk to the Goods and Passenger Managers at the North Eastern Railway, and his sixteen year old son Jack, who wrote to his sister Nellie:

*Sarah Ann and  
George Avison*  
© Avison  
family archive

‘We heard a very faint droning sound which rapidly grew louder and louder. By this time Dad had spotted a Zepp coming right up Bishopthorpe Road at a great speed...We had been dressing when we heard the sound and we dashed downstairs seeing some flashes across the fanlight as we went. We all got into that corner in the back room and by this time the Zepp had passed clean over our house and branched off at an increased speed over the Rectory’.

Nellie’s daughter Barbara Theakstone taught at Scarcroft from 1946 to 1982, the last eighteen years as Head.

## CHILDREN AND EMPLOYMENT

**E**ducation officials were under pressure from local employers in some parts of Britain to release elementary school children to fill labour shortages in farming and other industries. Nationally, nearly 16,000 children were exempted from school by 1916. The Government's Board of Education circulated a letter from the Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment (CCWTE) drawing attention to reports of schoolchildren making clothes for soldiers and sailors. This was condemned by the CCWTE, which urged that children should not to be sent to work. There is little evidence of Scarcroft pupils withdrawn from school.

## CHILDREN AND THE WAR EFFORT

**Y**ork Corporation supplied school Heads with a circular *Why Did We Go To War?* to help explain the political situation to older children. Military events increasingly impinged on school life. For example, the life of Field Marshal Lord Roberts was commemorated by Scarcroft School when Roberts was interred in St Paul's Cathedral on 19 November 1914.

Children were integrated into the war effort in many ways. York agreed to a one-off military request that elementary school girls make 2,000 small sandbags for use in army training. In November 1916 seniors at Scarcroft performed Christmas playlets to raise funds for the troops, and in December over 200 packages of



clothes and food were posted to them. The following year Christmas entertainment and small sales of work – items prepared by the children – again supported serving soldiers and sailors.

*Schoolboys  
collected horse  
chestnuts for  
the Ministry  
of Munitions*

© British  
Broadcasting  
Corporation

Ground next to the school was used for two allotments, as recommended by Inspector W.H. Young. In March 1917 gardening began with two classes, each with fourteen pupils, supervised by standard six and seven teachers, C.A. Heron and J.R. Bellerby. In October 1918 special absence was granted to boys to assist farmers to gather the potato crop. The school kitchen was used for cookery demonstrations for parents, as part of the food economy campaign.

Children continued to support the war effort. In 1917 Morrell recorded a big response to an appeal for horse chestnuts. Chemicals from conkers were used in



*The tank Nelson in Parliament Street*

From the Geoffrey Shearsmith Collection

factories, to make cordite, an ingredient in explosive shells and bullets. The conkers were sent by train to top-secret factories at Holton Heath in Dorset and King's Lynn in Norfolk. Around 3,000 tons of conkers were collected by Britain's children in 1917. The plan wasn't a great success. Conkers were a poor source of acetone, the chemical needed to make cordite. In the end, piles of unused conkers were just left to rot. The following year children collected fruit stones and nut shells for use in the manufacture of gas masks.

There was a School War Savings Association, and interest in the arrival of the tank *Nelson* to York in February 1918. School depositors were rewarded by permission to inspect the tank. The then huge sum of £3,000 worth of war savings certificates

was bought by York children including £400 from Scarcroft School.

The war featured in other ways. On 10 December 1917 York schools closed in honour of the British victory at Cambrai, which involved many local soldiers. In February 1918 the school was closed for a week, to allow teachers to register citizens for food rationing. On Empire Day (24 May) there were lectures, decorated class rooms, patriotic singing – and an afternoon holiday.

Military stories were shared with older pupils. For example, 200 pupils visited Tempest Anderson Hall on 29 November 1918 for an illustrated lecture by Inspector Rev. E. Barraclough about action in Palestine. Pupils continued after the war to raise funds for 500 Christmas souvenirs – a school photo – for Old Boys yet to be demobbed from the armed forces.

## IMPACT OF SPANISH FLU

**B**y July 1918 there were nearly 100 more school absentees than usual, as influenza swept through York. Two staff – Miss Holub and Miss R. Keithley – were absent due to the flu. On 4 July a quarter of children and three teachers were absent as a result of the pandemic and the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) ordered the school to be closed for five weeks. It reopened on 12 August with fairly good attendance. However, on 22 October Morrell reported 200 cases, some fatal. The MOH closed the school again and it did not reopen until 18 November, with numbers still much below normal.



## LEGACY OF WAR

**B**y March 1919, the final teacher was demobbed, and returned to Scarcroft School. Over 400 Old Boys were invited to a reunion in June, with 250 attending. They were welcomed in the central hall, decorated with flowers and flags. A concert was followed by supper, whist drive and dance. It was agreed to form an Old Scholars Association, and this was set up in October 1919. The following summer, cycling and tennis sections were formed, and in 1921 a drama section performed Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, together with an extract from *Adam Bede*. Later that year Old Boys celebrated the school's 25th anniversary with a drama, followed by a reunion of over 300 former scholars and teachers.

In June 1920 the Versailles Peace Treaty was commemorated with the Head Morrell addressing pupils, flags hoisted and a thanksgiving hymn sung. A city-wide peace celebration was planned for 20 and 21 August with 6,000 York children processing to the Minster. A school visit to the Knavesmire for sports and tea, each pupil receiving sweets, fruit, nuts and a sixpence souvenir was to follow. In the event it was too wet for games on the Knavesmire, so children played in the school yard. Children brought flowers and plants to decorate their classrooms.

There was the question as to how to commemorate those whose lives were sacrificed in the war. Special assemblies were held each year on Armistice Day, with hymns, a two minute silence and a reading of



From the Geoffrey Shearsmith Collection



Kipling's poem *Lest We Forget*. In February 1924 two senior pupils – a boy and a girl – attended a ceremony conferring the freedom of York on two former soldiers, representing those who had fought. The pupils later wrote an account which was read to a school assembly. York Corporation decided that those who died on active service be commemorated, and the School of Art at Exhibition Square made plaques for twenty schools. Scarcroft's memorial with 66 names was unveiled on Armistice Day 1924 by the Lord Mayor, Sir Robert Newbald Kay, and the City Sheriff, Mr S.R. Slack.

## CONCLUSIONS

**T**he war resulted in disruption. Enlisted fathers, older brothers and other relatives meant dislocated lives, uncertainty and anxiety within families. An estimated 300,000 children nationally lost their fathers.

There is little evidence in the school log books of a breakdown in school discipline or worsening behaviour during the war years. Despite the upheaval, Scarcroft continued pre-war elementary school trends seen elsewhere: greater opportunities for girls, more effective enforcement of attendance, a wider curriculum, more attention to pupil health, a falling teacher-pupil ratio, and more financial assistance to working class children.

There was a recognition by military and political leaders that elementary schools had made a significant contribution to an educated military and civil wartime workforce. Thus the war created the conditions for far-reaching reforms intended to help improve society, including the Education Act of 1918, which helped put a stop to the practice of child labour.

## AFTERWORD BY MANDY MORRELL

It is an auspicious time for the publication of this booklet. Having recently discovered that my great-grandfather Holtby Robert Morrell had been a headmaster at Scarcroft School in York, I arranged to visit the school and was put in touch with Clements Hall Local History Group, three members of which I am delighted to have met. I am honoured to share a few thoughts on my family connection with the school.

I'd like to thank the school secretaries and caretaker for making available logbooks written by Holtby Robert during his thirty years of service from 1896 to 1926. Scarcroft School is an extraordinary building and I was not surprised to learn that it had been taken over by the Military during WW1. With these disruptions, the tension of a country at war and the loss of staff to enlistment, Holtby Robert faced heavy responsibilities. His recording of events was precise and dispassionate, his concern for his staff ever apparent.

I am sure that Holtby Robert was proud of his son, my grandfather Donald Morrell, an architect honoured by the Queen, and would have been very proud of his grandson, my father Derek Holtby Morrell who set up the Schools Council and became head of the Children's Department at the Home Office until his early death in 1969. I am delighted to have discovered more about the life and work of the man who began the journey that took our family from a corn mill in Helperby to Whitehall!

## Sources

Sources include Scarcroft School Archives, and Explore York Libraries & Archives. Scarcroft's archive includes architectural drawings, registers, photographs, press cuttings and school log books.

## Further reading

Peacock, A.J., *York in the Great War 1914-1918* (York Settlement Trust, 1993).

Rubinstein, David, *York in War and Peace 1914-1945* (Quack Books, 2014).

An online version of this booklet has an extended bibliography, sources and references. It gives details of those who died on active service with home addresses, military unit and date of death. See <https://clementshallhistorygroup.wordpress.com>

## Acknowledgements

Anna Cornhill, Headteacher, staff and pupils of Scarcroft Primary School, York.

John Aked; the Avison family; Val Donaldson; Joyce Green; the Hawthorne family; Ken and Linda Haywood; Alex Helstrip; Mandy Morrell; David Poole; Geoffrey Shearsmith; Helen Snelson; and Geoffrey Timmins.

Everyday Lives In War; Explore York Libraries & Archives; Gateways to the First World War; Girl Guides Association; National Railway Museum; The Scout Association; University of Newcastle Library Special Collections; York Army Museum.

**Clements Hall Local History Group** is interested in the history of the South Bank, Clementhorpe and Scarcroft areas of York. A Heritage Lottery Fund grant has assisted its investigation of the impact and legacy of World War 1.

Published by Clements Hall Local History Group, Nunthorpe Road, York, YO23 1BW.

2017



**Back cover:** *Charlie Munton on his bike with Scarcroft School in the background, 25 April 1925.*

Credit: John Woodall

