

Lest We Forget.

1. The first day of the Battle of The Somme, on July 1, 1916, was the worst slaughter in British military history. German forces who had survived a week-long bombardment in concrete shelters emerged to massacre British and Empire troops walking towards them in parade formations.

More than 19,000 were killed, 35,494 were seriously wounded and a further 2,152 reported missing - most in the first hour. The casualties on Day One were so high they equated to one man killed or wounded for every 18 inches of the 17-mile front line.

2. Nearly nine million men and women from the British Empire were mobilised during the 1914-1918 war. They stood a one-in-three chance of becoming a casualty, as 908,371 were killed and 2,090,212 were wounded and 191,652 were taken prisoner or listed as missing.

3. The youngest British Army casualty of the First World War - John Condon, from Waterford City, Ireland - was only 13 when he died on the fields of Flanders in 1915. He told a recruiting officer he was 18.

4. The memorial at Thiepval, France, contains the names of 73,367 British and Commonwealth soldiers. It lists only those whose remains were never found.

5. In World War Two, more than 400,000 British and Commonwealth military personnel were killed.

6. More than 100,000 Allied bomber crewmen were killed over Europe between 1939 and 1945. Fighter aircraft crew stood a one-in-four chance of being killed or captured. The crew of medium bombers had a 50% chance of surviving their tour of 50 missions. More than 71% of heavy bomber crews were lost.

7. The youngest casualty of the Second World War was merchant seaman Raymond Victor Steed, 14, a galley boy from the SS Empire Morn, killed when it hit a mine in 1943. In the six years of conflict, 2,500 British ships were lost and 32,000 British merchant seamen were killed.

8. More than 12,000 British servicemen and women have been killed or injured on active service since 1945 in conflicts up to the present day, including Bosnia, the Falklands, Northern Ireland and the Gulf.

9. There has only been one year (1968) since the Second World War when a British serviceman has not been killed on active duty.

10. The Victoria Cross is the highest decoration that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces. It has been bestowed 1,355 times since 1854, most recently to Pte Johnson Beharry, 26, for his extreme bravery under fire in Iraq.

11. Remembrance Day not only honours those killed in war, but also raises funds to help those wounded in action, old soldiers who suffer problems in later life, plus the dependants - the widows and children - left behind when a serviceman or woman is killed.

A Poem for Remembrance Day

"The inquisitive mind of a child"



Why are they selling poppies, Mummy?
Selling poppies in town today.
The poppies, child, are flowers of love.
For the men who marched away

But why have they chosen a poppy, Mummy?
Why not a beautiful rose?
Because my child, men fought and died
In the fields where the poppies grow.

But why are the poppies so red, Mummy?
Why are the poppies so red?
Red is the colour of blood, my child.
The blood that our soldiers shed.

The heart of the poppy is black, Mummy.
Why does it have to be black?
Black, my child, is the symbol of grief.
For the men who never came back.

But why, Mummy are you crying so?
Your tears are giving you pain.
My tears are my fears for you my child.
For the world is forgetting again.