

## HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF REMEMBRANCE DAY

Remembrance Day, often referred to as Poppy Day commemorates the sacrifice made by servicemen in times of war.

In the United Kingdom the day was first commemorated in 1919, when it was known as Armistice Day, with two minutes silence at 11am on 11th November. The day marked the anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that brought World War One to an end in 1918. Its name was changed to Remembrance Day after World War Two. The day is also observed by other commonwealth countries.

In the United Kingdom two minutes silence is observed each year on the 11th November. On the second Sunday in November, Remembrance Sunday, special services are held and poppy wreaths laid at the Cenotaph in London and at war memorials in towns all over the country.

The poppy is used to symbolize remembrance and in the United Kingdom the Royal British Legion sell poppies in the weeks prior to 11th November to raise money for servicemen and their families.

During World War One some of the most intense fighting took place in Flanders (west Belgium). Buildings, roads, fields, bushes and trees were destroyed. However, despite the devastation, poppies flowered each spring. Poppy seeds that had been buried for years were brought to the surface by the churned up mud and germinated.

John McCrae a Canadian fighting in the trenches in Flanders wrote a poem called 'In Flanders Fields'. The poem was published and the poppy was adopted as a symbol for those who had lost their lives in battle.

*In Flanders Fields by John McCrae 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.