

# A Remembrance Trail in Victoria Park, Leicester

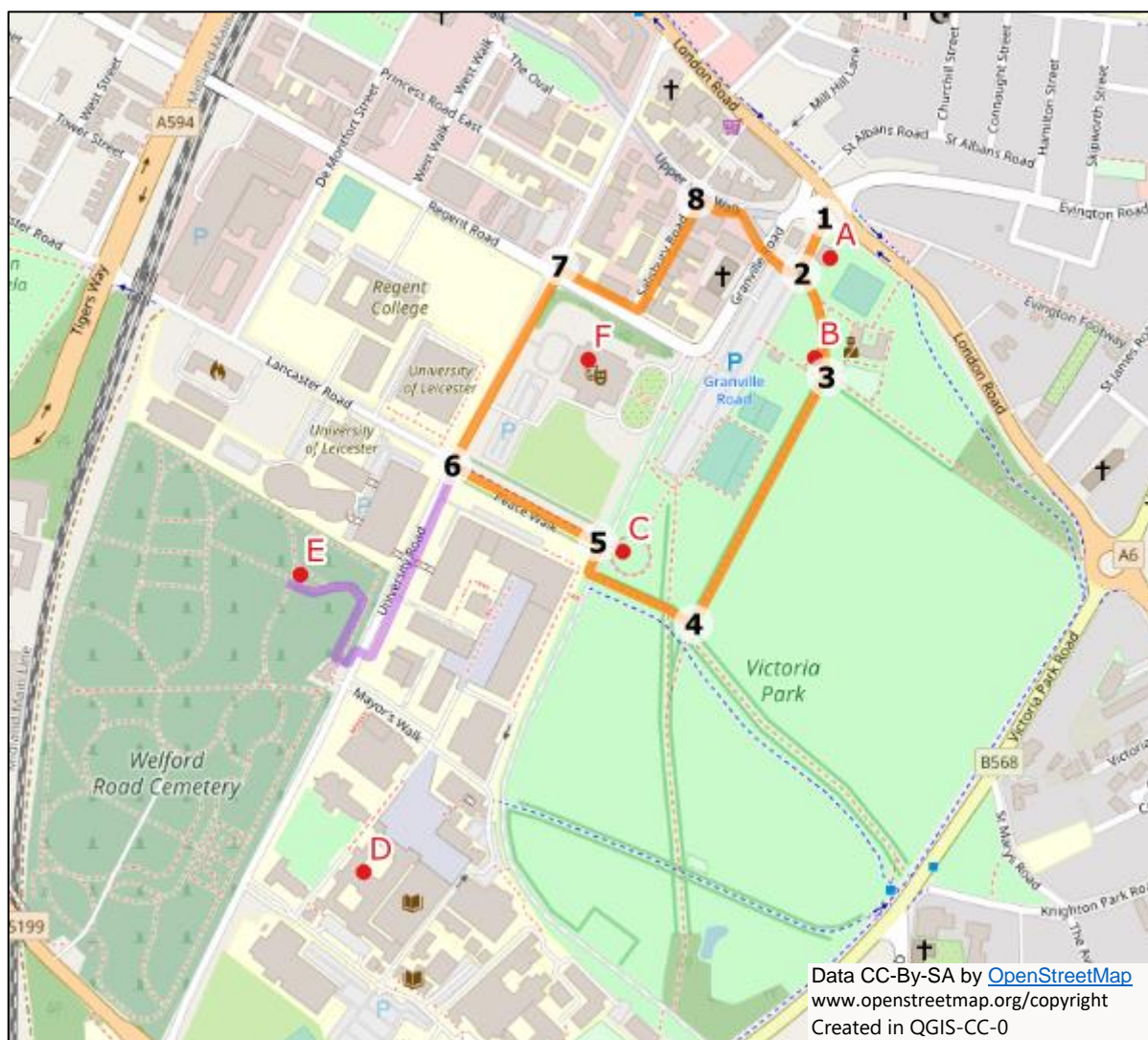
**Start location:** Victoria Park gates, London Road, Leicester.

**Time taken:** 25 minutes (approximately, steady pace); **Distance:** 0.8 miles 1.3 km **Circular**

Time with the optional detour: 39 minutes; Distance: 1.3 miles 2.1 km.

## Description:

Discover a little local wartime history on this short remembrance trail through Victoria Park. This route passes memorials within the park, with an optional detour to visit the memorial in Welford Road Cemetery. Look out for the answers to the questions along the route. Answers are given at the end. For young children, a short picture trail to accompany this route is available to download.



— Main route    — Alternative route    ① Stage / waypoint    ● A Point of interest

\*Time is calculated at a steady pace of 2mph

This route was developed by staff and volunteers for Leicester City Council:

[www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/walks](http://www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/walks)

## Walk starts:

### Victoria Park gates, London Road, Leicester.

London Road is served by public transport. There is a car park off Granville Road. To help plan your journey visit: [www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk](http://www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk)

## Safety tips:

Remember to keep a 2m social distance from others. There is a Covid-19 test centre in Victoria Park's carpark. Watch out for cyclists throughout. Take care when crossing roads and use pedestrian crossings when available. Keep to paths in Welford Cemetery. Paths may be slippery with seasonal weather conditions – take care.

## Route directions:

1. Starting on London Road by the Victoria Park gates, look up to read the inscription above the gates.

*Q1. The name of this Lady is also a direction on a compass. What is it? .....*

**(A)** The park gates and lodges were commissioned in 1931 by the Mayor of Leicester in memory of his late wife. The Mayor and Mayoress, Sir Jonathan and Lady Kate, supported local and overseas causes during the First World War. Lady Kate was a fundraiser for wartime causes. She took responsibility for equipping local hospitals for wounded servicemen and coordinated women's voluntary working groups who undertook clothing repairs to support the hospitals. She has been referred to as "Leicester's Florence Nightingale".

Enter Victoria Park via the gates. There is more information on the panel to your left.

2. Turn left before the carpark. At the path junction before the pavilion turn right. Look out for a large rock to your right surrounded by railings.

*Q2. The rock of remembrance is a tribute to the 82nd Airborne Division of which country? .....*

**(B)** The 82nd Airborne Division was based in Leicester during World War II prior to the D-Day landings in 1944. Like many others, the division suffered very heavy casualties during this operation.

3. At the main path junction continue ahead, passing sports courts and the skateboard park to your right. Continue to the next path junction.

4. Turn right towards the Arch of Remembrance and reach the main park roadway. Turn right and stand beside the arch.

*Q3. Do you notice anything unusual about the flags on the arch? .....*

**(C)** The Arch of Remembrance was unveiled here in 1925 to commemorate the dead of World War I, and now also those of subsequent conflicts. The architect was Edwin Lutyens who designed over 50 memorials for the Imperial War Graves Commission. His work includes the Thiepval Memorial in France, “To the Missing of the Somme” (1932) and The Cenotaph in Whitehall, London (1920), the UK’s national war memorial and site of the annual service of Remembrance. The same architect was commissioned to design the park gates and lodges here in Leicester’s Victoria Park.

During the 1930s much of the nation’s food was imported, but with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 there was a real danger that shipping would be disrupted, leading to food shortages. A national ‘Dig for Victory’ campaign encouraged people to produce home-grown food in their gardens. Public parks across the country also joined in the campaign. Allotment space was created in Victoria Park too and one plot was sited here beside the Arch of Remembrance.

Still standing at the arch, look towards the tall buildings on the University campus beside the park.

**(D)** Tucked within the campus and not visible from here, the University’s Fielding Johnson Building pre-dates the university. Built in 1837 as a mental health facility it was then known as the *Leicester Lunatic Asylum*. The building became vacant in 1908. When the First World War began in 1914 it became the base for a military hospital – the 5th Northern General Hospital – where wounded servicemen were treated. Some servicemen did not survive and of these, 286 were buried nearby in Welford Road Cemetery, many in a war graves plot marked by a memorial wall. You may wish to detour to visit it.

After the First World War local businessman Thomas Fielding Johnson purchased the hospital building and grounds and gifted it to the council for education purposes. University College Leicester was founded.

**Q4.** *The University’s motto reflects that it was founded as a memorial. In Latin it reads: ‘ut vitam habeant’. Can you guess what it means? .....*

**5.** From the Arch of Remembrance cross the perimeter path into Peace Walk (take care – this is a cycle route), leading to University Road. Bordered by flower beds, you will find several memorial plaques along here.

**Q5.** *Who wrote the poem “To the Ladies of World War 2”? .....*

From the bottom of Peace Walk you have the option to detour to Welford Road Cemetery (below) or you can skip this and follow the main route from 6.

### **Optional detour to Welford Road Cemetery**

Exit Victoria Park and turn left on University Road (watch for cyclists here: shared cycle path). Cross over at the pedestrian crossing and continue in the same direction to reach the gate in the railings, just before the cemetery’s gatehouse. Enter the cemetery here and turn right, parallel with University Road. Continue ahead. Turn left on a path which curves downhill. Pass a small path on the right, then turn right at the next junction to reach the memorial wall.

**(E)** The memorial wall bears the names of the First World War servicemen laid to rest in this war graves plot. The cemetery also has 46 Second World War burials, including 8 Belgian war graves.

After visiting the memorial retrace your steps to the bottom of Peace Walk and resume from **6**.

**6.** To follow the main route exit Victoria Park at the bottom of Peace Walk (watch for cyclists here: shared cycle path) and turn right along University Road. Pass De Montfort Hall and continue to the cross roads.

**(F)** In a ceremony here at De Montfort Hall in summer 1919, King George V presented gallantry medals to servicemen of World War I and knighted Leicester's lord mayor to honour his efforts during wartime. The ceremony was followed by a parade of local soldiers and war veterans on the park and watched by disabled veterans, Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses and the families who had lost loved-ones in service.

**7.** At the junction, cross ahead at the pedestrian traffic lights then immediately turn right on Regent Road. Continue to Salisbury Road and there turn left. At the end pass through bollards and turn right on Upper New Walk. At the top, cross Granville Road at the pedestrian crossing and continue ahead into Victoria Park to return to the gates where you started.

**Quiz answers on next page.**

## Quiz Answers:

**Q1.** Lady North

**Q2.** The United States of America.

**Q3.** The flags on the Arch of Remembrance do not move in the wind – they are not made of cloth.

**Q4.** The University's motto '*ut vitam habeant*' means '**so that they may have life**'

*"... in 1921 the University College opened with one eye on the past, as a memorial to the young men of Leicestershire who never came home, and the other on the future, equipping a new generation with the skills and knowledge to change their own – and other people's – lives."* University of Leicester website.

**Q5.** The poem was written by Wilf Corbett, ex R.A.F nurse.

## References:

The University as a military hospital during WWI:

<https://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/ww1/hospital>

Lady North:

Information about her work is detailed in 'Leicester 1914-1918' by Armitage.

Image of Lady North in the University of Leicester's special collections:

<http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll13/id/313>

War Graves in Welford Road Cemetery, Commonwealth War Graves website -

[https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/41262/LEICESTER%20\(WELFORD%20ROAD\)%20CEMETERY/](https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/41262/LEICESTER%20(WELFORD%20ROAD)%20CEMETERY/)

Victoria Park & Lutyans War Memorial:

Story of Leicester website: <https://www.storyofleicester.info/leisure-entertainment/victoria-park-and-lutyens-war-memorial/>

The Arch of Remembrance

Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch\\_of\\_Remembrance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_of_Remembrance)

Welford Road Cemetery

<https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-community/births-marriages-and-deaths/funerals-burials-and-cremations/cemeteries/welford-road-cemetery/>