

Honouring our borough's heroes 100 years on



This August will mark the centenary of the beginning of the First World War and the borough will be remembering in a number of ways

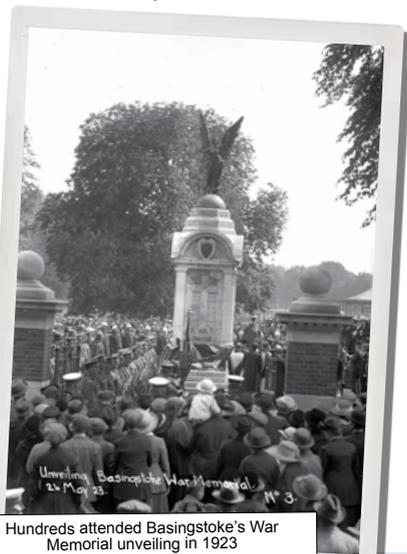
Over the next four years, there will be many opportunities for people and communities to come together and commemorate those who lived, fought and died in what became known as the Great War, acknowledged as a turning point in world history. The war claimed the lives of millions of people across the globe and has shaped the society we live in today.



The Mayor of Basingstoke and Deane Cllr Dan Putty said: "This is a very important centenary to remember, as the war changed the course of history and affected every household, whether here in the borough or far away. These commemorative events aim to bring the stories of the First World War closer to today's generations, and to ensure that we don't forget the sacrifices made."

Poppy plan

In tribute to those who lost their lives thousands of bright red poppies will be in bloom in Basingstoke's War Memorial Park this summer. The ground has been prepared to plant the seeds to ensure that there will be swathes of this flower of remembrance blooming in time for the anniversary events.



Hundreds attended Basingstoke's War Memorial unweiling in 1923

Commemorative services

In August, a special commemorative service will be held at St Michael's Church. The council will also be holding special Armed Forces Day (Saturday 28 June) and Remembrance Day (Sunday 9 November) ceremonies this year.

Remembrance concert

Basingstoke Festival of Choirs is planning a special concert in July 2014 to mark the centenary and the council will be approaching other arts groups and organisations to help publicise their events.

Community events

Voluntary and community groups across the borough are also being encouraged to get involved. The Heritage Lottery Fund can provide help to fund initiatives which explore, conserve and share the heritage of the First World War.

Heroes honoured

The council will be laying down commemorative paving stones to remember our local First World War Victoria Cross recipients. Basingstoke's heroes include James Welch from Stratfield Saye, who captured four German soldiers while armed only with an empty revolver and Captain John Liddell, a reconnaissance pilot with the Royal Flying Corps, who was mortally wounded by enemy fire while flying a mission in 1915 but succeeded in saving the life of his observer by landing his plane safely behind British lines.

James and John's were two of 628 Victoria Crosses awarded during the First World War and all of them will be commemorated as part of this national project organised by the Department for Communities and Local Government. All VC recipients will also be honoured in the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

The lost generation

When the First World War broke out, five members of Mick Smith's family signed up to fight – and none of these young men came back.

A century on, all five names are engraved on Basingstoke's War Memorial and Mick, a retired warehouseman from Knight Street, plans to remember his ancestors with his grandchildren Molly, William and George – the youngest named after Mick's grandfather George Smith, a private in the Coldstream Guards who died in France just weeks before the war ended in 1918.

Mick's other grandfather, Sydney Phillips, was killed in France just the month before. Also killed was his great uncle who fought and died in the Dardenelles in 1915, and his grandmother's two cousins, brothers William and George Tigwell, who died together in Gallipoli on the same day in January 1916.

As a result, Mick, who was born in 1942, was brought up in a family where a whole generation of men were missing – and the women had to pick up the pieces. To mark the centenary this year, he wants to play his part in making sure that their sacrifice is not forgotten by future generations.

"Although these family members died before I was born, I was brought up hearing their stories, and their loss affected my family who went through very hard times afterwards. We must make sure that they and others are remembered now, especially as all the veterans have now gone."

Later this year, the Mayor of Basingstoke and Deane will be holding a reception for descendants of local men killed in the First World War.

For more information, including a list of those named on the war memorials in the borough, visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/go/WW1.

Descendants of those listed on war memorials should email WWI100@basingstoke.gov.uk or call 01256 844844.



Patients play croquet in grounds of West Ham Red Cross Hospital.



Market Square in 1915.



Guard of honour at unveiling of War Memorial, 1923.



Women landworkers in Basingstoke with tomato harvest.



Landgirls' football team, 1915.