Huntingdon had a significant role in the First World War. Many troops were stationed in Huntingdon, wounded soldiers were treated here, and the Portholme Aerodrome Company contributed to the development of aviation.

This war memorial was paid for by the public. It was unveiled on 1 January 1921 by Major General Pilcher. The architect was Mr Alfred B Yates. 77 names from World War One have been recorded.

This map shows locations that would have been significant for those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The 'Great War: Between the Lines' project is a co-operation between 16 partners in the UK, to facilitate cross-border activities which will encourage the commemoration of the Great War centenary between 2014 and 2018, ensuring that the sacrifices made during the Great War and the immediate post-war period are remembered and celebrated, and that the lessons of war are learned.

The project will involve several activities which will involve the public, such as: new exhibitions and teaching materials to help young people understand the sacrifices made during the Great War; local commemorations and events to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War in 2014. For more details on how you can get involved please visit our website www.great-war.ccam.co.uk where you can also view our growing digital archive and upload your own material.

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Latitude Mapping Ltd. – www.latitudemapping.co.uk

The ‘Great War: Between the Lines’ project is funded by the INTERREG IVA 2 Seas programme. Its funds are distributed through the European Regional Development Fund and promote the development of the two seas border region.
5 Porch Museum

The Porch Museum is commemorating the First World War with an exhibition devoted to the experiences of children and women. It will include displays on war horses, the Royal Flying Corps and the first airman to receive a Victoria Cross, the Portholme Aerodrome Company, and Oliver George who was awarded the Croix de Guerre.

The Porch Museum is open on various weekends throughout the year. Please check the museum’s website for opening times.

6 Portholme

In the early days of the aeroplane, Portholme’s large meadow made it ideal as a place for flying. Between April 1910 and 1913 numerous flights were made from Portholme by pioneers of early aviation such as James Badley and Wilf Moorehouse. During the war, it was used for drilling troops stationed in Huntingdon. The Highland Mounted Brigade was inspected there by King George V in 1914. The meadow was also used as a temporary summer flying camp and a Royal Naval Air Service training camp, with around forty aircraft, until September 1918.

7 Mill Common

Large numbers of soldiers were stationed in Huntingdon during the early years of the war. Wooden buildings were erected on Mill Common to accommodate horses belonging to the troops billeted in Huntingdon over winter 1914/15 (also on Views Common, Spring Common and Castle Hill House). There was even an outdoor concert arena which was also used for church services as the local churches could not accommodate everyone. The Huntingdonshire Cyclist Battalion also used open ground on Mill Common to practise digging trenches. The remains of these can still be seen on the Common.

8 County Hospital

The first group of wounded soldiers arrived at the County Hospital in November 1914. Like the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) hospitals, the County Hospital relied on donations of food and magazines from well-wishers to keep it going.

11 Walden House

The former home of Henry Geldart JP, Walden House became a Red Cross Hospital in December 1914 when Brunswick Villas proved to be too small. It had to be extended with the addition of temporary buildings. By 1917 it could accommodate eighty five patients. Almost all the staff were volunteers. By the time it closed in January 1919, the hospital had treated 3,900 in-patients and women from Huntingdon who had lost their lives during the war horses, the Royal Flying Corps and the first airman to receive a Victoria Cross, the Portholme Aerodrome Company, and Oliver George who was awarded the Croix de Guerre.

12 Old Grammar School buildings (formerly Probation)

A ‘Central Restaurant’ was opened here in February 1918 to provide dinner at reasonable prices and to help people hit by rationing. The restaurant could accommodate 200 people and meals were served between 12 and 2 pm. Spring’s meals from 12 and 12.45 pm. Items from the menu on the opening day included soup (1 or 2d), beefsteak pudding (5d), stewed apples (2d) and rice pudding (2d). There was also a takeaway facility or ‘outdoor department’ at the rear of the building.

13 Huntingdon War Memorial

Despite raising large amounts of money for the war effort, the people of Huntingdon failed initially to support the building of a memorial hall or other form of commemorations of the fallen. The Town Council installed a memorial tablet in the Town Hall, but the Huntingdon Women’s Institute, formed in 1918 from the Women’s War Agricultural Committee, decided to fund a separate memorial. Lady Kathleen Scott was commissioned to design and make the statue. The cost of the statue was met by the Women’s Institute fund and a Mayor’s fund paid for the plinth and the cost of erection. 3000 people attended the unveiling of the statue on 11 November 1923.

14 Town Hall

Important announcements in the town were made from the balcony of the Town Hall. It was from here the Mayor announced the end of the war at 4pm on Monday 11 November 1918. Fireworks were let off indiscriminately and there was a huge bonfire in the grounds of the Red Cross hospital at Walden House on which an effigy of the German Kaiser was burnt. There is a memorial tablet in the Town Hall, recording the names of 118 men and women from Huntingdon who had lost their lives between 1914 and 1918.

15 51 High St (now Brighthouse)

The former Murkett’s premises in the High Street were converted in to a ‘Soldiers Institute’, one of many places across town where the troops stationed in Huntingdon could go to relax. There was generally a room set aside for reading and writing and another area for entertainment and games donated by local people. The former cycle repair shop was turned into an impromptu concert hall.

16 Huntingdon Library and Archives

Call in to Huntingdon Library and Archives if you want to start researching your military ancestors. We have free access to World War One records, via the Ancestry and Find My Past websites. We also have the Hunts Post newspaper for 1914 – 1918 on microfilm.