

THE ROYAL BRITISH
LEGION



'Service' and 'Service Not Self'

In 2024, The Royal British Legion continue their commemoration of the theme of 'Service' and 'Service Not Self'. Remembrance honours those who serve to defend our democratic freedoms and way of life. They endeavour to unite across faiths, cultures and backgrounds to remember the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces community from United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. **We will remember them.**

REMEMBERING THE COURAGE OF 1944

THIS YEAR MARKS THE **80TH ANNIVERSARIES** OF MOMENTOUS BATTLES
AND
TURNING POINTS
OF THE
WWII

D-Day and the Battle of Normandy

The D-Day landings of 6 June 1944 was the **largest seaborne invasion in history**. Alongside the airborne operations, it marked the beginning of the liberation of France and Western Europe. Tens of thousands of British, US, and Canadian troops landed on five beaches along the Normandy coast. **It marked the beginning of the end of WWII.**

With more than a year in the planning, D-Day was originally set to start on 5th June—chosen for the forecasted calm seas, the full moon and low water at first light. However, storms meant the landings were delayed by 24 hours to 6th June.

In the months leading up to the invasion, the Allies conducted a substantial disinformation operation to mislead the Germans about the date and location of the landings—at this stage in the war the Germans were spread thin throughout northwest Europe.

The amphibious landings were preceded by an extensive aerial and naval bombardment, and then shortly after midnight, 24,000 airborne troops dropped into Normandy, followed by allied infantry, and armoured divisions along on the coast at 6:30am in the morning.

Did you know that the only purpose for the D in D-Day was to provide a point of reference from which all other dates could be reckoned—D+1 would be the day after D-Day.



Elsewhere, hard-fought battles were also turning the tide of the war. The **Battle of Monte Cassino** was the bloodiest of the Italian Campaign and in India outnumbered British and Indian forces withstood weeks of siege and brutal fighting at **the Battles of Kohima and Imphal**.



Fought between 8 March and 18 July 1944, the **Battle of Kohima and Imphal** were the turning points of one of the most gruelling campaigns of the Second World War. The decisive Japanese defeat in North-East India became the springboard for the Fourteenth Army's subsequent re-conquest of Burma. Over the course of 14 days of this bitter siege, the defenders held off a staggering 25 Japanese attacks, many in hand-to-hand combat. Eventually in mid-April Indian troops began to relieve the defenders enabling the allies to begin to drive them from their positions.

The four battles for **Monte Cassino** in Italy took place between January and May 1944. They saw the Allied Forces involved in some of the most bitter fighting of the Second World War, where steep mountain slopes and winter weather were combined with the German defenders' determination and skill. The battles involved troops from America, Britain, Canada, France, India, New Zealand, and Poland in fighting that compared in its intensity and horror with the battles of the Western Front in the First World War.



THE WOMEN OF D-DAY

Many women assumed war time occupations and took up military Service. One of those women was **Marie Scott**, who was a 17-year-old radio operator who in the chaos of battle relayed messages through her headset between Allied commanders in England and the soldiers on the Normandy beaches.

'You realise the reality of war, what it really entails. It's not a word. It's an action that affects thousands, millions,' Scott said recently, discussing her time in the Women's Royal Naval Service, commonly known as the Wrens. 'I think I grew up that day from being a 17-year-old. I think I honestly grew up on D-Day.'

Iris Bower MBE was one of the first British women to arrive in Normandy after the D-Day landing. Before even arriving in Normandy Iris had to deal with an orderly who confronted her because she was a woman. With the biggest amphibious invasion in history underway, women such as Iris proved to be vital in helping the Allies to free Europe.



Operation Overlord, the Allied campaign that aimed to liberate Europe has long been immortalised by Hollywood. By August 1944, over two million troops had landed in Northern France, their stories are well documented, much less well known was the crucial role that hundreds of thousands of young women from all backgrounds and occupations played in this epic military mission. Determined to ignore her male colleagues condescending criticism, Iris was one of only two women from the Princess Mary's Royal Airforce Nursing Service who crossed the channel just five days after the invasion began. Conditions were hard and provisions basic. They slept in trenches and



washed from a bucket. Whilst munitions exploded overhead the nurses worked relentlessly in a temporary field hospital, where over a thousand wounded soldiers were treated every week. Iris said later, *'Their faces looking at me because I had a tin hat on, battle dress, a pack on my back and a big red cross on my arm'*.

Back home in Britain, **Ruth Bourne**, at just 18 years of age was fighting the same war as Iris but from an outstation that was part of the Bletchley Park code breaking station



in North London. Ruth operated the machines that were used to crack the German Enigma codes. In the June of 1944, as you might imagine, Ruth's workload increased considerably.

Thousands of women were recruited to intercept, translate and process encrypted enemy messages that were crucial in providing intelligence to those fighting in France. These women were instructed

to sign the Official Secrets Act. Ruth explained later, *'Once we were in, we couldn't leave, the stakes were high.'*

Other women found themselves even closer to the action, much of the Anti-Aircraft Demand which protected much of Britain against airborne attacks, had been operated by women since 1941. They also operated radar, height finders, predictors and other cutting-edge technology that was used to plot the course of enemy aircraft.

26-Year-old **Ena Collymore-Woodstock** was one of approximately 100 hundred women recruited from the Caribbean to serve in the role in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) in Britain. Initially given a role of clerk in Surrey, Ena was frustrated with the placement, having travelled all the way from Jamaica, she was certainly not going to sit behind a desk, *'No sir! I was tested and told I could go into any unit. I selected anti – aircraft and became a radar operative.'* She became one of the thousand ATS volunteers to be posted across the channel to defend the newly liberated Northwest Europe.



In the months following with the Allies pushing through France and beyond, thousands more women were required as cooks, orderlies, clerks, drivers and operatives. Many young women had a strong desire to go, although they did face some fierce opposition. The Prime Minister, Winston Churchill commented, *'mamas and papas did not want*



their daughters serving in Europe, heavily outnumbered by men.' Despite the unfairness of the inequalities and the gender divide, most women relished being part of the war effort.



#DDAY80t



Not only did it change their lives, but they had a huge impact on the outcome of the war. Nurse Bower was made an MBE in the New Years Honours in 1945 for her part in the war effort. The bravery and dedication that she and countless other women showed at both home and abroad made the execution of Operation Overlord possible. 80 years on, the vital role and contribution that they made is finally getting the **recognition it deserves.**



Different Colour Poppies

Remembrance Day is the National Day of Memorial to remember and honour all service men and women who fought in wars since the First World War, and the ongoing plight of veterans.

On the eleventh day of the **eleventh month at 11am, the nation stops for one minute of silence to commemorate when the armistice was signed between the Allies and Germany that brought the end of WW1.**

Wearing a poppy on this day has become a popular tribute tradition inspired by the fields of poppies that grew where many of the battles were fought.

There has been a rise of different coloured poppies; including white, black, and purple. Each of the four different coloured choices represents a different charity/cause within the sub-genre of paying respects.



The RED poppy



The red poppy is the most famous symbol used to commemorate those who sacrificed their lives in World War One and the wars that followed—it represents remembrance and hope and is connected to the Royal British Legion, a charity created by veterans of World War One.

The WHITE poppy

The white poppy pays tribute to those who died in conflict but emphasises an ultimate commitment to achieving peace and challenging the way we look at war. This one is the hallmark of the Peace Pledge Union.



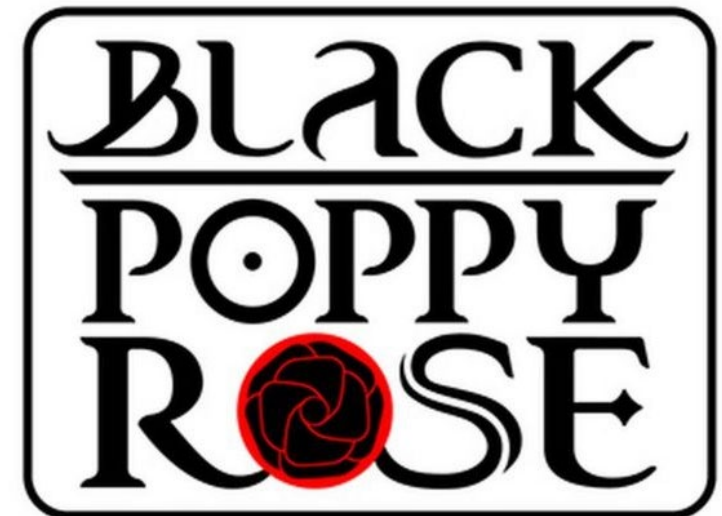
The **PURPLE** poppy



The purple poppy also known as the ‘Animal poppy’ is a memorial tribute remembering the service and sacrifices of all animals, great and small, that subsequently lost their lives in service; as well as honouring and recognising animals within the armed forces who bravely serve and work the frontline today.

The **BLACK** poppy

Most commonly associated with the commemoration of black, African and Caribbean communities’ contribution to the war effort – as service men and women and as civilians.



FACTS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT THE POPPY

There is no 'correct' way to wear a poppy, it is a personal choice.

THE BEST WAY TO WEAR IT IS WITH **PRIDE.**

The poppy is red because that is the natural colour of the poppy. During the first world war the countryside was devastated and the only thing that successfully grew and flourished was **the resilient poppy**.

THE RED POPPY DIRECTLY SUPPORTS THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY.

Poppies were not always sold with leaves. As with the natural flower the original poppy did not have a leaf. This was introduced in the 1960's and over time has become an optional extra. One of the ways the money raised supports the Armed forces is by providing financial advice to those veterans who may have difficulty adapting to civilian life. The appeal also supports recovery services such as the **Battle Back Centre**—a resource that helps wounded and sick service personnel in their recovery.

IN 2023 A PLASTIC-FREE VERSION OF THE POPPY BECAME AVAILABLE

