

**Dedication of the World War 1 Remembrance bench**  
**Willersey, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

We stand here today on our village green in front of the newly installed bench which commemorates the centenary of the end of World War 1 and the people from this community who sadly lost their lives in that conflict. This bench we dedicate to *their* memory. It is to be valued and enjoyed by all of us.

I would like to read some lines of a hymn that was sung at the dedication of our *Memorial Cross on April 13<sup>th</sup> 1920*. The hymn is called

*'In Remembrance of the Fallen'*

As we think of the brave who have ended their warfare,  
Whose faces we see not, whose labour is done,  
Across our thanksgiving there passes a shadow,  
Transfigured with glory, as clouds by the sun.

The soldier returning is welcom'd with honour,  
The love smiles upon him that bade him depart,  
But thoughts of remembrance, too deep to be utter'd,  
For those who return not are hid in our heart.

Together they join'd in the battle's encounter,  
A pathway for Freedom together they cleft,  
Till came the dread summons that put them asunder,  
For one must be taken and one must be left.

O Lord God of mercy, to Thee we commend them,  
Who laid down their lives for the land of their love;  
In death's quiet resting-place grant them refreshing,  
And crown them with life in Thy Kingdom above.

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So as you sit here and enjoy a few moments rest and reflection, think of those from Willersey and our surrounding towns and villages who lost their lives so that we can be here today to watch the clouds go by.

The poppies depicted here on the bench are familiar to all of us as a symbol of military personnel who died in war. They were first adopted by the American Legion to commemorate American soldiers killed between 1914 and 1918, and were then adopted by military veterans' groups over all parts of the British Empire. Today, we use them to depict the lives of *all* servicemen and women killed in conflict. This is the original poem, which led to the remembrance poppy becoming one of the world's most recognized memorial flowers:

### 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 bravely 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.

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The permanence of this bench represents our everlasting gratitude. The view from it brings to mind the land they loved and left for us. Rest here and reflect.