

European Exile Communities Trail

About the European Exile Communities Trail:

This walk, developed by historian Frank Grombir, provides a brief insight into the hidden history of places used by the people from Central and Eastern Europe since 1939.

The Second World War profoundly disturbed their lives. The post-war geo-political division of Europe triggered further emigration and prevented thousands of individuals from returning to the Soviet-controlled Eastern Bloc.

Huddersfield, like many other UK towns, extended hospitality to these groups. Their number and diversity was previously unseen in the district. The European exiles significantly contributed to the rebuilding of the post-war British economy and enriched local cultural fabric.

Information

For more information about Discover Huddersfield or to learn more about the project and how to get involved, please get in touch through the following media:

www.discoverhuddersfield.com

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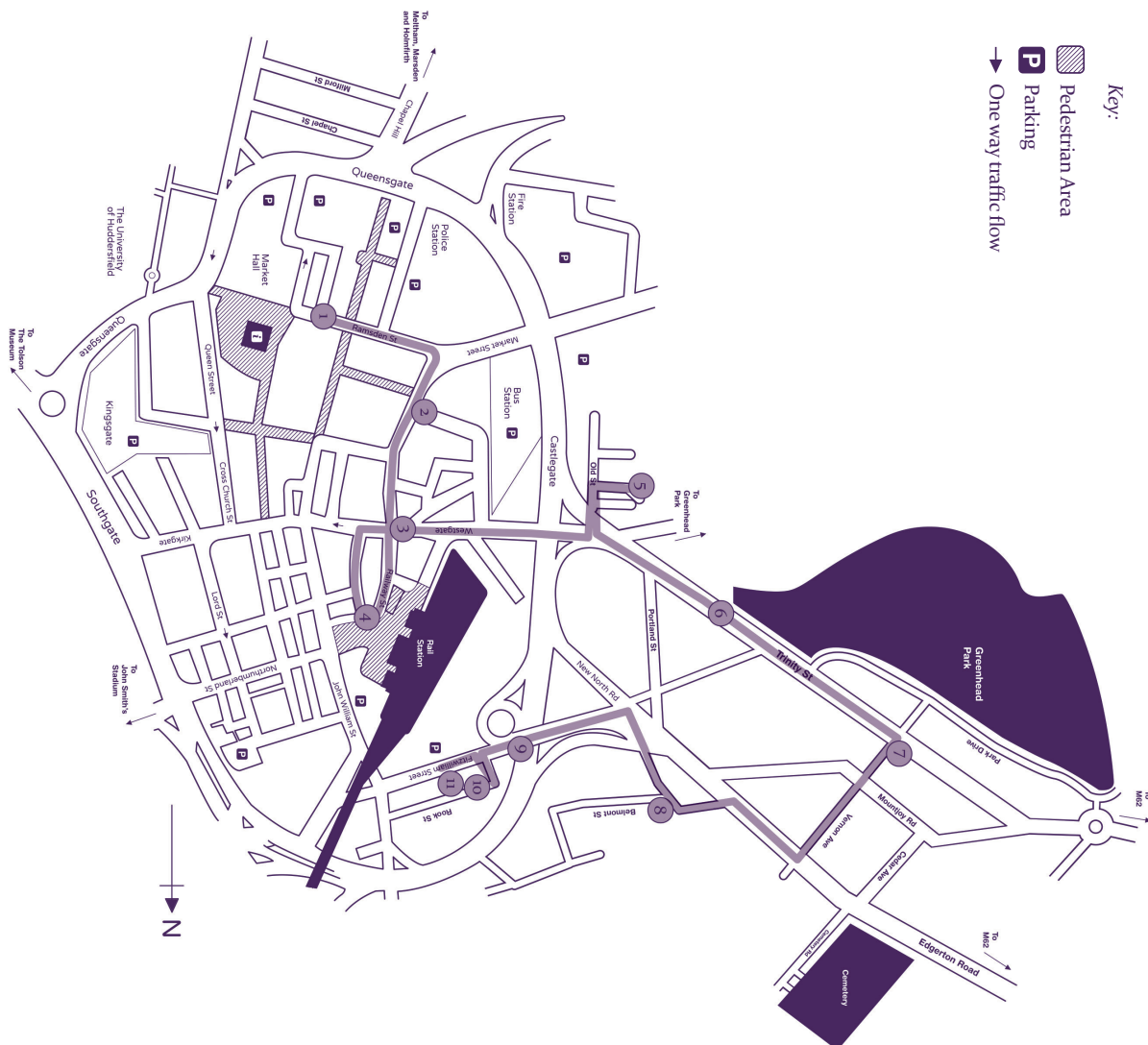
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Images:

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Huddersfield's Polish Community taking part in the Corpus Christi procession in the 1950s.



Discover Huddersfield offers new ways to experience this amazing Yorkshire town, through guided walks, talks and trails. See Huddersfield at its very best: grand listed buildings and small independent shops; a place for radicals from the Luddites to the Sex Pistols; birthplace of Rugby League; a town rich in creativity, stories, heritage and the odd ghostly encounter.



General Anders visiting Huddersfield in 1958.

1 Ramsden Street – Town Hall

Numerous dances and song concerts were staged here by the Poles, Ukrainians and other ethnic communities. The Soviet choir concert in November 1972 proved controversial when a 300-strong protest was staged, attended by Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Latvians from the whole of West Yorkshire. The Poles handed out leaflets warning about Communist propaganda.

2 17 Dundas Street - Anglo-Refugee Friendship Club

This had emerged from the earlier Refugee Club founded in 1939 for the purpose of uniting all nationals willing to resist Hitler's aggression. The membership consisted of the Czechoslovak citizens, anti-Nazi Germans, Free Austrians, many of whom were of Jewish heritage, and other local benefactors. The club ceased to function in 1943 when the different national groups formed separate organisations. Two hostels were also established to help temporarily accommodate the Central Europeans - at Grasmere Road, Marsh and Halifax Old Road.



Westgate in 1947, two years after the club's closure.

3 32 Westgate – British-Czechoslovak Friendship Club

Established in September 1943 as a club for around 150 refugees from Czechoslovakia. It organised lectures, exhibitions and fundraising events to support the Allied cause, celebrate important national days and highlight the plight of the victims of Nazism.

4 St. George's Square – Railway Station

The railway station has always been the first point of contact for people coming to Huddersfield from various corners of Britain and the world – visitors, business people, migrant workers, refugees and students.

5 32 Upper George Street – The Polish Presbytery

Between 1949 and 1964, this imposing ten-roomed house accommodated the Polish priest who had previously stayed at St. Patrick's Rectory and also provided five classrooms and a nursery for the Polish Saturday School, a library and a small private chapel. After the Poles left, it became Huddersfield's first mosque.

6 Greenhead Park

In the early days, the Polish Ex-Combatants used to meet on the park's benches. On many occasions, the exiles laid wreaths at the Cenotaph to pay respect to their fallen soldiers and to highlight human rights abuses perpetrated by Communist regimes. In April 1956, the Poles marched through the park to protest against the official visit of the Soviet leaders, Bulganin and Khrushchev, to Britain. Most notable was probably the Ukrainians' gala in June 1962 attended by more than 1,500 compatriots from around the UK.



This touring exhibition opened in March 1945 at the Czechoslovak Club in Westgate.



Children learning at the Ukrainian Saturday School in the early 1960s.



Former Ukrainian Club on the corner of Trinity Street and Vernon Avenue in 2014.

7 156 Trinity Street – Ukrainian Club

In 1956, this property became the headquarters of the Huddersfield Branch of the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain which had previously held meetings at Lindley Liberal Club. Serving around 250 Ukrainians, it had a bar and housed various organisations, including the Ex-Combatants, Women's Association and Saturday school. Another club run by the Federation of Ukrainians was at 163 Trinity Street but its existence was short-lived. In 1965, the community acquired a larger venue surrounded by ample green space at Edgerton which is still serving its purpose today.



The Latvian Club at Highfields in November 2011.

8 1 Belmont Street – Latvian Club

A pioneering party of four Latvian women came to work at Bradley Wood Sanatorium in October 1946. It was not until the early 1970s that the community got a place of their own. The Latvian Club was also used by smaller groups, including the Hungarians, Austrians and Lithuanians. It was buzzing with activity for many years, had a snooker table upstairs and a large social area with a bar on the ground floor. It closed down in 2012.



The construction of the new Polish Presbytery between 1966-67.

9 108 Fitzwilliam Street – Polish Social Centre

In May 1948, the Polish White Cross Society converted the house into a club for 2,000 Polish workers in the town and district. It ran a canteen and organised various social and educational activities, including classes for English women intending to marry Poles. In 1958, the club was signed over to Polish Ex-Combatants and was extended in 1961 to include extra facilities including a volleyball court. It was demolished in 1971 during the construction of a new ring road.

10 88 Fitzwilliam Street - The Polish Catholic Centre

After twelve years of using St. Patrick's RC Church and St. Patrick's Old Hall for their services and gatherings, the Poles acquired their own church from the Unitarians. In September 1962, it was consecrated by the bishop of Leeds and became the Church of Our Lady of Częstochowa, Queen of Poland. The whole complex, including the presbytery and Saturday school were added a few years later. The Centre is the most enduring testimony to the presence of the Polish Community in Huddersfield.



The Irish Club in 2010, formerly occupied by the Polish Ex-Combatants.

11 86 Fitzwilliam Street, Polish Ex-Combatants' House, Branch No. 440

This house became a new Huddersfield Polish Ex-Combatants' headquarters in 1971 and included a hall and an extension for a stage. It was sold in 1999 and became the Irish Centre.