

Llanidloes in the Great War

Town Trail



Start point - **Llanidloes War Memorial** - head up the street and turn left into Bethel Street



The gift of the Mayor of Llanidloes during the first years of the war, stonemason Richard Jerman.

The names of 115 local men who made the ultimate sacrifice during World War I are recorded on this war memorial outside the Town Hall. The soldiers came from Llanidloes and the surrounding parishes of Llangurig, Llandinam and Trefeglwys, and include eight pairs of brothers and one father and son. Many served in the 7th Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers, which was the local Territorial unit for the area.

Originally devised during the war, its final form was agreed by the Town Council once the war was over and the scale of sacrifice known. There had been some debate about whether a memorial to the county's soldiers should be sited in the county town of Montgomery or whether each town should make its own arrangements. Llanidloes decided to have a local memorial because the town 'had sent a large percentage of men compared to other towns of the same size'.

This 11 ft by 8 ft Yorkshire stone memorial was the gift of former Mayor, Richard Jerman, who not only planned the design but carved it himself. The motto 'Gwell angeu na Chywilydd' translates as 'Better death than Shame'. It was unveiled by Major David Davies MP in 1920, in front of a crowd of thousands that included many ex-servicemen who had returned from the fields of battle where their companions had died.

Further on in the trail you'll learn about two other 'memorials' in Llanidloes - the War Memorial Hospital and a pair of captured German artillery pieces that resided for a time under the Old Market Hall – the black and white building you can see at the end of the street.

War Memorial

At the end of Bethel Street turn right into Brook Street and then follow the road round to the right up Foundry Terrace



Tom Dykes - the 'first Llanidloes man to fall'



Bethel Street

Behind the Chapel here in Bethel Street there once stood the Cooperative Stores, a timber building that was destroyed by fire in 1915. The blaze, which started in the early hours of the morning, quickly engulfed the property, including the bakery at the rear of the shop. The large stock of flour, sugar and oil fueled the ferocious fire, which threatened to spread to neighbouring houses.

Lieut. Tom Pryce Hamer was one of dozens who fought to put out the fire using buckets and hosepipes, the nearest fire engine being 14 miles away in Newtown. Home on a few days leave from France, where he had seen action with the South Wales Borderers, Lieut. Hamer played a prominent role in tackling the blaze. His efforts were much appreciated, and when he left to return to France later that week a large crowd cheered him off at the railway station.

It is difficult to imagine how families coped with the devastating events of the First World War. The Dykes family lost two sons: Private Tom Dykes was 'the first Llanidloes man to fall' - killed in action at Vendresse, during the battle of Marne in 1914, while Private Moses Dykes was 'missing, believed killed' whilst serving in Palestine.

Their mother Mrs Dykes, who was the caretaker at the Chapel, narrowly escaped with her own life one Sunday morning, when the boiler in the chapel exploded shortly after she had left the boiler room. It appears that frozen pipes were to blame. Several hundreds of pounds worth of damage was caused to the building and the organ was completely destroyed. Though shaken, Mrs Dykes was not badly hurt. Fundraising activities started almost immediately to pay for the repair work.

Walk up Foundry Terrace and head up towards the old railway station.



Renowned Cornetist and drill sergeant of the local Royal Welsh Fusiliers territorials, Sergeant Albert Alfred Rowley.



Foundry & Terrace

The last house in the terrace on the right of the road was once the home of Sergeant Major Alfred Rowley, the drill instructor of the local territorial battalion, the 7th Royal Welsh Fusilier. A career soldier who had enlisted at the tender age of 13, Sergeant Rowley was recalled to his regiment, the Lancashire Fusiliers. By a strange quirk of fate, his battalion was posted to Gallipoli, the same battle area that marked the baptism of fire of the local men he had trained in Llanidloes. But by the time the 7th RWF went ashore at Suvla Bay, Alfred was dead, killed the day before in the opening stages of the battle. Before the news of the fighting reached home, the Montgomeryshire Express newspaper published a jovial letter from Alfred to a friend in Llanidloes, in which he joked about sending home-made explosives in jam jars over to the Turkish lines using a catapult. Alfred was a renowned cornetist with the Borough Silver Band. He left a wife and two children.

Messrs. John Mills and Company's Railway Foundry usually made colliery equipment but during the First World War it turned to producing 'other essential equipment' to help the war effort. It was 'one of the best equipped of its kind in Wales'. Typically, the foundry employed 300 men but many went away on active service, leaving around 50 employees. Many women were recruited to work in the Foundry during the war years.

The owner, John Mills, joined up at the start of the War, taking a commission in the South Wales Borderers. By 1916, having served in France, he was invalided back to Britain and accepted a post in the Ministry of Munitions in London. He tried, unsuccessfully, to return to front line service but was forced to retire due to continued 'ill health contracted on active service'.

From the railway station, head back into town, pausing at Lloyd's Hotel.



Albert Hopper, taken prisoner in the last year of the war and suffered privations due to food shortages in Germany. Conditions got so bad towards the end of the war that he died of an illness related to malnutrition.



Llanidloes Railway Station

Closed under the Beeching cuts of the 1960s, Llanidloes' railway station was once the Headquarters of the Cambrian Railway and a busy place of departures and arrivals during the First World War. Soldiers left here to go to war and arrived here when coming home on leave. In July 1914 the 18th Infantry Brigade arrived here, to great excitement, to set up a summer camp on the outskirts of town, only to be mobilised to France a short time later.

Even the future King George VI arrived here in the late summer of 1917 at the start of his mid Wales vacation. Earlier in the year he had been in action in the great naval action of Jutland, and needed to recuperate from the strain of the battle. He stayed at Clochfaen, the estate of the Lloyd Verney family, near Llangurig.

The station also saw many sombre events, including military cortèges bearing the bodies of dead soldiers. In February 1917, three young men were brought back to Llanidloes from Park Hall Camp in Oswestry, where they had been the victims of an epidemic. We will meet Simon Jones and Richard Lewis Davies at Dolhafren Cemetery later in this trail - while John Pugh Abel, of Hendreaur, was buried with full military honours at the non-conformist cemetery on the outskirts of Llangurig.

The Hopper family are closely associated with the Railway Station. George Hopper was on the staff here, as was his son, also called George, who in a shocking incident had the misfortune to discover a dead child wrapped up in a parcel beneath a carriage seat. The Hoppers had an interesting colonial ancestry, with links to Barbados and the Battle of Ishandlwana against the Zulus.

Mr and Mrs Hopper lost two sons during the war.

Petty Officer George Hobday Hopper went down with his ship, HMS Mignonette, in 1917, whilst clearing mines off the south west coast of Ireland.

Then, in 1918, they received news that their other son, Albert, was missing in action. After fourteen weeks of anxious waiting, they finally received a letter from Albert saying he was a prisoner of war in Germany. He sent two further letters to his parents, in each asking them to send food as quickly as possible.

However, Mr & Mrs Hopper's sense of relief was short-lived, within a few months they received news of his death from tuberculosis. He was buried in the cemetery of his prisoner of war camp in Minden, Germany, in October 1918, barely a month before the end of the War.

If this were not tragedy enough, the Hopper's daughter, Edith May, also died during the period. The report of her funeral tells us that the bearers of her coffin were members of staff from the railway station where her father worked.

From the Railway Station, head back towards the centre of town. Look for the hotel at the corner of Cambrian Place.

Lloyd's Hotel.

In the early 20th century this was the Temperance Hotel owned by Mr John Humphreys, two of whose two sons fought in France

during the First World War. The younger son, William Henry, died in a Canadian military hospital of wounds received in fighting around Ypres in February 1917. He is commemorated on this father's grave in Dolhafren Cemetery.

Jack, the elder brother, appears to have been an irrepressible character. Though suffering from several wounds to the head, neck and leg whilst serving in Mesopotamia - modern day Iraq - he still remained 'cheery' and in a letter home to his father described the campaign there as a 'picnic'. At the time of writing he made enquiries after his brother Willie, not knowing that he had been killed. In spite his wounds, and others he had previously picked up whilst serving in France, Jack managed to survive the war.

Cross the road and turn left into the High Street. About half way along you will come to the 'Bank Shop' - now two shop facades just past the Angel Inn.

Continue along the High Street, looking at the Bank Shop, Magistrates Court and the Glandwr Gatehouse, before heading down New Street.



Albyn Evan Powell Grant, who died in the fighting at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, during the first action of the local territorial battalion, the 7th Royal Welsh Fusiliers.



Bank Shop

The Pryce family were well-respected business people in Llanidloes who suffered extreme tragedy. Charles Edwin Pryce had inherited his uncle's retail business in 'Bank Shop' and went on to play a leading role in the local community. Known for 'his upright dealings and the integrity of his character', he was a prominent Baptist and a governor of the County School. Tragedy first struck in 1881, when his wife took her own life. Charles remarried and had a second family, including his youngest son John Percival (known as Percy), who became manager of a successful jewellery business in Worcester.

Llanidloes was shocked in 1917 when Charles died suddenly while serving a customer in his shop. At this time, two of his sons were serving in the War: Gwilym was able to return for his father's funeral but Percy was away fighting in France and unable to attend. Further tragedy struck the Pryce family in August 1918 when Percy was killed by a mortar bomb in the trenches. By this time Percy had been out in France for over two years and had been promoted to Sergeant in the Worcester Regiment, in which he had enlisted, in Worcester, in 1915. He had already been wounded once before.



Cross over the road and walk to the end of High Street The last building, which bears a blue plaque, was once the Magistrates Court House.

A number of different courts were required to keep Llanidloes in order during the Great War, ranging from the local borough 'petty sessions' that sat in judgement of cases of rate arrears, poaching, breach of licensing laws and disorderly conduct, and the 'county sessions' that laid down the law in more serious misdemeanours such as affray, or the sensational case of a fraudulent cheque in which due process was hampered by the manager of the bank mixed up in the case refusing to stand down from the Magistrates Bench, where he was fully determined to sit in judgement of the 'impudent felon'.

The dispensation of justice was very much a class privilege, and this must have seemed an increasingly unfair situation as the war went on and the magistrate and councillor class were called upon to fill more and more committees and commissions concerned with the organisation of labour, rationing, or the drawing forth of able bodied men to feed the 'war of attrition' that was fought out on the Western Front. Conscription was introduced in 1916, and with it came the right to appeal against selection for military service. Local 'Tribunals' were held in Llanidloes, to hear cases of men from the town, and at Caersws for the rural labourers working in the villages and farms of the district.

Pretty soon complaints were rife about the unfairness of the system, with questions asked why married men were being sent when hale and hearty youths were exempted, or how this man could be exempted when that man had to go; a problem that was only exacerbated by the inexorable rise in the age range from which men were drawn. By 1918, the talk was of men of fifty having to go, such was the manpower 'crises' in the wake of the

major German offensives of the last year of the war. The Great War was by no means solely a young man's war.

Opposite the Magistrates court, at the corner of New Street, High Street and the Gorn Road, is the gate house of Glandwr mansion, which once occupied all the land to the right of Gorn road where houses and flats now stand. During the First World War this imposing mansion was the home of James Grant, land agent and Alderman of the Borough. A native of Scotland, he had come to Llanidloes to set up in business with local solicitor Evan Powell, who later emigrated to the USA and founded a mining town bearing his name – Powellton, West Virginia.

James Grant's youngest son, Albyn Evan Powell Grant, was educated at Shrewsbury School before being articled to a firm of solicitors in Surrey. He was planning to join his father's legal practice once he had completed his studies, but the war intervened and instead, he served as an officer in the 7th Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers from September 1914. Sadly, along with other men from the area whom we shall meet, Albyn was killed during the battalion's first engagement - Suvla Bay, Gallipoli - on 10th August 1915.

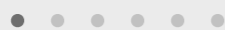
Albyn was just 21 years of age.

Cross the top of Mount Lane and continue down New Street. At the end of the street, turn right into Smithfield Street.

Head down Smithfield Street and pass through the Gro to the river.



John Fred Jones, another member of the Borough Silver Band, who 'saw some sights' in Gallipoli. Unfortunately, John Fred was killed in the other 'black day' for the 7th RWF, the first Battle of Gaza in March 1917.



Smithfield Street & Gro

Smithfield Street vies with Pen y Graig Street and Bethel Street for the honour of sending most men off to the war. A particularly high number of soldier named Jones seem to have originated from this street. John Fred Jones, of No. 41, wrote a letter from his military hospital bed in Cairo following the landing at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli in August 1915. In this assault a bullet went through his right foot and he had to remain where he fell for over six hours as the battle raged around him. His letter confirms that he saw sights 'too awful to describe' and relates how he was so thankful 'to be brought from that hell'. In the battle he narrowly dodged a fatal Turkish bullet, which became lodged in one of the cartridges in the front of his partially emptied bandolier. This famous souvenir made the newspapers of the day and can still be seen at Llanidloes Museum.

Unfortunately John Fred did not survive the war. He was killed in action at Gaza on 26th March 1917, in what turned out to be the bloodiest single day of the war for the wider community of Llanidloes.

Continue down the street and around the corner.

The houses clustered in a semi-circle around the entrance to the Gro car park are colloquially known as the 'bunch of five'. In one of these lived the Mills family – David, originally from nearby Trefeglwys, his wife Sarah Ann and their two young sons, Hubert and Randall. In 1910 David went to South Africa in search of a better life in the gold mines, intending that his family would follow once he had established himself. However, the opportunity never materialised and the First World War intervened. David enlisted in the South African forces, serving in both the

German South West and the German East African campaigns. It was during the latter campaign that he bumped into another Llanidloes man, Corporal E.T. Jones of Hopbrook, who wrote home in mid-1916 that he had 'met a man from Trefeglwys of the name Mills' at an unlikely place in the bush called Himo River.

The following year, David signed up for service in Europe and was drafted into the 4th South African Regiment, the Transvaal Scottish, then serving in France. A brief stay in Britain whilst in transit to the front gave him an opportunity for some leave to see his wife and children for the first time in 7 years, but the reunion was short lived. The great German Spring Offensive of March 1918 overtook David Mills and the Transvaal Scottish at Marrieres Wood on the Somme. The regiment suffered devastating casualties in a gallant rearguard action that ended in the capture of just a remaining handful of men. Of David Mills, no trace was ever found. He is commemorated on the Pozieres memorial.

Cross the road and cross the car park to the river.

It may be hard to believe but this expanse of tarmac by the River Severn was and remains the 'village green' in Llanidloes. In 1919, it was the scene of Enoch George's unfortunate fishing accident.

A rather eccentric character, Enoch had served with the 7th Royal Welsh Fusiliers, and was lame as a result of war injuries. On one leave, he had been seen walking up the main street with a squealing pig in a bag slung over his shoulder, oblivious to the 'stares of curious onlookers'. Once de-mobbed, 'the notorious Enoch', as he was known to the press, returned to Llanidloes and one day, while preparing dynamite for use in catching fish in the

Severn, the explosives went off in his hands. He lost his left hand and had further injuries to his left side, but eventually recovered.

Turn left at the end of the car park and follow the lane marked 'no entry', to its junction with Short Bridge Street. Turn left and cross the bridge, and turn left again into Penygreen Road

After looking at the flats at Hafrennydd and the Colonel's bridge, re-cross the river and turn left into Pen y Graig Street.



Lieutenant Tom Pryce Hamer, manager of the Spring Mills factory and noted footballer, who won two caps for Wales.



Pen y Green Road

The modern flats of Hafrennydd are built on the site of the former Spring Mills factory. Originally a flannel mill built in 1875, at the start of the First World War it was operating as a tannery managed by Tom Price Hamer. You may recall he played an important role in fighting the fire which destroyed the Cooperative Stores in Bethel Street. A well-liked personality in his home town, Tom was a capable and popular employer. He was also a keen and expert footballer; he captained Llanidloes' football team and won two International Caps for Wales.

Tom Hamer joined up at the very outset of war, leaving the tannery business in the hands of his father. He obtained a commission in the South Wales Borderers and was known for being 'a splendid officer' and 'popular with all the ranks'. In July 1916, during the first week of the Battle of the Somme, his battalion took part in the struggle for Mametz Wood. On hearing that several officers had been wounded, Lieut. Hamer, who was the battalions Adjutant, went up to the front line to see if he could be of assistance but was shot by machine gun fire and died instantly.

Tom's father, Alderman Edward Hamer, was one of the town's most successful businessmen and Mayor of Llanidloes a number of times. The death of his son was felt as a great loss to the community. Members of the Town Council sent official condolences to the family, remarking that 'they had lost a young man of great promise, and one who seemed likely to take such a prominent part in the welfare and the industries of the town'.

If you walk further along Penygreen Road, you will come to a bridge over the River Severn that is accessed by a gate. Known

locally as the 'Colonel's Bridge', it stands opposite the site of the camp that was occupied by the 18th Infantry Brigade of the British Army in 1914. The arrival of 2,000 troops in Llanidloes two weeks before the outbreak of the war was quite an event. Locals put flags in their windows, mills and factories closed down, and men left their work to welcome the soldiers. They arrived in six special trains and, headed by their bands, marched through the centre of town to the camp. In the short time the soldiers were stationed here, their conduct was exemplary and they provided military recitals for the townspeople. As the camp was open to visitors at certain hours, local people could stroll around and were struck by its 'orderliness and cleanliness', 'the happy and contented appearance of the men' and by the 'general courtesy extended to all'. In just a few short weeks friendships were formed that endured long after the Brigade was mobilised for war service.

The first months of the war were full of hard knocks for 'The Old Contemptibles' – the self-adopted name of the Regulars of the British Army in 1914. Very few of the men of the 18th Brigade who enjoyed that halcyon summer of 1914 in Llanidloes were still around six months later to witness the famous Christmas Truce. News of the Brigade's fortunes was conveyed regularly to the town through letters, newspapers and even convalescent soldiers who came to visit the friends they had made.

One such visitor was Bandsman Bert Harrison, 1st Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment, who came straight to Llanidloes from France at the start of a week's leave, staying at 'The Lion' on Long Bridge Street for two nights before travelling on to visit his mother. He'd experienced thirteen months at the front and was 'the first un-wounded man to come back to Llanidloes'. As a stretcher bearer,

he had had several narrow escapes. On one occasion he was taking a message to a hospital when a shell burst behind him and he was thrown into the air, but found himself unscathed when he regained consciousness. On his visit to Llanidloes, Bert brought with him a selection of hand grenades, some French bullets and an unexploded German shell!

Another 'adopted son' was Corporal Fred Hare, 2nd Battalion East Yorks Regiment. Born in Yorkshire, Fred Hare joined the Army as a drummer boy in 1909 aged just 16. During his time at the camp, he became involved with various social movements in the town and was a welcome guest in many homes. As part of the British Expeditionary Force, he landed in France in September 1914, but sustained a bullet wound in his right thigh on 30th October at the Battle of Armentières. Fred chose to be sent home to Llanidloes to recuperate, and remained here until January 1915 when he returned to the front. Sadly, Corporal Hare was killed at Ypres on 23rd April 1915 in 'one of the bloodiest encounters of the war'. The Montgomeryshire Express and Radnor Times recorded his death in its 'Roll Of Honour' of 22nd June 1915, reporting that only 63 of his 700 colleagues were present at roll-call after the battle.

Turn around at the Colonel's Bridge and retrace your steps back to Short Bridge Street. After crossing the bridge take the first left turn into Pen y Graig Street.

Walk along Pen y Graig Street to the Church



John Bertram Mills, a strapping six footer, one of four Mills boys to serve in the war, but the only one to die - at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli.

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Pen y Graig Street

Now a respectable row of terraced houses running high above the banks of the River Severn, Pen y Graig Street had quite a reputation during the First World War. Its residents were regularly before the 'petty sessions' on charges of poaching and other small-time offences. The fact of most of its men having gone off to war was believed to have affected the character of this area, the women left behind being prone to, 'wage a civil war'. In one noted court case the local magistrates heard that the warring women's language was 'simply disgusting' and that their skirmishes included kicking, pulling hair and knocking to the ground. The combatants were not fined on this occasion but were bound over to keep the peace for a year, the Chairmen of the Bench declaring, somewhat wishfully as it proved, 'We are anxious for you as parents to go home and set a better example to your children.' One of the women involved in this case was Sarah Jane Hill, wife of Private Harry Hill, who was killed in action after two years' service in France.

The Mills family, who lived at number 10, had five sons engaged in the war effort – four as soldiers and one in munitions work. The unassuming Jack Mills was killed in action at Suvla Bay. Unfortunately, news of Jack's death reached his widowed mother through letters sent home by other Llanidloes soldiers, before she had been officially informed of his loss.

At the end of the war the formidable residents of Pen y Graig Street successfully petitioned the Mayor to alter the route of the victory procession so that it passed along their street. Pen y Graig had, it was claimed, sent more men to the war than any other street in Llanidloes.

After looking at the commemorative plaques in the church, walk along the river bank and cross Long Bridge, and then head towards Dolhafren Cemetery.



Robin Everingham, in his merchant navy uniform.



St Idloes Parish Church houses a number of memorials to the fallen of the Great War. On the wall opposite the door, an engraved marble tablet lists the names of those members of the congregation who made the ultimate sacrifice. To the right of this is a small plaque that dedicates the glass in the window above to the memory of Canon Edmund Osborne Jones, the vicar of Llanidloes during the war, and his two sons Titho Glynne and Russell Hafrennydd, both of whom were killed in action.

Like Albyn Grant, whom we met earlier, Russell Hafrennydd was just 21 years of age when he died at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli in August 1915, in the first action of the local territorial battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Russell was in charge of the battalion's signalling section in the landings at Suvla Bay. A Dolgellau grammar school pupil, Russell's education was completed in Belgium and at Bremen in Germany. He was employed as a clerk for Lloyd's Bank in London at the outbreak of war and initially enlisted in the Queens Westminster Rifles before obtaining an officer's commission with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

Two years later, in April 1917, Russell's elder brother, Titho Glynne, was killed in Palestine. Just four weeks prior to his death, a letter from Titho had been read out from the pulpit by his father during a service in this church. A Lieutenant in the local Royal Welsh Fusiliers battalion, Titho had passed unscathed through the 1st Battle of Gaza on 26th March 1917, the worst day of the war for the Llanidloes area in terms of the number of men killed or wounded. Educated at Christ College, Brecon, Titho had been articled to a solicitor in Aberystwyth before setting up his own practice in British Columbia. Back in Britain on business at the

outbreak of war, Titho had immediately enlisted as a Private in the Queen Victoria Rifles and served a tour of duty in the trenches in France before gaining his commission. He was 30 years of age when he died.

The Reverend Jones and his wife had another son in the Indian Civil Service and a daughter who was an active member of the committee that kept the men at the front supplied with parcels containing treats from home.

On the opposite wall of the Church, underneath the Millennium window, are two burnished brass plaques commemorating another set of unfortunate brothers, Guy and Robin Everingham, who lived at Vaynor Park on the outskirts of Llanidloes, and were apparently descendants of the ancient Everingham barony.

The younger brother, Robin, was in the Merchant Navy when war was declared and his ship, S.S. Pentwyn was commandeered as a transport to carry guns and troops to Belgium. On arrival at Antwerp, Robin took it into his head to become a cavalryman and joined a unit called the 'British Colonial Horse', which was attached to the 3rd Belgian Lancers. He undertook scouting activity ahead of the German advance that came crashing through Belgium in the opening weeks of the war. With all but a corner of Belgium lost, Robin arrived home wounded and ill in early 1915, but shortly afterwards enlisted in the Welsh Horse Yeomanry. It was at the Dardanelles, on 10 December 1915, just days before the evacuation of the army from the ill-fated Gallipoli peninsula, that Robin was hit in the head by machine gun fire and killed instantly. His comrades buried him in a little cemetery close to where he fell, in a declivity dubbed the 'Rhonda Valley'. As the plaque

commemorates, Robin was just 19 years and 6 months of age. His brother Guy joined the Royal Welsh Fusiliers on the outbreak of war and served in the trenches in France for thirteen months before joining the Royal Flying Corps as an observer. During a spell of leave in early 1917 he married Gladys Brown of Llandudno, to which town his mother had moved. After a short honeymoon he was back in France where, on Easter Sunday, while flying over the Vimy Ridge, he had the misfortune to run into the red painted Albatros 'fighter' flown by Manfred von Richthofen. The slow-moving two seater in which Guy was flying was no match for the German aircraft, and Guy's plane became the 39th victim of the notorious 'Red Baron'. Guy and his pilot were laid to rest where they fell, on the eastern slope of the Vimy Ridge.

A colleague described the scene, "Flight Sergeant Gee and the Sergeant-Major buried poor Mackenzie and Everingham. Mack was looking most peaceful and quite normal, being shot through the back and arm. But Everingham looked like the end had not come so peaceably. He was not shot, but badly broken by the fall, some 4,000 or more feet. They were buried close to what was left of the machine, all around were hundreds of dead bodies - our own and the Huns." - *Captain Eric Routh, 16th Squadron RFC - quoted in 'Bloody April' by Peter Hart.*

Retrace your steps to the entrance to the churchyard and take the path down to the riverside walk. This area is known as Severn Port. Follow the path until you reach the entrance to the park by the bridge. Turn left across the bridge and follow the road to Dolhafren Cemetery

Having visited the cemetery, retrace your steps back into town, and walk up Longbridge Street.



The graves of the two friends lie next to next.



Dolhafren Cemetery

Dolhafren Cemetery contains memorials to a number of the men who died in the Great War, and doubtless the graves of many who served and lived to tell the tale. In this trail we have already met William Henry Humphreys and Tom Pryce Hamer, both of whom are commemorated here. David Hubert Evans, J.E. Bernard Jones, Evan Lewis Owen, William Morgan and T. Emlyn Davies are others who share poignant memorials on their parents' graves.

The Cemetery contains six Commonwealth War Graves relating to the First World War, not all of whom feature on the memorial. The graves include those of R. Osborne George, R. E. Jones, T. H. D. Jones, D. H. Evans, Simon Jones and Richard Lewis Davies.

The latter two young men form part of a tragically sad story. Friends from farms up in the hills overlooking Llanidloes, Simon and Richard had attended school and chapel together. Early in 1917 they were conscripted and went off to Park Hall training camp at Oswestry. Little more than a month later, both were dead, struck down by a virulent strain of pneumonia. A few days later another local man, John Pugh Abel, also died in what had turned into a full scale epidemic. The bodies of all three men were brought back to the town and given military funerals, Simon and Richard here at Dolhafren, John Abel in nearby Llangurig.

The outbreak at Park Hall camp caused consternation and anger, fuelled by rumours of German doctors working at the camp and inoculating the men with a deadly virus. The military authorities undertook an enquiry into the situation at Park Hall and, in their report, refuted claims that men were dying because they had received vaccinations or because the sanitary conditions in the camp were poor. It was stated that over 400 men had been

admitted to the hospital with respiratory illnesses in February and early March 1917, of whom 43 had subsequently died. The cause of death was declared to be an outbreak of 'influenzal pneumonia' aggravated by the very cold weather. The official report concluded that, 'The prevalence of illness is ascribed to the fact that many of the recruits affected are men of poor physique who are put through a course of drill which probably exhausts them so that, what in the normal course would be only a slight cold, rapidly becomes very serious'. With the benefit of hindsight, it is not hard to see in this outbreak a forerunner of the dreadful Spanish Flu virus that was to kill so many millions of soldiers and civilians in the aftermath of the First World War.

Turn around and retrace your steps back to the bridge.

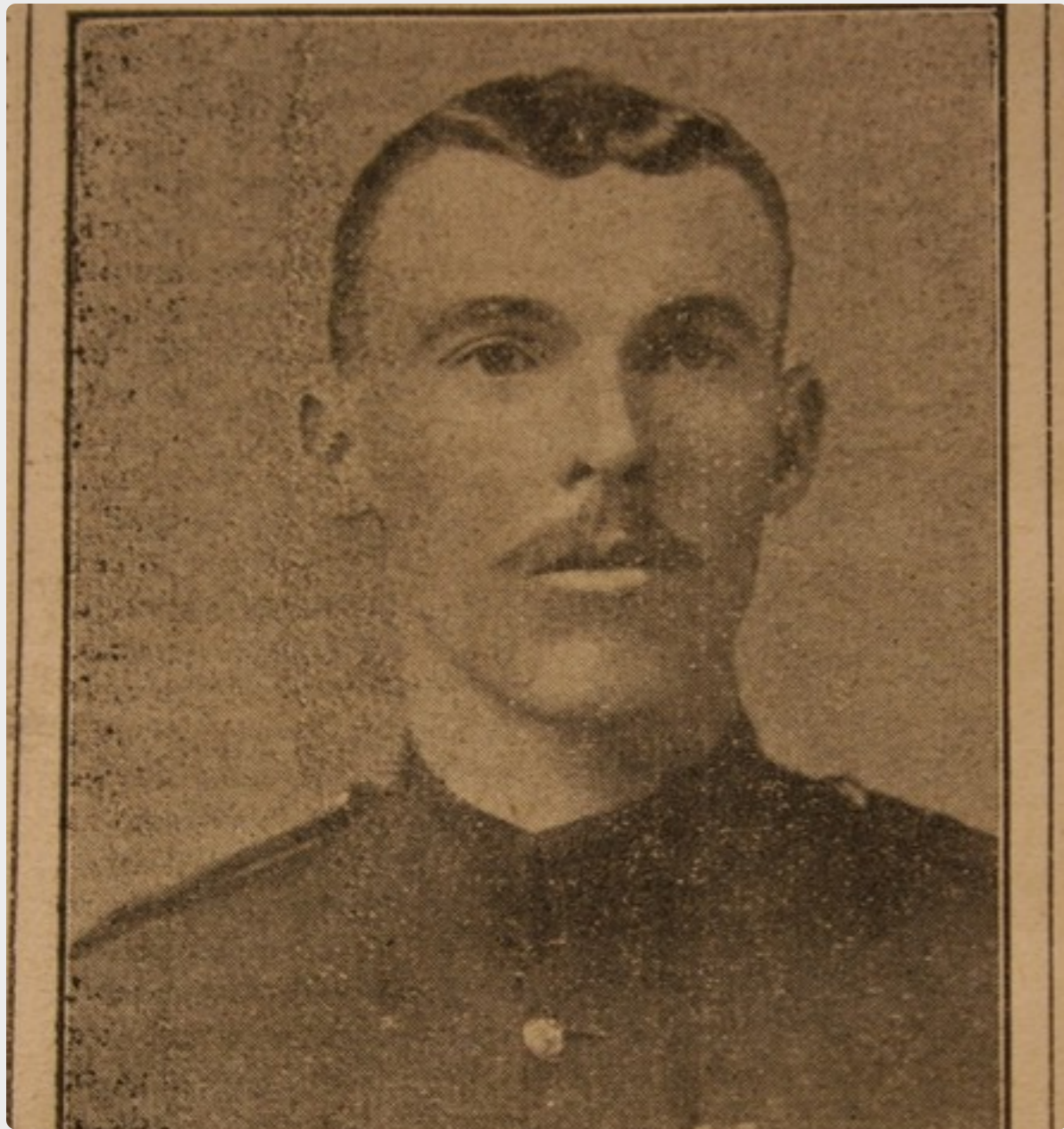
On your right you will pass the Llanidloes & District War Memorial Hospital which, as its name suggests, is also a legacy of World War I. When considering a fitting memorial to those who had fallen, it was decided to resurrect an old plan for a cottage hospital for the district. Thanks to donations from the Red Cross, arising from a surplus of funds collected by the local detachment during the war, and from the largess of the Davies family of Llandinam, there was sufficient money raised to start the project. Initial enquiries earmarked land at Glandwr, but the asking price was too great, so finally this site on Trefeglwys Road was secured.

The building you see before you did not open until November 1930; the first, temporary, cottage hospital opened in March 1922

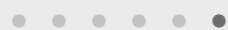
in the building on your right, called Glascoed. Fittingly, the first patient to be treated in the hospital was Mr Griffiths of Hornby; his son, Richard Benbow Griffiths, had died in the war and is commemorated amongst the names from Llandinam on the War Memorial on the Town Hall.

At the end of the bridge, cross the road and turn right onto Long Bridge Street.

Turn left at the Old Market Hall and complete the trail back in Great Oak Street,



Reservist and postman, Tom Habberley, who left a wife and three young children.



Long Bridge Street

Standing roughly half way along Long Bridge Street stands Plynlimon House. This building was erected to accommodate the abattoir and highly successful butchery business of Edward Hamer, former Mayor and an Alderman of the Borough. His son, Tom Pryce Hamer, has appeared a few times in this trail. Edward Hamer was ubiquitous in Llanidloes throughout the war years. He was a leading figure on the Food Committee for the area when, in the later years of the war, German submarine warfare restricted the importation of food into Britain, leading to rationing and the campaign to cultivate more land. He also sat on the tribunal boards that heard the appeals for exemption from conscription. And it was Alderman Hamer who proposed the cottage hospital project be adopted as the war memorial for the town and district.

Local ironmonger S. P. Davies was the Mayor of Llanidloes at the end of the war and during its immediate aftermath. His shop stood next door to Plynlimon House, where there is now a pharmacy. Two of his three sons served in the forces; one of them, Richard Brown Stephen Davies - known simply as RBS - becoming something of a local celebrity.

A photograph was published in the local newspaper showing Corporal R.B.S. Davies riding a camel near the Pyramids while serving in Egypt with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in 1916. The following year he was wounded and captured by the Turks at the Battle of Gaza, and remained a Prisoner of War until the Great War ended. One of the first POWs to be repatriated back to Llanidloes, RBS received a hero's welcome. The town band played as he arrived at the station, and he was carried shoulder

high to a waiting car that took him slowly through a crowd of admirers to his home. A subsequent interview given to the Montgomeryshire Express and Radnor Times tells of his experiences as a prisoner of the Turks. Later, he wrote a memoir of his time in the 7th Royal Welsh Fusiliers – from his training, to surviving Gallipoli and then becoming a prisoner in Egypt; a typed copy is kept in Llanidloes Museum. Promoted to Sergeant at the end of the war, RBS went on to receive a commission during further service in World War II.

The imposing façade of the present day estate agents was once the premises of the Llanidloes Post Office. Two of the men listed on the town's War Memorial were postmen and reservists, who were called up by their regiments on 8 August 1914, just four days after the declaration of war. Tom Habberley has the distinction of appearing on both the Llanidloes and Newtown memorials, being a native of the latter but well remembered in Llanidloes where he delivered mail to the farms in the neighbouring hills. He had been a soldier for eight years and had previously seen service in the Boer War. One of Llanidloes' first casualties, 34-year old Tom was killed on the 16th May 1915 while serving with 1st Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers in France.

Tom's fellow postman, Joseph Frank, served in the cyclist section of the Welsh Regiment. He had some hair-raising adventures during the initial months of fighting, which were reported at length in an interview given to the Montgomeryshire Express and Radnor Times. Early in 1915, while home on leave recuperating from a

wound, he married Elizabeth Lloyd, a widow living in Smithfield Street. They shared just eight days of married life together before Joseph returned to the front, where he was subsequently killed in action on 25th of May 1915. Shortly before he died, Joseph was promoted to Sergeant and recommended for the Distinguished Conduct Medal. However, his medal card shows that his wife was still enquiring about the award of this medal some twelve years after his death.

When you reach the Old Market Hall, turn left into Great Oak Street.

Finish the trail back at the Llanidloes War Memorial



Sergeant Frank Rogers, missing at Suvla Bay on 10th August 1915.



Great Oak Street

The timber-framed Old Market Hall is the landmark building in Llanidloes and it is inconceivable nowadays that anyone could have wanted to knock it down. But soon after the Great War ended, its anachronistic presence in the centre of town was viewed by many as an affront to progress. Indeed, this 17th century building was very nearly sacrificed when the Town Council purchased it and a suggestion was made that the centre of the old Norman Cross on which the building stands would be the ideal place to erect a War Memorial.

Thankfully, the closest that the Old Market Hall got to playing host to a memorial was the housing of two captured German artillery pieces. Presented to Llanidloes in recognition of the financial contribution the town had made to the war effort, the arrival of the guns caused quite a stir amongst the local children, but no-one knew quite what to do with them. While waiting for a decision on where they should be placed, the guns were safely tucked away under the arches of the Old Market Hall. Finally, it was decided to place one of the guns on the Recreation Ground and the other in the grounds of the Intermediate School. How long they remained at these sites, or what happened to them, is not known.

The newsagents shop on Great Oak Street was a stationers and newsagents owned by the Rogers family during the Great War. Their 32-year old son, Frank, worked in the shop and was the Llanidloes correspondent for the County Times. At the outbreak of war, Frank had to leave the business to serve in the 7th Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers, he being the Sergeant Major of

the local territorial company. Like several other Llanidloes men, he got caught up in the chaos of the Suvla Bay landings at Gallipoli and on 10th August 1915, Frank disappeared. Some said he was dead, and this was reported in the local press coverage of the battle, followed soon after by a correction saying that he was wounded and missing. His elderly parents went through the agony of not knowing his exact fate, and placed adverts in the newspapers asking for information about their son. Confirmation of Frank's death was a long time coming. It did not arrive until a few years later, in the same week that his parents celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary.

The Grade II-listed Trewythen Hotel was called The Trewythen Arms in the days of the Great War. According the 1911 census, it was one of twenty public houses in Llanidloes – that's one licence for every 129 people who lived in the town. The war certainly brought its challenges to these businesses, particularly in later years when rationing and price control made it difficult for publicans and hoteliers to provide their customers with all that they might wish. But by far the greatest restraint on the licensed trade of the town was the ever vigilant presence of the local police sergeant, P. S. Parry. In one notable case involving the Trewythen Arms Hotel, the sergeant got down on his hands and knees to sniff the floor where a 'suspect' had tossed away the contents of his glass. In those days, all drinking had to be finished promptly by 9pm if the long arm of the law was not to relentlessly pursue the landlords or soldiers home on leave. In our more relaxed age, it is hard to imagine the draconian regulations imposed during the First World War at the behest of the local

Wesleyan and Calvinistic Methodist Councils.

Next to the Trewythen Hotel stands an imposing building that used to serve as public meeting rooms in Llanidloes. At the time of the First World War, the London City and Midland Bank was on the ground floor corner of the building. It was in the windows of the bank that telegrams and papers bearing news from the war were displayed, attracting large crowds of readers.

On the first floor were the Assembly Rooms, the scene of regular events during the war: social activities to raise money for the local Red Cross; leaving parties to say goodbye to detachments of men; and a collection point for the constant stream of parcels being sent to the soldiers in the trenches. In 1919 Victory Balls were held here as soldiers returned home, de-mobbed from their units or released from captivity. These home-coming celebrations were mingled with sadness for those who would never return and a growing uncertainty over whether life in Llanidloes would ever be the same again.

The trail ends here. To discover more about the town during the First World War and of the wider area, known as Arwystli, please visit the Museum ,on the ground floor of the Town Hall, where you began the trail.