



The Story of the Poppy

THE 101 YEAR ANNIVERSARY



Our story begins and ends with a flower.

This beautiful flower is known as a King Protea. It is one of the oldest flowering plants on the planet: the species dating back approximately 300 million years.

Do you know what country the King Protea is a national flower of?



It is the national flower of South Africa and that is where our story begins.



In South Africa, British and Dutch troops fought in the Boer War.

This was the first war where Canadian soldiers traveled across the ocean to fight in another country.



This is where we meet John McCrae. He was born in Guelph, Ontario in 1872.

From a young age John had an enthusiasm for the military. The McCrae family had a long history of being brave and noble soldiers.

John loved learning. He was also very artistic and he liked to draw and write poetry. When he grew up, John studied

hard to become a doctor.



John loved adventure, so when the South African war broke out, John wanted to go. He felt a strong call of duty to serve his country.

In 1899, he sailed to South Africa to fight. When he returned home a year later, he studied to become a doctor.

Many years went by and John became an excellent teacher and accomplished surgeon. His enthusiasm and sense of caring for his patients and students earned him a high degree of respect.

He was a man of high principles and strong spiritual values. He was described as warm and sensitive, with extraordinary compassion for both people and animals.



On August 4, 1914 when Britain declared war on Germany, 45,000 Canadians soon joined the fight.

John McCrae was one of them, appointed a medical officer with the First Brigade of the Canadian Field Artillery.

He took with him his horse, Bonfire.

Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae and his dog, Bonneau. Photo courtesy of Guelph Museums.



John also had a dog named Bonneau. Bonneau would come with John on his hospital rounds when John was checking on his patients.

Interesting facts:

Men and women were not the only ones to serve in the war. Millions of animals such as horses, mules, dogs, pigeons and even glow worms helped out during these times. They moved troops and supplies, detected poisonous gas, caught rats, carried messages and offered companionship to soldiers.

But what the heck did glow worms do?



They were caught and placed in glass jars to give dim light so that men in the trenches could read letters, maps and reports in the dark.



On the morning before he wrote his famous poem, one of John's closest friends, Lieutenant Alexis Helmer, was killed. His death deeply saddened McCrea and inspired him to write the poem "In Flanders Fields."



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZDme90k5gY>

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

John McCrae

'Punch'
Dec 8 1915

Bonfire leads John McCrae's funeral procession.



John McCrae died on a cold January day in 1918. His friends and colleagues watched with deep sadness as Bonfire lead the burial procession.



Through the sadness and grief, a brave woman named Madame Anna Guerin was inspired by John McCrea's poem, In Flanders Fields, and had an idea.



Her idea come to be known as Poppy Day. On a special day, Remembrance Day, people could wear a cloth poppy as a symbol to honour and remember all the men and women who died in the war.

She asked associations to adopt and distribute the poppies on Remembrance Day as a way to raise money for widows and orphans of war torn France.

Anna campaigned tirelessly for her Poppy Day idea.



On July 4th, 1921, Madame Guerin met with the Great War Veterans Association in Port Arthur.

The Great War Veterans Association, now known as the Canadian Veterans Association, agreed to adopt the wearing of the poppy emblem.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3riQYKMenUA>

The poppy campaign became a huge success as millions of people pinned the bright red flower over their hearts to show their solidarity with the men and women who had made such great sacrifices.



The Poppy Trademark



Since June 30, 1948, the Royal Canadian Legion has been entrusted by the people of Canada to uphold and maintain the Poppy as a symbol that reminds us to never forget the sacrifices Veterans made to protect our freedom.

The Legion safeguards the Poppy trademark



Today, the Royal Canadian Legion continues its Poppy Campaign from the last Friday in October until November 11th, Remembrance Day. It is one of the Royal Canadian Legion's most important programs. The money raised provides financial assistance to veterans and their families, as well as funding for medical equipment, medical research, home services, long term care facilities and much more.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4W3IsTCSDo>

on  And 100 years later the poppy is the official symbol for the Canadian Veterans

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So our story starts and ends with a flower.

This remarkably delicate flower is a symbol of hope and a reminder to never forget those who gave their lives for our freedoms.

Let's take a moment to reflect on the freedoms and peace in our lives, and to remember the men and women who served and sacrificed for all we have today.

"They shall grow not 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." -- Laurence Binyon



Song - No Need to Say Goodby

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Images used

Figure 1. McCrae, at about age four



Note. From Woodbury, R. (n.d.). *The life of a poet surgeon*. CBCNews.
<https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform/the-life-of-a-poet-surgeon>. Copyright Guelph Museums.

Figure 2. Second Lieutenant John McCrae outside Royal Military College, Kingston, Ontario, 1893



Note. From Dietrich, B. (1996). Colonel John McCrae: From Guelph, Ontario to Flanders Fields. *Canadian Military History*, 5(2).
<https://scholars.wlu.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1218&context=cmh>
Copyright McCrae House, Guelph Museums.

Figure 3. McCrae riding his horse, Bonfire



Note. From Woodbury, R. (n.d.). *The life of a poet surgeon*. CBCNews.
<https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform/the-life-of-a-poet-surgeon>. Copyright Guelph Museums.

Figure 4 Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae and his dog Bonneau



Note. From Library and Archives Canada. (2015, March 17). *Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae and his dog Bonneau*. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lac-bac/16740826837/in/photostream/>. Copyright Library and Archives Canada.

Figure 5 *Fire flies in jars*



Note. From [Fire flies in jars]. (n.d.). [Photograph]. <https://hscweb3.hsc.usf.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Fireflies-in-jar-600x400-1.jpg>

Figure 6 *John McCrae, circa 1914*



Note. From Granfield, L. (2016, March 15). *John McCrae*. The Canadian Encyclopedia. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/lt-col-john-mccrae>.

Figure 7 *In Flanders Fields Manuscript*



Note. From Granfield, L. (2016, March 15). *John McCrae*. The Canadian Encyclopedia. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/lt-col-john-mccrae>. Copyright Library and Archives Canada.

Figure 8 *Bonfire leads John McCrae's funeral procession*



Note. From Granfield, L. (2016, March 15). *John McCrae*. The Canadian Encyclopedia. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/lt-col-john-mccrae>. Copyright Guelph Museums, McCrae House.

Figure 9 *Madame Guérin*



Note. From Johnson, H.A. (n.d.). *Home*. Madame Guérin: Who put the poppy on your lapel? Madame Anna A. Guerin did. <https://poppyladymadameguerin.wordpress.com/>

Figure 10 A 1921 *Madame Guérin* French-made poppy distributed on the streets of Canada, in 1921



Note. From Johnson, H.A. (n.d.). *The empire: Dominion Of Canada: Poppy*. Madame Guérin: Who put the poppy on your lapel? Madame Anna A. Guerin did. <https://poppyladymadameguerin.wordpress.com/chapter-7a-the-empire-dominion-of-canada-poppy/>. Copyright The Museum of Vancouver.

Figure 11 *Poppy Lady Madame Guérin*



Note. From Johnson, H.A. (n.d.). *The empire: Dominion Of Canada: Poppy*. Madame Guerin: Who put the poppy on your lapel? Madame Anna A. Guerin did. <https://poppyladymadameguerin.wordpress.com/chapter-7a-the-empire-dominion-of-canada-poppy/>. Copyright The Canadian Legion.

Figure 12 Legion Poppy Image, With Words



Note. From The Royal Canadian Legion. (n.d.). *Poppy 100 creative assets*.
<https://www.legion.ca/remembrance/poppy-100-anniversary/poppy-100-creative-assets>

Figure 13 Legion Poppy Image, No Words



Note. From Lewis, K. (2020, November 5). Haldimand Legions gearing up for a very different Remembrance Day. *The Haldimand Press*. <https://haldimandpress.com/haldimand-legions-gearing-up-for-a-very-different-remembrance-day/>

Figure 14 Legion 100 Years of the Poppy Banner



Note. From The Royal Canadian Legion. (n.d.). *Poppy 100 creative assets*.
<https://www.legion.ca/remembrance/poppy-100-anniversary/poppy-100-creative-assets>

Figure 15 Act of Remembrance



Note. From The Royal Canadian Legion. (n.d.). *2021 marks the 100th anniversary of the Remembrance Poppy in Canada*. <https://www.legion.ca/remembrance/poppy-100-anniversary>

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