

News release

#StayHomeSaveLives VE Day commemorations



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Status: Immediate release

Starts

On 8th May 2020 the nation will mark the 75th Anniversary of VE Day. Many people will have been planning events and activities which cannot take place due to COVID-19. This may include visits to one of the 100,000 war memorials across the UK, at least 40% of which have a connection with World War II.

War Memorials Trust believes that such visits should wait whilst we all respect the guidance to stay home and protect lives during this national emergency. It is not disrespectful to cancel services and events. Acts of remembrance at home are as significant as those at our war memorials, it is about remembering. If you visit a war memorial there is a risk of gatherings forming and the virus being passed on. We encourage everyone to pay their respects, and mark VE Day, from home.

Those who marked the end of the war in Europe in May 1945 did so having come through a period of great sacrifice. Many made the ultimate one in giving their life but everyone was affected through their military or community service. Those on the Home Front made changes to their lives to help the wider effort to win a war. Today we are making our own sacrifices to overcome a virus that threatens us. We believe those commemorated on, or who marked their losses through, our World War II war memorials would recognise our desire to keep each other safe and remember at home.

If any further support for this approach is needed we can consider how many of those commemorated on our memorials are there due to the Influenza epidemic of 1918-19. It caught many whilst demobilising alongside others whose service went on beyond the Armistice. Those who went through the Great War and that subsequent pandemic would surely understand our desire today to protect each other.

To pay your respects at home is as simple as taking a few minutes on the 8th May to remember VE Day. You might want to do more. This could include visiting www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk and checking if your local war memorials have been added. This website is seeking to create a greater understanding of the condition of war memorials across the country and records can be added with basic information which can be improved at a later date. If you want to engage young people with the commemorations then see if www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org has any resources which will help. Alternatively join in with some of the national activities such as the VE Day toast at 3pm or make bunting to display in the window of your home, see www.veday75.org for more information.

War Memorials Trust's Director, Frances Moreton said, "War memorials are important sites for community remembrance. However, this VE Day we believe that commemorations should take place at home with visits to pay our respects coming later when current restrictions have been lifted. There is a risk that in visiting our war memorials the virus could be spread and cause further loss of life. If our war memorials tell us anything it is that death in significant numbers impacts the whole community and is something we should all be doing our best to avoid. As such we encourage people to remember at home, protecting each other today whilst paying our respects to those of yesterday."

War Memorials Trust continues to offer support to those concerned about the condition of our war memorials or who have war memorial questions during the COVID-19 crisis.

Ends

Contact

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Notes to editors

1. War Memorials Trust is an independent registered charity. Established in 1997 due to concerns about neglect and vandalism it works to protect and conserve war memorials. It provides advice, information and administers grants schemes that assist the repair and conservation of war memorials across the UK. As a charity the Trust relies on voluntary contributions to undertake its work. Supporters include annual and life members, donors, charitable trusts and corporate contributors.
2. War Memorials Online, www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk, is seeking to create a greater understanding of the condition of war memorials across the UK. It is asking the public to share information, photographs and their local knowledge to gather data on the estimated 100,000 war memorials. At present it is believed 1 in 20 war memorials in the UK may need some work.
3. War Memorials Trust provides grants that can assist repair and conservation of war memorials. Further information can be found at www.warmemorials.org/apply.
4. War Memorials Trust provides a free advisory service to anyone with a war memorial enquiry. Specialist Conservation Officers are available on 020 7233 7356 / 0300 123 0764 or conservation@warmemorials.org or via www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk.