

## Bristol 2014: Great War Stories Map: Clifton



This walk is based on the Great War Stories map and app devised for Bristol 2014. The stories were researched, written and uploaded by Eugene Byrne. Email [bristol2014@btopenworld.com](mailto:bristol2014@btopenworld.com) if you require a large-print Word version of this document.

The dotted line in the map is approximate and gives an indication of the general direction to take, rather than a strict route to follow. Note that point 6 (the Victoria Rooms) is just off the page. Special care will be needed when crossing roads and always look for the safest place to do so. The walk will take approximately 35-40 minutes to complete.

***Begin on Park Row by the junction with Park Street Avenue. The large modern building on the right hand side (going towards Clifton) is the Merchant Venturers Building, part of Bristol University. During the First World War this was the site of Parnall & Sons' Coliseum Works.***

**1 Seaplane Factory:** The British & Colonial Aircraft Company was not the only manufacturer of aircraft in Bristol during the war. Indeed, to many Bristolians it was not even the most visible one. There was a much more conspicuous aircraft factory here; in the later years of the war, the bizarre sight of seaplanes being wheeled out of this building was quite common. Parnall & Sons Ltd was one of the country's leading shopfitting firms. It made glasswork, wrought ironwork and wooden

counters as well as scales and weighing machines. Parnalls had a superb reputation for the quality of their workmanship. Since much of the labour in making aeroplanes at this time consisted of making wooden frameworks it was not difficult for the firm to become involved in aeroplane construction. In 1915 the Admiralty placed the first orders with them to supply aeroplanes and seaplanes designed by other manufacturers. To undertake the work, Parnalls needed extra premises. The head office and propeller production unit were initially at Mivart Street, Eastville while they had another factory in Brislington. A site at Quakers Friars dealt with covering and doping airframes, and final assembly work was done here at the Coliseum - a skating rink until 1914.

***Carry on a little along Park Row and you come to the Wills Building, with its big, imposing tower.***

**2. 'The Last Fighting Tommy':** Work on Bristol University's Wills Memorial Building started in 1915 but was soon suspended due to the war. It was eventually completed and opened in 1925. After the war, one of the people who worked on it was plumber Harry Patch, who in his last years was famous throughout Britain as 'the last fighting Tommy' - the oldest surviving man who had taken part in the fighting in the First World War. When he died in 2009 he was 111 years old. Born at Combe Down near Bath in 1898 he was called up in 1916 and served with the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry as a machine gunner. He took part in the Battle of Passchendaele and was wounded by a shell which killed three of his comrades. As something of a celebrity in later life, he spoke frankly about his experience in the war, and how disastrous and futile it had been. Of war in general he said: "To me, it's a licence to go out and murder. Why should the British government call me up and take me out to a battlefield to shoot a man I never knew, whose language I couldn't speak? All those lives lost for a war finished over a table. Now what is the sense in that?" After the Wills Building was restored, it was officially reopened by Harry Patch on February 20 2008. (Picture: *Bristol Post*)



***Retrace your steps a little and use the pedestrian crossing to cross over to the top of Park Street. Almost directly in front of you is Berkeley Square. Go along here, turn right at the end and stop outside number 6.***

**3. The Bristol Training School for Women Patrols and Police:** Early on in the war, amid fears about the consequences of local girls flirting with men in uniform, voluntary patrols of women took to the streets during the evenings. Usually working in pairs, the patrols would try to put a stop to female behaviour that was likely to get girls into trouble. This, along with the demand for manpower from the forces, would lead to Bristol appointing some of the first women police officers in the world. Bristol Constabulary used women staff to work in its offices and supervise the custody of female prisoners. Now they appointed women detectives as well, usually for use in roles which were

unsuitable for men. In a famous local case female detectives gathered evidence against a fraudulent fortune teller. They were also commonly used to catch out shopkeepers contravening food regulations. The first uniformed women constables were appointed in 1917. The move followed lobbying by feminist campaigners, many of whom had been suffragettes before the war. Bristol was also home to a pioneering school set up in September 1915 to train voluntary women's patrols and later, female police officers. First established at Queens Road, and later based at 6 Berkeley Square, The Bristol Training School for Women Patrols and Police was set up at the initiative of the National Union of Women Workers and funded by voluntary donations. By 1917 the school was being run by Dorothy Peto (pictured), who would later go on to head the women's branch of the Metropolitan Police. The school also trained Britain's first women military police and helped set up a training school to cover the whole of Scotland.



***Carry on around the rest of the Square and you will soon be back on Queens Road. Use the pedestrian crossing to cross over to Brown's Restaurant, next to the City Museum & Gallery.***

**4. Floral Displays:** While this building is now a restaurant, it was Bristol's museum in 1914, while the present day museum next door was the city's art gallery. In the winter months, the Inquiry Bureau, as part of its welfare work for wounded soldiers, held tea parties here three times a week. Often there were lectures as well. The museum galleries were also opened to the men, including the Dame Emily Smyth Room, where Ida Roper of Westbury-on-Trym, the first ever woman President of the Bristol Naturalists Society, put on a fresh display of local wild plants each week. Miss Roper's plants and flowers were hugely popular through the war, with visitors and Bristolians alike. Perhaps this was because Miss Roper's botanical displays had absolutely nothing to do with the war which now pervaded every other aspect of everyone's lives.

***Carefully crossing University Road, continue along Queens Road towards Clifton. You will soon find yourself going along a row of shops with a long glass canopy. Stop just as you are about to reach the end of this canopy.***

**5. The Piano Boom:** One of Duck, Son & Pinker's two Bristol shops was on this site (we know from old maps and pics that it was here but I wouldn't want to say precisely which shop it is nowadays). This long-established Bristol music firm saw its business increase during the war. The demands of war meant there was almost full employment, and wages rose along with it. Unlike during the Second World War there was a a minor consumer boom, with many working class families wanting to own an upright piano. Local shops like Duck, Son & Pinker were only too happy to oblige, while middle class moralists sneered at the profligate way the lower orders were squandering their money on luxuries. "Pianos, like furs, jewellery, carpets and furniture, are being purchased by persons

whose incomes have increased at such a rate that it has quite turned their heads, and they seem obliged to spend money freely as water," said one local newspaper columnist

***Continue north towards Clifton, cross Queens Avenue using the zebra crossing. At the start of Whiteladies Road, cross over to the Victoria Rooms – the big building with the fountains and statue in front of them – using the zebra crossings.***

**6. Khaki Fever:** Built in the late 1830s and early 1840s the Victoria Rooms had played its part in Bristol's history ever since, both as a meeting place and a performance venue. It continued in this role in the First World War, apart from a brief interlude over the winter of 1914-1915. With the start of the war, there had been a massive recruiting effort, which produced more volunteers than the army could accommodate. At first many of these new soldiers camped in tents on Salisbury Plain, but it was clear that this would not be very comfortable once winter came. So the soldiers were dispersed to be billeted in whatever buildings were available around the country until enough huts could be built for them. The 77th Infantry Brigade was sent to Bristol. This was a Scottish formation, comprising the 8th Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers, the 11th Battalion Scottish Rifles, the 10th Battalion of the Black Watch and the 12th Battalion Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders. They were housed in various buildings around the city, including the Victoria Rooms. Bristolians loved the Scottish soldiers. They were cheered whenever they marched through the city, and church congregations vied with each other to put on teas and entertainments for them and generally make them feel at home. They also, though, caused a major moral panic. Local girls were said to suffer from 'khaki fever' - an irresistible attraction to men in uniform. (It used to be known as 'scarlet fever' back when soldiers still wore red jackets). It was said that girls were going up to them, starting conversations in parks, flirting with them - and worse. Voluntary patrols of women, usually working in pairs, were sent out onto the streets to encourage girls to go home at night, while the Bishop of Bristol denounced khaki fever from the pulpit.

***Continue north up Whiteladies Road. Just after you cross St Pauls Road using the pedestrian crossing you will see two large old houses with a branch of Tool Station next to them. Stop by the first house.***



**7. Dr Barclay Baron:** Dr Barclay Josiah Baron became Lord Mayor of Bristol in November 1915, even though he had only been in local politics for two years. He had originally been elected to the Council as Conservative member for Clifton South, but was a popular choice for Mayor. It was highly unusual for a Lord Mayor to serve two consecutive terms of office, but Barclay Baron proved so effective that he was unanimously re-appointed by his fellow councillors the following year. Barclay Baron was a successful and respected medical doctor. He had studied in Germany, and after coming to Bristol founded the ear, nose and throat department at the General Hospital. He was also president of the Bristol branch of the British Medical Association. As Lord Mayor, he was known for his compassion -

he met most of the trains that brought the wounded into Temple Meads Station - and for the huge amount of work that he and his wife carried out for the wounded. He was also a keen theatregoer, and his medical specialisation made him particularly useful to singers and actors; he was said to have saved the voices of a few of them. His theatrical contacts meant that he could easily fill out impressive bills of performers for the entertainment of wounded soldiers. He was knighted for his services in 1918, but died at his home a year later from complications following a fall when working on his garden.

***Continue up Whiteladies Road and you will soon come to an army barracks with a Second World War era gun in front of the building.***

**8. The Gloucestershire Volunteer Artillery:** Bristol raised its first volunteer artillery in Victorian times. Initially they were equipped with completely unsuitable muzzle-loading cannon from the Napoleonic Wars. By 1914, however, they were the 1st South Midland Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery, a Territorial unit of volunteers, most of whom had day-jobs, and who were based here. They were mobilised as soon as war broke out, and marched to Plymouth within three days. Initially equipped with 15-pounder field guns, they were later equipped with more modern 18-pounders and saw service in France and, later, Italy. In October 1914 a second artillery brigade was raised here.

***Re-trace your steps back to stop 7 (Dr Barclay Baron's house) and use the pedestrian crossing to cross Whiteladies Road. Now go along Tyndalls Park Road. Take the second turning on your right into Woodland Road; to your left you will see two old houses, joined together by a covered walkway and owned by Bristol University. The first of these, on the corner of Tyndalls Park Road, is the one you want.***

**9. Red Cross HQ:** In 1914 this building became the headquarters of the Bristol Branch of the Red Cross. For the rest of the war, medical and welfare services for wounded soldiers would be run by a range of different organisations. Outside of the army, the most important of these was the Red Cross, which now set up its headquarters here, in a house owned by Sir George White, chairman of the Bristol Tramways & Carriage Company, and of the British & Colonial Aeroplane Company. Lady White was Vice President of the Red Cross' Bristol Branch. As well as running medical services, the Red Cross immediately started collecting clothing for the use of wounded soldiers.

***Continue along Woodland Road and take the third turning on your left, into University Walk. Carry on along here, stopping where the Walk curves, by the Queens Building.***

**10. Bristol University:** The University played a key role in Bristol's contribution to the war effort. By the end of 1915 half of its staff and three-quarters of its male students (and most were male in those days) had joined the forces. Of the staff and students who remained, most of the able-bodied men were in the University Battalion of the Bristol Volunteer Regiment, a home defence unit similar to the Home Guard of the Second World War. The role of the academic departments remains obscure due to wartime secrecy, but we know that the Chemistry labs carried out research on explosives and poison gases, while the Physics and Maths departments were involved in the development of aircraft and submarines. The medical school looked into the health and safety conditions of munitions factories.