

Stop 1. Soldiers on every street corner: the war is announced in York

Stand in front of the Yorkshire Museum, on the steps looking out into the Gardens.

During the First World War, newspapers were the main source of information for the public, explaining what was happening at home and abroad as well as forming the basis for pro-war propaganda. In York, the building that currently operates as the City Screen Picturehouse, later on you will see it between stops 4 and 5, was once the headquarters of the Yorkshire Herald Newspaper.

In 1914 there were around 100,000 people living in York, half of the city's current population, and York considered itself the capital of Yorkshire and the whole of the North of England. The Local newspapers did not wholly prepare the city's inhabitants for Britain entering the war, as the Yorkshire Evening Press stated soon after war had been announced that 'the normal man cared more about the activities of the household cat than about events abroad'.

At the beginning of the 20th century the major European countries were incredibly powerful and had amassed great wealth, but competition for colonies and trade had created a European continent rife with tensions between the great powers.

June 28th 1914 saw the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire Arch-Duke Ferdinand and his wife Sophia while on a diplomatic trip to Sarajevo by a Yugoslav Nationalist who was fighting for his country's independence. This triggered the chain reaction which culminated in war between the European powers. Due to pre-existing signed treaties between nations, two opposing alliances formed: The Triple Entente between Britain, France and Russia, and the Triple Alliance between Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy. The Triple Alliance took over a month to mobilise which allowed the other nations to begin preparing for war. On Monday August 3rd 1914, the *Daily Mail* wrote that Germany had begun the Great War as they had attacked France and had also declared war against Russia. It was however, the German invasion of Belgium (which had declared itself neutral) which led Britain to officially declare war on the Triple Alliance. The *Yorkshire Herald* newspaper had been publishing an increasing number of articles on the European events. One example of this, an article that focussed on German deceitfulness, featured on page 3 of the August 4th edition of the paper. It stated that it was Britain's duty as a nation to stop the Kaiser from using the events in Sarajevo to pursue Germany's goal of expanding its empire.

The outbreak of the First World War was announced to the citizens of York on the 5th August 1914 outside the offices of the *Yorkshire Herald* Building, where there were "loud and prolonged cheers ... and the National Anthem was heartily sung". Around the country as a whole the news of war took the country by surprise and so was greeted by both anxiety and enthusiasm. A York school-headmistress recalls that "when the school broke up for the summer holidays in July 1914, none of us even suspected that Britain would join the continental quarrel".

Britain, with her vast Empire, was seen by the British people as superior to Germany both on land and in water, and so they believed that the Triple Alliance would be swiftly defeated. In the *Daily Mail* on 5th August there was an advertisement stating "Your King and Country Need You ...

JOIN THE ARMY TO-DAY?" and the York Press newspaper reported "everywhere today one saw soldiers in uniform about the city. They were to be met with at every street corner".

Stop 2. Recruitment and the Requisition of Public Buildings

The first location for this stop is in front of the Art Gallery. Once there, stand near the statue of William Etty so that you are facing the Art Gallery and listen to the ways in which this building was used during the war. If you are visiting this stop during gallery opening times, you should make your way to the Burton Gallery on the first floor and stand in front of the painting by Richard Jack, titled 'Return to the Front – Victoria Station'.

During the war, York Art Gallery was requisitioned by the military authorities. The Central Hall and South Galleries were put to use as a headquarters for recruitment and postal services, as well as a YMCA for the troops. It was even used to host tea parties for military wives and their families, so you can imagine that it was a real hub of wartime activity in the city.

And so it was that men made their ways here, to the city's art gallery, to enlist.

Today we remember the outbreak of war as a great rush of jingoism: men hurrying to the recruitment stations and jumping on trains to the front, convinced that they'd be back for Christmas. At first, recruitment in general in the industrial north of England was lower than for the rest of the country. To many average working men, European politics must have seemed quite distant. Nevertheless, just days after Britain declared war on Germany, an article in the Yorkshire Gazette tells of an average of 200 men a day being signed up here in the city.

Although many men volunteered, there was also an air of trepidation and reluctance to leave families behind without support. At that time, men were the breadwinners. It was a hard decision to join the army and take a pay cut, at the same time as leaving a family behind with mouths to feed.

In order to encourage enlistment, the factories and employers of York agreed that they would continue to pay an enlisted man's wage to his wife to ensure the upkeep of the families left behind. The York Corporation, The Rowntree's Factory and Leetham's Flour Mill on Walmgate were among the first to adopt this policy. Opinions were voiced at a citizens' meeting in early August that this approach was not sustainable, that the money could not be found. But the overriding feeling was that if the men of the city had a duty to fight, then those figures of authority remaining in England had a duty to guarantee the welfare of their families. One councillor was recorded to have said that 'the least they should do as citizens was to do the best possible service to the men who had responded to the call of the nation.'

As well as these wage measures, local newspapers played a significant role in encouraging enlistment. Headlines in the Yorkshire Gazette, like 'YORK'S ROLL OF HONOUR', and 'YORK HAS SENT HER THOUSANDS TO WAR' were printed weekly, with lists of names and photographs of serving York men. Often, pages were dedicated specifically to those men from the York Gas Company, or the Rowntree's Factory. By showing employees the faces of their colleagues already in the fight the industries of York also encouraged support for the war, and in some

cases, further enlistment. A local newspaper published a photograph of the building when it was being used for recruitment and as a post office of the staff assembled outside on these steps. A mixture of men and women, servicemen and civilians, and even a little dog nestled between the ankles of one man.

While all this was going on the gallery was still open to the public. Needless to say its day to day running was put under a great deal of stress by the new occupants but, despite the urgency of the war, the Museums and Art Gallery Committee complained that their work was being compromised. In 1916 *The Yorkshire Herald* reported that attendances were half that of the previous year, and the committee were unable to curate any new exhibitions.

Nevertheless, the Military had acquired access to the buildings through the support of the Head Curator at the time, a Mr George Kirby, later promoted to Quartermaster Sergeant for his endeavour. Kirby was both an active supporter of the military and a passionate patron of the arts, and it was under his guidance that the Exhibition Buildings would not only contribute directly to the war effort, but also continue to host public lectures almost as normal.

As early as October 1915, when the war had been underway for little over a year, Kirby himself had proposed that the matter of commemorating the men killed in battle should already be under consideration. Rather than stone monuments, he proposed majestic buildings for the advancement of the arts and sciences in York. This progressive vision is testament to a man who was well aware of the sacrifices made by young soldiers at the front, and sought to honour them by protecting and advancing the culture and society for which they had died.

War Correspondence

The Central Hall of the Exhibition Buildings was then requisitioned by the military for use as a post office and subsequently became the city's point of access to the world, with thousands of letters and parcels sent to the front in France and Belgium, and further afield to every corner of the Empire. One young man, George 'Tot' Simpson, from Bishopthorpe, who fought and was later killed in France, writes home in receipt of one of these parcels: 'My Dear Sister, Sorry I have been so long in writing to you. I got the nice pork pie and did enjoy it. It took only three days to come!'

Another York man, a stretcher bearer in the campaigns in the Middle East, sends thanks for a parcel which has arrived in 'good condition' at Port Said on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt. The Christmas cake contained within it, he adds, 'was more than acceptable.'

However, correspondence was not always a quick and easy matter, as there were heavy restrictions on the volume and content of letters from the front. More often than not, little could be revealed of an individual's whereabouts to families and friends back home, for fear of the enemy intercepting details of troop movements. If such details were included, the letter would be heavily censored with thick black ink. At times the number of letters a soldier could send was restricted to just a couple per week; one York soldier complains that this not only limits contact with loved ones, but also hampers the important business correspondence in which many were engaging, a reminder that many of the soldiers fighting abroad were still negotiating their working lives back home in Britain.

The War would be an eye-opening encounter with the world for the young men and women of York, many of whom may not have left Yorkshire in their lives. As well as the many thousands stationed in France and Belgium, soldiers, engineers, medics and nurses from York are commemorated around the globe for their services in the War.

A number are buried in modern day Turkey and Iraq having lost their lives in the Gallipoli or Mesopotamian campaigns. Several are buried in sub-Saharan Africa, in Tanzania and Kenya, and as far West as Canada, and as far east as Singapore. The names of two men from York are engraved on India Gate, the prominent War memorial in the heart of the Indian Capital New Delhi, built by Sir Edwin Lutyens to commemorate the 90,000 soldiers of the Indian Army who lost their lives fighting for the British Raj.

Of course, Sir Edwin Lutyens also designed the cenotaph and York's own city war memorial on Leeman Road, and the North Eastern Railway War Memorial on Station Road.

One soldier, Captain C.E.W. Brayley writing from the Mesopotamian front in 1916, is at a loss for how to fit the rich diversity of the Allied Forces into a short letter: "I might tell you of hobnobbing with New Zealanders and Australians, of hanging round Indian camp fires for "chapattis", of bartering with Greeks, of amusing conversations with French soldiers, of roving with Arabs [...] I might hold forth on sturdy Gurkhas and stately Sikhs, timid Maltese and majestic Maoris."

This reminds us that the war was a global event, and buildings such as this Art Gallery where letters arrived and young men signed up became gateways to the world.

York and the Railway in the First World War

The painting that you see before you has been voted one of Yorkshire's best loved, and it's easy to see why. Entitled *Return to the Front*, it was painted by Canadian war artist Richard Jack in 1917 and depicts the commotion of soldiers waiting to board a train at Victoria Station. The busy scene is given a sense of realism by the dynamic interaction between the figures and is a poignant reminder of the humanity of the situation. In depicting this scene the artist also highlights the integral role of the railway during the war as well as reminding us of the distances travelled by soldiers.

Immediately after war was declared, the role of the railway in society changed. In York, the impact of this change was felt very strongly indeed considering that prior to the First World War the rail industry was York's largest employer.

Within 24 hours of war being declared in Britain, control over the railway was seized by the Government's Railways Executive Committee under the Regulation of the Forces Act 1871 and priorities shifted towards the transportation of troops, munitions, food and other resources, including horses.

Adjustments were speedily made to workshops, stations and trains to help the war effort, and York also did its bit: within just a few months, 25-ton goods vans had been converted into ambulance carriages and were stationed ready for action. Whilst the reallocation of resources resulted in some station closures elsewhere, York carried on, despite some disruption to passenger services.

The sheer volume of military traffic that passed through York demanded the opening of a new canteen in November 1915. Positioned on platform three, the soldier's refreshment facility was staffed around the clock by volunteers from the local Women's Temperance Association, so that even soldiers travelling by night could be given a cup of tea when they arrived.

Many of the workers in the railway industry in York also felt the call of duty and by the end of August 1914, nearly 5,000 employees of the North Eastern Railway had enlisted: one tenth of the company's entire staff. It became apparent that many men preferred to enlist among those they knew so an application was made to Lord Kitchener for permission to enrol a battalion of North Eastern Railway soldiers.

Recruitment commenced the following September at both the York and Newcastle Railway Institutes. Once formed, the battalion was attached to the Northumberland Fusiliers. One of the soldiers recorded his experience in an article published in the North Eastern Railway magazine, likening the sensation to that of leaving school, or the first day of work.

With such a large section of the workforce having been deployed the responsibility fell upon those that remained in York to fill the unoccupied posts. Due to the shortage of men, York women were now encouraged to work within this formerly male-dominated industry.

The new female recruits were usually assigned to less physically-demanding tasks, working, for instance, as clerks and ticket-inspectors. However, the increasing necessity brought on by the war was beginning to break down former social barriers and new opportunities opened up for women in the rail industry. On the 20th December 1917, North Eastern Railway inaugurated its very first team of policewomen, based in York.

The devastating effects of the war for the railway community is epitomised by the North Eastern Railway memorial on Station Road and the roll of honour kept in the National Railway Museum. Originally intended to honour those who had gone to war, the list ultimately recorded the names of those who did not return.

The pressures of the First World War inevitably placed new demands on York's railway, and the strain of adhering to the demands of the war office caused the railway operators to place increasingly harsh travel restrictions on passenger services. Yet despite this, civilians were undeterred, and passenger traffic even reached record numbers during the holiday seasons of 1915. It is worth remembering that, beyond being a facilitator for military logistics, the railway in York also functioned to provide continuity and relief to regular citizens at a time of great unrest.

Stop 3. Conkers and Couriers: York Children in the First World War.

Stop in front of St Helen's Church, and look at the next-door building, right on the corner of Stonegate.

During the First World War the narrow building next to St Helen's Church now occupied by Crabtree and Evelyn was a toyshop known as Holgate and Sons.

In many areas of life, the outbreak of war called for austerity and money saving, however fortunately for children buying toys was considered to be a patriotic activity and was greatly encouraged across the country. Before 1914, the majority of toys sold in England had been manufactured in Germany. However once trading with Germany was banned, Britain began to produce its own toys on a larger scale, creating a boom in the domestic industry. Some of the most popular toys made in England and sold in shops like Holgate and Sons included a doll with three interchangeable porcelain heads and also a tiny lawn mower with real blades capable of cutting grass.

The importance of the toy industry at this time highlights how children in York and across the country, although seemingly a long way from violent conflict, were highly involved in the support and development of the First World War.

Collecting and playing with conkers is an activity that most people remember doing as a child. During the First World War however, collecting conkers was not thought of as a game but a serious task, vital to the war effort. In 1917 War Office notices appeared in classrooms and scout huts offering a seven shillings and six pence reward for every hundred weight collected by children, that's about 38 pence. The conkers were then transported by train to chemical factories in the south of England and then used to make acetone, a vital component of the smokeless propellant used for shells and bullets known as cordite and in short supply as a result of the German U-Boat blockade in the Atlantic.

Children in York were reminded on a daily basis of the ongoing war. Seven schools were temporarily taken over by the armed forces for use as billeting posts, and others were continually requisitioned for other purposes. Scarcroft Road School, for example, was closed and used as a post office for some time whilst Haxby Road School was taken over by the military every evening after classes had finished. School life was thrown into upheaval as groups of children were transferred across the city whilst teachers were encouraged to enlist and school nurses moved to field hospitals. In December 1914, a number of teachers who had fled from Belgium joined the staff in local schools, bringing the European turbulence close to home. All over the city attendance rates slipped and many children were called away to help with the war effort outside of the classroom.

York Boy Scouts delivered messages for the War Office across the city and in July 1915, in the absence of agricultural labourers, helped local farmers collect their harvest. Throughout the war, Yorkshire Scouts also guarded Eccup Reservoir and Headingley Water Supplies whilst others harvested flax at Bramham for use in making aircraft wings. Girl Guides delivered milk, tended allotments and packaged uniforms throughout the country whilst in Leeds children raised £33,000 of war funds through street collecting alone.

Military Sunday was one opportunity for children to show support for their parents in a public setting. Scouts marched through St Helen's Square and up Stonegate towards the Minster. They were dressed in full uniform with flags raised and trumpets playing. After 28 days of helping with the war effort each boy was awarded a War Service badge and by December 1914, only 5 months after war had started, 50,000 badges had been handed out across Great Britain. Other children were presented with certificates for sending gifts to the soldiers and sailors on the front line. The number of badges and certificates given to children at this early stage of the First

World War is a clear sign that young people undertook their new responsibilities with great enthusiasm and pride.

Stop 4. Cowardice or Courage? York's Conscientious Objectors.

Walk towards The Mansion House, the large red building at the end of the square. Walk beneath the Mansion House, through the archway, to reach the Guildhall.

This is York Guildhall, which was used by the York local Tribunal in the First World War. Here conscientious objectors could come and plead their case. The story of the Conscientious Objectors starts with the issue of conscription. The vast number of men who joined up in 1914, eager to do their bit, struggled to cope with the onslaught of the war, which lasted longer and was more bitter than anyone had expected. The drive to recruit new soldiers began to struggle and this led to the threat of conscription. This proposed measure was hated by many across the country and was labelled as 'un-British'. Seebohm Rowntree, famous for his study of the poor in York, stated that 'We thought we were fighting for liberty and opposing Prussianism but to bring conscription is to destroy liberty and bring in Prussianism'. However, in January 1916 the Military Service Act was introduced, making conscription compulsory for all men deemed to be fit and healthy. In this Bill there was a clause which allowed individuals to object on causes of conscience and so the Conscientious Objector was born.

In York the majority of the Conscientious Objectors were Quakers who were well known for their anti-violence stance. However, there is also some evidence that there were other Conscientious Objectors. The Independent Labour Party in the city passed its first anti-Conscription manifesto in June 1915. This was popular within the party - meetings held on the subject in January 1916 were well attended, and the meeting room was packed out. In 1917, the York Independent Labour Party had 12 members who were Conscientious Objectors.

To prove your objection to the war was not easy. The men had to face a local tribunal and explain their objection, which they would have done in this very building. The tribunal would then decide whether they could be exempted. Just 14 people from York were given a full exemption. Large numbers of temporary exemptions were given out whilst individuals found work of national importance or were drafted into the Non-Combatant Corps. If a conscientious objector refused to follow the ruling of the local tribunal, they were often charged with failure to report for duty and they would then be imprisoned. Many Conscientious Objectors did not receive the exemption they wanted and felt there was no other way forward. Some of the men wanted no involvement in war work at all and often refused work which, though not directly involved in fighting, would have advanced the cause of war. These men were called 'absolutists'. This complete rejection of the war effort often meant many were charged and imprisoned.

One of the scandals of the First World War was the treatment of the 'Richmond 16,' a group of sixteen absolutists. The men were imprisoned at Richmond Castle where some of these men left a permanent reminder of their presence through graffiti in their cells. One of the Richmond 16 was a man from York named Alfred Martlew. Martlew was a clerk working at the Rowntree's

factory. Arnold Rowntree, Quaker and York MP, had already made his opposition to conscription clear and campaigned for the release of the men. The British government smuggled the men over to France to try and force them into service, all but one continued to refuse and so they were sentenced to death on the 14th of June 1916. Lord Kitchener planned to make an example of them but died himself before the sentence was carried out. Under pressure, the government changed their sentence to hard labour. The men did not have to fight and stayed true to their principles. However, they did not escape unscathed as many suffered from psychological effects of their treatment. Alfred Martlew suffered in particular and committed suicide in 1917, one of two York Conscientious Objectors who took their own life during the First World War.

The opinion of the people in York towards Conscientious Objectors was very varied. One letter to the York Herald in 1916 said that all conscientious Objectors should be branded with a 'C' on their forehead. However, others fought for people's right to object, sometimes even offering them work of national importance. Conscientious Objectors were often labelled cowards but one thing that these men cannot be denied is courage, as it took great bravery to stand up and declare their principles in the face of great disapproval.

Stop 5. Broken Bodies, Muddled Minds: York's War Hospitals

Walking down Castlegate, turn right into Friargate and look for the Quaker Meeting House at the white-painted porch.

At 3.30am on Friday September 6th, 1918, a convoy of 160 wounded soldiers arrived by train into York Railway Station. They were met by members of the newly-formed Women's Department of Stretcher Bearers, who, under the supervision of Colonel F.W. Lamballe, assisted in the transport of 30 of them to York County Hospital. A further 50 men were sent to the Central Military Hospital on Fulford Road, which extended its buildings to meet this additional demand. The majority of the incoming patients however – 80 in total – were transferred to a makeshift hospital which was created in the Dining Block of the Rowntree's Chocolate Factory. Haxby Road Military Hospital, as it came to be known, was run by the Friends' Ambulance Unit. This volunteer ambulance service was founded following concerns raised by Arnold Rowntree about the need to provide opportunities of non-combatant service to young male Quakers. The Haxby Road hospital offered 200 beds, along with emergency care for soldiers and citizens injured in France and Belgium, and the Friends Ambulance Unit went on to work with the British Red Cross at the Western Front, as well as a number of other locations across the UK.

In the aftermath of The Boer War in 1909, the War Office set up male and female Voluntary Aid Detachments or 'VADs', to fill the gaps in territorial medical services which had been identified. By early 1914, almost 2000 female detachments and over 500 male detachments had registered. VAD staff worked on a voluntary basis. During peacetime, they would meet regularly and work towards training certificates in Home Nursing and First Aid, learning the basics of bandaging, cookery and hygiene, and they sometimes shadowed doctors and nurses at local hospitals.

Soon after the outbreak of the war, civilian hospitals suddenly found themselves struggling to accommodate service patients requiring medical assistance who were returning from the front. We're now standing outside the Quaker Meeting House off Clifford Street, the site of one of a number of Red Cross and Auxiliary hospitals, which were quickly established in public buildings in York during the First World War to cope with the influx of war casualties from the front. Another was set up on the site where York St. John University now stands, off Lord Mayor's Walk.

Of course, the treatment of physically injured servicemen was only one type of medical care which was required. The war also had an effect on provisions in the city for treating psychological illnesses. Before long, soldiers serving in the front lines were returning home from the front with a range of nervous disorders, the effect a new kind of organised, mechanised warfare. These included mutism, memory loss, insomnia, flashbacks and muscle complaints. In York, Naburn Hospital, then known as the York City Asylum, and Clifton Hospital both accommodated 'service patients': soldiers and sailors suffering from mental breakdown. Many remained there for several years after the war.

Bootham Park Hospital, just outside the city walls, treated a number of patients who represented advanced cases of the condition that came to be referred to as "shell-shock". In 1919, the Medical Superintendent at the hospital delivered a report to the British Medical Council on the casualties who were under his care and were suffering from what he referred to as "the psycho-neurosis war". "Never before in history has the human frame been exposed to such ordeals and strains", he observed, "and if in civil life shock is capable of producing a nervous breakdown, all the more would it do so under the truly appalling trials our men had to face". One of the case-studies he outlined was that of a young officer in the Royal Air Force, who was left unconscious for three weeks after his plane crashed during a hostile raid over London. Once discharged, he was given leave, during which time he got married. Not only, however, did he not remember the marriage ceremony or the church, but he did not marry the girl to whom he was already engaged. He also recollected having many strange ideas, including the conviction that he was a cuckoo or a cow. He was finally re-admitted to the hospital, "intensely confused and emotional, with complete loss of memory".

Stop 6. Internment of POWs and 'Enemy Aliens'.

After walking past Clifford's Tower towards the Castle Museum, stand by the tree in the centre of the grass.

By September 1914, where you are standing now was the site of a tented encampment holding the overflow of so-called 'enemy aliens' who were held at the Castle Prison during the first year of the war. York became famous as a detention centre for German-born civilian prisoners at this time, and they were brought here from all over the county. Amongst them was long-term York resident Edward Schumacher, a 62 year-old experimental engineer with a workshop in Coffee Yard (close to Barley Hall) who had been arrested whilst boarding a tram to Acomb. He was detained at the prison as a potential security threat, despite having an English wife and a son,

George, serving in the Royal Field Artillery. Julius Koch, the manager of the Olympia Oil Mills in Selby, was also arrested along with several of his employees.

Such arrests were mirrored nationwide as a wave of paranoid 'spy fever' swept the country and a conspiracy theory grew that Germans controlled all sections of the British establishment. Public figures with German connections were vilified, German employees lost their jobs and German-owned shops were attacked. On 5th August 1914 the Aliens Restriction Act was passed, shutting down their social institutions and forbidding 'aliens' from travelling more than five miles from their homes or living in 'prohibited areas'. Karl Lorentz, a 25 year-old chef who had been resident in York for nine years, fell foul of this law when he was prosecuted for taking a trip to Harrogate, unaware that he needed a permit to do so.

The intensity of the witch-hunt was such that in September of that year, a W. Kitching of Holgate Road felt it necessary to write to the city papers to insist that he owned no airship or aeroplane with which to assist the enemy. The next month, Joseph Foster Mandefield, a hosier of 12a Monkgate, similarly wrote to the papers to protest unfounded rumours that he had been arrested for attempting to poison the city's reservoir. Mr. Mandefield was British-born but of French extraction. At around this time Guy Bedan Alexander, a retired Royal Navy lieutenant, even wrote to the Lord Mayor suggesting the establishment of a civil Secret Service Corps for York, with "no other duties than to obtain and follow up evidence against anyone of German nationality, and to supply the police with such information as they obtain", a suggestion thankfully not carried out.

The national government pursued an increasingly strict policy of internment those perceived as a potential threat in any way. By the summer of 1915, over 32,000 German civilians had been imprisoned nationwide. In York, a concentration camp was built on the site of the old North-Eastern Engineering Works on Leeman Road to cope with the ever-increasing numbers. The camp had a capacity of 1700 and was surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards, but was provided with amenities such as a hospital, shop and hairdressers. It became something of a local spectacle, with crowds of thousands gathering on Sundays to stare at the prisoners, even throwing food and gifts over the fence. The prisoners reportedly entertained the spectators by playing children's 'ring' games. Local authorities responded by boarding off the site.

Military prisoners of war were held at the camp as well as civilians. On 26th September 1914, the *York Gazette* reported on the arrival of 300 German soldiers who had previously been held in Scotland. A crowd of thousands assembled to watch them. Reportedly in high spirits and good health, the Germans sang national airs, to the accompaniment of accordions played by civilian prisoners. A sailor from the cruiser *Mainz* also reported being held in York, complaining that the rain came into their accommodation, sending one of his shipmates down with influenza. And in October 1914, August Beckert, an engineer from Selby, died in the Leeman Road camp. The cause was unreported, but the *Yorkshire Herald* stated that he was "a registered alien...detained because he was likely to become dangerous". He was buried in York, and a photograph of his funeral procession, which several fellow internees were permitted to attend, appeared in the same newspaper. Reports of such deaths sparked retaliatory internments of British civilians in Germany, where they had previously been left largely at liberty. Both Leeman Road and the Castle Prison fell out of use once permanent internment camps were established on the Isle of Man, but the internments remained a bone of contention between the warring nations and were symptomatic of the rise of intolerance which grew out of the war. The fact that the German

community in Britain which before the war was some 60,000 was reduced to approximately 22,000 by 1919, is a stark illustration of how unwelcome Germans felt in Briatain.

Stop 7. Life on the Home Front: War Horses and Walmgate.

Cross Piccadilly by the Red Lion pub and look for the painted sign advertising F.R. Stubbs' Ironmongers.

You are now standing at the junction of Walmgate and Merchantgate. At the beginning of the 20th century the far end of this street just beyond Walmgate Bar had been the site of a large cattle market since the 16th century. From Walmgate Barbican to Fishergate Postern the cattle market's pens ran the length of the city wall, with auction rings situated where the Barbican Centre currently stands. The market relied on the residents of this street for a large proportion of its workforce, and on the 4th August, 1914, these workers would have arrived to find the site no longer operating as expected.

At the beginning of the war the British Army owned 25,000 horses. This was considered insufficient and in the next two weeks a further 165,000 were recruited from Britain. Military Authorities in York commandeered the Barbican Road Cattle Market and its wool sheds as a depot for requisitioned horses, permitting only a single auction ring and some of the pens to retain their original function.

The following day York residents witnessed mounted yeomanry arrive in the city and begin commandeering horses indiscriminately and from anywhere they found them. One account of this was recorded by the *Yorkshire Evening Press*; a farming convoy moving along Blossom Street, it reported, was left stationary as the military stopped them, gave a small payment and then proceeded to take the horses that had been driving the carts.

This sort of activity was not confined to York. Over the following fortnight, citizens observed a steady influx of horses brought from all over Yorkshire to be stabled at the Barbican Market. On the morning of the 13th August, hundreds of horses were brought into the city and at 3 o'clock another 150 were led down Micklegate, Clifford Street and then onto the Market. These horses had come from Halifax and were intended to be used overseas for transport as all were, as the press reported, "strong, useful-looking animals, and in good condition."

It is unlikely that many of these horses returned. On the frontline of battle they were exposed to the same dangers and diseases as the soldiers, and almost half a million horses owned by the British army were killed during the war. The legacy of that death rate can still be identified in the number of heavy draught horses that are now classed as rare and semi-rare breeds today.

The story of York's War Horses represents one example of the ways in which the city was adapted to meet the demands of the war. The residents of Walmgate in particular were forced to make sacrifices.

From the mid 19th century, the parish of Walmgate had been one of York's worst slum districts. Housing many of the city's working class and migrant communities, the area was over-populated, poorly sanitised and the buildings were largely dilapidated. By 1914, Walmgate's

population had grown even further and the area had become notorious for deprivation and sub-standard living conditions. In his yearly report, the Medical Officer during the war, Edmund J. Smith, observed that the Walmgate district was “an absolute slum, the worst in the city in my opinion.”

Before the war, the area had been in the early stages of redevelopment. Housing works had been planned, streets like Merchantgate had been constructed as thoroughfares, and York Council had begun proceedings for the acquisition of a large plot of land. They aimed to build a nearby housing scheme that would accommodate for the eventual clearance of the slum. Fifty Acres of land were provisionally secured in what is now the area beyond Walmgate known as Tang Hall.

However, following the reallocation of funds at the onset of the war, this project was suspended, and residents remained in the same housing that had been declared unfit for habitation for several successive years. Plans for a new Tuberculosis Hospital and an extension to the Fever Hospital were postponed, as were other works that had been prioritised to improve Walmgate.

The appalling living conditions directly contributed to the death rate for the area, which was the highest in the city, far above Micklegate’s and double that of the Bootham district. Adult and infant mortality rates increased for every year of the war. The chief causes of these deaths were mostly respiratory diseases such as Tuberculosis, Whooping Cough, and Bronchitis, as well as illnesses linked to bacterial infection and poor sanitation, such as diarrhoea and scarlet fever. This was because many of Walmgate’s residents lived in over-crowded back-to-back housing; structures that literally backed onto one another, restricting both light and proper ventilation. They also shared a minimal amount of water points with up to twenty houses using one tap and two or more sharing water closets.

The Medical Officer identified the war as the chief factor for the increased death rate and wrote that any efforts to improve the situation would have to be “postponed until after the War, as it is hopeless to proceed under present conditions.” In fact, the financial legacy of the war was such that it would not be until the 1930s that many of those living in severe poverty in Walmgate would be offered the opportunity to relocate.

Walmgate is also notable for the remarkable story of the Calpin family, which received local acclaim when ten brothers all enlisted in 1914. Press articles praised the patriotism of the brothers, and the Lord Mayor, Henry Rhodes Brown, wrote a letter to the brothers’ parents stating that “it will be hard for anyone in the Empire to equal your fine record of ten sons all serving their country.” All ten survived the war and returned home, although one son, Joseph, would die a few weeks later from the ongoing effects of gas poisoning. His name features along with 78 others on St Deny’s Church Memorial. This is one of two memorials located on the street honouring men from Walmgate, the other can be seen in St. Margaret’s church and lists the names of a further 55 men.

Stop 8. Confectionary and Hospitality: The Rowntree’s Story.

Cross Pavement and walk towards the entrance to the Shambles, entering the yard in front of the church of St. Crux. Look back across the road towards the building at number 35,

now housing a Pizza Hut.

The building now occupied by Pizza Hut is the site of York businessman and philanthropist Joseph Rowntree's first grocers' shop, which opened in 1842. Rowntree's products have been manufactured in York for 150 years now and the name Rowntree's is still a famous brand of sweets even today. The building was later the home of a young Arnold Rowntree, nephew of Joseph, during his apprenticeship with the company. He went on to become the Liberal MP for York 1910-1918 and a fierce champion of the rights of conscientious objectors. Rowntree's Cocoa works was eventually moved to a much bigger site on Haxby Road which they still occupy today.

During the war, the company extended their generosity both at home and abroad. The company was contracted by the government to supply goods to the army, but in addition, members of Rowntree's workforce sent out their own packages to the troops. The Cocoa Works employees' magazine tells us how a Miss Huffam was particularly instrumental in this, requesting donations of "tobacco, cigarettes, matches, candles, chocolates, peppermints, etc." to send in her weekly parcels to the men of the West Yorkshire Regiment, while the workers of the Almond Paste Department also sent parcels of "confectionery and cigarettes" to their department colleagues in the forces. You can see a sample of Rowntree's confectionery which survived the trenches in the Yorkshire Museum. Clearly, food played an important role in maintaining contact with and boosting the morale of those who had gone off to fight.

This generosity wasn't just felt overseas. Rowntree's also displayed their hospitality here in York. In the early years of the war, two battalions, including 1000 men from the 8th battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment (territorials) were quartered in the New Dining Block at the Haxby Road factory. When the West Yorkshire Regiment moved out, the space was soon filled again by another group of soldiers nicknamed the 'Koylis'; one of them was a former Rowntree's worker and he was placed on guard duty outside the hall on the first night. When the Regiment were posted to the Western Front, the Dining Block became a hospital for wounded soldiers. The employees efforts were much appreciated - a letter from the battalion commanding officer published in the workers' magazine expressed thanks to the employees who had volunteered to run the bar.

As well as accommodating soldiers waiting to travel to the frontline, Rowntree's also played host to those travelling in the opposite direction: Belgian refugees who were fleeing from the fighting. Many found their way to New Earswick, Rowntree's model village for their employees, where nine houses were donated rent-free by the directors. Rowntree's workers helped furnish and decorate these homes for the refugees and also paid a weekly donation of 1d to support the Belgian families. In turn, the refugees contributed to the community: many of the men took jobs in the Cocoa Works in order to support their families themselves, while some also offered to teach French to the employees.

Hundreds of Rowntree's male employees went off to fight in the war; many of them did not return. In 1921, the company gave Rowntree Park to the city in memory of all those workers lost in the war.

Stop 9. Dark Shadows in the Skies of York: The Zeppelin Raids, 1916.

Walk along Peasholme Green to the Black Swan Pub. Cross the road and look for the entrance to The New School House Gallery, where you'll find a garden and benches to sit on.

There were numerous Zeppelin airship attacks on the north of England during the war, and the German Naval Airship Division targeted York on three occasions. 'Rain and mist' was the weather forecast on 2nd May 1916 as the distinctive shadow of the Zeppelin appeared in the skies of the city. The airship dropped sixteen bombs, inflicting terror on the citizens of York. It passed over Nunthorpe Avenue where according to George Benson, a well known local historian of the time, "it dropped a bomb which blew off a lady's arm, killed one of her daughters outright and injured another daughter in the spine". It then continued its deadly course towards the city centre causing damage to Upper Price Street, Caroline Street and Peasholme Green. The latter was the scene of the most casualties, with six people killed and one injured. Overall, the May raid saw nine people killed, twenty-seven injured and substantial destruction to many homes.

On 25th September 1916, eight airships left their North German sheds to raid England once again. L-14, commanded by Hauptmann von Manger, headed towards York. However, the German aircrew were caught by surprise when they encountered the city's newly prepared defences. The powerful anti-aircraft gun and searchlight at Acomb picked out the Zeppelin as it flew across the city. After performing a number of manoeuvres to try and avoid the ceaseless firing of the gun, the airship then managed to continue its course and dropped bombs to the east of the city centre. The next bomb caused the most serious damage of the September raid, falling between Holy Trinity church in Heworth and a house occupied by a Dr. Lyth. All the windows in the church including a stained glass memorial were smashed, and part of Dr .Lyth's house was partly demolished. Fortunately Dr. Lyth himself been warned of the raid and he and his family had already evacuated their home. The airship subsequently flew away in a North Easterly direction. There were no casualties, although a woman did die of shock.

The final Zeppelin visited York on 27th November 1916. Lights which would have provided the Zeppelin a valuable guide were quickly extinguished by the police and the city was plunged into darkness. The searchlight hastily picked out the airship and the anti aircraft gun peppered the Zeppelin with bullets. In its swift retreat, the Zeppelin dropped twelve bombs on Haxby Road, Fountayne Street and Wigginton road. On this occasion the only casualty was a single injured person.

George Benson wrote that the November raid on the city "provided the citizens with a thrilling spectacle and enthusiasm ran high when the marksmen proved the victors". This triumphant atmosphere gave the citizens of York a brief respite from the countless stories of loss and bereavement from the Western Front. York's resistance to the Zeppelin attacks united the people of the city and established a new belief that Britain could end this war victorious.

Stop 10. Victory and Aftermaths

After walking alongside the Minster, continue across the grass of Dean's Park towards the war memorial: a series of stone arches set in front of the trees.

The Minster bells pealed out with joyous news that the war had ended, and the citizens of York took to the streets to sing and dance in celebration. November 11, 1918 marked the last day of fighting, and this war-fatigued city made a great display in tune with celebrations the world over.

From the barracks came the sounding of bugles, and nearly a half an hour of cheering as the British flag was hoisted atop the clock tower. At the police court, crowds gathered and joined in the signing of the national anthem. Flags were draped out every window, dressing the houses and businesses with patriotic colours.

It was a day for indulgence and festivities, but was also a day tinged with sadness. The gathered crowds remembered those who would not be returning from the front lines; those whose sacrifice had made victory possible. One reporter recalled that "the sight of women with tear-dimmed eyes but with a smile lighting up their countenance filled one with strange emotion". It was a melancholy happiness, both of pride and grief.

That evening, celebrations turned to a more sombre time of tribute, as some 10,000 citizens attended a thanksgiving service at York Minster. With the aisles packed, the Very Reverend began, "this is no opportunity for a sermon" and paused for agreement from the congregation. He continued, "At the same time it is occasion for recollection. The war is over. Hostilities ceased...The guns that have roared and thundered for four and a half long years are silent", then added that the Minster bells could ring out proudly once again.

England had paid a price for victory. Over 700,000 men had been killed in the fighting, leaving wives, children and other family members bereaved and without any source of income. Thousands more returned bearing the physical and psychological scars of the conflict, and the process of rehabilitation into their former lives was fraught with difficulties. York was no exception, and the legacy of the war was felt long beyond the 1918 Armistice. In 1918, York residents established a branch of the National Association of Discharged Soldiers and Sailors (NADSS), a pressure group founded to lobby the government on key issues such as disability pensions, medical provisions and employment opportunities for former servicemen. Naburn, Clifton and Bootham Hospitals, and the Quaker-run Retreat on Heslington Road continued to treat patients suffering from war neuroses for a number of years. Thomas Abbott, a resident of Walmgate, recalled war-disabled soldiers on his street: "You saw men in a terrible state. They just existed in lodging houses and some had no legs, just stumps, leather aprons on the end so they could shuffle along. These men used to be gradually fading away, used to die off in the lodging-houses, nobody could care less". It was clear that the long path to recovery was only just beginning.

It wasn't until the following year that the formal peace treaty was signed with Germany, on June 28th, 1919. This agreement, The Treaty of Versailles, laid out recovery plans for the nations involved. Among the provisions of the treaty were the allocation of lands from Germany, and

amounts of reparations to be paid. Another clause outlined plans to disarm Germany, rendering them incapable of forming such an army again.

With this sense of ease, England again celebrated peace. Through July and August, parades and festivals took place throughout the city of York. School children were excused from class, and businesses closed for a week to allow employees to take part in the civic activities. Boat races along the Ouse, fancy dress contests, and evening fireworks displays were on the official programme of events were. One activity was advertised as the “slippery pole walking contest” which involved several men dressed in funny costumes. By night, a big brass band was set up in the field along Leeman Road and played to revellers dancing under the stars.

However, victory seemed bittersweet. As the country tried to move on from the war and recover, many of those who lived through the First World War found, in one way or another, that their lives had been changed forever.

Credits

Oral history from Thomas Abbott taken from “The Walmgate Story”, Voyager Publications, Oct 2006 (ISBN: 0952539233). Reproduced by kind permission of Van Wilson.