

History Walk 1 - Bedminster Bridge via Windmill Hill to East Street

This walk will take under an hour and a half and is just over 4 km in length. It takes in Victoria Park and Windmill Hill. It includes some steep gradients and there are a few steps on the route. There are seats in Victoria Park and on East Street.

You can view the route of the walk on the 'Bedminster War Resisters' digital map at https://www.brh.org.uk/site/article_type/map/. When you have opened the map, scroll down the menu on the left of the screen, click in the box beside 'History Walk 1' and then click on the subtitle for the route to be shown.

Start at **Bedminster Bridge**

This was a place where open air political meetings were held before and during WW1. It was also a meeting point for members of the Clarion Cycle Club.

Walk down the right side of Bedminster Parade passing the Rope Walk pub to the **Old Police Station**

Opened in 1882, Bedminster Police Station was during the First World War, the home of B Division of the Bristol Constabulary. It is likely that some of the conscientious objectors and war resisters were temporarily held in the cells here after arrest.

Continue along Bedminster Parade going towards ASDA. Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing outside ASDA and turn right, then take the first left by the Barley Mow pub down Philip Street. Walk the length of Philip Street passing the Windmill Hill City Farm on your right. During the First World War there were a couple of **Tanneries** in the area to the left of Philip Street.

One of our war resisters, Frank Pope (74 Beaulay Road) was a leather roller and might have worked here. The tanneries would have given the area a very distinctive smell.

At the end of Philip Street turn left on Whitehouse Lane. Cross Whitehouse Lane using the pedestrian crossing. **The Whitehouse** was here on this corner where there is now a small car park.

The Whitehouse was the home of Henry Herbert Frape, a printer's cutter and conscientious objector.

On the opposite corner was **Victoria Lodge**

This was the home of Frederick Lewis, a grocer's assistant and conscientious objector. His brother Walter Henry Lewis (15 Victoria Place) was also a conscientious objector.

Go through the railway arch and turn right into Victoria Park, walking along the path that runs between an avenue of London Plain Trees with the play park on your right. The path climbs the hill does a hairpin bend to the left and carries on to the top of the hill. Where the paths divide take the central path towards a circular seat with a lamp post in the middle. In WW1 period there was a **cannon from the Crimean War** on this site.

The land for Victoria Park was bought by the Council in the late 1880s. This was obvious choice as the site had previously been used as a public open space and was also a favourite site for public meetings.

Now take the path up to the top between the bowling green and park keeper's lodge. At the children's playground turn left. (On sunny days you may be able to get a coffee here at the cafe van). When the paths divide bear right and go straight down the hill with the basket ball court on your left. There used to be a **bandstand** here during WW1.

Political groups including the Independent Labour Party held open air meetings here.

Take the next turning on the right and leave the park through the entrance (with a few steps) onto Nutgrove Ave. Just a short distance down the hill are **12&14 Nutgrove Avenue**.

Albert James Mann, a boot and shoe examiner and a conscientious objector lived at number 12. His neighbour George Sampson at number 14 was a dental mechanic and a member of the Plymouth Brethren. He obtained exemption from combatant service on religious grounds.

Go a short way up the hill and take the first left onto Elvaston Road, left again onto to Raymend Road. Just a short distance down the hill on the opposite side of the road is an alley that leads through to Kensal Road. When you emerge from the alley, turn left and you will see the houses on this side of the road are raised above street level. In this terrace is **25 Kensal Road**.

25 Kensal Road was a key household in the network of war resisters in Bedminster and Bristol as a whole. It was the home of Annie Chappell, Secretary of the Bristol Branch of the No Conscription Fellowship. Her husband Bert, a printer, was the Secretary of Bristol Branch of the Socialist Labour Party. They shared their home with Ernest and Florence Rudman, tobacco workers. In 1916 both Ernest and Bert were arrested and court martialled together in Worcester as conscientious objectors and both served several consecutive sentences in prison. Ernest was force fed after going on hunger strike in protest for still being imprisoned in 1919 after the war had ended.

With your back to 25 Kensal Road, cross over the road and turn right and then first left onto Paultow Road. Walk down the road and at the T junction turn left. The first road on the right is Mascot Road and the house on this corner is **27 Paultow Road**.

This was the home of Detective Herbert Charles Woods who was based at Bedminster Police Station. Detective Woods was responsible for arresting a number of Bedminster war resisters including: George Barker (12 Cannon Street), Ernest Rudman (25 Kensal Road), and George Abraham Smith (68 Greville Road).

Retrace your steps back up to Kensal Road and turn left up the hill. On the corner of Kensal Road and Holmsdale Road there is a green area on your left. Take the path diagonally up the hill, through the car park at the bottom of a tower block. From the driveway here there is a **panoramic view to the South of Bristol**.

During WW1, Bristol ended at St John's Lane running along the valley at the bottom of the hill. The hills to the South that are now the Knowle West housing estate were still farmland in 1916.

Go up the driveway to Somerset Terrace at the top of the hill. Turn left along Somerset Terrace going downhill. The road quickly becomes **Dunkerry Road and number 9** will be on your left.

Ormond Sidney Pink, a machinist lived here. He was imprisoned as a conscientious objector and later spent time in a Home Office work camp.

Carry on to **32 Dunkerry Road** on your right.

George Taylor, a sausage maker and conscientious objector lived here.

At the end of Dunkerry Road you come to a Y junction: turn right, going gently up hill. This is Cotswold Road: it bends to the right and just as you pass the highest point on your left is **86 Upper Cotswold Road**.

Samuel Charles Hall, a clerk/shorthand typist and conscientious objector lived here.

The road now descends steeply, on your left is an area of trees and greenery and partway along a big stone wall there is an entrance onto a footpath and a sign saying **St John's burial ground**.

St John's was a main parish church in Bedminster and family members of several war resisters are likely to have been buried here.

Follow the path which goes down the steep hill through the burial ground. At the bottom you will come out onto a major road. Turn right, cross a minor side road and follow the main road, going under the railway. You will come to a major road junction with traffic lights. Using the pedestrian crossing -

3 sets of lights - cross over to Malago Road. Turn right along Malago Road - pass a number of warehouses including Screwfix and just past Mr Clutch turn left up St John's Road. Go up the road and at the top there is a small terrace of houses on the left hand side which include **52 & 54 St John's Road**.

Thomas Hutchins, a letter press printer and conscientious objector lived at number 52. His neighbour, Ernest McDonald Paterson, a taylor and draper, lived at number 54. Ernest was imprisoned as a conscientious objector.

At the end of St John's Road you get a good view of the **Robinson Building**.

At the time of the First World War, E.S. & A Robinsons were major manufacturers of cardboard box packaging, and paper bags. It is likely that several of the Bedminster war resisters (particularly those involved in printing, such as Bert Chappell) or members of their family worked here.

Turn right into a dead end road - you should be facing a small park. Follow the path to the left that skirts the railings around edge of this park - this is the former churchyard of St John's. Take the first left down Church Road which leads down onto East Street. Turn left on East Street and cross to other side of the road to the HSBC bank. This is the site of **152 East Street**.

Abram Coburg, a tailor from a Russian Jewish family lived and worked here. He sought exemption from combatant service on hardship and probably religious grounds. Abram's brother Henry did join up and was killed in Flanders in 1917.

At the big junction at the end of East Street turn right onto Cannon Street where there is first a chemist, then a betting shop and the Robert Fitzharding pub. Somewhere beneath this block was **12 Cannon St**.

In WW1, this was the cycle shop and home of George Edgar Barker and his wife Minnie May. On 14th March 1917 George appeared before the Bristol Police Court following his arrest by Detective Woods. The Court Record states that he: 'Unlawfully did commit an act prejudicial to the Defence of the Realm, to wit, during the 12 months last past, with intent to assist the enemy did construct, maintain and use an underground chamber at his premises 12 Cannon Street, Bedminster, for the purposes of hiding and harbouring persons liable for military service.' George was assisted in the constructing the secret chamber by Walter Told, another cycle shop owner who lived and worked at 62 North Street.

Look across the road to the large Kustom furniture shop. This is the former **Bedminster Town Hall**.

Bedminster Town Hall was built in 1891. It was converted to a cinema by Ralph Pringle in 1909 becoming Bristol's second picture house.

Now retrace your steps back onto East Street and walk about 700 m down the street till you see a Superdrug and Poundland on the left. This is the site of **Bedminster Hippodrome**.

Bedminster Hippodrome opened in July 1911 as a 2000 seat music hall. George Barker (owner of the bike shop with the secret chamber at 12 Cannon Street) had a younger brother, Edward who with his wife Daisy Barker were music hall artistes. They might well have performed at the Hippodrome. In 1915 it changed ownership and was converted into a cinema.

Continue down East Street and you will see a large red brick building and arched arcade on the left. This is the former **Wills Tobacco Factory**.

W D and H O Wills built their first tobacco factory on the site of a former tannery on East Street in the 1880s. Hundreds of Bedminster people worked at these factories. Four of our war resisters (like Ernest Rudman) and a further six war resister households had members of their families in the tobacco industry.

This is the end of the walk. If you continue down East Street you will rejoin the start of the walk. You can catch buses to the centre and other parts of Bristol outside ASDA. There are toilets just inside the entrance of ASDA.