



REMEMBRANCE TODAY

Remembrance in the UK today is very different to that of 100 years ago. People are able to take part in a wide variety of Remembrance events, whatever their political or religious beliefs. The Royal British Legion produces special tokens of Remembrance to include people of no faith and those of different faiths to be able to remember individuals – family, friends and loved ones – in their own way. The Legion also organises Remembrance events, formal and informal, large and small, across the UK, involving people from a wide range of communities to take an active role in Remembrance and to feel part of our shared Remembrance heritage.

The poppy remains a humble, neutral and universal symbol of Remembrance and hope. Often misunderstood, it is however still worn by millions every year. In Scotland, the poppy has a slightly different design to the one worn in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Ireland the poppy is still regarded by many as a potent political symbol and a point of contention, however in recent years more and more people there have been buying and wearing them.

The Royal British Legion has launched its Centenary Poppy Campaign, aiming to cover the UK in red poppies throughout the First World War Centenary period. The poppy was a symbol of Remembrance 100 years ago and remains so today, but with renewed hope for a brighter, peaceful future. Every poppy helps The Royal British Legion to support the Armed Forces community, past and present, and their families.

McCrae's poem in turn inspired an American academic, Moina Michael to make handmade red silk poppies which were then brought to England by a French lady, Anna Guerin. The (Royal) British Legion, formed in 1921, ordered 9 million of the poppies which they sold on 11 November that year. The poppies sold out almost immediately and that first ever "Poppy Appeal" raised over £106,000, a huge amount of money at the time. The following year, Major George Howson, who had received the Military Cross for his role in the First World War, set up a factory off the Old Kent Road in London where five disabled ex-Service men began making poppies. 3 years later the Poppy Factory moved to its current site in Richmond, Surrey and today produces millions of poppies each year.

Such was the demand for poppies in England in 1922 that few were reaching Scotland. Earl Haig's wife established the "Lady Haig Poppy Factory" in Edinburgh to produce poppies exclusively for Scotland. Over 5 million Scottish poppies (which have four petals and no leaf unlike poppies in the rest of the UK) are still made by hand by disabled ex-Service men at Lady Haig's Poppy Factory each year.

REMEMBRANCE AND THE POPPY:

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE



1921 unveiling of the Cenotaph, Whitehall

For further details on The Royal British Legion, visit www.britishlegion.org.uk or call us on **0808 802 8080**

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John McCrae



Remembrance is part of modern British life, culture and heritage. It becomes a particular feature of the public calendar on or about Remembrance Sunday and 11 November, Armistice Day, each year. This is when public, private, formal and informal Remembrance events take place throughout the UK. Millions of people each year stop what they are doing and observe a Two Minute Silence at 11 am on the 11th day of the 11th month, commemorating the original Armistice of 1918 which signalled the "stilling of arms" and led to the formal end to the First World War (eventually signed in 1919). Over 40 million poppies are distributed by The Royal British Legion every year at the end of October and up to 11 November. Each and every poppy is a symbol of Remembrance and hope and millions of people make the individual choice to wear one.

THE POPPY IS...

- A symbol of Remembrance and hope
- Worn by millions of people
- Red because of the natural colour of field poppies

THE POPPY IS NOT...

- A symbol of death
- A sign of support for war
- A reflection of politics or religion
- Red to reflect the colour of blood

WEARING A POPPY...

- is a personal choice
- reflects individual and personal memories
- is not compulsory
- is appreciated by those it helps

THE STORY OF THE POPPY

During the First World War (1914 – 1918) much of the fighting took place in Western Europe. Previously beautiful countryside was blasted, bombed and fought over, again and again. The landscape swiftly turned to fields of mud, bleak and barren scenes where little or nothing could grow. Bright red Flanders poppies (Papaver Rhoeas) however, were delicate but resilient flowers and grew in their thousands, flourishing even in the middle of chaos and destruction. In the spring of 1915, shortly after losing a friend in Ypres, a Canadian doctor, Lt Col John McCrae was inspired by the sight of poppies to write a now famous poem called "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
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.



Tomb of the Unknown Warrior



Moina Michael