

Remembrance Sunday - Why do we "Remember"?

"They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old. age shall not weary them nor the years condemn. at the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them"

Remembrance Day was first celebrated after the First World War as a day to remember those killed in the carnage of the war which ended on 11th November 1918. In 1921, 100 years ago this year, the Royal British Legion began to sell poppies as a fund raiser and on the 11th November each year a two minutes silence was observed as part of Armistice Day.

After the conclusion of World War II the British Government replaced Armistice Day with a new Sunday observance known as Remembrance Sunday. In 1956 the date was fixed as the second Sunday of the month though now more usually fixed as the Sunday nearest the 11th of the month. In London it is recognised with a service at the Cenotaph in Whitehall led by the British Monarch. A form of remembrance which is the basis of the ceremony that we hold at St Peter's. It may be of interest to note that the bugles used by the Royal Marines Drummers at the London Cenotaph are made of silver and are a memorial to the Royal Marines Bandsmen who died at sea in World War I. The Bandsmen manned the Gunnery Direction Room, located in the bowels of the warships, working the hand driven "computers" which translated the directions of the targets into instructions for the gun layers. They had very little chance of escape if their ship was sunk.

Warfare has, sadly, not stopped much since the end of World War II as we of our generations are well aware. Many of us will have family or friends who have lost their lives in combat. So, Remembrance Sunday has changed its significance for many of us. But the quote from the Kohima Memorial in Burma (Myama) is still relevant today. "When you go home tell them this of us – that we gave our todays for their tomorrows". This quote, which should be more remembered than the quote from the poet in World War I, has been used in recent years at St Peter's at the request and in memory of two members of the Cathedral family who survived the Burma Campaign after very distinguished service there in the last war. Perhaps it is more relevant than the words normally used as part of the Remembrance observance. We should draw the attention of people to the Kohima quote in recognition of that priceless gift their companions in Burma and elsewhere, and many others since then, have given to us. The World War I message is one of sadness and past remembrance whilst the Kohima Memorial is a request for us to look to the future and to make good use of their sacrifice.

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