



## THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

**Title:** Remembering WWI: Paper Poppies Project

**Suitable for:** Churches with WWI memorials Curriculum Links: Art & Design, History, Literacy, RE

### **Project Aims:**

- To engage students with the commemoration of the First World War centenary
- To help students understand how the First World War impacted upon their own locality
- To provide students with the opportunity to experience aspects of local history first hand
- To help students understand the role of the church in early 20th century communities
- To provide students with the opportunity to develop and apply a range of investigative, communication and creative skills.

### **Overview:**

During the period of 2014 to 2018 people all over the world are engaged in learning, events and activities to commemorate the centenary of WWI. This project provides students with the opportunity to learn how this world event impacted upon the lives of people from their own community.

**Lesson:** 1 (church based)

### **Lesson Aims:**

- To discover objects that commemorate WWI in the local community
- To understand why churches were so often chosen as locations for WWI memorials

### **Activities:**

Lead a class visit to your local historic church so that students can see the WWI memorial(s). This experience will introduce students to the names of real people from their own community who were involved in WWI - people who attended that church, walked down its aisles and sat in its pews 100 years ago. The visit will also provide the opportunity to engage students in discussion about the role the church played in community life in Britain at the time of WWI and why churches made suitable locations for the erection of local memorials after the war (see Teachers' Notes). Take photographs of the memorial(s) and make notes of the names and inscriptions on them to

refer to in the next lesson.

**Materials:**

- Camera(s)
- Paper and pens/pencils to record names and inscriptions on memorials

**Plenary:**

Discuss with the class how their visit to the church and seeing the WWI memorial(s) made them feel and why they think it is important for communities to remember local people who were involved in world events like WWI.

**Lesson:** 2 (school based)

**Lesson Aims:**

- To conduct research using different mediums and materials
- To make and share discoveries about local people who were involved in WWI
- To empathise with the lives and experiences of local people from the past

**Activities:**

As a whole class, look at the photographs taken and notes made during the visit to the church. Read out the names recorded on the war memorial(s) and engage students in a discussion about who they think those people were and what their lives were like 100 years ago. Students are now going to conduct research to find out facts about people named on the memorial(s). You may structure the research in whatever way best suits your students – working as individuals, in small groups or as a whole class. Assign/let the students choose the names to be investigated and begin (see Teachers' Notes). Print or make copies of the documents that the students find. You may wish to extend the research element of this project over more than one lesson.

**Materials & Resources:**

- Printed or projected copies of the photos and notes taken in Lesson 1
- Access to research websites and/or hard copies of relevant WWI documents
- Access to printer/photocopier or ability to save documents to be printed later

**Plenary**

Have the students show copies of the documents they found and share the information that the documents reveal. Discuss whether the information they discovered about the people named on the memorial was what they expected or if there were any surprises.

**Lesson:** 3 (school and church based)

**Lesson Aims:**

- To understand the significance of the poppy as a symbol of war remembrance
- To commemorate the role of local people in WWI through art.

**Activities:**

Discuss with students how and why the poppy was chosen as a symbol of war remembrance (see Teachers' Notes). Tell students that they are now going to make their own remembrance poppies out of copies of the documents they found during their research. Show the students the photographs of the example poppies (provided).

**Paper Poppy Instructions:**

- Choose one of the WWI documents available
- Lay the black flower and leaf tracers (templates provided) on top of the document and trace around them (try to get key words or pictures within the outlines you trace)
- Shade in the outlines you traced of the flower and leaf shapes with red and green crayons/coloured pencils – shade lightly so the writing can still be read
- Cut out the flower and leaf shapes
- Take a wooden skewers and colour it green or wrap it in green paper for your stem
- Tape your flower and leaf shapes to the green stem to complete the poppy
- When the individual flowers are completed the students should 'plant' them together in pots with polystyrene or oasis foam at the bottom to support the poppies.
- Make a return visit to the church to install the pots of poppies around the WWI memorial(s). You may wish to make the return visit to the church at a later date depending on the time you have available.

**Materials:**

- Printed copies of WWI documents sourced during Lesson 2
- Poppy flower and leaf tracers
- Green and red crayons/colouring pencils
- Wooden skewers
- Green paper (optional – for wrapping stems)
- Glue sticks (optional – for wrapping stems)
- Scissors
- Sellotape
- Plant pots
- Polystyrene or oasis foam

**Plenary:**

Discuss as a whole class what the students have learned through the project, their feelings about the people they researched and how they feel when they look at the paper poppy display that they have created and installed in the church.

**Extension Activities:**

- Make a WWI map of the community plotting the location of places significant to the locality's WWI history such as the addresses of the people commemorated on the WWI memorial (found on census and military records), the location of military barracks and recruitment centres, the location of local air fields, etc.
- Have students conduct research into the role of their own ancestors in WWI and create reports to share in class.
- Invite the whole school to make paper poppies to add to the original class display at the local church

## **Teachers' Notes:**

### **Lesson 1: 'Making a Church Visit' - Background Information**

In the early 20th century the majority of people in Great Britain would have attended church on a regular basis. The parish church was central to both rural and urban communities and would have been a place where friends and neighbours gathered together to worship and socialise together. The parish church (and associated church hall) was often a multi-purpose venue, being used for religious services and celebrations (Sunday mass, weddings, baptisms, funerals) as well as civic gatherings (community meetings, village fetes, a meeting place for special interest groups and clubs). The parish vicar would have been well known within the community and would have offered guidance and advice to parishioners both in church and at home.

When WWI broke out, parish churches often became hubs for activities that supported the war effort (fundraising events, clothing drives, charity concerts) and the local vicar and fellow parishioners provided support to people and families impacted upon by the war. In many parishes, especially small rural parishes, the absence of people from the community who had left to go and fight in the war would have been very noticeable and the death of a soldier from the parish would have been cause for sadness and mourning throughout the community. Many parish magazines written between 1914 and 1918 reflect the impact that WWI had on the lives and lifestyles of communities across Great Britain with articles by the vicars and other contributors recording the activities undertaken within the parish to support the war effort, the opinions of individuals on whether the war was justifiable or not and the role played by people from the parish on the front lines and battlefields of WWI.

After the war many parish churches installed rolls of honour and erected war memorials to honour the people from their communities who took part in the war – both those who died and those who survived. These were people who were known in the church and who were part of the church community – so the church therefore made an appropriate location to record their names and their wartime stories.

### **Lesson 2: 'The Stories Behind the Inscriptions' - Suggestions for Research**

Resources such as the 1911 census, military records and newspaper articles relating to the people named on your memorial(s) are the sorts of documents that will be suitable for this project.

Websites such as [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com) and [forces-war-records.co.uk](http://forces-war-records.co.uk), local council websites and local newspaper websites are good places to start your research. Such websites may require enrolment and/or the payment of a membership fee. Your school may already have a membership to these or similar sites. If they do not and you are not in a position to start a new

subscription/membership you may find that you are able to access these or similar sites for free at your local library or archives.

Your local library or archive service may be able to provide documents for this project. You may wish to contact them in advance of this lesson to allow time for them to look into their records and locate relevant documents for you or you may wish to incorporate a class visit to the local library or archive into this project.

The church may be able to provide you with parish records or parish magazine articles from WWI that contain references to the people you are researching.

Families who have lived in your community for several generations and who have ancestors named on the local memorial may be able to provide resources such as family letters and photographs. You may wish to arrange a visit from community members who have family links to the memorial(s).

You are advised to check to see if there are any copyright restrictions on the use of the documents sourced by your students.

### **Lesson 3: 'Paper Poppies' - Background Information**

There are several reasons why the poppy made an appropriate symbol of war remembrance. Amongst them are the fact that they grew so abundantly on the battlefields of France and Flanders during WWI, they grew year after year bringing with them a sense of life and hope, they were both fragile yet resilient, like the soldiers themselves, and their colouring brought to mind the blood of the soldiers spilled in battle.

The poem, 'In Flanders Fields', written in 1915 by Canadian doctor and soldier [Lieutenant](#)

[Colonel](#) John McCrae helped to popularise the poppy as a symbol of remembrance:

<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/poems/john-mccrae-in-flanders-fields.htm>

The first Remembrance Day was marked in Great Britain in 1919 and the poppy was adopted as a symbol of war remembrance by the Royal British Legion in 1921. They were made and sold to raise money for WWI soldiers and their families.

### **Lesson 3: 'Paper Poppies' - Preparation**

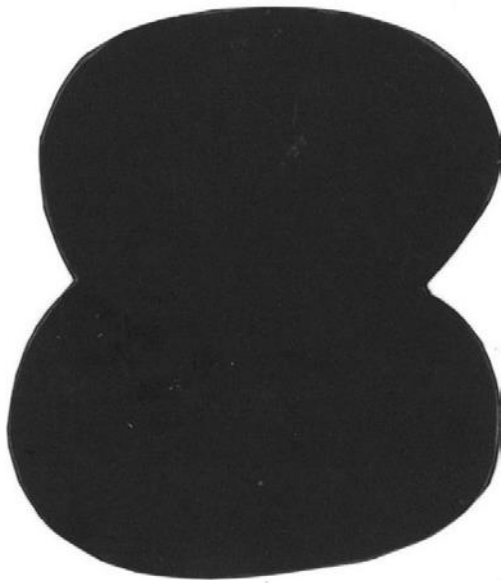
In advance of this lesson you should copy the WWI documents sourced during the research lesson(s) so that there is at least one document available per child. You should also copy and cut out the poppy flower and leaf tracers, again so there is one of each available per child.

If you wish to deliver this lesson within a church cared for by The Churches Conservation Trust, please contact : [learning@thecct.org.uk](mailto:learning@thecct.org.uk) prior to your visit to confirm church availability.

If you wish to deliver this lesson in a church not cared for by The Churches Conservation Trust, please contact the relevant parish or diocese in advance for permission



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Poppy  
Tracers:  
print and cut  
out these  
shapes for  
the students  
to trace  
around.

