

Million Candles Candlelit Vigil

The 4th of August 2014 marks the 100th anniversary of the day Britain entered one of the costliest conflicts in history – the First World War – which ended on the 11th of November 1918, Armistice Day. Nearly everyone in the UK has an ancestor directly affected by the First World War and all of us live with its effects today. The losses were felt in nearly every UK town and village as more than 1.1 million lives were sacrificed by men and women in service of the British Empire.

'The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.' Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary, uttered these words on the eve of 4 August 1914 as Britain officially entered the First World War.

A national commemorative event, **Million Candles Candlelit Vigil**, will take place in Westminster Abbey from **10.00 - 11.00pm on 4 August** and will be televised live on BBC.

Exactly 100 years later we are inviting millions of individuals, households and companies to join together in a national moment of reflection, and are encouraging everyone in the UK to turn off their lights between 10pm and 11pm on 4 August 2014 – leaving only a single light or candle for this symbolic act of reflection and hope. On that night we will remember more than a million Commonwealth Service personnel who lost their lives in the First World War.

Those remembered on the memorials in Minchinhampton include 7 officers, 12 NCOs and 42 men. The youngest died at the age of 16 and the oldest was 53. The average age of death was 26 years of age. The first death was 2Lt Christopher Lawrence on 13th October 1914 and the last during the conflict was Pte Edwin Ludlow who died on 4th November 1918. Three others succumbed to their injuries after the armistice. On average Minchinhampton lost one a month throughout the war, with this figure rising slightly in the last year. In all 61 men from Minchinhampton died in the war. Nearly 80% of these served in the Infantry with over half serving in the Gloucestershire Regiment; a further 13% served with the Artillery. Of our fallen one served in the Australian Infantry and another in the Canadian Infantry, one served in the Navy and two served in the Royal Flying Corps. One family lost 3 sons, a further 7 families lost 2 sons, with 15 leaving widows. Over 60% are buried in France, with a further 15% buried in Flanders; it is surprising to note that 8 are buried in England. Those who died further afield are buried in Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, Greece, or Germany; one is buried in Belgium and one was buried at sea.

We hope to light one million candles across the UK to remember each and every one of those Service men and women who gave their lives in the war to end all wars. A limited edition Centenary candle will be available from Marks & Spencer stores from 4 July 2014 for £4, with all profit going to The Royal British Legion.

Members of the Parish are asked to join in this vigil to create a unique national moment for Great Britain and The Royal British Legion. It is hoped that we may organise a vigil in the Parish Church. This, together with details, will be published in the Town later.