Kennington
First World War
Walking Trail

Revealing the history of local people, places and events

This trail was developed in association with Robin Britcher

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Contents

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Travel information

By car: Starting point at TN24 9AG

By Train: The nearest railway station is Ashford International which is 2.3 miles from the start of this trail.

Parking: On street parking available throughout Kennington, please park in a considerate manner to local residents.

Places of rest / Facilities:

Walking Advice – Health and Safety
Some of the locations shown on our maps can be dangerous, particularly coastal areas where the incoming tide may cut off routes, and cliff edges may be prone to collapse. Always check local safety information before travelling, and use caution when visiting.
Our maps and points of interest are provided for historical information only. If you are not familiar with the area, always walk with an appropriate OS map.
For schools and groups, a pre-visit should be undertaken by the organiser. Any educational walks or visits must be arranged in advance through e-Go.
Please view the following websites for important health and safety information for walking:
- gov.uk – Rules for Pedestrians
- www.walkingandhiking.co.uk – Health & Safety When Walking
Always use designated crossing points even if they are not shown in any walking guidance, neither Kent in WW1/ 100 miles for 100 years nor any associates assumes any liability for loss, damages or injury whist following this trail.

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Trail specific information

Note: text in ‘burgundy’ shows directions to a particular stop.

Glossary

VAD is the abbreviation for the Voluntary Aid Detachment formed before the War of members of the Red Cross and members of the St John Ambulance. These men and women were mainly volunteers and served in various roles including nursing, and as stretcher bearers, cooks and drivers.

Introduction

In 1914 the population of Kennington was about 1,100. The village consisted chiefly of Ball Lane, The Street, Vicarage Road, Ulley Road, Church Road (then Church Lane), Faversham Road, some cottages and farms. Canterbury Road was bordered by orchards.

Bybrook was a hamlet between Kennington and Ashford, but otherwise farms and fields lay between Faversham Road and the town. The 1911 Census records 279 addresses and a population of 1,087. The majority of men worked as agricultural or general labourers, or at Ashford Railway Works. Many women and girls were in domestic service.

Soon after war broke out a patriotic service was held in St Mary’s Parish Church, followed by a recruiting rally on the cricket ground in Ulley Road. About 500 people listened to “stirring speeches” from local dignitaries. The vicar, the Rev George Linton Thorp, was one of the war’s keenest supporters.

There was an immediate response to a call for Special Constables and 49 volunteers signed up and were issued with identity badges and truncheons.

During the next four years more than 200 men and boys either volunteered for service or were conscripted. The names of 207 who served in the war are on the Roll of Honour in the porch of St Mary’s. Identical bronze plaques in the church and on the War Memorial record the names of 25 who died. Other men from Kennington lost their lives but their names are not on the memorial. In some cases relatives had moved way, wanted to forget the war, or simply did not want names inscribed. Some families refused to accept their loved one was dead and still hoped for a safe return.

Robin Britcher
Stop 1. Village School (Upper Vicarage Road)
Starting Point: TN24 9AG

Upon the declaration of war the school would sing the National Anthem at opening and closing. School life became effected very early at the presence of war, these notes from the school log book on 14 August 1914 states: “The timetable has not been adhered to this week as the girls have been making socks and other things in readiness for the war wounded.”

The school was used for military purposes out of school hours and in May 1916 for entertainment. On the first occasion the main room “was left in an unsatisfactory state and the gas left burning all night.” Another time “seats and desks were left out all night in the wet so it was impossible for some classes to take their ordinary lessons. Consequently the upper classes were taken for a nature study walk.”

Some of the lucky soldiers that got Christmas leave in December 1917 slept at the school. On New Year’s Eve it was used for a whist drive and dance. “With the exception of some seats and desks in the infants’ room everything was returned properly to its place.”

When the war ended, on 11 November 1918, the school had been closed for several weeks because of the Spanish Flu pandemic. It reopened on 22 November.

Sources: Robin Britcher

Stop 2. War Memorial
Cross the road at the crossroad with Ulley Road and Ball Lane and you will see the War memorial on the corner.

Talks about a memorial for the lost men had begun even before the end of the war. A parish meeting was held and on the 9th June 1918 and it was decided that a War Memorial Committee would be formed. Originally the committee, headed by Rev George Linton Thorp had plans for a wooden shrine. However these were soon shrugged away
and it was decided that two bronze plaques would be purchased instead.

The cost of these plaques would be around £125. The £125, which was a large sum of money back then, would have been raised by door-to-door collections. The location of the memorial was deliberated over for some time before the current location at the junction of Ulley Road and Ball Lane was decided. Next came the problem of mounting the plaques, builder William Peters’ estimate in October 1921 for constructing and erecting the 18ft obelisk was £90. A second door-to-door collection raised £76 and Mr. Peters agreed to wait for the balance.

At 3pm on Sunday 18th June 1922 hundreds of villagers, schoolchildren and representatives from local organisations watched the unveiling ceremony performed by Colonel Cornwallis and the Venerable John Macmillan, Archdeacon of Maidstone

Sources Robin Britcher
Stop 3. Ulley Farm, Ball Lane
Walk along Ball Lane on the left hand side of the road and you will see the entrance to Ulley Farm opposite the junction with Church Road. Please do not walk down the lane to the farm as this is private property.

**Lieutenant Arthur Lewis Jenkins** (b1892) was the eldest son of Sir John Lewis Jenkins, KCSI, and hoped to follow his father into the Indian Civil Service. His former headmaster at Charterhouse wrote: “He seemed naturally destined by the traditions of his family and by his father's brilliant record. His own gifts of imagination and leadership would have made him more than a mere official.” Arthur studied classics at Balliol College, Oxford and volunteered for service in the Duke of Cornwall’s Light Infantry (DCLI) in **December 1914**. After serving in India for a year Arthur went to Aden, Yemen to take charge of a machine gun unit. Arthur always wanted to join the Royal Flying Corps, and was granted his wish in **January 1917**. After he earned his RFC wings, he went on to join the home defence squadron. However Arthur tragically died in a training accident on the **31st December 1917**. Arthur is buried at Richmond Cemetery, Surrey. A keen poet, Arthur is known for his book of war poems, *Forlorn Adventurer’s*.

Stop 4. St Mary’s Church (Church Road)
Turn to the right and walk down Church Road to St Mary’s Church on your left. Caution this road has no footpath.

The names of **207 men from Kennington who served in the War** are on the Roll of Honour in the porch of St Mary’s. However the roll of honour is not fully complete, with some local men missing. The church had to gather all information by door-to-door inquiries, leaflets through letter-boxes, announcements in church and word of mouth.

The church is home to two memorial plaques, Frederick Tyrrell (*see stop 17*) and pilot Alexander J. Jennings.
After education in Tonbridge while residing at Judd House, Alexander Jennings joined the Royal Horse Artillery (RHA) and was part of the Gallipoli campaign. However after getting wounded in battle he returned to the UK. He was accepted into the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) in 1916 and was assigned to the 29th Squadron, containing legendary pilot James McCudden VC. On the 7th April 1917 Alexander was killed in action after being shot down deep in enemy territory. He was attempting to take down observation balloons when his aircraft was flanked and shot down. With no known grave Alec is commemorated on the Arras Flying Services Memorial.

Two casualties of the war are buried in St Mary’s churchyard. Edgar Morton’s grave in the north east corner has an elaborate headstone designed by his father, an artist and sculptor. Edgar lived at The Studio (See Stop 8)

On the southern side of the churchyard a CWGC headstone marks the grave of 25-year-old Lt Edmund Marrable. He was stationed at Wye Aerodrome in Bramble Lane and was flying as an observer in an Avro trainer when it was involved in a mid-air collision near the Golden Ball pub (now the Old Mill) in Canterbury Road on 25 April 1918. All three airmen involved were killed. Although the headstone records Edmund’s unit as Royal Field Artillery he was in the Royal Flying Corps when he died. Edmund’s home was in Dorchester. His mother, sister and broth-in-law travelled to Kennington for the funeral. His name is not on the War Memorial.

Stop 5. Post Office
Continue to the end of Church Road with caution and turn left into The Street. You will see the old Post Office on your left after a very short distance.

The Post Office was at 88 The Street (now the Bubble Party Studio). The Post Office was a vital village amenity during the War time as the post was the only way in which families could communicate with those stationed away in the services. The mail was very efficient - initially there had been up to 8 deliveries a day but during the War this was cut to 5 a day. Such was the importance of these letters it is thought the British Army Postal Service delivered around 2 billion letters during the war. In 1917 alone, over 19,000 mailbags crossed the English Channel each day, transporting letters and parcels to British troops on the Western Front.

Stop 6. Recreation Ground, Ulley Road
Retrace your steps to the junction and you will see the recreation ground at the crossroads with Church Road on your left.

Many soldiers were stationed in Kennington before going to France, some billeted with families. The East Kent Yeomanry were in tents on the Recreation Ground. The Parish Council decided to invoice the Army for using the Recreation Ground and asked for 10 shillings for the men and eight shillings and sixpence for the horses. The Army paid up without a murmur. The council later collected the manure and sold it to villagers. Canadian troops camped in fields along the Canterbury Road and on the cricket ground. The Rec was the scene of Kennington’s Peace Day celebrations on Saturday 19 July 1919. After a united service in St Mary’s Church children carrying flags marched to the Rec to enjoy sports, swings and an aerial railway. A tea for 230 children was followed by a “meat tea” for 350 adults. In the evening there was a huge bonfire and fireworks, provided by Mr. Jennings of Kennington Hall who had lost his only son in the war. Practically every house was decorated with flags or bunting.

Stop 7. Phyllis Villas, Church Road
Turn left into Church Road and walk down the hill. You will find stop 7 on the right.

Home of Charles Staples. He was one of ten children and lived with his parents Jim and Mary. He enlisted at Ashford and after serving in The Buffs was transferred to the 207 Company Machine Gun Corps. Charles was wounded in both legs during the Battle of Passchendaele and died in a Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 25 September 1917. He was 19. He is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium, grave ref XXIII C17. The inscription on his headstone reads: He died so that others might live. Families could have an inscription of up to 66 letters added to a headstone. They were charged three and half pence (old money) per character. This was very unpopular and the government later made the charge optional.

Source: Robin Britcher
Stop 8. The Elms, Church Road
Continue down the road to find the Elms, also on your right.

A little further along on the same side is The Elms, home to the Vidler family. **George and Laura lost both their sons in a month.** Nineteen-year-old Percy was killed at Gallipoli on 8 December 1915 and his brother John, aged 18, died in Mesopotamia (Iraq) on 7 January 1916. **Both were educated at Ashford Grammar School** and were keen cricketers. Percy was apprenticed to family drapers Lewis and Hylands, of New Rents, Ashford, and John was apprenticed to Geerings, the stationers. Percy was in the Royal East Kent Mounted Rifles and John was with the 5th Battalion The Buffs. Only Percy’s name appears on the War Memorial.

Stop 9. The Studio, Church Road
A short way further along you will find the Studio, now called Leighton House, on the corner of Studio Close.

Continuing down the road we come to The Studio (now Leighton House) the home of **Edgar Morton.** He was in the Kennington Rifle Club and twice won the Ashford Grammar School shooting trophy. He was school prefect and captain of the football team. Edgar left at Easter 1913 and was employed at *Canterbury Motor Works.* Soon after the outbreak of war he joined the Royal East Kent Mounted Rifles. He contracted pneumonia and pleurisy while billeted in huts on the Military Polo ground in Canterbury and died at *Canterbury VAD hospital on 22 February 1915 aged 19.* Although he had not been on active service a report of his funeral occupied half a column in the Kentish Express.

His coffin, covered with the Union Jack, on which rested his sword, bandolier and cap, was carried from The Studio to St Mary’s Church by six of his comrades. A large crowd assembled beside the grave beneath an ancient yew. His sister Nora wore her VAD uniform. Three volleys were fired and trumpeters sounded The Last Post and Reveille. His commanding officer Major ffrench Blake said: “Morton was a general favourite and we all mourn the loss of a young but keen soldier.”
The headstone was designed by his father, an artist and sculptor.

Stop 10. Forestmere Villas, 137 and 139 Faversham Road
Carry on down to the end of Church Road and turn to the left onto Faversham Road. Almost immediately on the left you will see Forestmere Villas.

Go to the bottom of Church Road, turn left and you will find Forestmere Villas. One half of the semi-detached was occupied by the Coulter family whose 17-year-old sailor son Henry died when HMS Goliath was torpedoed. After providing supporting gunfire at the landing of Cape Helles, Goliath was stationed off Gallipoli providing support for troops pinned against the coastline. On the night of the 13th May 1915 Goliath was struck by 3 torpedoes and quickly capsized. Of the 750 onboard 580 fell, including Henry at the tender age of 17. With no known grave, Henry is commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial.

Their next-door neighbour, Miss Stapley, came up with a novel idea to raise money for the war effort. She persuaded friends and neighbours to write their initials on a tablecloth, at a penny a letter, which she then worked in coloured silks. The completed cloth contained 1,530 initials. It took three years to complete and raised £8. 4s 6d, which was shared between Ashford VAD Hospital, the Red Cross and the Kennington Canteen. It was arduous work for Miss Stapley who was an invalid.

Source Robin Britcher

Stop 11. Inversnaid, 105 Faversham Road.
Continue along Faversham Road and you will find number 105 on your left.
Upon outbreak of the war Captain **John Lachlan Stuart** (b1870) lived with his wife Margaret (b1877) and 3 children. Having served in the 16th Lancers for 22 years prior, including service in the Boer War. John **re-enlisted with the Buffs on the 21st September 1914**, however after applying for a short commission was assigned as lieutenant to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Fusiliers in London. The 2nd Battalion was part of the **Gallipoli campaign** and was later evacuated via Egypt and sent to the Western Front. John and his battalion fought on the **Western Front** until the end of the war; however he was not to make it to armistice. John fell ill on the 23rd October 1918 and **died of pneumonia** in the First Eastern Military Hospital, Cambridge. Aged 48 at death, John is buried at Cambridge City Cemetery. After being mentioned in Despatches, John was promoted to Captain in October 1918.

**Stop 12. Lewis Cottages, 130 Faversham Road**

Cross the road in a suitable place and retrace your steps up Faversham Road to stop 12 on your left.

**Ernest Knight** lost his mother when he was very young and lived with his father along with 4 siblings. After his father remarried the family moved from Cuckoo Cottages in Lower Vicarage Road, to Lewis Cottages. When Ernest was 15 he was sent to be trained in seamanship at the shore-based HMS Ganges in Suffolk. At the outbreak of war he joined **HMS Clan MacNaughton**, as Boy 1st Class. The warship was on patrol duty in the North Atlantic on 3 February 1915 when she reported terrible weather. Nothing further was ever heard of her. Some wreckage was found two weeks later near her last known position and it was presumed she had hit a mine. **All 261 crew lost their lives.** Sixteen-year-old Ernest Knight was unfortunately the youngest person to be killed on active service.

**Stop 13. Yew Tree Villas, Faversham Road**

Continue along the same side of the road and you will see Yew Tree Villas on your left almost opposite the junction with Church Road.

The homes of William Martin and Edward Stanton who died in the war and of Richard Barham who was taken prisoner.

**William Martin**, 22, was killed while trying to drag a comrade to safety on the first day of the Battle of Passchendaele, 31 July 1917. His commanding officer wrote to his parents: **“Your son was killed advancing”**
against the enemy. I was not with him at the time as I have only just taken charge of this company. But those that were, spoke very highly of him. He lost his life attempting to get one of his comrades under shelter from the bombardment that was going on. You have got this satisfaction: he died bravely as so many brave men have died before him in this terrible war.”

William was a Lance Corporal in the 11th Battalion, Queen’s Own Royal West Kent Regiment. He is commemorated on the Menin Gate Memorial (panel 12 and 14). The memorial contains the names of 54,896 men who fell in the Ypres Salient before 16 August 1917 and have no known grave.

Edward Stanton, 24, was a steam wagon driver and the son of railway worker William Stanton and his wife Emma. He had four brothers and three sisters. Edward enlisted in December 1915 and served in Salonika and Palestine as a bombadier with the 202 Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery. On 9 November 1918 he was admitted to hospital with pneumonia and died on 24 November, 13 days after the war ended. He is buried in Ramleh War Cemetery, Israel.

Sergeant Richard Barham, 27, was taken prisoner at Ypres on 24 April 1915, the same day his cousin, Lance Corporal Albert Wilson, 21, of Leybourne Villas, Church Road, was captured. They were both regular soldiers. Richard joined The Buffs in 1907 and served with the 2nd Battalion in Hong Kong and India. Albert worked at Little Burton Farm before joining The Buffs in 1912. He was a former Boy Scout and sang in the church choir.

Stop 14. The Vicarage, Lower Vicarage Road
Continue along Faversham Road taking the 3rd turning on your left down Lower Vicarage Road. You will see the location of stop 14 on your left at Kennington Place.

The old vicarage was an imposing property. Village fetes and shows were held in the grounds. During the war the Rev Thorp (vicar from 1897 to 1924) was a temporary captain in the Kent Volunteer Regiment. His son Geoffrey, a lieutenant in The Buffs, was seriously wounded at Ypres in July 1917.

In 1915 villagers were asked to give eggs for local hospitals and leave them at the vicarage on Monday and Tuesday mornings. By the end of the year 1,274 eggs had been donated.

The vicarage was demolished in 1965 and the present vicarage is an old peoples’ home built on the site. The home was later demolished and Kennington Place, a cul-de-sac of 10 homes, was built.
Stop 15. Cuckoo Cottages, Lower Vicarage Road
Continue along Lower Vicarage Road and walking up the hill a short way you will see Cuckoo Cottages on the left.

Arthur Taylor lived with his parents, brother Percy and sisters May and Elsie in Cuckoo Cottages. He enlisted at Chatham in August 1914 and served as a signal boy on the shore-based training ship HMS Ganges being before drafted to HMS Natal. On Boxing Day 1915 he wrote to his brother: “It was jolly dull on board this Christmas, but not as bad as last year. It would have been even better if all the lads had a little beer, but nothing doing in that line. Even the fellows in the workhouse have a pint on Christmas Day.” Four days later while the Natal was at anchor in Cromarty Forth and the captain was hosting a party for wives, nurses and children, a series of explosions ripped through the warship killing 421. Eighteen-year-old Arthur was among the casualties. There were 299 survivors. The cause was never conclusively proven, but it was believed a fire had broken out in ammunition storage area due to faulty cordite.

Stop 16. WI Hall, 228 Faversham Road
Retrace your steps to the junction with Faversham Road and turning left you will see stop 16 on the left.

Kennington Woman’s Institute was formed in 1918. A War Savings group was set up and the first talks were on vegetable growing, poultry keeping and pig keeping. Land Army girls working on local farms were admitted as honorary members. Meetings were held in the Church Room, Upper Vicarage Road, (now home to a play group) until the WI Hall was built at 228 Faversham Road in 1924.
Stop 17. York Villas, 235 and 237 Faversham Road
Cross the busy road with caution (or return to the pedestrian crossing) and almost opposite the WI Hall you will see Stop 17.

Frederick Tyrrell was well known in local sporting circles. He played cricket for Kennington, topping the batting averages in 1911 and 1913 and seemed likely to become the best batsman the club had yet produced. He played football for Ashford Railway Works. His father was licensee at The Rose Inn where he worked as a barman.

When war broke out Fred joined the 5th Battalion of The Buffs. They were in Mesopotamia (Iraq) in November 1915 as part of an 11,000 strong Anglo-Indian force sent to protect British oil interests in the Persian Gulf. After early success they were routed by 18,000 Turkish troops. The survivors retreated to Kut-al-Amara and held out for 147 days in bitterly cold weather with few medical supplies and limited rations. Many did not survive. Fred died on 7 January 1916, as did 18-year-old John Vidler of Church Road, Kennington, who was in the same battalion. They are buried in Amara War Cemetery, Iraq. There is a brass plaque to Fred’s memory in St Mary’s Church. His brother-in-law Edward Houlton, died in November 1914. Fred’s parents moved to York Villas 235-237 Faversham Road.

Stop 18. Rose Inn, Faversham Road
Continue walking up Faversham Road and you will see the Rose Inn on your right.

Ethel was Licensee Walter Tyrrell’s daughter and was married to Edward Houlcroft for six months before he became Kennington’s first casualty of the war. Before joining the Navy in 1911 he was an engine fitter at Ashford Railway Works and sang in the Ashford Choral Society. Edward, 26, was a Petty Officer on HMS D5, one of Britain’s first submarines, when it was sunk by a mine off the Norfolk coast on 3 November 1914. Of the 25 on-board only 5 survived. With no known grave, Edward is commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial.
Stop 19. Collins Family, Upper Vicarage Road
Turn right into Ulley Road and walk along to the junction with Upper Vicarage Road and your starting point. Turn right down Upper Vicarage Road and stop 19 was located somewhere along this road.

Austin George Collins (b1857) was an iron planer and the chairman of the Parish Council. Austin lived with his family on Upper Vicarage Road; three of his sons would go on to fight in the Great War.

The eldest son also named Austin George (b1886) signed up to the Buffs (3/5th battalion) on the 2nd June 1916. Austin survived the war having spent until early 1917 at home before being sent out with the British Expeditionary Force on the 12th January 1917.

Ernest Archibald (b1890) signed up to the Buffs on the 10th December 1915. Initially signing to the 3/5th battalion Ernest transferred to the 7th battalion joining them on the Western Front. Ernest was captured and on the 21st August 1918 died as a prisoner of war. The youngest son,

Harry Wyndham (b1893) also served with the Buffs (6th battalion). Stationed on the Western Front the 6th battalion took part in many conflicts such as the battle of Loos and the Somme Offensive. Harry lost his life to the war on the 20th November 1917. This was the initial day of the battle of Cambrai, which is where Harry lost his life. Harry is commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial, Nord, France.

In February 1919 the council passed a vote of condolence to the family on “the very sad loss sustained by the death of two sons, one of whom was killed in action and the other who had died while a prisoner-of-war in Germany.”

Houses in Vicarage Road had names, not numbers. It is bisected by the Faversham Road and later became Upper Vicarage Road and Lower Vicarage Road.
Please note that car parking is available on the streets. There are some hills on the route.