

Remembrance Sunday/Armistice Centennial 2018: Mayor's address.

The First World War was a 'first' in more ways than one.

Conscription was imposed for the first time (apart from a few exemptions) on all single men between the ages of 18 and 41.

With so many men at war, thousands of women were recruited for the first time into work previously reserved for men, albeit at half the pay.

Pressure on the Parliamentary process resulted in moves to extend the vote to *all* men over the age of 21 (previously less than 60% had qualified), and for the first time to a limited cohort of women over the age of 30.

The industrial scale of the war was unprecedented, as was the extent of destruction of buildings, landscapes, the crushing demands on the economies of countries involved, damage to bodies, minds and the devastating loss of life. An estimated 40,000,000 deaths were attributed in one way or another to the effects of the war.

On Armistice Day itself around 10,000 casualties were incurred between signing the agreement at 5am and its coming into effect at 11am.

In the Second World War that followed the death toll doubled, aggravated by the increased targeting of civilians. After its end in 1945, the custom of observing a 2 minute silence on Armistice Day was merged into creating an act of Remembrance on the second Sunday in November.

Today, one hundred years on, Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday coincide.

We are gathered to remember, with sadness, the unfulfilled futures of so many – in particular young men – whose lives were put on the line.

We can also honour their sacrifice by rejecting the politics of fear and hate that accompany war, and by questioning the channelling of technology and valuable resources into the creation of ever more efficient means of slaughtering our fellow human beings.

Some special tributes to the fallen have been placed to mark the centennial, thanks to our Scouts and Primary School pupils, who have created these from hand-made poppies.

Also many of you will be aware that for the past 4 years, a poppy has been placed on a memorial at the Heritage Centre for each of our fallen parishioners, on the 100th anniversary of their death.

These have been individually made by Viv Styles and where possible, thanks to the painstaking research of Lt. Colonel Bailey, placed by someone with a connection to those who lost their lives.

Thank You, everyone.