

Reputed to be the tallest in the country with four clock faces, the Nicholson War Memorial, known locally as the 'Monument' is a well-known landmark for people visiting the town of Leek. It stands proudly at the junction of several roads leading into the town centre with its gates facing Derby Street. The memorial was built in 1925 by Sir Arthur and Lady Nicholson in memory of their son, Lieutenant Basil Lee Nicholson, who was killed in action at Ypres, Belgium, in 1915, and also in memory of the men of Leek and District who fell in the First World War.

The Nicholson War Memorial, Leek, Staffordshire

This striking war memorial has four clock faces, is built of Portland stone on a red brick interior and stands some eighty feet high. The contractors responsible for building the main structure were Messrs E. and A. Frith of Macclesfield. The cost, in 1925, was £16,000.

THE BATTLES

The names of the 419 men who gave their lives in the First World War are inscribed on two bronze tablets on the sides of the memorial facing Fountain Street and Ashbourne Road. An unusual feature (and a mystery to most casual observers) is the carving of nine words above the clock faces, beneath the cornicing. These are names of towns and villages in France and Belgium where the Leek Battery, a Territorial unit of the Royal Field Artillery, saw action. Lieutenant Nicholson was an officer in the Leek Battery. The place-names read:

HOOGE, LOOS, YPRES, SOMME,
BELLENGLISE, RAMICOURT, BOHAIN,
LENS, GOMMECOURT.

In 1949, two further bronze tablets recording the names of the 101 men of Leek and District who fell during the Second World War were added to the front of the memorial facing Derby Street, either side of the main gates. In 2005, a further fifteen names were added. These were of men and women of the armed forces who had inadvertently been omitted in 1949 and, unusually for a war memorial, the name of the one person to be killed in Leek as a direct result of enemy action (a bombing raid on the town in 1941).

80th ANNIVERSARY

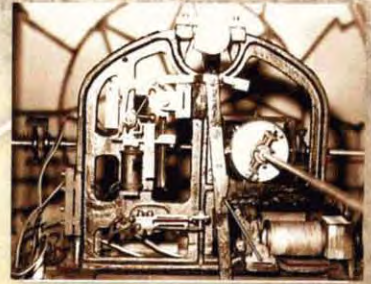
2005 also saw the 80th Anniversary of the unveiling of the Nicholson War Memorial. A commemorative service was held in September of that year when the memorial was rededicated by the Bishop of Stafford and the fifteen additional names unveiled.



The Striking and Chiming Mechanism, located on a platform below the belfry.



The Charging Panel used to charge the lead acid batteries.



The Waiting Train and Turret Movement, situated behind the clock faces and driving the fingers on all four faces.



The bells, five in number, weighing in at a total of 25cwt



The Master Clock which regulated the whole system plus the Striking and Chiming timer which set in motion the striking mechanism.

THE CLOCK

The original clock mechanism was manufactured by Gents of Leicester and was known as a pulsenetic system. The system was powered by two sets of lead acid batteries, one being charged while the other powered the clock. The Turret Movement turned the hands on all four dials but was not accurate and relied on the Waiting Train receiving a signal from the master clock every 30 seconds to achieve accurate time keeping.

The illustration above depicts the clock as it would have been in 1925. Since then, several improvements have been made to bring it up to date and it is now powered from mains electricity with a back-up battery supply to maintain the clock in the event of a mains failure.

The service was attended by numerous voluntary and statutory organisations and watched by thousands of local people. A commemorative DVD was made of the event which included original cine footage of the original unveiling service in 1925.

TIME CAPSULE

In 2006, a time capsule was sealed and placed inside the war memorial. This contains the full history of the memorial, books and other documents recording the details of the fallen of Leek, documentation outlining the maintenance of the memorial and its clock, details of the organising of the 80th Anniversary service, campaign medals, photographs and other relevant material and documentation.

THE FRIENDS

Born from the planning of the 80th Anniversary was the idea of forming a 'Friends of the Nicholson War Memorial' Committee. The building already has Grade 2 listed status with English Heritage and one of the main aims of the Friends is working towards Grade One Status. Maintenance of the memorial is very costly and it is important that this magnificent structure is kept in good condition for the benefit of future generations.



FLAG FLYING

The Union Flag is flown from the Nicholson War Memorial to mark notable days throughout the year.

8th May - Victory in Europe Day

1st July - First day of the Battle of the Somme (First World War).

Seven Leek soldiers were killed on this day.

15th August -
Victory over Japan Day

15th September -
Battle of Britain Day

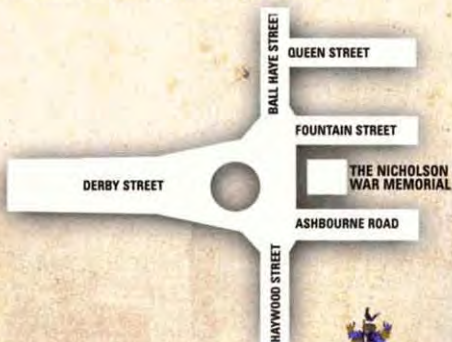
24th October -
Battle of El Alamein

11th November -
Armistice Day

Remembrance Sunday -
Nearest Sunday to
November 11th

Leek Town Council is responsible for the Nicholson War Memorial and is currently seeking additional funding for a variety of maintenance projects to restore and enhance this unique building.

For further details regarding the war memorial or to obtain a copy of the 80th anniversary DVD, please contact the Town Clerk on **01538 381271** or visit the website at www.leektowncouncil.co.uk



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