



# LEST WE FORGET

## History of poppies a long one

**Justina Pembleton**

As Remembrance Day approaches, donation boxes full of poppies appear on store counters, and it's rare to see someone not wearing one pinned on the left side of their jackets over their heart. Poppies have always been a sign of respect for all veterans who have fought in wars. But why the Poppy? Why not the carnation or the rose?

The Poppy has existed since the 19th century, during the Napoleonic Wars, 110 year before it was adopted by Canada. There are records stating how thickly Poppies grew over the graves of fallen soldiers in Flanders,

France. It is said that there is a connection between the Poppy and battlefield deaths because those fields were barren before the battles and exploded with the blood-red flowers after the fighting ended.

Before the First World War, hardly any Poppies grew in Flanders. Due to tremendous bombardments during WWI, the chalk soils became rich with lime from rubble. When the war ended, the lime was absorbed into the soil and Poppies began to appear again.

Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae was the person responsible for Canada adopting the Poppy as a symbol of Remembrance Day. He was

a Canadian Medical Officer during the First World War, and in May of 1915, on the day following the death of his fellow soldier Lt. Alexis Helmer of Ottawa, McCrae wrote his famous poem, "In Flanders Fields" to express his anguish over the loss of his friend and a reflection of his surroundings of wild Poppies and wooden crosses marking graves.

*In Flanders Fields  
In Flanders fields the  
poppies blow  
Between the crosses,  
row on row  
That mark our place;  
and in the sky  
The larks, still brave-  
ly singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid  
the guns below.  
We are the Dead.  
Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn,  
saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were  
loved, and now we lie*

*In Flanders fields.  
Take up our quarrel  
with the foe:  
To you from failing  
hands we throw  
The torch; be yours  
to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with  
us who die  
We shall not sleep,  
though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.*

John McCrae

McCrae's poem was published in England on December 8, 1915 and has been read at Remembrance Day services in Canada since 1920. On July 1921, The Great War Veterans' Association of Canada (the predecessor of The Royal Canadian Legion) officially adopted the Poppy as its Flower of Remembrance. Now, well over half of Canada's population wears the Poppy on their lapel as a sign of respect for our fallen soldiers.



Mayor Rick Bonnette and Members of Council convey their respect and appreciation for the sacrifices made by our Canadian men and women, at home and overseas, who served their country in times of war

## A Remembrance Day Poem

*It is the veteran, not the preacher,  
who has given us freedom of religion.  
It is the veteran, not the reporter,  
who has given us the freedom of the press.  
It is the veteran, not the poet,  
who had given us the freedom of speech.  
It is the veteran, not the campus organizer,  
who has given us the freedom to assemble.  
It is the veteran, not the lawyer,  
who has given us the right to a fair trial.  
It is the veteran, not the politician,  
who has given us the right to vote.  
It is the veteran who salutes the flag.  
It is the veteran who serves under the flag.  
Eternal rest grant them O Lord,  
And let perpetual light shine upon them.*



ROCKWOOD WREATH - Members of the Legion placed wreaths at the Rockwood the Rockwood Cenotaph on November 3rd - Submitted Photo



On Remembrance Day, we pay tribute to the Canadians who serve today, and those who have served their country in battle and in peacekeeping operations around the world.



Ted Arnott, MPP  
Wellington • Halton Hills

*We shall never forget  
their sacrifice.*

## DOWNTOWN ACTON



*Remember all  
those that lost  
their lives*

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**Acton Legion - Branch 197  
Wright Ave, Acton**

Would like to ask all local  
Businesses & Residents to  
observe the 2 minute  
wave of silence  
at 11:00am EST.  
on  
November 11