

Reflections on Remembrance

We share membership stories from our regions on marking Remembrance

Title	Page	Summary
From South & W Yorkshire	2	The UK's second Commonwealth memorial unveiled
From Wales	3	A well-trodden route to mark Remembrance
From Midlands	4	Joining serving personnel from around the world
From South East	5	A special blanket for a racing legend
From South West	6	Eye-catching camouflage
From Overseas	7	Poppies light up the Sydney Opera House



Photo: Huw John Pictures. Exclusive rights: RBL

A drumhead ceremony at the 44th Annual Wales Festival of Remembrance.

The UK's second Commonwealth memorial unveiled



Photo, left to right: Carol Kitson, Keighley branch, WW2 veteran Jack Crawford, and Jeff Gantschuk, County Standard Bearer and County Vice Chairman

NORTHERN REGION: RBL Standard Bearers from South & West Yorkshire took part in the unveiling of the UK's second Commonwealth War Memorial – the first and only one of its kind outside London. Situated alongside the Bradford Cenotaph, the memorial is in a garden of remembrance where all can remember and reflect.

County Standard Bearer and County Vice Chairman, Jeff Gantschuk, said he was honoured to have been asked to attend. Jeff (above right) is photographed with the South & West Yorkshire County Standard, along with Carol Kitson from Keighley branch, and WW2 veteran Jack Crawford.

John 'Jack' Crawford, 101, was born in 1923 in Lucea, Jamaica, where he grew up. In 1944, he joined RAF Filey as ground crew, returning to England after the war and joining the RAF in 1953. Jack enjoyed a happy and successful career, achieving the rank of Chief Technician. His last post was at RAF Sealand. After retirement, Jack was a regular poppy seller in Chester, raising funds alongside local RAF cadets.

Also in attendance was WW2 veteran Mirza Khan, 102, who served in the Indian Army. To read more about the memorial, visit the BBC's [Bradford gets UK's second Commonwealth war memorial](#).

A well-trodden route to mark Remembrance



Photo: Gary Williams

WALES: Alan L Williams, Chairman SE Wales District, explains that the Welshpool Remembrance Sunday parade has followed the same lines since the Welshpool Branch was established in 1921. Since then, the only year to be missed was 2020, during Covid.

Helped by the Welshpool Branch and led by the Welshpool and District Branch Parade Marshal, the parade is organised and run by the town council.

Town council and government officials lead with veterans, followed by RBL members and then the army cadets. ATC Cadets, local Scouts and Brownies also take part along with other local groups including Riders.

During the church service, the Standards are presented and placed near the altar, and the Welshpool and District RBL Standard is draped over the altar by the Branch Chaplain, who conducts the service. This year, children from the local Church in Wales school were asked to write about their understanding of Remembrance and then present the reading at the church. Alan says: "This was so moving and well conducted by the four young children."

The Remembrance service was traditional in format with a bugler sounding the Last Post, followed by a two-minute silence.

Joining serving personnel from around the world



Photo: Isabel Baumber

MIDLANDS REGION: Elaine Butler, President of Warwickshire and Birmingham County, says the county's membership is fortunate to have strong connections with local authorities and the military. "Earlier this year, I collaborated with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and the parish rector to enhance the civic service for Remembrance Sunday, focusing on diversity, youth, and serving personnel alongside veterans," she says.

"After the traditional act of Remembrance at the war memorial, the service continued in the parish church. Branch and youth standards, along with D-Day veterans, were escorted by Queen's Gurkha Signals' soldiers from 30th Signal Regiment, and Royal Navy and RAF members from diverse backgrounds including the West Indies, Nepal, and Zimbabwe. A Ukrainian children's choir performed, followed by a reading by Commander Jaffier RN. The highlight was the procession of a banner depicting the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, carried solemnly to the altar by uniformed personnel.

"The service celebrated tradition while honouring the diverse contributions of the RBL and our modern military. It was a moving and inspiring event, thanks to the enthusiasm of the Solihull Branch."

The Reverend Nick Parker added that the success of Remembrance 2024 – which included a poppy cascade of over 8,000 knitted poppies and artwork from nine local schools – lay in a shared vision. "We look forward to Remembrance 2025 knowing that locally there is widespread appreciation and good will towards this day, which brings people together and represents so much that is good."

A special blanket for a racing legend



Photo: Paul Greenwood

SOUTH EAST REGION: When Newmarket and District Branch members had the idea for a poppy horse blanket, the Managing Director of Jockey Club Estates, also in Newmarket, threw his support behind the project.

Newmarket is famous for horse racing so the branch wanted to decorate a blanket for the Jockey Club's statue of Hyperion, a famous racehorse, that's a focal point for the town.

A blanket was kindly donated by local saddler Karl Butcher, in memory of his grandmother who had been a treasurer of the Newmarket Branch for a number of years.

Poppies were knitted by Newmarket library's Knit and Natter group before being secured onto the blanket by branch members Mary and Bill Grimes and Rita Parsley. Red poppies were used in remembrance of the human lives, and purple poppies for the animals such as horses, dogs and pigeons that were lost during WWI and since then.

Paul Greenwood, Branch Chairman, said special thanks went to Mary and Bill Grimes and Rita Parsley, to Karl Butcher at Gibsons Saddlers Ltd, and to Nick Patton, Managing Director, and Sharon Thompson, Executive Assistant, at The Jockey Club Estates.

He said: "I am extremely proud of our branch and the links we have developed and forged locally with other groups and organisations. This project shows that with that support and partnership, there are no boundaries to what can be achieved."

Eye-catching camouflage



Photo: Martin Pelling

SOUTH WEST REGION: Martin Pelling, Membership Engagement Manager for the South West, snapped this dazzling display from Warminster Branch in Wiltshire. A group of local ladies had knitted the poppies before each poppy was painstakingly attached to a military camouflage net by soldiers at the local garrison. “There must have been a couple of thousand on display!” he says. On the back of the jeep, short white ribbons bearing hand-stitched names from the Warminster War Memorial completed a very impressive display.

Martin says, “During Poppy Appeal, Warminster, like many of our Market Towns, has a really strong showing of poppy collectors and local businesses, especially in the high street, which becomes fully involved with Poppy Appeal by decorating their shop fronts. This creates a superb feeling of connectedness to Remembrance and one which brings the community together for a shared purpose.”

He added that branch meetings were always well attended, and as a result of the county election process, the Warminster Branch Chair would be stepping up to become the Wiltshire County Chair. “Well played Warminster,” he says. “Thank you for all your support, hard work and commitment to our great charity.”

Poppies light up the Sydney Opera House

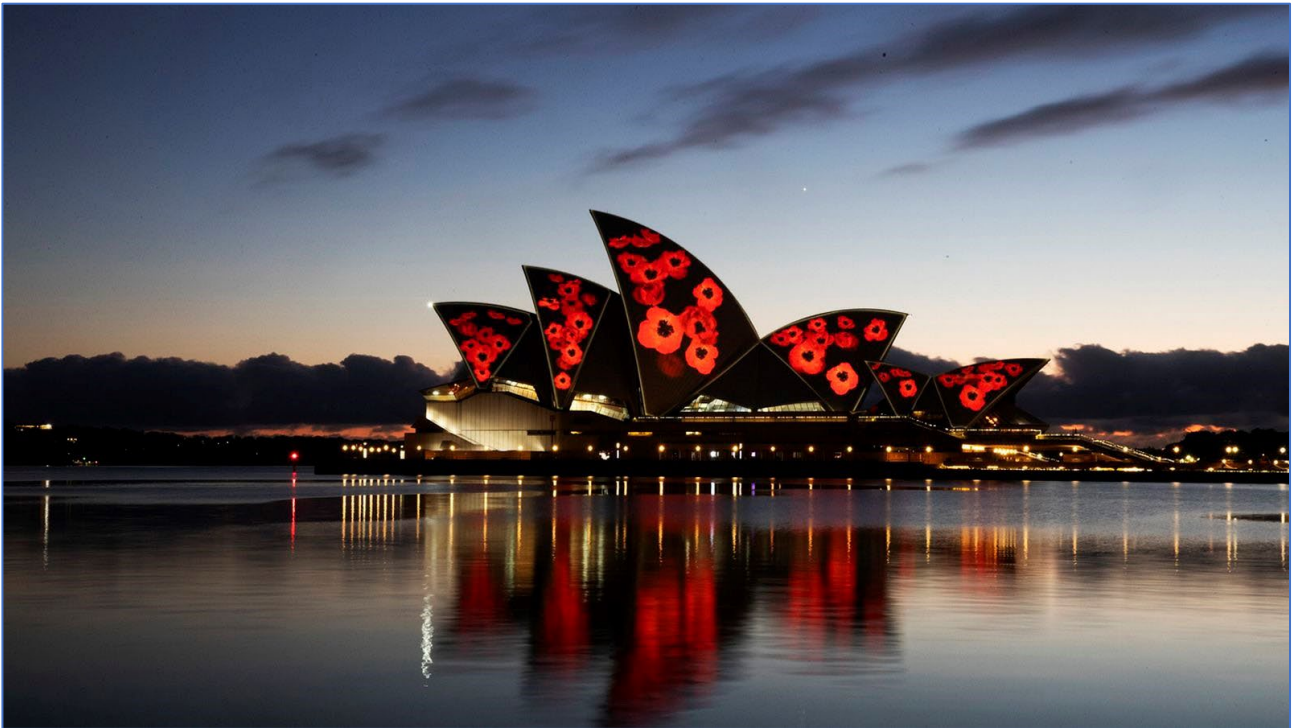


Photo: Paul Graham

OVERSEAS: This stunning photo of the Sydney Opera House by Paul Graham (David P Graham OAM JP) was shared with us through his Membership Council Representative.

Based in Australia, Paul told us how the project came about. “I was selling poppies in my local shopping centre and was asked many times, ‘What were the poppies for?’,” he says. “I was quite upset about this. I came home and wondered what I could do to better educate people on what the poppy stood for.”

Paul decided that if he could get the poppies of Flanders Fields projected onto the iconic Opera House, it would reach many, many people. So, taking up the challenge, Paul wrote to the Lord Mayor of Sydney. “They replied ‘nothing to do with us’,” he says. He also wrote to the Opera House without success.

Paul didn’t give up, writing to various government departments asking if they could assist but receiving a negative response each time. Finally, the tide turned when he wrote to the Premier of New South Wales. “He replied ‘What a great idea’.”

The poppies have now been seen on the sails of the Opera House for the last eight years. This year, says Paul, it got over a million hits on social media.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to Remembrance. We know that these stories are part of the tremendous work that has taken place.

***Please share with your branch members
– and thank you for reading!***