

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY 1ST AUGUST 2016

Good Morning

And welcome to York – on Yorkshire Day! About a tenth of all people in England live in the county. And just last week a study of DNA showed it was the most British region in the UK with over 40% having Anglo-Saxon ancestry.

Yorkshire – famous for its tea, its humour and straight-talking. I heard of a vicar who'd preached too long. After the service he apologised to a fed-up farmer by saying there wasn't a clock in the church. "Nay" the farmer nodded, "But there is a calendar!"

Today the Yorkshire Flag of a white rose on a blue background will be flown, and mayors from Hull to Huddersfield, from Richmond to Rotherham will gather in Halifax.

Yorkshire Day has its origins in both recent and distant history. After local government reorganisation dealt a death blow to traditional boundaries, the Yorkshire Ridings came together in 1975 to promote the whole county.

Further back in 1759 the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry helped to defeat the French at the battle of Minden in the Seven Years War, and commemorated it on August the First.

Ever since then soldiers from Yorkshire have been a mainstay of the British Army. Every year at York Minster there's an open air service that remembers their contribution to the Battle of Kohima. Lord Mountbatten called it 'the most horrendous and most important battle of World War Two'. It was they and others who saw off the ferocious Japanese army in brutal hand to hand fighting.

We know Kohima now for its famous epitaph to the whole of the Second Division of the British Army,

“When you go home, tell them of us and say,

For your tomorrow, we gave our today.”

I heard these words just a few weeks ago in the presence of veterans from the Burma campaign in the shade of York Minster. No doubt they were thinking of comrades who never came home, who gave their yesterday for our tomorrow.

There’s something in that phrase that speaks of continuity and even hints at eternity. Indeed the very landscape of Yorkshire with its Vales and Dales, Wolds and Moors echoes that continuity, and its vast open skies sing of an eternal beauty. They feel like a visual exposition of the psalm immortalised by Haydn,

“The heavens are telling the glory of God.”

Even though I am half Welsh and half Scots I can well see why the men and women of Yorkshire call it, ‘God’s Own Country’!

The Right Reverend James Jones

