

Knutsford

Remembrance Discovery Trail



The Trail

Welcome!

We hope that this trail will help you explore Knutsford through the lives of the Knutsfordians who contributed in so many ways to the service of their country and town during WWI. It will lead you to where they lived, worked and spent their leisure time and explore the town as they knew it.

1. Centennial War Memorial

The Centennial War Memorial was erected in October 2018 by Knutsford Town Council to commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War.

It is dedicated to the Fallen of Knutsford of both World Wars and subsequent conflicts whose names are inscribed on the stone plinth beneath the statue.

246 Knutsfordians are remembered through the Centennial War Memorial, of these 180 died in WWI.



Knutsford Centennial War Memorial

2. Knutsford Library

Information about each individual remembered on the War Memorial is available at Knutsford Library and Knutsford Heritage Centre (25) and also online at the 'Knutsfordians Community' of the Imperial War Museum's digital memorial 'Lives of the First World War'.



3. Knutsford Railway Station

Across the road from the Centennial War Memorial, at the junction of Toft Rd and Adams Hill, is Knutsford Railway Station.

Throughout the war Knutsford Railway Station would have been the departure point for soldiers leaving their home town to join their regiments after enlisting at the Recruiting Office at Grove House, now Grove Park estate.

Before conscription was introduced in January 1916 the men that enlisted were volunteers.



Toft Road



Knutsford Railway Station

4. Knutsford Gaol and Sessions House



Knutsford Sessions House

Those who felt unable to fight on religious or moral grounds were, under the law, able to object to their conscription on conscientious grounds. Some conscientious objectors were prepared to work in a non-combatant role at the front.

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Others were offered work that was not war-related in establishments adapted as Work Centres.

Knutsford Gaol and Sessions House served as a Work Centre for around 800 conscientious objectors from 1917 to the summer of 1918.

5. St. John the Baptist Church

In December 1918, the Reverend P.B ('Tubby') Clayton, M.C, selected Knutsford Gaol as suitable premises for a school where ex-soldiers, sailors and airmen who wished to enter the Church of England could live and train. In March 1919, the first 'students' of The Ordination School arrived from France and held their first evensong in St. John the Baptist Parish Church.

The Ordination School was welcomed by the community. In return the students (on average around over 200 students each year) participated fully in sports activities fielding teams in cricket, football and hockey.

In May 1919, some dressed in fancy dress and others in sweaters and shorts pulled 'Britannia' seated on the prison fire engine through the town in the May Day procession.



St. John the Baptist Church



Ordination School students pulling their float -
Courtesy of Cheshire Archives & Local Studies



6. War Memorial Chapel



The War Memorial Chapel

The school left the town in 1922 and Reverend Clayton presented a brass lectern to St John's Church. This unique lectern made out of WWI shell cases stands in the War Memorial Chapel with the Royal British Legion Standard, the bell from HMS Wren (WWII) and a battlefield cross. On the oak panelling of the Memorial Chapel are WWI and WWII memorial scrolls.

7. Bebbington Family Grave

The metal tag identifies the battlefield cross as the grave marker of George Arthur Bebbington, killed in action on the Somme in July 1916. The Bebbington family grave in front of the church records George's death and the fact that his father was the church's organist.

8. Egerton School

George Bebbington was one of many children to attend Egerton School, now Wright Marshall's Auction House on Church Hill.

11. Middle Walk

A short walk down Church Hill, through King Street Car Park (9) and across the path beside the Mere on the Moor (10) brings us to the tunnel under the railway and Middle Walk.



The Moor

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The Absent Voters' List of 1918 records that eighteen men were still serving from this one small street, twelve from the nearby Moordale Road and eighty-two from Mobberley Road.



Middle Walk

12. Over Knutsford War Memorial

At the junction of Mobberley Road with Thorneyholme Drive stands a 3m high sandstone cross, the Over Knutsford War Memorial. Forty-seven men are named on the Over Knutsford War Memorial.

13. Church of St. Cross

On the opposite side of Mobberley Road to the Over Knutsford War Memorial is the Church of St. Cross. Inscriptions to WWI soldiers are to be found on family graves in the burial ground of the church and inside the church on memorials.

14. Sparrow Lane

One of the men named on the Over Knutsford War Memorial is Tom Darlington, who lived at 2 Sparrow Lane. He was awarded the Military Cross in 1918 'for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty'. Sixteen men from the streets of

Cross Town and Mobberley Road never returned to their job as bootmaker, farm labourer, hairdresser, Co-op Store Manager, thatcher, painter, telegraph boy, errand boy, cooper, joiner, clerk or nurserymen.



Mobberley Road



15. Grocery Store and Post Office

At the junction of Sparrow Lane with Mobberley Road, stands what was the Grocery Store and Post Office.

16. Messrs Caldwell's

Situated along Chelford Road was one of the major nurseries in the town, Messrs Caldwell's. Many Knutsfordians worked as nursery men, domestic gardeners and estate workers on estates such as Tatton.



17. The Legh Arms

Opposite to the Grocery Store on the other side of Chelford Road is The Legh Arms where George Walton Garft, the son of the publican lived.

The Legh Arms stands at the junction of Chelford Road with Legh Road.

18. Legh Road

These large Victorian villas and the eccentric Italianate villas of architect Richard Harding Watt were the homes of wealthy Manchester industrialists and merchants, many associated with the manufacture and trade in cotton. Their sons were scholars at private schools, before going onto University and or joining the family business. At their schools and Universities it was not uncommon for them to join the Officer Training Corps.



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In 1918, fourteen men from Legh Road were absent on wartime service and the same number from Leycester Road. Two of these men in addition to seven others were casualties. Among them was John Baldwin Hoyle and his brother Geoffrey Morgan Hoyle; Haron Baronian of Brae Cottage; Reginald A. F. Downie and his brother Robert T.M. Downie of 'Cornbrook' and Charles Leigh Pickering of 'Bramley'.

19. The Liberal Club



Brook Street

Leaving Legh Road and walking down Brook Street brings us to the Brook Street Club which at the time of WWI was the Liberal Club. The memorial scroll in this building is to eleven members of the Liberal Club who died, among them Charles L Pickering, and the names of ninety-seven men that served and returned.

20. Carnegie Library

Where Brook Street meets Adams Hill stands the Carnegie Library which was an important educational and recreational facility of the town. The Aldi supermarket behind the former Library occupies land that housed the business of Henry and Julius Caesar which made rustic summerhouses. War casualty, Patrick Leech, worked as 'a rustic worker' as did John Jones who survived the war, after being in a prisoner of war camp in Germany.



Carnegie Library



21. - 26. King Street

At the bottom of Adams Hill we can pass under the railway bridge and re-enter the town centre on King Street (21). In 1918, fifty-one residents of King Street were absent from home on wartime service.

In addition seventeen residents of the street died over the period of the war, among them were William Watson, Fred Darlington and John William Garner. Businesses such as Watson & Son (22), Mollatts the butchers of 76 King Street (23), the Royal George (24) and the Knutsford Steam Laundry, Drury Lane (26) lost employees and family members.



King Street



King Street



King Street



The Royal George, King Street

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27. Park House, 108 King Street

Park House, 108 King Street was the home of Mrs Genevieve Surtees Irwin who was born in New York and married Surtees Irwin, a cotton merchant. She published a booklet 'Cranford in War Time' (a copy is available in Knutsford Library) which was sold for the benefit of Knutsford's Red Cross Hospital and Hospital Supply Guild.

In it she describes the support given by townsfolk to Belgian refugees and the incredible work done by women in Knutsford's two hospitals and in the depot of the Hospital Supply Guild where they produced and dispatched garments and surgical dressings to hospitals on all war fronts.

28. Malt Street & Old Market Place

The buildings that make up the streetscene of the two main streets of Knutsford Town Centre's King Street and Princess Street are much the same as they were in the early 20th Century.

However the sub-standard housing and buildings between these principal streets and the Moor, such as Malt Street and Old Market Place, were demolished in the 1930s. Thus, the homes of WWI soldiers such as John Murray (another prisoner of war) who lived in Malt Street, are not traceable today.



Old Market Place



Malt Street



29. Silkmill Street Old Picture House



Silkmill Street Old Picture House

There was further post-war demolition of sub-standard housing and buildings in Silkmill Street such as the Old Picture House which in February 1918 was showing 'The Fireman' featuring Charlie Chaplin.



Princess Street



Canute Place and Princess Street



Canute Place and Tatton Street



Princess Street and the Methodist Church

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30. Methodist Church

Moving on from the junction of Silkmill Street with Princess Street brings us to the Methodist Church. Inside the church is a carved oak memorial listing the five men associated with the church who died in the war, including brothers Harry and Percy Vernon; the memorial also lists twenty-five men who served and returned, including their brother Frank.

The shop to the right of the Methodist Church was originally Grices's Bicycle Shop where William Oaks learnt his trade as a mechanic.

31. Bucklow Rural District Council

By crossing the road at the pedestrian crossing at the junction of Princess Street with King Edward Street (built in 1937) we enter Bexton Road. By walking along Bexton Road we come to the building which in 1918 was the offices of Bucklow Rural District Council (31). Occupying the large area of land behind the Council Offices was the Bucklow Union Workhouse (32) whose Infirmary, in addition to Knutsford's Red Cross Hospital, was used as a war hospital.

34. Knutsford Grammar School

Walking along Stanley Road brings us to its junction with Northwich Road and The Heath (33). Knutsford Grammar School stood on the site now occupied by Winstanley House.



Knutsford Grammar School boys



Knutsford Grammar School



35. Heathfield Square

Further along Northwich Road is Heathfield Square which was built by Knutsford Urban District Council in 1922 as part of a nationwide scheme of 'Homes Fit for Heroes'.

The parents of John Venables lived at 4 Heathfield Square. John was gassed and discharged but in 1919 he died of the flu which was endemic amongst soldiers at the end of the war.



36. Tabley Hill Cemetery



Tabley Hill Cemetery Chapel

John is buried in a Commonwealth War Grave in Tabley Hill Cemetery which is a short distance out of town by car, on Tabley Road. In the cemetery are five WWI Commonwealth War Graves of men who died at home of war-related injuries or sickness. There were also a number of headstones on family graves that record the death of a relative in the war.

38. Kilrie

Back along Tabley Road, opposite the Heath, are several Victorian villas. 'Danebury' (37) was home to Knutsford's Auxiliary Red Cross Hospital (before it moved to Kilrie (38), now Heathside on Ladies' Mile.



Kilrie Red Cross Hospital

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'The Gorse', (39), (demolished to accommodate the retirement block of flats) was the home of Douglas Marshall Rigby who died, shot by a sniper, so close to the end of the war in September 1918.



*Staff at Kilrie Red Cross Hospital
Courtesy of Cheshire Archives & Local Studies*

40. - 41. Cricket Ground & Football Field

The Knutsford Guardian carried many reports on Knutsfordians throughout WWI. These articles reveal their social side, their memberships of clubs and societies and the teams that they played in. Three favourite sport activities were cricket, football and bowls. The cricket ground (40) was on the same site as it is today but surrounded by nursery gardens - now the housing of Mereheath Park. The football field (41) of 'The Cranford Lads' was at the junction of Sugar Pit Lane with Manchester Road (almost opposite to its current location). Eight members of the team were killed including Albert Sumner, Harry Cragg and William Bracegirdle the team's goalkeeper.

42. - 44. Manchester Road & Conservative Club



Manchester Road

In 1918, sixty-eight men were still serving from Manchester Road and its adjoining streets, Garden Road, Victoria Street, Queen Street, Albert Street and Green Street. Eleven did not return. A memorial stone plaque (43) to the fallen is to be found on the terrace properties that were built by Lord Egerton of Tatton on Manchester Road for estate workers.



At the junction of Manchester Road with Northwich Road at Canute Place stands the building that was the Conservative Club (44) with its bowling green (now the premises of OKA).

Within the building on the staircase is the Memorial Scroll to Conservative Club Members among them Robert T.M. Downie and Charles Richardson.



Canute Place

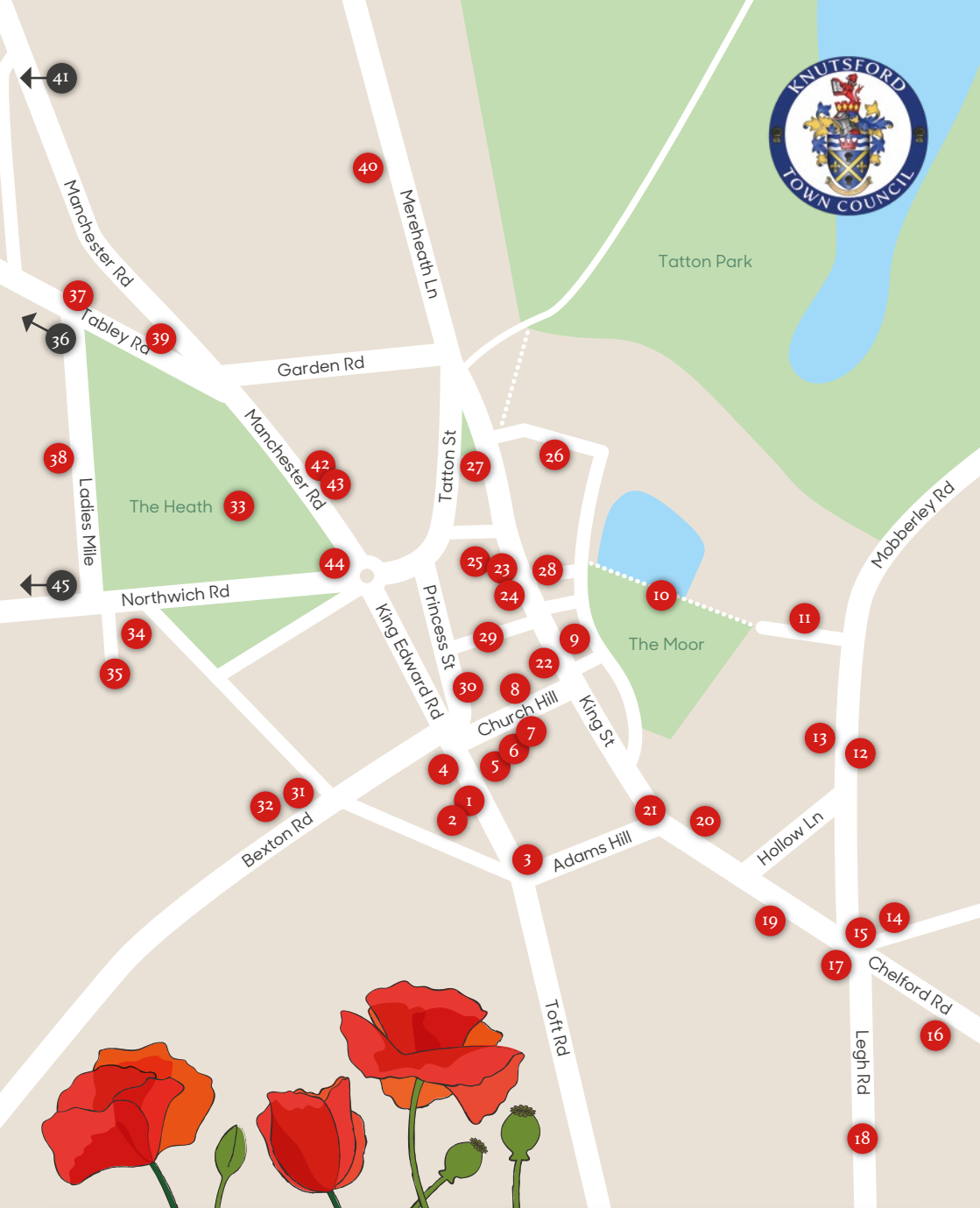
45. War Memorial Cottage Hospital

Our Remembrance Trail ends along Northwich Road at the site of Knutsford's War Memorial Cottage Hospital. The hospital was built in 1922 entirely through public subscription as a fitting memorial to the fallen of Knutsford and District.

A Memorial Stone is set into the building and within the entrance hall are two wooden Memorial Scrolls, one to WWI the other to WWII and subsequent conflicts. The hospital was taken over by the NHS in 1948 and it continued to provide health related services until 1995 when it was acquired by the Red Cross to serve as their District HQ until 2018.



Knutsford War Memorial Cottage Hospital



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