

LEST WE FORGET

How do we remember?

In the aftermath of WW1 there was a call to remember the loss of life and the sacrifice made by ordinary men. There are 54,000 national memorials to lives lost in WW1 in UK. Remembrance is both a personal and a shared act which draws community and nation together and speaks of a shared heritage.

The National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire has pulled this personal and corporate remembrance together in a unique and powerful way; the Arboretum like the cenotaph in London has become a site of national remembrance and commemoration, honouring those in the distant and recent past for their sacrifice for others. The 150 acre site with 300 memorials to lives lost both in conflict, but also in other theatres of national life, encapsulates private acts of remembrance and the community commemoration. The Arboretum's Landscapes of Life Exhibition has a sentence written on the wall speaks into this:

'from a single name etched on a wall to a national ceremony and the unifying silence of quiet contemplation remembrance has many voices'.

A hundred years on from the immediate pain of individual lives lost, the war enters the nation's memory in a different way. The distance allowing perhaps a new way of evaluating the cost of war and the sacrifice made by individuals as part of a nation of a nation.

Is it still important to remember and to commemorate the lives given in World War 1?

Personal, individual memories are disappearing as those who remember the First World War have gone. Those lives lost are no less important now than they were a hundred years ago and although family and individual acts of remembrance have faded, the community I feel, are called to remember and honour those individuals. Commemorating not the perceived glory of war, the victor's celebrations, but the personal cost to families, communities and nation.

'The many voices of remembrance' mark the enormity of their sacrifice, not forgotten as time elapses and subsequent generation learn about those who laid down their lives for others.

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