

BROCKENHURST

Main WWI Historic Sites Brockenhurst



Approx distances from Station: -
Village Centre Car Park (Brookley Road) 0.5km (0.33mi);
St Nicholas Church 0.5km (0.33mi); Balmer Lawn or Forest Park 1.4km (0.8mi)

Markers indicate the sites of interest.
Church Lane is a single track road with no public parking bays.
Recommended Parking - At the station or the Village Centre Car Park.

A World War I Hospital Village



A Walk Through History

Revised 2017



A wounded NZ soldier arrives at the Hospital

The Importance of Brockenhurst in WWI

In 1914 the War Office designated Brockenhurst a key hospital centre.

King George V (1865-1936) and Queen Mary (1867-1953) visited in November 1914 to see the Lady Hardinge Hospital where 3,500 Indian Troops were treated.

The No.1 New Zealand General Hospital opened in June 1916. By the end of the war some 21,000 New Zealand troops had also been admitted.

Brockenhurst before WW1

Brockenhurst life in 1914 was very different from today. There were then eight working farms. Men and boys were otherwise mostly employed in timber related industries or the railway. Other villagers were employed as servants in large houses. There was a strong culture of benevolence by these properties' owners, who provided employment but not necessarily generous wages. Some women undertook tasks such as dressmaking or taking in laundry. They did not usually work once married. Cottagers kept pigs, fowl and animals. Finding work was a concern for many.

WWI, the Hospitals and the Villagers

The coming of war in 1914 saw the Lady Hardinge Hospital hurriedly opened for Indian troops. In 1916 it became the No1 HQ New Zealand Hospital. The hospitals recruited villagers as support staff. The fresh eggs, fish, meat, and locally grown vegetables they received at Brockenhurst were a real treat. Villagers also actively engaged in fundraising events for the war. The ladies made surgical dressings, some using Sphagnum moss collected from the Forest by children. Weekly food parcels were sent to fighting units. Notably the villagers set up a convalescent unit at the Morant Hall. (8)

The surrounding Forest

After the battlefield, troops must have found the New Forest an idyllic haven. Soldiers wrote of the opportunities available to them. Popular activities included golf and Forest picnics.

Local Recruitment & Losses

As in the rest of the UK, numerous recruitment campaigns were held and men signed up for military service prior to conscription being introduced in 1916. The village, population only 2,000, had a recruitment office in Rosetta Cottage at the junction of Brookley Road and Sway Road.

In total 79 villagers were lost, with 21 in the last year of the war alone. The emotional and economic impact must have been significant for many village families.

*The walk between **locations 1 and 4** forms a pleasant rural stroll guided by interpretation boards. It provides a feeling of what it was like to arrive at the station from the Western Front and be taken to the hospital for admission. (Allow 60 minutes plus 30 minutes to view the exhibition inside the Church).*

1. Brockenhurst Railway Station

Start from the plaque near the ticket office or bus stop.

2. Commonwealth War Graves

Information boards are sited in the Churchyard.

3. St. Nicholas Church

Open 2-5pm Easter to the end of October and during Church services. An exhibition commemorates the part played by Brockenhurst in wartime events. A memorial stained glass window, gifted by the people of New Zealand, was unveiled in 2016.

4. No1 New Zealand General Hospital

500m beyond the Church is the location of the former No1 New Zealand General Hospital. This can be viewed from the lane and access to the Tile Barn site, now an Activity Centre, is available during normal office hours on request. At the site entrance is a small plaque illustrating the hospital layout. In 2016 a collection of 'Glamping' Pods were installed for use by service personnel.

*The walk between **locations 5 and 11** forms a pleasant level stroll around the village north of the railway. Allow 90-120 minutes plus any time taken to dwell at each site. Why not also stop off in Brookley Road to see the famed Watersplash or visit our shops and cafes.*

5. WWI Hospital – Balmer Lawn Hotel

The hotel was requisitioned as a hospital and mostly used for neurological and eye cases while surgery was conducted at the main site in Church Lane. Much of the hotel remains as it was at the time.

6. WWI Hospital – Forest Park Hotel

This hotel building was also requisitioned and used for officers. Much of the hotel remains as it was at the time.

7. Meerut Road

This pleasant Forest fronting road, linked hospitals at Balmer Lawn and Forest Park. Its name commemorates the 7th Meerut Indian Army Division

who with the 3rd Lahore Division were the first casualties to arrive in the village.

8. WWI Hospital – Morant Hall

Provided by the generosity of the Morant Estate the village community hall (The New Forest Hall) was a large building with extensive grounds. Under an initiative led by the vicar Rev. Arthur Chambers the villagers converted the building into a convalescent annexe to the Royal Victoria Military Hospital, Netley. Later it was integrated into the No1 NZ General Hospital.

9. Kia Ora Building (R&R Centre)

Literally meaning "be well/healthy" the Māori phrase "kia ora" is used in New Zealand as a greeting. The Kia Ora building was redeveloped 2005 as the new Masonic Hall and the symbolic "Silverferns" housing development.

10. Site of YMCA Building (R&R Centre)

The YMCA building was used as a recreation centre and was on the site now occupied by Auckland Avenue so named to reflect connections with New Zealand.

11. The Village War Memorial

Located in Sway Road which was named Wide Lane at that time.

ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) Day

Australians and New Zealanders who served and died in conflicts are commemorated annually on 25 April around the world. Here in Brockenhurst an ANZAC day service is held at the Commonwealth War Graves on the nearest Sunday in April at 3pm. It is always well attended by villagers of all ages.

You may also be interested in a smart phone guide to the village – available on the "Visit Brockenhurst" website.

Our friends in NZ have produced an audio walking guide at <http://ngatapuwa.govt.nz/western-front/brockenhurst>

Other relevant websites are www.brockenhurst.gov.uk and brockenhurstchurch.com

Copies of this walk leaflet and the information boards can be found at <http://brockenhurst.gov.uk/16160>

Leaflet produced for Brockenhurst's commemoration of the Centenary of WWI. With thanks to local historians John Purkess, Tony Johnson, John Cockram, author of *Brockenhurst and the Two World Wars*. And with information from: *Before We Go. Brockenhurst Memories of Peace and War* by Richard Taylor.

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