

CREDITON WW1 LOWER TOWN TRAIL

Approximately 3¹/₄ miles

Start and finish at CREDITON station

In August 1914 CREDITON Station was a hive of activity as many families saw their sons, husbands, fathers and lovers off to war. Over the next four years it was a place of tears and smiles as men left and returned from the fighting. This makes an ideal starting point to the CREDITON WW1 Lower Town Trail.



From the main station platform go over the railway bridge and down onto the road by the level crossing. The fields across the road are said to be where the horses that had been requisitioned were trained for the Front. It was chosen because the steam trains passing the fields would familiarize the horses to the noise and disturbance of large machines such as tanks and guns.



No. 2 West View overlooking the fields is where Walter Hallett, one of the first CREDITON casualties, lived. Walter had worked on the railways and was killed at the Front on 14th September, 1914, not long after the outbreak of WW1. There is a touching letter written by his colleague W. Heath to Walter's parents which describes how Walter died, saving Mr Heath's life. This letter is in the archives of the CREDITON Area History and Museum

Society.

Return across the level crossing and take the small path which runs along the wall of KJM Services Garage, just off Four Mills Lane. Walk up the path to the gate on your left going into a field. Cross that field and carry on straight ahead into the next field towards some houses. Don't leave the field but continue on the left fork of the path skirting the houses to the next gate. Go through the gate and follow the path between the wire fence and the hedge, keeping the houses on your right. Go through the next gate and continue straight on. Go through the left hand metal gate. Continue along the path and through the next gateway towards some red brick houses. Go through the next metal gate, under the big oak tree and follow the path with the wooden fence on your left and hedge on your right until you reach Barnfield near the entrance to Queen Elizabeth Lower School.



Turn right and walk down Barnfield. At the bottom you will see the Moose Hall at the top of Bowden Hill, which used to be a Drill Hall during WW1. Facing Moose Hall turn right and continue down Bowden Hill to the main road.

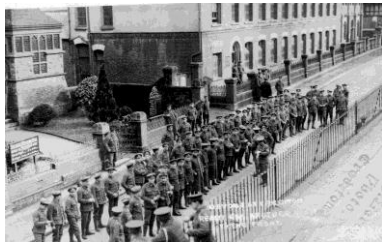


Cross the main road to the War Memorial. There is a chapter devoted to the War Memorial in John Heal's book 'Life in CREDITON in WW1'. It was unveiled on 16th May, 1923 with Col. Leopold

Drill Hall opposite War Memorial

Montague presenting it to the Council on behalf of the Military. Opposite the War Memorial there are two large blue doors to what used to be Cherry's Garage. This was used as another Drill Hall during WW1.

On the left of the War Memorial is the timber-framed building known as the Church Workers Institute which had various uses during WW1 including the accommodation for convalescing soldiers and a display of 'War Economy' where cooking demonstrations making meals from rationed food took place.



To the left of the Church Workers Institute, beyond the Masonic Hall is Redvers House. This was the last boot and shoe factory to be closed in Crediton, just before WW1 broke out. Had they waited a few months they may well have had a very lucrative order to make boots for the soldiers. In WW1 it housed the trainees waiting to go off to the Front.

Go back to the War Memorial and descend the steps beyond the Memorial into the park known as Newcombe's Meadow. Follow the path round to Church Street on the right hand side of the park. On Church Street turn right and make your way into the church grounds where you can look for memorials and gravestones to some of the Crediton men killed in WW1 remembered both within and outside the church.

Return to Church Street and turn right. 200 yards along on the right is the entrance into the old Vicarage. The gardens used to extend right down to the churchyard and it was here that some of the fundraising and celebration events would have been held during the war.

Turn right into Belle Parade and cross the road by the roundabout at the foot of Jockey Hill. Take the left hand fork, Penton Lane, and walk up beside the back of a terrace of thatched cottages. This leads on to the entrance to Penton House where Col. Leopold and Amy Montague lived. The Montagues were an influential and respected couple in Crediton. Amy



Penton House

was a staunch suffragette but during WW1 she trained as a VAD nurse and worked in the Exeter and Crediton hospitals. They lost both their sons, Paul and Felix during WW1. Not long before WW1 Rupert Brooke, a friend of the Montague sons, had visited Penton House and it was



Col. Leopold & Amy Montague

there he was said to have had a mystical experience which inspired his poem 'Dining Room Tea'.

Continue along the path between the cob and stone walls, occasionally glimpsing Penton House through the trees. Descend the stone steps on the right and turn right into Old Tiverton Road taking great care of the traffic as there are no pavements along this stretch.



**Charles Ware
and family**

At the bottom of Old Tiverton Road turn left and then right at the T junction into Mill Street. Follow Mill Street until you get to East Street. Turn right into East Street. Opposite a big house called The Limes, go under the arch into Queen's Place. No. 7 Queen's Place, which has since been pulled down, was where Charles Ware lived with his mother Minnie and his two older sisters during WW1. Charles was very keen to enlist and his first attempt was at the age of 14. His mother found out and thwarted his effort but he successfully enlisted again when he was 15. He survived the war and returned to live in Crediton where he died in 1946.

Returning to East Street turn left onto Charlotte Street. Continue for 500 yards past The Crown, cross Park Road and continue straight on taking the right hand fork away from the main Exeter Road, into Four Mills Lane.

At the bottom of Four Mills Lane cross the road and return to the station.

The Station Tea Rooms offer hot and cold drinks, lunches and cakes. They are closed all day on Sundays and Mondays.

We are grateful for the photographs which were supplied by members of the Montague and Ware families, and by the Crediton Area History & Museum Society.

More information can be found in 'Life in Crediton in World War One' by John Heal, price £4.95, available from the Crediton Museum in the Town Hall.

The Echoes of Wartime Project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Arts Council of England.