

BIRMINGHAM FIRST WORLD WAR TOUR



www.birmingham-tours.co.uk



LOTTERY FUNDED

THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN BIRMINGHAM



2nd City Battalion embarking for training
in Yorkshire, 1915

When Britain declared war in 1914 few people in Birmingham could have foreseen the impact it would have on the city.

Around 150,000 Birmingham men served in the armed forces during the conflict. Many of them joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, the three local battalions of which were known as the 'Birmingham Pals'. Pals regiments were so-called because prior to the introduction of conscription in 1916 local men were encouraged to volunteer in groups with their friends.

By the time of the Armistice in 1918 the war had claimed the lives of 12,320 Birmingham servicemen with a further 35,000 wounded. Many were permanently disabled and so were never able to return to their pre-war livelihoods, leaving their families without their main breadwinner.



Birmingham Pals cap badge



Lewis Machine Gun

Birmingham was a major centre for munitions manufacture during the war.

The city produced three of the iconic weapons used throughout the war by the British and Imperial forces: the 'Mills Bomb' hand grenade, the Lee Enfield Rifle, and the Lewis Machine Gun. The latter were both manufactured by the Birmingham Small Arms Company (BSA) in enormous numbers - at its peak the firm was producing 10,000 rifles and 2,000 machine guns per week.

Numerous local companies were involved in the production of munitions including Kynoch's Munitions in Witton, the National Shell Factory at Washwood Heath, the Mills Munitions Factory in Newtown, the Birmingham Metal and Munitions Company at Adderley Park in Saltley, the Austin Motor Company at Longbridge, the Birmingham Small Arms company (BSA) factories in Small Heath, Sparkbrook and Redditch, and the Kings Norton Metal Company ammunition works (where the most dangerous processes were carried out in temporary buildings on the marshes).

At the peak of the war effort 18,000 people were working at the Kynoch factory in Witton. Many of these were women, known locally as "Kynoch's Angels", who took over the places vacated by enlisted men. Visitors were astonished how well the women adapted to unfamiliar tasks and how quickly they worked to achieve optimum output.



Munitions workers making Mills Bombs

BIRMINGHAM FIRST WORLD WAR CITY TOUR MAP



KEY

1. Council House & Victoria Square
2. Birmingham Town Hall
3. Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
4. Bell Edison Telephone Building
5. The Jewellery Quarter, Caroline Street
6. Hudsons Whistles, Barr Street
7. The Museum of the Jewellery Quarter
8. Warstone Lane and Key Hill Cemeteries
9. Hall of Memory

KEY

10. Library of Birmingham
11. St. Thomas' Peace Garden
12. St. George's Church, Edgbaston
13. King Edward's School
14. University of Birmingham
15. Bournville
16. Highbury Hall, Yew Tree Road
17. Cannon Hill Park
18. Moor Street and Snow Hill stations

Please note: this map is an approximate guide to the relative sites listed within this publication and is not drawn to scale.

COUNCIL HOUSE & VICTORIA SQUARE

Created in 1901, Victoria Square was (and still is) the city's main public gathering space and focal point for major events. It was packed with people when war was declared in September 1914 and also on 11th November 1918 as news of the Armistice spread.

In January 1918 a tank was displayed in Victoria Square as part of 'Tank Bank Week'. It was greeted with great fanfare, with civic dignitaries and local celebrities delivering speeches to encourage people to buy

War bonds to fund the war effort. Birmingham raised over £6.5m as part of 'Tank Bank Week'.

The Council House contains a number of memorials to council employees who were killed during the conflict. In the Council House reception there is also a plaque commemorating the 4,000 Belgian refugees who made their homes in Birmingham following the invasion of their country in 1914.



Council House



2

BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL



Neville Chamberlain speaking at the Town Hall



Designed by Joseph Hansom and Edward Welch and opened in 1834, Birmingham Town Hall was the city's first public concert hall and auditorium. It was the venue for numerous meetings and speeches during the First World War. Speakers included Neville Chamberlain, then the city's Lord Mayor and later Prime Minister of the country.

In November 1916 the suffragette Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst (above) spoke at the Town Hall.

During the First World War she suspended her suffragette activities and strongly promoted the war effort. She toured the country at meetings, persuading those who had not enlisted to sign up. White feathers were given out by her supporters to those men not in uniform.

The Town Hall also hosted numerous musical performances. One of the most popular tunes during the war was *'It's a long way to Tipperary'* which was co-written by local songwriter Harry Williams.



Birmingham Town Hall

3

BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM & ART GALLERY



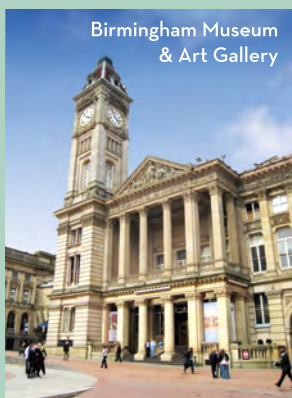
Birmingham: its people, its history war displays

Opened in 1885, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery acted as a special recruiting office for the Birmingham Pals Battalions in 1914.

Today the Museum is home to a range of collections related to the First World War.

On the museum's main staircase is the Birmingham artist Joseph Southall's fresco, *New Street 1914* (right). Southall was a Quaker and a pacifist and his fresco (which was actually painted in 1915-16) deliberately harks back to a prosperous, peaceful pre-war city.

The *Birmingham: its people its history* exhibition galleries also feature a large number of objects, photographs and other documents which give an insight into its citizens' experiences of the the war.



4

BELL EDISON TELEPHONE BUILDING, NEWHALL ST.

The Bell Edison Telephone Building was the Midland headquarters of the air raid warning system.

In January 1915, Chief Constable Rafter announced that if the city was attacked, certain factory whistles and hooters would be used as sirens. The signal was to be four short notes and one very prolonged note. In the event of the siren being sounded the public were advised to leave the streets and shelter in cellars or under their stairs, and to

extinguish any domestic lighting.

Despite being a key strategic target for German Zeppelin air-raids, Birmingham escaped any damage thanks to its implementing a partial black-out in November 1914.

Although not popular with residents this proved to be extremely effective. On the night of 31 January 1916 Zeppelins were unable to locate Birmingham in the dark so bombed the glowing Black Country foundries instead.



Bell Edison Telephone Building

5 THE JEWELLERY QUARTER, CAROLINE STREET

In 1914, the Birmingham Jewellery trade was one of the most important industries in the city, employing an estimated 70,000 people.

The First World War dealt a severe blow to the trade. The supply of precious metals was hampered by government embargoes, and demand for jewellery fell as the middle-classes were squeezed by war taxes. Young men from the jewellery factories enlisted in their droves, creating a massive shortage of skilled labour.

Despite all of the problems, the war created a new market in the form of patriotic goods.



Jewellery workshop,
Caroline Street

Many companies switched to producing military equipment. The historic firm of Deakin & Francis moved from the production of cufflinks and fine jewellery to making swords and bayonets. They even manufactured an ingenious trench lighter, designed to shield the flame, so that soldiers could light a cigarette without being spotted by enemy snipers.



Deakin & Francis,
Regents Place

6

HUDSONS WHISTLES, BARR STREET



Hudson's whistles have been made in Birmingham since 1870 and the company is still going strong today. They moved into their factory on Barr Street in the Jewellery Quarter in 1909.



The company's whistles were used extensively by the military during the First World War, perhaps most poignantly to signal the soldiers to go 'over the top' to attack enemy trenches. The two whistles used were the famous 'ACME Thunderer' and the 'Metropolitan'.

The Metropolitan whistle belonging to Sgt. T.W. Harper of 2nd Battalion Royal Warwickshire regiment saved his life when it deflected a German bullet that was aimed at his heart.



7 THE MUSEUM OF THE JEWELLERY QUARTER

Located in the original factory of the jewellery manufacturers Smith & Pepper, the museum tells the story of jewellery and metal-working in Birmingham.

During the First World War Smith & Pepper were one of 300 jewellery manufacturers who switched production from gold and silver ornaments to munitions.

The Museum's current temporary exhibition, *An Adaptable Trade*, explores how the jewellery industry adapted to wartime austerity, the impact on local people, and the vital role played by women. Looking in detail at three prominent Jewellery Quarter firms, and illustrated with items loaned from family collections, it reveals the extraordinary sacrifices made by a generation of Birmingham people.

An Adaptable Trade
runs until June 2015





WARSTONE LANE AND KEY HILL CEMETERIES



Warstone Lane
Cemetery War Memorial

The Jewellery Quarter
boasts two historic
cemeteries.

Key Hill, opened in 1836,
was Birmingham's first public
cemetery and was open to
all denominations. Warstone
Lane - for Anglicans only -
opened twelve years later
in 1848.

Warstone Lane contains
51 First World War burials.
A screen wall lists by name
those whose graves are not
marked by headstones.

Key Hill contains 38 burials
from the First World War,
all commemorated by name
on a screen wall.



Warstone Lane
Cemetery Lodge



Key Hill
Cemetery

9

HALL OF MEMORY

Completed in 1924, the Hall of Memory was built to commemorate the 12,320 Birmingham citizens who died during the First World War.

Designed by local architects S.N. Cooke and W.N. Twist and constructed almost entirely by Birmingham craftsmen, it cost £60,000 which was raised solely through public donations.



Outside stand four larger than life bronze statues representing the Army, Navy, Air Force and Women's Services by the Handsworth born sculptor Albert Toft. Inside are three fine low-relief sculptural plaques by another local artist, William Bloye, entitled *Call*, *Frontline & Return* (below).

The three Books of Memory detailing the names of the fallen are available to view online at www.hallofmemory.co.uk



10

LIBRARY OF BIRMINGHAM



Library of Birmingham

The Library of Birmingham houses a wealth of material related to the First World War in the Archives & Heritage section on Level 4.

These include photographs, letters, silk-embroidered postcards, song cards and other documents and memorabilia.

The library is also home to the Birmingham War Poetry Collection.

The collection was originally presented to Birmingham Central Library in 1921 in memory of Private William John Billington of the 2/24 Regiment, who was killed in action in Palestine in March 1918. It represents one of the largest collections of its kind in the world.



www.libraryofbirmingham.com

11

ST. THOMAS' PEACE GARDEN

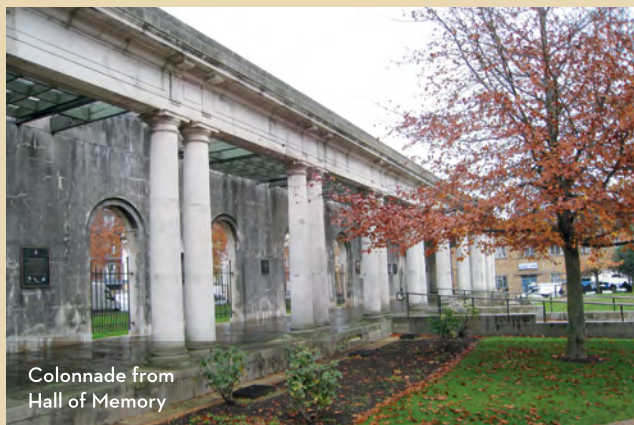
St. Thomas' Peace Garden was designed around the ruined tower of St. Thomas' Church, which was the only part of Thomas Rickman's 1829 structure to survive the Birmingham Blitz of 1940.

Originally laid out as public gardens in 1953 to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, the area was renamed the Peace Garden in 1995 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

When the world leaders came to Birmingham for the G8 summit in 1998, each premier planted a tree as a living symbol of peace.



The Peace Garden includes a colonnade which had originally formed part of the Hall of Memory but which was relocated here when Centenary Square was laid out in 1989.



Colonnade from
Hall of Memory

12

ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, EDGBASTON



St. George's Church

St. George's church was originally designed by J.J. Scoles in 1836-8 but was largely rebuilt by J.A. Chatwin in 1884-5.

The church contains the funeral memorial to Raymond Lodge who died on the Somme aged 24. Raymond's father, Sir Oliver Lodge, was an eminent physicist and man of science, but such was his grief that he turned to spiritualism.

Nearby to St George's on Church Road was the home of Sir William Mills, inventor of the Mills Bomb (left), the standard issue hand grenade of the British and Imperial forces.

Early in 1915, Mills opened the Mills Munitions Factory in Newtown and by the end of the war the company had manufactured a staggering 75 million grenades.



13

KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL

Founded in 1552, this historic school originally occupied buildings in New Street in the city centre. The school moved to its current site in 1936.

Over 1400 Old Edwardians served in the First World War, including J.R.R. Tolkien who lost two of his closest friends during the Battle of the Somme.

To commemorate the centenary, the school chapel has been renovated and a

new exhibition created to tell the stories of the 245 Old Boys who lost their lives during the war. In addition, a new documentary film, Tolkien's Great War, explores the impact of the war on Tolkien and his friends.

Due to the limited capacity of the chapel pre-booking is required to view the exhibition. Register on the school website at www.kes.org.uk/great-war-exhibition



Exhibition in school chapel



J.R.R. Tolkien in the school cadet force

14

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM



Great Hall in use as a temporary ward



University of Birmingham

At the outbreak of war the University of Birmingham was requisitioned by the army as the 1st Southern General hospital.

Various parts of the campus were used as temporary wards, including the Great Hall. By the end of the war the hospital had accommodation for 3,500 patients.

In November 1916, J.R.R. Tolkien was brought to the hospital from the Somme

after being diagnosed with trench fever.

Matron Lloyd became famous as Birmingham's "Lady of the Lamp". She received several honours for her work with the wounded soldiers. She was personally presented with a white quilt embroidered with the coats of arms of nine British and Commonwealth regiments.

15

BOURNVILLE



Bournville Green

The Quaker Cadbury family purchased the land now known as Bournville in 1879 to build their new cocoa and chocolate factory. From 1893 they created nearby Bournville village to provide affordable, high quality housing for their workers.

During the First World War, Cadbury's continued to produce chocolate, albeit in reduced quantities. They produced 'chocolate for the troops' gift parcels throughout the duration of the war. In total 20,000 parcels were sent out to troops on the front, as well as to those who were wounded and recovering at home or in hospital.



Quaker Meeting House

Although many of their employees fought in the war, the Cadburys' Quaker principles meant that most family members were opposed to joining up as combatants.

However, Laurence Cadbury was one of the founding members of the Friends Ambulance Unit.

16

HIGHBURY HALL, YEW TREE ROAD



Highbury Hall

Highbury was home to Joseph Chamberlain from 1880 until his death in 1914. During the First World War the Hall was turned into an Auxiliary hospital funded in part by Kynoch Armaments.

The hospital was quickly earmarked to be the Special Neurological Department of the 1st Southern General hospital and was fully equipped with 'electrical appliances of the most modern and varied character, and a gymnasium with modern apparatus provided for rehabilitation, education and occupational therapy'.



Military personnel recuperating at Highbury



Boy Scout Memorial

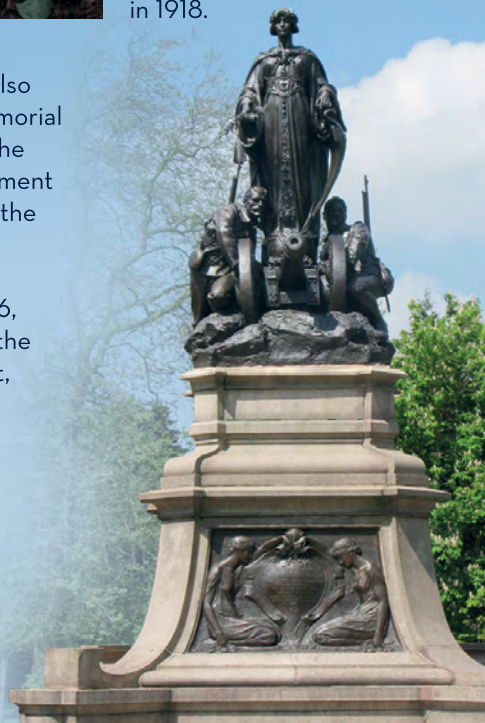
Cannon Hill Park was given to the city of Birmingham by the philanthropist Louisa Ann Ryland in 1873.

The park contains a memorial to members of the Scouting movement in Birmingham who were killed in the First World War. The memorial was designed by the architect William Haywood (1876-1957) and was unveiled on 27 July 1924. Haywood was a founder member and the first secretary of the Birmingham Civic Society, which was established in 1918.

Cannon Hill Park also includes a fine memorial to the soldiers of the Warwickshire Regiment who were killed in the second Boer War.

Completed in 1906, the memorial was the work of Albert Toft, who later went on to sculpt the four allegorical figures which adorn the Hall of Memory.

South African War Memorial



18

MOOR STREET AND SNOW HILL STATIONS



Moor Street station

In the early stages of the war, convoys of wounded troops bound for the Southern General hospital arrived at Moor Street station. They would then be transported in ambulances to the hospital which was based at the University of Birmingham.

As the war progressed a new station was created at Selly Oak goods yard which was

nearer to the university campus.

At nearby Snow Hill station a rest station manned by volunteers was established where servicemen travelling by train could get a hot drink and a sandwich at any time of day or night. The rest station catered for 362,000 men from 2,372 trains during the war years.



Snow Hill station
c1912

BOOKING AND FURTHER INFORMATION

To book the Birmingham First World War Tour
contact Sue at enquiries@birmingham-tours.co.uk
or telephone **07805 115998**

Websites

www.voicesofwarandpeace.org

www.1914.org

www.bbc.co.uk/history/O/ww1

www.britishlegion.org.uk

Further reading

Great War Britain:

Birmingham Remembering 1914-18

by Sian Roberts (2014)

In connection with The Library of Birmingham

*Tolkien and the Great War:
the Threshold of Middle-Earth*

By John Garth

Harper Collins, 2014

Original concept by Sue Behan.

Bus tour research by Hazel Cartledge.

Additional text and editing by Chris Rice.

Images courtesy of Chris Rice, Library of Birmingham,
BMAG and King Edward VI School.

Design: www.davewalshcreative.co.uk



www.birmingham-tours.co.uk



LOTTERY FUNDED