



Lest we forget ...

REMEMBRANCE ASSEMBLY (1)

(Friday 9th November 2018)

(Children, Staff and Guests enter and sit down – “Nimrod” playing)

You are all very welcome, to this, the most special of Remembrance Services.

Please stand for the singing of the hymn, “I Vow To Thee My Country”.

(Sing the hymn – words on the screen)

Please be seated.

(Poppy display on the screen)

In a little over 48 hours’ time, it will be exactly 100 years since the guns fell silent on The Western Front, at the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month, in 1918, bringing to an end, The Great War, later to become known as World War I.

Our nation and the Commonwealth will recall that moment, as it has done down the years, via formal events this weekend, culminating in a solemn ceremony at The Cenotaph in London on Sunday morning. We are gathered here this morning to pay our respects to those who died or were wounded during The Great War, and to the men and women of our armed forces who, in conflicts from that day to this, have continued to pay the ultimate sacrifice.

Back in 2014, Barfield committed to ensuring that, as a school, we would commemorate The Great War throughout its centenary anniversary. To mark the moment, 100 years before, on 28th June 1914, when the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip set in motion a chain of events which led to the outbreak of a world war, an Assembly was presented by Barfield pupils who are now well into their Senior School careers. The oldest children in this Auditorium today were then in Year 2, and some of you in Reception were only a few months old.



Lest we forget ...

REMEMBRANCE ASSEMBLY (2)

Since that Assembly, we have talked and learned about many of the significant moments from the conflict, such as The Battles of Gallipoli, The Somme, Jutland and Passchendaele, in addition to hearing about the sinking of The Lusitania, and the significance of The Menin Gate, where, since 1928, on every evening at 8pm local time, The Last Post Ceremony has taken place, except for during World War II, when the occupying German forces forbade it. This ceremony has now taken place over 31 000 times.

Most of you from Year 3 upwards travelled to the Brookwood Cemetery when you were in Year 2, and on Monday this week, the current Year 2s visited the Farnham War Memorial and were part of a service at the one in Weybourne.

We remembered John Parr, who was the first British soldier to die in August 1914, and also George Ellison, who was the last, just an hour and a half before the end of hostilities, and how, in spite of their deaths being over 4 years apart, they are buried opposite one another in the Saint Symphorien Cemetery in Belgium.

Each year, Mr Hollands has created a poppy-based display to which both pupils and staff have contributed. In February this year, our annual Arts Week was entitled "1914 – 1918", and over those 5 days, you were involved in many varied activities which presented you with the opportunity to understand and to learn so much more about that time in general, without focusing solely on the military aspect.

The Great War and its horrors led many soldiers to express their thoughts via the medium of poetry. It was in 1915 that, amidst all the chaos and destruction of war, fragile, yet beautiful poppies bloomed, and this sight inspired Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae to write what is probably the most famous of war poems. It is called "In Flanders Fields", and Ms Lynch has found a musical arrangement of it, and The Chamber Choir is going to come up on stage and sing it for us now.

(Chamber Choir comes up on stage to sing "In Flanders Fields")



Lest we forget ...

REMEMBRANCE ASSEMBLY (3)

Thank you Chamber Choir, Ms Lynch and Mrs Cobb. Please sit down.

(Chamber Choir sits down)

At this Remembrance Service 4 years ago, I told the story of my great grandfather, Sergeant Major Tate of The Scots Guards. He was involved in the fighting from the very start, back in August 1914, and after The Battle of Mons that month, he was part of a retreat to the River Marne. The British forces then counter-attacked and forced the Germans back, and my great grandfather was subsequently awarded The Military Cross Medal for his bravery during this action. I have that medal here, along with the others which he was awarded.

(Show medals)

Not that long after, during further fighting, in the 1st Battle of Ypres, he was shot in the chest, and he would almost certainly have died, had it not been for a batch of letters, which he kept in the breast pocket of his battle dress.

The bullet deflected off the letters, missing his heart, and exited through the right-hand side of his body. I have the letters here, and you may just be able to make out where the bullet went.

(Show letters)

If you can't quite see, then I shall show them to you, along with the medals, as you go out at the end.

Having been shot though, my great grandfather lay wounded for 3 days, until he was taken prisoner by a German soldier. He was taken to Germany and from 14th November 1914 until 11th November 1918, he spent just under 4 years in a Prisoner Of War camp in Nuremberg, Germany, which is roughly the same length of time between my first telling this story and my repeating it again today.



Lest we forget ...

REMEMBRANCE ASSEMBLY (4)

Back in 2014, I told another story, relating to a single individual, and this one was about a person called Arthur Collins, who, shortly before the outbreak of The Great War in July 1914, had played a game of cricket in Aldershot. He was actually quite a good batsman, as, in 1899, at the age of 13, he took part in in a cricket House Match at Clifton College School, in which he scored 628 not out.

At the time I told the story in 2014, this was still the highest individual cricket score which had been made; however, in early January of 2016, it was finally broken by an Indian boy who scored 1009 not out. From the 22 players who took part in that Clifton College House Match, no fewer than 16 of them died during the Great War. Arthur Collins was one of those 16, and so, were his record to have been broken, it is somewhat appropriate that it happened during the period of the centenary anniversary.

By November 1918, the Allies had clearly gained the upper hand, and with the Germans falling back, and social unrest growing on the streets in Germany, the government in Berlin sought an end to the war. 3 days of talks led to the signing of The Armistice at 5.10am in a railway carriage in the forest of Compiègne, north of Paris, on 11th November 1918. In order that there should be time for the decision to be relayed to all those who were on the front line, it was decided that all fighting would cease at 11.00am that morning.

Although many received the news well before 11.00am, it is amazing to think that some commanders still instructed their men to engage the opposition, and seek to take land, land into which they could freely walk in a matter of hours' time.

Quite unbelievably, 863 Commonwealth soldiers died, either on 11th November 1918, or subsequently from wounds sustained on that morning, while a staggering total of over 10 000 were killed or injured on both sides on that day. Either to avoid paying war pensions, or out of shame at the fact that soldiers had died, even though a ceasefire had been agreed, the gravestone of every French soldier who was killed on 11th November 1918, bears the date 10th November 1918.



Lest we forget ...

REMEMBRANCE ASSEMBLY (5)

I have already mentioned George Ellison, who was the last British soldier to die, at 9.30am on the final morning. The last Frenchman to be killed was Augustan Trebuchon, who was shot at 10.50am, ironically, as he was delivering news of the Armistice, while George Price, a Canadian, was the final Commonwealth soldier to die, at 10.58am. The final Allied soldier to die in The Great War was Henry Gunther, an American, who died at 10.59am, just one minute before the end of hostilities.

Although the focus in this country tends to be on The Western Front, The Great War was a global conflict, and it had been described as “The War To End All Wars”, but sadly this was not the case. As The Armistice came into being with German soldiers still occupying foreign land, many of them could not accept that they had been truly defeated, and several Allied commanders felt that the war should have continued until the Germans had been beaten back to Berlin. The American General, John Pershing, said, “They will never believe they were beaten if we have a ceasefire. We need an unconditional surrender, or we shall have to do this all over again.”

The lack of an unconditional surrender, coupled with the harsh terms which were imposed on the German nation in the Treaty Of Versailles, sadly led to General Pershing’s words coming true, as, just 21 years later, the world was at war once again.

Never again, as a nation, shall we remember, and commemorate, The Great War, in this way. It was some 9 years ago that Harry Patch died. He was the last soldier to die who fought in The Great War, so we can no longer talk to those brave people, we can neither look them in the face, nor shake them by the hand, and say “Thank you”.

However, we can, and we must, remember the part they played in a conflict which so significantly shaped the world in which we now live, and we should always remain grateful to all servicemen and servicewomen, past and present, for what they have done, and continue to do, for us.



Lest we forget ...

REMEMBRANCE ASSEMBLY (6)

Through our Poppy Mufti Day last Friday and the purchasing of poppies this week, as a community, Barfield has raised money for two worthy charities. The majority of the money will go to The Royal British Legion; however, I have decided that some will go to The Commonwealth War Graves Commission. This institution looks after war graves in over 10 000 cemeteries around the world, so, in this way, a piece of land somewhere in the world will be forever linked with Barfield.

* * * * *

We shall now have our short period of remembrance.

Lucy Sproule will read the 1st part of The Exhortation, as it is known, the final line of which is – “We will remember them.”

After she has said this line, please all repeat, “We will remember them.”

Following this, Calvin Sucharov will play The Last Post, and there will then be a minute’s silence, during which time we can think of all those who have given their lives for this country.

Jamie MacDougall shall then read the 2nd part of The Exhortation and then Eren Aydin, Nathan Ellis and Joshua Jones will say some prayers.

After the prayers, I shall ask you to lead off in silence, having a look at the medals and the bullet-damaged letters should you wish to, and off to Lesson 4.

As you leave, “Highland Cathedral” will be playing. I have chosen this piece of music as it was written in 1982 by 2 German composers, but the prominence of the bagpipes, a musical instrument associated with Scotland, brings together nations which had been at war. It is often played at The Menin Gate Last Post Ceremony. Please now stand.



Lest we forget ...

REMEMBRANCE DAY ASSEMBLY (7)

THE EXHORTATION

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,

We will remember them.

Response : We will remember them.

The Last Post

1 MINUTE SILENCE

When you go home, tell them of us and say –

For your tomorrow, we gave our today.

PRAYERS

At this time of remembrance, we think of those who gave their lives serving our country in 2 World Wars.

We also remember those who have died in other wars and conflicts over the years.

We pray for those who have been injured and for the families of those serving today. Amen.

(Children and Staff exit – Mr Reid showing the children the medals and the bullet-damaged letters – “Highland Cathedral” playing)