

Remembrance Assembly

Darja - Red poppy

The symbolism of the red poppy started with poems written during WW1 by John McCrae and Moina Michael. In 1919, it had been decided that the red poppy would serve as an emblem of those who passed in the war by the Royal British Legion - a charity which provides social, financial and emotional support to those who are part of the British Armed Forces, their families and those in need.

The red poppy is a symbol of hope for a better future as well as a remembrance for those who lost their lives fighting and those affected outside the battlefield – the innocent civilians.

It has been just over 100 years since people started wearing the red poppy in 1921: the red petals reflecting the blood shed of those fighting, the black button representing mourning of those unable to welcome their loved ones home and the green leaf illustrating hope.

Some argue, however, that the symbol has been used excessively to support British military interventions, while others refuse to wear it due to the pressure in doing so.

Nonetheless it is a flower that grew and coloured the scarred, bleak and muddy landscapes after bombing, fighting and destruction - a sight which John McCrae wrote about, in the famous poem 'In Flanders Fields', following the death of his friend. Let us therefore remember the lives that have been taken by war and their honourable sacrifice in hopes of reaching peace.

Purple poppy -Rosie -

The purple poppy is used as a symbol of remembrance for animals that served during wartime and was created in 2006 by the charity Animal Aid. Animals are often regarded as the 'forgotten' victims of war, and it is important to remember the sacrifices they unwillingly made in times of human conflict. For example, horses and donkeys were often used to transport ammunition and supplies to the front line, and it is estimated that 8 million of them died during the First World War. The poppy also commemorates animals such as dogs and pigeons (used as messengers) and canaries (used for detecting poisonous gases).

Today, the purple poppy campaign is run by the Murphy's Army charity, although it was previously supported by Animal Aid, who have now switched to selling a purple paw. This is because they were concerned that the message behind the purple poppy was sometimes being lost, with animals being represented as heroes, rather than victims. The Royal British Legion have not declared their public support of the purple poppy, but have said that they see no issue with people wearing it next to the red poppy.

As the stories of animals who served during conflict are not often well-known, I would like to draw your attention to a particular horse called Warrior. Warrior served on the front line from August 1914 until November 1918, and was victim to machine gun attacks by air and falling shells, buried under debris, and trapped twice under the burning beams of his stables. Fortunately, Warrior was able to survive all of this and, after his death in 1941, he was awarded the Dickin Medal, which is the highest accolade for animals in military conflict.

Whilst Warrior was able to return home after his time on the front line, many animals have not been as lucky and have died during conflict. It is important to be aware that it is not just humans that are affected by war, and we should acknowledge and respect these forgotten victims during this time of remembrance.

Black poppy- Janelle

Launched in 2010 by Selena Carty, the black poppy commemorates the lives of black, African, Caribbean, and Pacific Islanders, which were lost during various wars since the 16th century. The Black Poppy Rose Foundation aims to highlight these missing key historical narratives as well as to assist with the preservation of African/Black history, which together assisted in shaping the world we live in today. Black people not only played an important role in the British war effort, but in rebuilding the country after the devastation of World War II. As one of the few black soldiers to leave a memoir of the First World War, Norman Manley is an example of someone who had to overcome prejudice during his experience as a soldier. After graduating from Oxford and enlisting in the Royal Field artillery in 1914, the Jamaican soldier was promoted quickly to Corporal in just two years. Despite this honour, he experienced racial prejudice from those who "disliked taking orders from a coloured non-commissioned officer." Furthermore corporals and sergeants resented their shared status with him because of his colour. Remembering the wartime history of people of colour, such as the story of Norman Manley, is crucial to the meaning behind wearing a black poppy.

White poppy - Ellie

In the UK white poppies are distributed by the Peace Pledge Union – the UK's oldest secular and pacifist group. The white poppy was created in 1933, just 12 years after the red poppy and was worn by many to stress the "never again" message, which emerged after World War One, and which pacifists feared was slipping away.

The white poppy symbolises three things. Firstly, the remembrance of all victims of war. This includes both civilians and members of the armed forces; people of all nationalities; and those killed in wars happening now as well as in the past. Secondly it stands for challenging war and militarism. Wearers of white poppies hope to encourage people to question the way war is normalised and remind people of the need to resist war and its causes today. Finally, the white poppy symbolises a commitment to peace and to seeking nonviolent solutions to conflict, by drawing attention to the devastating human cost of war.

Thank you

Darja - Red poppy, **Rosie** - Purple poppy, Janelle - **Black** poppy, Ellie - **White** poppy