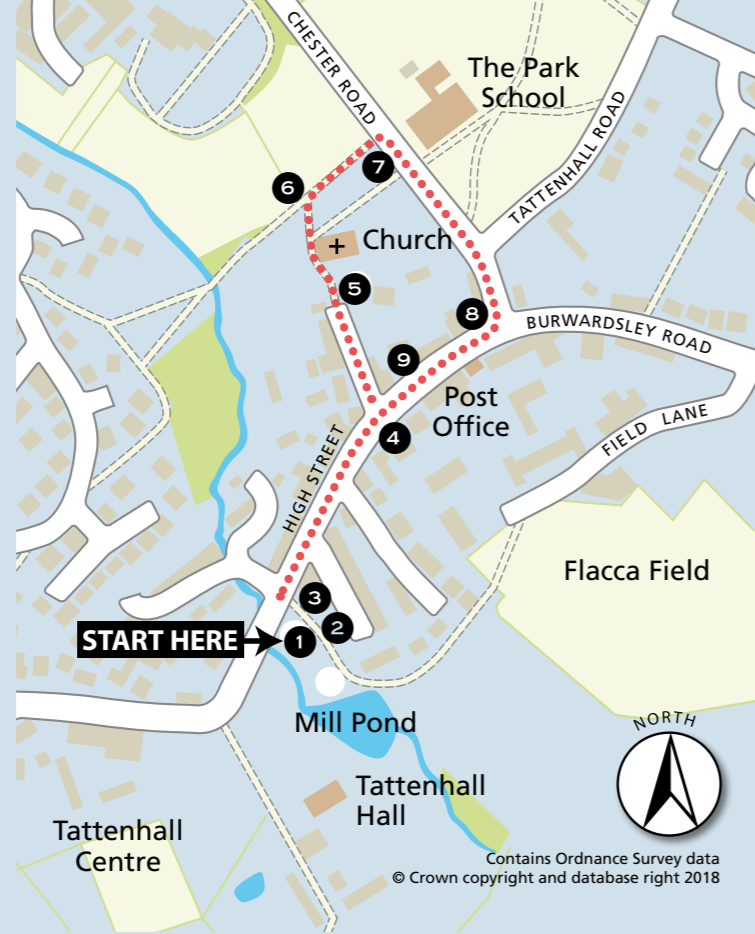# A Circular Walk around the Village of Tattenhall

This heritage trail has been created to commemorate the Centenary Anniversary of the Armistice, 11 November 2018.

The trail starts at the War Memorial, on the High Street.

This leaflet provides a lasting legacy which raises awareness and curiosity about local heritage and, in particular, the role of Tattenhall in The Great War, 1914-1918.

At the outset of The Great War, Tattenhall, like other locations, was hugely patriotic. Lads willingly signed up. That said, Tattenhall was a small, well served village. The 1911 Census recorded 1347 people living in the village, the principal occupation being agriculture. The village had two stations on the London and North Western railway; one line between Chester, Whitchurch and Shrewsbury and the other between Chester and Crewe. The Shropshire Union Canal passed through the Parish. The village was lit by gas. St Alban's Church was the nucleus of the village and a variety of craftsmen were employed locally. The principal landowner was George Barbour of Bolesworth Castle.

Tattenhall War Memorial ❶ is a focal point of remembrance within the village. In the aftermath of The Great War (1914-1918), families needed a focus for their grief, loss and pride. War memorials were erected across the UK. Tattenhall War Memorial was erected in 1922. It comprises a red sandstone Celtic cross on a plinth and stepped base, and it is approximately 5m high.

There is decoration on the arms of the cross and an upward-pointing sword on the face of the Memorial, below which is an inscription. The plinth has two original bronze plaques and two additional plaques were added in 2005. Of the 44 names that are recorded on the War Memorial, 34 relate to The Great War.

Immediately behind the War Memorial and within Millfield, stands a **War Horse Sculpture** ❷. This 'Horse of War' was constructed in 2014 by local Forge Master, Andrew Smith, to mark the centenary of the start of The Great War. The sculpture represents a permanent legacy to the role of horses in the conflict. Local school children voted to name the horse 'George'. In 1914 the Cheshire countryside was emptied of many of its horses. Farming communities, like Tattenhall, saw their finest animals requisitioned by the government. Horses were vital to the war effort in moving heavy guns, transporting supplies, carrying the wounded to Field Hospitals and, in the early days of the conflict, mounting cavalry charges.

Next to the War Horse Sculpture is an imposing red brick building which is **The Barbour Institute** ❸, erected in memory of Janet Barbour on the instruction of her son, George.

The armorial bearings of the Barbour family are on the outside of the building. The Institute was officially opened in July 1898 with the intention of providing a public room for parish purposes.

During The Great War, however, this building was transformed into an Auxiliary Military Hospital dealing with convalescing and less seriously wounded servicemen; often designated as 'sitting cases' rather than arriving in 'cots'. Records confirm that one patient was admitted having been severely gassed and he was described as 'progressing satisfactorily at hospital in Tattenhall'. Two such hospitals were located in the village, the other being at The Rookery Annexe on Chester Road. Daughters of the Barbour family served as Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) Nurses.

Continuing on this side of the High Street, you will shortly see Olympus House on your right. This 3-storey building, once the **Tattenhall Home for Boys** ❹, was opened in 1896 and housed 40-45 waifs and strays aged 8-15. Married couple, James and Margaret Hicks, were the first Master and Matron.

At the age of 13, James Hicks (like his father before him) joined the British Army, completing his service with the Royal Berkshires. It is likely his military experiences influenced his thinking since he ran the Home with regimental precision. Some boys rose at 5.30am to clean and light the stoves whilst the other boys rose at 6.30am. All boys performed chores, undertook 15 minutes of exercises, said prayers, breakfasted and had band practice before walking to the village school. Boys returned to the Home for lunch. After school, boys played until tea, said their prayers, had band practice and were in bed by 8.15pm.

The Boys' Home Band was well regarded, being called upon to entertain the convalescing soldiers.

On leaving the Home, many boys signed up; the Royal Berkshires being a firm favourite because of the close ties that James Hicks had with that regiment. The Regiment paid tribute to him for 'sending well-trained lads ... all of whom did well'. Many youngsters also signed up as drummers or pipers following their training in the Boys' Home Band. Several boys lost their lives and the names of some are recorded on the War Memorial. The Home closed in 1936.

Cross the road and walk up Church Bank (opposite) to **St Alban's Church** ❺. On the entrance gates into the Churchyard is a plaque in memory of Thomas Booth Brierley, a doctor in attendance at Tattenhall's Auxiliary Military Hospital during The Great War. His son, Lieutenant Roger Christian Brierley, was killed in Flanders in 1917.

Enter the Church, within which is a Roll of Honour and various shrines to those who died during 1914-1918. The Tilney Shrine on the North Wall is in memory of Major Leonard Arthur Tilney who was a Squadron Commander with the Royal Flying Corps. In 1917 he received command of 40 Squadron which he led with distinction, gaining the Military Cross and the Belgian Croix de Guerre. He was also made an Officer of the Order of the Crown of Belgium. He was shot down in aerial combat in 1918, aged 22 years. Leonard's sister, Susan Agnes Rhodes Tilney, not only nursed wounded servicemen in Tattenhall but she also served at Red Cross Hospital No 2 in Rouen, France.

On the carved oak screen, is reference to another Tattenhall lad who died. Harry Reynolds Jones was a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps. In 1918, and aged 19, he was killed in a flying accident, just 8 weeks into service. He is buried in The Somme.

Guidelines for Walkers

- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Be respectful within the Church and Churchyard and during Church Services
- Take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Be considerate

This historical trail has been produced by **Tattenhall Local History.** To find out more about the local history of Tattenhall visit **www.tattenhallhistory.co.uk**

Pte. G Stoneley, Cheshire Regiment

Funded by **Redrow Homes** for the community of Tattenhall **www.redrow.co.uk**

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The Rookery, Tattenhall

Turn right out of the Church Door and keep to the footpath around the Church Tower which leads to the Wignall Gates. Beyond the gates is a substantial black and white building known as **The Rookery ❻**. This was once the Wignall family home and housed Tattenhall's second Auxiliary Military Hospital. Located in the Annexe, it was officially opened in 1918 although up to 12 soldiers were already in occupation. Mrs Edith Marguerite Wignall was appointed 'Commandant' of both Hospitals. She was awarded the MBE for her Red Cross Work.

Some nurses worked in both hospitals, as well as serving in France. VAD Nurse Miss Elizabeth Cooke with over 5,000 hours of service, also received special mention from the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St John for her valuable war work in Tattenhall.

As you leave the Wignall Gates turn right along the pathway and immediately right along Chester Road ❼. To your right is the renovated **Brodbelt Family Grave**. Surviving members of the Brodbelt family commissioned the complete restoration of this grave in 2014 as part of the centenary anniversary of the start of The Great War.

Guy Brodbelt joined the 9th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment. He was killed in action in 1916, having been shot in the head by a sniper. He was 28 years old and is buried in France.

His brother, Lieutenant Arthur Dell Brodbelt, joined the Royal Garrison Artillery and was mortally wounded in 1918. He was 32 years old and is also buried in France.

Like other wealthy local families, the Brodbelts had close connections with the community. They not only lived at Fairfield House and Brook Hall, substantial local properties, but played active roles within the Church. The family also paid for the full restoration of the Church Porch in 1870.

Continue along Chester Road. The next gate into the Churchyard is The Tilney Gate which is housed between two sandstone pillars. On the inside of the left-hand pillar is inscribed the following 'In Memory of Colonel Tilney DSO and Mrs Tilney who for many years lived in Tattenhall'. Two of their children, Leonard and Susan, have been mentioned previously but the influence of the Tilney family within the village during the war should not be over-looked.

Whilst Colonel Robert Henry Tilney had a distinguished military career, his wife, Frances Mary Tilney, worked tirelessly, keeping accurate records of those Tattenhall men who had signed up for service, collecting books and treats for serving soldiers, raising funds, and holding informal gatherings of 'sewing bees' who busied themselves producing clothes for the soldiers.

The next gate into the Churchyard is the Clayton Gate. Immediately to the right of the path stands the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) headstone of Mathew Boylan; the only CWGC headstone in the Churchyard relating to The Great War. Mathew was born in Ireland, initially joining the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and then transferring to the 415th Agricultural Company Labour Corps. He died in November 1918 in Chester's War Hospital, aged 29. Within the Churchyard are two other CWGC headstones which relate to WWII.

Another grave of significance within the Churchyard relates to a Tattenhall woman who was active in the war effort. Marjorie Smyth not only qualified as a VAD Nurse in 1915, but she also joined Chester Remount Depot No. 2. Remount depots were 'convalescent' homes where sick or injured army horses were taken, in order to be made fit for service. In the Chester depots, up to 40 horses were cared for at any one time

Keep to this side of Chester Road, past Alpha House (1894) on your right, and continue to the T-Junction of Chester Road with Burwardsley Road and the High Street.

On the corner ❽ was located **No.1 High Street**, formerly a grocery and tobacconist shop run by

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Mary Stoneley. Her son, Private George Stoneley, one of Tattenhall's youngest casualties of The Great War, died of wounds to the abdomen, aged 19. George Stoneley had been a member of the Church Choir, a telegraph messenger at Tattenhall Post Office and a porter at Tattenhall Station. He is buried at Lijssenthoek; Belgium's second largest CWGC cemetery.

Follow the route to the right and in a few metres on your right is the former **National School ❾** which was erected in the mid-19th century. During The Great War, the School was regularly used for meetings, for lectures explaining issues such as war loans, for lantern slide shows illustrating the conflict, and for talks which encouraged individuals to grow their own food as well as persuading Tattenhall women to train to work on the land. The School also raised monies to purchase tobacco and cigarettes which were then sent to front-line troops. Teachers and scholars at the School also entertained wounded soldiers with concerts, tea and further entertainments.

Continue along the High Street and your trail is complete.

Heritage Trail
Tattenhall in The Great War 1914-1918