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YORKSHIRE AND THE FIRST DAY OF THE SOMME

EDWARD M. SPIERS

University of Leeds

The First Day of the Battle of the Somme (1 July 1916) has become etched in the British national consciousness and ‘memory’ of the First World War. Vera Brittain, in writing her autobiography, *Testament of Youth* (1933), as an elegy for a “lost generation”, set the tone for subsequent commentary by describing the First Day as ‘that singularly wasteful and ineffective orgy of slaughter’.¹ After three generations, this depiction of the trauma has become so pervasive that Bill Philpott, in his prize-winning study of the battle, admits that the First Day is now ‘a metaphor for futility and slaughter, a national trope and tragedy that defies understanding’.² The scale of tragedy, as calculated in the Official History of the Great War, amounted to 57,470 casualties, of whom 19,240 were killed and 35,493 wounded, with the remainder either missing or taken prisoner. For this ‘disastrous loss’, it continues, ‘there was only a small gain of ground ... some 3½ miles and averaging a mile in depth’.³ The First Day has already been the subject of a major study,⁴ and it forms a pivotal part of studies of the Anglo-French offensive that was sustained over 142 days before petering out on 19 November 1916.⁵ Given all the debates over the strategy, significance, and effects of the battle,⁶ it is timely to consider how contemporaries coped with news of the disaster, especially in Yorkshire, a county that shouldered a peculiarly heavy burden of anxiety and grief after the First Day.

Local historians have readily testified to the burdens borne within the county, not least by families of the “Pals” battalions. Once raised by local authorities, industrialists, and groups of concerned citizens, and approved by the War Office,

these battalions became iconic symbols of the wartime volunteering spirit, especially within the industrialized towns of northern England. Their unofficial titles, like the Sheffield City Battalion (12th Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment), Barnsley Pals (13th and 14th Battalions, York and Lancaster Regiment), Leeds Pals (15th West Yorkshire Regiment), Bradford Pals (16th and 18th West Yorkshire Regiment) or the Miners' Battalion (12th Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry), testified to their social, demographic or local origins.⁷ As 1 July represented the first major engagement of these units,⁸ it would expose the 'fatal downside' of the "Pals" concept, namely that if these battalions suffered heavy casualties, they would fall disproportionately upon the male populations of particular localities.⁹ The *Leeds & District Weekly Citizen* not only anticipated this effect but also fuelled the local legend in Leeds, that 'hardly a street has escaped, and some streets, quite small ones, have many representatives in the hospitals, or, worse still in the cemeteries behind the firing line'.¹⁰ Early post-war histories compounded the exaggeration, claiming that 'only a handful [of the Leeds Pals] – 47 N.C.O.'s (sic) and men – was left out of 800'.¹¹ More recent histories have corrected these accounts, using battalion war diaries, post-war lists of wartime fatalities published by the HMSO, and the records held by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. For the Leeds Pals, a more likely estimate of casualties among other ranks is 504, comprising 56 killed, 267 wounded, and 181 missing (with the final fatalities from the missing and those who died of wounds being 233 other ranks).¹²

Why Yorkshire?

Yorkshire remains prominent in narratives about the First Day on the Somme, partly on account of its disproportionate losses. According to Martin Middlebrook, Yorkshire suffered more than any other regional area, with 9,000 casualties, that is, 3,000 more than Ulster or Lancashire, and 3,500 more than London, the North-East or Scotland.¹³ Each Yorkshire regiment contributed a unit, ranging from a single battalion of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment to the ten battalions of the West Yorkshires, and, collectively, the 29 Yorkshire battalions represented 20 per cent of the 143 involved. Leeds and Bradford each suffered casualties in excess of 1,000, Sheffield many hundreds of casualties, and six Yorkshire battalions, out of 32 overall, incurred casualties in excess of 500 among officers and other ranks. These were – the Sheffield City Battalion (512), 1st Bradford Pals (513), Leeds Pals (528), 8th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, hereafter KOYLI (539), 8th York & Lancaster (597), and the 10th West Yorkshires (710, the highest number suffered by any British unit, representing 90 per cent of those who went over the top on 1 July).¹⁴

Yorkshire units also experienced the full range of experiences on the First Day. In the far south the 9th KOYLIs advanced by crawling and rushing from shell hole to shell hole until they seized the German front-line trench north of Fricourt, then the Sunken Road about 600 or 800 yards behind the front line, and finally occupied Crucifix Trench, another 200 or 300 yards further on. In letters home Lieutenant Lancelot Dykes Spicer described the achievement as 'the most marvellous show I've ever seen or had anything to do with!' while Lieutenant George F. Ellenberger added that 'We stayed in those trenches all Sunday and Monday, and were finally relieved on Monday night.'¹⁵ Captain Harold Yeo, who had remained with the battalion's reserve, praised 'the whole affair' as 'a great success, and our sacrifices are not going to be in vain'.¹⁶ Conversely, near the northern flank opposite Serre, complete disaster

ensued. Six Yorkshire “Pals” battalions, serving in the 93rd and 94th Brigades, both part of the 31st Division, bore the brunt. After the lead companies advanced at 7.20 a.m., lying down about 100 yards into No Man’s Land, followed by supporting companies about 30 yards to their rear, they arose at the designated signal at 7.30 a.m., ten minutes after the artillery barrage had lifted, and walked forward in line formation ‘as if on parade’.¹⁷ Disaster awaited not merely the advance units of 31st Division, most of whom fell before crossing ‘the first 100 yards of No Man’s Land’¹⁸ but also the supporting units, especially among the Bradford Pals. Many of the latter were killed and wounded by the massive artillery bombardment of the front-line and assembly trenches, and never crossed their own parapet.¹⁹ Yorkshire battalions saw acts of great bravery on that Saturday, winning two of the nine Victoria Crosses awarded,²⁰ but also an outright blunder, when “A” Company, 7th Battalion, Green Howards, advanced several hours prematurely to near annihilation, prompting the Battalion’s commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Ronald D’Arcy Fife to wonder if Major Kent, of “A” Company, ‘had gone mad’.²¹

Finally, Yorkshire battalions became associated with the evocative prose and enduring images of the First Day. Captain Basil Liddell Hart, who served with the reserve of the 9th KOYLIs on 1 July, and was soon invalided out of the army on account of wounds and gassing on the Somme, later described the First Day as the ‘greatest effort and the greatest loss that the British Army has ever crammed into one day’.²² When officers of this battalion met on eve of battle, 28 June 1916, they drank to the toast: ‘Gentlemen, when the barrage lifts’, one that has been reprinted annually in *The Times* whenever the anniversary of the battle recurs.²³ Siegfried Sassoon also captured the remarkable innocence of the pre-Somme English soldier, by remarking how the First Day had begun at 7.45 a.m. in ‘brilliant sunshine’, with ‘Some

Yorkshires on our left (50th Brigade) watching the show and cheering as if at a football match.’²⁴

County and Local Impacts

In examining the impact of casualties within Yorkshire, several caveats have to be borne in mind. Given the unprecedented numbers involved in the offensive, absolute precision about casualties in particular units is not possible. Every battalion left about ten per cent of its strength as a reserve cadre, as well as specialists such as the signallers, clerks and the transport section. They also seconded men to machine-gun corps and light trench mortar batteries (where casualties would be entered separately).²⁵ Of those who went over the top, casualties were listed as killed in action (KIA), died of wounds (DoW), which could occur hours, days or weeks after the event, and missing, usually in No Man’s Land. The missing included prisoners of war, those who sheltered for hours or days in shell holes, and the unidentified dead, some of whom would be found in March and April 1917, after the Germans retired to better positions on the Hindenburg Line when skeletons with identification discs were discovered near Serre,²⁶ while the remainder were never identified. Contemporary reports whether in newspapers, post-war memorials, or local rolls of honour sometimes added further errors by misidentifying the dead or misspelling their names.

Despite these shortcomings the surviving evidence casts light upon the broad spread of bereavement, and of anxiety about the wounded and missing, across the county. Although anguish afflicted families across Yorkshire, the concentration of bereavement was overwhelmingly in the West Riding. Despite the prominent service of three battalions of the Yorkshire Regiment (Green Howards), their fatalities were

by no means drawn from the regiment's recruiting area, which extended across the North Riding, with enclaves (including Driffield and Bridlington) in the East Riding, a regimental depot in Richmond, and the largest centre of population in Middlesbrough (104,787 in the census of 1911). The 2nd Battalion, which lost six officers and 66 other ranks out of 273 casualties, was a regular battalion that had recruited heavily from London and Stratford depots in 1913 and 1914.²⁷ Like other regular battalions, it required the return of reservists to mobilize, and drafts from the depot to offset losses in 1914, but the depot complained about the regiment's pre-war reliance on the London depots for over 60 per cent of its recruits, concluding that this 'does not speak well for the military spirit at present prevailing in Yorkshire'.²⁸ So the families who would be distressed by tidings about the 2nd Battalion were far from exclusively based in Yorkshire.

Similarly, when the Yorkshire Regiment raised Service Battalions for Kitchener's Armies, it could not find all its recruits from the under-populated North Riding. Of the two Service Battalions involved on the First Day, the 7th had enlisted many of its recruits from the mining communities of County Durham. Accordingly when it suffered 104 fatalities out of 351 casualties on 1 July, the burden of bereavement spread beyond the county. Some 61 per cent of the fatalities came from outside Yorkshire, primarily Durham and Northumberland, only 22 per cent from the regimental area, and the remainder from elsewhere in Yorkshire, including nine deaths from Bradford alone. Of the 41 fatalities suffered by the 10th Battalion, only 15 per cent came from the regimental recruiting area, 38 per cent from the rest of Yorkshire and another 47 per cent from outside the county, mainly Durham and Northumberland. So slight was the impact upon Middlesbrough that the town's history of the war includes only one sentence about the Somme.²⁹

The First Day of the Somme also had a relatively modest impact upon the East Riding, the recruiting area of the East Yorkshire Regiment, which had its depot in Beverley and a major urban centre in Hull (278,024 population). None of Hull's four "Pals" battalions served on the First Day; they were all held in reserve and, apart from periodic raiding duties thereafter, only saw major action when the 12th and 13th Battalions took part in another abortive offensive on 13 November 1916.³⁰ Just two East Yorkshire units served on the First Day: the 1st, a regular battalion, and the 7th, a Service Battalion, reporting 441 and 118 casualties respectively in their war diaries.³¹ Although lists of dead, wounded, and missing often with photographs appeared in the *Hull Daily Mail*, the *Hull Daily News*, and the *Eastern Morning News*, they hardly compared in length with similar lists in the West Riding Press. The longest single list of East Yorkshires killed on the First Day involved 25 fatalities, mainly from the 7th Battalion, and a mere nine of these were from Hull (eight from Sheffield).³² The final fatality tallies revealed 111 deaths in the 1st East Yorkshires, of whom 49 per cent were born outside the county, and another 29 per cent outside the recruiting area, with only 22 per cent from the East Riding. Of the 34 deaths among the 7th battalion, only 18 per cent came from the recruiting area (all from Hull), with 41 per cent apiece from elsewhere in Yorkshire and from outside the county.³³ In short, the spread of East Yorkshire bereavement extended far beyond its recruiting area.

Within the West Riding, the families most affected by news from the front were those of the 23 West Yorkshire, KOYLI, and York & Lancaster battalions involved, whose numbers of dead and wounded dwarfed the returns from the other battalion engaged, the 2nd Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment.³⁴ The seven "Pals" battalions included the Miners' Battalion, formally the 12th Service Battalion, KOYLIs (Pioneers), raised by the West Yorkshire Coalowners Association, one

apiece from Leeds (445,568 population) and Sheffield (454,653 population), and two apiece from the much smaller communities of Bradford (288,505 population) and Barnsley (50,623 population). Like other Service Battalions, these were not the original units. During initial training, these units had lost men through deaths, desertions, and the discharge of the unfit for active service (about ten per cent nationally) and some under-age. Compounding these losses were the skilled tradesmen sought by the Munitions Department for employment in the armaments industries or transferred to technical arms, like the Royal Engineers and the Royal Flying Corps, and the educated men who were commissioned from the ranks. These pressures exercised some battalions more than others: the City Battalion of Sheffield had to raise a fifth company to supply reinforcements in December 1914, and later resist further demands from the munitions industry.³⁵ The Leeds Pals, having lost between 400 and 500 men commissioned from the ranks in 1914, had to reopen recruiting periodically from December 1914 through to August 1915.³⁶

In both Sheffield and Leeds this additional recruiting diluted the social homogeneity of the original units, which had been formed as socially exclusive bodies during the “great rush” to the colours in early September 1914. As recruiting enthusiasm dwindled rapidly thereafter, the Leeds Pals had to recruit locally, when in training camp at Colsterdale in the North Riding. The battalion also sent an illuminated tramcar round the working-class wards of Leeds like Bramley, where a Labour Councillor, James Thompson and fifteen of his followers enlisted, and into suburbs like Pudsey, Yeadon, and Morley, where forty recruits were found at one rally.³⁷ As a consequence, when the Leeds Pals left the UK in December 1915, first for Egypt and then the Western Front, only six officers and 534 other ranks remained of the 1,028 officers and men who had enrolled originally. Of the 233 fatalities

incurred on the First Day, only 107 were original volunteers.³⁸ More significantly, the belated rounds of recruiting had ensured that grief over the fallen Pals would not be confined to Leeds. Approximately 40 per cent of the other ranks who died came from outside Leeds, including Pudsey, Morley, Batley, Cleckheaton, Dewsbury, and Garforth, and more remote localities such as Tadcaster, Goole, Harrogate, Grassington, Masham, Oxenthorpe and Middlesbrough. Some of these men may have come to Leeds, looking for work and established their own families in the city, but the findings confirm both the altered composition of the Leeds Pals before the Somme, and the mourning of fallen Pals beyond the city.³⁹

If the fatalities of the Leeds Pals were less concentrated than local legend maintains, the city still had to cope with over 1,000 casualties from 1 July.⁴⁰ These included former Leeds Pals, such as Lieutenant-Colonel Louis M. Howard, who died commanding the 24th Northumberland Fusiliers (1st Tyneside Irish),⁴¹ and Leeds-based soldiers who fought in other West Yorkshire units, including the 7th and 8th Battalions, more commonly known as the Leeds Rifles (Territorials). The latter served as reinforcements in the battle for Thiepval Wood, suffering heavy casualties but not as many as the Pals.⁴² Leeds also supplied soldiers for other Yorkshire regiments, and non-Yorkshire units, including the Royal Engineers and Royal Artillery, a grouping so large that they often required separate categorization in the local Press.⁴³

Similarly, Sheffield's casualties extended beyond the City Battalion to include soldiers in other York & Lancaster units, other Yorkshire regiments, and in regiments as diverse as the Sherwood Foresters, Royal Berkshires, and the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Of the City Battalion's 240 other ranks killed in action, only 56 per cent were born in Sheffield, but many of the remainder had come to work in or near Sheffield, as its enlistment rate among the fallen was 98 per cent. The battalion had

found recruits for “B” Company from outside the city, including Penistone in the York and Lancaster recruiting area and from outside the county in places like Chesterfield, Derbyshire.⁴⁴ Yet Sheffield never gained a complete understanding of its losses: having received such a huge list of missing, the Lord Mayor interceded with the War Office on behalf of the affected families to seek more information but 165 of the City Battalion’s deaths were never identified.⁴⁵

In Barnsley, where enlistment for the two “Pals” battalions was concentrated overwhelmingly in the town (94 per cent), another 38 per cent of the 198 other ranks killed or died of their wounds came from outside the recruiting area and outside the county. This was very similar to the Miners’ Battalion (12th KOYLI), where 32 per cent of the 37 fatalities came from outside Yorkshire. In both cases many of these men had come to Yorkshire, seeking employment in coalmining: some 29 per cent of the Barnsley fatalities were miners. Nevertheless, fallen Barnsley Pals were mourned both in and beyond the district, while local families coped with additional casualties in the KOYLIs, Sherwood Foresters, and the Royal Scots Fusiliers among others.⁴⁶ The KOYLIs, however, suffered from an additional disadvantage on account of its disparate recruiting area (Pontefract, Batley, Dewsbury, Castleford, Doncaster, Goole and Wakefield), with only Dewsbury and Wakefield, possessing populations marginally in excess of 50,000. When the 9th Battalion suffered 173 killed or died of wounds after their three-day action, only 28 per cent of the deceased came from the KOYLI’s recruiting area and another 41 per cent from the rest of Yorkshire. Many of the remaining 31 per cent had next of kin outside the county.⁴⁷

Bradford’s experience, though, differed from that of any other community. The prodigious numbers of Bradford Pals killed and wounded in their own trenches not only delayed supporting the advance, as Brigadier Hubert C. Rees admitted,⁴⁸ and

impeded soldiers trying to crawl back to their own trenches, as Private Herbert Pearson (Leeds Pals) recalled,⁴⁹ but also dramatically affected the reportage in Bradford. While the city, like all others, received news of the wounded and officer casualties first, confirming that the sacrifice had been shared across all ranks,⁵⁰ Bradford had to absorb the early shock of lists of killed, wounded, and missing that greatly exceeded those received in neighbouring cities. This derived from the ability to identify casualties either near or in the front-line and support trenches, and from the high proportion of fatalities recruited from Bradford and the recruiting area (83 per cent in the 1st Pals and 71 per cent in the 2nd): ‘The war’, wrote the *Bradford Daily Telegraph* on 7 July, ‘has laid a terribly heavy hand on our city during the last two or three days’,⁵¹ and the *Leeds Mercury* commented three days later:

The extraordinary long list of casualties amongst Bradford N.C.O.s and men has made Bradford people realize the costliness of the recent fighting but everybody is proud of the prominent part played by the town regiments in the “big push”.⁵²

By 14 July, the *Bradford Weekly Telegraph* had received so much information about local casualties that it was able to produce a monumental commemorative issue. This included over nine pages completely filled with biographical details about individual casualties on the Somme, interspersed by five pages, each of which had 56 photographs of ‘Bradford and District Heroes’. It sustained this scale of photographic coverage over a fortnight, only halving the number of photographic pages per issue by the end of July but still sustaining a remarkable array of photographs in every issue throughout August. It also printed between two and three pages of biographical details

per issue into August 1916. By 20 July, when news of the ‘large numbers of casualties’ was at its peak, the *Bradford Daily Telegraph* speculated that ‘there seem to be few homes in the city that have escaped the terrible effects of the first British advance’.⁵³ This was an exaggeration, as the grief occasioned by over 1,000 casualties on the First Day was spread across a city with homes in over 4,700 streets,⁵⁴ but the stoicism of the response was credible: ‘During the whole of the past fortnight we have heard no word of complaint from any one person who has lost a loved one in the great battle.’⁵⁵ At a meeting of the Council of Bradford’s Chamber of Commerce, Alderman Sir John H. Robinson, the president, observed that ‘the suffering and the bereavement had been borne with a fortitude which had only been excelled by the bravery of those who had fallen’.⁵⁶ The body of his son, John, an officer in the 1st Bradford Pals, was never found.

Processing the Casualty Data

Processing information about the First Day was critical to its reception throughout the United Kingdom, let alone Yorkshire. As part of an offensive of unprecedented scale and intensity, participants struggled to understand the unfolding drama. By late afternoon on 1 July, Brigadier Rees, then in temporary command of 94th Infantry Brigade (composed of the Sheffield City Battalion, the two Barnsley Pals Battalions and the 11th East Lancashires), admitted that his staff officers ‘found it impossible to believe that the whole brigade had been destroyed as a fighting unit’. It was only after lecturing Brigadier-General J. D. Ingles (93rd Brigade), and the intelligence staff on the situation in the ‘early afternoon’, that Rees ‘convinced my own staff that the

whole attack was a terrible failure'. He reckoned that only 550 men survived from the 2,600 who had been 'launched to the attack' as part of VIII Corps's assault on Serre.⁵⁷ When briefed about events on the First Day Sir Douglas Haig, then in command of the British Expeditionary Force, believed that 'few of VIII Corps' had even 'left their trenches!' By 2 July, he reckoned that the first estimate of casualties at 'over 40,000' as not 'severe in view of the numbers engaged, and the length of front attacked'.⁵⁸

Amidst the unprecedented scale of carnage Reverend C. R. Chappell, chaplain to the Leeds Pals, wrote on 1 July to Dr Samuel Bickersteth (Vicar of Leeds, 1905-17), who had three sons at the front, advising him that Lieutenant S. Morris Bickersteth of the Leeds Pals was missing, and that 'You must prepare Leeds for splendid and heroic news, but oh so terribly sad.'⁵⁹ Another of his sons, Julian Bickersteth, chaplain to the 56th (London) Division, had rushed to the Serre front, where he confirmed the deaths of his brother, Morris, and another six officers, with four more missing and 'every other officer' wounded: 'heroes every one!' He also provided an extraordinarily detailed account of the activities at the Advanced Dressing Station (ADS) on 1 July, where he worked with two other chaplains first treating the wounded and then identifying the dead. As doctors in their underground dugouts found themselves overwhelmed with patients, the chaplains superintended the provision of dressings and hot drinks for the cases awaiting treatment, the loading of wounded onto cars for removal to casualty clearing stations in the rear, and the emergency treatment of injured German prisoners. Towards dark they led the least tired of the stretcher-bearers back into different sections of the trenches to remove wounded from the regimental aid-posts and cope with the 'large number' of soldiers crawling over the top and dropping into the trenches.⁶⁰

Lance-Corporal James Thompson, the Bramley councillor in the Leeds Pals, confirmed the value of such efforts. Wounded just ‘a few yards in front of our barbed wire’, Thompson had crawled into a shell hole, where he lay with seven others up to the waist in water from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Three of them had then crawled back to the trenches, where they found several ‘helpless comrades’ and had tried to assist them by making improvised splints. Only at 7 p.m. did they reach a stretcher station, and after three hours had their wounds dressed, before transport removed them to a clearing station.⁶¹ The Barnsley Pals, having suffered fewer losses of officers than the Leeds Pals, dispatched parties after dark to search for their wounded and recover some of the dead under enemy fire.⁶²

Julian Bickersteth had worked in the trenches until 3 a.m. on 2 July, and then assisted at the ADS until 5 a.m. Later that morning he began identifying the dead from their identification discs and pay books, beginning with the ‘seventy or eighty’ corpses lying beside the ADS. But this process was interrupted by news of an armistice in early afternoon, when every available man went out with stretchers to bring in the wounded from No Man’s Land. Although Bickersteth was unable to participate, another chaplain led his party as far as the German wire, bringing in over one hundred wounded: ‘There was no time’, however, ‘to even look at the dead’. Over another 24 hours, Bickersteth and his fellow chaplains carried on identifying the dead and conducting funerals over mass graves. He reckoned that about 400 men were missing: ‘The task of writing to their people is quite beyond me, and I do not know how to write to those whose dear ones are missing.’⁶³

Amidst all the time-consuming effort of identifying the dead and wounded, further time would elapse before letters could be written and sent to the next of kin, and basic details about the casualties, such as names, numbers, and places of

enlistment, released through the Press Bureau. Although the Bureau, as reorganized in May 1915, controlled the supply and distribution of information from the War Office and Admiralty to the newspapers, it hardly needed to censor material as the vast majority of newspapers fully supported the war, with their proprietors and editors willing to operate a system of self-censorship, where necessary.⁶⁴ Preparing and distributing information about the dead and wounded, which sometimes involved letters from officers (if able), comrades in arms, and/or the nurses and chaplains who tended the mortally wounded, was a massive undertaking at the time of a continuing major offensive. As many of these letters were reproduced in the local newspapers, the process confirms the absence of any intent to shield the public from knowing about the casualties, even if this was only partial information.⁶⁵

As many hundreds of soldiers were listed as missing, local newspapers urged their readers to send information about the dead, wounded, and the missing to them, with photographs if possible.⁶⁶ At least two newspapers, the *Keighley News* and the *Yorkshire Herald*, expressed surprise at the relative paucity of the published numbers of dead and wounded. They quoted sources in London and the military, suggesting that total casualties in the first two weeks of the Somme offensive were under 30,000, and that, in July overall, British casualties amounted to 7,071 officers and 52,000 men. This was less than the estimate of casualties received by the Adjutant General of 5,054 officers and 146,130 for July,⁶⁷ and further particulars about the deaths on the First Day appeared intermittently throughout August 1916.

In reporting upon the dead, wounded and missing, the Yorkshire Press never settled for merely chronicling the casualty returns. The newspapers tried to identify soldiers by giving, where possible, the names and addresses of their next of kin and short biographies, including their former employment. Although ready to honour the

previous military service of ex-regular soldiers like Private Alfred Reed (10th West Yorkshires), who died of his wounds on 9 July 1916,⁶⁸ many newspapers focused upon the civilian volunteers of Kitchener's New Army. They identified the gallant sacrifice of so many men from ordinary backgrounds, such as Corporal Frank Schofield (12th KOYLIs), a keen sportsman, father of four, and a miner from the Ryhill Main Colliery, or Private John W. Ruddeforth (1st East Yorkshires), another married man with two children, who was a former plumber, painter, and cornet player in the Bridlington Brass Band.⁶⁹ The Press also personalized the casualties by including photographs, sometimes, as in the *Rotherham Advertiser*, devoting full pages over several weeks to images of the killed, wounded and missing.⁷⁰

The newspapers praised the sacrifice of those who had put their educational advantages at risk and paid the ultimate price: men like Second Lieutenant Robert Smith (2nd KOYLIs), an Old Hymerian and the son of a Hull oil merchant; Lieutenant Eric Marcus Carr (12th York & Lancaster), formerly of King Edward VII School, Sheffield, who had celebrated his 20th birthday on 30 June before dying the next day; or Lieutenant John W. Shann, who had won a scholarship to Leeds Grammar School and an open science exhibition to Christ Church, Oxford, but died with the 10th West Yorkshires.⁷¹ Personal sacrifice was a recurrent refrain, whether of Private Howard Gott (Leeds Pals), a popular schoolteacher, who had a lifetime's connection with Ebenezer Primitive Methodist Chapel and was a member of Morley Liberal Club and the Ackroyd Street Working Men's Club,⁷² or the sporting celebrities who were killed or died of wounds on the First Day. The latter included a Yorkshire County cricketer, Second Lieutenant Major W. A. Booth and a Leeds City and England football international, Lieutenant Evelyn Lintott (both Leeds Pals); a Headingley and England Rugby Union player, Second Lieutenant Henry G. Walker (a product of Dollar

Academy and Fettes, who was commissioned from the Public Schools Battalion into the 2nd KOYLIs); and a notable golfer and old boy of Bradford Grammar School, Lieutenant Robert Sutcliffe (1st Bradford Pals).⁷³ If these were young men in the prime of life, the 47-year old veteran, Captain William A. Colley (Sheffield City Battalion) had also paid the ultimate sacrifice. A freemason, who had a business in edge-tool and cutlery manufacturing, he had longstanding connections with local military organizations before the war, had served on Sheffield City Council, and had famously defended the reputation of Sheffield manufacturing in a German court case.⁷⁴

Shared bereavement was another theme that resonated across the Yorkshire newspapers. The families of political elites, senior clerics, and industrial magnates shared in the widespread grief and mourning. Among the fallen were Second Lieutenant Alfred V. Ratcliffe (10th West Yorkshires), a nephew of Colonel Edward A. Brotherton, J.P., formerly the Lord Mayor of Leeds (1914) and Wakefield's Member of Parliament (1910-12); Lieutenant Stanley L. Welch (12th KOYLIs), the only son of the Vicar of Wakefield; and Captain George C. Whitaker (Leeds Pals), the youngest of the six Whitakers at the front – one of whom had already died and another was a prisoner in Germany – part of a large Horsforth family that had made its fortune from railway contracting.⁷⁵ Families from all classes shared in the suffering.

Where soldiers died of wounds in English hospitals and could be buried locally, their funerals enabled the community to display its respect for the dead and its sympathy for the bereaved. Whether held in Leeds or in smaller communities like Morley, Batley, Heptonstall, and Darton (a village near Barnsley) spectators lined the routes taken by cortèges, with the coffins draped in the Union Jack. Blinds were

drawn in houses and even offices along the chosen routes, churches and chapels were reportedly packed, and floral tributes abounded. Only the odd person failed to share this community spirit, such as a Leeds undertaker, who thought that July 1916 was an appropriate month to announce an increase in the price of funerals,⁷⁶ and certain communities simply incorporated the tidings from the Somme into wartime “rolls of honour”. By the second anniversary of the war, 4 August 1916, Skipton could list the 277 men of the district, who had paid the ultimate sacrifice since the outbreak of the war.⁷⁷

The Somme narrative

Maintaining community cohesion was a key ingredient in sustaining support for the war. That cohesion depended upon the flow of information, the respect for personal sacrifice, and the belief that this sacrifice had not been in vain. The churches, schools and newspapers all contributed to the flow of information and the honoring of the dead. Although the news came through ‘very slowly’, recalled Marjorie Llewellyn, then a Sheffield schoolgirl, ‘everybody rushed to the paper every day to see if there was anyone they knew’. Churches and schools, she added, purveyed further information about the dead: just as ‘there were numerous services’ for the fallen, headmasters announced the names of deceased old boys in school assemblies, and Ms. Llewellyn remembered being ‘brought out of class to be told that my cousin had been killed’. It ‘was a very, very sad time’, she recollected, ‘the people were in deep black, the men if they couldn’t wear black wore black armbands’.⁷⁸

Despite the mounting casualty returns, the Yorkshire Press sustained a positive narrative about the first month of the Somme offensive. The ‘Great British Attack’, as the *Yorkshire Post* described the “Big Push”, was commended in other dailies for its ‘good progress’, even ‘a magnificent beginning’ (*Scarborough Daily Post*), capturing the villages of Montauban and Fricourt (2 July).⁷⁹ The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* claimed that the British had learned from the impetuous attacks at the battle of Loos (25 September – 14 October 1915) but warned against expecting ‘sweeping daily victories’ or victory without ‘heavy losses’, even if the army was using tactics that ‘will make the least sacrifice of life’.⁸⁰ Apart from a brief celebration of the battle of Jutland,⁸¹ the Somme offensive dominated the editorials and commentary of July 1916, including commendations of the “Pals” battalions and praise for the Yorkshire battalions and the men of Yorkshire generally, with references to the ‘dauntless valour’ of the soldiers engaged.⁸² These accounts ranged from eulogies about the New Armies, now tested in battle for the first time, to the more perceptive recognition of the strength of the German defences and the likelihood of a long haul before victory.⁸³ Underpinning the credibility of this commentary was a published letter of King George V, expressing his ‘admiration’ for ‘the continued successful advance of my troops’, and the editorial confidence in Sir Douglas Haig.⁸⁴

Amplifying this narrative were reports from the five approved war correspondents,⁸⁵ whose accounts were published initially in the metropolitan Press before some were reprinted in the provincial newspapers. By July 1916, the correspondents had established a working relationship with their intelligence officers, and as Philip Gibbs recalled:

We identified ourselves absolutely with the armies in the field, and we wiped

out of our minds all thoughts of personal “scoops”, and all temptation to write one word which would make the task of officers and men more difficult or dangerous. There was no need of censorship of our despatches. We were our own censors.⁸⁶

Of his despatches from the Somme, which were the accounts most commonly reproduced by the Yorkshire Press, Gibbs maintained that they told ‘the truth’ but nothing like the whole truth. He insisted that he had to ‘spare the feelings of men and women who have sons and husbands still fighting in France’, and had ‘not told all there is to tell about the agonies of this war, nor given in full realism the horrors that are inevitable in such fighting’. Even within the residual commentary, which shrouded some events with ‘fine phrases about the beauty of sacrifice’, he could not, as an ‘honourable correspondent’, reveal details about ‘exact losses’, failures, or tactical blunders as these were ‘things which the enemy must not know’.⁸⁷

Complementing these reports were letters from survivors of the First Day. Many of these letters were often frank and graphic, and were passed onto newspaper editors by the families and friends who received them. Where they reflected upon the pre-battle memories, they all praised the scale, intensity, and anticipated effectiveness of the seven-day preparatory artillery bombardment. ‘Everybody’, wrote Private W. Hopkinson (10th West Yorkshires), ‘was in the best of spirits and looking forward to it.’⁸⁸ When the barrage lifted, many shared the shock of Private Frank Smith (West Yorkshires) in finding that ‘the Germans were evidently waiting for us, for as soon as we got out of the trenches to go across to them we were met by a terrific hail of bullets and shrapnel’.⁸⁹ Several Yorkshire soldiers commended the enemy’s machine gunners for their steady traversing fire across No Man’s Land, always firing ‘low’, as

Lance-Corporal J. W. Walmsley (2nd West Yorkshires) described: ‘men went down every second mostly hit through the feet or legs and stopping bullets with the body and head immediately on going down’.⁹⁰

Soldiers protested wherever the preparatory artillery bombardment had failed to cut the German wire,⁹¹ and described the effects of high-explosive shells and shrapnel upon their front-line and communication trenches. A Leeds stretcher-bearer, Private W. Wigglesworth found it impossible to follow the advance for the ‘hundreds of men of our brigade... crawling back wounded and bleeding to be dressed’. Under the hail of shrapnel striking the British trenches, one of his casualties was decapitated, another lost an arm, and twice he had to dig himself out as the trench was blown in on him. With another Bradford bearer, he continued trying to move wounded into the trench ‘near the doctor’s place’ as a machine-gunner ‘rattled away at us’. Eventually he was hit in the neck and, as he tried to dress this wound, a shell blew him eight feet into the air, leaving him with further wounds to the face and elbow. ‘So here I am’, concluded Wigglesworth, ‘and jolly lucky too’.⁹²

Amidst tales of carnage and relative good fortune, were accounts of units moving courageously into action ‘as if on manoeuvres’;⁹³ numerous descriptions of men sheltering in shell holes, wounded or not, sometimes for several days;⁹⁴ and reports of depleted battalions withdrawing from the front line:

A stragglng endless stream of silent, tired men ... coming back from the trenches, their faces begrimed, their clothes plastered with brown and yellow mud. Some of them have their legs covered with sandbags, one looks like a tramp, but still retains some grace of manner which identifies him as a gentleman.⁹⁵

Mitigating these grim, if authentic, accounts of action on the First Day were claims of unit successes in reaching the German trenches, taking prisoners, and capturing German machine guns. The Green Howards, wrote Private Herbert Hardy, 'made a name for ourselves' amidst the 'fine work of the British', and added that 'We took two lines of trenches and over a hundred prisoners'.⁹⁶ Just as pleased was Sheffield-born Private Arthur Garfitt, who described how the 8th KOYLI's 'lost a lot of brave officers and men (heroes every one)' but got to close quarters with the enemy, 'killing and wounding many Germans' in the first trench, before moving on to the second and third, despite 'our ranks getting thinner and thinner'. 'Our casualties were heavy,' he observed, 'but they were nothing compared with the German losses in killed, wounded and prisoners'.⁹⁷ Claims about German casualties were one source of unreliability in these letters; others included exaggerations, like the reference to a 12-day preparatory artillery bombardment, or the utter fabrication that the Bradford Pals had captured Serre.⁹⁸ More plausible were the judgments of a Sheffield sergeant that the Boer War 'was child's play to this', and of Lance-Corporal Walmsley that he would 'never forget the First of July'.⁹⁹

So numerous letters from the Somme appeared in the Yorkshire Press, albeit scattered across the various newspapers. They did not spare their readers harrowing details of death and mutilation, and the devastating effects of machine-gun fire and shrapnel. Nor did they conceal that many Yorkshire soldiers had fallen within yards of their own front line, or even in their front-line and support trenches. The congestion 'owing to the number of wounded in the trenches' was so great, as Signaller J. Chalmers Park (Leeds Pals) recalled, that he had to spend all night with his mate on a stretcher before moving him on for medical attention.¹⁰⁰ Doubtless these

tales of individual suffering, succour and survival on the First Day stirred the emotions, but what the letters didn't say was probably just as important in sustaining public support for the war. They could neither provide any estimate of the overall number of casualties, nor mention tactical objectives unsecured, nor speculate on the causes of local reverses other than to praise the fighting qualities of the Germans. The correspondents neither criticized the strategy or tactics adopted, nor even referred to the arrest of two Bradford Pals, Privates Herbert Crimmins and Arthur Wild, who went missing on 30 June before reappearing on 4 July: both were later tried and executed for desertion (5 September 1916).¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, the county soon grasped that the number of casualties was mounting on an unprecedented scale. Hence, on 9 July, Florence Isles wrote to her brother Horace, an underage soldier in the Leeds Pals, about 'what an anxious time I am having on your account'. She urged him to admit his age of 16 years and get sent home: 'You have no need to feel ashamed that you joined the "Pals" now for by all accounts they have rendered a good account of themselves, no one can call them "Featherbed Soldiers" now... If you don't do it now you will come back in bits and we want the whole of you.'¹⁰² Horace, however, had died on the First Day of the Somme.

The civic authorities and munitions workers of Leeds heard a more positive message when their city was chosen as one of five visited by a delegation of French Socialists. This was a reciprocal visit after Labour MPs had toured French munitions factories in the autumn of 1915, and involved the visit of Lieutenant George Weill, who had represented Metz as a Social Democrat in the pre-war German Reichstag and was now an interpreter in the French army, and a French artilleryman, Private Cabannes. After the delegates had toured the various engineering shops in the city and district,

Charles Lupton, the Lord Mayor of Leeds, hosted a reception in Leeds Town Hall on 1 August 1916. Weill maintained that the allies had to fight the war to the 'bitter end', and warned his audience that they should beware of talk about peace and internationalism by German Socialists. The latter, he argued, could not understand what 'freedom' meant, as they were 'the blind instruments of the junker class'. Cabannes asserted that the Allies must resist all attempts by German agents to sow the seeds of dissension between them, and that the French nation appreciated the British contribution 'since the advance on the Somme'. The meeting concluded by passing a resolution unanimously, expressing 'profound sympathy for the sufferings of the French, and intense admiration for the heroic resistance at Verdun'.¹⁰³

Having celebrated allied solidarity, Lupton somewhat bizarrely decided that Leeds should not commemorate the second anniversary of the war, as the government wished. His preference for business as usual contrasted with decisions across the county to mark the occasion with all manner of religious ceremonies, civic processions both during the day in Doncaster and Rotherham, and at night in Wakefield, and large public gatherings outside the town halls of Bradford and Halifax, in the centres of market towns (Manor Square, Otley, Market Cross, Richmond and Market Cross, Northallerton), in parks and grounds (Myrtle Park, Bingley and the Cricket Ground, Scarborough) and in the Winter Gardens of Harrogate.¹⁰⁴ Of all the congregations, including one involving the senior officers of Northern Command at York Minster, the congregation in Sheffield Cathedral was possibly the most spectacular:

Women from the more prosperous suburbs of the city predominated in the assembly, which was leavened by public, professional, and business men, and

a fair proportion of the young and aged. Military officers, Corporation officials, Church Burgesses, representatives of the Free Church Council were also present. Here and there black garments testified to a heavy burden of sorrow and sacrifice.¹⁰⁵

Communities seized this opportunity to pay tribute to the fallen and to demonstrate ‘their inflexible determination’ to continue the struggle towards a ‘victorious end’.¹⁰⁶ Churches were packed, with hundreds ‘content to stand throughout the service’ in Holy Trinity, Hull, and ‘hundreds more ... unable to gain admission’.¹⁰⁷ The open-air meetings attracted massive attendances, reportedly several thousand in Bradford,¹⁰⁸ where the political, civic, religious, and military elites delivered inspirational speeches. They reminded their audiences that this was a ‘righteous war’, one that had been forced upon the United Kingdom, and one that had to be fought to a victorious finish on account of German war crimes and the threat posed by Prussian militarism. While most speakers proffered condolences to the bereaved, they commended the spirit which the war had brought forth, a unity of purpose that had enabled the late Lord Kitchener to field an army of several millions and to receive enthusiastic support from the Allies and the empire. They were confident, too, that the sacrifices would not be in vain, and that they were going to prevail: ‘Today we know we are going to win’, declared James Parker, the Labour MP in Halifax: ‘We were going through to victory whatever the price.’¹⁰⁹

The events had the odd flash of controversy when a woman heckled in the Bradford rally that ‘The women of Bradford want peace’ but she was promptly restrained by other women in the vicinity and led away by the police.¹¹⁰ There were also references to conscientious objectors. Ever since the introduction of compulsory

military service in March 1916, these objectors, like some who sought exemption from military service on account of their present employment, and/or the serious hardship that would be entailed by military service, had been a conspicuous presence at tribunals across Yorkshire. Although accounts of these tribunals received considerable publicity, and aroused the wrath of some soldiers' families, and soldiers themselves,¹¹¹ the conscientious objectors represented a very small minority and 'could be ignored' as stated at the anniversary meeting in Bingley.¹¹² Thomas W. Drury, the Bishop of Ripon, summarized many of the contemporary sentiments, albeit in a way that overlooked the contribution of regular soldiers and reservists, by claiming that

Our soldiers were men quite untried in war, men who two years ago were in our schools and universities; all were engaged in peaceful occupations at home. Our armies had been drawn from every class in the land; men who, by their supreme sacrifice (if necessary of life itself) had ensured the honour of our homes, and the safety of our land.¹¹³

Conclusion

How far this rhetoric had any influence over the thousands of grieving households in Yorkshire is impossible to gauge. Some families never came to terms with their loss, particularly of "missing" family members, either keeping rooms ready for their return or pestering comrades home on leave for information, or scouring the battlefields after the war. Some had to cope with ex-soldiers, bearing physical and psychological scars

of the First Day, including amputations and disfigurements. Others adjusted quite rapidly, with Reverend Bickersteth and his wife going off to a family wedding only a fortnight after learning of Morris's death. Like many others, Bickersteth was hugely proud of the sacrifice that his son had made and supported staunchly the cause for which the war was fought.¹¹⁴

Collectively, communities held together but not because the grief and anxiety were spread uniformly across the county nor concentrated within particular towns. The most affected region was the populous West Riding, and within it, the major cities and towns supporting the West Yorkshires, KOYLIs, and the York and Lancaster regiments. Within these communities political, religious, professional and industrial leaders proffered support for bereaved families, respect for the fallen, and reaffirmation that their sacrifice would not be in vain. Undoubtedly, concentrated pockets of grief occurred within extended families, or where friends and neighbours had enlisted together and had become casualties on the First Day, but nearly all units included fatalities born outside their recruiting areas and outside the county. Nor was the grief deferred because the Press was censored and the information about casualties deliberately withheld; the slow and incremental release of information reflected genuine difficulties at the front, and the fact that so many men were left missing in No Man's Land. Finally, the huge number of casualties on the First Day soon became blurred with subsequent casualties on the Somme, affecting more units and communities across the county; by late July 1916, the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* ceased reporting the dates on which casualties occurred.¹¹⁵

The First of July remained important, nonetheless, as the beginning of the "Big Push", the long awaited offensive that had gained some ground and received favourable coverage across the provincial Press. Most communities were spared the

shock that engulfed Bradford; they received instead long lists of missing and partial information that spread anxiety over days and weeks, without revealing the full scale of the carnage or the burden borne by Yorkshire. Despite the reporting of military tribunals and the odd court case involving pacifist literature,¹¹⁶ the widespread confidence in the rectitude of the war, the strategy of Sir Douglas Haig, and the prospect of ultimate victory endured.

In these circumstances demand was huge when the silent film, *The Battle of the Somme*,¹¹⁷ came to Leeds and Wakefield. Having attracted full houses at 34 London cinemas in the week beginning, 21 August 1916, it opened in the provinces in the following week. Advance publicity promised a film that would ‘depict with wonderful fidelity and force the realities of warfare’, a film without faking (it included only a few faked incidents), and a film that was both ‘a great war picture’ and ‘the finest peace picture the world has ever seen’.¹¹⁸ When it opened simultaneously at the Picture House, Briggate, the Assembly Rooms, and the Harehills Picture House, Leeds, distributors reported unprecedented demand to see it. The Yorkshire audiences were part of an estimated 20 million, half the UK’s population, that may have seen it in its first six weeks.¹¹⁹

Reactions varied in Leeds, as they did elsewhere, with some scenes occasioning laughter, but others, more somber reflection as cinemagoers watched British soldiers climbing over the parapet – the ‘most striking part of the picture’ (and the most clearly faked).¹²⁰ They watched the ‘grim realism’ of war, including the bringing in of German prisoners, some of whom were shell-shocked; images of German dead; and burial parties at work. Audiences left their cinemas reportedly ‘chastened and silent’, possibly in keeping with Badsey’s observation that the film ‘reinforced the shapelessness of war, and the helplessness of individuals in war’.¹²¹ If

the film conveyed, as many observers recalled, a greater understanding of the war and of how it was being fought, it enhanced the admiration for those who had fallen on the First of July.¹²² It thereby complemented the dominant narrative that this was a war that had to be fought and had to be won.

¹ Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (1980 re-issue of 1933), p. 276.

² William Philpott, *Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme* (2009), p. 207.

³ Brigadier-General Sir James E. Edmonds, *Military Operations: France and Belgium, 1916*, 2 vols. (1932), vol. 1, p. 483.

⁴ Martin Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme 1 July 1916* (1971).

⁵ Apart from Philpott, *Bloody Victory*, there are scholarly studies by Malcolm Brown, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the Somme* (1996); Gary Sheffield, *The Somme* (2003); Peter Hart, *The Somme* (2005); Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *The Somme* (New Haven, 2005); Peter Simkins, 'Introduction' in Chris McCarthy, *The Somme: the day-by-day account* (1993), pp. 7-13.

⁶ For example, Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare 1900-1918* (1987), pp. 152-68; Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War: Myths and Realities* (2001), pp. 163-9; and J. P. Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2008), chap. 9.

⁷ The best account of the "Pals" battalions is by Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-1916* (Manchester, 1988).

⁸ Ever since initial deployments overseas, sometimes in Egypt then on the Western Front, "Pals" battalions had taken casualties but nothing to compare with those suffered on 1 July 1916, see Jon Cooksey, *Barnsley Pals: The 13th & 14th Battalions York & Lancaster Regiment* (Barnsley, 2008), 'Casualty Roll', pp. 295-6 and Barrie S. Barnes, *This Righteous War* (Huddersfield, 1990), p. 75.

⁹ David Bilton, *Hull PALS: 10th, 11th, 12th & 13th Battalions East Yorkshire Regiment* (Barnsley, 1999), p. 28.

¹⁰ *Leeds & District Weekly Citizen*, 14 July 1916, p. 4; for the durability of this legend, see Stephen Wood, *The Leeds Pals* (Stroud, Glos., 2014), p. 69 and Andrea Hetherington, *Lawnswood's Great War Stories* (Leeds, 2015), p. 16.

¹¹ William H. Scott, *Leeds in the Great War 1914-1918: A Book of Remembrance* (Leeds, 1923), p. 117, a claim repeated by Michael Meadowcroft, 'The years of political transition, 1914-39' in *A history of modern Leeds*, ed. D. Fraser (Manchester, 1980), pp. 410-36, at p. 412.

¹² Laurie Milner, *Leeds Pals: A History of the 15th (Service) Battalion (1st Leeds) The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment) 1914-1918* (1991), pp. 164-5; for the post-war lists, see *Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-1919* (1921, reissued Polstead, 1989), Parts 19 (West Yorkshire Regiment), 20 (East Yorkshire Regiment), 24 (Yorkshire Regiment), 38 (West Riding (Duke of Wellington's) Regiment), 54 (King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry Regiment), 61 (York and Lancaster Regiment), hereafter *Soldiers Died*. See also *Officers Died in the Great War 1914-1919* (1919, new enl. ed. Polstead, 1988) Part 1 'Old and New Armies' and Part 2 'Territorial Force'.

¹³ Middlebrook, *First Day*, pp. 269-70. The book does not explain this calculation and it may exaggerate the number of Yorkshire casualties, as many regiments had to recruit from outside their regimental areas and county boundaries.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 263 and 330. The author calculated the number of battalions from the county's regimental histories and fatality lists, including Ernest W. Bell, *Soldiers killed on the first day of the Somme* (Bolton, 1977) but correcting Bell's error in omitting the 1st Barnsley Pals.

¹⁵ Lieutenant L. D. Spicer to his mother, 5 July 1916, in Lancelot Dykes Spicer, *Letters From France 1915-1918* (1979), p. 55 and Imperial War Museum (IWM),

PP/MCR/130, Ellenberger Mss., Second Lieutenant George F. Ellenberger to his mother, 7 July 1916 (also published the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 21 July 1916, p. 4) and on the mode of advance, see Ellenberger Mss., ‘Account of Lieutenant B. L. Gordon’, 4 July 1916.

¹⁶ IWM, Documents 3132, 95/6/1, Captain H. Yeo to his mother, 6 July 1916, in ‘The First World War Letters of Colonel H. E. Yeo, MBE, MC, 1915-1919’; see also The National Archives (TNA), WO 95/2162/1, war diary of 9th KOYLI.

¹⁷ Liddle Collection (LC), University of Leeds, LIDDLE/WW1/MID/01, Middlebrook-Somme, Private Alfred Howard, interview; Richard A. Sparling, *History of the 12th Service Battalion York & Lancaster Regiment* (Sheffield, 1920), p. 62.

¹⁸ Edmonds, *Military Operations 1916*, 1, p. 442.

¹⁹ York Army Museum (YAM), war diaries of 16th and 18th West Yorkshire Battalions, including the statement of Sergeant-Major George Cussins, 1 July 1916, with the 16th diary; see also Prior and Wilson, *Somme*, p. 76. For an account of the artillery bombardment, see British Library (BL), Add. Mss. 48365, ff. 51-2, Hunter Weston Mss., ‘Notes as to the Battle of Serre on the Morning of 1st July 1916, by Brigadier General H. C. Rees, D.S.O., temporarily commanding 94th Infantry Brigade, 31st Division’.

²⁰ Among the V.C. winners were Corporal George Sanders (7th West Yorkshires) and Captain Stewart Walter Loudoun-Shand posthumously (10th Green Howards).

²¹ IWM, 94/19/1, Lieutenant-Colonel Ronald D’Arcy Fife, diary, 1 July 1916; TNA, WO 95/2004, war diary of the 7th Green Howards, 1 July 1916.

²² Basil Liddell Hart, *Through the Fog of War* (1938), p. 252; see also *Liddell Hart’s Western Front Impressions of the Battle of the Somme with War Letters, Diary and*

Occasional Notes Written on Active Service in France and Flanders 1915 and 1916, ed. B. Bond (2010).

²³ Spicer, *Letters From France*, p. xviii.

²⁴ The Yorkshires became better known by their nickname, the Green Howards, *Siegfried Sassoon Diaries 1915-1918*, ed. R. Hart-Davis (1983), p. 82.

²⁵ David Raw, *Bradford Pals: A Comprehensive History of the 16th, 18th & 20th (Service) Battalions of the Prince of Wales Own West Yorkshire Regiment 1914-1918* (Barnsley, 2005), pp. 177, 196.

²⁶ Ralph Gibson and Paul Oldfield, *Sheffield City Battalion: The 12th (Service) Battalion, York & Lancaster Regiment* (Barnsley, 2010), p. 166.

²⁷ TNA, W O 95/2329, war diary of the 2nd Green Howards, 1 July 1916. The pre-war recruiting percentages, as calculated by the author, were 62% and 57% respectively: Green Howards Regimental Museum, 'Enlistment Records 1912-14'.

²⁸ 'Depot and 3rd (Reserve) Battalion Notes', *The Green Howards' Gazette*, XXI: 251 (1914), 182; Geoffrey Powell and John Powell, *The History of the Green Howards; Three Hundred Years of Service* (2002), p. 137.

²⁹ William Robertson, *Middlesbrough's Effort in the Great War* (Middlesbrough, 1927), pp. 49-50. Calculated from *Soldiers Died*, 24, pp. 46-52, 64-9; *Northern Echo*, 27 July 1916, p. 6; TNA, WO 95/2004, war diary of the 7th Green Howards, 2 July 1916; Powell and Powell, *History of The Green Howards*, p. 137.

³⁰ Bilton, *Hull Pals*, pp. 81 and 149-58.

³¹ YAM, war diaries of 1st East Yorkshires, 1 July 1916 and 7th East Yorkshires, 1 and 2 July 1916.

³² *Hull Daily News*, 27 July 1916, p. 3.

³³ Calculated from *Soldiers Died*, 20, pp. 3-19 and 39-50.

³⁴ Three officers killed and 11 wounded; 18 N.C.O.s and men killed, 231 wounded and 40 missing, TNA, WO 95/1508, war diary, 2nd Duke of Wellington's, correcting the wounded return of '251' in the Brigadier-General C. D. Bruce, *History of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment [1st & 2nd Battalions] 1881-1923* (1927), p. 151.

³⁵ TNA, WO 159/19, Secretary of State for War, private office, 'Recruitment', n.d.; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 312-13; Sparling, *History*, pp. 13 and 16; Raw, *Bradford Pals*, pp. 47, 67-8.

³⁶ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 113; Milner, *Leeds Pals*, p. 72.

³⁷ On the effects in Sheffield, see Philip Healy, 'Sheffield at War' in *The History of The City of Sheffield 1843-1993*, ed. C. Binfield et al., 2 vols. (Sheffield, 1993), 2, pp. 234-49, at p. 236; and on extra recruiting of the Leeds Pals, see *Darlington and Stockton Times*, 22 July 1916, p. 7; *Leeds Mercury*, 24 June 1915, p. 4; *Yorkshire Post*, 15 June 1915, p. 8; *Morley Observer*, 25 June 1915, p. 7.

³⁸ Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 313 and Milner, *Leeds Pals*, pp. 164-5.

³⁹ Calculated from *Soldiers Died*, 19, pp. 95-100, supplemented by the daily casualty reports of the *Leeds Mercury*, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, *Yorkshire Evening News* and other Yorkshire newspapers.

⁴⁰ Middlebrook, *First Day*, p. 269.

⁴¹ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 11 July 1916, p. 4.

⁴² On casualties in the Leeds Rifles, see YAM, war diaries, 1/7th and 1/8th West Yorkshire Regiments (Leeds Rifles) and Patricia M. Morris, 'Leeds and The Amateur Military Tradition: The Leeds Rifles and Their Antecedents, c. 1859-1918' (unpub. PhD thesis, Leeds Univ. 1983), pp. 590-1.

⁴³ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 11 July 1916, p. 5, 12 July 1916, p. 5, 15 July 1916, p. 5, 26 July 1916, p. 5 and 27 July 1916, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Calculated from *Soldiers Died*, 61, pp. 76-80; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 11 July 1916, p. 3, 12 July 1916, p. 3 and 21 July 1916, p. 3; Gibson and Oldfield, *Sheffield City Battalion*, pp. 31 and 165.

⁴⁵ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 3 August 1916, p. 3; Healy, 'Sheffield at War', p. 238.

⁴⁶ Calculated from *Soldiers Died*, 61, pp. 80-88; Cooksey, *Barnsley Pals*, pp. 296-303; and *Barnsley Chronicle*, 15 July 1916, p. 3. Calculations about the Miners' Battalion from *Soldiers Died*, 54, pp. 70-2.

⁴⁷ Calculated from *Soldiers Died*, 54, 44-57; 173 is a rough estimate of the fatalities over three days, including those who died of wounds, as the battalion was back in action, incurring further casualties, on 14 June 1916.

⁴⁸ IWM, 77/179/1, Brigadier - General Herbert C. Rees, 'A Personal Record of the War 1915-1916-1917', p. 90.

⁴⁹ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 3 August 1916, p. 5; for confirmation of the parapet casualties, see *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 18 July 1916, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Officers suffered a casualty rate of 75 per cent, Middlebrook, *First Day*, p. 263.

⁵¹ *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 7 July 1916, p. 4; calculations from *Soldiers Died*, 19, pp. 103-7 and 110-13; 122 officers and men of the 1st Pals, a lead battalion, were never found, compared with 74 of the 2nd, Raw, *Bradford Pals*, p. 197.

⁵² *Leeds Mercury*, 10 July 1916, p. 4.

⁵³ *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 20 July 1916, p. 6.

⁵⁴ Calculated from *The Post Office Bradford Directory, comprising The City of Bradford and the townships of Shipley, Baildon and Clayton* (Bradford, 1916), pp. xxv-xxlvii.

⁵⁵ *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 20 July 1916, p. 6.

⁵⁶ *Yorkshire Post*, 26 July 1916, p. 4; Raw, *Bradford Pals*, pp. 45 and 185.

⁵⁷ IWM, 77/179/1, Rees, 'Personal Record', pp. 92-4; see also TNA, WO 95/2363, war diary of 94th Infantry Brigade, 1 July 1916. VIII Corp's commanding officer, accepted that 'we shall find ourselves back in our original lines', BL, Add. Mss. 48365, f. 49, Hunter-Weston Mss., Major-General Sir Aylmer G. Hunter-Weston to his wife, 1 July 1916.

⁵⁸ *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters 1914-1918*, ed. G. Sheffield and J. Bourne (2005), pp. 195-7.

⁵⁹ *The Bickersteth Diaries 1914-1918*, ed. J. Bickersteth (1995), p. 97.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 99 and 106-8.

⁶¹ *Leeds Mercury*, 13 July 1916, p. 4; for an account of work at a casualty clearing station, see *Keighley News*, 19 August 1916, p. 3.

⁶² TNA, WO 95/2365, war diaries of the 13th and 14th York & Lancasters, 1 and 2 July 1916.

⁶³ *Bickersteth Diaries*, pp. 109-10.

⁶⁴ Deian Hopkin, 'Domestic censorship in the first world war', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 5 (1970), 151-69 and Ian F. W. Beckett, *The Great War 1914-1918* (2001), p. 281: for examples of the letters to families, see *Pudsey and Stanningley News*, 14 July 1916, p. 2, *Wakefield Express*, 15 July 1916, p. 6 and *Craven Herald*, 28 July 1916, p. 5.

⁶⁵ Michael Finn, 'Local heroes: war news and the construction of "community" in Britain, 1914-18', *Historical Research*, 63:221 (2010), 520-38.

⁶⁶ *Wharfedale & Airedale Observer*, 14 July 1916, p. 5 and *Ossett Observer*, 22 July 1916, p. 5.

⁶⁷ Compare TNA, WO 95/26, Adjutant General, 'Statement of Estimated Casualties, 1st to 31st July 1916, inclusive' with *Keighley News*, 22 July 1916, p. 11 and *Yorkshire Herald*, 3 August 1916, p. 2.

⁶⁸ *Yorkshire Herald*, 15 July 1916, p. 8.

⁶⁹ *Wakefield Express*, 22 July 1916, p. 3 and *Bridlington Free Press*, 28 July 1916, p. 6.

⁷⁰ *Rotherham Advertiser*, 15 July 1916, p. 4, 22 July 1916, p. 4, 29 July 1916, p. 3, 5 August 1916, p. 3, 12 August 1916, p. 6 and 19 August 1916, p. 4. In the last issue it included ten images of missing soldiers, nine of whom were from the 1 July.

⁷¹ *Hull Daily Mail*, 11 July 1916, p. 3; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 8 July 1916, p. 5 and *Yorkshire Evening News*, 7 July 1916, p. 5.

⁷² *Morley Observer*, 21 July 1916, p. 4.

⁷³ *Yorkshire Evening News*, 6 July 1916, p. 3; *Pudsey and Stanningley News*, 14 July 1916, p. 2; *Dewsbury Reporter*, 15 July 1916, p. 7; and *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 7 July 1916, p. 3.

⁷⁴ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 8 July 1916, p. 5.

⁷⁵ *Wakefield Express*, 15 July 1916, p. 6 and 22 July 1916, p. 3; *Yorkshire Evening News*, 6 July 1916, p. 3; *Pudsey and Stanningley News*, 14 July 1916, p. 2.

⁷⁶ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 26 July 1916, p. 5. On funerals, see *Leeds Mercury*, 14 July 1916, p. 4; *Morley Observer*, 14 July 1916, p. 8; *Dewsbury Reporter*, 15 July 1916, p. 7 and 22 July 1916, p. 6; *Halifax Courier*, 15 July 1916, p. 9; and *Wakefield Express*, 22 July 1916, p. 6. For rallying of local communities in wartime Liverpool, see Finn, 'Local Heroes', 10-15.

⁷⁷ *Craven Herald*, 4 August 1916, p. 7; see also *Pontefract and Castleford Advertiser*, 26 August 1916, p. 2 and *Keighley News*, 5 August 1916, p. 5.

⁷⁸ IWM, Sound Archives, 4163/C/A, reel 1, Ms. Marjorie Llewellyn.

⁷⁹ *Yorkshire Post*, 3 July 1916, p. 5; *Leeds Mercury*, 3 July 1916, p. 3; *Yorkshire Herald*, 3 July 1916, p. 4; *Scarborough Daily Post*, 3 July 1916, p. 4; and *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 3 July 1916, p. 5.

⁸⁰ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 4 July 1916, p. 4.

⁸¹ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 7 July 1916, pp. 5-7; *Keighley News*, 8 July 1916, p. 10; *Hull Daily Mail*, 7 July 1916, p. 5, *Northern Echo*, 7 July 1916, pp. 1-3 and *Yorkshire Herald*, 7 July 1916, pp. 5-7.

⁸² *Yorkshire Post*, 8 July 1916 and 15 July 1916, p. 7; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 8 July 1916, p. 6; *Leeds Mercury*, 11 July 1916, p. 5 and 12 July 1916, p. 4; *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 8 July 1916, p. 1 and *Barnsley Chronicle*, 22 July 1916, p. 5.

⁸³ *Leeds Mercury*, 17 July 1916, p. 2; *Malton Messenger*, 22 July 1916, p. 2 and *Yorkshire Gazette*, 29 July 1916, p. 4.

⁸⁴ *Yorkshire Post*, 19 July 1916, p. 4 and *Leeds Mercury*, 17 July 1916, p. 2.

⁸⁵ The approved correspondents were H. Perry Robinson (*The Times* and *Daily News*), Percival Phillips (*Morning Post* and *Daily Express*), Philip Gibbs (*Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Chronicle*), William Thomas (*Daily Mail* and *Standard*) and H. Russell (Reuter's). H. M. Tomlinson (*Daily News*) sometimes replaced Robinson, Sir William B. Thomas, *A Traveller in News* (1925), pp. 103-4.

⁸⁶ Philip Gibbs, *Adventures in Journalism* (1923), p. 231.

⁸⁷ Philip Gibbs, *The Battles of the Somme* (1917), p. 17; see the reports of Gibbs in the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 3 July 1916, p. 5, 7 July 1916, p. 3 and 10 July 1916, p. 5.

⁸⁸ *Craven Herald*, 28 July 1916, p. 2; see also IWM, Docs. 3132, 95/6/1, Yeo to his mother, 9 July 1916; PP/MCR/130, Ellenberger Mss., Gordon's account, 4 July 1916; and *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 26 July 1916, p. 6.

⁸⁹ *Yorkshire Observer*, 10 July 1916, p. 7; see also LC, LIDDLE/WW1/MID/01, Middlebrook-Somme, Howard, interview.

⁹⁰ *Craven Herald*, 14 July 1916, p. 5; see also *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 10 July 1916, p. 6 and 14 July 1916, p. 3; *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 18 July 1916, p. 6.

⁹¹ *Craven Herald*, 14 July 1916, p. 5 and LC, LIDDLE/WW1/MID/01, Middlebrook-Somme, Howard interview. The wire had been cut in places, partially cut in others, but remained a severe problem in several sectors, Hart, *Somme*, p. 137.

⁹² *Leeds Mercury*, 17 July 1916, p. 2.

⁹³ *Yorkshire Observer*, 10 July 1916, p. 7; see also *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 18 July 1916, p. 6.

⁹⁴ *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 18 July 1916, p. 6; *Leeds Mercury*, 5 August 1916, p. 4; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 14 July 1916, p. 3; *Dewsbury Reporter*, 15 July 1916, p. 7; see also LC, LIDDLE/WW1/MID/01, Howard interview and Private W. Slater (18th West Yorkshires), interview.

⁹⁵ *Leeds Mercury*, 17 July 1916, p. 2.

⁹⁶ *Morley Observer*, 4 August 1916, p. 5.

⁹⁷ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 13 July 1916, p. 5.

⁹⁸ *Craven Herald*, 14 July 1916, p. 5 and *Yorkshire Observer*, 13 July 1916, p. 9.

⁹⁹ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 14 July 1916, p. 3 and *Craven Herald*, 14 July 1916, p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ *Leeds Mercury*, 31 July 1916, p. 2; see also *Keighley News*, 15 July 1916, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ TNA, WO 71/495 and WO 71/496; Cathryn Corns & John Hughes-Wilson, *Blindfold and Alone: British Military Executions in the Great War* (2001), pp. 255-6. Although this work repeats the claim that these soldiers were reported as killed in action, there is no corroboration of this in the extensive records of soldier deaths in

the Bradford Press. It was official practice, though, to inform the families of executed men 'at once', *Hansard*, 5th series, 1916, LXXX, 1553.

¹⁰² Richard van Emden, *Boy Soldiers of the Great War* (2005), p. 213.

¹⁰³ *Yorkshire Post*, 2 August 1916, p. 6 and *Leeds Mercury*, 2 August 1916, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Compare *Leeds Mercury*, 5 August 1916, p. 4 with *Hull Daily News*, 5 August 1916, p. 4; *Yorkshire Observer*, 5 August 1916, p. 5; *Doncaster Chronicle*, 11 August 1916, p. 6; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 5 August 1916, p. 7; *Wakefield Express*, 5 August 1916, p. 7; *Yorkshire Herald*, 6 August 1916, p. 6; *North Riding and Northallerton News*, 12 August 1916, p. 5; and *Harrogate Advertiser*, 5 August 1916, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 5 August 1916, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid* and *Wharfedale and Airedale Observer*, 11 August 1916, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ *Hull Daily News*, 5 August 1916, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid* and *Leeds Mercury*, 5 August 1916, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Yorkshire Observer*, 5 August 1916, p. 5; see also *Darlington and Stockton Times*, 5 August 1916, p. 7; *Keighley News*, 5 August 1916, p. 10; *Yorkshire Herald*, 6 August 1916, p. 6; *Malton Messenger*, 12 August 1916, p. 3; *Wharfedale & Airedale Observer*, 11 August 1916, p. 3.

¹¹⁰ *Leeds Mercury*, 5 August 1916, p. 4.

¹¹¹ *Whitby Gazette*, 28 July 1916, p. 5; see also *Scarborough Daily Post*, 10 July 1916, p. 3 and *Huddersfield Examiner*, 29 July 1916, p. 2.

¹¹² *Keighley News*, 5 August 1916, p. 10.

¹¹³ *Yorkshire Herald*, 7 August 1916, p. 6.

¹¹⁴ Gibson and Oldfield, *Sheffield City Battalion*, pp. 181-2; *Bickersteth Diaries*, p. 113; Milner, *Leeds Pals*, p. 165.

¹¹⁵ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 31 July 1916, p. 3, 1 August 1916, p. 6, 2 August 1916, p. 3 and 3 August 1916, p. 6.

¹¹⁶ *Yorkshire Post*, 25 August 1916, p. 7 and 26 August 1916, p. 8.

¹¹⁷ Nicholas Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda during the First World War* (1986); Stephen D. Badsey, 'Battle of the Somme: British war-propaganda', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 3:2 (1983), 99-115.

¹¹⁸ *Yorkshire Post*, 17 August 1916, p. 10 and *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 28 August 1916, p. 3; see also Badsey, 'Battle of the Somme', 110.

¹¹⁹ Nicholas Reeves, 'Through the Eye of the Camera: Contemporary Cinema Audiences and their "Experience" of War in the film, Battle of the Somme' in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, ed. H. Cecil and P. Liddle (1996), pp. 780-98 at p. 784.

¹²⁰ *Leeds Mercury*, 29 August 1916, p. 4; Reeves, 'Through the Eye', p. 786.

¹²¹ *Yorkshire Evening News*, 29 August 1916, p. 3; *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 29 August 1916, p. 5; Badsey, 'Battle of the Somme', 106.

¹²² Reeves, 'Through the Eye', pp. 789-93.