

Ranmoor Society News

October 2014

We stayed at Home but “We Did Our Bit!”

In the centennial commemoration of the supreme sacrifice by those millions of men who gave their lives for king and country in the First World War, less has been said about what was happening in civilian life.

At the Society's September meeting, historian and former Sheffield Lord Mayor, Sylvia Dunkley's talk entitled “*And We Did Our Bit*” explored the role of women in Sheffield who, out of necessity, took on work which previously would have been unthinkable, being exclusively the preserve of men. At the time women were, in a sense, second class citizens but social change and liberation were on the way, as many women rallied to keep the wheels turning in civilian life. Just pre-war, nearly 30% of Sheffield women worked, a third of these in domestic service and nearly a quarter in the cutlery trades.

Transport became another area of employment offering new opportunities for women. As more and more men went to the front, the workforce of Sheffield Tramways became depleted by about a third. To avoid a reduction in service women became for the first time conductresses and, in a few cases, eventually drivers. There was a woman's uniform and hat. By 1916, with nearly three quarters of post office workers involved in the war, women took on many roles including delivery of post and telegrams. Again, a uniform was provided. The First World War saw the employment of the first women police officers initially in “Women's Patrols” covering areas such as railway stations, streets, parks and public houses.

Eventually women formed a large part of the labour force in the steel industry, which at the time was heavily engaged in the production of munitions. At a new Templeborough works over 40,000 shells per week were being turned out. Nationally by 1918 almost a million women were employed in some aspect of munitions work. This work was relatively well paid - especially for women previously employed in domestic service. But it was often unpleasant, dangerous and involved working long hours.



As war ended and the men came home they began to pick up their old jobs, often at the insistence of the trade unions. Whilst this still left many women working, a large number were sorry to be put out of work. During the war, they had become liberated through their work, enjoying the feeling of doing something worthwhile – and earning a much better wage than that paid in domestic service. Life had taken on a new pattern.

Some female Shell Inspectors in Sheffield



Could you be a Committee member?

Committee members work quietly behind the scenes on your behalf and willingly put themselves forward year after year at the AGM. However, this year Gill Battye will be standing down after occupying the Treasurer's chair for over a decade and she deserves the Society's sincere thanks for her unstinting efforts. Mike Killingley will take over the important job of balancing our income with our expenditure.

Your committee will now be one person short and, dare we say it, a little unbalanced in terms of the male/female split. Would you like to see if membership might suit? You could try out a co-opted role for a period – with absolutely no obligation to continue.

Please think about giving it a try. Your Society needs you! Do have a word with any Committee member.

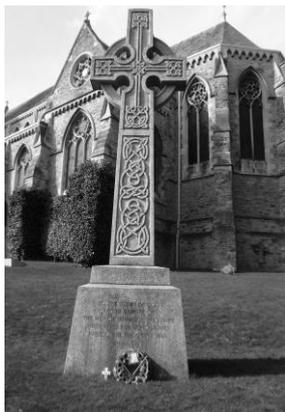
Men who Went to War but Did Not Return

Like many others who volunteered for the Sheffield's Pals Battalion, Arnold Beal was killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme (1 July 1916). He had lived in Newlyn, on the corner of Ivy Park Road and Whitworth Road. A private soldier subsequently wrote to his father:

'I tried to give him a drink, but only once did his lips move. He was past human aid, and died immediately. . . . Then the Germans spotted us and we were in that [shell] crater fourteen hours, and at 11 o'clock on Saturday night we crept to our own line, leaving Lieutenant Beal and Lance-Corporal Emmerson and [another] dead man.'

Arnold is one of the fifty-eight Great War soldiers who are listed in the sequence of their deaths on the St John's War Memorial and are recorded on our website

www.ranmoorsociety.org.



The memorial (left) was financed by local subscriptions and dedicated by the Bishop of Sheffield on 28 May 1921. Sixteen feet high and made of unpolished Cornish granite, it is offered *"to the glory of God and to the memory of the men of Ranmoor who gave their lives for honour and freedom in the Great War"*.

St John's also holds a Roll of Honour in book form and inside the church a brass tablet lists the 58 servicemen named on the stone memorial. Inside the bell tower a separate tablet commemorates Arthur Ward, who since 1909 had been a member of the church's bell-ringing team. On the day it was unveiled in September 1919 the team rang for him and his memory a half-muffled peal of 5,088 changes lasting a remarkable three hours and nineteen minutes.

Also remembered inside the church are two deceased sons of Robert and Elizabeth Colver, who before the Great War lived with the family at Rockmount next to the Bull's Head on Fulwood Road. Ted and Harry Colver were killed in action in June and December 1915 respectively, and their parents subsequently provided a stained glass window in their remembrance.

These Ranmoor men were some of the 6,000 Sheffielders who were killed in the war – almost 12% of those who served from the city. For the country as a whole around three quarters of a million men died, and around two and a half million were wounded or became sick. Most Sheffield families were touched directly or knew of bereaved neighbours. On several days each week during much of the war the city's newspapers listed casualties in long Rolls of Honour, with separate sections for *Killed, Wounded or Missing*. The papers also published soldiers' letters from the Front which, despite a generally cheerful tone, made clear to people at home the horrors of war. For instance:

'You can just imagine standing beside a few of your pals, and every now and then one would topple over, either wounded or killed. . . .

The last I saw of one of them was hanging dead on the German barbed wire. I have seen them go to the attack as if they were going to a picnic, laughing and joking: the next minute they were bowled over like flies.'
(*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 9 July 1915)

Families received official casualty information through standard War Office forms completed for men identified either as Dead or Missing, and telegrams were sent in respect of officers. Some next-of-kin received both an official notification of death and an earlier letter from a friend, junior officer or chaplain, but weeks could elapse before official confirmation was received. The Red Cross worked to obtain and send earlier information after particularly fierce battles, but distress for families could be all the greater because an absence of information sometimes led to a long period of anxious uncertainty.

The bodies of around 100,000 British men have never been identified, including more than 2,000 from Sheffield. Furthermore, none of the war's bodies were returned to Britain so that after a death, families were not able to mourn their loss at a funeral or visit a loved one's grave; all they had were the dead man's letters and possessions which were eventually returned to them.

Hundreds of memorials were erected around the country in subsequent years – starting with a wood-and-plaster "cenotaph" (meaning "empty tomb") in London in 1919. This was intended to be temporary, but public acclamation resulted in a permanent replacement the following year.

Ranmoor's memorial, dedicated in 1921, was one of the earlier Sheffield monuments. The city-wide memorial was dedicated in Barker's Pool four years later, and a "Memorial Hall" was included in the City Hall when that was opened in 1932.

Poppies were introduced as symbols of remembrance in 1921, in the same year as the British Legion was formed.

Ranmoor Society Committee 2014

Chairman	Anthony Riddle	230 1114
Secretary	Gerald Eveleigh	230 1992
Treasurer	Gill Battye	230 1596
Archive	Peter Warr	230 9174
Planning	David Barber	230 4717
Membership	Peter Marrison	230 3238
General	Mike Killingley	263 0454
	Margaret Ward	327 0065

The Society needs another Committee member, perhaps on a take-a-look co-opted basis. Please give the possibility serious thought. Thank you.