'We Will Never Forget You': Christian Charities and the Rehabilitation of Disabled ex-Servicemen in Inter-War Leeds

Bethany Rowley

Abstract

The unprecedented number of disabled ex-servicemen is one of the evident, but often forgotten, legacies that the First World War left to Britain. For these men, and the organisations created to rehabilitate and reintegrate them back into civil life, the war did not end with the 1918 armistice. By using parish records, this paper will argue that disabled veterans were largely forgotten by religious charities within inter-war Leeds, despite attempts made by clergymen to help servicemen during the war. The impact that this had on male and religious identity is also examined, as any help available disappeared with distance from the conflict. This lack of Christian aid in Leeds challenges the wider historiographical perspective that the Great War favourably altered social attitudes to disability and disability care, whilst supporting the narrative that disabled ex-servicemen were overlooked by the nation they fought to protect.

Introduction

Less than two hours before the Armistice was signed, Private George Edwin Ellison was killed by a German sniper on 11 November 1918. From Leeds, he was the last British soldier to be killed in the First World War. Along with the other 704,802 British men who died in conflict, how and why soldiers such as Private Ellison died, has been the focus of many histories of the Great War.[1] Consequently, one of the evident, but often forgotten, legacies that the war bequeathed to Britain was the unprecedented number of disabled ex-servicemen.[2] As there was no armistice on the war against the misfortune of mind, body, disease and deformity, by 1929, approximately 1.6 million men had been awarded a pension by the British government for disabilities traceable to war service.[3] Yet, in contrast to countries elsewhere in Europe, the British state did not accept full responsibility for providing healthcare to her 'war heroes'.[4] Disabled ex-servicemen and their families relied on philanthropic and charitable

1 J. Mitchell, and G.M. Smith, *Official History of the War: Medical Services: Casualties and Statistics* (London, 1931), p. 316; E. Jones, I. Palmer and S. Wessely, 'War pensions (1900–1945): changing models of psychological understanding', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 180 (2002), pp. 374–9, here at p. 374.

2 P. Verstraetea, M. Salvanteb and J. Anderson, 'Commemorating the disabled soldier: 1914–1940', *First World War Studies*, 6 (2015), pp. 1–12, here at p. 1.

3 J. Shay, 'Afterword', in D. Garber, *Disabled Veterans in History* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2012), pp. 275–82; Mitchell and Smith, *Official History of the War: Medical Services: Casualties and Statistics*, p. 316; Jones *et al.*, 'War pensions', p. 374.

4 S. Michel, 'Review of Susan Pedersen, *Family, Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914–1945*', *Contemporary Sociology*, 23 (1994), pp. 802–3.

organisations to provide social and medical care in place of the state. As many of these charitable organisations identified as Christian, religious care-giving is an important, but often overlooked, factor in the rehabilitative process for veterans. Therefore, this paper, asks whether Christian charities neglected their duties of care to the disabled, arguably, at the very time they were needed most in twentieth-century Britain, by looking at how disabled ex-servicemen accessed charity and religious services in the city of Leeds, West Yorkshire.[5]

In 1918, there were 6,000 charities for the war disabled registered with the Charity Commissioners, with The War Seal Mansions, The Star and Garter, Roehampton, and St Dunstan's among the best-known charities for the disabled formed during and after the war. By 1936, only 500 of these charities still operated in Britain on behalf of ex-servicemen and their dependants.[6] Less than ten per cent of these were operating in Leeds after the war.[7] The religious stance of these organisations, along with the existence of religious charities after the war, are however, largely ignored by historians.[8] This is because influential work on war charities, such as Jeffery Reznick's *John Galsworthy* and Deborah Cohen's *The War Come Home*, has tended to focus on the interaction between the state and disability.[9] By doing so, they examine the social consequences of state configurations theoretically, meaning that the veterans' religious experience and identity is thus often missed in examinations of British charities within the histories of disability. This is despite the relationships between the state and the veteran, and between the state and charitable organisations, being crucial in gaining an understanding of how veterans experienced their new disabled identity in civil life.[10]

5 Conceptualisations of disability alter between the Old and New Testament. Both texts mention charity and compassion. For example, just before God's condemnation of those that are 'blemished' in Leviticus (21:16–24), it states: 'Thou shalt not curse the deaf nor put a stumbling block before the blind, nor maketh the blind to wander out of the path' (19:14). Comparatively, within the same book readers are asked to be 'compassionate towards the blind and deaf and warned that the blind and deaf were not to approach the sacred altar'. According to D.L. Braddock and S.L. Parish 'An institutional history of disability' in G.L. Albrecht, K.D. Seelman, and M. Bury (eds), *Handbook of Disability Studies* (Thousand Oaks, Calif., 2001), pp. 11–68, here at p. 20, 'Further complicating matters is the fact that in the Bible it becomes clear that disability is both a punishment meted out by God and a reminder for charitable obligation and compassion in society for persons with disabilities'. For example, in Deuteronomy '… if you do not carefully follow His commands and decrees … all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: the Lord will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of the mind. At midday, you will grope around like a blind man in the dark' (28:15 and 28:28–29). The teachings of Jesus in the New Testament therefore present a significant shift in disability conceptualisation. Whether charities supported the Old or New Testament interpretations of guilt and disability, as well as how disabled men perceived this division, is therefore an important factor to consider. Disability as a punishment (did men consider their wounds as a punishment from God for some reason?) and as form of care and compassion are evident in the Bible—hence I argue that such charities have a Christian duty of care.

6 D. Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914–1939* (London, 2001), pp. 35–6; F. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 6.

7 Leeds Parish Magazine Collection: Leeds Minster Archive.

8 R. Fries, 'Charity and big society', in A. Ishkanian and S. Szreter (eds), *The Big Society Debate: a New Agenda for Social Welfare* (Cheltenham, 2012), pp 93–104, here at p. 94.

9 J. Reznick, *John Galsworthy and the Disabled Soldiers of the Great War, with an Illustrated Selection of his Writings* (Manchester, 2009); Cohen, *The War Come Home*.

10 To aid understanding of this topic research which critically examines the construction of disability in state policy and medical discourse during the war is essential. For example, see J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (London, 1996); B. Linker, *War's Waste: Rehabilitation in World War I America* (Chicago, Ill., 2011); and J. Meyer, *British Popular Culture and the First World War* (Leiden, 2008).

Adult 'membership' of faith bodies in Britain was around 8.1 million in 1918. This equates to 29 per cent of the estimated adult civilian population compared with 27 per cent of the whole adult population in 1914.[11] Whilst Clive Field emphasises that there are no known statistics on the number of Christian soldiers (disabled or able-bodied) included within these percentages, the marginal difference contradicts arguments that any lack of Christian rehabilitation after 1918 was because the war encouraged a loss of faith.[12] The monthly *Leeds Parish Magazine* however contradicts these statistics: one in four were church goers in the city before the war, compared with one in five in 1919.[13] Whilst this does not account for denominational difference, in local parishes with small populations, the numbers of those killed or injured to the extent that they could no longer attend church, should be analysed as an impact of war not as an argument about whether the war increased or decreased individual or organisational faith, since many who identified as Christian did not attend church. Leeds may not have followed the national trend, but it is paradoxical in an argument about religious charity, that more people in Britain identified as Christian after the war than before. This is because it was in times of peace that Christian organisations failed to reach out to soldiers, in contrast to the situation during the war, with, for example, the work of the Yorkshire Men's Christian Organisation on the western front.[14] Hence, in Leeds and in Britain more widely, a disparity in the amount of religious aid for soldiers before and after the war existed.

Disabled ex-servicemen, charity and forms of identity

Using this locality argument, differences between religious aid and the proportion of the population who identified as Christian were most likely caused by something other than secularisation. In Britain, societal expectations of 'masculinity' could bridge this gap. This is because all denominations of Christianity define domestic relations and provide guidance on the treatment of people with disabilities.[15] As head of the household, the male provides for his family. This Christian understanding supports the 'traditional' gender relationships and natural order of families, with 'men in public roles (as the bread-winner), and women at home' as argued by Joan Scott.[16] As Katherine Holden suggests, for some women, the

11 C. Field, 'Gradualist or revolutionary secularization? A case study of religious belonging in inter-war Britain, 1918–1939', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 93 (2013), pp. 57–93; C. Field, *Historical Religious Statistics* http://www.brin.ac.uk/2012/some-historical-religious-statistics [accessed 6 January 2018].

12 Michel, 'Review of Susan Pedersen'. This is a generalised trend. For example, the 'numbers of Easter Day communicants in the Church of England fell from 2.3 million in 1913 to 2.1 million in 1917 but recovered to 2.2 million in 1921 and nearly 2.4 million in 1925. Whilst this was an increase, the total Methodist membership in Great Britain fell from 829,565 in 1913 to 801,721 in 1920, but rose to 843,825 in 1928. Denominational figures differed, see John Wolfe, *God and Greater Britain* (London, 1994).

13 Leeds Parish Magazine Collection: Leeds Minster Archive (1–10).

14 M. Snape, *God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British Army in the First and Second World Wars* (London, 2005).

15 E. Madigan, *Faith Under Fire: Anglican Army Chaplains and the Great War* (Basingstoke, 2011). For Christian domesticity, see J. Tosh, *A Man's Place—Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London, 1999).

16 J. W. Scott, 'Rewriting history' in M.R. Higonnet, J. Jenson, S. Michel and M.C. Weitz (eds), *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven, Conn., 1987), p. 28.

First World War marked the opportunity to develop their own careers, as war disability meant that the wife and not the husband became the 'breadwinner'.[17] Women in Leeds, as across Britain, often gained these careers through war work which was actively encouraged by the church. Rev. W.H. Elliot made the following statement in the April 1915 *Leeds Parish Magazine*:

> If men must fight, women must work and not weep according to modern ideas and I desire to endorse with all my might the appeal of our Government through the Board of Trade just issued. Any women who by working helps to release a man or equip a man for fighting does National War Service. Every woman who can work and is free to work should come forward either as clerks or for industrial or agricultural employment. Let all willing apply to the Labour Exchange, Great George Street Leeds.[18]

Therefore, disabled veterans significantly disrupted this idealised and gendered order, simultaneously providing a social crisis and re-fashioning of gender codes.[19]

By disrupting this social pattern, they were also challenging Christian teachings of domesticity and masculinity, such as the powerful male at the head of the household. This is because many men were unemployable because of their disablement. To many, this meant a loss of personal identity and financial freedom. An inability to be economically self-sufficient tested Victorian ideals of manliness: independence and self-reliance were essential qualities.[20] Any social, financial and loss of masculine perception was however felt more intensely by those accessing charity. Seeking charity contradicts self-reliance, yet, by giving charity, those who provided care had power over the disabled veterans receiving it. The accessibility of religious charity for veterans is therefore complicated by notions of identity and masculinity.[21]

Yet, as A.J. Withers argues, it was not only accessing charity which created this sense of loss and dependence, but, accepting a disability pension.[22] The pensions system reflected how disability was socially constructed: it was synonymous with diminished capacity or actual economic productivity.[23] Pensions 'intended to mitigate the difference between a disabled and non-disabled person's wages': to make men feel 'complete' again.[24]

17 K. Holden, 'Imaginary widows: spinsters, marriage and the "lost generation" in Britain after the Great War', *Journal of Family History*, 30 (2005), pp. 388–409.

18 Leeds Parish Magazine Archive, April 1915.

19 For more on this idealised order, see S. Kingsley Kent, 'The politics of sexual difference: World War I and the demise of British feminism', *Journal of British Studies*, 27 (1988), pp. 232–53, here at p. 247; S.M. Gilbert and S. Gubar, *No Man's Land: the Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century-Letters from the Front*. Vol. 3. (New Haven, Conn., 1996).

20 Cohen, *The War Come Home*, p. 119.

21 S.M. Durflinger, *Veterans with a Vision: Canada's War Blinded in Peace and War* (Toronto, 2010) p. 5.

22 AJ. Withers, '(Re)constructing and (re)habilitating the disabled body: World War One era disability politics and its enduring ramifications', *Canadian Review of Social Policy/ Revue Canadienne de Politique Sociale*, 75 (2016), pp. 30–58, here at p. 39. This refers to a state not a privately-funded run charity pension.

23 Withers, '(Re)constructing', p. 40.

24 Withers, '(Re)constructing', p. 41.

Comparatively few church or Christian initiatives to get men employed or encouragements to a spiritual life that could make a man feel equally as 'complete' have been identified nationally or in Leeds. In the three hundred *Leeds Parish Magazines* published between January 1914 and January 1940, there was not one business advertisement stating that they accepted disabled veterans as employees, nor were there any announcements by disabled ex-servicemen asking for employment despite no restrictions on them doing so. Whilst they may have been helped by Leeds Parish Church in the numerous funds raised for the poor, disability and disabled pensions as a narrative remained hidden from the parish readership.

By ignoring the issue, The *Leeds Parish Magazine* thus challenged the social projection that any perceived loss of masculinity which accompanied disability could be retrieved through employment. This is demonstrated by the 'plethora of rehabilitation discourse and newspaper articles which encouraged disabled ex-servicemen to support themselves'.[25] The *Daily Herald* in 1921 for example reported that '[a] disabled man who is profitably employed is no longer handicapped'.[26] Charitable organisations also advocated this stance with the Red Cross advertising in 1920 that, 'the type of soldier who became a greater problem than the blind or limbless, was the man who does not want to be a worker anymore'.[27] Physical realities were diminished by social constructions. This social and gendered understanding of disabled veterans provided rehabilitation authorities with a way to motivate the wounded by giving them a 'positive masculine identity' and gave disabled veterans a sense of control and hope they could become 'positive agents once more in their own life'.[28] Yet, and as repeatedly asked by the Vicar of Leeds Parish Church, could one's belief in God not provide the same hope and control to men in civil life?[29] Hence, this social belief was full of aspiration and idealism. Consequently, disability was constructed 'as a challenge to idealized masculinities' in Leeds, as views that 'rehabilitation sought to reclaim the productive self as well as to return soldiers to an optimum state of masculinity and social ideals thus became prevalent in inter-war Britain'.[30]

However, whilst the historical view that disability weakened, or effeminised men prevails, 'veterans were not the passive recipients of charity'.[31] In his article 'Surveillance of British ex-servicemen', Stephen Ward argues that the sheer number of soldiers returning disabled by war, coupled with governmental ambivalence towards them, prompted the

25 See for example, M. Kowalsky, 'This honourable obligation: the King's National Roll Scheme for Disabled Ex-Servicemen 1915–1944', *European Review of History*, 14 (2007), pp. 567–84.

26 D. Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: a European disorder, c. 1848–1918*, Vol. 15 (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 202–3; 'Caring for soldiers; Aiding limbless men', *Daily Herald*, 19 July 1921, p. 14

27 M. Larsson, 'Restoring the spirit: the rehabilitation of disabled soldiers in Australia after the Great War', *Health and History*, 6 (2004), pp. 45–59, here at p. 53. For more information on the Red Cross and the First World War see Y. Makita, 'The alchemy of humanitarianism: the First World War, the Japanese Red Cross and the creation of an international public health order', *First World War Studies*, 5 (2014), pp. 117–29.

28 Larsson, 'Restoring the spirit', p. 53.

29 Leeds Parish Church Magazines (1–10): Leeds Minster Archive.

30 M.O.Humphries and K. Kurchinski, 'Rest, relax and get well: a re-conceptualisation of Great War shell shock treatment', *War and Society*, 27 (2008), pp. 89–110, here at p. 96; Larsson, 'Restoring the spirit', p. 45.

31 A. Carden-Coyne, 'Ungrateful bodies: rehabilitation, resistance and disabled American veterans of the First World War', *European Review of History*, 14 (2007), pp. 543–65, here at p. 544.

birth of ex-servicemen's organisations from 1916 to 1920. The most prevalent was the 'National Association of Discharged Soldiers and Sailors', formed in September 1916.[32] Leeds was no exception: the Leeds and District Ex-Servicemen's Association remained active until 1932, with members often campaigning for changes to disability and unemployment pensions.[33] Veterans were therefore not necessarily weakened, in terms of social position, finance or masculinity, by their war disability, and charities supporting them were not necessarily created for rehabilitation purposes, as is predominantly implied in the literature.[34]

Whilst church services were held annually at Leeds Parish Church to salute those who died and those who survived the Great War, no disabled or able-bodied ex-servicemen's organisation was formed in Leeds specifically (the Leeds and District Ex-Servicemen's Association was part of a nationwide institution), especially on a religious basis. Leeds parish documents do not suggest a reason as to why, in this city, disabled veterans did not unite to force local organisations to recognise their needs and help them accordingly.[35] Developing this perspective, Cohen argues charity provided an outlet which stopped ex-servicemen's organisations turning political and violent, whilst emphasising that charity helped those needing and giving care.[36] She does not distinguish between religious and secular charities, and in Leeds, as has been emphasised, religious organisations did not cater for the city's war wounded in this capacity.

Hitherto, it was voluntarism and not the state that 'brought a reconciliation between disabled veterans and those for whom they had suffered'.[37] This is because veterans believed citizens honoured their sacrifices through charities and voluntary organisations.[38] Charity may have served the public appreciation in this way, but philanthropists often had their own agenda in helping the war disabled other than simply caring for them and, whilst many historians are not as bold in their claims, Rozario attests that 'charity officials eagerly experimented with ways to dramatize the suffering of the victims they most wanted to help to advance their own social prestige'.[39] Veterans were thus vulnerable and open to manipulation from the organisations they believed would help them.

It is important to consider this perspective when analysing the activities and motives of religious charities for the disabled in Leeds. This is highlighted by the Eyres Park Charity in

32 S. Ward, 'Intelligence surveillance of British ex-servicemen, 1918–1920', *Historical Journal*, 16 (1973), pp. 179–88, here at p. 181.

33 West Yorkshire Archives, Public Assistance Committee Minutes, January 1932–December 1932 (LLC60/1/S).

34 See for example the assessment of the Ex-Services' Welfare society in, F. Reid, 'Distinguishing between shell-shocked veterans and pauper lunatics: the Ex-Services' Welfare Society and mentally wounded veterans after the Great War', *War in History*, 14 (2007), pp. 347–71 and Kowalsky, 'This honourable obligation'.

35 Leeds Parish Church Magazines (1–10): Leeds Minster Archive.

36 Cohen, *The War Come Home*, p. 7.

37 Cohen, *The War Come Home*, p. 7.

38 Cohen, *The War Come Home*, p. 8.

39 K. Rozario, 'Delicious horrors: mass culture, the Red Cross and the appeal of modern American humanitarianism', *American Quarterly*, 55 (2003), pp. 417–55, here at p. 420.

Armley. In 1916 Miss E. Eyres Park left a legacy to her Vicar and Churchwardens for 'the benefit of the poor'. The net amount received was £412 9s 6d, but instead of it going to the local poor, it was 'invested by the Charity Commissioners as 5% War Stock'.[40] Miss Park could not contest this decision as the money was left upon her death.

Therefore, Leeds was not an exception to Deborah Cohen's conclusion that charity administrators in inter-war Britain were 'abandoning Christian humanist platitudes as they were more impressed by professionalisation and fundraising techniques on the charity industry'.[41] Although a generalisation, Rozario and Cohen are alluding here to the fact that charities became more about 'burnishing status credentials' than helping those in need. In doing so, the main argument of this paper, that religious charities loosened their Christian duty to the disabled is qualified. The charity records from parishes across Leeds support this idea, with Leeds being a useful case study, as parish records with charity subsections are available for every area in the city.

Whilst these only show Anglican parishes, Anglicanism was the most dominant form of Christianity in Leeds at this time, followed by Roman Catholicism and non-conformist groups.[42] Aside from Wales, where Methodism overtook non-conformist groups in the inter-war period, Leeds followed the national trend. This makes it easier to trace charitable activity. Whilst Catholic and other denominational charities may have existed to help the war disabled, none have been referenced in the parish records or *Leeds Parish Magazine*, despite links being made to other national secular and religious disability charities, such as the Salvation Army. The main parish charities in Leeds therefore appear to be Anglican. Hence, these sources, held at the West Yorkshire Archives in Leeds, show that inferences can be drawn about how accessible religious charity was to disabled ex-servicemen, and the influence religion had on disability organisations using charitable records.

Leeds parish records

Before 1914, British charities were predominantly structured to distinguish the 'deserving' from the 'undeserving' poor as the English Poor Law resulted in charities focusing on economic hardship and not disability. Whether Evangelical, High Church, Catholic or Unitarian, however all agreed: to be Christian was to be charitable as 'un-charitableness strikes at the heart of Christianity' in Christian teachings; all those in need were 'deserving of help' despite this political division.[43] Thus, at the outbreak of war, there were many Vicar-led charities which aimed to help the poor in Leeds. These include the Kirke's Charity

40 West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds: RDP4/194, Eyres Park Charity.

41 Rozario, 'Delicious horrors', p. 427.

42 This is based on church membership figures and supports the argument of John Wolfe that Anglican and non-nonformist churches maintained their numbers; non-conformity overtook the Calvinistic Methodists as the largest single denomination in Wales; and that the Roman Catholic Church continued to grow in this period across Britain. Also, in all parts of Britain, organised Christianity, taken as a whole, continued until after the Second World War to maintain approximately the same level of adherence as it had done in the late Victorian Period, see Wolfe, *God and Greater Britain*, pp. 70–1.

43 Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, p. 6.

in Adel and the Eyres Park Charity in Armley.[44] Significantly, no specific disability or disabled ex-servicemen's charity was mentioned in the parish records. Religious aid was not readily available for disabled ex-servicemen when they returned home to Leeds. This is despite commitments made by various clergymen to help those in need during the war. For example, in the 1916 *Armley Parish Magazine*, the vicar wrote:

> Thousands of men are risking and some laying down their lives to save England. We must share in their self-sacrifice by making England a better place to live in, by bringing the nation back to obedience to the Christian Law for this is and always has been the Church's work. Can anyone be so indifferent, slack or cowardly as to refuse to take a share in such a work?[45]

Yet, the vicar and parish he is preaching to does not take a share of this work regarding the men who were injured in their 'self-sacrifice' for England. They offered no financial or social help to the disabled veterans on their return to Armley during or after the war. In *Armley Centenary Church Magazine* (1877–1977), there is no reference to the First World War or the immediate years following it.[46] The disabled veterans appeared forgotten by their parish on their return to this part of the city. Whilst more work needs to be done to draw any conclusions about how and why certain parts of the same city or different cities within the same county responded differently towards disabled ex-servicemen, this highlights how not all 'heroes' were offered help from their religious community and thus had little access to religious charities that understood the needs of disabled ex-servicemen. Whilst it is not possible to trace the backgrounds of all church members to draw conclusions on whether their private lives contradicted their ability to understand the religious needs of veterans, it is telling that in this example, the deacon of Armley parish was not a committee member of a non-religious charity and thus any charitable act was undertaken within the church.

However, the accessibility of religious help differed across the city as letters from the Rev. S. M. Hankey of Leeds Parish Church and his 'A' Division, demonstrate. 'A' Division was a men's group run by the Rev. Hankey every Sunday afternoon at the church hall. Any male members of the Church could attend, and, whilst holy matters were discussed they were not the primary focus. The main concern was how a religious education could benefit oneself and the wider community. 'As Vicar of Leeds, I have some right to speak on behalf of all the citizens', said the Reverend at a church service in 1915. The wider community of Leeds was thus shown through the voice of clergymen. In this service, he continued: 'one and all would desire me to-day to assure you of their hearty good-will, and to tell you that they are proud to be represented in this, the greatest of all wars by the Leeds Rifles

44 West Yorkshire Archive Service, RDP4/194, Eyres Park Charity and Adel Parish, Kirke's Charity, Saltergate Hill, 1809–1946, RDP2/97.

45 West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds: Armley Parish, Parish Magazines *Armley Church Magazine*, Volume 37, No 5 May 1916, RDP4/317.

46 West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds: Armley Parish, Parish Magazines *Armley Centenary Church Magazine*, 1877– 1977: RDP4/320.

because they know that whatever difficult duty is entrusted to you, you will quit yourselves like men and be strong'.[47] The church was proud of local men's involvement in war, possibly inspiring the creation of groups such as the 'A' Division. Yet, it was not until conscription was introduced and the heavy losses at the Battle of The Somme in 1916, however, that the Leeds 'A' Division became a charitable institution. It had 50 members which increased to 133 a year later.[48] Reverend Hankey made the decision to register this male group as a charity as he wanted to help 'his men' by sending them letters of encouragements, monetary gifts and reminding them that their 'church had not forgotten them and that they never would'.[49]

As a man of God, it is likely Hankey showed all soldiers from his area the same kindness, but the lack of available sources makes it difficult to trace charitable acts towards members of the congregation who were serving or who had served in the war, 'kindness is the desire to make others happy. Our kindness must embrace not only our friends but all men. It is to be our practical interpretation of the Golden Rule: Do unto all men as you would want done to you.'[50] This difficulty is especially so as there are no documents in Hankey's personal collection dated after 1918. The *Leeds Parish Magazines* held at Leeds Minster help make up this shortfall. In every monthly edition, an advert was placed for 'A' Division meetings and, nearly three years after the outbreak of war, in April 1917, an advertisement for injured soldiers to attend the meeting was published. This was the first time the charity publicly made aware and accepted the war injured residing in Leeds. Whilst the records give no explanation for this delay, the advertisement read: 'TO CONVALESCENT SOLDIERS, Leeds Parish Church, 'A' Division – A Meeting For Men is conducted in the Parochial Room every Sunday afternoon at 2:30 by the Reverend S. M. Hankey, You are Warmly Invited'.[51]

Special prayers were also said in these meetings 'for servicemen to be used privately and at Holy Communion'.[52] Whilst there are no details of what was said in these prayers, many convalescent soldiers would have been injured because of the war. As this invitation extends beyond members of the parish, the newspaper advertisement and the particular use of 'warmly' within it, suggests that this church group and Rev. Hankey actively wanted to help and include in social activities men impacted and/or injured by warfare. In the analysis of Leeds parish records and disabled ex-servicemen, as highlighted by the Armley case study, this is unusual. It is also interesting that these prayers were said privately and not as part of the regular church service. Perhaps Rev. Hankey felt that doing so would cause more upset to the female friends and family of those serving as they were said only in the

47 These are extracts taken from the Vicar of Leeds final words to the 7th Battalion Leeds Rifles 1/1st West Riding Infantry Brigade, T.F., 1/1st West Riding Division, BEF, on the day of their departure for the Front, April 15th 1915, *Leeds Parish Magazine*, April 1915.
48 *Leeds Parish Magazine*, September 1916; August 1917.
49 West Yorkshire Archive Service, RDP68/87C/2: Leeds Parish Church, 'A' Division.
50 *Leeds Parish Magazine*, October 1920.
51 *Leeds Parish Magazine*, September 1917.
52 West Yorkshire Archive Service, RDP68/87C/1: Leeds Parish Church, 'A' Division.

company of men, or perhaps he felt he could not dedicate enough time to those serving as he would like in the regular service.[53]

Also, by advertising these meetings just to a religious audience, it inadvertently made religious charities less accessible to ex-servicemen. They may have required charitable help, but because of a lack of faith were unaware of the existence of religious charities such as 'A' Division and thus were unable to receive it. This requirement made charities appear less charitable and exclusive. This is especially so as 'A' Division was only regularly advertised in *Leeds Parish Magazine* as opposed to any local newspapers or church noticeboards visible to the public.

The date of this advertisement is of further significance. 'A' Division became a war charity in 1916, but it was 1917 when ideas were put into practice. At a committee meeting held on 26 October 1916, it was thought that members of the 'A' Division would 'welcome the opportunity of sending a small Christmas gift to each of our men on War Service'.[54] Christmas was chosen because of its significance in the Christian faith and the culture of gift giving at this time. This was not unusual. In the parish charities of Leeds, sending money to those in need (in this case soldiers but often the poor) on days of religious significance appears traditional. For example, the Reverend Joseph Swain Charity, based in Farnley near Leeds, 'gave bread and money to the poor of Farnley at Christmas and Good Friday' from 1891 to at least 1919.[55] This desire to help the wounded could have been prompted by the death of 85 men of 'A' Division, which included five clergymen, in 1917. These were published in the church magazine listed by name and rank, and it was because of this concern that a memorial not only to those who died but to those who survived and those who were wounded was erected in Leeds Parish Church in the 1920s. These memorials are still visible in the church, presently known as Leeds Minster.

In late 1917, Reverend Hankey again wrote to soldiers of the 'A' Division:

> First of all let me say that we have not forgotten you; you are just as much a member of the 'A' Division now that you are away from us on War Service as you were when you were at home and in your place on Sunday afternoon. If I can be of any personal service to you please let me know and when you get your next leave come and see me. Will you also let me know whether you received a small bronze cross we sent from the parish church. Ever your sincere friend, leader of the 'A' Division.[56]

Despite this, no letters from soldiers about the Christmas scheme, gifts, nor Rev. Hankey's letters after the war are available in the archive. Conclusions therefore cannot be drawn about how servicemen interacted with and experienced religious charitable institutions

53 West Yorkshire Archive Service, RDP68/87C/2: Leeds Parish Church, 'A' Division.
54 West Yorkshire Archive Service, RDP68/87C/2: Leeds Parish Church, 'A' Division.
55 1919 is the last date recorded in the Joseph Swain documents; West Yorkshire Archive Service, RDP25/62: Reverend Joseph Swain Charity.
56 West Yorkshire Archive Service, RDP68/87C/2: Leeds Parish Church, 'A' Division.

within Leeds Parish Church. The dedication and charitable willingness of Rev. Hankey towards those fighting in the war is however clear from his writings. Although it can be argued that care and compassion were skills he presented because of his occupation, his desire to remember every man fighting and place them on his 'Roll of Honour' goes beyond this duty, particularly when in other Leeds parishes, such as Armley, this need was non-existent. This is also demonstrated by internal church correspondence when Rev. Hankey writes, '[i]n the Infirmary, there are about 500 patients of whom 180 are wounded soldiers'.[57] The Rev. J. Wurtzburg, who worked at the Leeds Clergy School before its closure in 1915 (a lack of students because of the war meant that it was forced to close) was appointed by the War Office as Chaplain to Beckett Street Hospital in 1915. It is likely that Hankey knew of these statistics and carried on with 'medical services' at the church because of the connection both men (and hence the hospital) had to Leeds Parish Church.[58]

Therefore, through acts of kindness and charitable giving, Leeds Parish Church and 'A' Division did not forget those injured and disabled by the First World War during the conflict. Despite this level of care towards the soldiers it did not continue when these men permanently returned home. As with Armley and Adel, religious charitable care disappeared with distance from the conflict for men connected to Leeds Parish Church. The church believed that rehabilitation of the wounded soldiers went beyond medical treatment (such as that provided at Beckett Street Hospital) and included after-care: charity was still needed after men were released from hospital. Subsequently, and, unlike many churches across Northern England, Leeds Parish Church created a fund for recuperating soldiers. To enable men to recuperate for a few weeks in the country or by the sea they needed 'Recommends' by the church. The right to nominate for a vacancy in convalescent homes was purchasable and the cost was covered by the Early Offertory Fund. Members of the congregation were encouraged to make donations to the fund at church services, as clergymen acknowledged they could not continue with this work for the sick without such funds.[59]

Also, after early 1920 there is no mention in the *Leeds Parish Magazines* of help from the parish to disabled ex-servicemen. The church did help disabled children and others, for example sending toys to children's hospital wards, but not specifically ex-servicemen. Hence, whilst different parish charities reacted to disabled ex-servicemen differently, predominantly because of the vicar's desire to do so there appears to be a stark difference in the willingness of people across Leeds parishes to help those disabled by war during the war and in times of peace.[60] It is also telling that disability charities are only mentioned in the magazine between 1918 and 1920, and the ones that are mentioned are not of a religious background. For example, in the August 1918 edition, blinded soldiers are remembered in

57 West Yorkshire Archive Service, RDP68/87C/2: Leeds Parish Church, 'A' Division.
58 *Leeds Parish Magazine*, June 1915.
59 *Leeds Parish Magazine*, September 1915.
60 *Leeds Parish Magazine* Collection: Leeds Minster Archive (1–10).

prayer within the 'soldier's notes section', and St Dunstan's (now Blind Veterans UK) is mentioned for the first and last time. As well as in prayer the congregation is being asked to give money to the charity and between September 1918 and December 1919, the congregation is being asked to give what they can for the Church Huts and the Yorkshire Men's Christian Association instead of the Early Offertory Fund. Whilst it is not clear why fundraising stops and why disability charities are no longer mentioned after 1920, in Leeds, help, albeit only limited, was given to established national charities whereas no local parish charities or bodies were created to help the disabled ex-servicemen of Leeds when they returned home.[61]

It is surprising then, what the Senior Curate of Leeds Parish Church, W.H. Elliott, writes in the October 1920 edition:

> Members of the Church are bound to take an active part by public action and by personal service in removing these abuses which depress and impoverish human life. In company with other citizens and organisations they should work for reform and particularly for such measures as will secure the better care of people including real opportunity for an adequate education; protection of the workers against unemployment and the provision of healthy homes.[62]

Whilst this demonstrates the recognition and intent of Christian charitable kindness, there are no examples suggesting this was followed through in the case of disabled ex-servicemen. Just as in the statement given by the Vicar of Armley four years earlier, parishes intended to help disabled ex-servicemen and those in need but saying so was much easier then implementing schemes which would. However, as Joanna Bourke argues, the bodies of disabled ex-servicemen were the 'product of violence inflicted as well as violence suffered'.[63] This separated disabled ex-servicemen from the 'previous cohorts of disabled Britons: the helpless young, the misery of the elderly, or the distress of people disabled in factory, mining or agricultural accidents'.[64] Local communities may not have known how to treat 'this new class of disabled people' as their needs differed from those, such as the elderly, who they were used to helping.[65] They may have wanted to help, as the Leeds Parish records indicate, but did not know how or they wanted to carry on with the charitable work they conducted prior to the war, believing this was most beneficial to the people of the parish and did not have the funds to help both causes. It is also possible that they helped disabled veterans in a personal capacity or through other organisations.

61 Leeds Parish Magazine Collection: Leeds Minster Archive (1–10).
62 Leeds Parish Magazine Collection: Leeds Minster Archive (1–10).
63 J. Bourke, 'Love and limblessness: male heterosexuality, disability and the Great War', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 9 (2016), pp. 1–17, here at p. 5.
64 Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, pp. 37–8.
65 Kowalsky, 'This honourable obligation', p. 568.

Leeds and Toc H

Moreover, outside specific parishes, Public Assistance Committee Minutes in the inter-war years also held at the West Yorkshire Archives, emphasise the work of Toc H in Leeds. Toc H is an international Christian Charity. It was founded by Rev. Dr Neville Talbot and Rev. Philip Clayton in Belgium in 1915. It is an abbreviation of Talbot House, a rest and recreation centre designed to promote Christianity amongst soldiers of all ranks. Members of Toc H, like those of 'A' Division, eased the burdens of others through acts of service, promoting reconciliation and bringing together different sections of society. It is a charity which still operates today.

In the 1938 booklet ' "The Power Loom", a Booklet on the Activities of Toc H in Yorkshire' Philip Clayton outlines the connections between Toc H and Leeds and Yorkshire during the war:

> On the night of December 15th, 1915, Lieutenant. Clayton of the 1st East Yorks was my first guest in Talbot House in Poperinghe. We little thought that night on which the Old House was opened that 16yrs later almost to the day, thousands would gather in Leeds, the Talbot's home, to this great birthday festival, one of well-nigh a thousand held by branches of this God-grown family throughout the world. In this tremendous growth, many Yorkshire men have played a leading part. Long generations hence this work will now continue. We stand united in a true work of God – goodwill among men.[66]

Open to disabled and able-bodied men, Toc H was still popular throughout Leeds on the eve of the Second World War, as it had been in the aftermath of the First. The Leeds Harehills branch, in their desire to help disabled ex-servicemen, made an application to the public assistance committee for a visitor's card in 1923. This would enable Toc H members to visit patients in St James's Hospital, Leeds.[67] Religious help, such as these visiting schemes were however very localised. Subsequently, tracing continuity within Toc H and their efforts in helping disabled ex-servicemen in Leeds is problematic. For example, there is evidence that a Toc H Hospital Library scheme for veterans existed across hospitals in Sheffield, but not in Leeds.[68] This is not specific to this religious charity or to charities within Yorkshire as The War Charities Act of 1916 made registration for public appeals compulsory and gave local authorities the power to decide which organisations would be registered or exempt. This local emphasis meant wide variations in the way the act was applied, especially in relation to defining a war charity, the poor, and what constituted a public appeal. Interestingly (as none were evident in the Leeds parish records) these local

66 P. Clayton, 'The Power Loom', A Booklet on the Activities of Toc H in Yorkshire' (1938), University of Birmingham, Toc H, M66.

67 West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds: Public Assistance Committee Minutes, Dec 1933–Jan 1933, LLC60/1/S.

68 'Hospitals Library – Bringing Happiness to Convalescents', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 13 July 1923, University of Birmingham Special Collections: TOC H Section 5 PC6, Press Cuttings, Jan 1929–March 1930.

differences can be dated back to England's Old Poor Law, where welfare activities were organised on a parish basis.[69]

However, the War Charities Act did not apply 'to any collection at a divine service in a place of public worship'.[70] With their four compass points: 'Fellowship: to love widely; Service: to build bravely; Fairmindedness: to think fairly; the kingdom of god: to witness humbly',[71] aims by which Toc H members should live their lives, this clause applied to Toc H. This could explain why the rank and file of the movement felt that the Christian basis of Toc H should be stated more emphatically than was agreed in the Royal Charter and the original terms of the charity'.[72] Religion can thus be interpreted as being important in helping ex-servicemen experience charity and disability, rather than a hindrance, which the lack of religious charities compared to secular charities in Leeds emphasises. Free from state restriction, an increase in parish initiatives to raise funds for disabled ex-servicemen and all of those affected by war would be expected, yet, as the Leeds parish records demonstrate this was not always the case. This is true of the Leeds Parish Church, despite Dr Neville Talbot, Bishop of Pretoria and co-founder of Toc H preaching in Leeds Parish Church in March 1923 to raise funds and awareness of the work of the charity.[73]

Additionally, what also alters is how Toc H and other religious charities were reported in Yorkshire. For example, the charity is frequently mentioned throughout the early 1920s in the *Halifax Guardian*, but from a financial rather than care perspective, and the *Scarborough Post*, but repeating Toc H principles such as equality amongst all classes rather than disability rehabilitation schemes.[74] This further complicates attempts to locate specific examples of religious charitable acts towards disabled ex-servicemen. It is also telling that the application made by Toc H to St James Hospital in Leeds was denied.[75] Therefore, even in cases where religious charities wanted to help disabled ex-servicemen they were often unable due to practical reasons such as a lack of funding or social protection of the vulnerable. To say therefore that Christian organisations abandoned their principles is perhaps misguided. In this example, Toc H believed in and preached the Christian vison but could not fulfil it for

69 West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds: Public Assistance Committee Minutes, Dec 1933–Jan 1933, LLC60/1/S.

70 Liddle Collection, University of Leeds, Fund Raising and Comforts: Items, 4, 5 and 7, War Charities Plea, item 7, p. 1.

71 Liddle Collection C-50/TOC, 'Toc H defined: some brief notes on the history aims and methods of Toc H' (published by Toc H at 47 Francis Street, London, 1948).

72 Liddle Collection C-50/TOC, 'Toc H defined', pp. 6, 8–9: With the desire to increase Christian principles within Toc H, accordingly in 1923, the following 'Main Resolution' was passed: 'remembering with gratitude how God used the Old House to bring home to multitudes of men that behind the ebb and flow of things temporal stand the eternal realities and to send them forth strengthened to fight all costs for the setting up of His Kingdom upon earth; we pledge ourselves to strive to listen now and always for the voice of God; to know His Will revealed in Christ and to do it fearlessly, reckoning nothing of the world's opinion or its successes for ourselves or this our family,' pp. 8–9.

73 *Leeds Parish Magazine* 10, January–December 1923.

74 University of Birmingham Special Collections: Toc H Section 5, PC6–Press Cuttings, Jan 1929–March 1930.

75 West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds: Public Assistance Committee Minutes, Dec 1933–Jan 1933, LLC60/1/.

material reasons such as human and financial resources. This perhaps explains why Rev. Hankey and Rev. Elliot were not able to provide religious aid to the war injured in Leeds despite expressing a Christian desire to help them.

Religion therefore did not prevent religious charities suffering the same hardships as non-religious charities—both must be run as a business, reiterating the arguments of Cohen and Rozario. But, not all charities or religious charities received the same funding from the state. For example, the Leeds Finance and General-Purpose committee meeting notes for February 1936 provide a breakdown of the charities in Leeds which were paid under the Poor Law Act, 1930 (Toc H and 'A' Division was not mentioned). Religious Charities included Leeds Kosher Kitchen (£50); Salvation Army Women's Welfare Work (£20) and the Leeds Jewish Board of Guardians (£400). The latter charity received the most money and interestingly faith charities were given more money than non-faith ones except in the nursing district charities (such as Leeds Nursing District Association with £135) despite there being no record of a specific religious disability charity.[76] This list was repeated in 1938. Whilst the guardians still received the most, the Leeds Kosher Kitchen no longer existed.[77] This implies that it was Jewish and not Christian charities that received the most state support in Leeds, despite there being no Jewish charity registered for the help of wounded or disabled ex-servicemen in the city in the inter-war period. By 1914, 20,000 Jews lived in Leeds which made up 5 per cent of the total population and 25 per cent of all Jews who had settled outside London at the outbreak of war. This number continued to grow, and unlike Anglicanism and non-conformist groups, remained constant throughout the inter-war period.[78] Whilst this perhaps explains the investment in Jewish charities in Leeds, the large Jewish population makes it more surprising that no Jewish disabled ex-servicemen's charity was formed in this city. The analysis of Toc H and these committee minutes suggests that in Leeds, in a charitable context, faith not disabled veterans were worth investing in.

Conclusion

Rosemary Garland Thompson's approach in *Extraordinary Bodies* was to challenge existing assumptions that 'able-bodiedness' and its opposite form 'disability' are 'self-evident physical conditions.[79] She argued that 'it was not the flaws in the body but social relationships which characterise disability constructions'.[80] These relationships include the way in which charities reacted to war veterans; how war injuries impacted upon social perceptions of

76 West Yorkshire Archives: Public Assistance Committee Minutes, Jan 1936–Jan 1938 (LLC60/1/S).
77 West Yorkshire Archives: Public Assistance Committee Minutes, Jan 1936–Jan 1938 (LLC60/1/S).
78 Olivia Sandler, *Jewish Women in The Late Nineteenth-Century Labour Market: A Study of the Influence of Race and Gender* (unpublished University of Leeds MA Thesis, 1991), p. 6. Anne Kershen, 'Trade unionism amongst the Jewish tailoring markets of London and Leeds, 1878–1915', in David Cesarani (ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo Jewry* (Oxford, 1990), p. 5.
79 R. Garland Thompson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York, 2003), p. 6.
80 Thompson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, p. 10.

disability and in turn male identity, and how charities and veterans used religion to aid recovery and their relationship with the state. In Leeds, as Thompson argues, it was not injury or an unwillingness among clergy men to help which stunted the growth of religious aid, but the social projection that disabled men had to help themselves and could overcome their disability if they tried hard enough. This meant that parish charities were less inclined to start specific disability charities with the lack of human and financial resources available to them. This was especially so after the immediate financial downturn in the British economy because of the cost of the Great War and with the economic depression of the 1930s. Although Leeds suffered less unemployment than other large northern cities, such as Glasgow and Liverpool, it was the distribution and service trades that increased most rapidly at this time. However, many of these jobs required physical labour which meant that disabled ex-servicemen as well as the civilian disabled were less likely to benefit from this industrial growth and employment opportunities during the depression.

However, after the war finished the government decided to give grants to any ex-servicemen who needed financial help in completing university or college courses. As this only covered secular courses and not theological ones, the ordination candidates who went to universities did so on a Government grant, but after that, the theological training of those who went direct to the Church's colleges was paid for entirely by the church. Whilst not specifically finding men employment, parish charities and Leeds Parish Church in particular were able to train men in 'religious teaching' so that this new skill would hopefully help them find paid employment.[81] Along with advertising in the parish magazines for employment opportunities for the war disabled and supporting their families through donations, this was one of the ways the church, nationally and in Leeds, tried to mitigate the impact of the depression and rising unemployment among ex-servicemen. Yet, with the passing of time from the war, this scheme again appeared to be used less by disabled ex-servicemen.

Moreover, and as demonstrated by *Leeds Parish Magazines*, the resources they did have were given to schemes and causes that they had helped prior to the war, such as helping children in hospital by giving them toys and offering support to the elderly. In doing so, they were fulfilling their Christian duty of charity to the disabled, which this paper argues was not the case in terms of religious disability aid. However, this division is significant. Religious aid was available and more accessible to the civilian disabled compared to the war disabled in the city. This Christian duty was not fulfilled in terms of helping the war injured; in helping the men who were disabled by helping to save those who after the war seemingly forgot about this sacrifice.

Time and immediacy were therefore important factors. Whilst the war was happening, in Leeds and across Britain more efforts were made by religious organisations to help the soldiers, such as 'A' Division sending money and gifts to soldiers from their parish who were

81 Leeds University Special Collections: Liddle (item 17), Rev A. L. Robins, Religion and the Forces in the First World War, p. 1.

fighting on the western front. The immediate dangers of war were removed in civil life, and with less danger and supposedly less men in need of care, the amount of help offered by religious organisations decreased with distance from the conflict.[82] This challenges ideas that the war caused a loss of individual and organisational faith and, whilst this paper does not attempt to qualify such a claim, this is too simple an argument when trying to understand the relationship between religious charity and disabled ex-servicemen in Britain. Particularly as the committee records demonstrate, the state awarded more money to religious rather than secular charities in Leeds. Therefore, because of its impact on the local community, faith and not disabled veterans were deemed worthier of investment in the city.

Yet, by using Leeds as a case study it becomes clear that the response of even one city, let alone of a nation, towards disabled ex-servicemen, whether this be local attitudes towards war disability or the amount of religious aid available, differs massively. No help was offered by the Adel parish, yet less than ten miles away at the Leeds Parish Church, attempts were made to include disabled veterans in the church community. Hence, it appears that offering and making religious aid accessible to disabled ex-servicemen was the position and problem of an individual, not a church, a city, the state or a nation.

82 This was a perceived as opposed to an actual need as the vast numbers of men returning home injured demonstrate.