



The laying of wreaths is an integral part of many Remembrance services and highlights the functional and commemorative roles of war memorials. The laying of wreaths allows individuals and organisations to pay their respects and lay a tribute to individuals or groups. As the laying of wreaths are personal tributes, often made in a public setting or on a public memorial, those responsible for the memorial are at times challenged with the role of managing the wreaths without causing distress or offence.

This helpsheet aims to provide guidance on the two biggest issues the Trust is contacted about regarding wreaths: when to remove wreaths from memorials following Remembrance services and how to secure wreaths on or around a memorial.

When to remove wreaths

As with many other practices involving war memorials, there are no rules which state when wreaths should be removed from a memorial. Therefore, this is something which needs to be decided by the owner or custodian of the memorial following consultation with the local community. The Trust recommends that a policy is put in place by the custodian which details when the wreaths will be removed so that everyone is aware of when this will take place, and to ensure consistency in the future.

Some people may be upset by wreaths being removed what they consider prematurely, whereas others may be concerned that wreaths have been left for too long. If wreaths are left in place for a long time they can begin to deteriorate which can lead to the memorial appearing as though it is not looked after and this can cause distress. Furthermore, wreaths which are left directly on the stone for prolonged periods, particularly in wet weather, can cause staining on the stone from either the wreaths themselves or from any metal ties in them, which can be difficult to remove.

The Trust recommends that the person or organisation that has responsibility for removing the wreaths from the memorial undertakes consultation with the local community and any other interested parties, such as veterans' organisations, to agree an appropriate timeframe to remove wreaths. Once this has been agreed it should be publicised in a suitable public place such as the council's website, a village notice board or on the order of service for the ceremony.

Wreath holders

In some cases it may be necessary or desirable to have a more secure form of displaying wreaths. There may be a number of reasons for this, such as that they blow off the memorial in windy weather, but alternative means of fixing can also remove the possibility of the wreaths staining the memorial as outlined above.

The particular form wreath holders take will vary depending on the materials, size and design of the memorial. However, it is best to try and have non-invasive means of securing wreaths.

Some of the best examples involve a freestanding frame (perhaps made from wood) which can be placed either in front of the memorial, or frames can be placed around the memorial if there are a large number of wreaths. The wreaths can then be placed on/fixed to the wooden frame. This has the benefit of not physically impacting on the memorial and can be removed with the wreaths. This will mean the memorial is not visually affected the rest of the year with empty hooks or other fixings. It is also an affordable option and can be easily constructed and dismantled, but is still using a quality material which in general (depending on the design/materials/size of the memorial) will be sympathetic to the memorial.

If the wreaths need to be secured to the memorial itself then there are some things to bear in mind:

- Wire should not be used to fix wreaths as it can cause staining on the memorial. An alternative would be to use rope or a natural material.
- Any metal fixings should be non-ferrous to avoid damage caused by rust staining.
- Any fixings to the memorial should be made into the mortar and not the masonry.
- Any alterations or additions to a listed memorial are likely to require Listed Building Consent. You should contact the Conservation Officer at the local planning authority to discuss this.

Please note that this helpsheet is intended to offer informal advice and is a distillation of experience. The information contained in this helpsheet is not exhaustive and other sources of information are available.