

## **Pals' Battalions: Why Did Friends Die Together In WW1?**

### **Friendship on the frontline**

Julian Farrance is a military expert from the National Army Museum in London. He's come along to explain why friends and colleagues were persuaded to join up together in the so-called Pals Battalions

"The Pals Battalions were originally brought up as a recruiting tool. One of the ways they tried to do that was to bring in this idea of associations - people being able to recruit with their friends because joining the army is a bit of a daunting idea. It's a big institution that you've got no idea about so if you're able to join with your friends, you've already got your social hierarchy worked out and that works extremely well. The work's manager is going to be the officer of the battalion, then the foremen will be the NCOs, then the ordinary factory workers will be the soldiers."

How effective were these Pals armies thought to be?

"Because of their unit cohesion, to use a modern phrase, the fact that they have strong relationships within the battalion, they are an extremely effective fighting force."

But the Pals Battalions experiment proved disastrous. When single battles brought heavy casualties whole communities of men were wiped out. For the families of the Pals who fought at the Somme in 1916 it was a catastrophe.

"If you've got all of your recruits coming from one location and they go into action and they sustain heavy casualties, entire communities of young men can be wiped out. That's exactly what happens on 1st July 1916. In places like Hull, Liverpool, Manchester, Lancaster and Accrington entire streets blacked out with crepe and bombazine because all of the young guys have been badly injured or killed."