



The Lickey Hills Local  
History Society



LOTTERY FUNDED

**Bilberry Hill Gun Proof Range**

# **WORLD WAR 1**

## **and the**

# **LICKEY HILLS**

**PACK FOR SCHOOLS**

This pack is written for pupils aged 8-13

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## 1. Pack and Visit Information

This pack has been written for pupils in the 8-13 age range but can be easily amended for older/younger pupils. The pack has been written so that a non-specialist teacher can make a visit to the site without the need for support from the Park Ranger Service or History Society. A booking may be made to include the use of the School Room (for lunch/bad weather). Please be aware that the **Quarry is only open to visitors by arrangement** with the Birmingham Ranger Service.

To make the most of your visit it would be helpful if pupils were aware of basic information about the First World War. Resources can be found on the BBC bitesize website including video clips which will contextualise and ready pupils for their visit.

It is strongly recommended that all adults attending read the teacher packs and are familiar with the pupil work packs, before they arrive on site, so they can effectively lead the visit and answer pupil questions. Pupil work packs are to be printed in school, one between two children would reduce paperwork and encourage pupil discussion which is an integral part of this visit. **Clip boards are desirable if available and pencils for pupils are essential.**

The visit is likely to take up most of a school day if arriving around 10am and leaving at 2pm with time for lunch. There is a large play area which may be used to occupy pupils if the activities are completed early, before transport arrives. The Visitor Centre has male and female toilets and the information desk has small 'pocket money' items for sale. The café sells drinks and ice-cream plus hot and cold snacks.

This pack is best worked through beginning with the Local Area, progressing to the Quarry and finally the Buildings.

We hope you have a very enjoyable and informative visit to the Bilberry Hill Gun Proof Range on the Lickey Hills.

## 2. The First World War in 1917

### The First World War

A good reference for information on the First World War is the BBC site “**Schools WW1 Primary**” – <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/25827997>

### Industrial Mobilisation.

Before the war there was a well-established armaments industry in Britain, supplying the home forces (the Army and the Royal Navy) and providing goods for export. Once the war began it was soon apparent that the existing factories could not provide the volume of guns, shells, etc. that were required.

Existing manufacturing companies, such as the Austin Motor Company, were turned over to war production under the direction of the Ministry of Munitions. Women began to take up roles in these factories as the male workforce joined, or were called up to the armed forces. See <http://www.austinmemories.com/styled-49/index.html> for more detailed information on the Austin Motor Company in the war.

By 1917 it is estimated that approximately two million workers were engaged in munitions work in thousands of establishments regulated by the Ministry of Munitions (from <https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/first-world-war-home-front/what-we-already-know/land/munitions-factories/>)

### The Need for Our Site

As the war dragged on the demands for guns and carriages could not be met simply by producing new ones. Old, worn out equipment needed to be sent back from the front for repair. The Austin factory at Longbridge was one of the firms contracted to repair 4.5” howitzer field guns and gun carriages.

In 1917 guns and carriages were being manufactured and repaired in such numbers that the existing proof ranges could not keep up with the inspection requirements. It was decided that three new gun proof ranges needed to be established – in Leeds, Nottingham and Birmingham.

***“In July 1917, a site at Bilberry Hill, near Birmingham, was selected for carrying out the proof of 4.5 in howitzers and 18-pdr carriages, and the production of a proof range was pushed forward at all possible speed”*** from The Official History of the Ministry of Munitions. Volume ix. Published by The Naval & Military Press Ltd.

### DORA (Defence of the Realm Act)

As soon as the war started, Parliament passed the Defence of the Realm Act, shortened to DORA. This gave the government more power than it would usually have. It allowed the government to quickly decide that something new could become a crime. For example, feeding wild animals became a crime because it was seen as a waste of food, which was hard to get during wartime. DORA also stopped newspapers from writing about anything that didn't support the war effort and which may have upset people who were fighting and working hard for their country. The government brought in Daylight Saving Time, where the clocks go forward one hour, so that daylight lasted longer and people could do more work. They also had powers to take over land to use for the war effort as they did on the Lickey Hills in 1917.