

# Historic Walks around Yeovil

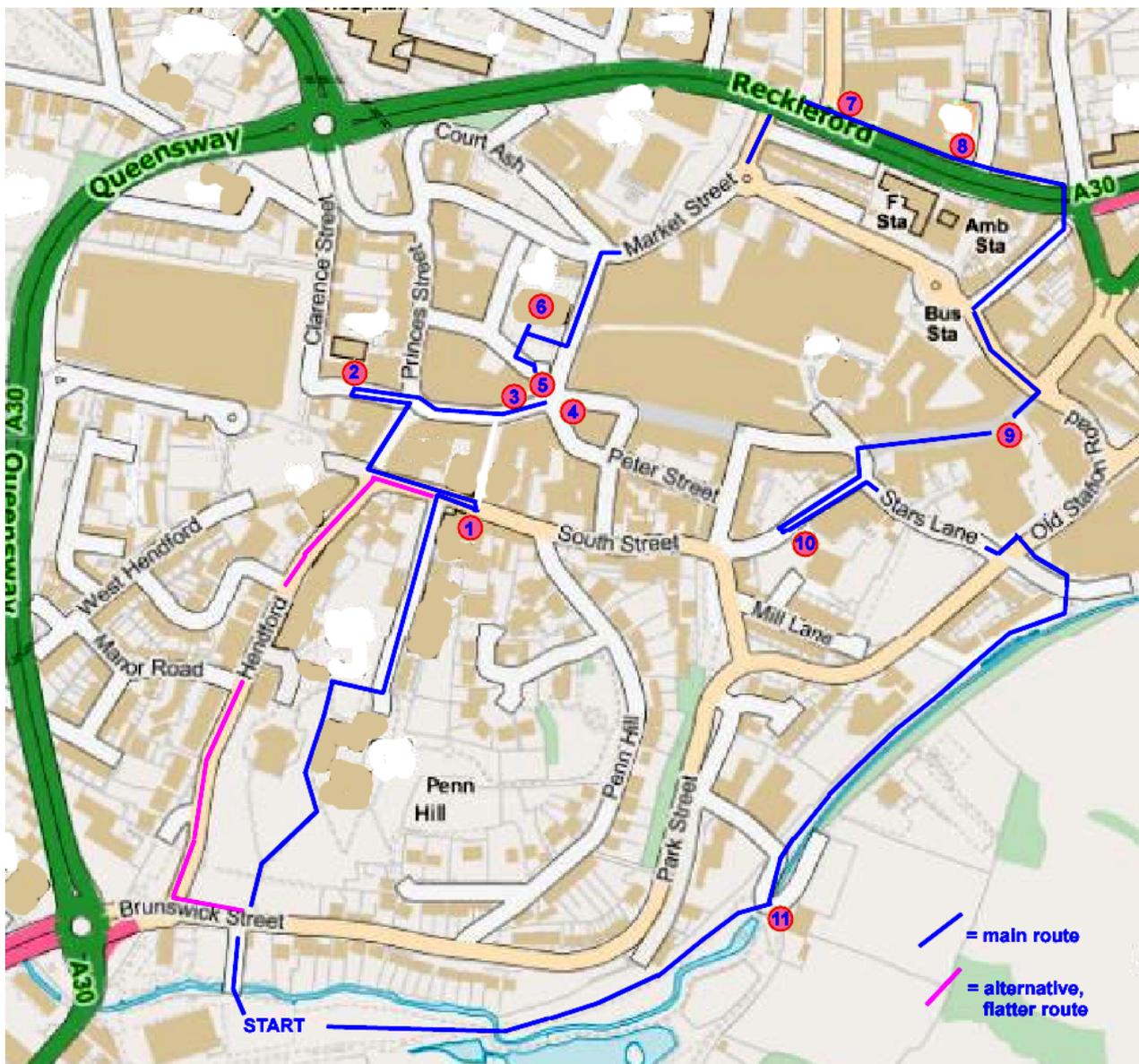
## No 5 - Yeovil at War

This is the fifth in a series of short Historic Walks around Yeovil. This walk features the places connected with Yeovil at War - both the First and Second World Wars.

The walks are designed to be printed and carried with you on your walk. The various walks may be undertaken individually or grouped together. None are of any great distance and times will vary depending on the amount of time looking at each key point. **Walking directions are given in blue.**

Key Points on the walk are highlighted along the route and key facts are included. Most Key Points may be researched in greater depth on the A-to-Z of Yeovil's History website ([www.yeovilhistory.info](http://www.yeovilhistory.info)), either before, during or after your walk.

<b>Walk 5:</b>	Yeovil at War
<b>Distance:</b>	2 miles
<b>Time:</b>	90 minutes at a slow amble, with an additional 30 minutes in St John's church
<b>Gradient:</b>	Mostly flat (for Yeovil). Hendford alternative route avoids Penn Hill



**START - Goldenstones Car Park**

Begin in the pay and display car park of Goldenstones Leisure Centre. Initially, this walk has a fairly steep uphill gradient but the alternative route along Hendford is more gradual.

**Commence walk - From the car park walk to Brunswick Street and cross using the crossing. Take the footpath up the hill and walk alongside the left of the multi-storey Maltravers House. Cross to Petters Way and continue to South Street. Alternative Route: Cross Brunswick Street, turn left to Hendford. Along Hendford. Turn right into South Street and join main route.**

**Key Point 1 - The Newnam Memorial Hall (WW1)**

In January 1915, a Red Cross military hospital opened in the Newnam Memorial Hall, the hall being lent free of charge by the South Street Baptist School trustees. The first patients were 103 men from the Territorials and Army Service Corps billeted in the town. In total 1,200 men were treated at the hospital and only four deaths occurred. A plaque is affixed to the wall facing South Street to commemorate the efforts of the hospital and its staff.

**Return past Petters Way to Hendford, turn right and then turn left into Westminster Street.**

**Key Point 2 - The Soldiers' Rest Room (WW2)**

A cafe in Westminster Street became a soldier's canteen, known as the Soldier's Rest Room, run by volunteers. The Soldier's Rest Rooms were set up across the country, often by Church groups, with the intention of providing food and drinks to servicemen as well as somewhere to relax. The Soldier's Rest Room stayed open all night, volunteers turning up to help although it was not their turn on the rota. Every soldier who came in was fed and given a cup of tea, but never asked for a penny. In the "quiet" room upstairs there were a few tables, and paper and stamped envelopes were provided for soldiers to write home - once again for free.



**Return along Westminster Street, proceed along High Street to the Borough.**

**Key Point 3 - The American Plaque (WW2)**

Mounted on the wall of Lloyds bank, facing the Borough, is a plaque commemorating the 12,000 American troops who were stationed in and around Yeovil during the build-up to the D-Day landings of 6 June 1944. The bank acted as the payroll department for the American troops and financed the plaque project. The plaque was unveiled in a ceremony performed on Sunday 5 December 2004.

**Key Point 4 - The Borough War Memorial (WW1)**

The design of the War Memorial in the Borough is based on the 'Eleanor Crosses' erected by King Edward I in memory of his wife Eleanor of Castille. The memorial was unveiled on 14 July 1921.

Fifty-three names were added to a new set of plaques for the Borough War Memorial (bringing the total to 289 names), commissioned by the Town Council in 2018. Height 29 feet (8.84m). Cost £1,250 (about £52,000 at today's value).

**Key Point 5 - The Site of the Medical Hall (WW2)**

Look across the Borough to today's Burger King building. This was built on the site of the former Medical Hall that was built in 1860 and occupied by a series of chemists. During the Second World War part of the Medical Hall was used as a canteen. Late in the evening of Good Friday 11 April 1941, the Medical Hall was destroyed by enemy bombing. Fortunately there were no casualties as the canteen was closed at the time of the bombing. Immediately after the war the site was cleared and an ornamental garden was laid out, planted with tulips donated by Dutch children who had been evacuated to Yeovil during the Second World War. Boots the Chemist rebuilt on the site and the present building dates to 1956.



**From the Borough, walk between the buildings to St John's church and enter.**

**Key Point 6 - The Prowse Memorial Window (WW1)**

The Prowse Memorial Window, in the north aisle, is by Henry Holiday.

This window was installed in 1917 in memory of brothers Brigadier-General Charles Bertie Prowse and Captain Cecil Irby Prowse RN who were both killed on active service, a month apart, in 1916.

Why not spend a while taking in the glories of St John's church.

**Proceed to Silver Street (to avoid the steps, first return to the Borough and turn left). Continue along Market Street to Reckleford. Cross Reckleford, turn right and cross Goldcroft.**

**Key Point 7 - The Nautilus Works (WW1 & WW2)**

At the outbreak of the First World War the Petters family offered their facilities to the British government to produce war materials and by early 1915 the Reckleford works was already producing 18 pounder shell cases.

During the Second World War the Nautilus Works was used to store sheet metal and other equipment as part of a dispersal policy for the aircraft works at Westland.



**Proceed east along Reckleford as far as the former Board School at the junction of Reckleford and Dampier Street.**

**Key Point 8 - Public Air Raid Shelter (WW2)**

On the front elevation of the former Reckleford Board School, facing Reckleford, is the entrance to a Public Air Raid Shelter. Still discernible even today, over seventy years since it was painted on the wall is a large yellow 'S' for shelter and '13 persons' written by the side of it which would have notified any passers-by caught out in an air raid of its existence. The grey concrete structure seen in the photo covers the access stairs.

**Proceed east along Reckleford as far as the traffic lights at the Reckleford / Eastland Road junction. Cross Reckleford and continue along Earle Street as far as Central Road. Turn left and proceed to Middle Street. At Middle Street, turn right and proceed 50 yards to the 94 Club (the former Liberal Club) on your left.**

**Key Point 9 - The British Restaurant (WW2)**

In 1940 the Ministry of Food set up "Community Feeding Centres" primarily to help people who had been bombed out, had run out of ration coupons or otherwise needed help. They were also one answer to combat the severity of rationing. At the insistence of Winston Churchill the name was changed to "British Restaurants". They were run by local government or voluntary agencies on a non-profit basis and were to sell basic, wholesome meals at reasonable cost and 'off the ration'. They were sited so that they were in fairly easy reach of most families. In Yeovil the Liberal Club in Middle Street was commandeered.



**Proceed west along Middle Street as far as the Triangle, then into South Street alongside Club Neo (the former Gaumont Cinema). At the end of the cinema, turn into the car park.**

**Key Point 10 - Camouflaging Yeovil (WW2)**

Even during the early 1930s with the prospect of war on the far horizon, there was concern that in such a war, bombing of strategic installations such as airfields would become a huge problem. A General Camouflage Policy was developed in 1938, designed to break up the regularity and conspicuousness of large buildings. In

Yeovil the prime concern was camouflaging the Westland factory and airfield but other large buildings, conspicuous from the air, were also camouflaged. The surviving faded camouflage paint on the western end and the south elevation (seen in this photograph) of the old Gaumont Palace cinema shows that it was camouflaged by painting it to look like residential buildings.

**Return east along South Street, then turn right into Stars Lane. Proceed, crossing Old Station Road, and then turn right onto the footpath that runs alongside Dodham Brook. When you reach the junction with Addlewell Lane (and the children's play area in front of you), look left towards the large farm building. Alongside the farm building is -**

**Key Point 11 - Communal Air Raid Shelter (WW2)**

This is a 'Type A3FTR1' surface communal shelter consisting of three separate compartments, each of 10ft 7½in by 4ft 6¾in (3.24m by 1.39m). The compartments were built side by side with all entrances on one side protected by a traverse or blast wall. All the walls were of brick construction 1ft 1¾in (0.35m) thick. They had a concrete floor and flat reinforced concrete roof. These triple compartment shelters were designed to accommodate thirty six people. Only about a dozen of this type of air raid shelter were built in Yeovil - this is the last survivor of this type, although many smaller air raid shelters survive in Yeovil, especially in the area around the Westland's airfield (a prime target for German bombers) and in the Newtown area.



**Continue past the play area, along the footpath that runs alongside Dodham Brook, to return to the Goldenstones car park.**

**I hope you enjoyed this walk and don't forget that full details and photographs of all the Key Points mentioned may be seen on Yeovil's Virtual Museum website ([www.yeovilhistory.info](http://www.yeovilhistory.info)).**