

Reimagining Remembrance



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Introduction

“Just Show Business” – World War 1 veteran Harry Patch describing Remembrance Day commemorations.

2009 saw the death of the last British survivor of the carnage of the Western Front, described in some obituaries as the final physical link to World War 1. But as politicians and many others lined up to pay their tributes, few openly acknowledged his critical attitude both to war and the way we remember it.

For more than 80 years Harry Patch would not talk about his war time experiences. He refused to attend regimental reunions and avoided war films which appeared on television. His Remembrance Day was 22 September, he said, the day he lost three best friends and his war ended. But he also had specific ideas about how we should remember. When we do remember, he said, we should remember those on “both sides of the line”. In his final years, he visited both the British and German cemeteries, placing a wreath of poppies on one of the German graves.

Four years ago The Daily Telegraph, revealed that in the early 1970s the Home Office had considered doing away with the Cenotaph Remembrance Day Service.¹ Sir Arthur Peterson, the Permanent Under Secretary, wrote to government departments saying:

“Clearly, as the wars become increasingly distant some consideration ought to be given to the question of whether the ceremony needs any alteration to take account of the passage of time - or perhaps even should be discontinued altogether.”²

The working party voted against its abolition. However, it did propose a number of modernisations, such as the inclusion of the civilian services, a reduction of the military role and an end to the practice of laying the Commonwealth wreath. These modernisations were never realised.³ Since then, wars in the Falklands, Iraq and Afghanistan, have contributed to a reaffirmation of a commitment to remember, and a continuation of traditions established decades ago.

Despite the concerns of veterans, civil servants and many others, we have inherited a remembrance tradition that has changed little since its creation in the aftermath of World War 1. Many questions, however, remain about both the traditions and the values on which they are built. As articulated by Harry Patch, some have been around for as long as Armistice Day has been marked.

¹ The Daily Telegraph, 2005, Cenotaph Service Was Almost Abandoned, *The Daily Telegraph*, [online] published 29 December . Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1506534/Cenotaph-service-was-almost-abandoned.html> [accessed 25 June 2009].

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

A renewal of the way in which we remember is long overdue.

For Such a Time as This

British remembrance as we know it today developed around the time of World War 1. For as long as it has been practised, there has been discussion about the purpose of remembrance and the meaning it attributes to war. Remembrance has never been a value-free act. Just this year, the British Legion wrote to the leader of the Far Right British National Party, Nick Griffin, asking him not to wear a red poppy. They said his opinions contradicted the values for which the poppy stood.

Continuous attempts have been made to try and keep remembrance above and beyond party politics. But remembrance is nevertheless profoundly political. As this report highlights, its roots were political and its development was political. This perhaps becomes clearest when established traditions and customs are challenged. There was outrage from politicians in the 1980s when Archbishop Robert Runcie, who shared Harry Patch's conviction that we should remember the 'enemy' as well as British soldiers, called to mind Argentinians, in a service at St Paul's.⁴ Others were incensed when the thinktank Ekklesia (which is producing this report) suggested that churches should give people a choice of how they remember, with both red and white poppies.⁵

The nature of the politics and the values that underlie it come into the spotlight as social change opens the way for new perspectives. Along with the last surviving Tommy, the majority of World War 2 veterans have also died, ending much of the living memory of mass conscription. As autobiographical memory decreases, the way is opened for society to reflect on these wars from new perspectives, without the emotional charges and political agendas that come with proximity to an event. Perhaps it is this benefit of hindsight that has prompted a greater ambiguity about the morality and advantage of war, as the ethics of wars previously considered to be 'just' come into question. Or perhaps this ambiguity has always been present, but there is now greater opportunity to express it.

The nature of warfare has also changed considerably. Armies are significantly smaller, without conscription, and use much more powerful weapons. Following World War 1, virtually every person in Britain would have had direct contact with the army through a family member or close friend and would have experienced the devastating impact of war. Now a comparative minority have a strong personal connection. Where the arms trade has been considered more socially acceptable in previous generations, it is now singled out by many as an 'unethical' business. Other social trends such as immigration and ethnic diversity bring with them new issues about international relations and the extent to which we identify with the army of our nation state.

Attitudes have also changed toward the military. Where the army has previously been considered a respectable career, a recent survey suggested that one third of parents

⁴ When Runcie led the service commemorating the end of the Falklands War, his prayers for the Argentinians caused the Conservative government of the day great annoyance. See Episcopal News Service, 1983, Church of England Inks Establishment, *The Archives of the Episcopal Church*, [online] 13 January. Available at http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.pl?pr_number=83011 [accessed online 28 August 2009]

⁵ BBC News, 2006, Red Poppy "Less Christian" Claim, *BBC* [online], 6 November. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6131464.stm> [accessed 30 September 2009].

would not now support their children in a decision to join it.⁶ The Government too, is concerned about the way we relate to the military. This year, a new annual Armed Forces Day was launched, the stated purpose of which was also remembrance.

All these things have a bearing on how we remember. This climate allows a questioning of remembrance traditions, which will enable a re-shaping and a re-imagining which express and reflect the sentiments of a changing society. As Ekklesia co-director Jonathan Bartley, commenting on Remembrance Sunday events in 2008, said:

“There is a clear and present sentiment behind the poppies and the prayers – and one that, if the people in the pews really stopped to think about, would not be shared by all who attend this Sunday’s services.”

Our remembrance needs to adapt accordingly so that it remains relevant and meaningful. We can remember badly, or we can remember well. This is not just about honouring the memory of those who are no longer with us. Remembrance is hugely significant because the way we remember has an impact on the future too. How we remember, who we remember, and what we remember will affect our corporate attitude and response to war in the future. It also influences the decisions we make now, as we saw only this year with the Gurkha Justice Campaign⁷ and the treatment of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.⁸

Lest We Forget

This phrase ‘lest we forget’, emphasises not so much an obligation to remember as an inevitable doom should we fail in our recollection. Kipling’s poem *Recessional*, admonishes the Empire to remember God and not become proud, or risk downfall. In the context of war remembrance, however, the phrase begs the question : what doom might befall us in the unlikely eventuality that we should consciously or unconsciously forget to remember?

After World War 1, when this phrase became associated with remembrance, the sense of doom was related to fear that the terrible pain and loss caused by war might be repeated if the war were forgotten. Yet we have remembered with commitment and enthusiasm year in and year out, through subsequent wars and tens of millions of deaths, many times more than those of the Great War.

One might ask whether we have remembered in the best way. Have we truly honoured those who hoped that their war would be the last? To view insufficient or inadequate

⁶ National Army Museum Survey, Conducted by ICM, 12 September 2009

⁷ The Gurkha Justice Campaign was fought to gain all ex-Gurkhas who have served in the British Army for more than four years the right to reside in the UK, see Gurkha Justice Campaign, 2009, *The Gurkha Justice Campaign* [online]. Available at <http://www.gurkhajustice.org.uk/> [accessed 30 September 2009]

⁸ In March 2009, the return of the Royal Anglian Regiment from Afghanistan was marked both by crowds welcoming them home as heroes and Muslim protesters hurling abuse at them. This highlights the way an individual’s understanding of war, in which remembrance plays a significant part, can influence their actions. BBC News, 2009, Two Held During Parade Protests, *BBC News* [online], 10 March. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/beds/bucks/herts/7935049.stm> [accessed online 13 March 2009] / BBC News, 2009, Thousands Welcome Protest Troops, *BBC News* [online], 11 March. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/beds/bucks/herts/7936485.stm> [accessed 13 March 2009].

remembrance as a direct cause of war would be to over-simplify complex political matters. However, the role of remembrance in shaping a nation's attitudes, opinions and values should not be underestimated. Corporate remembrance is a hugely significant act which influences all who participate or experience it, both consciously and subconsciously. It has the power to influence both for good and bad. It has the potential to cultivate a nation that pursues peace to the fullest extent, or one which defaults to violent conflict.

The purpose of this report is to enable a greater understanding of the implicit and explicit values in remembrance and to consider how, in response, we could best re-imagine it. It aims to explore the contentious question of what the role of remembrance in society should or could be and how it could be undertaken better. This is done from a Christian perspective, which includes questioning the traditional role of religion and the church in remembrance and suggesting how this could be modified so that the church can be more true to its values. The churches have always played a crucial role in remembrance. In that respect, they have a particular role to play in helping our remembrance tradition to develop. The hope is that this report will produce a picture of a fuller remembrance that is life-giving and brings peace and freedom.

Chapter 1:

War to End All Wars

On 23rd October 1926, Brigadier General T E Hickman unveiled a war memorial in front of Christ Church, Lye.⁹ Modelled on a more celebrated one at Brierley, it features a large marble statue of a British soldier about to bayonet his enemy. This emotive image recalls the reality faced by many British soldiers in World War 1 who were involved in hand-to-hand combat. In this respect, it is an accurate depiction both of those who lost their lives, and those who took the lives of others.

However, alongside this truth, some deceit is apparent. The soldier has a strong presence about him and his stare gives the impression of powerful conviction. This was not the case for many of the soldiers on the battlefields for whom terror and uncertainty were a constant reality. Recognition of the truth highlights how the very inglorious actuality of bloody, destructive warfare has often been portrayed in our remembrance as glorious and noble.

Eighty years after its creation, the contradictory messages and interpretations embodied in this monument featured in a heated debate in the Stourbridge News. A local man, Alan Jones, suggested that this “solemn” and “dignified” statue was dishonoured by a politically correct “Winter Fayre” (as opposed to “Christmas Fayre”) sign outside the Church. He felt that the Church embodied much of what the men had fought for. It was therefore doing an injustice to their memory in its attempt to be inclusive.¹⁰

But another resident, Tim Heller, was quick to rush to the church's defence, praising its attempt to connect with those of other faiths. He also questioned Jones' perception of what the statue stood for:

“This aggressive statue, with its position outside a Christian church, speaks volumes of Christian involvement in spreading the blessings of Christian civilisation by the sword and the Bible to a quarter of the world. An empire that lasted for centuries and where we are still at it today in the Middle East as part of the empire of the United States of Aggression... The white statue says it all! Even the colour is misplaced.”¹¹

⁹ United Kingdom National Inventory of War Memorials, *Men of Lye District*, [online]. Available at <http://www.ukniwm.org.uk/server/show/conMemorial.48075/fromUkniwmSearch/1> [accessed 30 September 2009]

¹⁰ http://www.stourbridgenews.co.uk/search/1065683.We___ve_sold_our_heroes_out/ [accessed 8 July 2009]

¹¹ Tim Weller, 2006, Blessing the poor, heathen foreigner with the sword and the Bible!, 31 December. [Letter: personal communication.]

In another letter, Heller suggested: “We could all do with behaving more (politically) correctly by turning away from a role model of a man ready to bayonet and shoot another man, woman or child on foreign soil.”¹²

Remembering War

War has been remembered for as long as it has existed and different people have different ways of remembering the wars in which we have engaged. However, for large parts of history, the main emphasis of remembrance has been more in tune with the depiction found in the statue in front of Christ Church, Lye. Remembrance was often about celebrating victory and honouring the victors, usually a war god and the person who instigated and directed the war. Military victory was seen as a great achievement, a sign of great leadership and justification of the cause. Successful battles were celebrated and victory was glorified.

Trajan's Column, erected in 117 AD, for example, commemorated his victory in the Dacian Wars. This sort of remembrance had both a political and religious function in society. It was religious because it prompted the veneration of war deities and promoted the idea that victory proved the favour of the gods. It was political in that it glorified the ruler, highlighting his authority and power and bolstering national support for further military campaigns.

At the end of the nineteenth century however, there was a distinct change of emphasis towards commemorating the dead.¹³ This ideological shift was the wider context for the traditions that grew up during and after World War 1, on which modern practices are founded. It brought with it a new, additional emphasis on the social¹⁴ function of remembrance. It allowed a focus on the individual loss of life and the contribution that had been made to the war effort. Remembrance also became a vehicle for helping the bereaved come to terms with their situation.

However, the religious and political functions of remembrance did not disappear. Rather, they were joined by this social function. It is this form of remembrance that we find during the annual events, scattered colourfully across the European landscape in the form of memorials, cemeteries, flags and wreaths, in museums and books, on the internet and in our classrooms. These traditions grew up during and after World War 1 as part of an evolving tradition of war memory. They have been critical in shaping modern remembrance, both in respect of the actions performed and the complex societal understanding of its role and significance.

A War-Time Remembrance

Some of the earliest acts of remembrance were the commemoration services for the dead held by churches just after World War 1 had begun. These were part of their pastoral

¹² Tim Weller, 2007, Aggressive Church Statue Reflects Our Bloody Past, *Stourbridge News*, 18 January [online]. Available at [http://www.stourbridgenews.co.uk/archive/2007/01/18/Hales+News+Letters+\(hales_news_letters\)/1131220.Aggressive_church_statue_reflects_our_bloody_past/](http://www.stourbridgenews.co.uk/archive/2007/01/18/Hales+News+Letters+(hales_news_letters)/1131220.Aggressive_church_statue_reflects_our_bloody_past/) [accessed online 30 September 2009].

¹³ Wikipedia, *War Memorial*, [online] (updated March 2007). Available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_memorial [accessed online 12 February 2009].

¹⁴ Here, “social” is used to mean activities seeking to improve human welfare, both physically and mentally.

ministry, helping the bereaved come to terms with the reality of war. They showed that the church was engaged in, and responding to, people's spiritual needs. They also showed its solidarity with the nation, as prayers were offered not only for the dead, but also for the safety of the living. However, these services also served a political function in that they promoted "patriotic sentiment".¹⁵

The need to raise and maintain support for the ongoing battle was soon apparent as families began to receive the dreaded telegrams reporting the deaths of loved ones. Institutions such as the Church were in a prime place to help maintain support for the cause. By upholding the war as a necessary fight for freedom and soldiers as glorious, self-sacrificing heroes, the Church was able to boost morale and foster a divinely-sanctioned sense of purpose. The Church was an "important contribution to the home front propaganda offensive".¹⁶

This is summed up by Dr. Fosdick, preaching the Sermon to the Unknown Soldier:

"When religious faith supports war, when, as in the Crusades, the priests of Christ cry, 'Deus Vult'—God wills it—and, confirming ordinary motives, the dynamic of Christian devotion is added, then an incalculable resource of confidence and power is released. No wonder the war department wanted the churches behind them!"¹⁷

The tradition of permanent memorials which had begun long before World War 1, continued during the war with strongly political motives. Stone monuments were initially created not to commemorate the dead, but to honour the significant contributions of individual villages or groups to the war effort. In 1915, stone crosses were awarded to the villages of Knowlton, Kent, Dalderby, Lincolnshire and Barrow-on-Trent in recognition of the fact they had the highest proportion of eligible men in their counties enlisted.¹⁸

As the war progressed, 'war shrines' also became commonplace. Like altars to the dead, they were often placed in the street to make them more accessible. This practice too had in part a political purpose. The altars strengthened communities, built morale and glorified those who had died. They validated the loss of life and encouraged others to follow their example. This custom was particularly promoted by pro-war members of the clergy, some of whom came to believe, like Bishop Winnington-Ingram of London, that all who died in war were guaranteed a place in Heaven.¹⁹

¹⁵ Alan Wilkinson, 1998, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance*, (Berg: Oxford) p.44

¹⁶ Ibid p.45

¹⁷ Harry Emerson Fosdick, 1933, *The Unknown Soldier*, 12 November (Peace Pledge Union: London)

¹⁸ Wilkinson, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*, p.46

¹⁹ Ibid p.55

Chapter 2:

Post-War Remembrance

War-time remembrance traditions attracted such ardent patriotic commitment that most attempts to question them were shouted down.

In 1917, when the anti-Catholic Rev. J.A. Kensit preached a sermon against war shrines at Raleigh Memorial Church, he was promptly attacked by a crowd of fifty irate women and boys, who were waiting for him outside.²⁰ His sermon was entitled: "A Real Patriotic Protest Against the Memory of Our Brave Soldiers and Sailors Being Insulted by The Idolaters of Ritualism". His intention was not to undermine the importance of remembrance, the respect owed to the soldiers, or even the patriotism, but rather to challenge the more ritualistic elements which he appears to have considered idolatrous. Yet the emotions aroused by this topic overtook the public in such a way that they were unable even to consider whether there might be some rationale in his argument.

When the war ended however, and its impact began to sink in, more questions could be raised. Despite the remembrance practices that emerged during the war which served clear social, religious and political functions, and promoted a belief that the war was noble, glorious and justified, at the end of the war Europe was in a state of shock. The loss of life was unprecedented and left the world in mourning.

For the Allies, the glory of victory was overshadowed by the enormous death toll. In Britain, whilst people were thankful that the war was over, faith in the validity of the cause did not come easily. The potential ramifications of this ambiguity were severe: if the war could not be justified, loved ones had died in vain. Post-war remembrance developed both as an extension of traditional practices and as a response to the terrible tragedy. It sought to maintain the celebratory sense of glorious victory whilst simultaneously acknowledging the reality of individual loss and widespread grief.

As it had done previously, religion provided a powerful framework for interpreting the conflict. A divinely sanctioned war would not only appear to have a higher purpose, but would also be justified by an unquestionable authority. Consequently, remembrance was steeped in religious imagery and language.

The Cross of Sacrifice, designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield, is perhaps the most familiar image. Seen in all Commonwealth cemeteries, the limestone cross carries a similarly-shaped bronze sword, explicitly giving a religious framework for the war. It aligns death in war with the self-sacrifice seen in the death of Christ.

The language of remembrance is also full of religious ideology upholding the spiritual

²⁰ Ibid p.53

justification for war. The phrases most commonly found on memorials and in services are 'the glorious dead' or 'they died for God, King and country'. Many carry biblical quotations such as that found on the memorial at the Collège Militaire Royal de Saint Jean in France. The quotation is from 2 Timothy 4v.6 – 8: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith".²¹

More subtle religious imagery can also be identified. The pristine white stones of the allied cemeteries are in stark contrast to the dirty grey ones in German graveyards which were erected by the French and Belgians. Consciously or otherwise, the idea of purity versus impurity, good versus evil, righteousness versus sin, rests there amongst the dead.

Together, such things created a "collective war memory" and provided a platform for the politically and socially sanctioned 'official version' of the war, which has been described as a "national theatre of collective memory, choreographed by social and political leaders".²² Collective memory also served to keep the war in the public eye. It gave a continuing significance to the lost lives, emphasising the on-going impact of their actions so that they could not be nullified and lose their meaning.

In addition to these permanent, physical memories, the annual commemorations of Armistice Day were also established. Here, the tension between the historical approach which celebrated victory and the more modern approach mourning the tragedy came to the fore, as the nation tried to develop an appropriate way of remembering.

In the years immediately after the war, 'Victory Balls' were held on 11th November to celebrate the successful outcome of the war. These occasions, which commemorated the war with dancing, music and food, attracted much criticism from those who saw militaristic values in such remembrance, rather than a commitment to peace without violence. In 1925, a great victory ball was planned to take place on Armistice Day in the Royal Albert Hall, but it was cancelled and replaced by a service of remembrance instead.²³ The first of these services was arranged by Canon Dick Sheppard, who was later involved in the founding of the Peace Pledge Union.²⁴

The idea of a commemorative silence was proposed by George Edward Honey, an Australian soldier. In a letter to the Evening News on 8 May 1919, under the pseudonym Warren Foster, he wrote:

*"Five little minutes only. Five silent minutes of national remembrance. A very sacred intercession. Communion with the Glorious Dead who won us peace, and from the communion new strength, hope and faith in the morrow. Church services, too, if you will, but in the street, the home, the theatre, anywhere, indeed, where Englishmen and their women chance to be, surely in this five minutes of bitter-sweet silence there will be service enough."*²⁵

²¹ Wikipedia, *War Memorials*

²² J.Winter & E.Sivan, 1999, *War and Remembrance in the 20th Century*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge), p.41

²³ Jeffrey Richards, 2001, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876 – 1953*, (Manchester University Press: Manchester), p.159

²⁴ Peace Pledge Union, *Remembrance Day*, [online]. Available at http://www.ppu.org.uk/whitepoppy/white_briefing.html [accessed online 30 September 2009].

²⁵ Australian Government, Department of Veteran's Affairs, 2009, *Silence at Commemorative Events*

The idea did not reach King George V at this point, but probably came via Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, a South African author and politician, who made a similar suggestion on 27 October 1919 which was forwarded to the King. Following this, it became a regular part of the Armistice Day events. In 1920, a stone version of the Cenotaph was erected in London and became the national focal point for remembrance day, with its annual ceremony and laying of wreaths.

During World War 2, the silence was moved to the closest Sunday so that munition making did not have to be interrupted. Now a silence is commonly observed on both days. After World War 2, many Armistice Day events were moved to take place on the Sunday nearest to November 11th, so creating Remembrance Sunday.

[online], (updated 17 June 2009). Available at http://www.dva.gov.au/commems_oawg/commemorations/commemorative_events/organise_events/Pages/silence.aspx [accessed online 30 September 2009].

Chapter 3:

Problems with Poppies

"In Flanders Fields the poppies grow between the crosses, row on row, that mark our place..."²⁶

Another important symbol of remembrance, which became popular following World War 1, was the red poppy. The origins of the symbol are well known. After 1918, it was one of the few plants able to grow in the disturbed soil of the battle fields and so it grew in great abundance.

The same was observed after the Napoleonic war, when "blood red poppies" filled the massacred land.²⁷ Even long before this, the blood-red colour of the flower had lent it an association with death. In Greek mythology it was a symbol of resurrection, as well as an offering to the dead.²⁸ John Macrae's famous poem, *In Flanders Fields*, solidified the existing metaphorical meanings of the poppy, whilst enhancing them with an emotive personal significance.

The poppy became the sign for American servicemen returning home, and a means of raising funds for children who had suffered the impact of war in Northern France. In 1921 it became the national symbol of remembrance in Britain, giving employment opportunities to injured soldiers who made the paper flowers and raised money for the British Legion.

The red flower also came to symbolise the political and religious ideology which underpinned much of the collective war remembrance. The extent to which this was the case was highlighted by the advent of the white poppy.

In 1926 the No More War Movement suggested that the red poppies should have "no more war" inscribed in their centre. The idea was rejected by the British Legion. So, a few years later in 1933 the Women's Co-operative Guild decided to realise the idea, creating white poppies to emphasise their hope of peace, as well as commemorating those who had died in war, particularly as the prospect of another war grew. In 1943, the Peace Pledge Union took over their creation and dissemination, which it has continued to this day.

From their inception, the white poppies have caused a mixture of sporadic irritation, annoyance and anger amongst those who have interpreted them as a sign of disrespect.

²⁶ John McCrae, 1915, *In Flanders Fields* [online]. Available at <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/poems/john-mccrae-in-flanders-fields.htm> [accessed 28 February 2009].

²⁷ BBC, 2008, *How We Remember: Why the Poppy?* [online], (updated 2008). Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/remembrance/how/poppy.shtml> [accessed 21 April 2009]

²⁸ Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, quoted on Wikipedia, 2009, *Poppy* [online] (updated 22 September 2009). Available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poppy#cite_note-1 [accessed online March 24 2009].

During the 1930s, many women who wore white poppies lost their jobs.²⁹ In 1986, Margaret Thatcher condemned white poppies in response to an MP's questioning.³⁰ In 2006, an article published in the *Church Times* suggesting that churches should give people a choice over which coloured poppy to wear re-ignited the public debate.³¹

Almost from its adoption as a symbol of remembrance, there has been controversy over what the poppy stands for. A symbol cannot be defined simply in theoretical or abstract terms. Its meaning is inextricably bound up with how it is used, as well as its implicit and explicit associations. To the mothers, wives and sisters of the Women's Co-operative who had lost loved ones in World War 1, the white poppy stood for a commitment to peace which gave lasting significance to the actions and memory of the dead. But others perceived it as an insult and violation, undermining the meaning of the sacrifice made by those who had died.

A crucial difference remains between the red and white poppy. In their refusal to state "no more war", red poppies leave space to acknowledge the necessity of war, which white poppies challenge. Contrary to what is often suggested, both have their roots in a desire to respect the actions of the dead.

It would be wrong to say that red poppies inherently glorify war. Valuing war as necessary does not mean it also has to be celebrated. But the red poppy does allow space for the idea that redemption through war is possible - a position which does not easily square itself with everyone's beliefs, and certainly not with the teachings of the Christian faith.

In different contexts, the red poppy has also taken on differing political and religious symbolism. For the overwhelming majority of the world it carries little meaning. It is not a global symbol, but one used primarily in Britain and Commonwealth countries. In Northern Ireland it has become associated with British patriotism and Protestant Unionism.

Some have suggested that in the UK there is also now a 'poppy fascism', which does not just expect, but also requires those in public life to wear one in the weeks before Remembrance Day. The Channel 4 presenter Jon Snow caused controversy when he refused to wear a poppy on air.³² This brought the debate about what the red poppy stands for to a head and underlined the extent to which conformity to these values is expected, or even required.

The BBC claims it does not have a policy that everyone should wear a red poppy.³³ Nevertheless, producers and assistants on television programmes always have them to hand for guests and presenters. The red poppy also remains one of the only charitable or political symbols which those working in the medium of television are permitted to wear.

However, as the Royal British Legion have highlighted, there is an irony surrounding any requirement for public figures to wear a red poppy. In response to the Snow controversy,

²⁹ BBC, 2008, *How We Remember: Why the Poppy?* [online] [accessed 21 April 2009]

³⁰ Peace Pledge Union, *Thoughts on Remembrance Day* [online]. Available at http://www.ppu.org.uk/whitepoppy/white_remember2.html [accessed 21 April 2009]

³¹ Jonathan Bartley, 2006, Choosing Between Red and White, *Church Times* [online] 10 November. Available at <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=28698> [accessed 1 October 2009].

³² David Jordan, 2006, Poppies and Presenters, *BBC News* [online], 10 November. Available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors/2006/11/poppies_and_presenters.html [accessed 21 April 2009].

³³ Ibid.

the Legion insisted that everyone should have the right to choose which poppy they wear, if indeed they choose to wear one at all. In their opinion, soldiers fought to win the privilege of such freedom.³⁴

³⁴ BBC, *Remembrance Day: Poppy Day*, [online]. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/alabaster/A653924> [accessed 21 April 2009].

Chapter 4:

The Included and the Excluded

When America joined the war in 1917, President Woodrow Wilson famously described it as “the war to end all wars”. This was not to be. Since World War 2, there has been only one year (1968) when a member of the British armed forces has not been killed in combat.³⁵

Britain alone has been involved in conflicts including World War 2, the Falklands, Northern Ireland, the Korean War, the Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq. The remembrance traditions which evolved during and after World War 1 set the precedent for remembrance throughout the Twentieth Century and beyond.

World War 2, with its devastating impact of death on a scale that the world had not previously seen, was particularly formative. But the questioning of war and how it is remembered also became much harder after World War 2, because of the emphasis on the rightness of fighting fascism and how close Britain came to being invaded.

The value system created and upheld by the political, social and religious functions of remembrance has also contributed to the nation's beliefs about war and remembrance. These wars have often been added to the list of those commemorated on Remembrance Sunday, automatically imbuing them with the meanings implicitly and explicitly attributed to World War 1. They have also been individually commemorated with their own services of remembrance, such as the service in St Paul's Cathedral in 1982 to mark the end of the Falklands War, or that of October 2009 marking the end of Britain's military presence in Iraq.

However, remembrance has also been characterised by selectivity. Even in the most recent conflict, the colossal Iraqi death toll was not part of the remembrance. Whilst it was clearly right to remember the British troops who died, one might legitimately ask why there was no service of remembrance to recall the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who were killed as a consequence of the war in which Britain engaged.

But perhaps the most glaring omission from our remembrance has been the civilians on all sides of war. Remembrance customs were formed following World War 1 when the number of dead were overwhelmingly combatants. But of the estimated 60 million who were killed in World War 2, two thirds were civilians. Our remembrance, however, has never adjusted to incorporate this fact. It was almost as if the pain was too great for the

³⁵ *A Video Introduction to the Royal British Legion: Royal British Legion Counties DVD*, 2008, [DVD / online], RAWvideo. Available at <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do> [accessed 1 October 2009]

national conscience to bear.

There are exceptions. Peace groups have continued to remember war with sadness, for example in the numerous peace vigils held for the Iraq War. But such vigils and services for peace, whilst occasionally attended by politicians, have not been sanctioned or supported by the state. The moments that can show war and our role in it as noble have been remembered, whilst the embarrassing and controversial moments which prompt a questioning of war, have been ignored. This trend, established long before World War 1, has continued to this day.

Perhaps the most emotive example of this is the treatment of Bomber Command in World War 2. Many German cities were carpet bombed, the most famous attack being that on Dresden, in which more than 3,900 tons of high-explosive bombs were dropped, causing a fire-storm which destroyed 39 square kilometres of the city centre and burned thousands alive.³⁶ This approach to bombing caused widespread destruction of buildings and landscapes and numerous civilian deaths, which subsequently caused contention as many believed it was an excessive and unnecessary. Consequently, the British Government did not award Bomber Command a campaign medal.³⁷

The treatment of Bomber Command has been heavily criticised by those who feel they deserve recognition, though, as yet, they have not received a campaign medal.³⁸ Such selective remembrance gives an incomplete picture of war. In forgetting the worst moments, there is a reluctance to recognise the true reality of warfare. It has a negative impact on the public perception of war, because values are formed on incomplete grounds. It also creates a two-tier remembrance in which some are considered more worthy of recollection than others.

Recent years, however, have seen a move towards a fuller remembrance, as different groups have challenged this traditional exclusivity. Perhaps this has been clearest amongst conscientious objectors who, along with those promoting peace through non-violence, have historically been excluded from remembrance.

When Parliament passed the act making conscription compulsory for all eligible men in 1916, 16,000 men applied for exemption.³⁹ Some were "non-combatants" who joined the forces but did not use weapons. Others were 'alternativists' who did non-military service to

³⁶ Bombing of Dresden in World War Two, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Dresden#cite_note-Historians-24-40-1

³⁷ Wikipedia, 2009, *Sir Arthur Harris 1st Baronet* [online] (updated 28 September 2009). Available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Travers_Harris [accessed 21 April 2009].

³⁸ More than 60 years after the end of World War Two, there is still a campaign to give Bomber Command a special medal, see Gilbert, M, 2008, Bomber Command Deserves A Medal, *Telegraph.co.uk*, [online], 13 March. Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3556063/Bomber-Command-deserves-a-medal.html> [accessed online 28 August 2009]. In 2007 there was a petition to the Prime Minister, asking him "to Recognise the courage and sacrifice of the men of RAF Bomber Command by instituting a Campaign Medal." The Prime Minister's Office refused to do so on the grounds that it "has maintained a policy that it will not consider the belated institution of awards and medals for service given many years earlier." See Number10.gov.uk, 2007, *Petition to Recognise the courage and sacrifice of the men of RAF Bomber Command by instituting a Campaign Medal* 27 May, [online], updated 15 June 2007, available at <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/BomberCommand/> [accessed online 28 August 2009]; and Number10.gov.uk, 2007, *Bomber Command – petition response*, [online], 15 June, available at <http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page11982> [accessed online 28 August 2009]

³⁹ *Not Forgotten: The Men Who Wouldn't Fight*, 2008, [TV documentary], Channel Four, 10 November.

help the war effort. Still others were 'absolutists', who refused to have anything to do with the war effort at all. The latter group often faced consequences similar to those who were sent to fight. They were punished by being sent to labour camps, in the hope that they would repent and agree to fight. One man, Walter Roberts, suffered such extreme conditions at a camp near Aberdeen that he died. He was the first of 73 conscientious objectors to die as a result of their treatment.⁴⁰

It is not surprising that the contribution of these men to the war is contentious, particularly considering the plight of the nation in the aftermath of World War 1. However, it was not until 80 years after the start of that war that the first national monument to Conscientious Objectors was erected on 15th May 1994 in Tavistock Square, London. This date is now an annual International Conscientious Objectors Day. The memorial is inscribed with the words "to all those who have established and are maintaining the right to refuse to kill".

Another group who were effectively excluded from remembrance until relatively recently were the 306 men who were executed for 'cowardice' or desertion. Only in November 2006, as part of the Armed Forces Act, did they receive a pardon. The Defence Secretary, Des Browne said that he hoped that this would "finally remove the stigma with which their families have lived for years."

The terrible damage done to the environment and many animals both directly and indirectly has also historically gone unrecognised. The narrow view of the impact of war on humanity has not given an holistic consideration to the wider implications for creation. It was not until the 90th anniversary of the start of World War 1, that a memorial for the crucial service and sacrifice of many animals was erected. The Animals In War Memorial, unveiled in November 2004, stands on the edge Hyde Park at Brook Gate, Park Lane. It is designed to be a monument with which the public can interact, as they walk around the large stone walls and learn about the role of animals in war.⁴¹ Animal Aid now create purple poppy wreaths, which are laid there annually.⁴²

It is also notable that less successful wars are not kept in the public eye in the same way as those that result in definitive victories. For example, the Korean War is rarely mentioned, perhaps as Michael Portillo observes, because it ended in stalemate.⁴³

Another grouping who have struggled for inclusion in public remembrance are veteran soldiers, who survived to suffer the physical and emotional consequences of war and for whom there is often inadequate support. Historically, social action has played a significant role in remembrance, particularly in the immediate aftermath of wars. However, for the most part, projects and initiatives have taken place on a small, local scale or amongst a

⁴⁰ Paul Kelbie, 2006, Memorial Honours Sacrifice of Conscientious Objectors, *The Independent* [online], 15 May. Available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/memorial-honours-sacrifice-of-conscientious-objectors-478318.html> [accessed on line 16 May 2009].

⁴¹ Animals in War Memorial Fund, *The Monument* [online]. Available at http://www.animalsinwar.org.uk/index.cfm?asset_id=1374 [accessed online 25 July 2009].

⁴² Animal Aid, 2006, *Wreath Ceremony for Victims of Animals in War* [online] (updated 7 November). Available at http://www.animalaid.org.uk/h/n/NEWS/news_other/ALL/1400/ [accessed online 25 July 2009].

⁴³ Michael Portillo, 2006, Newreaders Should Wear Their Poppies With Humility, *The Sunday Times* [online], 12 November. Available at http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article634434.ece [accessed 1 October 2009].

group of people who have a uniting experience. For example, the Union of Disfigured Men was started after World War 1 by two men who had met in a Paris hospital. The union provided empathetic support for men who returned from war with severely damaged faces and for their families. Initially, this took the form of biannual dinners. Subsequently, a country house was purchased as a retreat centre, where disfigured men could withdraw from the stress of living with deformity in full view of society.⁴⁴ Such activities are an element of post-war remembrance which are less well known, partly because they often remained out of the general public eye, but also because such action was a direct response to a post-war need and as that generation died, much of the need died with them. Nonetheless, they were an important part of post-war remembrance and involved remembering what had happened on a day to day basis, as the practical needs of veterans were addressed.

The British Legion was formed from an amalgamation of several social action groups in 1921. Where the focus of small-scale, local organisations was primarily one of providing practical and emotional support, larger groups such as the Legion, took advantage of the political platform made available in commemoration. They used it to campaign for jobs, homes and adequate care for veterans, which they have continued to do to this day. In many respects, by providing both a political voice and practical support, the work of the Legion provides a bridge between ceremonial, national remembrance and local remembrance.

Following World War 1, a huge lack of provision by the state for the suitable care of war veterans was identified. Even today, the majority of such work is carried out by charities. Discomfort has been expressed that the poppy is not simply a symbol of remembrance, but also a fund-raising tool. In particular, it raises questions about why money needs to be raised for veterans when the state which sent them to war should be taking responsibility. There is an apparent disparity between the importance placed on remembrance by the state and its lack of care for those who suffer as a result of war. This highlights a gap between national remembrance with its pomp and ceremony and local remembrance, which more often involves facing the real consequences of war on the individual.

⁴⁴ J. Winter & E. Sivan, *War and Remembrance*, pp.50-51

Chapter 5:

A Value-laden Act

War remembrance which takes place in the public arena ensures that significant conflicts continue to have a place in the public conscience. Every year, as people gather for Remembrance Day, they are encouraged to reflect on past and present conflicts and consider how these relate to their lives, communities and society. Whilst an individual may have a particular, personal response to this, the act of public remembrance also creates a platform for those who lead our remembrance to disseminate their own understandings of these conflicts, be they churches, particular community groups, the British Legion or civil servants. The process of remembrance necessarily involves ascribing meaning to war. It is a political act.

The remembrance traditions which we have inherited are implicitly and explicitly steeped in values. Who we remember, why we remember and especially how we remember demonstrate and affirm our attitude towards war. Every act of remembrance is born out of a desire to remember war in a certain way. From memorials, to cemeteries, to church services, each act makes its own statement about how war is understood. It is this aspect of remembrance which makes it highly controversial and problematic for those who wholly or partially disagree with the meaning these traditions ascribe.

According to the British Legion, the nation's custodians of remembrance, the purpose of remembrance is to remember those who “have given their lives for the freedom we enjoy today”.⁴⁵ If this familiar statement is unpacked, a number of implicit and explicit messages is revealed, which highlight a set of beliefs about the wars that have been waged, and how they should be remembered.

Firstly, it suggests that remembrance is, or should primarily be, about those who have fought for Britain. The patriotic sentiment of commemorating those who have died for the nation state is clear. Sometimes, but not always, this extends to allies. Yet our view of remembrance begins (and often ends) with Britain, rather than with a global perspective. It is not about remembering those who have been deemed ‘enemies’, whether they be civilians or military personnel. These people did not ‘give their lives’ for us; rather they were ‘killed for us’. So we do not remember them.

Secondly, it is implicitly not about remembering all those who have suffered as a result of war. It is specifically about the dead. This excludes those who were part of the armed forces who are still living even if they have been maimed in body or mind. It also excludes conscientious objectors and civilians who may have been killed. Moreover, such an approach to remembrance omits the huge environmental impact of war, including the destruction of whole communities, animals and the contamination of battle zones. During

⁴⁵ The Royal British Legion, *Remembrance*, [online]. Available at <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/remembrance> [accessed 25 June 2009].

World War 1 alone, 8 million horses and countless mules and donkeys died.⁴⁶ The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine has highlighted the destructive use of animals even in military training, where soldiers have carried out tasks such as shooting at and setting fire to live pigs.⁴⁷ The devastating impact of war reaches well beyond the battleground and the duration of battle.

Thirdly, rather than focusing on the tragic reality of warfare, the emphasis is on the contested idea of what was achieved. The proposition is that all the wars in which we have engaged have resulted in the 'freedom we enjoy today'. War is seen as redemptive because it has brought us freedom. Former Defence Secretary Michael Portillo testifies to the prevalence of this belief, as he writes:

"On November 11 we recall that sometimes the finest achievements of humanity could be saved from violence only by responding with violence."⁴⁸

This shows an assumption that violence is sometimes the only way of bringing salvation, which is a contentious opinion to put forward with such definitive authority. Yet remembrance has applied this standard universally to all wars in which we have engaged, allowing little room for any particular conflict to be interpreted differently. So for example, those who died in the Iraq War, the Falklands, Afghanistan and Northern Ireland, are placed together with those who died in World Wars 1 and 2, suggesting that all those who died in these wars, did so for our freedom. The wars have been seen as necessary, and even good. But many who wish to remember do not support such a political position.

This perspective is reinforced by phrases often used in remembrance such as "glorious sacrifice", a sentiment frequently carried on war memorials, which overlooks the tragedy of death by focusing on the heroism of dying for someone. Such a death is imbued with a profound sense of spiritual significance (note the use of the term "glorious", which has religious overtones), which raises the fallen beyond the human to an ethereal level. In this, there is little room to mourn the futility of war: a glorious death may be even attributed to a soldier killed by 'friendly fire' when considered in the broader context of "fighting for freedom".

Fourthly, no distinction is made between the war actions of those who died. All are considered to have died for our freedom, with no regard for the nature of their specific activities. So those who tortured the enemy and committed atrocities are considered to have acted for our freedom in the same way as those who were killed whilst saving their wounded fellow soldiers on the battlefield.

Finally, it is clear that remembrance is underpinned by a desire to give war positive meaning. The Legion's statement is in the end positive in its outlook on war. It is perhaps

⁴⁶ Animals In War Memorial Fund, 2000, History, [online]. Available at http://www.animalsinwar.org.uk/index.cfm?asset_id=1375 [accessed 27 August 2009].

⁴⁷ Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, 2009, The War on Animals: PCRM Confronts the Military's Deadly Use of Animals for Medical Training, Good Medicine, [online], Volume XVIII, No.1. Available at <http://www.pcrm.org/magazine/gm09winter/war.html> [accessed online 27 August 2009]

⁴⁸ Portillo, M, 2006, Newsreaders Should Wear Their Poppies, With Humility, *Times Online*, [online], 12 November. Available at http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article634434.ece [accessed online 27 August 2009]

for this reason that public remembrance often attempts to identify itself and its country with the victor, whilst minimising any association with the loser. Unsuccessful wars tend to be ignored as Michael Portillo observes:

“[W]hy do we dwell so little nowadays on the Korean war? In Kim Jong-il’s regime there is starvation and brainwashing. People are imprisoned for “crimes” committed by their grandparents and then savagely used in experiments with chemical weapons. That might suggest that we were right to fight communism there. But the war has been pushed to the back of our memories because it ended not in victory but stalemate.”⁴⁹

Our remembrance is too often selective. Our remembrance is not value free. Nor is it apolitical as some claim.⁵⁰ Even the assertion that people “died for our freedom” attributes political meaning to remembrance because it demonstrates a specific political understanding of war. As the beliefs and values are unpacked, it becomes clear that in the contemporary context (present day society is very different to that in which remembrance practices emerged), there are many difficulties with upholding such ideological positions, whilst seeking to maintain a remembrance that is meaningful to all.

⁴⁹ Portillo, M, 2006, Newsreaders Should Wear Their Poppies, With Humility, *Times Online*, [online], 12 November. Available at http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article634434.ece [accessed online 27 August 2009]

⁵⁰ The Royal British Legion believe even the poppy to be an apolitical symbol, see <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/news/general/an-open-letter-to-nick-griffin-chairman-of-the-bnp-and-mep-for-north-west-england>

Chapter 6:

Remembrance and the Church

On 26th July 1982, at the behest of the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, Archbishop Robert Runcie led a Thanksgiving Service in St Paul's Cathedral to commemorate the end of the Falklands War. His sermon caused such great controversy that virtually every obituary recalls it.⁵¹ The Conservative Party complained that he had underplayed Britain's victory and given too much consideration to the plight of the Argentinians. Himself a former tank officer who served in the Guards Armoured Division in Normandy in 1945, Runcie had urged that all the dead (including the Argentinians) be remembered, and expressed the hope of reconciliation.

The event demonstrates what can happen when political remembrance meets the message of Christianity. The discomfort of incompatibility rears its awkward head as the true values of remembrance are revealed. For the most part, the more political aspects of remembrance are shrouded in sombre but familiar language and the important causes of caring for injured war veterans, their families and the bereaved. The political dimension of remembrance remains hidden. It is only revealed when something challenges the underlying values, provoking an often disproportionate reaction.

For the Christian churches who play a central role in Remembrance Day events, there are two particular challenges. First, whether from a pacifist or a 'just war' perspective, war is always considered an evil. It is just that some – from the just war tradition – may consider a war to be the lesser of two evils. However, the idea that war is in any way glorious or redemptive is not one that orthodox Christian theology accepts.

The second difficulty is the global perspective of the church. Christian theology teaches that the primary citizenship and allegiance of the Christian is to the Kingdom of God, not to the nation state.⁵² To consider only those from "our side" who died is inadequate. The difficulty is made all the more clear by the fact that many of the wars, most notably the first and second world wars, but also the more recent war in Iraq, have involved Christians killing other Christians. It is estimated that there were around 800,000 Christians in Iraq before the US invasion in 2003 who, for the most part, were living in peace with their Muslim neighbours. Now, it is thought that there are significantly fewer, partly due to emigration and partly because of the "spate of attacks on Christian targets in 2004 and 2005" after the removal of Saddam Hussein.⁵³

⁵¹ Tempestuous Reign of the Church's Good Shepherd, Chris Moncrieff, The Independent, 12th July 200, accessed online 27/05/09 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/tempestuous-reign-of-the-churchs-good-shepherd-706990.html>

⁵² 1973, *Holy Bible: New International Version*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, Hebrews 11 v. 13 – 16,

⁵³ BBC News, 2008, Iraqi Christians' Long History, BBC [online], 13 March. Available at

When the political element of remembrance is considered, questions also arise about the place the Anglican Church in particular has historically held in leading or participating in Remembrance and Armistice Day events. The ideology that people died for our freedom means that there is little room for a more nuanced, flexible approach from the church, which might not accept that British armed forces, fighting in every conflict we remember, have done so to bring a degree of redemption or salvation in the form of liberty. Maintaining this traditional involvement inevitably necessitates an on-going compromise of values.

There are, of course, those who deny or overlook the political side of remembrance. In an interview on the BBC Radio 4 Today Programme, the Chaplain to the British Legion, the Bishop of Manchester, explained his opinion that remembering those who have fought for Britain is not the same as a “support the war day” and that “young men and women are out there...following the direction of our political leaders, whom we have voted in...we need to support them (ie the armed forces) whether or not we believe politically in the war that is being fought”.⁵⁴ This position, however, fails to engage with its own reality – that in the very act of “supporting” the armed forces by using traditional remembrance day customs, a political statement is being made about the contribution of these men and women and so about the value of war.

The difficulty that the church finds itself in was highlighted by the response of the Church of England to a survey produced by the Network of Christian Peace Organisations. The Network took a sample poll of 160 adults at the 2009 Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival, which revealed that many respondents wanted the troops out of Afghanistan, an end to UK arms exports and a more decisive stand for peace to be made by the churches. However in response, and presumably out of fear of causing controversy, a Church of England spokesperson sought to play down the poll's significance, describing it as a "self-selecting survey at a predominantly evangelical summer camp" and adding: "The Church of England continues to support our armed forces."⁵⁵

Compromising Values

In 1921, a Royal Charter charged the British Legion with organising “festivals of Remembrance, services and parades to perpetuate the memory of sacrifices made during service with the Armed Forces in war and peace”.⁵⁶ All centralised, public remembrance came under their jurisdiction and any alterations or amendments to official proceedings must be sanctioned by them.

Traditionally, the church has offered its services on the Legion's terms, willingly upholding their values even when they appear to clash with those of the Christian faith. The introduction to the traditional Service for Remembrance Sunday published by the Church Society demonstrates this:

“We have come together to worship almighty God;

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3526386.stm [accessed online 28 August 2009]

⁵⁴ *Today Programme*, 2008. [Radio programme] BBC, BBC Radio 4, 11 November 2008 08.55

⁵⁵ Christians want ‘Afghanistan Withdrawal Timetable’, *Politics.co.uk* 26 October 2009,

⁵⁶ *The 2003 Royal Charter of Incorporations and Schedules: Version 5, 31 October 2008*, London: Royal British Legion. Available at <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/media/33735/newroyalcharter.pdf> [accessed 1 October 2009].

*to offer him praise and thanksgiving
for our nation's deliverance in time of war;
to recall to our minds
those who through death, injury or bereavement,
suffered to bring peace and freedom to our world;”*⁵⁷

The declaration is full of patriotic sentiment, the glory of victory, the justification of war and the language of righteousness. God is said to deliver the nation victory. The enemy is implicitly deemed unrighteous, being apparently unaided by God. The hymn suggestions, including “O God Our Help In Ages Past” and “He Who Would Valiant Be”, also perpetuate the idea that God is on the nation's side and conflate the spiritual battle with earthly war.

However, since the wholehearted support given by most churches to the First and Second World Wars, the gap between the churches and the state has widened, even though the establishment of the Church of England has continued. Christianity has become far less associated with British culture. In turn, churches have assumed a more critical and sometimes radical position with regard to politics and Government.

Recent years have seen Church leaders express more critical responses to war, most notably in 2003 when the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams and the then Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, the Most Rev Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, issued a joint statement highlighting their doubts about the “moral legitimacy” of the conflict in Iraq.⁵⁸

In 2005, the churches produced a new Order of Service for Remembrance Sunday. This was published by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and prepared with The Joint Liturgical Group of Great Britain and The Royal British Legion.⁵⁹ This service places greater emphasis on the tragedy of war and the universal responsibility to commit to peace. The introduction demonstrates this new approach:

*“We meet in the presence of God.
We commit ourselves to work
in penitence and faith
for reconciliation between the nations,
that all people may, together,
live in freedom, justice and peace.
We pray for all
who in bereavement, disability and pain
continue to suffer the consequences of
fighting and terror.
We remember with thanksgiving and sorrow
those whose lives,
in world wars and conflicts past and present,
have been given and taken away.”*⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Church Society, *A Service For Remembrance Sunday* [online]. Available at

<http://www.churchsociety.org/publications/liturgy/RemembranceService.htm> [accessed 1 October 2009]

⁵⁸ The Times, 2004, Blair Floored from Right and Left by Church, *Times Online* [online], 30 June. Available at

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article451614.ece> [accessed 27 May 2009]

⁵⁹ Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, *Remembrance Sunday* [online]. Available at

<http://www.ctbi.org.uk/CGBA/233/> [accessed 10 September 2009].

⁶⁰ Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2005, *An Order of Service for Remembrance Sunday* [online].

As our understanding of war and its place in society changes, it is clearly appropriate that our remembrance should continue to be up-dated.

Chapter 7:

Towards a new remembrance

In April 2009, Britain formally declared the end of its military operations in Iraq and by the beginning of August, all British troops had been withdrawn. From the outset, many found it hard to see justification for the invasion. An ICM research survey of British attitudes to war published in September 2009 saw 60 per cent voice opposition to Britain's military involvement in Iraq. Only 20 per cent agreed that it had been right to send troops to Basra.⁶¹

During the Summer of 2009, the conflict in Afghanistan also escalated and the death toll soared to over 200, with 41 fatalities in July and August alone.⁶² In the same ICM survey, more than half of those interviewed "said that the army should never have been deployed to Helmand province in southern Afghanistan."⁶³

The public find themselves in an awkward position. Many do not agree with or support the wars. Nevertheless, their hearts go out to the soldiers who have been sent to kill and be killed, following the political decisions that were made, as well as to all the many families affected around the world on all 'sides'. They want to remember. But our remembrance customs seem ill suited to cope with such circumstances.

In this context, on 27th June 2009, Britain celebrated its first annual Armed Forces Day. According to the Government, the purpose is to bridge the growing gap between the Armed Forces and the general public.⁶⁴ Quentin Davies MP, who was heavily involved in the instigation of the new day, argued that, even though there was a large degree of support for the armed forces nationally, there was less and less understanding about them.⁶⁵ This was due he said, to a decrease in direct contact between civilians and service personnel. Armed Forces Day promoted respect for, and understanding of, the military.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Michael Evans, 2009, More than half of British public against UK mission in Afghanistan, *Times Online* [online] 10 September. Available at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article6827945.ece> [accessed 10 September 2009]

⁶² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7531254.stm>

⁶³ Michael Evans, 2009, More than half of British public against UK mission in Afghanistan, *Times Online* [online] 10 September. Available at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article6827945.ece> [accessed online 10 September 2009]

⁶⁴ Jenny Percival 2008, Report Proposes New Public Holiday to Celebrate Armed Forces, *guardian.co.uk* [online]. Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/may/19/education.military> [accessed 10 September 2009]

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Armed Forces Day, *About Armed Forces Day*, [online]. Available at <http://www.armedforcesday.org.uk/About.aspx> [accessed 26 June 2009]

Others however, have identified a political agenda: to raise support for the military and to make their deployment easier, both in the present and in the future. Uncertainty about the military has not been a result of “decreased understanding” of what the army do they argue, but rather a response to the dubious premises on which politicians have waged war. The announcement two weeks prior to Armed Forces Day 2009 that an inquiry into the Iraq war was to be carried out in private⁶⁷ (a decision later partially revoked) appeared to contradict the proclaimed intention to increase understanding about the army and what it did. A disparity was also identified between the intent to “honour the armed forces”⁶⁸ and the lack of adequate social and financial support for veterans and their bereaved families.⁶⁹

Armed Forces Day is also an example of re-imagining remembrance. Remembrance is one of the stated goals of the Day. And with it, a new sort of remembrance is being established, with a new emphasis that will cultivate new values. Since values are the basis for actions, this is an investment for the future. Indeed, where traditionally the emphasis has been on the past, here the focus is on building relationships in the present (i.e. between the Armed Forces and civilians), to impact upon the future.

But where historically remembrance has been characterised by “sadness and commemoration”, this is a day of celebration⁷⁰. The main event in 2009, hosted by Chatham Dockyard, included “have-a-go” activities, displays with the Royal Navy and a spectacular fly-past. The light-hearted military spectacular is far removed from the realities of the battleground. The Government has re-imagined remembrance to help its vision for the future become a reality. It appears to be actively projecting a value framework, which considers what soldiers do to be good and glorious, whilst obscuring the harsh realities of the impact of war.

On 27th June 2009, Britain also celebrated its first Unarmed Forces Day, which stands in stark contrast to this. The proponents of this event have also re-imagined remembrance, but in a way that recognises the horrors of war and responds with a commitment to a future of peace-building without weapons. Unarmed Forces Day seeks to recognise the contribution made by many peace-builders around the world, who work to prevent conflict from occurring, or make peace when it has. The day was celebrated by a peaceful protest, which included handing out copies of Peace News at Chatham Dockyard, displaying posters with famous pacifists and holding peace vigils.

Both these examples of remembrance re-imagined share some common ground in believing war should be remembered. There is a duty to recall the impact of war and the countless lost lives. However, in every other way Armed and Unarmed Forces Day are polar opposites. They are based on different values and so make opposing statements about the place of war in society. Consequently, they also show contrasting desires for the future of warfare: the former supports its continuation as a means of resolving conflict; the latter seeks to prioritise non-violence and seeks an end to war through non-violent means.

⁶⁷ BBC, 2009, Iraq War Inquiry to be in Private, *BBC News* [online], 15 June. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8100432.stm [accessed 15 June 2009]

⁶⁸ Armed Forces Day is described as “an opportunity to honour and celebrate the work they do in support of our country.” Armed Forces Day, *Home*, [online]. Available at <http://www.armedforcesday.org.uk/> [accessed online 10 September 2009]

⁶⁹ BBC, 2009, Veteran Mental Care “a Disgrace”, *BBC News* [online], 28 February. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7916221.stm> [accessed 10 September 2009]

⁷⁰ MP Quentin Blake quoted in Jenny Percival, Report Proposes New Public Holiday, *guardian.co.uk*

Chapter 8:

Re-Imagining Remembrance

Perhaps the most powerful testimony for re-imagining British remembrance is Harry Patch, ‘the last Tommy’, who died on 25th July 2009, aged 111. Patch was conscripted during the First World War and fought at Passchendaele. But it was only in his last years that he became an icon as “the last British survivor of the carnage of the Western Front.”⁷¹

In addition to the usual war medals, he was awarded the Legion d'Honneur in France, and subsequently made an officer of the Legion. In 2008, he was also honoured by the Belgian king, Albert II, who appointed him Knight of the Order of Leopold.

But despite all the honours, Patch did not subscribe to the view of World War 1 perpetuated through remembrance. In an interview with Mike Thomson in 2005, he said the war “wasn't worth it” and described Remembrance Day as “just show business”.⁷² Thomson observed that Patch did not wear his medals with pride in the war, from which he believes nothing was learnt. Uncomfortable questions were raised about whether a remembrance that forces a pre-formed ideology onto those who are being remembered, actually does justice to their memory.

The word remember, made up of the prefix “re-”, meaning again, and “memor” (Latin) meaning “mindful”, is about bringing something known to the level of conscious mind. Sometimes the process of bringing to mind is unconscious, for example when an object, place or smell triggers a memory. At other times, it is a very conscious, deliberate process. Remembrance Day is when the nation makes the choice to remember actively, and corporately. Either way, once the thought comes into consciousness, the individual is responsible for what happens to it or for how the subject is remembered.

We have a choice about how we remember. We can remember well or we can remember badly. When it comes to remembering war, we can choose to remember in a way that will ensure the continuation of the extant ideology or we can choose to remember in a way that challenges, changes or develops it in new directions. We can also choose to remember in a way that makes remembrance accessible, in particular to new generations who have less experience of war, or a way that excludes.

Whatever we do, remembering must be approached as an act that has profound ramifications for the whole of life. As such, it should be undertaken with consideration

⁷¹ BBC News, 2009, Obituary: Harry Patch, [bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6954937.stm), [online], 25 July. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6954937.stm> [accessed online 20 August 2009]

⁷² *Today Programme*, 2004 [radio programme]. BBC, Radio4, 24th December 2005, 07:50.

about the possible impact on the present and the future so that wise choices are made. We have a responsibility to remember well. We should also continually review what is good about our remembrance so far, and what perhaps we should let go because it makes us remember badly.

In light of this, the following recommendations are made:

A more truthful remembrance

“If any man tells you he went over the top and he wasn't scared, he's a damn liar” – Harry Patch

Remembrance must accurately reflect the experiences of those who took part in war and were directly affected by it. The terms should not be set by politicians who send people to fight. Telling the truth is the best way to honour those we seek to remember. This is a principle acknowledged in holocaust memorials such as Yad Vashem which recall the horror of the Nazi death camps.

There should be no selective remembrance. Atrocities should be remembered alongside acts of bravery. Dishonourable acts should be recalled alongside those which were honourable. This includes acts committed by all sides. To do anything else would be to fail to tell the whole truth. This has particular implications for the way that Remembrance events are covered by the press and media, who have a tendency to focus on acts of heroism, rather than on the more uncomfortable truths of war.

A more truthful remembrance will also mean modifying our language. Words such as “glorious” clearly have little place in recalling war. Whatever one’s views on the rights and wrongs of war, it should be openly acknowledged that some did “die in vain”. To say that all those we remember have “given their lives for the freedom we enjoy today” is inaccurate. It is also to ascribe a specific political position to all the wars in which Britain has engaged, which many do not believe is truthful. It was not the belief of many who have fought and died. The use of the phrase should be discontinued.

Churches should resist the misappropriation of religious language. Words from liturgies and biblical texts referring to spiritual battles and conquests, should only be used carefully in the context of warfare. Churches should also guard against the equation of Christ’s “sacrifice” on the cross with the “sacrifices” of soldiers. Such words should at least be qualified. The death of Jesus Christ who rejected violence and killing, is different in many respects from the death of a soldier in war. It may though more accurately describe the experience of unarmed civilians, peace-builders or conscientious objectors.

A new language of remembrance should be developed instead, based on the reality of war and its consequences. Truth telling should also influence the songs which are sung and the words which are said in Remembrance services. It may mean a replacement of triumphant songs with ones that are more honest. The trend in this direction is already evident in many churches and its continuation should be encouraged.

New artistic expressions are also required to facilitate our developing remembrance. A good example is the recent song by Radiohead, who were inspired by the interview to write Harry Patch (in memory of), offering Patch a more genuine tribute than Remembrance Sunday did. It is devoid of all sense of glory and greatness. The words are

bleak and full of the futility of war. They recount the story of a man who fortuitously escaped alive, whilst the unlucky fell around him. There is no notion of a “glorious sacrifice”, but rather a group of men being used for political ends with no control over their destiny. The music features no trumpet fanfare or victorious salute. Instead, a simple string motif repeats over and over, like a musical painting of the slow-motion pictures of men being sent over the top.

A more peaceful remembrance

*“War will exist until the distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige as the warrior does today”–
JFK*

How do we truly honour those who have died hoping that their war would be the last?

On the 6th August every year bar one since 1947, the Mayor of Hiroshima has delivered a peace message inspired by the massacre. In 1949, it was declared “Hiroshima, City of Peace”. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park contains a collection of monuments promoting peace, from bridges to sculptures and even a clock. The Cenotaph for the A-Bomb Victims was one of the first to be erected. This bears the names of all reported dead as a result of the bomb, regardless of their nationality. It is also inscribed with the words “let all the souls here rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evil”, a challenging message because it neither apportions blame nor seeks retribution. Rather, the all-encompassing “we” demands a universal responsibility to commit to ending nuclear warfare. Such changes point the way to a different sort of remembrance, built on a different set of values. They seek to make peace a reality.

To remember without a commitment to prevent the tragedy of war in the future is to dishonour the memory of those who died. Remembrance must include a commitment to peace – a commitment to do all in our power to make sure that the terrible tragedy of war is not repeated. That was the wish of those who fought. It is the sentiment behind holding our remembrance on the day that hostilities ceased on the Western Front in the First World War. And whilst there will always be disagreement about the rights and wrongs of a war, there can be agreement around a commitment that we should do all we can to prevent another war from happening. If peace is to become a reality it must be more highly valued than war.

What would this mean for our remembrance? It would mean including in our recollection all those who have also died working for peace. It would mean greater use of peace symbols. For the churches it might mean greater use of prayers for peace in Remembrance Services. Those churches who provide chaplains and bishops for the Armed Forces such as the Church of England and the Catholic Church might also consider creating a Chaplain or Bishop for the Unarmed Forces, in recognition of all those working around the world to prevent war and defuse conflict.

In providing chaplains and a bishop only for the armed forces, churches are failing to invest in peacemaking to the extent that they could. Members of the unarmed forces, such as aid workers and those working for non-violent conflict resolution, experience the horrors of war zones and risk their lives just as the armed forces do. Providing them with a chaplain or bishop would not only show an active commitment to peace and conflict resolution on the part of the church, but would also offer such people much needed

pastoral support as they undertake challenging and important work.

A more equal remembrance

Those who dare to interpret God's will must never claim Him as an asset for one nation or group rather than another. War springs from the love and loyalty which should be offered to God being applied to some God substitute, one of the most dangerous being nationalism – Robert Runcie

There are many days in the calendar when we remember specific groups or events related to wars in which we have engaged. Holocaust Memorial Day, International Conscientious Objectors Day, Hiroshima Day, and VE Day are just a few. With the advent of Armed Forces Day, the military too now have their own day. This allows Remembrance Day to become broader in its focus and to incorporate everyone touched by war on an equal basis. This day should be set aside to remember all the consequences of war.

There is a strong precedent for such a move. From the latter part of the nineteenth century, the tradition of celebrating war victories and great military leaders began to give way to a new tradition of commemorating those lost in war. This made room for the destructive aspect of war to be remembered alongside the glory. The surprising equality of the standard gravestones and layout used in World War 1 Commonwealth cemeteries is a testimony to this change. Officers are buried next to privates and everyone has the same white stone, regardless of former rank. This approach is vastly different from historic monuments, such as Nelson's column, which remember one individual's glory and omit the contribution and suffering of the rest.

The principle that all are equal, which Christians would say is derived from the fact that all are made in the image of God, should be extended to all sides in war. Remembrance which upholds equality recognises the value of every life. It also acknowledges that actions can not be taken in isolation. Britain's allies should be remembered. But so should Britain's enemies. When this happens, the enemy ceases to be an abstract evil force and become real people, like ourselves.

A more equal remembrance would also involve remembering all who have died in the wars in which Britain has engaged, not just those in the armed forces. The contributions of conscientious objectors and those who were shot for cowardice or desertion should be included. And since the remembrance formed by World War 1 was never properly developed to incorporate the terrible civilian death toll of World War 2, remembrance should include civilians on all sides. In doing so, it would highlight our collective responsibility and also acknowledge that people who are killed are people like us.

A more inclusive remembrance

The move towards a more diverse remembrance is seen in International Conscientious Objectors' Day on 15th May, which began in 1994. The monument of volcanic rock in Tavistock Square pays tribute to these men and women. The Animals in War memorial similarly demonstrates the move towards a broader remembrance, which seeks to recount the impact of war more holistically.

Our remembrance should show diversity in recognising all the consequences of war, from the environment to soldiers, from animals to conscientious objectors. It should also be conducted in a way that makes it accessible to all, regardless of background, religion,

ethnicity or view of war.

The red poppy has come to symbolise the values which underpin much of our collective war remembrance. Others, for the many reasons set out in this report, may find the symbol unhelpful. But it is important that they too are able to express their remembrance through symbols, without fear, hysteria, or social condemnation.

The British Legion has acknowledged the importance of the freedom in being able to choose how we remember. And whilst there is no legal prohibition against a diversity of remembrance, examples set out in this report have shown how those who would seek to remember in different ways have sometimes felt unable to do so. They have certainly been limited in their choices.

Those holding remembrance events, including churches, should allow for different symbols to be used, and make different symbols available, including white, red and the new purple poppies produced to remember animals. This includes diversity in the laying of wreaths. It is important too that these symbols are not seen to be in competition with one another as has been portrayed by some national newspapers.⁷³ White wreaths of poppies have long been laid next to red ones, and now are joined by purple wreaths. Such diversity echoes the unique and individual war shrines made by families as the first soldiers were killed in World War 1. Diversity in our remembrance should be encouraged.

Wars such as Korea or Northern Ireland should also receive greater prominence. We should guard against the tendency to forget wars in which there was no obvious winner.

Those who live with the consequences of war, such as those with disabilities caused by war, should also play a prominent role in remembrance events. Children should play a more prominent role, with spaces set aside for them to take part, and in particular ask questions and learn about the consequences of war.

A more just remembrance

“Such services should never be occasions to glorify war, but could increasingly become occasions which value and encourage peace making and the search for justice”- Jean Mayland

If there is no accountability in our remembrance, then our remembrance is cheap. One of the principal criticisms of Armed Forces Day was that the Government did not match the rhetoric of support for the armed forces with action. To pay lip service and then fail to follow through on those words is to call our remembrance into question.

Remembrance should bless soldiers, not war. Truly honouring members of the armed forces means in particular honouring the needs which emerge as a result of what they have been required to do. This includes those who have been hurt or maimed and the relatives who continue to suffer long after their loved ones have gone.

The focus of Remembrance Day is very often on those who have “fallen” for our country.

⁷³ The Red Poppy, Flower of Remembrance Sunday, Daily Telegraph, 8 November 2008. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/3563324/The-red-poppy-flower-of-Remembrance-Sunday.html>

However, for every fatality there are four armed forces personnel injured.⁷⁴ These injuries are often horrific, leaving the sufferer maimed or disabled.

Although almost 4,000 military staff annually are found to have some form of mental disorder, in just over three years only 115 British personnel or veterans were compensated for the psychological injuries of war.⁷⁵ However, pecuniary compensation is not where it ends. For example, those returning from deployment should have quick access to the psychological help they need to process what they have experienced and maximise their chances of having a mentally healthy existence.

Remembrance should also involve a commitment to repairing the damage done by war. This may mean reparations, where they are due, to communities that have been affected by the actions of the military. It also means a commitment to work towards reconciliation where divisions have continued after the fighting has ended.

A more marked remembrance

The best way to continue our remembrance in future generations would be through a Remembrance Day Bank Holiday in which the whole country participates.

An e-petition was presented to the Prime Minister on 18th April 2008 requesting the creation of “a new public holiday, the National Remembrance Holiday to commemorate The Fallen and our Nation”. On 11th November 2008 a Private Member's Bill, “Remembrance Day Bank Holiday Bill, had its first reading in Parliament.

A Remembrance Day Bank Holiday would allow for communities to come together more easily to remember collectively. In many respects this would be an extension of the idea of a one or two minute silence, to incorporate the whole day.

It would also mean that those involved in the business of war such as munition factories and distributors of weapons would stop their activities for a day. The cessation of weapon production would be a powerful demonstration of a national commitment to work towards ending war.

The Day could be promoted as an opportunity for the public to reflect on the impact of war through additional events to the usual services. A bank holiday would also be a commemorative event which engaged every person in the country, regardless of ethnicity, background and belief. In this, it could also facilitate a more equal and diverse remembrance.

⁷⁴ John Major, 2009, We're Letting Down Our Injured Service Men, *Telegraph.co.uk* [online], 24 July. Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/5895580/Were-letting-down-our-injured-servicemen.html> [accessed 1 October 2009].

⁷⁵ A. Mostrous & B. Macintyre, 2009, British Soldiers Victims of a Mental Conflict Without End, *Times Online* [online], 28 March. Available at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article5989498.ece> [accessed online 1 October 2009].

Conclusion

“How we remember shapes who we are, how we approach life, what we believe to be truly important, what we anticipate, and what choices we will feel able to make as we continue our journey through the world. If we remember well, we stand a good chance of living happily and fruitfully, but if we remember badly we may find ourselves disabled by fear, guilt and anger.”⁷⁶

There are a number of difficulties with updating how we remember. Even when the motive is that we remember better, it will often provoke tension and anger. From the reception of the Rev. J.A. Kensit in 1917⁷⁷, to the response to Archbishop Robert Runcie, through to anger at the proposal that white poppies should be made available alongside red ones, it seems that little has changed in a hundred years. Attempts to illuminate the politics of remembrance or to suggest differences, even when the proposals are made by war veterans, will often be ignored or twisted into an accusation of “dishonouring of our war dead”.

The churches however, are uniquely placed to facilitate changes to our remembrance. Their core activity, after all, is remembrance. The recollection of Jesus' crucifixion has been central to the Christian faith from the outset. The most popular symbol of faith, the cross, was a Roman weapon of torture used to put him to death.

Remembrance of this gruesome event takes place weekly for many churches in the form of the Eucharist, or what some Christians call the “Peace Meal”. It is the context within which churches reflect, learn more and explore the meaning of the event. This understanding contributes a framework of implicit and explicit values, based on beliefs about how God relates to humanity. It lays the foundations for the choices that Christians make about how they will act.

It may seem strange that a faith would be built on such a horrific event. Yet it is significant because it highlights the importance of engaging with the reality of the past. Simply ignoring or forgetting difficult experiences has a negative effect. A failure to acknowledge the past will lead to diminished understanding. But active engagement with the past allows it to be understood in new contexts.

Christians believe that when the resurrected Jesus appeared to his disciples, he displayed the wounds from his crucifixion. He carried his experiences, which remained a part of him. But these wounds could now be understood in the new context of life, rather than death. So it becomes clear that the significance of Jesus' death is in the life to which it leads.

⁷⁶ Simon Barrow, 2008, *War Remembrance and Christian Hope*. Available at <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/7942> [accessed 20 August 2009]

⁷⁷ See Chapter 1 of this report.

Remembrance for Christians becomes an act that is life-giving and life-affirming.

Remembering death in the context of life is an idea that can be applied well to war remembrance. This is something all Christians can also support, regardless of their views about war, as Barrow points out:

“The issue is not, in the first instance, whether you are an advocate of pacifism or ‘just war’ ideology, it is about remembering death in the context of the search for life and the gift of life.”⁷⁸

When the Church is involved in remembering war, it must do so in a way that seeks to give life. True life is characterised by peace, which is found through reconciliation and restoration. History testifies to the non-redemptive nature of warfare. With hindsight, it is clear that a “war to end all wars” is an illusion.

There must be a commitment to “peace to end all wars”. Christian theology suggests that peace will not ultimately be brought about through violent means. For Christians to claim the contrary is to ignore the reality of Jesus' loving, non-violent self-sacrifice and to shun the power promised to believers if they will follow his new way of life.

“I remember the sergeant major saying it was going to end tomorrow. So we got down to the bottom of our trenches and stayed there. There was no way we were going to be killed on the last day.

“Then it didn't really register that it was over. Your life was still under a cloud of fear and hardship. All you had done for weeks was look out for shells, mortars and snipers and all you could smell was the cordite of the shells and the stench of dead bodies.

“It took a little time to come out of that despair and, when you did, life had changed. Once you could hear birds instead of shells, smell flowers instead of death and you could look and see nature in all its beauty again, that's when you realised how lucky you were to still be alive. That's when you started to remember all the men you had fought beside who had died and there was a sense of being born again. I decided then that I would make sure I did everything I could to enjoy the richness of life and waste none of the life that I was so lucky still to have.”⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ibid

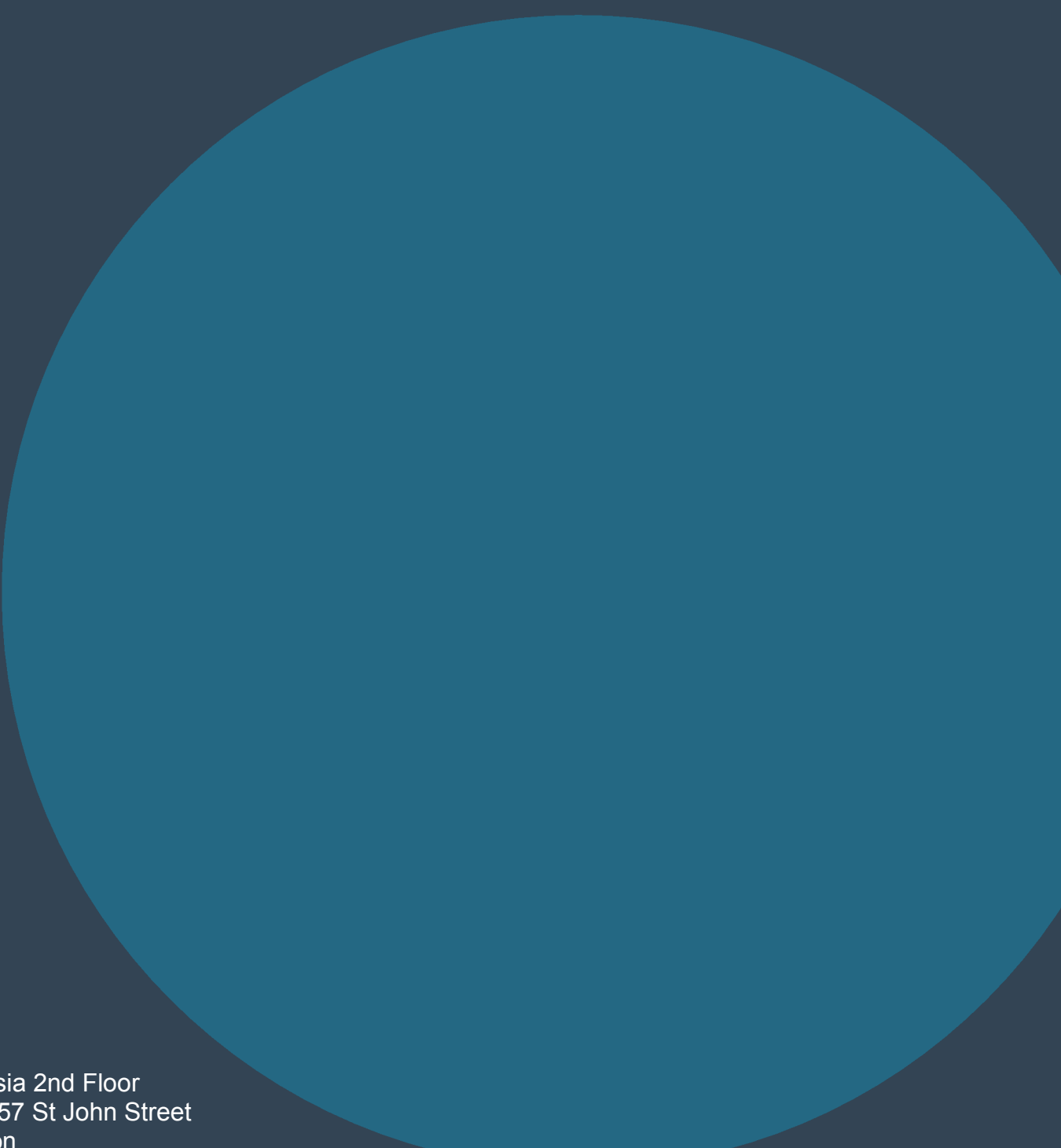
⁷⁹ Tom Renouf, quoted in Samantha Booth, 2008, Why Remembrance Day is Still Relevant and Important, *Daily Record.co.uk* [online], 10 November. Available at <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/lifestyle/real-life-stories/2008/11/10/why-we-must-remember-86908-20883423/> [accessed 1 October 2009].

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