

Walking tour of WWII memorials in Southampton

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WWII PLAQUES AND MEMORIALS

Some parts of modern-day Southampton are unrecognisable from war-time photographs, and much of the damage caused by German bombings is no longer visible. With many new developments in the post-war years, D-Day is commemorated with many plaques and memorials throughout the city, some affixed to buildings which had a specific function, some marking a site where re-development has taken place, and others that are applicable to the city in general. This walk takes in those plaques and memorials directly related to the City during WWII. It is about 2.4 miles (3.8 km), ending at the D-Day Wall, and can be completed at a leisurely pace in less than an hour and a half.





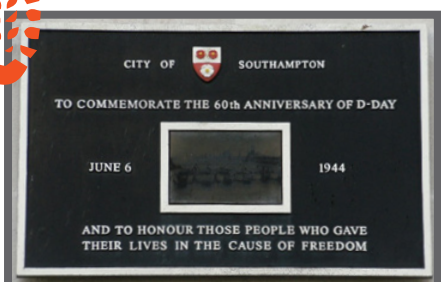
Location A

Let's start at the Cenotaph, in Watt's Park, which is dedicated to those citizens of Southampton who, in active service, lost their lives in both World Wars and subsequent conflicts. A few metres behind this memorial, further into the park, are two further memorials. These are 1.7m high stone pillars surmounted by carved open books. One is dedicated to "THE MEN WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF SOUTHAMPTON WHO LOST THEIR LIVES DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR", the other to "THE CITIZENS OF SOUTHAMPTON WHO HAVE GIVEN THEIR LIVES IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY". They were unveiled on 11th November 1999.

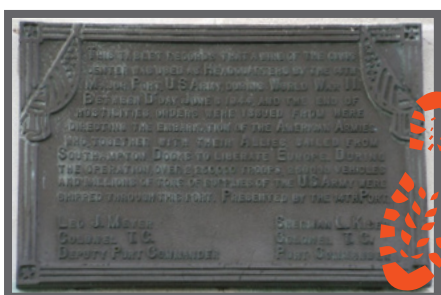


Location B

Now over to the north side of the Civic Centre, near the entrance to the Central Library and Art Gallery. To the right of the main entrance is another door, normally locked shut.



To the left of this door is a plaque commemorating the 60th anniversary of D-Day, while to the right is another, recording that a wing of the Civic Centre was used as Headquarters by the 14th Major Port, U.S. Army.



Inside the lobby of the Library/Art Gallery is a memorial commemorating a tragic event in November 1940, when the Civic Centre took a direct hit during an afternoon air-raid. The 500 lb. bomb struck the Art School, located near the door you have just visited. It penetrated down to the basement, where it exploded, killing over thirty people, including fourteen schoolchildren. The memorial comprises items including photographs, names and personal letters of some of the survivors.

Location C

In the reception area, on the opposite side of this building, there is a duplicate of the second outside plaque mentioned above, and another that records the thanks from the U.S. Navy for the hospitality and cooperation received.





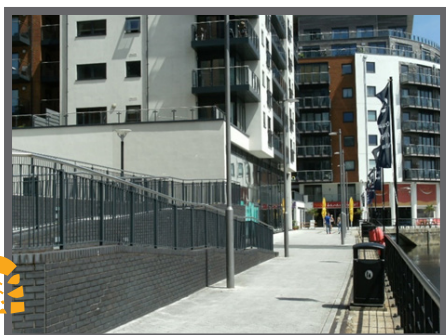
Location D

Now walk down to the city's iconic Bargate. In the pedestrian area to the south of the gate is a round tablet set within a square surround, all mounted on a brick plinth. It gives brief facts of the damage caused by the air raids, and the numbers of troops who passed through the city.



Location E

Take the road that heads east from the Bargate, and cross over the next roundabout. Follow the footpath on the park side of the road until you are opposite St. George's Street. In the park, visible from the footpath, is a ground-level plaque dedicated to those who lost their lives in the air raids of 1940. It was unveiled in November 1990, when the adjacent tree was planted.



Location F

Proceed now to Ocean Village, taking whichever route you wish, and enter the area from Canute Road by Ocean Way, opposite Royal Crescent Road. This area covers the site of one of Southampton's first commercial docks, which opened in 1842, and was redeveloped as a leisure destination from 1986. Beyond the tall block, turn left. With the marina to your right, you should soon reach a flight of steps on your left leading up to 'The Ocean Rooms' with a pair of plaques high on a wall. These were originally mounted on the wall of the Southern Railway booking office here, which served the branch carrying passengers to the transatlantic liner.



Location G

Retracing your steps to Canute Road, note the memorial plaques either side of the entrance to Ferry House; the plaque on the left commemorates those lost in WWI, on the right WWII. There is a difference in initials at the top of each: 'London & South Western Railway' became 'Southern Railway' in 1923. Built around 1870, this entire building (including the pub), served as the Harbour Board Office and was later used as the Southern Railway Docks Office.





Originally the London & Southampton Railway when opened in 1840, it soon expanded to have lines throughout southern England and down into Devon and Cornwall. The arrival of the railway helped the docks develop and expand, and the company developed shipping, too, with passenger and freight services to the Isle of Wight, the Channel Islands and St. Malo in France. In 1892, it bought the docks and expanded them further. Just around the corner in Canute Road, next to Maritime Chambers, is an impressive building, now apartments, with the company crest at the top, above the portico.

An option from here is to visit the 'Solent Sky' aviation museum in the road opposite (adult admission £8, www.solentsky.org), if it's open. It has a Roll of Honour for the 52 staff of the Cunliffe-Owen aircraft factory in Eastleigh, killed in a bombing raid in 1940. The museum also houses the Hampshire Police & Fire Heritage Trust Collection which contains a Roll of Honour for Southampton Borough Police – WWII.

Location H

Now head west along Canute Road, with its mixture of new developments and imposing older buildings, many bearing names indicative of Southampton's maritime heritage. Keeping the traffic to your right, continue over a level crossing. This spur off the main London to Southampton railway is still in use for rail-freight, but once also served passengers on the transatlantic liners, with a station inside the docks and another behind the large building over the road, where you can still see parts of the structure. Now an apartment block, this was the South Western Hotel, owned by the railway company. Continue westward, with a small park to your right. Shortly after the first towers of the old town walls come into view, there is a road junction, with Town Quay to the left, and Red Funnel ahead. On the wall of the first building on the quay (with a coffee-house on the ground floor) are two plaques commemorating D-Day operations.



Now turn around, to face up the High Street and towards the city centre. On the right-hand corner stood The Sun Hotel, which was destroyed in an air-raid in 1940. It is believed to have been re-built by Canadian troops, as a temporary wooden pub, in the lead-up to D-Day. It survived, looking like this, as a pub until June 1990, and was demolished 4 years later. The grade II listed Harbour Board building, built around 1910, is in the background.



Location I

Cross over to the High Street and take Porter's Lane, which runs behind the ex-warehouse buildings which face the main road. On your right is the small Town Quay Park, where you can find a plaque commemorating the repatriation of 22,000 prisoners-of-war and civilians from the Far East in 1945, listing the ships that brought them back. It is near the entrance from French Street.

Location J

Back to the main road, continue round outside the city wall, past Bugle Street and Cuckoo Lane, towards a roundabout where you'll find a gravelled area set back from the pavement. The Mayflower Memorial here carries an additional plaque, linking the freedom sought by the Pilgrim Fathers to the Allied Forces who sailed from Southampton on and after D-Day.



Now walk on a short distance and look across at the Holiday Inn hotel. To its left is an arch marking the entrance to this part of the commercial port area. On the right-hand brick column is a plaque. If you don't wish to walk closer, the wording is: 1939 - 1945 THIS TABLET WAS PRESENTED TO THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY BY THE 14TH MAJOR PORT, UNITED STATES ARMY IN PROUD & GLORIOUS MEMORY OF THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE FORCES OF THE UNITED NATIONS WHO SAILED FROM THIS PORT DURING THE GREAT WAR AGAINST AGGRESSION TO SECURE THE FREEDOM OF MANKIND.

The Wall

Continue round into Western Esplanade, following the old city walls. Opposite the Arcades (a series of arches) and Blue Anchor Lane, you'll find a part of the Grand Harbour Hotel's wall which is engraved with the names of U.S. troops that passed through the city during WWII. This is covered in detail on the Maritime Trust webpages: www.maritimearchaeologytrust.org/dday.



While here, do take time to visit the foyer of the Grand Harbour Hotel, where you'll find an exhibition of details and the research work done on this wall by the Maritime Archaeology Trust.

R.D.Breech
Catawissa
Penna

{ DOOLING
BEVERLY
MASS }

GN BUNKER
SACCity IOWA

JEWETTA CALLAWAY
MIAMI FLORIDA

BILL URBAN

OTHER PLAQUES AND MEMORIALS

There are numerous other plaques and memorials around the city. Some are in churches, usually commemorating those of the parish; others are in institutions. Here is a selection of some of the more unusual public ones:



Not far from where we started, in Grosvenor Square, there is a stone (left) dedicated to all who served in The Burma Campaign and in South East Asia Command. It was unveiled by Countess Mountbatten on 11 October 1998 and is alongside the statue of Lord Mountbatten, who lived at Broadlands, near Romsey.

Across the Itchen on the Woolston side, and just south of the bridge, is a new residential development called Spitfire Court, which was built on the site of the Supermarine Factory where Spitfires were manufactured. On the waterfront is a plaque (right, top) remembering those workers killed in bombing raids in September 1940.



On the other (Hazel Road) side of the apartment complex is a modern memorial to R.J. Mitchell, the aircraft's designer (right, bottom). There is also a standard blue plaque on Mitchell's house in Russell Place, Portswood.



On the north side of the bridge, further up Hazel Road and opposite The Yacht Tavern, is a small memorial garden with a rectangular bronze plaque, recording how the area was devastated by the attacks on the Supermarine factory.



Behind the chapel at Hollybrook Cemetery, there are two wooden benches set into a structure of Portland Stone, with an inscribed panel: "TO THE HONoured MEMORY OF THE CIVILIANS IN SOUTHAMPTON WHO WERE KILLED BY ENEMY ACTION DURING THE YEARS 1939 – 1945". Over towards the north-west border of the cemetery, there is also a CWGC cross of sacrifice and a plot of graves.



On the west side of the City, Tebourba Way (A35) was named after, and has a memorial to the actions of the Royal Hampshire Regiment at the Battle of Tebourba Gap in Tunisia (December 1942). The text reads: "TEBOURBA WAY WAS OPENED ON APRIL 30TH 1953 BY THE WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR OF SOUTHAMPTON (ALDERMAN E BURROW) AND SO NAMED IN RECOGNITION OF THE BRAVERY OF THE MEN OF THE ROYAL HAMPSHIRE REGIMENT WHO TOOK PART IN THE BATTLE OF TEBOURBA NORTH AFRICA DECEMBER 1942."

ABOUT THE PROJECT

This walking tour was produced as part of the D-Day: Stories from the Walls project by volunteer Richard Wyatt. The project was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, thanks to money raised by National Lottery players.



The project

The 'D-Day Wall' or 'American Wall' as it has become known, is a 19 metre length of brick wall at the lower end of Western Esplanade in Southampton. The wall, built c1910, is all that remains of the boundary wall of the old Southampton Borough Council Disinfecting Station. On this wall, around 100 men (mainly American) carved their names and home towns as they waited to embark to Normandy on D-Day and throughout the latter part of the Second World War.

The United States Army took control of Southampton Port in February 1944, designating it the 14th Major Port of Transportation Corps and the city became an enormous military camp. Southampton had been earmarked for the HQ of the invasion early on in the war. As D-Day approached, military vehicles and guns lined the streets hidden by trees and camouflage netting. Hundreds of vessels were pre-loaded with ammunition, vehicles and supplies and anchored in the inlets and rivers of the Solent. The port remained in constant use, supporting the campaign overseas, until the end of the war. 3.5 million service personnel passed through Southampton Docks, including soldiers from America (2 million), Canada and Britain, with approximately 100 of them recording their part in history on the D-Day Wall.

When this area of Southampton was redeveloped in 1993, this section of wall was allowed to remain in situ as a memorial and a number of the best carved bricks from other parts of the demolished wall were retained and kept by Southampton Museum Service. Some of these were later rebuilt into a smaller wall behind the original wall. Others still remain in the museum collection. The wall is recorded on the Southampton Historic Environment Record (MSH4692) and registered with the Imperial War Museum as a war memorial (Graffiti Wall WW2 21636).

Today the wall forms the boundary of the Grand Harbour Hotel car park. The bricks are crumbling due to weathering and the inscriptions are eroding. With 2019 being the 75th anniversary of D-Day, the Maritime Archaeology Trust is carrying out recording of the inscriptions and research into the names so their stories can be told.

The Maritime Archaeology Trust

The **Maritime Archaeology Trust** is a registered charity with 30 years' experience in research, investigations and pioneering techniques for the study and promotion of marine cultural heritage. The MAT has grown from regional roots to be an internationally renowned authority on maritime archaeology.

Our key objectives are to:

- Investigate: maritime, coastal and underwater archaeology,
- Engage: people, communities and schools through involvement, enjoyment and education,
- Promote: hard to reach and inaccessible maritime heritage,
- Protect: through supporting heritage management for current and future generations.

