100 Years of Remembrance

The History

Remembrance is the act of honouring those who served to defend our democratic freedoms and way of life. We unite across faiths, cultures and backgrounds to remember the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces community from Britain and the Commonwealth.

During the First World War, much of the fighting took place in Western Europe. The countryside was blasted, bombed and fought over repeatedly. Previously beautiful landscapes turned to mud; bleak and barren scenes where little or nothing could grow. There was a notable and striking exception to the bleakness - the bright red Flanders poppies. These resilient flowers flourished in the middle of so much chaos and destruction, growing in the thousands upon thousands.

Shortly after losing a friend in Ypres in 1915, a Canadian doctor, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae was moved by the sight of these poppies and that inspiration led him to write the now famous poem 'In Flanders Fields'.



In Flanders fields, the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place, and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly



The Poppy

This poem then inspired an American academic named Moina Michael to adopt the poppy in memory of those who had fallen in the war. She campaigned to get it adopted as an official symbol of Remembrance across the United States and worked with others who were trying to do the same in Canada, Australia, and the UK.

Also involved with those efforts was a French woman, Anna Guérin who was in the UK in 1921 where she planned to sell the poppies in London.

There she met Earl Haig, our founder, who was persuaded to adopt the poppy as our emblem in the UK. The Royal British Legion, which had been formed in 1921, ordered nine million poppies and sold them on 11 November that year.

Now, around 40 million poppies are sold each year by Royal British Legion Volunteers with all proceeds being used to provide Armed Forces Veterans, Serving Personnel and their families with financial support, advice, employment, mobility, housing and mental health facilities.

The Act

This year, as in years gone by, on the 11th and 14th November, a two-minute silence will be held across the nation at 11.00am to honour those who have fallen. On Remembrance Sunday at war memorials across the nation and the commonwealth tributes will be paid to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Today we are more aware than ever that battles are fought mainly by young people, and many of those who survive bear scars for life.

The act of 'remembering' will not only look back to mark their sacrifice, but also to learn lessons for the future. Reflecting on the poem, '*In Flanders Fields*', Moina Michael, wrote:

And now the torch and poppy red
We wear in honour of our dead.
Fear not that ye have died for naught;
We'll teach the lesson that ye wrought
In Flanders Fields.

Please support the Poppy Appeal where you see them for sale throughout the village. Thank you.