

York in the First World War



Photo: Imperial War Museum

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Photo: Yorkshire Film Archive



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York Civic Trust

explore

Libraries and Archives

A York Civic Trust/Explore York Libraries and Archives education pack

Marching off to war



Photo:
Yorkshire
Film
Archive

photograph above

Whereabouts do you think the photo was taken? (Look at the writing on the building for a clue.)

How many women can you see? Why do you think they are there?

Who do you think the men are and where may they be going?

In what year do you think it was taken?

Look at the expressions on the men's faces. How do you think they may be feeling?

Why did the First World War start?

The reasons for the start of the First World War are very complicated but most historians agree that the direct cause was the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on the 28 June 1914. It seems hard to believe that the murder of one very important man by a terrorist could lead to such world wide devastation, but it did.

What is an Archduke? He sounds very important!

An Archduke is similar to a British Prince.

Why was the Archduke so important?

The Archduke was heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Europe.

Where did the assassination happen?

It took place in the city of Sarajevo in the country of Bosnia

I've never heard of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. What is it?

Who killed the Archduke?

Gavrilo Princip

Today, the Austro-Hungarian Empire is separated into different countries, two of which are Austria and Hungary.

Find out what an empire is in a dictionary.

Why did he do it?

Princip was a Bosnian and he did not want his country to be under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

An artist's impression of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

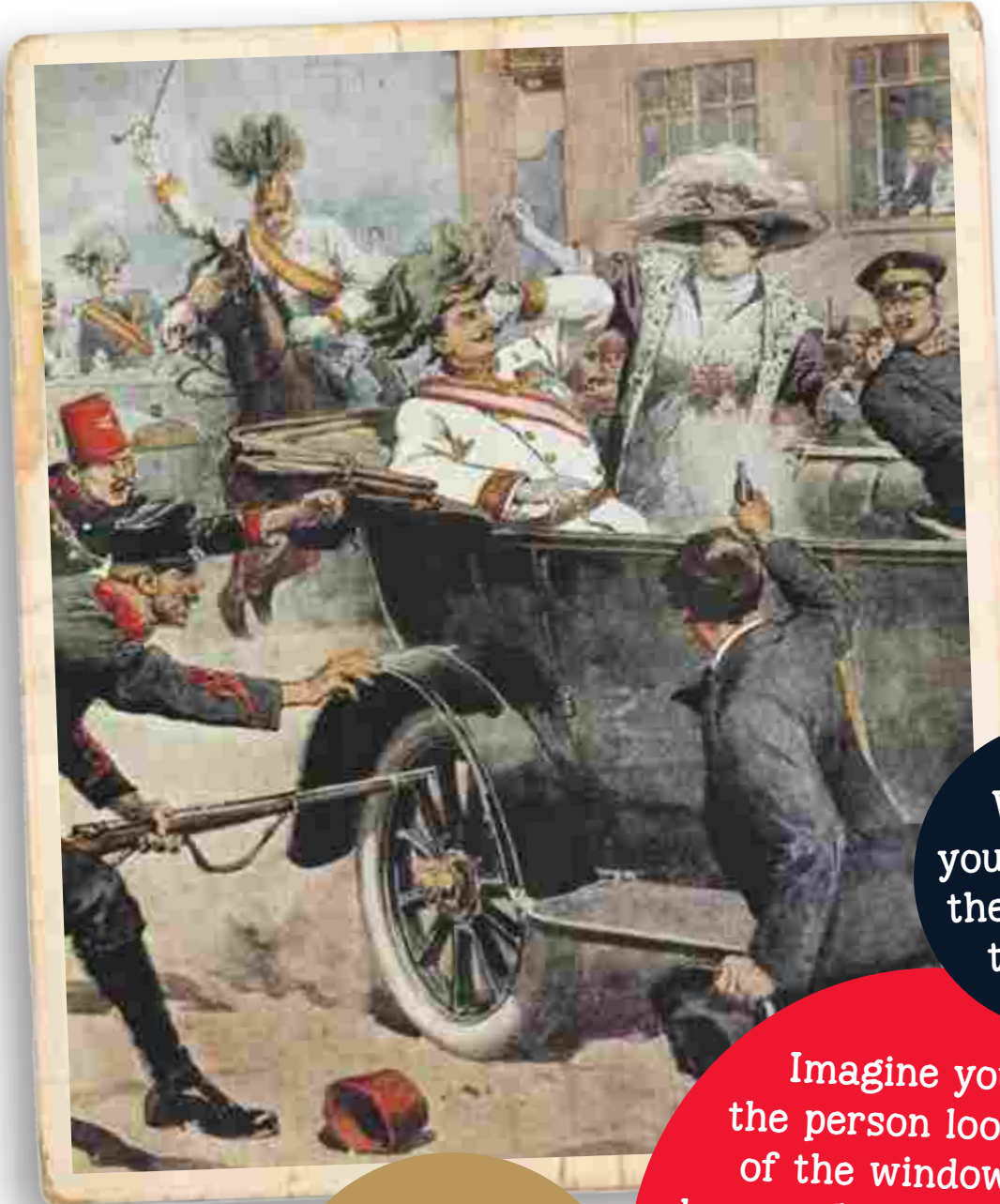


Image: Wikipedia

Can you find Gavrilo Princip, the assassin, in the picture?

Who do you think are the people in the car?

Imagine you are the person looking out of the window of the house. You are interviewed later to give an eye witness account of the event. Give details not just of what you saw, but what you heard and how you felt.

Britain reports the news

The event was reported in the news in Britain, even though Sarajevo is 1500 miles away. If you had read about it in the newspaper, would you have believed it would eventually affect your life in York?



Image: thought.com

Imagine you are a reporter for York's newspaper, "The Press". Your editor asks you to write an account of the event. Include a **SHORT** headline, which should make your reader want to buy the paper to read more.

Remember to include the facts as far as you know them.

What happened?
Who is involved?
Where did the event take place?
When did it happen?
Why did it happen?

Use simple language, keep sentences short and check your facts, grammar and punctuation.

Design a front page for a national tabloid newspaper, reporting the event. You should include an eye-catching headline.

Why did this one event lead to a world war?

After the assassination, this is what happened next:

Austria declared war on Serbia.

Russia, an ally to Serbia, defended them against the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Germany came to Austro-Hungary's defence and declared war on Russia.

Germany then also declared war on Russia's ally, France.

A little later, the war spread to the rest of the world. Japan declared war on Germany in support of Great Britain.

Britain declared war on Germany to defend Belgium and support her friend France.

Germany invaded Belgium to attack France.

Italy declared war on Austro-Hungary and Germany to support Great Britain and France.

Turkey declared war on Russia to support Germany.

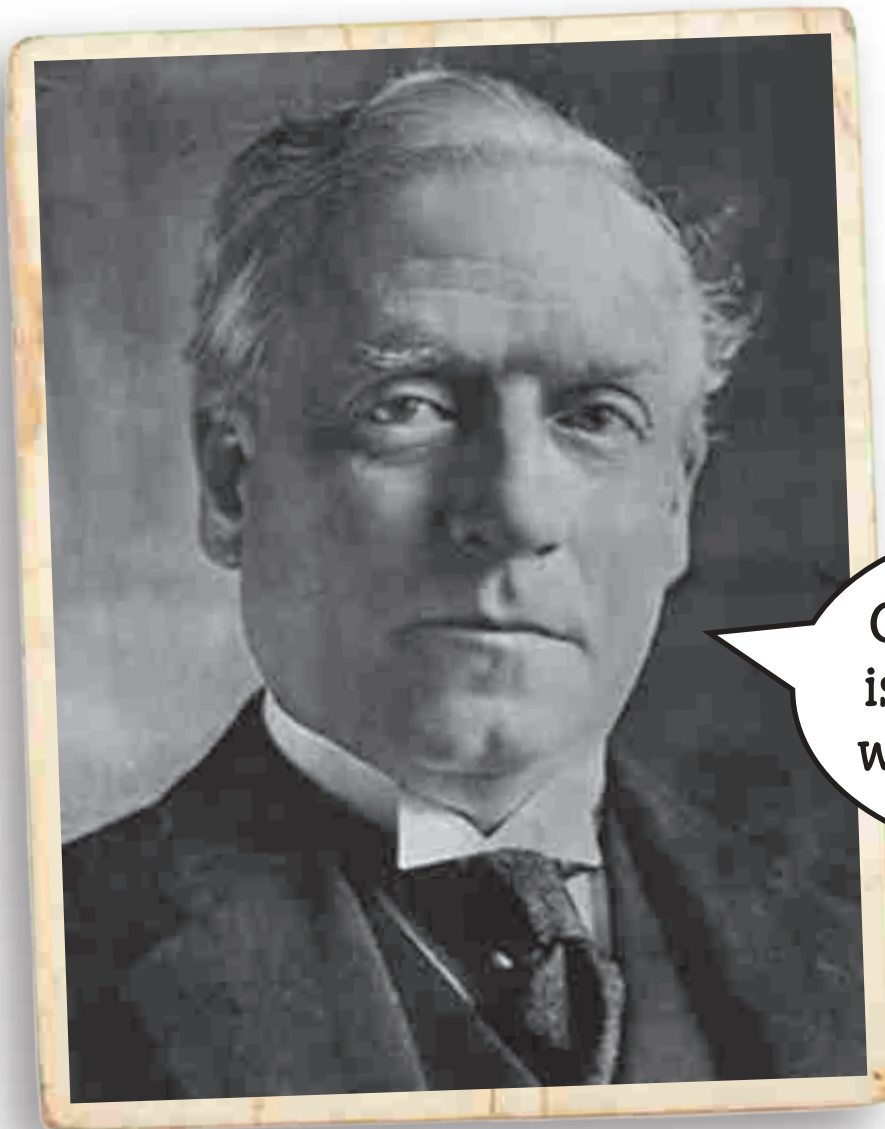
Great Britain and France declared war on Turkey.

And finally, America, Britain's ally, declared war on Germany.

WORLD WAR ONE

Ally: An individual person or (in this case) a country that has agreed to give help to and support another country. The allied powers in the war were all the countries who fought on the same side.

The First World War comes to Great Britain and to York



On August 4th, 1914, Herbert Asquith who was Prime Minister at the time, declared war against Germany.

Great Britain
is now at war
with Germany

Image: Wikipedia

e was a BIG pr

- The German Army had two million soldiers.
- The entire British Army was 120,000 men.
- That's nearly 17 German soldiers to 1 British soldier.

Kitchener wants YOU!

This man, Herbert Horatio Kitchener, realised Britain needed a massive army. He was Secretary of State for War, which means he was the member of Government responsible for organising the armed forces.

He wanted men to volunteer to join the Army and so with his very famous finger, he began a recruitment drive to persuade able-bodied young men, over five feet three inches (1.6 metres) tall and between the age of 18 and 41 years old, to join up. Many men and boys ignored these age limits and volunteered anyway.



Image: W

Write a list of as many men as you can think of among your close family and family friends who you think are

- Over 18 and under 41 years
- Over 5 feet 3 inches tall.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

By the end of the war, it is very likely they would all have been recruited to fight in the war. Perhaps you have family or friends who are in the Army today. Have they had to go to dangerous places?

Recruitment: This means the job of attracting and employing suitable people to do a job. In this case, the Government's recruitment drive was to persuade young men to join (or enlist in) the Armed Forces.

The words "sign up", "join up" and "enlist" all mean the same thing: to join the Armed Forces.

Whose face is on this poster?



Here is another recruitment poster

Image: Wikimedia

How are the soldiers presented?

Why is there a little boy in the picture, not a little girl?

How are the women presented?
(Think about the caption as well as the picture).

Imagine you were a young man, not yet enlisted, out with your friends who were all soldiers. You walk past this poster, how might it make you feel?

What might your friends say to you?

Compare this poster with the one of Lord Kitchener. In what ways are they different?



Recruitment begins in York

Along with these two very famous posters, here is one which was used in York:
This site on Bootham was cleared in 1915 and used as a builders' yard. You can see recruitment posters on the fence for men to join the Army.



The two outer posters read “Lord Kitchener calls for more men” and the larger one says “West Riding Territorial Force” and then lists the seven Yorkshire regiments that require more men.

Which of these posters do you think would be the most successful in persuading men to enlist? Give reasons for your choices.

York, just like every other city, would display these posters in public places. They would be at the railway station, at bus stops, on the sides of buildings and all around the town. The Art Gallery in Exhibition Square was the recruitment office for the city where men went to volunteer to join the Army.

If you went to the theatre, the actors may have pointed at you if you weren't wearing army uniform. How might this make men feel? How might it make the women with them feel?

York just like every other city would have days set aside to recruit soldiers. Bands would play and local important people like The Lord Mayor would give speeches encouraging men to do their patriotic duty.

Patriotic: To be very proud of your country and to show love for it. People are often very patriotic at sporting occasions when their country is competing against another.

Men queuing to sign up outside a recruiting station in London



By the end of the first year of the war, over one million volunteers had enlisted.

Image: Imperial War Museum

This is a very long queue of men all wanting to enlist. Are you surprised there are so many?

On one particular day, 3rd September 1914, over 30,000 men from all over the country signed up to be soldiers. That is nearly a third of ALL the men who live in the City of York today.

Have you been told about anyone in your family who signed up to fight in the First World War? Ask your family members.

What would YOU have done?

Imagine you are 19 years old, a healthy young man, born and bred in York. You left school at 13 (that was the school leaving age in 1914) and you have worked in York in a factory ever since. You live with your parents, you are engaged to be married and you consider yourself to have a very good life. You have just heard that war has been declared. What would you do?

Would you have enlisted as a volunteer to go to war?

Think carefully about your response. There is no right or wrong answer. List your reasons for or against below and then be prepared to share them with the class.

Your country



I **WOULD** sign up because:

Your country



I **WOULD NOT** sign up because:

Children and the war

War came to Britain and to York. You didn't have to be in uniform or even an adult to be affected by it. It changed the lives of everyone and everyone was expected to do what they could to help the war effort. Children chopped wood for fires in the house (no central heating in 1914!), they carried water and they queued up for food in the shops and helped to grow vegetables. (Food was in short supply because German submarines would sink boats bringing food to Great Britain).

How would you have helped the war effort?

If you were a Girl Guide or a Boy Scout, you were given more responsibility.

Boy Scouts would:

- Guard telephone and telegraph lines so important messages could get through.
- Guard railway stations and railway lines in case of German invaders.
- Guard water reservoirs against attack.
- Watch the skies for aeroplane attacks and blow a bugle to let everyone know when the attack was over.
- Be trained in how to fight fires.
- The Scout movement's handbook instructed Scouts to "be prepared... to die for your country if need be".

These Scouts in York are marching as part of Military Sunday.



Girl Guides would:

- Work on farms and allotments, digging and weeding.
- Knit scarves and socks to keep British soldiers warm when they were fighting.
- Collect bones which people saved from meat to help make ammunition.
- Learn first aid, use stretchers and collect a special type of moss called sphagnum moss. How do you think moss could help win the war?
- Collect conkers, but not to play with! What do you think they were for?
- Carry important messages for the Government.

A Girl Guide records a signal message

This girl has received a message sent using flags.

What is this form of communication called?

It seems a very old fashioned way to communicate. Why might it have been effective?



Read the statements below. How many of them do you agree with?

Read these statements and tick those you agree with. Put a cross next to those you don't agree with. Be prepared to say why you have made those choices.

I think it was a good thing that children had to help the war effort.

I think it was a bad thing that children had to help the war effort.

I think boys and girls should have been given the same jobs to do.

I think children today should be given more responsibility.

I am expected to help out with household chores and I think this is a good thing.

Children today have enough work to do at school so they should be able to play or rest when they are not at school.

Here is a young man who wanted to sign up so badly, he lied about his age.

Read the case study below and be prepared to give your opinion of Sidney Lewis. Do you think he was brave or foolish?

CASE STUDY

**from the Daily Mirror,
18 September 1916**

Sidney George Lewis (24 Mar 1903 – 1969) enlisted in the East Surrey Regiment in August 1915 at the age of twelve. He fought in the Battle of the Somme in 1916, then still only thirteen, fought as a gunner at the Battle of Delville W that saw some of the worst casualties on the Somme. He was sent home after his mother sent his birth certificate to the War Office and demanded his return. He was awarded the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. He re-enlisted in 1918 and served with the army of occupation in Austria. He joined the police in Kingston upon Thames after the war and served in bomb disposal in World War II. Later, he ran a pub in Frant, East Sussex. He died in 1969.

World War I army recruiters often turned a blind eye to underage recruits. They may also have been deceived by Lewis's mature appearance. He was a tall, heavily built boy, growing to 6 feet 2 inches (1.88 m) as an adult. The minimum height requirement of the British Army at the time was only 5 feet 3 inches (1.60 m).

Image:
Wikipedia



What do we mean when we say we “turn a blind eye?”

Why do you think the recruiters did this?

How many children in your class would have been tall enough to sign up?

How would your parent/guardian react if you had tried to enlist?

Would you have tried to sign up if you were under age?

What's in a kit bag?

Sidney would have gone off to war with a small kit bag containing amongst other things:

- Hob nail boots
- Puttees (long strips of cloth wound round and round the leg from ankle to knee for extra support and protection)
- Gas mask
- Change of underwear and socks
- Long johns
- Bar of soap
- Boot polish
- Notebook and service warrant card
- Mess tins (like a small portable saucepan for cooking and eating out of)
- Tin opener and a can of food
- Bar of chocolate
- Pipes, cigarettes and matches
- Oxo cubes
- Dog tags (engraved with his name, rank and service number)
- Rifle
- Ammunition
- Bayonet
- Helmet
- Penknife
- Field dressing
- Coins

You may not know what all these things are.
Put a x next to those items that you have never heard of.

Are you surprised by any of the contents?

What would YOU pack in your kitbag?
Make a list!



Can you identify ten of the objects in the picture?

Image: Wikipedia

Soldiers often sang songs to keep their spirits up. One of the most well known songs from World War One is called: "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag". Ask family members if they know it. Find the words and the tune on the internet and sing it!

Why do you think it was so popular?

There was no music streaming, no computers to download music, no television, few people had radio, so how do you think people got to know about the songs?



Image: Pinterest

Women and the war

Life changed dramatically for women during the war because so many men were away fighting. Many women took paid jobs outside the home for the first time as well as running their homes and looking after their children.

Women were not allowed to be soldiers. They could be nurses, or work behind the front line where the fighting happened but they could not fight. In Britain, women were asked to take jobs which had previously been thought of as men's work, such as tram drivers, ambulance drivers or factory workers.



Image: York Explore

This photograph of a woman driving tramcar No.17 was taken during the Great War. This tram went from Nessgate to Hull Road.

Women began working on trams at the end of 1915 as a third of men were in the forces. The women were given the same wage as male workers - 28 shillings a week, which in today's money would be worth about £117.

There are two women on the tram. We know one is the driver. Who might the other one be?

Do you know any women who drive lorries or buses or trains?

We don't have trams in York any more. How are they different from buses?



Image: Imperial War Museum

An ambulance driver stands beside her ambulance at St. Omer in France, 28 February 1918. The ambulance, one of several, seems to have been paid for by Yorkshire mine workers.

Before the war women were expected to marry and have a family. During the war, women took on jobs that had been traditionally done by men. After the war, these jobs were given back to men.

How might this make you feel if you were a woman?

How might this make you feel if you were a man?

Conscientious objectors and the war

When war broke out, everyone expected Great Britain to win a quick victory. People in York, just like the rest of the country, had been enthusiastic for war, excited by the thought of it and convinced it would all be over by Christmas.



**“It will all
be over by
Christmas”**

But by 1916, the war showed no sign of stopping and more soldiers were needed if Great Britain was to win the war.

**The war shows
no sign of ending.
We need more soldiers.
You will have to
join up.**

The government introduced conscription. This forced all men who were single and between the ages of 18 and 41 to join up whether they wanted to or not. A few months later, the law was changed again to include married men and in 1918, the age limit was raised to include men up to the age of 51.

I believe war and killing are **WRONG**. I do not want to be forced to join up.

Image:
York
Explore



This is William Varley who lived at 24 Chestnut Grove in New Earswick. He was a conscientious objector in the First World War.

He was arrested and sent to prison because he refused to enlist to fight in the war.

William was a pacifist. This meant he did not believe in fighting or wars. Like other men with the same belief, William became a conscientious objector, that is someone who objected to war on the grounds of his conscience, or inner belief of what is right or wrong.

York had, and still has, a large religious community called Quakers. Quakers believe very strongly in pacifism. Can you name any famous York Quakers?

A conscientious objector:

- Refused to fight on moral grounds – they simply did not believe in violence.
- Said their inner beliefs, or conscience, would not allow them to fight.
- Refused to fight on religious grounds – they may have been Quakers or pacifists.
- May have worked in jobs to help the war effort that did not involve fighting, such as driving an ambulance. These were often dangerous jobs.
- May have refused to do anything that would help the war effort. Many were sent to prison.
- May have been bullied in the street or imprisoned.

William Varley sent a postcard to his wife from Wormwood Scrubs at Christmas 1917 writing **“May our ‘little bit’ of prison separation do something towards an everlasting Peace on Earth...Not forgetting the boys still suffering.”**

Pacifism: The belief held by a pacifist that war and violence can never be the right way to settle a dispute. All disputes should be settled by discussion and peaceful means.

CASE STUDY: Alfred Martlew

The following case study is based on research done by Ros Batchelor, a local historian. We are grateful to her for permission to use her work.

Alfred worked at Rowntrees (now Nestle) and when conscription was introduced in 1916 he was sent his "Notice Paper" which you can see on the next page, telling him he had to enlist in the Army.

William did not believe in fighting and so he applied for exemption. That is, to be excused from fighting in the war.

He said he had a "conscientious objection" to the taking of human life. He said: "I absolutely and emphatically deny the right of our government to call upon me, as a citizen of the world, to assist in the slaughter of my fellow men."

He was not excused from fighting in the war and instead with 15 other conscientious objectors from Yorkshire he was made to join the Northern Company Non Combatant Corps. That was a group of conscientious objectors who did not have to fight but instead had to do jobs to help the war effort, such as driving ambulances.

Alfred, however, along with the other 15 men, refused to take military orders and refused to wear a uniform, so they were all imprisoned in Richmond Castle.

In May 1916 they were posted to France. Again, they refused to obey orders. They were tried by court martial and sentenced to death. The sentence was later changed to 10 years hard labour. Alfred was sent to break stones at a granite quarry in Scotland.

In 1917, Alfred went missing and returned to York to see his fiancée, Annie Leeman who lived in Heslington. He gave her his money, watch and other possessions and told her he intended to give himself up for re-arrest. However, in July of that year, his body was found in the River Ouse near Bishopthorpe. It seems likely that he had committed suicide, although no one will ever know for sure.

Army Form W. 3236.

NOTICE PAPER to be sent to men who belong to the Army Reserve under the provisions of the Military Service Act, 1916.

[In accordance with the provisions of Section 24 (1) of the Reserve Forces Act, 1916, evidence of the delivery at the last registered place of abode of a man belonging to the Army Reserve of a Notice, in or a letter addressed to such man, and containing a notice, shall be evidence that such Notice was brought to the knowledge of such man.]

Surname Harley No. in Military Register (A. B. 414) _____

Christian Name William

Address 24 Chestnut Grove Class Number 34
New Earswick York

You are hereby warned that you will be required to join for service with the colours on the 1st Oct 3rd 1916.

You should therefore present yourself at Accounting Office Painpoué on the above date, not later than 9.30 o'clock, bringing this paper with you.

A Railway Warrant is required ~~unobtainable~~ required ~~unobtainable~~ Accounting Office Painpoué

* This will be struck out of the usual printed form if the man is called out to attend to personal business.

W. Woodcock Signature.

25/9/16 Date.

Capt Rank.

Painpoué Place. Accounting Office Appointment.

9. 11. - Particular attention is called to Section 15 of the Reserve Forces Act, 1916, which provides that where a man belonging to the Army Reserve is called out on permanent service, and such man, without leave lawfully granted or such sickness or other reasonable excuse as may be allowed in the prescribed manner, fails to appear at any time and place at which he is required to such calling out to attend, he shall be guilty, according to the circumstances, of deserting within the meaning of Section 12, or of absconding himself without leave within the meaning of Section 13 of the Army Act, 1901.

Image: York Explore

What would YOU have done?

Would you have volunteered when war first started?

Would you have enlisted when you had to?

Would you have been a conscientious objector, or "conchie" as they were known?

If you had been a conchie, would you have wanted to help the war effort in some way that didn't involve fighting, like being an ambulance driver?

The White Feather

In August 1914, at the start of the First World War, an important soldier called Admiral Charles Fitzgerald founded the Order of the White Feather. His purpose was to identify young men who had not volunteered to fight in the war.

Young men not in uniform were handed a white feather as a sign that they were cowards.

Usually it was young women who handed out the feathers.

The aim was to shame men into enlisting in the British army if they were not wearing a uniform.

But of course some men not in uniform were soldiers back on leave, or men doing important jobs at home.

Some men did not have to sign up because of the jobs they did. They were given uniforms or silver badges to wear so everyone would know they weren't conscientious objectors.



SYMBOL: A thing or an object which is used to stand for something else. Often it is a **CONCRETE** object (something we can physically see or touch) which is used to stand for an **ABSTRACT** object (something we cannot see or touch, like an emotion or an idea). Red poppies are used to symbolise all the soldiers who were killed in the war.

Why do you think he chose a white feather to be a symbol of cowardice?

Do you think conscientious objectors were cowards or very brave? Give your reasons.

Do you think giving a white feather to men not in uniform was a good thing to do? Give your reasons.

What other symbols can you think of which are commonly used to stand for an idea or an organisation? For example, if you saw a dove, what would it make you think of?

Can you think of a symbol that is often used to represent soldiers who have been killed in war?

The Medical Officer of the 12th Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment conducts a foot inspection in a support trench near Roclincourt, France, 9 January 1918.

Image: Imperial War Museum



War on the Front Line

What is the meaning of “the front line”?

The front line is the place where the two enemy armies (Britain and Germany) faced each other and where the fighting happened.

Trench Warfare

The front line where the British and German armies faced each other was in Northern France. The land here is very flat and there was nowhere to hide.

Soldiers on both sides dug deep trenches to live in and to protect themselves.

These trenches were dug across France from Calais to the Alps.

Find these places on a map. How many miles do you think this is?



Image: Wikimedia

Soldiers would live in them and attack the enemy across no man's land. This was a thin strip of land between British and German trenches which each side fought over.

A photograph taken from the air of the trenches in France.

The top left lines are British trenches and the lower right are German trenches.



Can you see differences in how the trench lines look?

Which area do you think is no man's land?

Image: Wikimedia

Between the two fr was pitted with craters where shells had dropped, unexploded shells and barbed wire. Sadly, there were often dead and wounded soldiers in no man's land too.

The Germans were better at designing and constructing trenches. They used reinforced concrete to construct deep, shellproof, ventilated dugouts, while British trenches used wood and chicken wire to secure the trench sides.

Shells: These were large exploding bullets fired from field guns.

You can see the line of the trenches in the image above. The British trenches look like wiggly lines while the German trenches are shaped like castle battlements. If a shell fell on one of the lines, the explosion would travel down the trench. The German sharp corners would take the impact of the explosion whereas the British smooth corners were less good at this.

Life in the trenches



Troops of the 12th Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI), the pioneer battalion of 31st Division, break for food in the ruins of Feuchy, France, April 1917.

Image: Imperial War Museum

This picture shows troops from Yorkshire in the small French village of Feuchy in Northern France. It had been occupied by German troops.

Feuchy was freed by the British army in 1917 as part of a much bigger battle in the surrounding area.

Describe what you can see in the picture.

What are the men doing?

What emotions do you think they are feeling?

These men will have been very brave. Many may have been given medals. Why do you think medals are awarded? Do you know any family members who have a medal?



Image: Imperial War Museum

Men of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry attaching fuses to trench mortar shells near Ypres in Belgium, 1 October 1917.

These men are preparing mortar shells for use, by attaching fuses to them.

They would light the fuse and then fire the mortar at the enemy. A mortar could be fired whilst the soldiers were in the safety of the trench.

What do you think the men are thinking as they work?

What do you think the worst thing about being a soldier might be?

Trench Foot

The Medical Officer of the 12th Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment conducts a foot inspection in a support trench near Roclincourt, France, 9 January 1918.

Image: Imperial War Museum



Look at the foot he is inspecting. Does it look healthy?

The man bending over is a medical officer. What do you think he is doing?

Why was the health of soldiers' feet so important?

If you lived in the trenches in the conditions described below, what other illnesses do you think you might get?

Trenches were long, deep and narrow. Soldiers lived in them whenever they were at the front line. They did not get much sleep because it was cold and uncomfortable. There were many rats who ate their food and sometimes nibbled at the men as they slept. The soldiers would also suffer from lice which made them itch unbearably. Perhaps worst of all was trench foot. Rain would flood the trenches so soldiers spent a lot of time with soaking wet feet which meant their feet would start to rot. It is still possible to get trench foot today if your feet are wet and cold for a very long period of time.



Image: Imperial War Museum

Men of the 12th Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment, 31st Division, passing along a communication trench near Roclincourt, France, January 1918.

These men are part of a wiring party. (The word “party” here means a group of people all taking part in the same activity, not eating and drinking and having fun).

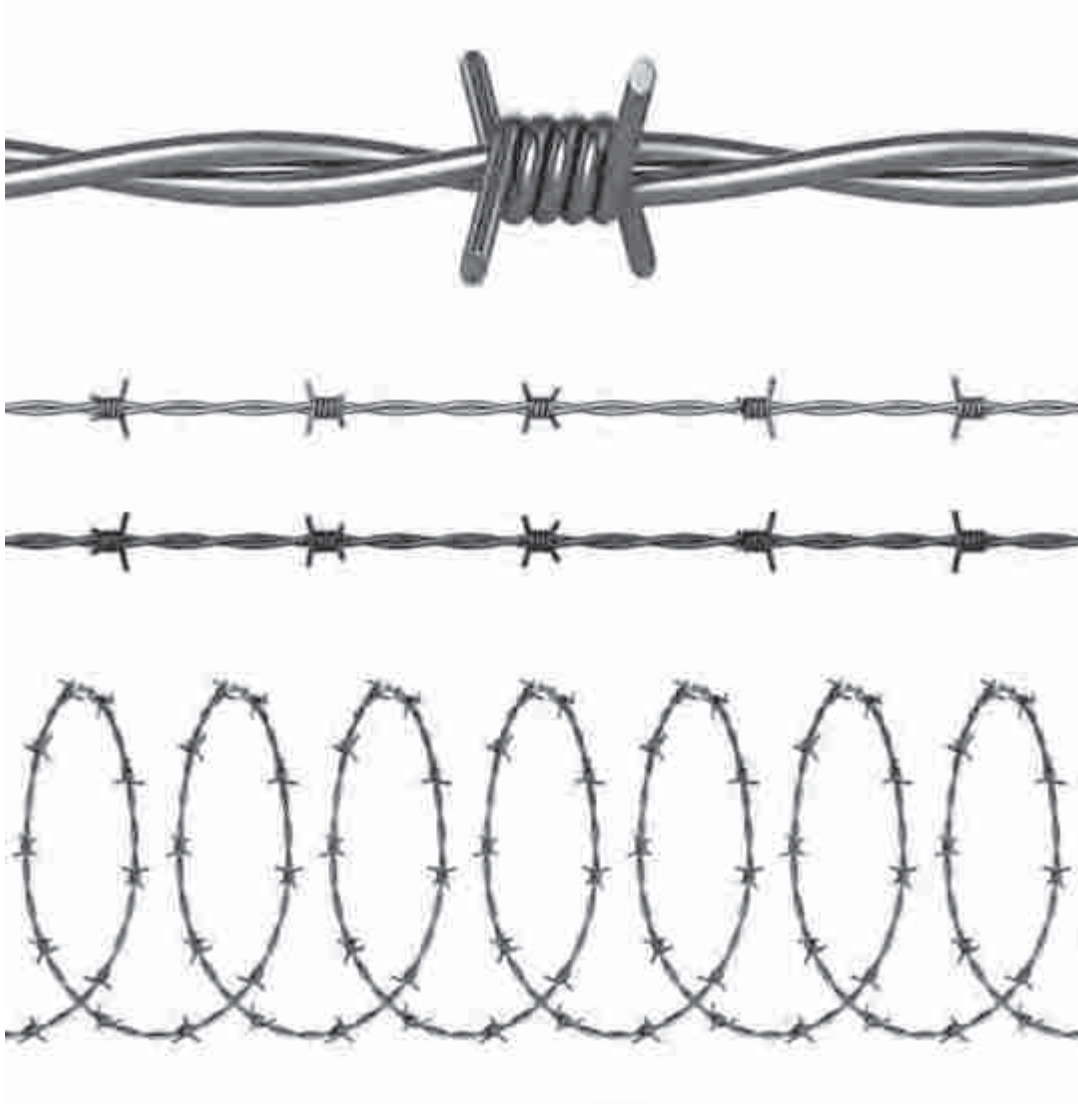
Barbed wire was used as a weapon of war to stop the enemy crossing no man’s land. Look at the images of barbed wire over the page. How would it feel if you touched it?

Men like those in this picture would go out at night to cut the enemy’s barbed wire obstacles. This meant their comrades had a better chance of crossing no man’s land during the next attack.

At the same time, they would mend their own defences whilst trying not to be noticed by enemy search lights.

There are no trees anywhere on the landscape. Why do you think that is?

Think of 5 reasons why being a member of a wiring party was so dangerous.



One soldier writing home says:

"You mention in your letter about what I would like or need most...a good stout pair of gloves for handling barbed wire would be acceptable. But don't worry about me, I'm not complaining."

Why do you think the soldiers would not complain when they wrote home to their loved ones?



Image: Imperial War Museum

A group of officers of the 12th Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment wash, shave and dress in their dugout near Roclincourt, France, 9 January 1918.

How many men can you see in the picture? They are sharing a very small space. How big do you think it is?

Perhaps you have been on a residential visit with your school where you may have shared a room with your classmates. If so, did you have enough space for yourself and your belongings?

Did you miss home?

Did you always get on with your room mates?

How would you feel about living in the trench in the picture above?

Do you think it's a safe place?

A little piece of home

For Christmas 1914, Princess Mary, daughter of the reigning king, George V, sent every serving soldier a gift of a small box. Most of the boxes contained chocolate, some had cigarettes and some had other tastes from home like spices for Indian soldiers.

The Lord Mayor of York at the time, J.B. Morrell, wanted soldiers from York to have a taste of home. He sent each one a commemorative tin full of chocolate from Rowntrees (now Nestlé).



Image: York Museums Trust

Imagine you are a soldier living in the trenches. What emotions do you think you would feel receiving this present? They may not all be positive!

Many soldiers sent the tins home to their family. Perhaps someone in your family still has one?

J.B. Morrell was a very important man in York. Where is there a building named after him?

Many soldiers sent letters home thanking the Lord Mayor and the Sheriff, Oscar Rowntree for the gift. Here is one of the letters they wrote.

H.M.S. New Zealand
Feb 5th 1915

(29)

Your Worship.

I have just received your kind Xmas gift which you so kindly sent to all Yorks men on active service and I would like to express my thanks to Yourself and Mr Rowntree (The Sheriff) for the same. I am sending the box home as I guess my people would like to have it for a keepsake and I can assure you that I have enjoyed the contents. I was very pleased to see my name in the City's Roll of Honour and by the list the City has contributed well to the Army and Navy and I think they will all uphold the Honour of the City. I have had the pleasure of taking part in two actions up to the present and in both instances our efforts were rewarded by a victory so now we are patiently waiting for our next action only I am afraid that they will be too much afraid of our gunnery to venture out again after what they received from us in our last engagement. It is twelve months since I was in York so will be pleased when I get the chance of coming again. I will close now with Best Regards and Thanks from. Your Obedient Servant

Pte. G. W. Breckon, Royal Marines.
H.M.S. New Zealand
1st Battle - Cruiser Squadron, G.P.C. London

HMS New Zealand
Feb 8th 1915

Your Worship.

I have just received your kind Xmas gift which you so kindly sent to all York men on active service and I would like to express my thanks to yourself and Mr Rowntree (The Sheriff) for the same. I am sending the box home as I guess my people would like to have it for a keepsake and I can assure you that I have enjoyed the contents. I was very pleased to see my name in the City's Roll of Honour and by the list the City has contributed well to the Army and Navy and I think they will all uphold the Honour of the City. I have had the pleasure of taking part in two actions up to the present and in both instances our efforts were rewarded by a victory so now we are patiently waiting for our next action only I am afraid that they will be too much afraid of our gunnery to venture out again after what they received from us in our last engagement. It is twelve months since I was in York so will be pleased when I get the chance of coming again. I will close now with Best Respects and Thanks from.

Your Obedient Servant

Pte. [Private] G W Breckon, Royal Marines.

HMS New Zealand

1st Battle- Cruiser Squadron.

c/o G.P.O. London

G.P.O. stands for General Post Office. It was established in 1660 by Charles II, eventually growing into the country's postal system. If a soldier was serving abroad and didn't have an address, their mail would be sent c/o G.P.O. meaning 'care of' the General Post Office. In other words, the G.P.O. would look after their letters until they could be either collected or delivered.

Does Private G.W. Breckon sound cheerful or miserable in his letter?

Does any of the language sound old fashioned to you?

What do you think "The Roll of Honour" is?

Does your school have a Roll of Honour?

Do you know where any war memorials are in York?

Have you ever seen the names of any of your family members or anyone you know on a war memorial?

Why do you think we build memorials?

Here is another letter, this time from a Lieutenant:

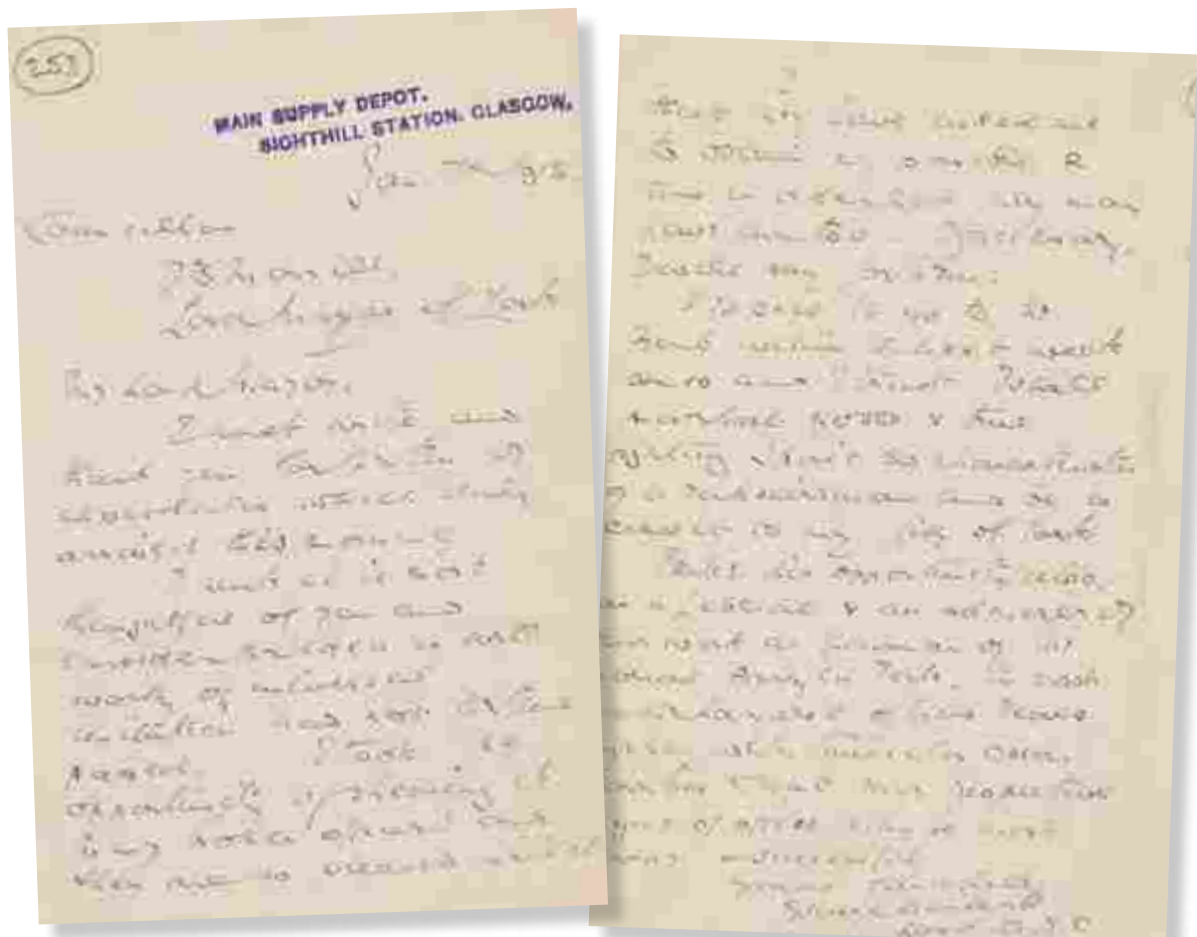


Image: York Explore

This is what the letter says:

MAIN SUPPLY DEPOT,
SIGHTHILL STATION, GLASGOW.

Jan. 7th 1915.

Councillor J B Morrell,
Lord Mayor of York.

My Lord Mayor,

I must write and thank you for the tin of chocolates which duly arrived this morning.

I think it is most thoughtful of you and consider the idea is well worthy of universal imitation had not the time passed. I took the opportunity of showing it to my brother officers and they are so pleased with it that they have asked me to obtain, if possible, 2 tins in order that they may have one too. If necessary I will pay for them.

I expect to go to the Front within the next week or so and I trust I shall have that force & true fighting spirit so characteristic of a Yorkshireman and be a credit to my City of York.

I take this opportunity also, as a Liberal & an admirer of your work as Chairman of the Liberal Party in York, to wish you the happiest of New Years, together with Councillor Oscar Rowntree That your respective years of office may be most happy & successful.

Yours faithfully
George Herbert
Lieut. [Lieutenant]
A.S.C. [Army Service Corps]

What would you miss most from home?

Would you have eaten the chocolate or kept it safe?

What would you say in your letter of thanks if you had received chocolate?

Does any of the language sound old fashioned to you?

Animals at War

The photograph was taken in 1914 at York Cattle Market (today, the location of the Barbican centre). The horses are waiting to be sent to the front lines in



soldiers on horseback with swords and guns. When war broke out in 1914, most people assumed this would be the case again and so horses were rounded up from across the country to be sent to France. Cavalry charges were used in some battles at the start of the First World War but both sides soon realised that a combination of machine guns, barbed wire and very muddy ground meant that horse power alone would not win the war.

Over eight million horses died during the war.



Image: Imperial War Museum

Horses moved equipment in the muddy terrain. Often tanks and vans would get stuck in mud or would take longer than the tried and tested horse.

Horses helped deliver food to the front line.

Horses were used as ambulances to transport wounded soldiers.

Have you read Michael Morpurgo's book "Warhorse", or seen the film or the theatre production?

Other animals were used in the war. Homing pigeons were used to send messages. Dogs pulled machinery and would help to lay telephone wires. They were also used to sniff out gas attacks and search for wounded soldiers. Some soldiers even kept jars of glow worms so they could read in the trenches.

Some battalions had animals which they kept as pets or mascots to help them forget about the horrors of war. In the picture below, you can see a soldier with the regiment's mascot.



Image: Imperial War Museum

A gunner of the 6th Battalion, the York and Lancaster Regiment with the Regiment's cat mascot, in a trench near Cambrin, France, 6 February 1918.



Image: Imperial War Museum

across muddy ground. The telephone wire is clearly visible stretching out behind the dog from the container carried on its back.

Why do you think soldiers had mascots?

Do you think the animals felt safe doing these jobs?

Would you want your pet to go to war?

How many other ways can you think of where animals help humans?

Home on Leave

If you were a soldier, you weren't always away fighting in the trenches. You



The photograph shows the wedding of Regimental Sergeant Major Percy Lewis Jones and Jessie Field on 31 October 1917. They married at St Thomas's Church on Lowther Street.

The boy on the right is Robert Field, who was about 10 years old and the man on the left is John Greenwood Field the elder.

Some soldiers would get married during the war like this couple. You can see the men dressed in their uniforms. In the first round of conscription it was only unmarried men who were called up so some men would get married to avoid being drafted into the military.

Imagine you are one of the people in the photograph. Describe your day. You may feel very differently about it depending on which character you decide to be!

This portrait of the Morris family was taken at their home at 29 Claremont Terrace. On the back row are Ike Morris, Benjamin Raisman (who went on to marry Sarah Morris in 1915), Solly Morris. Middle row: Saul Morris, Sarah Morris, Kitty Morris (nee Fischler). Front row: Les Morris, Lewis Morris.



How old do you think the two people in uniform are?

Think about their parents in this picture. How do you think they feel about their sons coming home and then having to return to the war?

Image: York Explore

If you were walking around in York in 1915 and saw people in uniform, what would you think? What would you say to them?

If you saw men walking around during the war who were not in uniform, what would you think? What would you say to them?

Coming home to recover

Many people were hurt very badly in the war. If men were seriously hurt but had a chance of recovering, they were sent back home to get better. Many schools, big country houses and other large buildings were converted into hospitals,



Image:
Explore

wounded in August 1914 but never used and was returned to its original state two weeks before term started.

Look at this room. Would you like to stay here?

What do you think it would have been like to spend a few weeks here?

What do you think happened after this photograph was taken?

Does the bed look comfortable?

What do you think this room was used for?

Zeppelin raids on York

Britain had never been attacked by air before, but this was all to change in 1915 with the launch of German Zeppelin raids.

Zeppelins were huge long thin tubes, like giant sausages and more than twice as long as a modern jumbo jet. They were slow moving balloons full of hydrogen gas that was lighter than air. During the First World War the Germans used them to drop bombs on Britain. They did this to try and break the British people's morale and to force the Government to give up the war in the trenches.

When they first appeared in British skies, people would rush out to look at them in wonder, not used to seeing things flying above them. However, it didn't take long to realise how deadly they were as the bombs fell.

On the night of Tuesday 2 May 1916 nine people were killed in York with 40 more being injured by a raid from the skies. Eighteen bombs were dropped on York causing destruction on Nunthorpe Lane and the Upper Price Street area in Bishophill and in Hungate. Among the nine people killed that night were 71-year-old George Avison and his wife, Sarah Ann. Their house at 13 Upper Price Street was completely destroyed in the raid.

In a letter, Norah Chapman writes about her sister Emily who was killed.

My poor darling sister was killed in the air raid, my dear darling mother has had her left arm shot off and I am very badly wounded at the top of my right arm, and three wounds in my back... The house is completely wrecked.

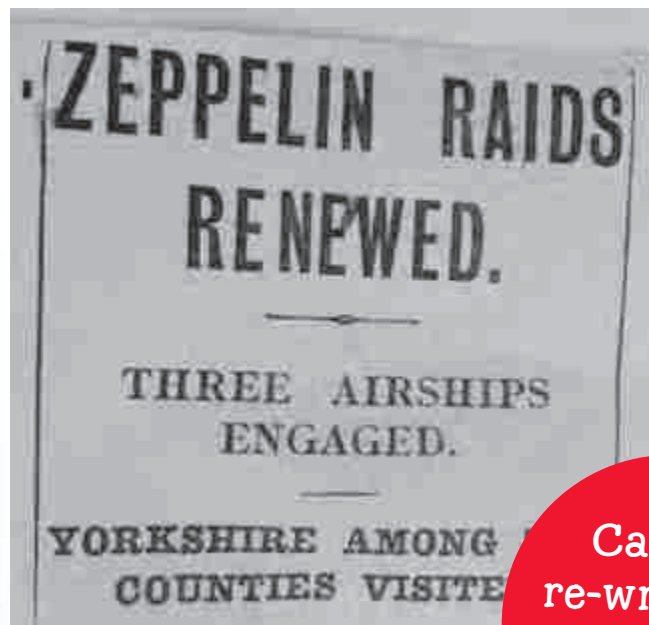


Image: York Explore

This was the headline in "The Yorkshire Evening Press".

Can you re-write it to sound more dramatic?



Image: Wikimedia

Design a poster in the style of the one above warning about the dangers of a Zeppelin attack on York.

If you were at home with your family and you heard a Zeppelin flying overhead, what would you do and where would you go?

Zeppelin damage in Kyme Street, Bishophill

Image: The Press (Clements hall local History group)

Imagine this was your home. You are the first one of your family to discover what has happened. What would you do next?



If you could save one thing from the wreckage, what would it be?

Remembering the dead: loss of a generation



This postcard is part of a series produced during the First World War. These are men of the Fulford Road area who were killed.

Image: York Explore



Image: York Explore

The picture shows the NER (North Eastern Railway) war memorial. This was built to remember the railwaymen who died in the First World War. Sir Edwin Lutyens designed it with panels listing the names of the dead. It is so big that its creation involved the removal of some of the mound of the city walls.

These two images show the different ways in which people commemorated those that died during the war.

Can you think of any other ways that we remember those that die in conflict?

What do many people wear during November?

Why do you think the word "fallen" rather than "killed" is used?

Sir Edwin Lutyens was a very famous architect who designed many famous buildings and war memorials. Find out the location of his most famous War Memorial.

CASE STUDY:**Research by Clements Hall Local History Group****Arthur Toft and Maurice Challoner**

Arthur Toft died in Belgium on 19 April 1918 after being wounded by a flying shell fragment. Maurice Challoner was killed in action in France on 8 May 1917. They had attended Cherry Street School, Clementhorpe, and are commemorated on memorials in St Clement's Church. Arthur's parents were from Sherburn, and Arthur spent the early part of his life in Appleton Roebuck. By the time he was eight the family had moved to a more urban area again to 47 Caroline Street, off Bishopthorpe Road, York. By 1911 they had moved to 87 Nunnery Lane.

Maurice Challoner lived nearby at 86 Nunnery Lane, the family having moved from 15 Bishopthorpe Road. Both boys left school at fourteen. Maurice went to work in his father's pawnbroker business, and Arthur to S. Border & Son, a grocer and café in Coney Street. Life experience could not have equipped them for war which was declared in August 1914. Arthur joined the 1/5th West Yorkshire Regiment in May 1915 and was at the front just over a year later. Maurice left the family business to join the 1/5th West Yorkshires in March 1916. The following September Arthur was gassed and returned to England for treatment. He recovered sufficiently to return to action in June 1917, but Maurice Challoner had been killed in action in May, aged 21. Less than a year later Arthur was dead, aged twenty. Both boys were the youngest sons of their families. Private 201209 Arthur Toft is buried at Hooge Crater Cemetery, West Vlaanderen, Belgium.

Private 201986 Maurice Challoner is buried at Croisilles Railway Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France and is commemorated in the King's Book of York in the Minster.

The King's Book of York Heroes is a local and unique memorial that can be seen in York Minster. Follow the link to watch a video by Forces News: <https://www.forces.net/news/army/all-you-need-know-about-kings-book-heroes>

This photograph is of a man walking on crutches, as he is an amputee. He is a casualty of the First World War. The photograph was taken in St Sampson's Square.

Image: York Explore

Some people returned from the war with many injuries that would affect them for the rest of their lives. Some had physical injuries, such as amputations and facial disfigurements. Many more had shell shock, a mental health condition that we now know as post traumatic stress disorder.

In the years after the war, people with disabilities were more noticeable and new medical treatments were implemented to try and improve their quality of life. Plastic surgery started with those who had disfigurements from the war. False limbs became more comfortable and flexible and mental health was discussed more openly.



How do you think people with disabilities were treated in public after the war?

Has your school been adapted so people with mobility needs have access?

Finally, the war ends

On the eleventh day of the eleventh month at 11 o'clock in the morning the war finally ended. There was an armistice; that is, an agreement that there would be no more fighting. All over the country, church bells were rung in celebration. There was a noise of hooters, fireworks and whistles. People cheered and rejoiced and took to the streets.

In York, 10,000 people squashed into the Minster for a service of thanksgiving. The Lord Mayor gave a speech and everyone was given a day off work.

This is how it was reported in "The Yorkshire Evening Press".

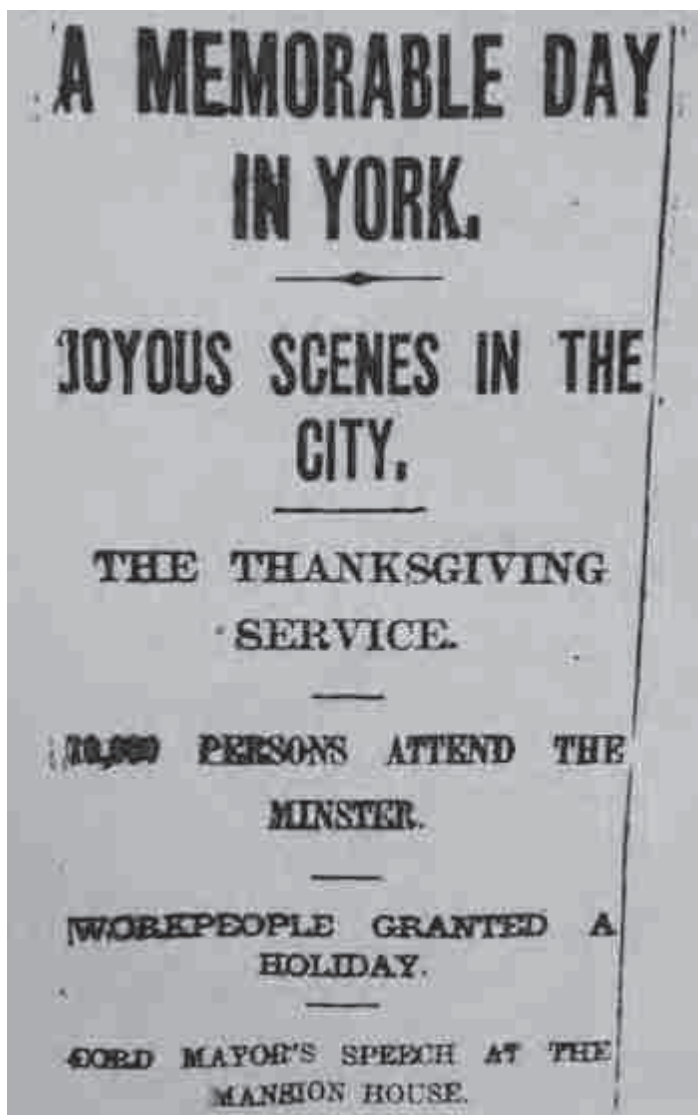


Image: York Explore

Imagine you were alive on 11th November 1918. How would you have felt when you heard the news?

How would you have celebrated?

The First World War was known as the Great War, the war to end all wars and the war of the nations. We still remember the Armistice every year.

Why do you think it is important that we do this?



The residents of Moss Street, off Blossom Street, hold a street party to celebrate...

*Image:
The Press*



...so do the residents of Thorpe Street.

*Image:
The Press*

Have you ever been to a Street Party?

If so, what did it celebrate?

Design a poster advertising one of the events shown in the pictures.

Describe how you would organise a street party. You may like to begin by writing a list of all the different things you would need, such as food, entertainment, decorations, who you would invite, what you would wear, etc.

How do you think you would have celebrated the end of the war?

Student evaluation form

Did you enjoy learning about the First World War?

We would love you to fill in the form and tell us what you thought.



I learnt something new					
I thought the photographs were interesting					
It made me want to know more about the First World War					
I didn't like this lesson					