



JUNE UPDATE FROM THE TRUSTEES OF THE LEIGH AND BRANSFORD MEMORIAL HALL

Remembering VE Day and Make Over May

On Thursday 8 May, the country marked the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day. Over four consecutive days, starting on the Bank Holiday Monday, 5 May, all over the country people organised street parties, hung out the red, white and blue bunting, dressed up in 1940's attire, listened to concerts, took part in or watched parades and witnessed fly pasts.

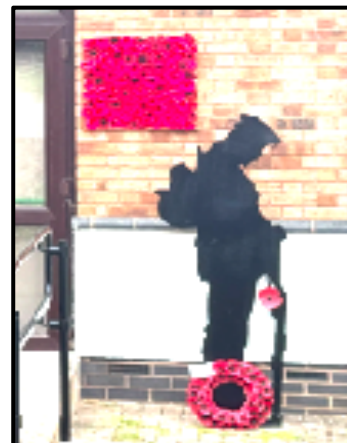
Schools joined in by organising history days and creative displays about the second world war, while some children may have even got to taste 'rationed food' like corned beef sandwiches or played traditional games like tin-can-alley or learned contemporary songs.

But amidst all the celebrations and holiday atmosphere, there was, and is, a much more serious and reflective side to marking the end of the second world war in Europe. It's a time to remember and to honour the sacrifice made by that generation (and previous generations) who fought to protect our freedoms, our way of life, our traditions and our democracy.

Our own Memorial Hall together with Stanley (our standing soldier) is a lasting tribute to all those brave men and women in our parish who served in both world wars and subsequent conflicts. It was financed mostly by public donation for the future benefit of our wider community *"in the interests of social welfare, to improve the conditions of life . . . without distinction of political, religious or other opinions by the provision of facilities for recreation and other leisure-time occupation."*

And so it was, mindful of the sacrifices made by parishioners down the years, that in November 2024 Leigh and Bransford WI members started to knit and crochet poppies. Their mission was to create a lasting and ever-expanding tribute (as more poppies are made) to be displayed outside the Hall during the months of May and November as a mark of gratitude, respect and remembrance.

So, take another look at the banner photograph at the top of the page. The keen-eyed among you will already have spotted that it's not our usual photo – for just to the left of Stanley (our standing soldier) is their plaque of hand-made poppies. Look even more carefully and you'll see one attached to Stanley's rifle.



This is a thoughtful and important piece of work. Most of the people you'll have seen on the TV in the archive films celebrating that first VE Day in 1945 will, sadly, no longer be alive. And in our relatively small community of about 2000 souls, there are now probably fewer than 200 who can remember that first VE Day. And with each passing year that number will sadly get smaller still. In a world of information overload – where it's often hard to remember what happened last year, never mind 80 years ago – it now becomes our responsibility to keep alive the memory of all those who so selflessly fought – and still fight – to keep us safe and preserve our freedoms.

The statue of Stanley is one such way we do this. The WI Poppy Plaque will now be another. And in May (as you'll also see in the banner photograph) work started to excavate and then completely redesign the Memorial Planters either

side of the old porch. More about that next month!

Jon Gamble, Chair of Trustees