

THE ROYAL BRITISH
LEGION



1914
WWI CENTENARY
1918



**THE ROYAL
BRITISH LEGION**
and the Centenary

Photographer: Mark Philpott

April 2014

The Centenary of the First World War

The 4th of August 2014 marks the 100th anniversary of the day Britain entered one of the costliest conflicts in its history, the First World War, which ended on Armistice Day, 11th November 1918.

Almost everyone in the UK has an ancestor directly affected by the First World War. The losses were felt across every UK town and village as the lives of nearly one million lives men and women were sacrificed in service of the British Empire.

The Royal British Legion will be joining in the commemoration of all those who served and sacrificed from British, Dominion and Imperial forces from countries including the UK, Republic of Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India and South Africa.



The Royal British Legion and the Centenary Commemorations

The Royal British Legion was founded in 1921 by veterans of the First World War who adopted the poppy as their symbol of Remembrance and hope. Today the Legion will be at the forefront of Centenary commemorations. As we come together to remember the events of a century ago, we are reminded of the important welfare work the Legion continues to provide today and will need to provide in the future.

A century on from the First World War those serving in the Armed Forces, veterans, and their families still call on us for help with almost every aspect of daily life. The problems facing veterans when they returned to the UK continue to affect serving personnel and veterans today: the Legion is still there for the whole Armed Forces family, whether they are living with bereavement or disability, having difficulty finding employment or coping with financial stress.

As the UK's Custodian of Remembrance, the Legion will be joining the nation in respecting the sacrifices of the First World War. Whilst continuing to observe traditional Remembrance events in November, the Legion will be marking commemorations in the UK and Republic of Ireland throughout the Centenary period and beyond, with a focus on Remembrance, education and legacy.

The red poppy is the Legion's symbol of Remembrance, chosen because these delicate flowers bloomed on the battlefields during the First World War. Millions of people in the UK still wear a poppy as a sign of Remembrance of those who have served and are still serving, and as a symbol of hope for the future.





The Royal British Legion Centenary projects

Here's a selection of events the Legion is currently involved with to commemorate the Centenary. For full and updated information, visit our website: www.britishlegion.org.uk/ww1centenary

Every Man Remembered

This project, supported by Ancestry.co.uk, aims to commemorate every one of the fallen by the end of the Centenary. The website, www.everymanremembered.org was built using the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's database of every Service man or woman who died during, or as a result of, the First World War. Members of the public can search the site by name, home town, date of birth or regiment. You can plant a virtual poppy in their memory, as well as upload pictures and share stories.

Lights Out

At 10.00pm on 4th August 2014 candles will be lit at Westminster Abbey to launch a commemorative service of penitence and contemplation. Candles will be available from the Legion through our partner M&S to be lit across the country as families and community groups join in.

Centenary Poppy Campaign

Inspired by our Greenhithe & Swanscombe Branch the Legion is working in partnership with B&Q to get the whole country covered with poppies for the Centenary as a living

tribute to the fallen. B&Q will donate £1 to the Legion for every promotional pack they sell. The Legion is also going to send a free pack of poppy seeds to schools throughout the UK, courtesy of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Only Remembered

War Horse author, Michael Morpurgo, has curated an anthology of First World War inspired literature, featuring contributions from Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cornwall, Jaqueline Wilson, Miranda Hart, Joanna Lumley, Anthony Horowitz and Raymond Briggs. 50% of the royalties have been kindly donated by Michael Morpurgo will go to the Legion and SSAFA.

The National Memorial Arboretum

Family friendly discovery trails will take visitors to memorials linked to the First World War, telling the stories behind these tributes.

Centenary Fields

In towns and villages across the country there are war memorial fields given in memory of those who lost their lives in the First World War. The national charity Fields in Trust is working with the Legion to protect these fields and create a legacy of at least 425 green spaces in the UK preserved in perpetuity for local communities.



The Centenary Fields programme will safeguard in perpetuity our war memorial parks, playing fields and other green spaces in memory of those who lost their lives in World War I. Working with local authorities and landowners, this project will deliver a fitting tribute to the sacrifices made then by local people, while also protecting our green spaces for the future.

Please support Fields in Trust and The Royal British Legion to commemorate this important landmark in our history and help remembrance to live on through Centenary Fields.



HRH The Duke of Cambridge

Poppies in the Moat

On 5th August an installation of almost 900,000 ceramic poppies will be unveiled in the moat at the historic Tower of London. The poppies will be available for sale throughout the installation, with proceeds going to military charities.

Learning Pack

The Legion's award-winning, and free, Learning Pack goes out to 50,000 schools in June 2014. The pack will contain a wide range of resources about the First World War, including assembly outlines, poems, activities, and video content.

Centenary Gardens

Ashridge Trees in Somerset will be growing trees, rosebushes and other plants to raise money for the Legion, providing the opportunity to plant something beautiful.

Hear My Cry - Words for When There Are No Words

The Bible Society has published a collection of poems, psalms and drawings inspired by the Centenary. Proceeds will be donated to the Legion and a copy of the book will be sent to each of the Legion's branches.

The Centenary Album

The Legion and Decca Records, are producing an album of First World War themed poetry and music, featuring well known personalities, descendants of WW1 VCs and the Central Band of The Royal British Legion.

Honour Events

The Legion is organising a variety of community events around the country, including sponsored walks, bike rides and swims.

Windsor Castle WW1 Commemorative Concert - 100 years of music

On 5th June 2014 the Central Band of The Royal British Legion, with soloist Nichola McAuliffe, will perform music and songs from the last 100 years in the historic St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle.

The Book of the Poppy

This book brings to life the symbol of the poppy and the vital work of The Royal British Legion and features a foreword from the Legion's National President, Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson CB CVO.



LOTTERY FUNDED





Key messages

*‘To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high’*

The Centenary provides the nation with an opportunity to honour the commemoration of the First World War and acknowledge The Royal British Legion and the red poppy, as the charity and symbol of Remembrance and hope with relevance for today and the future.

The Centenary gives the Legion the opportunity to re-engage with our supporters, as well as moving forward to reach the next generation.

We want to use this time to reinvigorate ourselves. It is important for us to remind the public of our purpose: to help members of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, British Army and Royal Air Force, Reservists, veterans and their families all year round.

Our mission – to be the number one provider of welfare, comradeship, representation and Remembrance for the whole Armed Forces community – remains as vital now as it was following the First World War.



Inspired to organise your own event?

We know that many projects will need funding to help them get started. We encourage you to investigate the grants available from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) who have money earmarked for community Centenary projects. They want to fund projects that help communities understand more about the heritage of the First World War and that will benefit a wide range of people.

To find out more about the HLF grants and your eligibility visit www.hlf.org.uk, call their grant enquiry line on **020 7591 6024** or email them at enquiries@hlf.org.uk

They're particularly keen to support initiatives that have community, educational, youth or legacy elements.

Success Stories

Leiston Branch

The Legion's Leiston Branch received a £9,200 grant from the HLF for the community project they are running with other local groups. The branch is working with local museums, youth and cadet groups, historical societies and regimental associations to organise four months of events chronicling the town's wartime history, culminating in the annual Festival of Remembrance in November.

National Funding

The Legion has applied for funding from the HLF to enable us to send a pack of poppy seeds and Remembrance heritage information to schools throughout the UK, as well as funding a full time Ambassador Training Co-ordinator for a year. The seeds will be sent out in early April, supported by Prime Minister David Cameron, the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport and devolved administrations. The new Co-ordinator role, focused on Remembrance, will support training activities for over 500 Legion volunteer ambassadors who will represent the Legion to a wide range of communities across the UK, including schools and youth groups.



Key dates

The UK Government will be observing six national and international events to commemorate the Centenary.

4th August 2014

National and international services in London, Cardiff, Glasgow, Belfast and at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission St Symphorien Cemetery in Belgium to mark the 100th anniversary of Britain declaring war on Germany.

25th April 2015

Events to mark the start of the Battle of Gallipoli. The campaign was a disaster, with more than 44,000 Allied soldiers killed.

31st May - 1st June 2016

Events to mark the naval Battle of Jutland. This was the largest naval battle, and the only full-scale clash of battleships, of the war.

1st July 2016

Events to mark the first day of the Battle of the Somme. In just 4 months the British suffered around 420,000 casualties, the French 200,000, and the Germans 500,000 casualties.

June - November 2017

Events to mark the Battle of Passchendaele, also known as the Third Battle of the Ypres.

11th November 2018

Germany and the Allies signed the Armistice agreement and fighting on the Western Front ceased at 11am.



Reg. Charity No. 219279