Maidstone
First World War
Walking Trails

Revealing the history of local people, places and events

These trails were developed by Darrienne Price with additional research by Ashley Meadows, Chris Goldsmith and Anne Paine

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Travel information:
**By Car:** Postcode for the start point of the Blue Trail is ME14 2SZ
- Postcode for the start of the Burgundy Trail is ME16 8SF

**By Train:** Maidstone East Station is central to both trails

**Parking:** Blue Trail - 98 Sandling Road Maidstone ME14 1AA.
- Burgundy Trail - Lockmeadow – ME16 8SF

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.

**Walking Advice - Health and Safety**
There are gentle hills on this route. There are a number of very busy roads, we have advised crossings but extreme care must be taken when crossing these roads and designated crossing places must be used. The advice we give is for guidance only. The footpaths are all adequate. 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](https://www.gov.uk)
- [www.walkingandhiking.co.uk – Health & Safety When Walking](https://www.walkingandhiking.co.uk)

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**Note:** text in 'burgundy' shows directions to a particular stop.
Glossary
Silver War Badge was first issued to men who had been discharged from service in the Armed Forces as no longer physically fit for service due to injuries received or sickness as a result of their service. It was granted retrospectively to those affected from August 1914 and could be worn on the right breast or lapel of a jacket but not on Naval or Military uniform. It was an important acknowledgement that a man had done his duty. The men concerned also received a certificate from the King.

RAMC stands for Royal Army Medical Corps

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, as stretcher bearers, cooks and drivers.

YMCA stands for Young Men’s Christian Association.

Introduction
Situated on the River Medway as a fording point Maidstone had a rich and varied history, it has also had an army barracks since the Napoleonic times. At the outbreak of the First World War Maidstone was the headquarters of the Home Counties Division and on August 14th 1914 the paper reported that there were 2,000 Territorials in Maidstone waiting to be sent to their war stations. The regimental depot for the West Kent Yeomanry was in Union Street and men were encouraged to enlist directly there, a regular site would have been the troops marching along the High Street.

In August 1914 there were a number of exercises testing the troop’s readiness, with alarms being sounded whilst the troops were off duty – they caused quite a disturbance as they rushed back to their stations and then marched out of the town – and when they returned to the town at 5a.m. the residents were woken up again.

Equipment for the men about to serve overseas was in short supply and in 1915 there was an appeal to all of Kent public to send contributions to the Kent Territorial Force in Union Street Maidstone.

The Tilling-Stevens Factory became controlled by the Ministry of Munitions making engines and lorries for the Army.

VAD hospitals mobilised in October 1914 included Howard- le- Warden Institute and Hayle Place with several local women giving their time in a variety of roles such as housekeeping, cooking as well as nursing. Preston Hall was taken over by the military in 1915 to be used as a Military Hospital (now the site of the Royal British Legion Village at Aylesford). A VAD working at Preston Hall in 1915 appealed to the public for newspapers and magazines to help keep the patients occupied during their convalescence.

Maidstone was where the weekly Kent Fruit Market was held and newspapers during the War recorded the steady rise in prices of fresh produce, as was mirrored across the rest of the country, which led to rationing being introduced from 1917/18. The role of Women in agriculture was demonstrated when 6,000 people attended an event in 1917 near Allingham where women displayed their many skills including horse ploughing, fruit planting as well as butter making- there were 9,000 women registered as land workers in Kent.

Sources: various newspapers such as the Kent Courier and the Kent Gazette
Stop 1. Brickmaker’s Arms, 107 to 109 Perryfield Street - the Dalton family
Start point – ME14 2SZ

Ernest Dalton, whose grandfather John ran the Brickmaker’s Arms with his uncle also John, enlisted with the West Kent Yeomanry in Maidstone in 1915 giving his age as 18 yrs and 5 months when in fact he was 15. He went to France on the 8 December 1915 but was not sent to the front line as he was unfit for front line service so he served at the depot in Etaples until he was discharged and sent back to England as under age in July 1916. He was living at the Brickmaker’s Arms in 1920 when he applied for and was granted his war medal.

Reading his medical records it seems obvious to a modern eye that he was under age as he was only 5ft and 3 ½ inches tall and weighing 100 lb with a 32 chest. However, it has to be remembered that young men from the inner cities were often similarly undeveloped due to malnourishment, and those who survived when measured on discharge had put on weight, grown and increased their chest measurements. The height limit for the Army at the time was 5ft 3 ½ and there were special units formed referred to as ‘Bantam Units’ for men who were shorter than the height limit.


Stop 2. 17 Arundel Street – the Hepton Family
Turn Left along Arundel Street and number 17 is on the left.

John Frank Hepton (b 22 April 1881) was the younger twin, his older twin was Henry and they lived at 17 Arundel Street with their parents Frank and Helen. John was known as Jack by the family. Whilst he was a young boy the family moved to Bearsted and the boys attended Bearsted School. When he left school Jack worked for Leveritt, Fry and Page the grocers in Maidstone. At some point he moved away from Maidstone, married Edith Jane and had 2 children Lucy and Arthur.

Jack enlisted with the 1st Battalion the Coldstream Guards in 1916 as Private number 16619 and he was selected to form part of the King’s Guard at Windsor Castle before he was sent to France in June 1916. He was wounded in the head at Passchendaele on the 18 September 1917 and was admitted to the No 8 Stationary Hospital at Wimereux, where the Matron wrote to his wife on the 20 September to say that although he was conscious he was very seriously ill. Another letter followed on the 21 September to Edith to inform her that Jack was much worse and had lapsed into unconsciousness. He was to die of his wounds on the 22 September 1917 aged 38. He is buried at Wimereux Cemetery, Pas de Calais; his parents were still living in Maidstone when they received the news of their son’s death.

Information contributed by his family.
In memory of John Frank Hepton'
Stop 3. 50 Peel Street - the Price family
Continue to the end of the road then turn right into Chillington Street then right into Canning Street. Turn left into Peel Street and number 50 is on the right.

Henry Edward Price (b 1873 in Colchester) served in the Royal Marines as a young man and was based in Maidstone when he met and married Louisa in 1896. By 1911 he had left the Army and was working as a stoker in a brewers with one son Henry Charles (b 1899) and four daughters. When War was declared Henry Edward was recalled being on the Army Reserve and served on the Western Front throughout the War.

We don't know when Henry Charles joined the 8th Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment in which he served in C Company in charge of a Lewis gun as Private 42736. Henry Charles was with his regiment defending Hill 60 in the Ypres salient in April 1918. Hill 60 was a man made hill which was only 150 feet high but dominated the otherwise flat landscape and was fought over by the British and Germans throughout the War as whoever held it had the advantage. Henry Charles was killed on the 5th of April 1918 and having no known grave is commemorated on the Arras memorial.

Louisa received two telegrams to say that both her husband and son were missing. Her Husband Henry Edward survived and returned to live in Peel Street after the War

Source: Family research Sue Black

Stop 4. 60 Peel Street - the Harrison family
Retrace your steps slightly to number 60

The eldest son of William and Bertha was William John (b 1894) who volunteered in November 1915 and gave his occupation as a domestic gardener.

He was sent to France in August 1916 sailing from Southampton to Le Havre with the 10th Rifle Brigade. He had several periods at home during his service on the Western Front, once because he had been injured. He was reported missing 27/28 May 1918 but then his family were relieved to hear that he was a POW. He was captured by the Germans at Berry au Bac on the 27 May 1918 on the first day of the Battle of Aisne when the German offensive pushed the British Force back over the River Aisne. He was held in Cologne POW camp until he was repatriated in December 1918 arriving at Hull on the 6th. William was finally demobilised in September 1919.

Bertha would have been able to send William parcels and news from home through the Red Cross whilst he was a prisoner of war.

His brother Edmund Wallace was a glass cutter/glazier when he enlisted in the Navy in 1917.


There are no military records for the 4 younger brothers but these could have well been lost.
Stop 5. 72 Peel Street - the Brooker family (family can also be located at 2 Peel Street as that was where the shop was)
Continue up Peel Street crossing the junction and number 72 is on your left.

The Brooker family consisted of Horace and Mary and their 4 daughters and son. Ethel, her parents' 2nd daughter was an elementary school teacher but also a VAD volunteer. She volunteered at Hayle Place from January to September 1918. Her father's shop was at 2 Peel Street and as a grocer local people would have registered their ration books with him from 1917 for some of their weekly groceries.

Rationing was brought in during 1918 to counteract shortages of food caused by U-boat activity and to ensure that everyone had a certain amount of food. However poorer families still went short as prices were high.

Source: Kelly’s directory of Kent 1913, 1911 Census

Stop 6. 179 Boxley Road – the Whitehead family
Retrace your steps and turn left into John Street. Walk to the end of the road and turn right into Boxley Road. Stop 6 is on the right.

This was the family home of the Whitehead family. Edward Geoffrey (b 1887) lived here with his parents before his marriage to Bessie when he moved around the corner to James Street.

Edward enlisted in the Royal Navy in June 1917 with the Reserve Battalion and then was transferred onto the Nelson Battalion. There was such a shortage of men to fight on the Western Front that the Navy had six infantry battalions serving in France and Belgium. These men were all under naval command although they were fighting on the land; the Royal Navy Division came under the control of the British Army in 1916. So, although Edward was in effect a soldier, his rank was AB not Private. Edward fought in France during the autumn of 1917 until he was wounded in the neck in December and in hospital at Etaples and then convalescent until March 1918 when he rejoined his corps and then transferred to the Anson battalion. He was granted 2 weeks home leave. Unfortunately, he was severely wounded in the June and was at the Canadian Hospital in Etaples when his family received a letter to advise them that his life was in danger. However, he pulled through and rejoined his battalion after convalescence in England. His health was still poor and he had other periods in hospital before finally being demobilised in February 1919.

The Royal Naval Division did not only fight on the Western Front but also served in Gallipoli.

For more information visit http://wereldoorlog1418.nl/RND-Royal-Naval-Division/index.html

Source: Lives of the First World War
Stop 7. 74 Salisbury Road - Alfred Chittenden
Retrace your steps up Boxley Road and turn right into Salisbury Road. Stop 7 is on the right hand side of the road.

Alfred John Chittenden (b 1886) was a paid driver for the Red Cross, based in Rouen from 1915 to February 1919. Before the War he was lodging in Folkestone and working as a greengrocer, so this could be when he learnt to drive. There were several base hospitals in Rouen and the drivers worked very long hours moving patients from the first aid stations to the base hospitals; they also transported the patients to the ambulance trains for repatriation. Alfred’s father Alfred Mathew and mother Isabelle lived with his younger brother and sister.

Stop 8. St Luke’s Church and Army Chaplains
Continue to the end of the road then turn right into Wheeler Street and left into St Luke’s Road. You will see the church on the right.

The Reverend Collis was the minister here. The Army chaplains were vital to morale and served and lived with the men to whom they were attached. One of the curates, who was at St Luke’s before he joined up; we don’t have a name; won a Military Medal. Often the Army chaplains would assist with the rescue of wounded men from the battlefield.

For more information about the Army chaplaincy please visit https://www.chaplains-museum.co.uk

Stop 9. 30 Foley Street – the Billenness family
Turn right down beside the Church into Foley Street. Stop 9 is on the left.

William Frederick Billenness (b 1877) was living here with his wife Elizabeth and young family working as a carpenter and joiner.

He joined the Labour Corps in October 1916, having been a volunteer with the West Kent Regiment. William served in this country and was discharged in June 1918 because of epilepsy exacerbated by military service. He would have been entitled to wear the Silver War Badge.

In 1916 the Silver War Badge was introduced for men that had been honourably discharged so that others knew they had tried to do their patriotic duty and was worn only on civilian clothing.
Stop 10. 28-30 Allen Street - Henry Davis bakers
Continue down the road and turn left into Allen Street. Stop 10 is on the corner with Heathorn Street.

Henry Davis ran the bakers shop here and had to abide by several regulations brought in by the Government.

Before the War, most of the wheat to make white bread had been imported from the USA but the actions of U-boats and difficulty in supply lead to white bread disappearing to be replaced by brown bread, the composition of which was determined by the government – National Bread as it was known. Other grains and oats grown in this country were used to make bread and the importance of bread as the staple diet of the poorer members of society was such that the Government took charge of milling and supply of grain.

Despite efforts to get people to cut their consumption of bread, the demand from the public and the armed forces led to a situation that at one point there was only six weeks’ worth of supplies in the country. Further legislation in 1917 meant that shops were banned from selling fresh bread as it was thought that stale bread could be cut thinner. Another result of the ban on selling fresh bread was that bread could be baked during the day before so the bakers did not have to operate through the night, this cut the use of energy for lighting and also that women; who had replaced the male bakers who had joined up; did not have to walk to and from work during the night or find someone to mind their children at night.

Source: https://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/articles/bread-a-slice-of-first-world-war-history/

Stop 11. 66 Holland Road - the Brown family
Continue to the end of the road and turn right into St Luke’s Avenue then right along Holland Road. You will see number 66 across the road after a short distance.

This was where Frederick (a clerk in the civil service) and Louisa lived with their two sons Frederick Arthur and Harry Edward. Frederick joined the Royal Flying Corps aged 19 as an air mechanic on the 25th June 1915, before which he had worked for the Post Office. He served in Rouen before transferring back to Crystal Palace and being demobbed on the 4th April 1919.

Harry Brown was serving on board a merchant ship the SS Umaria, a cargo ship built in 1914, as a cadet when it was torpedoed and sunk in the Mediterranean off Italy on the 26th of May 1917 by the German submarine the U65. The SS Umaria was travelling back from Calcutta with a general cargo when it was sunk, but had been used as a troop ship in 1915. Harry was one of the three crew who survived (the others were the chief engineer and second officer) and was taken as a prisoner of war. Harry was held in the POW camp in Brandenburg (near Berlin) which was specifically for merchant seaman. Whilst Harry was being held prisoner all of his pay would have been stopped because he was serving with the Merchant Navy. He was repatriated at the end of the War.

Source: https://www.wrecksite.eu/wrecked-on-this-day, Lives of the First World War
Stop 12. 38 Hedley Street - Elizabeth Down and her son Cecil
Continue along the road staying on the right side of the road and turn right up Hedley Street to number 38 on the right.

Cecil Vernon Down gave this address on his enlistment in the First Rifles 16th Battalion the Australian Imperial Force on the 25 September 1914. He was the only son of Leonard and Elizabeth and brother of Doris. He had emigrated to Australia at some point between 1911 and the outbreak of War and was working as a bank clerk when he volunteered. The 16th Battalion had only started recruiting the week before and most of the recruits came from Western Australia. Cecil would have undergone training before embarking on the 22 December 1914 from Melbourne for Egypt, where he arrived in early February 1915. After some more training, the troops were sent to Gallipoli arriving on the 25 April and engaged with the enemy a week later. The fighting against the Turks was fierce and Cecil was killed on the 2 May 1915 just over a week after he first landed. He is commemorated at the Lone Pine Cemetery having no known grave. His mother had written to the War Office requesting information about his grave but received an answer to say that one could not be traced, she had also asked for his personal effects but again none could be found. Considering the strength of the fighting and the fluidity of the front line none of this is surprising.


Stop 13. 98 Wheeler St - Thomas Robert Pargeter
Retrace your steps back to the main road and continue along Holland Road. Cross to the other side of the road at the crossing and walk a little way down Wheeler Street. Stop 13 is on your left.

Thomas Robert Pargeter was a volunteer with the VAD for four years from August 1915. He volunteered at night and one of his duties was assisting with the ambulance trains which arrived at the Railway Station in the early hours of the morning.

His actual civilian role was as a prison warder. On the 14 August 1918 he risked his life by rescuing someone from a well in Maidstone. For this rescue he was awarded the Royal Humane Society Bronze medal.
Maidstone was one of 200 stopping stations for ambulance trains in the country. The wounded; who were unloaded at the station; would be distributed around local hospitals and would be tended to on the platform whilst transport was arranged.

Source: the Red Cross and http://www.lsars.org.uk/bronz18s.htm

Stop 14. 15 James Street – Coal rationing

Turn around and, using the crossings, walk up Wheeler Street and turn left into James Street. The location of stop 14 was along this road.

By March 1915 over 190,000 miners had joined the Forces; this drain on labour combined with increased demand for coal for use in the War effort meant increased shortages for the domestic user. The price of coal rose month on month and the coal queue became a common sight. In 1916 coal was the first commodity to be rationed. The ration was based on how many rooms a householder had and the householder was only allowed to deal with one coal merchant. There was also an attempt to fix the price of coal. However, coal merchants were allowed to sell smaller quantities under a ton for more money so poorer families were still penalised as they did not have the funds to buy more than 1cwt of coal at a time or the space to store more than that.

People were advised by the Government to mix coal with coke, to put fire bricks in their grate to decrease the size of the fire and not to heat more than one room. In 1918 local coal committees were formed to fix the price of coal locally.

Source: Various newspapers, West Sussex & the Great War Project and https://abberleylives.wordpress.com

Stop 15. 26 Fisher Street – Butchers

Continue to the end of the road then turn left and at the end of Boxley Road turn right along Lower Boxley Road continuing into Fisher Street at the roundabout. You will find stop 15 on the corner of Thornhill Place.

Frederick Baker was a master butcher who ran his own shop here during the War. People would have to register their ration card here for meat supplies and would not be able to shop anywhere else.

Soldiers being sent abroad needed a nutritious diet in which meat was believed to be essential at the time. This, combined with the reduced labour supply on farms and the activity of U-boats, led to rising prices and shortages. Public consumers were hit the hardest and in particular the poorer communities. This was due to the fact the cheaper cuts of meat rose by a higher percentage compared to the luxury cuts. As a result the Government introduced the Meat (Maximum Prices) Order on 29 August 1917. However, rationing still had to be brought in during 1918 to counteract shortages and to ensure that everyone received a share of supplies. People were encouraged to eat less meat and many people kept chickens so at least they had a supply of eggs.

Continue along Fisher Street to return to the start point of the trail.
Stop 1. Lockmeadow
Start point – ME16 8SF

For many years before the First World War, Maidstone Market was busy and bustling with the weekly auction of local produce, plants and livestock at the original Agricultural Market Hall. The Lockmeadow Market Hall, now built on this site, still provides a busy centre every Tuesday Market Day. Several local auction houses were involved including R Waterman and Sons of 42 King Street and Ambrose and Foster. In October 1914 the auction at the annual fair was conducted by Mr Leslie Ambrose wearing his full regimental uniform of the East Kent Yeomanry.

Stop 2. All Saints Church – Leonard Startup
Cross the river using the footbridge and turn left along the river bank. Turn right up the steep hill or for an easier slope walk past the buildings and then turn right.

Local Leonard Startup was a bell ringer here. Leonard’s parents had lived in Tonbridge Road for over 15 years although he had moved away by the outbreak of War and enlisted with the Northumberland Fusiliers in Guildford. Private Startup (service number 22823) was first assigned to the 3rd Reserve Battalion - which remained at home throughout the War - and trained as a Stokes Gunner in October 1915. At some point he was transferred to the 1st Battalion and sent to France. He had been promoted to Corporal when he was killed in action on the 3 May 1917 at the age of 33 and having no known grave he is commemorated on the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais.
Walk to the right along Mill Street using the crossings to turn left down Knightrider Street. Knightrider House is on your left.

John Aldington Gibb (b 1870) lived here with his wife Lyddie, and 2 daughters Joan and Betty. He was the medical officer in charge and surgeon at Hayle Place from October 1914 to January 1915 and served as a volunteer. His first patients were 53 wounded Belgians who arrived on the 14 October 1914 and were transported to Hayle Place by voluntary ambulance drivers. By mid 1915 400 wounded soldiers had been treated at Hayle Place, of whom 100 were Belgian.

*Source: British Red Cross and Kent Care for the wounded*

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Stop 4. The Palace Theatre, 28 Gabriel's Hill
Continue down Knightrider Street and turn left into Lower Stone Street. Walk along the road and use the crossing just after the bend to cross and walk back to your right to Gabriel's Hill. Stop 4 is on the right.

This live performance theatre opened in 1908 replacing the Hippodrome. In 1915, the lady artists went round the audience and raised £11 5s 5d in the hat. The wounded from the Royal West Kent Military Hospital at the Depot and the Howard-de-Warden VAD Hospital were treated to items such as eggs, chickens, chocolate, flowers and cigarettes from money raised at the theatre. Each soldier also received a bundle of 12 stamps. A show was also put on for the wounded soldiers to enjoy.

*Source: The Stage Thursday 10 June 1915*  
[http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/50384](http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/50384)

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Stop 5. 38 Gabriel's Hill – the Beale family
Turn left and walk up Gabriel's Hill and you will see number 38 on your left.

Wallace Cork Beale was the youngest of four children who ran the family shop which sold drapery and baby carriages and were furniture dealers. The two brothers and two sisters lived over the shop. Wallace left here in January 1917 to begin his training at Chatham for the Royal Navy. He was posted to the Grand Fleet on board the HMS Commonwealth, a battleship, which was based at Scapa Flow and during 1918 conducted patrols in the North Sea from April 1918 to February 1919. Wallace served in the engine room as a stoker until he was demobbed in early 1919.

At first women were encouraged to be thrifty and make their clothes over. However, many women were earning their own money for the first time and with this financial independence came a desire to buy fashion items rather than practical items. Skirts were shorter but also
fuller. One popular practical item developed was the ‘all in one’ which was ideal to sleep in if sheltering during the night in a public air raid shelter.

Shops like Beale’s sold the patterns and materials for these and also offered a making up service.

Source: world-war-and-womens-fashion-what-to-wear-in-an-air-raid
http://www.naval-history.net/OWShips-WW1-01-HMS_Commonwealth.htm

Stop 6. 62 King Street - R S Miles
At the top of the hill turn right along King Street. Continue past Church Street on the right and the location of Stop 6 is on the left.

Mr Miles kept and maintained one of the ambulances here which was used by the local VAD detachment. This vital work included meeting the ambulance trains and also conveying patients from Chatham to local VAD hospitals in the Maidstone area. Also living in King Street at number 1 was Bernard William Haynes. Bernard had, from the beginning of the War, been in overall charge of arranging patient transportation for the Maidstone VAD Hospitals. He continued in this role until March 1919.

Source: Red Cross

Stop 7. Nearby Lenworth, 4 Ashford Road (now part of the main A249
Continue walking along King Street, crossing at a suitable point, to the junction with Queen Anne Road on your right. If you look down the road to the traffic lights this would have been the location of Lenworth, 4 Ashford Road.

The family home of corn merchant and miller Mr Edward and his wife Eliza Anne Hills who had twelve children. Four of their seven sons served in the War, three of whom survived and one of whom died.

Their 4th son Frederick Mervyn Hills (b 1883) attended Maidstone Grammar School and Tonbridge School and was a keen cricketer. He worked in the United States and Canada as a civil engineer and was home on holiday when War was declared. He associated himself with the Public Schools Brigade by being the Maidstone recruiting officer. He himself enlisted in 1915, going to France in 1916 but returned home to recover from pneumonia before returning to France during the year. Frederick was killed in action near Ypres on 27 July 1917 serving as 2nd Lieutenant with the 3rd Battalion the Northamptonshire Regiment and is buried in Belgium at the Perth Cemetery China Wall.

Their eldest John Hyde Hills (b 1877) had married Ada in 1911 and was working (possibly for his father) as a flour miller’s traveller before the War. John enlisted as Private 38438 with the Bedfordshire Regiment in Watford in December 1915 and, after a period at home for training, was sent to France in November 1916. He suffered several bouts of illness and was in hospital in France in 1917 with frostbite and bronchitis. John was discharged in Nov 1918 due to ill health and received a pension from the Army.
Stop 8. Howard-de-Walden Institute
Turn left up Queen Anne Road then take the first turning on the left into Marsham Street. You will see Stop 8 on your left opposite the junction with Astley Street.

Kent VAD 12 was one of the early VAD units in Kent and was raised in 1910. The members of the VAD received annual training on the wards of the West Kent General Hospital in Marsham Street before the War. This was a real community effort as the beds at Howard-de-Walden were equipped by funds raised in the local community. This community effort continued throughout the war with donations of eggs, food, and funds a regular occurrence.

Mrs Edythe Benzie was a volunteer masseuse from 1915 to 1918 at Howard-de-Walden, having served at Hayle Place as night Superintendent from October 1914. Massage was a very important treatment, especially when the limbs were badly damaged or there had been an amputation. The Red Cross trained volunteers who showed aptitude to give massages as it was recognised that the treatment was beneficial. Edith Benzie was given a “Special Mention” by the Secretary of State for War for her valuable nursing services.

Source: Kent & Sussex Courier Friday 22 August 1919, Red Cross

Stop 9. 23 Church Street, The Victory Inn
Continue along the road to the junction with Church Street, turn left and you will see Stop 9 immediately on the left.

Hubert Arthur, born 26 November 1883, was living at home with his mother and sister Rose and was a cabinet maker before the War. He joined the RNAS on the 28 April 1916 and trained as an air mechanic. He served his time as an air mechanic in the stores in London, where the salvaged components from aircraft were returned to from France to be refurbished and resent to the depots in France as spares. Hubert served until 1919 when he was placed on the Reserve list.

The Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) was part of the Navy and so the men held Navy ranks and wore a Navy uniform. At the outbreak of the War the RNAS operated air ship stations around the coast. The airships were used in the Channel to spot for enemy submarines, mines and ships as were sea planes based around the coast. The RNAS also was tasked with defending the country from air attacks and also attacking Zeppelin bases in France.

On the 1 April 1918 the RNAS was amalgamated with the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) to form a third service- the RAF. It had been recognised that there was a need for a separate service combining all the resources necessary to be able to defend the country and attack the enemy. The United Kingdom was the first country to have a specific Air Force as a separate entity

Source: Lives of the First World War
Stop 10. Council School, Union Street (now Old School Place)
Retrace your steps and turn left up Wyatt Street. At the end of the road turn right into Union Road. You will see the location of stop 10 where Old School Place is on your left.

When War was declared, and throughout the War, Maidstone had many regiments passing through or billeted in the town for several months. During the autumn of 1914 as well as 2,000 territorial's in the town there were also West Kent Yeomanry who had to be billeted in the Union Street School as a temporary measure.

School children were permitted by the Kent Education Committee during the War to miss school from May to October to help with sowing and harvesting crops – such was the need for the country to have a sustainable food chain. School children were also allowed to work part time (considered to be 35 hours per week) from the age of 12 as long as they continued to attend school regularly.

The school leaving age was officially 14 but there seems to be a blurring of this during the War and when families had financial problems, due to drop in wages when men were conscripted or delays in war pensions, it was often the eldest child who would leave school early to either work or stay at home to mind younger children whilst their mother worked.

Source: various newspapers 1914

Stop 11. Depot Drill Hall, Union Street
Turn around and walk back along Union Street to the end of the road. Along this street was the location of the Depot Drill Hall.

Until conscription was brought in during 1916, there were regular newspaper appeals for recruits to report to the Drill Hall to enlist in the West Kent Yeomanry. Also during the War, regular instruction was held here. Adverts were placed in the local papers appealing for men to help raise a second regiment of the West Kent Yeomanry. Especially sought were recruits with knowledge of riding. From 1917 all the records for the Tonbridge recruiting office were held at Maidstone Church Institute.

Source: various newspapers

Stop 12. 34 Week Street - Henry Taylor’s tailors shop
Turn left into Week Street and you will find the location of Stop 12 on the left a short way past Earl Street.

This was the site of the Taylor family’s tailoring business run by Henry Taylor who was a master tailor. John Henry (b 1893) was a student tailor cutter in the 1911 census and he lived with his father, mother Ada and younger sister Irene in College Road and worked here with his father. Unfortunately, John’s military records have been lost but we know from newspaper reports in June 1917 that he was awarded a Military Cross for distinguished service on the Struma Front and was promoted to Captain. He was part of the Allied forces in Macedonia who were fighting
against the Bulgarians. The battles which he would have been involved in at this time are the battles of Dorian. As the report mentions that he had been in Salonika from 1915, we believe he was serving with either the 26th or 28th Division and so would have been in Salonika until 1919. He was serving as Adjutant and would have been in charge of the administration for the Battalion when not fighting.


Stop 13. High Street
Continue to the end of Week Street and turn right on to the High Street. Look Along the High Street for Stop 13.

After War was declared, townsfolk would have seen many different regiments marching along the High Street. As it was the headquarters of the Home Counties Division there were men from the Home Counties Infantry, Artillery, Engineers, Field Ambulance, Signallers and also the Surrey Yeomanry of the South East Mounted Brigade in the town in August 1914. Many of these 2,000 plus men were billeted locally but also some 500 where billeted in the countryside. There was a concern that the presence of the Territorials would interfere with the gathering of the fruit harvest especially as the pickers were not all local. There was a worry that bringing in workers from elsewhere could be a security problem because of the presence of the military and the possibility that fruit picking could be used as a cover for gathering intelligence by enemy agents. In April 1915 it was reported that Maidstone Corporation had appointed several married women as tram conductors and that they were being the same rate as their male counterparts, which was unusual at the time.

Source: Kent & Sussex Courier and Western Times April 1915

Stop 14. 10 Middle Row, The London and Provincial Bank
Walk along the High Street keeping to the left and you will see 10 Middle Row on your left.

The Banks were only allowed to distribute a limited amount of gold coin and customers had to accept paper money instead. Due to the number of staff who volunteered or were conscripted, women were employed in the Banks for the first time and Bank opening hours were shortened with closing time being 3pm.

Barclays Bank continued to pay their staff their salary whilst they served in the Forces, guaranteed that their jobs would be held for them and recruited women to fill the men’s places.

Horace Holland Moore (1872), the Bank Manager for the London & Provincial Bank, lived here with his wife Helen, son Lesley and young daughter.

The London and Provincial Bank was acquired by Barclays Bank in 1918.
Stop 15. Post Office
Continue along High Street past the junction with Mill Road and you will see Stop 15 on the left just before the pedestrian crossing.

Anyone writing or sending parcels to the Forces would post their mail free of charge. It was separated out and sent to the Army Postal Service sorting office in Regents Park, London. This was based in a temporary wooden structure covering several acres which was at the time reported to be world’s largest wooden structure. Over 2,500 staff worked at the sorting office, many of them women. Over 12 million letters a week passed through the sorting office and on average it only took around 5 days for mail to reach the recipient on the Western Front.

Special cable was provided for the High Street, Week Street and Tonbridge Road for street lighting when the rest of town would be in darkness one week before and one week after each full moon, rather than cutting the general electricity supply during air raids.

Source: Whitstable and Herne bay Herald 2nd March 1918

Stop 16. Mill Street - the Rootes building
Retrace your steps and turn right down Mill Street. Stop 16 is on the left just by the junction at the end of the road.

Before the War, Messrs Rootes Ltd had an establishment in the High Street where William Rootes (b 1870) a motor and cycle engineer was repairing cars and motor cycles.

Rootes Ltd acquired the old tan yard on the River Len and renamed it the Len Works. It was here during the War that they undertook the overhauling and repair of aero engines. This work was vital to the War effort as there were few establishments who had the expertise to repair engines. There were 400 workers here during the War and the skilled workforce also manufactured precision parts for the engines. This was a large site and they had the facility to test 7 engines at the same time.

In February 1919, it was reported that Messrs Rootes Ltd were transitioning from this war work to repairing car, lorry and tractor engines. They also sold new cars from the site and built a new showroom as well as a new entrance to the works site to enable easier access for the large garage which could accommodate 40 cars at a time. The building is a listed building.

Another local company, which diversified into war work using existing expertise, was Wallis and Co, who were builders and joiners. They advertised for staff throughout the War and we believe were making wooden propellers for aero planes.

Source: Census 1911 and Sussex Courier February 1919.
Stop 17. Tithe Barn, Mill Street
Walking straight ahead use the pedestrian crossings to cross the main road and you will see the Tithe Barn on your left.

As well as various auctions, such as horse auctions, being held here the Tithe Barn had several war time uses.

It was reported in the paper in November 1917 that, due to the steep rise in the price of coal, the Council had bought a **reserve of 200 tons of coal** specifically for sale to poorer residents. Coal was in short supply, due in part to the extra demands from the Navy, railways and making of armaments as it was the main source of energy production.

There was also a **drop in production due to the lack of labour in the mines** as many miners had volunteered. We were also exporting some coal to France as their coalfields had been overrun by the German Army. The Council securing this supply of coal meant that the poorest were protected from further price rises but many families still struggled to keep warm.

The Tithe Barn also served as a **Waste Paper Depot** in 1917. School children and Scouts collected all types of waste paper from households, which were sorted here into various grades. When there was sufficient the paper was sent to the local paper mill for re-pulping and the funds raised were given to support the local VAD Hospitals and charities.

*Source: Kent Messenger and Kent and Sussex Courier - various dates*

Stop 18. River Medway
Using the crossings go to the other side of the road and turn right through the gardens following the path down to the river bank for Stop 18.

The bridge was **guarded constantly** during the War. In 1915 it was announced that the River would be open from Maidstone to Tonbridge to allow larger barges to convey goods from London through to Tonbridge.

*Source: Kent & Sussex Courier -Friday 21 August 1914, 30 July 1915*
Stop 19. Boys Grammar School, Tonbridge Road
Walk right along the river bank and keep to the right to take the path up to the bridge. Turn Left and cross the bridge. Walk up the road and cross just past the War Memorial then turn back towards the memorial walking round the buildings and turn left up London Road. The site of Stop 19 would have been on the left along this road.

This is the site of the **Boys Grammar** during the First World War. The Reserve Regiment of the West Kent Yeomanry had been under canvas at Mote Park from August 1914 but with winter approaching it was decided to billet them in the town and the Grammar School was one place that the men were billeted. At the time there were 139 students at the school and whether their education was affected is not recorded. The school had an OTC (Officers Training Corp) before the War and had gone on summer training camps before the War. **During the War 43 former pupils and one teacher were to be lost.** There is a wooden memorial board which was moved with the school to its present site in Barton Road.

*Source: [http://www.mgs.kent.sch.uk/about-mgs/history/mgs-and-war/](http://www.mgs.kent.sch.uk/about-mgs/history/mgs-and-war/) and various newspapers*

Stop 20. War Memorial
Retrace your steps back to the Memorial.

The War memorial consisting of a **bronze figure** representing **St George** on a Portland stone base sited on Tonbridge Road was unveiled in June 1922. One of those present was the **Mairie of Montauban**; the town in France which was adopted by Maidstone after the War and supported with help for reconstruction. It does not list the names of the fallen.

*Source: Kent and Sussex Courier June 1922*

Stop 21. 2 Heath Cottages, Tonbridge Road
Looking up along Tonbridge Road to the right you will see the location of 2 Heath Cottages on the right.

The Startup family lived at 2 Heath Cottages for over 15 years. Apart from Leonard, who was killed in 1917, one of their other sons also served. **Victor (b 1899)** was 19 when he volunteered for the RAMC on 11 March 1915 in Maidstone and gave his civilian occupation as being a milkman. He left England for the Western Front in January 1917 sailing from Southampton to Le Havre.
Victor was a **stretcher bearer and thus served on the front line**. On the 21 March 1918 he was at Travecy Keep with the 2/2nd Battalion of the London Regiment near St Quentin when the Germans attacked at 4.50am. Throughout the day there was heavy fighting and by the evening, the Keep was surrounded and being held by 3 officers and 60 men. They held out against attacks, including bombs from the air, until the 22 March when it was decided that there was no hope of relief. Ammunition had run out and there were many wounded men who needed treatment and so the position was surrendered just after midnight when there were only 40 men remaining alive. Victor’s POW record shows his capture date as the 22nd March 1918. He was held at **Cassell POW Camp**, which was a large camp holding **20,000 prisoners** of various nationalities.

His family were able to send him parcels free of charge through the Red Cross and there was also an organisation set up, **The Kentish Prisoner of War Fund**, to send regular parcels to captured men to supplement their meagre camp rations. Victor was repatriated to England in December 1918 arriving in Hull and was finally discharged from the RAMC in March 1919 when he returned home.


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**Stop 22. The Eiffel Tower Works, Hart Street**

Use the crossing and retrace your steps back towards the bridge turning right into Barker Road then right into Hart Street. Hart Street was the location of stop 22.

**Eric Foster Clark** had only just commenced his studies at Trinity College, Cambridge in the month before War was declared and left university to volunteer in November 1914 with the **East Kent Buffs**. He was sent to France in the Autumn of 1915 as a Lieutenant and applied for a transfer to the Royal Flying Corps early in 1916. He was flying as an observer over enemy lines, spotting enemy positions for the artillery on the 1 January 1917 when his plane burst into flames and crashed near Malincourt on the Somme. Eric was killed outright together with his pilot, John Robertson. Eric is buried in the **Heilly Station Cemetery, Mericourt-l'Abbe, Somme, France** next to John Robertson.

The Clark family had lived in 53 London Road West before moving to Boughton Monchelsea and consisted of **George Foster Clark**, his wife Henrietta, Eric and his sister Margaret. George Foster Clark was a manufacturer who gradually expanded his business until he became an important local employer, especially of women who travelled from local villages to work in his factory. The factory made jellies, custard powder, dried soup and canned goods as well as lemonade powder which was marketed under the Eiffel Tower brand. The lemonade powder cost 6½d in 1917 and made 2 gallons of lemonade. **George was mayor of Maidstone** from 1916 to 1918 and was an important local benefactor, donating land to the Maidstone Boys Grammar School for playing fields.

Source: Various newspapers of the time, Boughton Monchelsea the fallen [http://www.kentfallen.com/PDF%20reports/BOUGHTON%20MONCHELSEA.pdf](http://www.kentfallen.com/PDF%20reports/BOUGHTON%20MONCHELSEA.pdf)

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**Walk back through Lockmeadow to the car park**
Nearby Places

- **Kreemy Toffee Factory, Saint Peter's Street**
The Sharps factory by the river bank originally produced toffees. During the war it was first a fruit pulping station for jam for the troops and later dried vegetables. The owner Sir Edward Sharp raised money for prisoners of war by organising a fancy dress comic charity football match.

- **175 Tonbridge Rd**
The home of the four Busbridge brothers, three of whom served - but in different regiments. Families sometimes chose to do this to lessen the risk of losing several members during the same battle. The two eldest sons Frederick and Walter worked together and both were bellringers, their parents lost both of them; Walter in 1916 and Frederick in 1917. Their third son, Leonard, survived.

- **21 Buckland Hill**
VAD cards for Frederick Charles Deane and Miss Louisa Griffin who lived at 21 Buckland Hill.

Frederick assisted in forming the VAD detachment and with the Silvertown Explosion in West Ham in 1917 and was awarded the Gold Medallion from St John Ambulance. Louisa was serving at Hayle Place.

- **Mill Hall**
Mrs Scott of Mill Hall, Aylesford, had VAD members lodging with her who were serving at Preston Hall & Howard-de-Warden. Mary Wellington was one of these VAD members. Mrs Scott’s son, Captain JJ Scott, was killed in action in July 1918.

- **The Bush Inn**
Mary Atkins was a widow running the Bush Inn, whose son Private George Atkins served in the Army Service Corps attached to the II Corps Heavy Artillery. George was killed aged 23, by a stray German shell on the 14th July 1916 whilst unloading his lorry at the Front.

- **John Everitt**
On the 31 December 1915, The Reverend John Everitt was installed as the new vicar. His daughter Doris joined the Red Cross VAD in August 1916, and served in Fernleigh Hospital, Larkfield. She began her service working in the pantry and then became a nurse.
Preston Hall was taken over from the Sauber family in 1915 for use as a Military Hospital. It is now the site of the British Legion Village but this building remains.

To showcase the contribution women could make to agriculture and promote the Women’s Land Army, a demonstration was held at Allington in November 1917.

Source: Kent & Sussex Courier

New Road, Langley
Commander Noel Laurence lived here. After having attacked a German cruiser and sinking a large German transport, he was awarded the St George Cross of the Fourth Class by the Czar of Russia in 1915.
## Quiz

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>True/False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Local newspapers were used to appeal for new recruits.</td>
<td>True/False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School children could drop out of school from age 12 to work full time?</td>
<td>True/False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. During the War, women were employed in banks for the first time?</td>
<td>True/False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Army Chaplains assisted with rescues from the battlefields?</td>
<td>True/False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Any letters or packages sent to the Forces were charged for?</td>
<td>True/False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Alfred Chittenden was a volunteer driver for the Red Cross and lived in Rochester before the War</td>
<td>True/False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A Drill Hall was located in Union Street</td>
<td>True/False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The War Memorial on Tonbridge road lists the names of the fallen.</td>
<td>True/False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The Eiffel Tower works was a manufacturer of food stuffs.</td>
<td>True/False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The bridges on the River Medway were guarded constantly during the War.</td>
<td>True/False</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you have completed the quiz, don’t forget to send your answers to [info@kentww1.com](mailto:info@kentww1.com) to receive your certificate.
Maps of the Maidstone Trails

Maidstone Blue Trail

Distance approx 1.9 miles (3.05km)

There are some very busy roads please use designated crossings. This route has hills.

Please note parking can be found at 98 Sandling Road Maidstone ME14 1AA.

*Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) 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. Offering, 38 stretcher bearers, cooks and drivers.

Credits: (c) MIBFI 19576533