



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 digital interactive map available at the link below,
www.visitbrockenhurst.co.uk/ww1



Brockenhurst

A World War I Hospital Village

A Walk Through History

1914 - 1918

The Importance of Brockenhurst in WWI

Brockenhurst was officially designated a key
hospital centre by the War Office.

Both King George V (1865-1936) and Queen Mary
(1867-1953) visited Brockenhurst during the war.
They were the first monarchs to have visited the
New Forest since George III (1738-1820).

By the end of the war some 24,000 Indian and
New Zealand troops had been admitted to the
Brockenhurst hospital.

Updated 2017

A Walk Through History

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.

WW1, the Hospitals and the Villagers

The coming of war in 1914 saw the hospital hurriedly opened for Indian troops and in 1916 it became the No1 HQ New Zealand Hospital. The hospitals recruited villagers as support staff. 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 convalescence 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 exercise 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, at 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.

Further information about this walk and information board images can be found at brockenhurst.gov.uk/16160

Our friends in NZ have produced information at ww100.gov.nz Their Apps and audio walking guide a can be found on The App Store or Google Play by searching for *Ngā Tapuwāe Western Front*

Contact us at www.brockenhurst.gov.uk or brockenhurstchurch.com

Historic Locations

The walk between **locations 1-4** 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 on the north side of station bridge.

2 Commonwealth War Graves

Information boards are in the Churchyard.

3 St. Nicholas Church 2-5pm Easter-Oct only

An exhibition in the Church commemorates the part played by Brockenhurst in wartime events. A memorial stained glass window gifted by the people of New Zealand in 2016 proudly sits in the north wall.

4 The No.1 New Zealand General Hospital

500m beyond the Church is the Tile Barn site of the former No1 New Zealand General Hospital now used as a Hampshire County Council run Activity Centre. Limited access to the site is available during normal office hours, but the site can be viewed from the lane and a nearby plaque records the site plan when public access is not available. In 2016 Poppy Pods were installed and are available for use by current and veteran service personnel and their families.

The walk between **locations 5-11** 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. Or why not also stop off in Brookley Road to see our 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. While upgraded over the years 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 structure of the hotel remains as it was during the war.

7 Meerut Road

This pleasant Forest fronting minor road, linked the hospitals at Balmer Lawn and Forest Park. Its name commemorates the 7th Meerut Indian Army Division who were first in the village. together with the 3rd Lahore Division.

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 convalescence annexe to the Royal Victoria Military Hospital, Netley.

9 Kia Ora Building (R&R Centre)

Literally meaning “be well/ healthy” the M ori 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 close and was on the site now occupied by the Auckland Avenue area 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.



You may be interested in the walk leaflet entitled “**Brockenhurst in WWII**” – available from summer 2017



A digital interactive map that will guide you around the village – available on the “Visit Brockenhurst” website

www.visitbrockenhurst.co.uk/ww1

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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