

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. Although the walks explore local places and events, they also tell the story of the war at large: the outbreak, volunteering and conscription, feeding the nation and rationing, heroism and sacrifice, hospitals and poetry.

In 2014 this walk No 1 will be followed by Guided Walks on

**Saturday June 14th –  
Aston-on-Clun to Hopesay**

In Berlin the last hours before the War

**Saturday August 2nd 10.30am and Sunday 3rd 11.00am –  
Craven Arms**

Preparing for War – In the Air and on the Rails

**Saturday 20th September –  
Titterstone Clee to Downton Hall**

The Kaiser Gate-crashed my 21st

All these walks must be booked in advance from  
Shropshire Hills AONB, Alison Scimia: 01588 674080  
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The printed guides will form a complete set by the end of 2019.



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# War Walks on the Home Front



## Walk 1 1914 Boots blessed with gold

## Walk 1- 1914 Boots blessed with gold

A short circular walk along the north of the town, exploring the paths and meadows enjoyed by the poet Wilfred Owen and his family.

**Distance:** 2½ miles, 1½ hours • **Grade:** Easy

**Terrain:** Hard surfaced tracks, meadow paths and minor roads



**1** From Shrewsbury Abbey walk towards the English Bridge using the pavement on the right hand side of the road.

The Technical School [John the name has recently reverted] before the bridge is where Wilfred Owen studied from 1907 and graduated in 1911 at the age of 18.

**2** At the far end of the bridge descend the steps to the river and turn left at the bottom. Go under the enormous railway bridge and continue to the weir. Tom Owen [Wilfred's father] was the Assistant Superintendent of the Joint Railway in Shrewsbury.

**3** Turn right along the tree-lined Sidney Avenue

**4** At the sharp left turn at the end of the trees leave the road and take the riverside path straight ahead signed the Severn Way.

**5** At the road bridge follow the Severn Way signs up the steps and turn right to cross the bridge. The Wrekin with its mast can be seen in the distance and Haughmond hill is the nearer hill. Turn right again to descend to the opposite bank. At the top of the steps an information panel recalls how Wilfred Owen exercised a poet's licence with the buttercups from these meadows. In 'Spring Offensive' written in 1918 he transplants them to the Western Front. On their way home from Uffington Church, Wilfred had commented how the petals from the buttercups had blessed his young brother's boots with gold.

**6** Go straight ahead leaving the Severn Way to follow the river upstream towards the town. Continue through a kissing gate and over a footbridge to reach Underdale Road.

**7** Turn right along the road ignoring 3 LH turns. Just before next one i.e. Cleveland Street, stop at Hawthorn Villas [Nos 28 and 26]. Tom's parents lived in the right hand of the two houses. In December 1884 Tom started work as a clerk with the L&NW and GW Joint Railways on a salary of £65. Until his marriage, Tom seems to have lived here. In the 1891 census he appears as "railway accountant."

In 1907 when the family moved from Birkenhead on Tom Owen's promotion, they initially lived here again. Wilfred was 14 years old. It was in

the same year that the boys discovered Uffington Ferry, the church and the buttercup meadow.

Continue as far as Cleveland Street. The large building with polychrome bricks on the far corner was Cleveland Place [now no 18]. The Owen family lived behind the left hand of the two doors giving on to Underdale Road. Wilfred and Harold shared the unheated room on the top floor. There was no electricity; a boy who lived opposite would see Wilfred reading every night by candlelight.

**8** walk along Cleveland Street to Monkmoor Road and turn left. Look out for number 69, Mahim [Maheern]. The house was named by Tom Owen as a reminder of his four years in Bombay with the Indian railways. Wilfred wrote the early poems in his attic bedroom. Before the houses opposite were built, he had a view of the old race course [1730 to 1887]. It was in this house the family learned of his death whilst outside the bells rang to mark the Armistice. Retrace steps to cross over Cleveland Street and continue along Monkmoor Road. [a short detour if you have time] cross over Monkmoor Road and turn into Canon Street. From 1897 to 1900, the Owen family lived at the far end, No 54, Harold was born here 5th September 1897. Wilmot House recalls the Lost Eden of Plas Wilmot, Oswestry.

Return to Monkmoor Road and continue to Whitehall Street on the opposite side of the road. End of detour.

**9** Before turning right into Whitehall Street look left to the red sandstone gatehouse.

This formed the entrance to the Tudor mansion built by Richard Prynce, a lawyer, using stone from Shrewsbury Abbey after the Dissolution.

**10** Turn left at the end and cross the road to the Abbey churchyard. The memorial to Wilfred Owen SYMMETRY 1993 lies straight ahead. It was unveiled in 1993 to mark the centenary of his birth. Two smooth slabs of Dartmoor granite act as benches supported by two sharp-edged structures based upon the duckboards laid over the mud in the trenches. It also speaks of the pontoon across the Oise-Sambre Canal which Owen's unit was constructing when he was killed on 4th November 1914.