Stencilling Tommy’s Footprints

SR. Hartley
In memory of the local men who volunteered to train at the Duke of Bedford’s Ampthill Camp, and the family and friends they left behind.

Tommy’s Footprints has been amazing journey. We have met new people, developed new skills, and extended Ampthill’s knowledge. Thank you to everyone who has joined us along the way and for your many contributions, large and small. I am amazed by the myriad number of ways that you have connected. A special thank you to –

My lovely wife Frances and our family for your patience and support.

Amphill Town Council for embracing the idea.

John Bingham, Mark Smith, John Hele, Simon Peacock, Ollie Lock, Donna Searle, Roy Tebbutt and Gary Quilter for conspiring to make Tommy’s Footprints happen.

Ian Church, Steve Fuller and Sue Hart for their historical insight.

The Installation Team of willing volunteers.


The relatives of boys who trained at the Ampthill Camp one hundred years ago. Visiting the past takes courage.

Profits from the book benefit Combat Stress. This charity was founded in 1919 as the Ex-Serviceman’s Welfare Society to support veterans who returned from the Great War with shell shock. These days we know it as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

This book tells the story of **Tommy’s Footprints** and how it became reality…..
Tommy’s footprints

Remembering the men who trained at the WWI Camp in Ampthill Great Park, their service and loss.

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WALKING IN TOMMY’S FOOTSTEPS

A small reflection of the role played by Ampthill in the Great War 1914-18.

Written by Ian Church
Ampthill Great Park is a peaceful place that boasts tremendous views from the Greensands Ridge. The Great Park is best known for Katherine of Aragon who lived in Ampthill Castle (1532-3) for a time when Henry VIII was seeking a divorce.

Less is known, at least publicly, about the role that Ampthill Park played in WWI. In 1914 the 11th Duke of Bedford responded to Lord Kitchener’s call to arms by establishing the ‘Bedfordshire Training Depot.’ By August 1916 the Depot would train 2,235 infantry soldiers to fight with the Bedfordshire and other Regiments for ‘King and Country.’ A lone Memorial Cross stands proud in Ampthill Park to remember the soldiers who trained there, the horrific loss, and the ‘Ampthill Command Depot’ that treated 8369 wounded soldiers (1916-19). A hundred years on few signs of the Depot remain - spent brass cartridges rest in the leaf mold, faint initials scar the bark of a tree, and a slight depression is all that remains of a practice trench.

In 2008 Ian Church wrote an excellent little book ‘Walking in Tommy’s Footsteps’ to help fund the replacement of thirteen phosphor bronze plaques that were stolen from the Memorial Cross in the 1970’s.

The book provides an insight into the role that Ampthill Park played in the Great War. Ian’s book and the Memorial Cross inspired me – the thought of soldiers training in the Park and marching to Ampthill Railway Station to face unimaginable horrors on the Western Front….
One hundred years on....

4th August 2014 was the centenary of the country entering into the Great War. In the UK to mark this grim day -

- There was a special BBC War Horse Prom at the Royal Albert Hall on 3rd August.
- People were invited to take part in a LIGHTS OUT on 4th August by turning off their lights from 10pm to 11pm, leaving on a single candle for a shared moment of reflection.
- At the Tower of London volunteers were planting 888,246 Poppies – one for each British and Commonwealth soldier who died 1914-18. The installation was due to open on 5th August.

My wife and I had tickets to attend the War Horse Prom. It was a matter of chance really - one of Frances' work colleagues was organising a BBC Prom trip and it happened to be the War Horse 'special.' This was a huge stroke of luck.

The Prom was splendid, cleverly crafted to tell the story of blissful British innocence, eager young men heeding the call, the grim reality they met... What struck me most was Gareth Malone's Military Wives choir. Some of these brave souls silently carried army boots onto stage and laid a shroud over the pile to shape a corpse to a soulful rendition of ‘Home they brought her warrior dead' (Gustav Holst, 1905). Were these deadman's boots? Had the bearer lost their man in Iraq, Afghanistan or another distant land?
To Tommy’s Footprints

War Horse
Monday, 4th August was a bright day. I was off work and, moved by the Prom, took a reflective walk to three of Ampthill's War Memorials. The Duke of Bedford War Memorial in Ampthill Great Park records the names of 707 soldiers who died. I read the phosphor bronze plaques. 707 dead is roughly one third of the chaps who trained at the Depot - three times the national toll. Of one in ten.
I headed to The Alameda where The Cenotaph names 67 of Ampthill's Fallen, and onto St. Andrew's Church to search for some of their graves.
St. Andrew’s Parish Church
Walking back along The Alameda I pictured 707 soldiers in the hollow of Ampthill Park, drafting out. How long was the column? What would it look like? That night at 10am we lit a single candle as part of LIGHTS OUT and let it burn in memory of the fearful darkness that covered this country one hundred years ago.

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LIGHTS OUT

everyone in the UK was invited to take part in LIGHTS OUT by turning off their lights from 10pm to 11pm on 4 August 2014, leaving on a single light or candle for a shared moment of reflection.
On Tuesday, 5th August an opportunity presented itself. Public interest in the Poppies was growing - I was commuting into London and decided to visit The Tower. I walked briskly along the Embankment to be there for the break of dawn. All was still - red poppies spilled over the battlement to fill the moat as if with blood.
Such a powerful statement of the nations' loss. Each death had affected a family, friends, a community. Walking to the office I thought again about the Bedfordshire Training Depot and then it struck me - maybe we could remember the 707 dead by marking a column of footprints in Ampthill Park, empty boots silent to the fore. In the days to follow the chalk-stenciled footprints would wash into the ground and disappear..... The idea bubbled and I resolved to speak with Cllr Mark Smith of Ampthill Town Council. A few days later I sent this note:

Dear Mark,

Ampthill Training Depot opened in October 1914. Over the next two years 2,235 local men would train in Ampthill Park before passing out to fight in the front line. 707 died - almost 1 in 3. The war memorial records the names but the scale of the horrendous loss is hard to imagine. My thought -

As part of the WWI Centenary can we (Ampthill) do something simple and powerful to help people know of and remember the service and loss?

What would 707 boots look like? How much space would 707 soldiers take as they marched out of Ampthill Park?

In the hollow where we prom it should be possible to make a simple, powerful statement - empty soldiers boots at the front of a column and white footprints [stenciled] behind. The commemoration should be relatively simple and inexpensive to install and the footprints would fade into the ground.

November 2016 could be an appropriate time because the Depot closed in October 2016 to be replaced by the relief hospital.

We spoke and agreed to float the idea of Tommy's Footprints more widely.
Over the weeks and months to follow I reflected further and jotted my thoughts. I explored the possibility of using WWI boots as part of the installation but at £200 a pair this was clearly a no go. Stenciling looked like it might be the solution.

Public art is the preserve of recognized artists who have trained and perfected their craft. I remember pondering how I could possibly qualify to conceive some art let alone do it. Who was I to entertain painting nature’s canvas?

A meeting was arranged for January 2015. John Hele - author of "Ampthill’s Fallen" - and former Cllr John Bingham joined us. The meeting was short but in the hour together we bounced some great ideas. I left thinking we had the potential to achieve something quite remarkable. An artist’s impression would help us to visualize Tommy’s Footprints. There was also need to test how long the whitewash footprints would last.

We needed to double-check how the boys marched in the early years of WWI. Military Historian Ian Church* helpfully provided the answer. "Four men wide" which meant that the column of 707 footprints would extend 180 yards up the hollow, almost to the ridge. Tommy’s Footprints would be a simple and poignant statement. Ian also made time to meet us in Ampthill Park to discover what remains of the Camp. My children, Ben and Anna, were delighted to find a piece of coal secreted in the grass close to where the cook house once stood.

In the February we launched a blog and a FaceBook page to give more presence, and started to visualize Tommy’s Footprints. On exiting Bedford Railway Station I came across footprints stenciled on the pavement. Out came the camera, and kersnap. A few
weeks later I was passing through St. Pancras International and noticed more footprints, this time stenciled blue on an escalator. I hopped on the escalator and photographed these prints discretely lest my actions were construed as something decidedly odd.

We knew very little about the camp — Googling the internet found virtually nothing. I started to look on eBay and in May unwittingly found a few flakes of gold. Someone was selling a page from the ‘Illustrated War News’ which showed a group of officers seated in Ampthill Great Park. The date, July 1915.
I bid and was pleased to pay the starting price. A large letter arrived – the page was in great condition, and then I glanced at the reverse—there were four photographs of the Ampthill Camp: the cook house, kitchen garden, the mess, and bayonet practice. Arguably, the scenes were more important than the officer group photograph. The discovery planted a seed that there might be more….

An appeal went out for a local artist to help with sketching how Tommy’s Footprints might look. No offers came forth and so I faced a nervy option – dust off the O’level art skills and set to with a soft pencil. This early sketch helped to capture and communicate the vision. Tommy’s Footprints in the hollow of Ampthill Great Park with 707 poppies planted alongside; a cross for each fallen man.
June 2015 was the first time Tommy's Footprints featured in “Around the Pump.” Then our thoughts turned to funding and the legacy; the possibility of installing some commemorative WWI benches in Ampthill.
Great Park. In parallel John Bingham crafted a plywood template that we could use to stencil some test footprints.

Practice stenciling started in the August when we laid down a platoon of twenty footprints in sight of the Duke of Bedford War Memorial. We visited the spot regularly to see how the prints weathered and survived the attentive rabbits. Success - the footprints would last a fortnight before they quietly washed into the ground. Further testing seemed sensible in Autumn when the conditions would be closer to the real thing.

September produced a break through. Keen to discover more about the Ampthill Camp I visited the County Archive in Bedford. Mentions of the camp took some finding but secreted in the musty broadsheets there were insights and the occasional grainy photograph. Gradually, I
leafed through the Ampthill & District News and The Bedfordshire Standard. Most of the cuttings were a column inch or two. There was talk of recruits arriving, new huts and recreation. However, there were a few longer features. In October 1914 there was the Duke of Bedford's notice calling local men to volunteer and train. Moving into 1915 the snippets provided an insight into how the Ampthill Camp grew and developed.

**THE DUKE OF BEDFORD AND THE BEDFORDSHIRE TRAINING DEPOT.**

Sanction has been given by the Army Council to form a training establishment in Ampthill Park to be known as “The Bedfordshire Training Depot.” This will form a unit of the Bedfordshire Regiment. Col. the Duke of Bedford, A.D.C., will be in command of the Camp, Major Stevens will be Second-in-Command, and Major Nelson, late of the Beds. Regt., will be Adjutant. Men will be enlisted for the colours for 3 years or for the duration of the war. Height 5ft. 4in., chest 34in.

On the completion of their training in Ampthill Park, the drafts, after inspection and when found fit for foreign service, will be sent to the 3rd Batt. Beds. Regt. at Llandudno, and despatched from there at once abroad to join the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Line, or any of the Service Battalions who may by then have gone to the Front. Recruits on final approval will be appointed to the Beds Regt., and will be sent to the Depot at Bedford to be clothed and equipped. They will then join for training in Ampthill Park.

Six huts, with ample accommodation for 20 beds each, are now ready. Cook-houses, bath-houses, Recreation-room, and canteen are in course of construction. Ampthill Park affords every facility for field training. Millbrook Rifle Range is close at hand. There will also be an open Miniature Rifle Range in the Camp, and as training will be going on during the winter a covered shooting gallery and covered drill shed. If recruits are forthcoming more huts will be built.

**Calling Notice**

*Ampthill & District News*

*(October 31, 1914)*
how the pioneering cinematographers The Blake Bros. filmed a reel for showing in local picture houses, and the trenching ground in Warren Woods at Steppingley. Much of the material hadn’t seen the light of day for a hundred years. I photographed the reports and mused about how to share the material. It gradually dawned on me that there was sufficient to write a ‘Camp Diary’ that would glimpse the monthly happenings.

Reading the reports I was struck by the buoyant, nationalistic tone - gleeful route marches, concerts, and drafts leaving the Camp to entrain at the Midland Station, but then came September 1915. On the London commuter train home I looked at the Bedsatwar Blog for September 25, 1915 and read a long list of Bedfords’ casualties for the Battle of Loos. A cold shiver. Many of the names matched those on the Duke of Bedford War Memorial. A closer look revealed that twenty Ampthill Park boys lost their lives the first day of the “Big Push.” Loos would become infamous for the British artillery first use of gas shells. I read of Bedford women doing their bit to assist by making respirators, 22,000 in just one week. These hoods were beyond primitive but they were the best the Homefront could muster to protect troops from the poison gas threat.

In the November, with exactly one year to go we stenciled some more footprints in the hollow of Ampthill Great Park. This time we also explored different configurations (static-, half-, and full-step) and marked the column length. The stenciled footprints would be plain for all to see, and the installation would lend itself to some splendid aerial shots. We imagined how Tommy’s Footprints would provide a focus for local artists and the photographic club, and started to approach both.
Gas hood (1915)

Test Footprints (November 2015)
In January 2016 we went in search of the old trenching ground that hugs the Northern edge of Warren Wood, Steppingley - land now dissected by Center Parcs. Winter is the time of year to look, when the bracken and briar lie low. The 1915 newspaper reports clearly describe how the trenches were used to help ready the recruits for drafting to the Front. Since the trenches were abandoned nature has quietly set about claiming its own, but a hundred years on the complex of support, communication and firing trenches still scar the land.
Spring 2016 and the focus shifted to engaging with the local schools. We met each Headteacher to tell them about Tommy’s Footprints and how it connected with aspects of the curriculum such as art, history, English, and maths. It struck me that there was a genuine opportunity to use Tommy’s Footprints as a focus for teaching. In maths an array of footprints could take the place of dots to assist with calculation. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Alameda Middle School was particularly keen and saw the opportunity for pupils to do some real research. Each pupil would help to research a man named on the War Memorial. This was a ground-breaking offer. Local 9-13-year-olds would engage in primary research that would extend Ampthill’s knowledge of what happened to the 707 men who we only knew by their surname initial. Alameda School’s work would form an important part of the Tommy’s Footprints legacy and help to connect families with their past.
By March 2016 we had discovered enough about the Ampthill Camp to do an illustrated talk for the Royal British Legion in Flitwick. There was a hint of angst in the packed room, every seat taken, but the passion flowed and we engaged with about 70 members. This would be the first of many talks that would connect with a spectrum of groups and age. The Flitwick Boy’s Brigade "Ampthill Camp Treasure Hunt," lecturing at the Open University, and a candle-lit talk in St. Lawrence’s Church in Steppingley are particular highlights.

**Bedfordshire Training Depot (1914-16)**

In 1914 Lord Kitchener (British Secretary of State for War) issued his famous call to arms. The 11th Duke of Bedford responded by establishing the 'Bedfordshire Training Depot' in Ampthill Great Park, at his own expense. This was a well-equipped, hutted camp to help recruit and train soldiers for the Bedfordshire Regiment. The Ampthill Camp had a miniature firing range, extensive trenching ground, and state-of-the-art obstacle course. Young men, many of them farm workers, volunteered in droves. In May 1915 the first draft of 140 men from the Depot entrained at Ampthill Midland Station for the fight in France. Recruitment peaked in the Autumn of 1915 with more than a hundred local men joining The Camp each month. At one time over twelve hundred men were in training. The recruits were often seen route marching through the villages, Flitwick, Greenfield, Flitton, Clophill.....

By August 1916 the Depot had trained 2,235 local men to fight for 'King and Country.' About one third were killed and more were wounded, many of them at the Somme.

In September 1916 the Wrest Park Military Hospital was badly damaged by fire. Thankfully, the one hundred and sixty convalescent soldiers were rescued. Of these, about 50 of the wounded were brought to Woburn Hospital and to empty huts at the Ampthill Camp.
The Camp
Ampthill Great Park

Below
Recruits marching through Ampthill

With kind permission of Bedfordshire Archives
Recruits
Ampthill Great Park
(1915)

Below
The first draft depart
Ampthill Midland
Station
(May 1915)

With kind permission
of Bedfordshire
Archives
Tramping Feet

In the cool, grey light of morning,
Silence fills the dew drenched air,
Softly lapping round the group of men
And boys now gathered there.

Fathers, brothers, uncles, sons;
Each one courageous through and through,
The Bedfords, all united now
In the duty they must do.

Yet what horrors lie before them
As they wave a last goodbye?
In the cool, grey light of morning,
Do they wait to live or die?

And do they maybe wonder,
Just how many will return
To live once more the peaceful,
Simple lives for which they yearn?

And then, the silence shattered
By the sound of tramping feet –
Those lads march off across the fields,
Their destiny to meet.

So now, today, remember
All those folk who’ve gone before,
And hear once more their tramping feet
All marching off to war;

To fight for King and Country;
For the freedoms we enjoy;
For a cause they all believed in –
Every soldier – man and boy.
Bedfordshire Command Depot (1916-19)

Wrest Park Hospital closed in September 1916 because of a major fire, and in October 1916 the Training Depot was converted into the No.9 Ampthill Command Depot for the treatment of convalescent men of the following units: the Bedfordshire-, Essex-, Northampton-, Suffolk-, and the Hertfordshire Regiments. In the next two years 8,369 injured soldiers passed through the facility.

By March 1919 the Command Depot was empty. The Camp was dismantled and Messrs. Swafffield and Son held a five-day sale where the huts, equipment and furniture were sold at auction.

In 1920 the Duke of Bedford erected a Memorial Cross in Ampthill Great Park to the soldiers who trained at the Ampthill Camp who fell during the Great War, and to the men who passed through Ampthill Command Depot.
The Bedfordshire Training Depot

The Bedfordshire Training Depot at Ampthill Park, the construction of which was commenced in October, 1914, has now, after two years, been converted into a Command Depot. The original object of the camp was to allow men, under the voluntary system of enlistment, to do their training in their own county until they were fit to join their friends and relations fighting in the Regular and Service Battalions of the Bedfordshire Regiment in France.

The Camp commenced with 140 men. The men and Camp rapidly increased in numbers and size, until at one moment, in spite of numerous drafts sent to France, the Camp accommodated over 1,600 men. The trustees of the Wesleyan Schools at Ampthill kindly assisted in accommodating this large number by granting the use of their schoolroom as a dormitory. Over 2,000 men, all of whom joined under the voluntary system, have been trained at Ampthill, and have proceeded overseas.

One of the most satisfactory parts of the training at Ampthill has been the almost total absence of any form of crime. There have only been six cases of desertion, and, needless to say, no drunkenness. Of the 2,000 men who have left the Camp for the front, not a single man was absent at the final parade on the day they left the Camp for the front.

Two of the men have received the Military Medal for distinguished and gallant service in the field. The casualties have been heavy, four officers and 155 men having been killed in action.

The Bedfordshire Training Depot has now become the Ampthill Command Depot. A Command Depot is commanded by a combatant officer, with a staff of combatant officers, as well as medical officers.

Colonel the Duke of Bedford, K.G., A.D.C., who commanded the Bedfordshire Training Depot and built and maintained the Camp, will remain in command, maintaining the Camp as before. Major F. A. D. Stevens will remain as Second in Command, and Major Nelson as Adjutant. Lieut. Holmes, R.A.M.C., and Dr. Garner, will be the medical officers. There will also be a permanent establishment of combatant officers.

The Command Depot at Ampthill will be for the non-commissioned officers and men of No. 9 Group Regimental District, which comprises the counties of Bedford, Huntingdon, Hertford, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Northampton, and Cambridge, and for officers who have been trained at Ampthill and returned home wounded or invalided from the front.

Men on discharge from hospital proceed on ten days' furlough, and then rejoin a Command Depot, the object of which is to restore wounded and invalided men to a state of military and physical efficiency by a careful system of physical and military training. At a Command Depot the men lead the ordinary life of a soldier in barracks or in huts—route marching, drill, bombing, musketry, physical drill, and trench warfare all being part of the course. In addition there is a special establishment for those men requiring massage and electrical treatment, which will be under the supervision of the medical staff attached to the Command Depot.
The attention moved towards funding. Cllr Mark Smith developed and led the Heritage Lottery Fund bid. A few months later we would be delighted to receive news of success – the full amount of £5,400 would pay for Tommy’s Footprints and the legacy of WWI commemorative benches, interpretation boards, and a website.

Themed “Best of British,” in July the Ampthill Gala weekend in offered a fantastic opportunity to connect with people. We asked the Ampthill Town Band if they would play a WWI Ampthill Camp tribute piece at the Proms. The answer was happily ‘yes.’ On a glorious evening the band played a Florrie Floyd ensemble to a festive audience of about 3,000 in the very hollow where the soldiers marched so many years before. ‘Pack up your troubles…., It’s a long, long way to Tipperary…..,’ familiar favourites flowed, the picnickers sang and union
flags were waved. What would those khaki boys make of this ever so British affair?

The next day Tommy's Footprints was at the Ampthill Gala Day, with footprints stenciled to the fore. Ollie Lock did a splendid job of dressing the stand with authentic WWI soldier' kit - uniforms, helmets, mess tins - and there was strong interest throughout the day. Unbelievably, the stand won a special award - voted for by the 'Pride of Ampthill' made up of local young people.
August was particularly poignant - a family trip to Ypres we visited the Essex Farm Cemetery. From researching the Camp Diary I knew that Ampthill recruits were killed on the night of 19/20 April 1916:

Pte Bert Ward  
Pte Samuel Chalkley  
Pte Arthur Bird
British frontline alongside the Yser Canal Bank with Canadian allies. The scene of battle was very compact. Frontline trenches along the canal bank, dressing station dugouts, and the burial ground; all within 100 yards of each other. We found six named graves close to where the boys fell, and placed an Ampthill Camp cross at each. Tears were shed; it was a struggle to pen even a few words in the Book of Remembrance.

That evening we quietly gathered at The Menin Gate. The crowd easily numbered 250, and at 8pm a bugle sounded ‘The Last Post’ and ‘The Reveille’ in remembrance of 56,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers who died in the Battles of Ypres, their resting place unknown. This daily act of remembrance dates from 1928.

In September and October the pace quickened as we set about finalizing the preparations for November. Woburn Abbey was a huge help with verifying the names of the 707 fallen men which was crucial.
Aerial impression of how Tommy’s Footprints would look, with a field of poppies planted alongside. A cross for each fallen Ampthill recruit.

Bottom
Ampthill recruit deaths by major battles and year

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<th>Event</th>
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<th>1916</th>
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<tr>
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<td>282</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>712</td>
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...to profiling when and where the deaths happened. This picture determined how the poppy crosses would be clustered according to...
the major battles – Loos 1915, The Somme 1916…. – and artist impressions were scaled to show how the poppies would look.

A select group of Ampthill & District Rotary Club members kindly volunteered to name each cross, and did a fantastic job.
Tommy’s Footprints banners went up and posters were distributed far and wide—a hundred years ago the recruits came from Bedfordshire and the surrounding counties so the commemoration was relevant to those towns and villages.

In late October we asked for volunteers to help stencil Tommy’s Footprints on 5 November and plant the field of poppies alongside. A healthy number of local people asked to assist, some of them relatives of Ampthill recruits who were killed in action.
On Friday, 4 November public interest moved up a gear with a live interview for BBC Three Counties Radio. Presenter Nick Coffer enthused about the project connecting with different parts of the community; hits on the Tommy’s Footprints website surged.

That evening more than 6,000 people gathered in Ampthill Great Park to watch Ampthill Fireworks and see The Mayor, Cllr Margaret Wilson, light the Beacon in memory of the Ampthill Camp – a lovely touch.
Saturday, 5 November was the day for stencilling. Would the Great British Weather have due respect? Thankfully, crisp blue skies greeted the volunteers who arrived to stencil Tommy’s Footprints and plant the poppy crosses alongside.

Ampthill Mayor, Cllr Margaret Wilson stencilled the first footprints and...
planted the first poppy cross. The Installation Team worked tirelessly with a smile and Tommy’s Footprints gradually took shape.

Approaching the ridge the stencil paint ran out. Runners were despatched and returned with sufficient cans to complete the task.
The Footprints

Tommy’s Footprints
Extending up onto
the ridge
The field of poppy crosses
Tommy’s Footprints was always about making a difference – remembering the centenary of the Ampthill Camp, the fallen and the friends and family they left behind. I hope that we have managed to achieve this –

- Each pupil of Alameda School has spent an hour researching what happened to the 707 men who are remembered on the Duke of Bedford War Memorial. A website will make this knowledge publicly available for free.

- The Camp Diary provides insights into what the Bedfordshire Training Depot was like, and the challenges the boys faced fighting abroad.

- We have helped people to learn about their past.

- Tommy’s Footprints has helped to connect different groups from Ampthill and beyond.

- Heritage Lottery Funding has made it possible to install some splendid WWI-styled benches and interpretation boards in Ampthill Great Park and The Alameda

I hope that you have enjoyed being part of the Tommy’s Footprints journey, and know more about the Ampthill Camp than you did before. I am pleased to share the news that there is more to come.

A hundred years ago - in September 1916 Wrest Park Military Hospital was badly damaged by fire. Thankfully, the 160 convalescent soldiers were rescued but the extent of the damage led to the authorities deciding the hospital had to close. About 50 men were accommodated at Woburn Hospital and at the Ampthill Camp, which was mostly empty by then. From October 1916 Ampthill Great Park played a new role as No.9 Ampthill Command Depot. The camp was refitted to treat and rehabilitate injured soldiers after discharge from hospital.
2016 - for the next two years the Camp Diary will continue to be published each month. This will provide insights into happenings at the Ampthill Command Depot. Then, in Autumn 2018 as thoughts turn to the centenary of The Armistice, the Ampthill Camp story will conclude with the publication of a book.

Commemorative WWI bench, The Alameda

With thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund
Commemorative Coaster.

Limited edition of 120 thanks to The Stationery Boutique
Tommy’s IPA bottled beer
Limited edition of 450
t thanks to The Ampthill Brewhouse
Tommy’s Footprints
by moonlight
Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the following for their help: Ampthill Town Council, Tommy’s Footprints Working Group, Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire & Luton Archive Service, Ian Church, John Hele, Nicola Allen, Steve Fuller and Sue Hart.

I also acknowledge with gratitude the following sources of information:

Ampthill’s Fallen by John Hele 2014
Flitwick: A story of Two World Wars by Phillip Thompson 2014
Maulden Remembered by Susan Hart 2014
Walking in Tommy’s Footsteps by Ian Church 2008
Www.bedfordshireregiment.org.uk
Bedsatwar and Bedshomefront blogs
Woburn Abbey blog

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