

13th July 2018

Roger Clarke helps the Parish Council honour The Fallen of Trimley St. Martin

Part 2



Papaver Somniferum

Throughout 2018 various communities in the towns and villages of the U.K. are working to remember those who died in what H.G. Wells called, "The War that will end War". Trimley St. Martin is no exception and as you walk or travel around the village you may see small tubs of poppies outside nearly all of the communal meeting points. If you examine them carefully you will observe each tub has an accompanying plaque. Each records the names and some details of individual St. Martin's men who died in the course of the First World War. All of the poppies and the plaques have been created and placed there on behalf of the St Martin's Parish Council. One particular Councillor took responsibility for the practicalities of this operation, Roger Clarke.

I was interested to know more about these frail, fleeting memorials and Roger agreed to meet me at Goslings Café to discuss how they came to into being. The café was full of quietly talking people and the Strawberry fields nearby were occupied by people calmly picking fruit. I couldn't help but view this scene as a sharp contrast to that experienced by the troops in France exactly a century ago. Then, the weather in France during June and July, mirrored the fine hot days we have enjoyed this year. By July 12th, the Western Front was reported in "The Times" as having, "relapsed into the conditions of stationary warfare". However, the weather had broken on 9th July and subsequently the Battle Front was swept by high gales and severe thunderstorms, creating mud and water filled craters, which were viewed by Strategists as being helpful to the British troops. In the same edition it was reported that there had been no fewer than seventy-four bombing raids on Germany by the Royal Air Force. For the men in France, the War still had four long months to run before Armistice Day.

We sat in the blistering heat, soberly drinking tea and coffee as we turned our attention to the simple yet effective Poppy project, which commemorates those who died in the First World War. Roger has lived in St. Martin's nearly all his life arriving in 1958 at the age of three, when his family first moved into 54 Grimston Lane. He appears to be an intensely grounded man with a strong respect for our village; it became clear he wants to highlight and strengthen its sense of community. He explained how the Parish Council had discussed the one hundred years commemoration, helped by Barbara Shout, compiler of "In Memory of the Trimley Villages Fallen", and an ideal informant. After reflecting upon how the dead might be honoured, it was agreed the goal should be

to grow and plant poppies as visual reminders. We are all familiar with Poppies, which became associated with the First World War and Remembrance Day, partly because of the popularity of the famous poem by Canadian doctor, Lt Col John McCrae entitled, "In Flanders Field". They are used as symbols of remembrance and hope, not representatives of death or blood.

The poppies Roger has nurtured are not the traditional agricultural variety, Papaver rhoeas, we associate with "Poppy Day". But this is irrelevant: the delicate beauty of the different varieties in the displays, now coming into flower, are pleasing to the eye. This project has taken time to come to fruition as the poppies are only just reaching their maturity this month and Roger finished placing them throughout our village at the start of this week. However, in a kind act of generosity, he said he would provide one more tub. You may see it on the Village Recorders' Stall at the Carnival on Saturday 14th July.

Before he left, I asked Roger what his specific motivation was for this project and waited as he carefully contemplated how best to explain his reasons.

"We are a community and it is important how we define ourselves." Roger finally said, "The people who died were part of our village and they deserve to be remembered."

If you choose to walk around the village to view these testaments to long departed men, you may perhaps stop, read and reflect on their young lives. As I photographed the gentle displays of poppies, I imagined not only those who lost their lives but also the incalculable sorrow and loss of the mothers, sisters, daughters, wives and sweetheart of these men.

Sometimes we have to remember.

If you are interested in finding out more about role of the British Troops in the First World War,

<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk>

is an excellent site to examine.

If you are interested in viewing the poppies planted on behalf of the Parish Council then follow the short trail around the Village. Commemorative poppies are located outside:

Goslings Farm Shop; Seamark Nunn; The Methodist Church; The Hand in Hand; Trimley Sports and Social Club; The Memorial Hall; Trimley Bowls Club; The Sausage Shop; Reeve Lodge; Trimley Post Office; Trimley St. Martin School.



"Never such innocence,
Never before or since,
As changed itself to past
Without a word – the men
Leaving the gardens tidy..."

"MCMXIV" by Philip Larkin