

Continue a short distance along High Street until you come to a small car park on your left. **8** In 1919 a Joy Day Parade was held here as illustrated on the cover. Anyone who had served was allowed in the parade. Those who had left the army wore no belts because they had to hand back their equipment, and could only keep their basic uniform. Those in plain clothes had been demobbed or discharged early. The national celebration was planned for Saturday, 19 June 1919, but torrential rain meant it was postponed for a week.

From the car park bear left into Back Lane, and keep right to a car park which is behind the Corn Exchange. **9** In 1920 this area was considered as the possible site for a swimming pool to be a practical tribute to the memory of those who had died in the war. Another proposal was to convert the Corn Exchange into a YMCA-style community meeting room for returning soldiers. Both were dropped as being too expensive, but ex-soldiers and young men did benefit from the use of rooms at the Corn Exchange.

Continue straight on along Back Lane, bearing right at the end into Queen Street, and after a few metres turn right where you will see Holy Trinity Church across the road, and go inside. **10** Wenlock is unusual in having a town war memorial inside the church and not in the town square. This records the names of the fallen whatever their religious persuasion, and consists of a bronze plaque on marble made by Jones & Willis of Birmingham, and unveiled on 28 May 1921. It is on the wall to the left immediately on entering the church nave.

Names for inclusion were given by members of the town and largely reflect those who were resident, but a few names were of close relatives who did not live in the town. Some names on this board also appear on the Methodist war memorials and on boards in nearby parishes.

At the time of the Great War there were two Methodist chapels in town and both had their own war memorials. One is still in King Street, but the other is now the Pottery in Sheinton Street.

From the church go back to The Square, and to the Museum on the right. **1** Above the door of the town's museum is a glass fanlight which says 'Memorial Hall 1914-1919'. The last date takes the signing of the Treaty of Versailles as the end of the war, rather than that of the Armistice. Most men did not return from the war until 1919. The building had been an open-fronted market hall (built 1879) which some felt was out of place in post-war Much Wenlock, and a better site for a memorial than the Corn Exchange. Alderman Cooke led plans to convert the building into a venue for the town's social gatherings, at a cost of £1400 (£1000 was raised by subscription before the opening night on 12 Dec 1921). There were some in Wenlock who said Alderman Cooke, owner of the general stores, next to the market hall, had a vested interest in closing down the old market. The hall continued as a community centre until the museum was created in 1970.

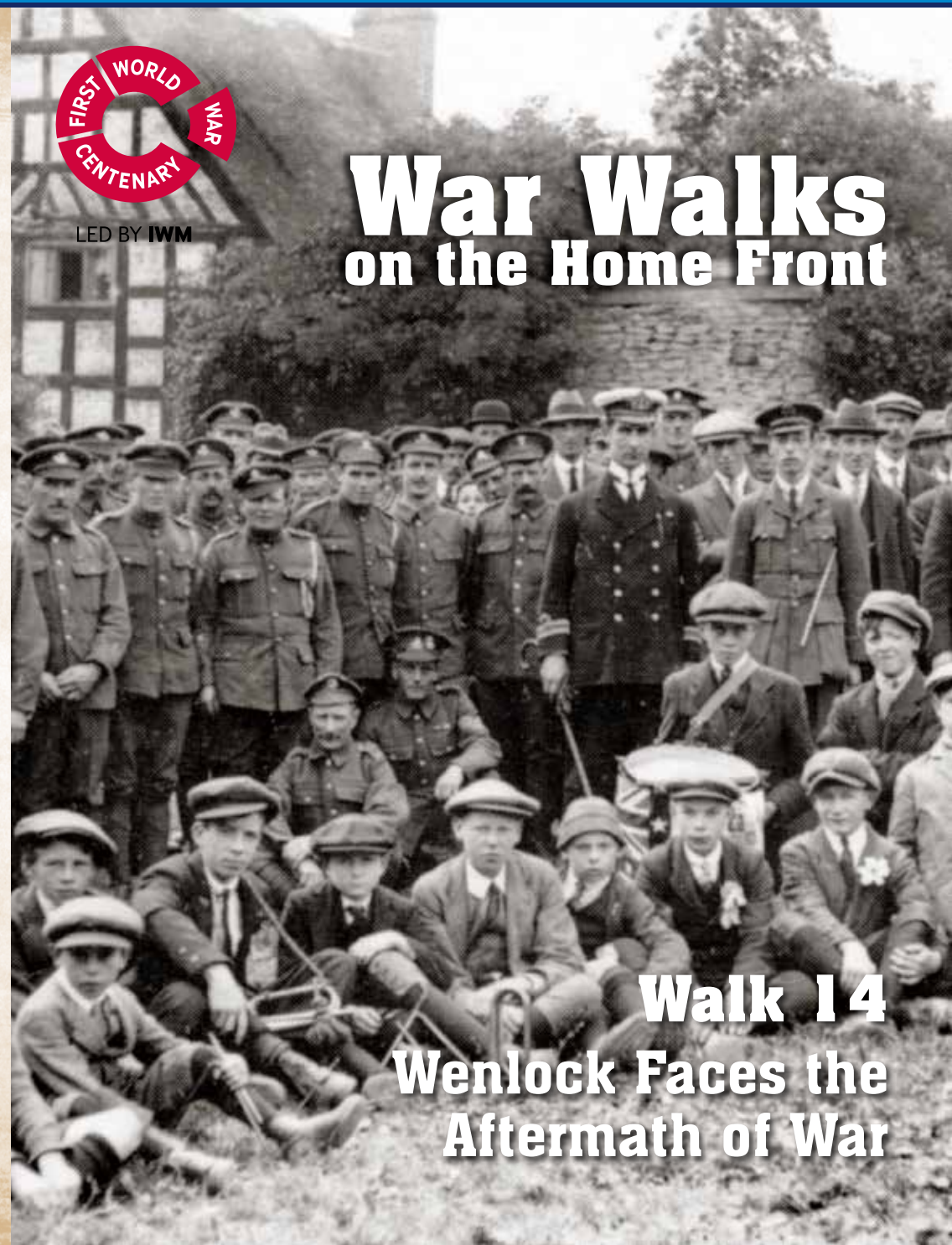
You won't have to visit the battlefields to experience Shropshire's part in the First World War. 20 walks cover the war years and the aftermath throughout the county. The printed guides will form a complete set by the end of 2019.

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War Walks on the Home Front



Walk 14 Wenlock Faces the Aftermath of War

Wenlock Faces the Aftermath of War

Four long years after Wenlock went to war the fighting ended, the repercussions of that terrible period in so many ways lived on. The town could not entirely revert back to 1914 in terms of its economy or social attitudes, but it could reflect, recover and reshape its future in the three years that followed the war. It was also a time in which to consider the war's legacy, and how best to commemorate those community members who had been lost.

This short circular walk, the third in Much Wenlock, will cover the period 1917 to 1921. It will pick up the story where Walk 8 in the Shropshire series ended, and take us to the end of the war in 1918 and the three years beyond. By this time the town had moved on, and its resilience and fortitude had overcome its trauma, and set it back on course. Also by then its commemorations and memorials were in place.

Distance: 4.3 km / 2.7 miles

Duration: about 1½ hours

Grade: Moderate

Terrain: Pavements, minor roads, fields. No stiles.

➊ From The Square with the clock and museum behind you go along Barrow Street towards the Raven Hotel on your right. Immediately before the Raven is number 29, the building that used to be the Plough. ➋ It was to this pub that Father D'Arcy, a Catholic priest from Shifnal, regularly visited by bicycle to give mass to the Belgian refugees in the room upstairs.

Continue along Barrow Street to Forester Avenue on the right. On the opposite side of Barrow Street at this point was the Gas Works. ➌ Wenlock was lit by gas

until 1945 when electricity took over. The Wenlock Gas Company was founded by William Penny Brookes in 1856, and they bought the site the following year. The company was then bought by the borough council in 1900 and closed in the 1950s.

Go 20m beyond Forester Avenue, and on the right is an entry. Follow this entry between a house and a bungalow to some steps on the left, and go up the steps and straight on up the road. At the top go half right and up five steps into another entry leading to a kissing gate. Beyond, go straight up the hill ahead to another kissing gate, through, and turn left. This is Walton Hill with fine views of the southern part of the town, and a place to reflect on the sadness experienced by one of Much Wenlock's farming families. ➍

Behind Walton Hill, and out of sight, is Marsh Farm, where Alderman John Davies was farming in 1917. His eldest son George Henry trained for missionary work for the Methodist Church before the war. He joined the Australian Infantry and was killed on 12 September 1917, and is remembered on the Menin Gate. Another son, Norman William in the Machine Gun Corps, was killed in Palestine on 27 September 1918 aged 27. News of his death did not reach the family until the very day that they were burying their third son, Edward Bryan, aged 19, who had died in the influenza epidemic on 14 November 1918 in Much Wenlock, just three days after the Armistice.

Continue along the edge of the field to the road, and turn right down the hill to a gate and turn right. ➎ It was as late as 31 August 1918 before any German prisoners of war appeared in the town. Brought in to work on the land, perhaps in these very fields, these 20 men were accompanied by armed guards and the newspaper noted: 'They created a lot of interest and were the subject of much comment.'

Go straight on past a copse into a field with a hedge on your left. Ahead is a

bungalow estate with access through a kissing gate. After the gate go straight ahead along the road to Hunters Gate, and turn left. After 200m bear diagonally right along a path across a small park area and then turn left onto a path which goes through a gate, and on up to a road. Turn left past the school to the main road. Look for the lychgate, cross the road, and enter the cemetery. ➏

There are a few WWI military graves in this cemetery. These men were not killed in action because repatriation of fallen servicemen was not permitted. Just after the war it was said that 370 Wenlock men had died. The WWI graves here are of servicemen who had died in training, or of illness in the UK. The grave of Edward Bryan Davies, mentioned above, is here in a Davies family memorial just to the south of the chapel and marked by a tall column surmounted with a cross.

The grave of Signelman James Yates, aged 21, is near the entrance to the chapel. He died in the Lady Forester Hospital in Much Wenlock on 10 August 1918. The Yates family were well known in the town, and ran the George and Dragon. James joined the RNVR in May 1916. After training he went to South America, and then he returned to serve with the Dover Patrol Squadron on HMS Manly, an M Class destroyer engaged in the blockade of U-boats transiting the Channel on their way to destroy allied merchant shipping. He contracted an illness, and was brought ashore and transferred to

the Lady Forester Hospital. He had been a member of the church choir, and a bell ringer. His funeral was a big event with soldiers on leave, and some of the wounded from the Lady Forester and the bell ringers following the coffin.

Return to the lychgate and turn left along the footpath as far as the Gaskell Arms Hotel. Cross the road into the High Street and go to No 26, a cottage on the right. ➐ Here lived Cecil Nevett, known as Cec, a boot maker who gained a reputation for his sprinting before the war, not just in Much Wenlock, but also as a member of Birchfield Harriers. He joined the Bedfordshire Regiment and continued his running during the war, winning races for his battalion in Italy, Egypt, and India. Cec returned and became the local postman, but his three brothers all died in the war. Cec continued to support the Wenlock Olympic Games as a steward and judge until his death in 1960.

