

The Poppy Appeal at Cowbridge Comprehensive School

THE ROYAL BRITISH
LEGION



THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION WALES IMPACT DATA OCT 2017 - SEPT 2018

Responded to
1079
INCIDENTS
across Wales
98%
were resolved.

651
WELFARE GRANTS
DELIVERED TO CLIENTS
TO THE VALUE OF
£460,394



£425,546
Benefits Debt Money
Advice Service worked with
111 Clients securing a gain of
£425,546



9,171 FOOTFALL
at offices and outreach across Wales
(up 24% on last year)

4 EXTERNAL
GRANTS

awarded to organisations working
with armed forces community across
Wales with a total value of

£163,134

HANDY VANS
SERVICE CONDUCTED



CARRYING OUT A TOTAL
OF 2247 JOBS



War Pensions Team supported
190 CLIENTS
at Tribunals across Wales

74 CLIENTS
INDEPENDENT
LIVING TEAM
WORKING WITH

177
BRANCHES
WORKING WITH
8890 MEMBERS



86%
CUSTOMER
SATISFACTION
response rate to post
grant survey

This year, Annual Poppy Appeal Raised
£2,269,837



ADMIRAL NURSES
service worked with
172 FAMILIES



was the average age
of those we supported
with direct grants

The Poppy Appeal by David Howell

In the beginning...

John McCrae



John McCrae was a Canadian doctor. He enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force as a soldier at the start of WW1 and fought in the 2nd Battle of Ypres in Belgium. He is famous for the poem "In Flanders Field" which we will look at his poem in a moment but before we do let's look at his description of the battle. He wrote many letters to his mother and in one, which gives us just a small taste of what he and his colleagues were going through, he described the battle as a "nightmare". Here are some of his words

" For seventeen days and seventeen nights none of us have had our clothes off, nor our boots even, except occasionally, in all that time while I was awake, gunfire and rifle fire never ceased for sixty seconds... and behind it all was the constant background of the sights of the dead, the wounded, the maimed, and a terrible anxiety lest the line should give way. "

The day to day life he was living was traumatic by any standards and on 2nd May 1915 his close friend Alexis Helmer killed by exploding shell. Due to circumstances MacCrae himself had to perform the burial service and later that day he wrote his now famous poem "**In Flanders Fields.**"

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.

There's not much of it, just 3 verses, 15 lines, 97 words. They could be the words of his friend Alexis, or any of the other thousands who died, as he imagines the words of the dead.

Verse 1

Basically, a description of what the men at the front saw in their daily lives. The result of the battle – the dead and their crosses. He observes the poppies which despite all the death and destruction continue to flourish, and the lark still singing although it's barely heard in the noise of battle.

Verse 2

The opening words "We are the dead" state clearly the aspect from which he is writing. He reflects on what the dead men were doing a very short time before and the relationships between them and their loved ones. Now they lie in their graves "In Flanders Field."

Verse 3

Here he uses the symbol of passing on a torch, such as the Olympic torch being passed on from bearer to bearer, country to country. He leaves no doubt that in his view the living must now accept the responsibility and not devalue the sacrifice made by those who gave their lives and that as always the poppies will continue to grow "In Flanders Field"

Lieut Col John McCrae died on 28th Jan 1918 and sadly did not see the result of what his poem had started.

McCrae's torch was picked up by American teacher Moina Michael.



In November 1918 Moina Michael was at YMCA conference in New York which was being attended by "War Secretaries". She read McCrae's poem, and wrote a poem "**We Shall Keep the Faith**" in direct reply....

Oh! you who sleep in Flanders Fields,
Sleep sweet - to rise anew!
We caught the torch you threw
And holding high, we keep the Faith
With All who died.

We cherish, too, the poppy red
That grows on fields where valor led;
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies,
But lends a lustre to the red
Of the flower that blooms above the dead
In Flanders Fields.

And now the Torch and Poppy Red
We wear in honor of our dead.
Fear not that ye have died for naught;

We'll teach the lesson that ye wrought
In Flanders Fields.

Apparently, the conference was being held at a fairly austere venue Moina she was given \$10 for flowers to brighten it up. She scoured New York and bought 25 silk poppies and kept one herself. She showed both McCrae's poem and hers to the War Secretaries and sold the remaining poppies to them - the first Poppy Appeal had taken place. She campaigned from then on for memorial poppies and became known as "The Poppy Lady"

Another who "Carried the Torch" was Mde Anna Guérin of the YWCA



She was closely linked to Moina Michael, travelled to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Great Britain promoting poppy as an emblem, and helped persuaded USA & Canada adopt it.

Anna Guérin met Earl Haig 1920 and arranged for red silk poppies to be brought from France. In 1921 the sale of silk poppies raised £160,000 in Great Britain. The Royal British Legion (RBL) set up factory following year, and the money raised was used to help WW1 veterans and their families. The future of the Poppy Appeal in the UK had been set.

In recent years the Poppy Appeal in the UK has topped £40m and in 2018, for the first time exceeded £50m.

The Poppy Appeal in Cowbridge by David Howell

The Poppy Appeal has been running for many years in Cowbridge and has involved both the RBL and Rotary. The Cowbridge Poppy Appeal area covers Cowbridge and Llanblethian and a number of outlying villages such as Colwinston, Llangan, Llansannor, Ystradowen, Welsh St Donats, Aberthin, St Hilary and St Mary Church. In recent years Pendoylan, Bonvilston and St Nicholas have also been included.

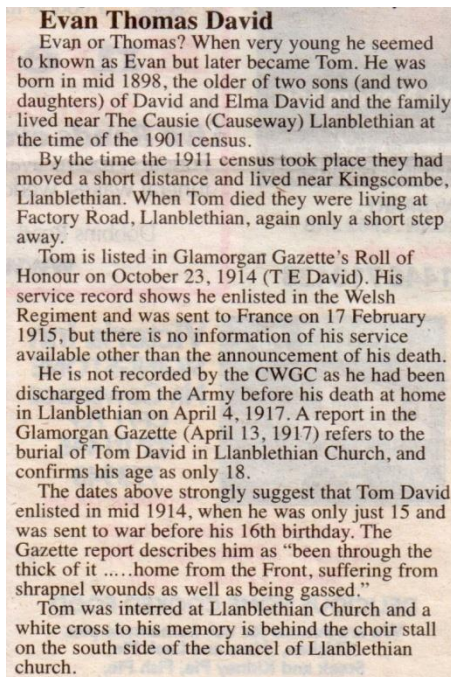
Over recent years the centenary of anniversaries surrounding the First World War, has helped increase the public profile of the Poppy Appeal and the Royal British Legion on a national basis has produced a greater range of merchandise.

Locally the Poppy Appeal has increased its activities. During the Poppy Appeal period a campaign of awareness of those who gave their lives has taken place in Cowbridge, Llanblethian and some of the surrounding villages.

In 2014 research was carried out on the men named on the Cowbridge War Memorial. This augmented the research already carried out by Jose Rawlins and published in her book "The

Great War: Memorial in Cowbridge and Llanblethian” published in 2008. By this time the 1911 Census and other material was available which provided supplementary information not available to her at the time.

The Cowbridge Gem published over a three week period an article giving a pen picture of each of the men who lost their lives in WW1, with the aim of bringing to the fore that these were more than names on a monument but people who lived in the same area as we do, who walked down the same street, and used the same shops and pubs as we do today.



Sadly Thomas Ellis Clarke`s name was added to the monument following his death in a helicopter crash Afghanistan in April 2014.

Further research undertaken during 2017 resulted in the names of five men who lost their lives during WW1 being added to the Cowbridge War memorial.

A further initiative centred on the theme of "We Will Remember Them." Was started in Cowbridge town centre about 2015. Large plastic poppies were fixed to the town lamp posts, one post dedicated to each man who gave his life, two poppies per post facing up and down the street.. Each of these poppies containing a short history of that man, including information about his date and place of birth, where he lived, his occupation, and where he fell. The poppies are also placed close to where that individual lived or worked whenever possible to further personalise the dedication.

The fallen of Llanblethian, whose names are on the War Memorial in Llanblethian Church, were treated similarly.



In later years the initiative extended to Pendoylan, Llysworney, where single poppies are placed commemorating the men from these villages who lost their lives. Further research on the individuals who lost their lives has enabled the inclusion of similar short histories in these villages. In St Mary Church, which thankfully lost no men in WW1, the children from Llanfair Primary School used the same large poppies to help commemorate the event.

In addition, large felt poppies were produced by the members of Cutting Edge and which were loaned to traders along with a Poppy appeal sign "Supporting the Poppy Appeal" for traders to place in their windows; around 90, Local retailers also take part in the "Paint the Town Red" a further initiative to promote the Poppy Appeal and develop the ambience in the town. They do so by decorating a shop window or part of a window in support of the Poppy Appeal. Over the three of four years it has been running they have produced some colourful and imaginative displays and in 2018 over 20 shops took part.



In 2018 Cowbridge (with Llanblethian) Town Council, arranged for a cascade of poppies, made by local groups and individual volunteers over the main entrance to the Town Hall. This along with the felt poppies in windows and large poppies on the lamp posts, work together to develop a warm and welcoming atmosphere helping to attract local people and visitors into the town.



The opening of Waitrose in Cowbridge at the end of 2012 has also been of considerable benefit to the Poppy Appeal. The Poppy Appeal are very fortunate to be the only charity allowed to collect inside the store and the donations of Waitrose customers has been of considerable benefit to the appeal every year since its opening.

The Poppy Appeal has three other regular collection points in the town itself on the High Street and is also helped by collectors from the local branch of Rotary. It is also helped very considerable by shops, **schools** and businesses both within the town and surrounding villages.

Cowbridge Comprehensive School has raised money for The Poppy Appeal for many years. 2016 - £536.41, 2017 - £473.67, and 2018 - £879.07. Our school will continue to support this fantastic appeal.