



Remembering the end of the Second World War

A Guide to Engaging with Communities for
VE Day, VJ Day and Other Anniversaries in 2025





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The Royal British Legion (RBL) has been a national champion of Remembrance since its formation in 1921. This is expressed through the work that our volunteers, branches, members, partners and staff accomplish every day across the nation. From local events to national commemorations, in person and online, and through the resources we produce, we are here to help the nation engage in Remembrance. This ensures that the service of, and the sacrifices made by, our Armed Forces Community from Britain and the Commonwealth are always remembered.

Remembrance for All

The RBL believes that the poppy and Remembrance are, and always have been, unifiers of all people and communities across Britain and the Commonwealth since the First World War. Remembrance recognises the immense contributions of the Armed Forces from these nations in times of conflict as well as in peacetime. We have remembered this contribution to the freedoms we enjoy today for over a century, and continue to do so through our work.

The RBL is a non-partisan and non-sectarian charity focused on the experiences and welfare of those who serve, or have served, in the military, and their families, without considering the politics of conflict.



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We recognise:

- the service and sacrifices of those who have served or are serving in His Majesty's British Armed Forces, including members of the Commonwealth, in the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force, from 1914 to the present day.
- the service and sacrifices of civilians, communities, services and organisations from Britain and the Commonwealth during times of conflict or acts of terror.
- the families of British and Commonwealth Armed Forces personnel, including those who have been bereaved.

If you are interested in learning more about our position on Remembrance, then please see the 'Remembrance Key Points' document in Appendix A.

[Click here to see our Remembrance Key Points](#)



2025: Remembering the end of the Second World War

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The most lethal and devastating conflict in history, it touched every continent, involved millions of people and its legacy is still felt today.

VE Day is a day remembered by all who witnessed it. After nearly six years of war, Germany forces unconditionally surrendered on 7th May, 1945, and the conflict in Europe was finally over.

This news had been anticipated as the Allies advanced through Germany, and the official announcement was broadcast to the British people on the evening of 7th May with a news flash proclaiming that the next day would be a national holiday (VE Day).

Across the Allied world, millions celebrated, relieved that years of conflict and extraordinary hardship were finally coming to an end. Yet the news provoked mixed emotions for those who had lost loved ones during the war, and for those worried about friends and family still serving (and fighting) overseas.

While VE Day marked the beginning of the end of the Second World War, millions were still involved in the fighting that raged in

the Far East and Pacific, and many troops stationed in Europe were redeployed to the east instead of going home.

Britain and the Commonwealth's principal fighting force, the 14th Army, was one of the most diverse in history: over 40 languages were spoken, and all the world's major religions represented. They achieved success in liberating Burma, but at great cost. The descendants of many of the Commonwealth veterans of that army are today part of communities throughout the country: a lasting legacy of the success and comradeship of those who fought in the east, and other theatres of war.

Victory over Japan Day (VJ Day) on 15th August, 1945, marked the Japanese surrender, which in effect ended the Second World War, and was greeted with jubilation in the Allied nations.

The Second World War profoundly shaped our modern world, helping to foster global cooperation and establish institutions like the United Nations.

Everyone in Britain today will have a connection to those who served during the Second World War, either through their family or community heritage. In this 80th anniversary year we remember the struggles that the wartime generation endured. The RBL wants to help communities across the UK mark these important anniversaries, and below is information and advice to assist.

VE Day and VJ Day are the significant anniversaries in the 2025 Remembrance calendar. You may identify other anniversaries or occasions that provide further opportunities for engagement.



Many ways to remember

Every November, we unite as a nation in shared Remembrance. In this moment of quiet reflection, we honour the fallen and those affected by conflict and show our support for veterans, active servicemen and women and their families.

Yet Acts of Remembrance can occur at any time of the year when an anniversary, film, photograph, the news or meeting someone triggers a thought or feeling. At such times, people acknowledge their grief and sadness, as well as pride, as they remember a person or an event. Each Act of Remembrance can anchor memories and help us share our thoughts and emotions.

We want you to encourage communities to find their own way of engaging in Remembrance. Activities to consider may include:

- Creating a space for quiet contemplation and reflection for Remembrance. This could include plants chosen for their symbolism or as a reminder of a person or event. This could be a space in the community, your garden or even a window box.
- Holding an event such as a coffee and cake morning and sharing personal stories of Remembrance with those attending. You could include a crafting activity.
- Visiting a local monument, a location like the National Memorial Arboretum or a local museum or heritage site.
- Sharing food from the countries of those who served, and continue to serve, in the Armed Forces. Would they have missed these dishes when they were away from home?
- Simply wearing a poppy.
- Laying a wreath, or taking part in a local or national event, such a service or parade.
- Attending a talk or, if you feel comfortable doing so, giving one yourself to a local group. We have resources available to download from our website to present to adults and children (primary and secondary).

[Click here to see our presentation resources](#)



How to engage your community in Remembrance

Remembrance is a time to honour our Armed Forces community who have served and sacrificed to defend our democratic freedoms and way of life.

As found in the 2014 Household Survey the number of those with a personal connection to service in the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force is in decline. Consequently, fewer people in your wider community will have a direct experience or deep understanding of military service. When you think about what Remembrance means to you, and talk to others in your community, you may find that their reasons for remembering are not solely focused on military service. People's thoughts, feelings, attitudes and interpretations of Remembrance may vary.

Your events may be enhanced if you were to invite local veterans of the Second World War.

Try different routes to find and invite veterans. Local RBL branches may know of them. You might also wish to enquire with care homes and day centres. Rotary clubs and guilds may have veterans (or their families) among their members and local places of worship may also know of them.

Many local councils have Armed Forces Officers whose job is to identify veterans and their needs in the local community and run events such as veterans' clubs.

If there is a Regimental Association or branch based in your area, and a regimental museum, they would be worth approaching as they may have connected with veterans.

Local history centres, history groups and museums would also be worth approaching, as well as searching for online forums for veterans and local history. For example, there may be local dedicated Facebook groups you could join and post a request for information.

Please read on to learn more about the resources we have created to support your journey to encourage people to remember and engage in Remembrance.





Resources to engage your community

To help you engage with your community we are producing a number of display units that will explore the themes being commemorating in 2025. These are free-standing displays of different sizes which can be ordered from our supplier Brand Jam via an online portal.

[Click here to visit the portal](#)

There is an easily assembled four-sided tower which, at 2.5m high, would be a great talking point at an event. In addition, there will be one- and two-sided pull up banners as well as a large poster and a leaflet.

Each of these items will be available in the following formats:

- The end of the Second World War, featuring an overview and veteran case studies and imagery.
- Teaching Remembrance Learning programme, featuring information on events and resources available to teachers and educators.

We have also produced a range of free downloadable resources for community groups, RBL branches, RBL partner organisations and any other group that wishes to mark the anniversary by engaging with their communities to remember. The resources will enable groups to confidently engage with communities and provide ideas for outreach and suggestions for activities and events. Bespoke resources will be available with an educational focus for non-teaching adults to engage with young people.

These resources, which include presentations, posters and leaflets, are available on the RBL website.

[Click here to access free downloadable resources](#)





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Engaging young people in Remembrance

Helping young people to understand and make their own connections with Remembrance is an important part of our work. The RBL's Teaching Remembrance Learning Programme offers free, engaging resources and events for schools, youth groups and families.

What we offer:

- Free downloadable learning resources - available all year round
- Free events - online workshops, assemblies and more
- Curriculum-linked activities - supporting the National Curriculum & Curriculum for Wales

Our online learning resource library includes resources for Primary and Secondary age children. Teachers, educators and youth group leaders can choose from curriculum-linked assemblies, book club activity packs and other learning activities that encourage young people to explore the meaning of Remembrance.

We also provide opportunities for young people to explore Remembrance in engaging and interactive events. Every November we host a Remembrance Assembly which is broadcast across the UK to hundreds of thousands of children in schools. This event brings together art, music, poetry, interviews and more to create a special Remembrance experience for children aged 9 to 14.

In 2025, we will be launching a special set of resources designed to help Primary age children understand the end of the Second World War and the people who served during this momentous time. This will include an online event for young people in Primary and Secondary schools across the country to watch and discover the stories of those who lived through this extraordinary time. The event will also feature a Q & A session with young people and an educational event handout.

To access free Remembrance learning resources and sign up for events visit rbl.org.uk/teachingremembrance

Click here to access
Teaching Remembrance resources

Appendix A



Remembrance Key Points



Remembrance

The Royal British Legion believes that the poppy and Remembrance are, and always have been, unifiers of all people and communities across Britain and the Commonwealth since the First World War, supporting and recognising the contributions of the Armed Forces from these nations in times of conflict and rebuilding society. We have remembered this contribution to the freedoms we enjoy today for over a century and will continue to do so through our work.

We are a non-partisan and non-sectarian organisation focused on the experiences of those who serve or have served in the military, and those affected by their service, without considering the politics of conflict.

We recognise the service and sacrifices of all those who have served or are serving in His Majesty's British Armed Forces, including members of the Commonwealth in the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force, from 1914 to the present day. This includes both living and deceased personnel, regardless of the length of their service.

We recognise the service and sacrifices of civilian individuals, communities, services, and organisations from Britain and the Commonwealth during times of conflict or acts of terror. We are committed to acknowledging their contributions in Remembrance, such as the support of emergency services and the Merchant Navy.

We recognise the families of British and Commonwealth Armed Forces personnel; this includes those who have been bereaved.

Acts of Remembrance

Although it may be bookended by formal and/or religious ceremonies, the Act of Remembrance at its core is simple, brief, and non-religious. The organiser may assemble whatever readings, music or other elements to accompany the Act of Remembrance so that it is relevant for the particular community attending.

The RBL has no objection to wreaths of non-red poppies or other flowers being laid at war memorials or in Remembrance services alongside red poppy wreaths and the RBL respects the rights and freedoms of groups and individuals to make their own decisions on how to observe Remembrance.

It is the RBL's wish that red poppies are not included within wreaths of non-red poppies or other flowers but remain separate. This is because red poppy wreaths are inclusive of all people and communities.

The Two Minute Silence, observed on Remembrance Sunday (second Sunday in November) and Armistice Day (11 November), is a time for the nation to honour the sacrifices of those who have served in the British and Commonwealth Armed Forces. It's an opportunity for personal reflection and remembrance, whether observed publicly or privately. While participation is voluntary, it's important to respect those who choose to pause and reflect.

The poppy

The poppy is a universally recognised symbol of Remembrance and hope for a peaceful future since it was first worn as an act of Remembrance and to raise funds for the British Legion more than 100 years ago.

It unites us in remembering all those from the British and Commonwealth Armed Forces who have served and sacrificed; and do so today, to defend democracy and freedom.

The poppy also acknowledges the wider impact of conflict.

It represents the contribution of civilian services and uniformed emergency services that contribute to national security in times of war, conflict or terrorism and acknowledges innocent civilians who have lost their lives at such times.

Wearing a poppy

There is no right or wrong way to wear a poppy.

The poppy can be worn throughout the year whenever you wish to show your support for the British and Commonwealth Armed Forces, past and/or present.

The decision to wear a poppy is voluntary and the RBL recognises people's desire to wear different coloured poppies or flowers or to place other symbols alongside the poppy. However, the red poppy inclusive of all people from all backgrounds.

The red poppy also raises funds to support veterans from the British and Commonwealth Armed Forces and their families at times of need. There is no contradiction in wearing other emblems alongside the red poppy and we respect the rights of any individual to express their views within the law.

