This year marks 100 years since the First World War began. This historic event changed the lives of a generation; its impact on families and communities is still felt today.

The colleges and institutions that would one day form our University played significant roles during the conflict, not least through the volunteers and conscripts that were thrown into theatres of war, throughout the World. At our Headingley Campus one of the most visible monuments of that terrifying war are the original college buildings, including the James Graham which houses the City of Leeds Training College war memorial. In 1914 the Leeds Training College at Beckett Park, which was officially opened only a year before, was converted into a military hospital. Designated the 2nd Northern General Hospital, it was one of many stations spread across the country created in anticipation of casualties. From its inception until the last wards were closed in 1927, conservative estimates recorded that Beckett Park Hospital admitted 57,200 cases, performed 11,694 surgical procedures and witnessed the deaths of 226 men.

The City of Leeds Training College War Memorial was erected in 1922 in the Great Hall; 77 lives are commemorated from the First World War. Originally there were four brass plates two on either side of a central plate bearing the college badge and a dedication. These lines of verse are taken from the third stanza of Canadian Lt Col John McCrea’s 1915 poem ‘In Flanders Field’. The symbolism of the torch of remembrance being passed to the next generation resonated with the torch and book depicted on the college badge; the torch of knowledge illuminating darkness, a torch passed from teacher to pupil. Among those named is Mathematics Tutor Edward Harrison, the only member of staff recorded on the memorial, students included Robert Bland, Matthew Hudson Mossop and Henry Lowther Holliday, three Cumbrian lads who had been photographed as members of the 1913-14 CLTC Rugby Team.

During the war the hospital was visited by a number of high profile guests including Dr Walter Hines Page, the American Ambassador; Sir John French, who had commanded the British Expeditionary Force in August 1914 and King George and Queen Mary who in 1918 presented medals for gallantry to wounded soldiers.

In 1916 George Sprittles was called up and stationed at the 2nd Northern General Hospital where he worked as a hospital orderly, by the time he left in 1919 George had been promoted to the rank of sergeant. He kept a scrapbook of photographs recording the hospital environment, staff and patients. The scrapbook demonstrates a remarkable continuity with our university buildings at Beckett Park; the book was handed to his niece, a lecturer in history at the City of Leeds Training College, who used it in her teaching practice. On her retirement in the 1970s she passed it on to a teaching colleague who in 2007 gifted the scrapbook to our Archive and Special Collections. We hope you will find the images as interesting as we have.

If you have any further information or would like to contribute to our archive please contact archivist, Keith Rowntree at K.Rowntree@leedsmet.ac.uk or 0113 812 3522.