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HOW WE SALUTED THE FALLEN IN WORLD WAR ONE – AND ALL WARS

by Andrew Harris



Lancaster Remembers. Picture by Lancaster City Council.

On the morning of the 11th November the people of the north west gathered in more than 40 locations in acts of remembrance for all those who lost their lives in past wars. They especially remembered the 887,858 British soldiers, sailors and airmen who died in the First World War which had ended exactly 100 years before. So why did they die?

On the 28th June 1914 Archduke Franz Ferdinand – heir to the throne of the fragile Austro Hungarian Empire – was assassinated in Sarajevo by a Serbian nationalist. A month later Austro Hungary declared war on Serbia but the empire's army was badly mauled by Serbia. Russia mobilised to support their fellow slavs in Serbia followed by France which was allied to Russia and wanted to recover the province of Alsace and half of Lorraine which she had lost to Germany 43 years before. Germany wanted to support its ally Austro Hungary – together the Central Powers – but feared that more populous Russia would overwhelm it. Expansionist Germany aimed to defeat France before Russia could attack and thus avoid a war on two fronts. They would use the Schlieffen Plan to attack France via Belgium after an ultimatum on the 2nd August but the Belgian Government invoked the 1839 Treaty of London which required Great Britain to protect Belgium. Germany gambled that Great Britain wouldn't honour its obligation but it did hence Great Britain went to war on the 4th August 1914

allied to France and Russia against the central powers. Thus began the war which was – until 1939-45 – the bloodiest war in history which is estimated to have cost the lives of more than 17 million people.

The ground war quickly became a stalemate with both sides literally entrenched in a muddy slaughter until eventually aircraft and tanks gained the initiative. It was such a dreadful war of attrition that people thought it was surely a war to end all wars. The horrible truth is that since 1918 our country has fought 25 more wars in which a further 391,749 British soldiers, sailors and airmen died. In just 21 years after the first world war Britain lost 3,483 service men and women in the Russian Civil War, the Third Anglo-Afghan War, the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-1921, the Iraqi revolt of 1920 and the Arab revolt in Palestine. Then came the Second World War of 1939-45 in which 382,600 British soldiers, sailors and airman lost their lives.

Since 1945 Britain has lost 5,666 service personnel in 19 further wars with the greatest loss of life in what was Dutch Indonesia, then Malaya, Korea, Northern Ireland, the Falklands, the Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq from 2003-2009. With 1,279,607 military and 178,117 civilian British deaths plus untold damage to bodies and minds since 1914 we



Clitheroe Remembers. Picture by Tom Lemmon.

have much to remember.

As well as services at Cenotaphs – monuments to those buried elsewhere - the people and institutions of the north west commemorated the fallen in many ways –

- From last July to 24th February 2019 the Imperial War Museum North is staging an exhibition *Lest We Forget* which explores how symbols of commemoration such as the poppy and two minute silence have endured for a century. It focuses on the many ways in which the First World War has been remembered and highlights include works of art. Exhibition curator Laura Clouting explains “The exhibition explores the diversity and compelling ways in which people have, from 1918 right up to the present day, tried to make meaning out of the Great War’s human cost. Through intensely personal and private grief, the fractures inflicted upon communities and enduring rituals of remembrance, the memory of the war dead has been kept alive for over a century. The exhibition explores how these accepted forms of remembrance have been challenged and how they have evolved.” For details call 0161 836 4000 or see IWM North at www.iwm.org.uk

- On Friday 9th November the Armed Forces in the North West staged a major event in Preston Guild Hall to mark 100 years since the Armistice which ended the First World War. It was described as the ‘North West’s very own tri-service Festival of Remembrance – similar to the Royal Festival Hall but held in the North West.’ Colonel Russ Miller OBE is the Army Commander HQNW and explained “This event is particularly pertinent when one remembers that the Armed Forces have historically recruited heavily in the North West of England and that was especially true during WW1. Vast numbers enlisting in Kitchener’s New Army and the iconic Pals Battalions. Then, as now, more than 20% of recruits to all 3 services came from the NW. Many of those chose to resettle in the NW at the end



Preston Remembers. Picture by Andrew Harris.



Leyland Remembers. Picture by the Royal British Legion.

of their military service.”

- On the 27th October the national chairman of the Royal British Legion attended a special remembrance ceremony on ice to support the Legion’s *Thank you 100 Campaign* which coincided with the start of the 2018 Poppy Appeal. Terry Whittles and his wife Sue joined other dignitaries at Altrincham Ice Rink when Manchester Storm faced Belfast Giants. The event was held to mark 100 years since the end of the conflict and to say ‘thank you’ to the First World War generation who served, sacrificed and changed our world. The Ambassador for *Thank you 100* is Dilys Hooper who represents the Legion’s membership in Cheshire, Merseyside and West Lancashire. She explained “We are grateful to Manchester Storm for this unique occasion. It was a perfect way to begin the period of remembrance when we focus on the contribution of the First World War generation but also remember the service and sacrifice of all those serving with the British Armed Forces and their families right up to the present day. We will remember them.”

- The ‘Football Remembers’ campaign honours the footballers who joined up and went to war. Shortly before



ABOVE: Southport Remembers. Picture by David Bridge.
LEFT: The 'Albert Hall' ceremony in Preston Guild Hall. Picture by Andrew Harris.
BOTTOM LEFT: When the poppies fell in Preston Guild Hall.



Remembrance Day, Premier League clubs planted trees in tribute to their players who went to serve their country in the conflict but never returned. Liverpool FC Academy planted seven trees in tribute to seven players from the club who lost their lives in the so-called Great War. The campaign was organised as a partnership between the Woodland Trust, the National Football Museum in Manchester, the FA, the Football League in Preston and the Professional Footballers' Association.

- Reality TV star Tanya Bardsley from Cheshire supported designer Leigh Hetherington and three of her team who spent more than 250 hours of their own time to create a dress to commemorate 100 years since the end of the First World War. The dress is made from black taffeta and black tulle. Each of the poppies has been individually handmade from red silk organza with black Swarovski crystal beaded centres. The design wraps poppies around the body to give the effect of a poppy wreath. Tanya from the *Real Housewives of Cheshire* modelled the dress and said "Two years ago my Dad, Steve Robinson, received an MBE for services to injured soldiers - so helping our Armed Forces is close to my heart. When I hear that Leigh was designing a poppy dress I was delighted to be involved and help raise money for this year's Poppy Appeal.



- Margaret Wadsworth from Carlisle has sold £1million of poppies since joining the Royal British Legion. Margaret, 73, was named 2018 fundraiser of the year in a glittering ceremony in London and also won a national ITV Pride of



TOP: TV star Tanya Bardsley modelling the poppy dress which helped to raise money for this year's Poppy Appeal. ABOVE LEFT: Manchester Storm played Belfast Giants as a tribute to the Fallen in World War One. ABOVE RIGHT: Liverpool FC Academy planted 7 trees in memory of their players who perished in WW1.

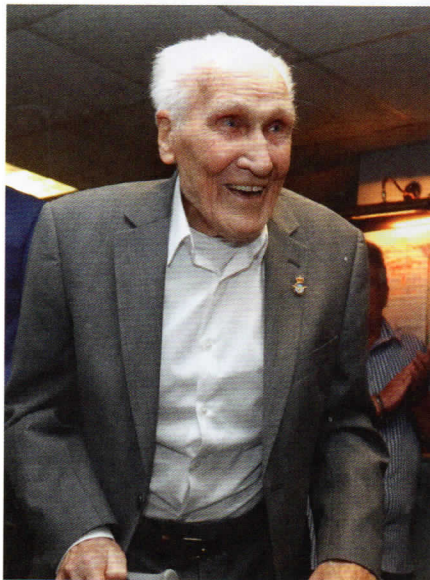
Britain Award. She explained "When my husband Colin came out of the forces he joined the Legion and became the volunteer Poppy Appeal Organiser for Carlisle and Stanwix when I decided to help him out. We've just worked as a team ever since. It's amazing to think that we've raised £1million since then."

• George Haigh is 103 and an RAF veteran believed to be one of the oldest surviving professional footballers in the world. On the 17th November – the first Stockport County home game since Remembrance Day - George unveiled a plaque as a tribute to 13 Stockport County players who lost their lives between June 1915 and November 1918. They were Joe Beswick, Frank Booth, James Greechan, Richard

Hegarty, John Hodgkinson, Fred Houghton, William McRailt, Christopher Porter, Robert Suart, Wilfred Toman, George Warren, Norman Wood and Jack Yuill. All died young for us.

• Lancaster City Museum is staging an exhibition: *For the Fallen – Now that War is Over* which opened in September and runs until the 24th March 2019. It tells the story of the end of the Great War and the immediate aftermath for both the King's Own Royal Regiment and Lancaster. It also commemorates the 100th Anniversary of the action for which Lance Sergeant Tom Neely was awarded the Victoria Cross which is on display for the first time. For details call 01524 64637 or visit www.kingsownmuseum.com

There are some amazing commentaries about the First



"Well, if you knows of a better 'ole, go to it."

IN FLANDERS FIELDS

by John McCrae in May 1915



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.

TOP LEFT: Margaret Wadsworth from Carlisle receiving her award.

MIDDLE LEFT: 103- year old George Haigh of Stockport County who unveiled a memorial to 13 players lost in WWI.

ABOVE: Design by David Bridge of Southport.

BOTTOM LEFT: Bruce Bairnsfather's most iconic cartoon by kind permission of the Bruce Bairnsfather Society. Copyright 2017 Estate of BB's daughter Barbara Bruce Littlejohn.

World War. The poets Robert Laurence Binyon and Canadian Army Doctor John McCrae immortalised the conflict with great pathos with *For the Fallen* and *In Flanders Fields*. The cartoonist Captain Bruce Bairnsfather managed to see grim humour reflected in his *Fragments from France* with more than 160 cartoons which tell their own story. Their words and images say it all.

Andrew Harris – www.andrewharris.co.uk
– gratefully acknowledges the help provided by Jon Keighren of the Royal British Legion in the preparation of this article. Thanks also to RBL and those named for the images and my daughter Jane for finding the lead picture. Casualty figures are the best available from official sources but due to the fog of war many deaths were unrecorded.

