

First World War centenary

We shall remember them

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the armistice of the First World War, over the next four weeks **Ann Cullis** from Bath and North East Somerset Council will highlight some of the events happening this November and looks back at events and projects over the last four years in B&NES



The Rotary Club of Bath is hoping to install two of the Tommy silhouettes in Parade Gardens
Picture: Tim Anderson/PA Wire

People who lived through the four years of the First World War often called it The Great War because its scale was so huge - so many nations were involved, and so many men and women were affected, with such an enormous impact on everyday life.

On the evening of Monday 3 August 1914, the day before war

was declared, the Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey looked out across London as the gas-lights were lit at dusk and remarked: "The lamps are going out all over Europe, and we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."

On Monday morning 11 November 1918 The Mayor of Bath, Alderman A. W. Wills, stood on the steps of the Guildhall to read out the

Proclamation of Peace and to announce that the Armistice had been signed - signalling the end to hostilities.

Between these two moments there were more than 18 million military and civilian deaths, and 23 million wounded.

The Rotary Club of Bath is fundraising to buy two 'Tommy' silhouette figures, as part of the There

But Not There remembrance campaign.

The 'Tommy's' - a powerful and silent reminder of the millions of soldiers who lost their lives - will stand in Parade Gardens in November.

To support the campaign for the Tommy figures go to: <https://mydonate.bt.com/events/tommie/475826>

Symbol of remembrance for all fallen comrades

Poppies were a common sight for soldiers fighting in the trenches of Belgium and northern France. They can still be seen in wheat fields in the countryside today, but were far more common 100 years ago. Poppies are often mentioned in poems written in the First World War.

Probably the most famous is John McKae's 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*

The red paper poppy soon became a symbol of remembrance. In the 1930s, peace campaigners began to wear white poppies, as a



Knitted poppies entwined on the staircase at the Guildhall
Picture: © Freia Turland

Coverage in the Bath Chronicle

In 1918, the Bath Chronicle was printed on a Friday night for sale on Saturday.

The declaration of the end of war was on Monday 11 November, and was quickly shared through word of mouth, but it wasn't reported until the edition of Saturday 16 November 1918:



The Great Day

What a week is that through which we have just passed. What a relief when on Monday morning the great news, for which the people so eagerly awaited on Sunday, came through that on that morning the war would end. In Bath, as in every other city in the Empire and in Allied lands, in every town and hamlet, was released the pent up suspense of over four years duration, and was loosened the exuberance which the welcome news inspired.

Throughout the long period of war Bath has had many a flag-day. Never was there such a flag-day as Monday. Never was enacted so rapid a scene of transformation as that witnessed on that armistice day.

City streets which were of normal aspect, with little to suggest the imminence of a mighty happening save the frequent enquiry as to whether there was "any news yet", became within a few minutes the theatre of vast surging crowds demonstrating their joy with pardonable disregard of the usual very decorous behaviour of staid and unemotional citizenship.

Never were such happy crowds; never such thankful crowds. The turning in the long war had been reached, and out of the gloom of that horrible lane the peoples of the victorious nations had swept round the corner into the bright thoroughfare of peace. Not in the world's history has there been news of such joyous import.



A special event to remember 1918 through letters, poems and music is being by the Bath Poetry Café group.

'Voices 1918: Remembrance Day' commemorates the final year of the First World War through the words of those who were fighting on the frontline as well as families on the home front.

The free event - donations to the poppy appeal are encouraged - takes place on Wednesday at 7.30pm at the BRLSI, Queen Square, Bath.

Councillor Paul Myers said: "The evening will include a look back at how the Bath Chronicle covered the Armistice on 11 November 1918, and the Peace Celebrations of the following year, as well as memoirs and letters."