



## Six Streets History Derby



### Ambulance Train 1917, Built in Derby

© National Railway Museum and SSPL

[Visit National Railway Museum page](#)

Ambulance train, pulled by a 4-4-2 locomotive number 2153, 22 July 1917. This train was built at the Midland Railway's Derby works and is on its way to France to be used to transport soldiers, wounded fighting in the First World War, to hospital. Railway ambulance trains were run partly from voluntary donations.



[Ceramic Poppies at the Tower of London](#)



### Six Streets History Newsletter No 3

**Six Streets - Not So Local History!** One of the great things about this project is the contacts we have made around the world. Emailing people about their ancestors through message boards has been very useful in finding extra information and links between families, but people also find us through the Six Streets website.

This issue is on the theme of the Midland Railway, due to an email we received from Yorkshire, from a relative of a former Six Streets Resident, Archibald Adamson, who was a Midland Railway employee and served in World War 1. For the war effort, Derby's Midland Railway works built ambulance trains and army wagons, and also manufactured parts for rifles for which up to 500 women were employed. This Newsletter focuses on ambulance trains, and features Archibald Adamson who at one time lived in Statham Street.

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## ARCHIBALD ADAMSON and his brother Thomas

Photograph: Cardross Cenotaph, by kind permission of N Musgrove

We were delighted to receive an email from someone asking for extra information about their Great Uncle who had lived briefly on Statham Street in the First World – because of his short stay he wasn't on our list of serving soldiers from the Six Streets, so we were excited to hear about him. Archibald Adamson was employed by Midland Railway as a Clerk. Originally from Cardross in Dumbartonshire he moved to Derby, along with his brother

Thomas, to work for the railway.

Archibald's brother Thomas signed up near the start of the war, and was posted with the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders to France in February 1915. He was killed in action in May 1915, aged 24.

Archibald enlisted in November 1915, and shortly before he was called up in March 1916 he married Beatrice Mills, a school teacher at Ashbourne Road School, who lived at 60 Statham Street with her mother. Sadly Archie, who was serving with the Royal Field Artillery, was killed at the Battle of Passchendaele in July 1917.

The brothers are remembered on the war memorial in their home town. Unfortunately, all the Adamson family photographs that might have included Archie and Thomas were destroyed some years ago, but maybe some descendants of Beatrice Mills may contact us in time...



## The Midland Railway and the First World War

Photograph: Midland Railway Service Badge  
© IWM (INS 7811) [Visit Imperial War Museum page](#)

Many of the men living in the Six Streets in the 1911 census had been employed as clerks, engineers, and other types of railway workers – these were the largest male employment categories locally. Every street would have contained families whose livelihoods were bound up with the Midland Railway, in some cases employing fathers and sons from the same family. What the people of Derby would have seen passing along the railways (troops, armaments, coal) and through the station itself, which displayed recruitment posters and war propaganda, would have provided constant awareness of the impact of the war, despite the large distances between streets like ours and the trenches.

Nationally, all railway companies contributed extensively to the war effort, in various ways, and on a scale that is difficult for us to appreciate now. The Midland Railway in Derby was no exception. It provided manpower by releasing its staff to serve and administering their enlistments. As the war progressed many more employees were called up or killed and the company employed more women to fill vacant posts.

Its companies were also essential to the huge logistical demands of moving coal, goods and troops to, around and from the Western Front, including returning wounded or sick soldiers. It used its expertise in engineering tracks and rolling stock to produce a lot of new equipment to make and transport armaments, such as howitzer gun carriages, and it also fitted out specialist trains such as **Ambulance Trains**.



### **Ambulance Train, 1914**

© National Railway Museum and SSPL

Workers standing beside an ambulance train, 27 August 1914. This train was built at Derby works and is on its way to France to be used to transport soldiers, wounded fighting in the First World War, to hospital. Railway ambulance trains were financed partly from voluntary donations.

**Ambulance Trains** were an important part of the business of war, and they offer particular insights into the impact of the war on the home front, as soldiers who had been injured, disabled, disfigured, or developed sicknesses including influenza and effects of exposure to gas, were returned to stations and towns like Derby. The Midland Railway produced a total of 9 ambulance trains: existing coaches were converted into ones for medical staff, isolation coaches for infectious cases, pharmacy, ward and sitting up cars. While the official photos of ambulance trains showed starched sheets and flowers in the wards, the reality was doubling up on the intended capacity, lice, gangrene and an awful smell which was only partly mitigated by tobacco smoke. Pharmacy cars had an eight-foot wide sliding door to receive stretchers sideways. The operating theatre was a part of the “pharmacy” coach, where it simply had a drain hole in the metal floor through which waste could be hosed out after operations including amputations.

Ambulance train coaches that were kitted out with folding bunks were simply converted back to ordinary passenger coaches after the war, if they weren't too worn out.



### **Ambulance Train, 1917**

© National Railway Museum and SSPL [Visit National Railway Museum page](#)

Description: Interior of an ambulance train, 22 July 1917. This train was built at the Midland Railway's Derby works and is on its way to France to be used to transport soldiers, wounded fighting in the First World War, to hospital.

### **Railway Research**

Many people continue to be interested in the railways locally, and if you would like to read in more detail and find out what kinds of resources are available to help with research, please email us at [6streetshistory@gmail.com](mailto:6streetshistory@gmail.com)

## **EVENTS**

### **Railway Exhibition in York 2016**

A major new Exhibition is planned at the [National Railway Museum](#), York, from July 2016, reconstructing such a train and exploring the experiences of nurses and injured soldiers travelling on them. If you might want to go to this within a local group please let us know - we will check back with you nearer the time.

The **National Railway Museum blog** has details about the [project to reconstruct an ambulance carriage](#), as well as details from an exhibition held in November 2013 on [ambulance trains](#) and extracts from a book compiled by the [Friends' Ambulance Unit](#), which was a unit of conscientious objector Quakers, who often served in medical capacities helping injured soldiers.

**Illustrated Talk  
"DERBY AT WAR"  
by Dr Mike Galer  
Thursday 12 March 2015, 7.30 pm, WI Hall, Sherwin Street**

An illustrated talk about Derby during the First World War

Mike is former Keeper of Military History at Derby Museum. Now at Crich Tramway Museum, he has recently published a book "Derby Remembering 1914-18" in the series Great War Britain (copies available for sale on the night). Entry is free to the talk which lasts about 1½ hours with a refreshment break (small charge).

**Booking is not essential but recommended –**

email [6streetshistory@gmail.com](mailto:6streetshistory@gmail.com) with your name and contact phone number.

## **Trip to Imperial War Museum North, Manchester**

Coach trip to the IWM north,

**Sunday 19 April 2015, 9.30am – 6.00pm**

leaving from Kedleston Road 9.30am; returning 3.45pm from Salford Quays.

A chance to view exhibitions at the Museum including "From Street to Trench: A World War that shaped a nation"

This trip is suitable for families – activity trails available on request. The museum includes interactive displays, opportunities to handle items from the collection and "The Big Picture Show", a complete sensory experience of war which is projected in the main museum space seven times a day. Set within the regenerated Salford Quays the whole area is an interesting place to explore.

Cost: £5 per ticket; £15 family ticket (2 adults + 2 children). Everyone will be allocated a seat with a seatbelt; there will be a toilet on board for emergency use. Further details from 01332 294204 or [6streetshistory@gmail.com](mailto:6streetshistory@gmail.com). Places must be booked in advance. More details will be sent to those signing up.

*Both the above events are subsidised from our Heritage Lottery Fund project:  
Six Streets History: the Impact of the First World War on a Derby  
Neighbourhood*

## **100 Years Ago**

November 22: Trenches are established along the entire Western Front.

December 16: The German fleet bombards Hartlepool, Whitby and Scarborough, killing 137 civilians and proving that British mainland is susceptible to attack.

January 19: In the first airborne attack on British soil, Zeppelins bomb Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn, killing five civilians.

February 18: Blockade of Britain by German U-boats begins. All vessels are considered viable targets, including those from neutral countries.

March 10: The British Offensive at Neuve Chapelle begins. Allied losses amount to 12,800 in two days. Some of the blame falls on the poor quality and lack of British shells, initiating the 'Shell Crisis'.

April 22: Second Battle of Ypres begins. First use of poison gas by Germany.

April 25: Allied landing at Gallipoli - 70,000 British, Commonwealth and French troops are under heavy fire. On 'Y' Beach, 1,200 out of a force of 1,500 men are casualties.

May 25: The 'Shell Crisis' exposes the failings of the British Government in supporting front line troops. Discontent over rising casualty figures grows and a coalition government is formed.

***If you have any information about people who lived in Six Streets during World War 1 please contact us at [6streetshistory@gmail.com](mailto:6streetshistory@gmail.com)***

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## **Trace Local Servicemen from WW1 on Imperial War Museum Website**

### **Lives of the First World War**

Find out who went away to fight from our area, listed under the Community named Six Streets Derby.

**More men will be added as our research progresses.**

[Lives of the First World War IWM Website](#)

## **Forthcoming Event - Arts Trail**



*Kedleston Road in about 1914 (reproduced by kind permission of "Picture the Past" and Derby City Council)*

***Would you like to get involved?***  
**Are you interested in helping to research local history and helping to find out more about the impact of the First World War on our area?**

We are a small, friendly team and we have begun to compile evidence of the variety of local people's experiences during the war. We are seeking volunteers aged 16 and over (up to any maximum age!!) who can contribute and gain from becoming involved.

If you have a few hours a week to spare or occasional times when you can help, we would be very pleased to discuss options with you. Please contact Chris at 50 White Street, on 01332 705500 or [chris@6streetshistory.com](mailto:chris@6streetshistory.com)

## with Local History Features

During the **Arts Trail** which will be held in the Six Streets area on

**27 & 28 June 2015**

there will be exhibitions, events and trails relating to our project, which is researching the lives of local residents during the First World War.

[6streetshistory@gmail.com](mailto:6streetshistory@gmail.com)

The range of tasks available includes:

- using resources, especially local Derby newspapers of 1914-1918, at the Local Studies Library.
- using online research resources, especially family history related, from your own home and at times convenient to you.
- helping occasionally with the preparation and running of a small number of events locally, and visits.

We are a small neighbourhood group formed in 2010 and part of Six Streets Derby, a community group active in Wheeldon Avenue, Parkfields Drive, Park Grove, White Street, Statham Street, Bromley Street and immediate surroundings. We are always happy to welcome new members to our group - for example our current focus is on researching personal histories of the men from our area who fought, but we are happy to include in our project other aspects that interest people. Subjects we want to explore further include women's roles and whether tribunals for exemption from military conscription affected any families in this area.

**If you would like to know more please go**

**to [www.sixstreetsderby.org.uk](http://www.sixstreetsderby.org.uk) and to get involved please**

**email [6streetshistory@gmail.com](mailto:6streetshistory@gmail.com) – Thank you for your interest**

The views and opinions expressed in this Update are not necessarily shared by the Editorial Team, Six Streets History Derby or Six Streets Derby.

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**Our mailing address is:**

Six Streets History Derby, 34 White Street, Derby, Derbyshire DE22 1HA