

Number 78
Autumn 2018

ISSN 1350-3006

peace matters

MAGAZINE OF THE PEACE PLEDGE UNION



100 years on: The things we forget to remember

Also in this issue:

Good news: St John Ambulance accepts white poppies

Girlguiding UK challenged over army partnership

An inspiring example of nonviolent resistance

Sign the Peace Pledge and build a culture of nonviolence

**Join online at www.ppu.org.uk or fill
in the form below.**

I/we would like to sign the peace pledge (see wording oppo-
site) and join the Peace Pledge Union.

Name _____

Address _____

Email address _____

*Annual subscription: £21, or £10 if you are on a low income,
or £28 for two at the same address. Or you can subscribe to
Peace Matters without joining the PPU for £6.*

Either: I/we enclose a cheque for £_____

Or: debit my/our card for £_____

Card type _____

Card number _ _ _ _ _

Expiry date _____ Security number _ _ _

To The Manager: Bank _____

Address _____

Your account number _____

Please pay on / /2018 and on the same day each
MONTH / YEAR (delete as appropriate)

To: Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place,
Birmingham B1 2HB

60-83-01 Peace Pledge Union Main Account no 20386940
the sum of £ _____ amount in

words _____

Signature _____ Date _____

**“War is a crime against
humanity. I renounce
war, and am therefore
determined not to
support any kind of
war. I am also
determined to work for
the removal of all
causes of war.”**

ISSN 1350 – 3006

Peace Pledge Union

Peaceworks

1 Peace Passage, London N7 0BT

Phone: 020 7424 9444

Email mail@ppu.org.uk

Website: www.ppu.org.uk

Peace Matters is published by the Peace
Pledge Union. Material published in
Peace Matters does not necessarily
reflect PPU policy.

Editor: Symon Hill, with help from Sarah
Robinson

Typeset and design: PPU

Printing: Lithosphere

The Peace Pledge Union is the oldest
secular pacifist organisation in Britain.
Through War Resisters' International it
links with similar groups around the
world. It is one of the original sponsors
of the Campaign Against Arms Trade, a
member of Liberty and a co-operating
organisation of Landmine Action.

**For information, visit
www.ppu.org.uk
or call 020 7424 9444.**

Remembering or forgetting?

Symon Hill, Editor

I recently took a call from a journalist who asked me if the PPU had a view on students at Cambridge University voting to “ban poppies”.

It was difficult to express a view on this incident - because it never happened. In reality, Cambridge students had voted down a motion proposing a highly pro-war approach to Remembrance Day. Other students sought to amend it to remember “all people affected by war”. Some of those students have since received death threats.

It’s another reminder of how far some people will go to attack anyone who deviates from the standard militarist line. Since I appeared on ITV’s Good Morning Britain to discuss the Cambridge controversy, the PPU has received a string of messages accusing us of supporting Nazis - because we want to remember all victims of war of all nationalities. Sadly, some people are offended by the idea of compassion reaching further than a national border.

For some, Remembrance Day is mostly about



forgetting: forgetting civilians, forgetting people who are not British, forgetting the horrific realities of war that they cover over with talk of heroism and honour.

There has been some very selective remembrance around the centenary of World War One. Conscientious objectors (see front cover), mutineers, anti-war suffragists and other peace activists are rarely mentioned.

On pages 8-9 you can read about some centenar-ies that are unlikely to be mentioned much in the coming months. Also, Hanifa Ali and Zaynah Akhtar question the way war is taught in schools (page 6). We reprint an article from 50 years ago by John Hyatt describing

nonviolent resistance in Czechoslovakia (12-13)

We have some recent news on pages 4-5. Simone Ramacci tells us how he persuaded St John Ambulance to change their poppy policy (7) while Pippa Gardner urges us to challenge Girlguiding UK’s partnership with the army (10-11). You can also read some moving poetry by PPU supporters (14-15).

We wear white poppies not because we oppose remembrance but because we believe in it: in remembering all victims of war and recognising its dreadful realities.

When we fail to learn from the past, we are condemned to repeat it.

Pacifist walkers trek 150 miles

Two Peace Pledge Union members from Kent have completed a 150-mile walk to promote peace.

Richard Barnard and Holly Adams raised funds for the PPU and other peace organisations during their eight-day pilgrimage from Canterbury to the Greenbelt festival in Northamptonshire in August.

Holly and Richard are both members of Kent Christian Peace Activists. Other members of the group joined them for stages of their walk.

It is a relatively new group and has so far



campaigned against Armed Forces Day, arms exports and domestic violence, while promoting nonviolent conflict resolution and policies to tackle climate change.

The Peace Pledge Union thanked them not

only for the funds raised but also for their promotion of nonviolence, through their blog and the conversations they had as they walked. After their journey, the pilgrims wrote that they were "thankful beyond measure of the kindness and hospitality of friends and strangers".

Richard and Holly said they were encouraged by the slogan "pacifist, not passive", often used by the PPU.

"Being against violence is not a matter of quietly disapproving of the violent systems that go on around us," explained Holly. "It requires individuals and communities to be courageously active. We must say audibly, consistently and patiently – not in my name, I will not be complicit."

Hundreds join in white poppy art project

Hundreds of people have produced textile poppies - many of them knitted - as part of an art project called 'Collateral Damage'. Each textile poppy remembers a particular casualty of war, highlighting the reality of suffering behind the dismissive euphemism often used for civilian victims of war.

The new project complements the PPU's distribution of white poppies every year. While the PPU is backing the project, it is an independent scheme supported by a range of organisations.

A large installation of the handmade poppies will be on display in Friends House, London, from 1 November to 21 December 2018.

MoD dodges manslaughter charge

The army leadership and the Ministry of "Defence" have been accused of dodging the law over the deaths of three reservists on a training exercise in the Brecon Beacons.

Clearing two SAS soldiers of negligence, a judge made clear that the failings were higher up in the chain of command - but no senior soldiers will face prosecution and the Ministry of "Defence" (MoD) is legally exempt from being charged with corporate manslaughter.

The Peace Pledge Union said it was the latest example of the MoD and armed forces being placed above the law.

Three reservists - Craig Roberts, Edward Maher and James Dunsby - died during the training exercise in 2013.

A court-martial in Bulford, Wiltshire, cleared two SAS soldiers - a junior officer and a warrant officer, both of whom were anonymous - of negligence in relation to the deaths. He said that they had received insufficient training and the decisions had been made by more senior officers.

Judge Jeff Blackett

told the court-martial that "the deaths occurred because of the systemic failures within Joint Forces Command". He said the defendants lacked "even the most basic of training in relation to heat illness and risk assessment".

The defendants said they had tried to change the training exercise but had been overruled.

Bryher Dunsby - James Dunsby's widow - described the situation as "beyond unacceptable".

able".

The victims' relatives and a growing number of MPs are among those calling for a change in the law so the MoD can be prosecuted.

The PPU described the situation as a familiar pattern: people die, somebody relatively junior is blamed and the military leadership go completely free.

The armed forces are the only organisations in the UK allowed to conduct their own trials.

Revealed: Arms firms in schools

Research has revealed the shocking extent of the arms industry's involvement in British schools.

213,000 young people have seen a roadshow run by arms company BAE Systems since 2005. BAE visited 420 schools in the last year, with materials used by children as young as seven.

While schools in the UK are presented with a positive image of BAE, schools in Yemen have been bombed by Saudi forces that BAE supplies.

Other arms firms involved in activities for children include Raytheon, Rolls-Royce and MBDA.

The news follows research by the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT), to which the Peace Pledge Union is affiliated.

The increased involvement of arms companies in schools mirrors a sharp rise in the presence of armed forces in British schools in recent years. The PPU has backed CAAT's call for "arms companies to be kicked out of the classroom".

What are we really taught in school about war?

What would happen if young people were taught more about the causes of war? School students Zaynah Akthar and Hanifa Ali call for a change in the way that we learn about war.

Akthar and Hanifa Ali call for a change in the way that we learn about war.

Hanifa Ali (left) and Zaynah Akthar (right) are studying for their GCSEs at school in east London. They are both 15.



As students our memory of learning about the war is very vague. This is due to the lack of lessons talking about the impact and the real causes of war. Growing up, although we knew there were two world wars, we couldn't necessarily differentiate between the two. During primary school our knowledge of the wars was non-existent. There were almost no discussions of the wars.

In our opinion this is a major flaw in the UK education system.

This is a matter that needs to be discussed, as in order to prevent wars we need to educate children on the aftermath of wars.

Wars are almost always based on the decisions made by the government. Citizens not knowing about previous wars, they will not be able to gather a very good understanding of what a war can do, making them more likely to blindly agree with government decisions.

This is a serious issue

as the vast majority of people affected by war are civilians.

Many feel that teaching children about the war isn't very effective as they are young and unable to comprehend the full capacity of the destruction of war. However, we disagree because we think that to prevent any future wars and to avoid the glorification of war, we need to allow children to learn about past wars and why war is so detrimental to humanity.

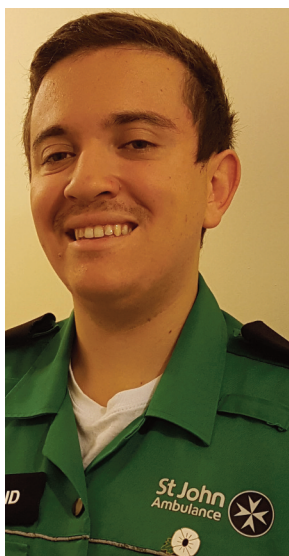
Some believe that war is a complicated topic as there are aspects which would be difficult to explain to children, but although this may be true, not allowing children to know about war or hiding aspects of war is preventing children from learning about the cruel reality of war.

Our main concern is that we are afraid that, due to children's lack of knowledge of previous wars they will not be able to understand the reasons that lead to war and the alternatives to war.

How St John Ambulance changed their poppy policy

Simone Ramacci explains how he persuaded St John Ambulance to allow him - and their other volunteers - to choose to wear a white poppy while on shift.

Simone Ramacci is a PPU member and St John Ambulance volunteer living in Colchester.



As an international student in the UK I tried to blend in as much as I could. Part of this meant popping my coin in the tin around the beginning of November and wearing my red poppy. The red poppy cause is said to be about helping veterans and I couldn't see any harm in doing my bit. I did so for three years. That's how long it took me to realise what I actually believed as a Christian.

Red poppies were suddenly problematic for me. The British Legion limits remembrance to those who fought in UK and allied armed forces. It receives donations from arms companies and does nothing to prevent more people being injured or killed in war.

Being a peace-oriented Christian I decided to reclaim the original meaning of Remembrance Day as the starting point to end war. As a St John Ambulance volunteer I also decided I needed to commemorate those in the organisation who lost their lives in war but who were not soldiers-

I decided to wear a white poppy, which "represents remembrance for all victims of war, a commitment to peace and a challenge to attempts to glamourise or celebrate war".

Unfortunately, St John Ambulance only allowed people to wear red poppies on shift. Not wanting to stir up any trouble, at first I came to an agreement with my manager which allowed my small act of witness to continue on religious grounds; but I felt that was not enough.

I wrote to St John Ambulance's Standards of Dress Group Chair explaining that I felt allowing people to wear white poppies would better fit our values and history. I am happy to say that after much consultation he informed me that the policy now allows a poppy to be worn without mandating its colour.

Sometimes our witness can start with something as small as a white poppy or an email. I hope more organisations will follow St John Ambulance's lead.

1918-1919: The centenaries they'd rather we forgot

As the world prepares to mark the centenary of the end of World War One, it seems that some of the events 100 years ago get talked about far more than others.

Symon Hill takes a look at the events we're generally not encouraged to remember - including the protests, mutinies and strikes that accompanied the end of the war.

In 1918, Albert Einstein was a physics lecturer at Berlin University. On 9 November, he wrote in his diary, "Class cancelled due to revolution".

Thousands of Berliners had poured onto the streets in a largely nonviolent uprising. Troops sent to suppress them had refused to open fire. The Kaiser abdicated. Two days later, German commanders - many of whose troops were in open revolt - signed the armistice with the French and British forces.

British pacifist Fenner Brockway, sitting in the cell where he was imprisoned as a conscientious objector, heard that the armistice would come into effect at 11.00am. "Was the slaughter of four years to end?" he asked himself. "Was I to see the fields and woods and hills and sea? The line of the sun on the wall approached eleven."

The war ended at eleven. But suffering and conflict were far from over.

It is right that we commemorate the centenary of

the end of World War One. However, there are many events in 1918 whose centenaries are going almost unmentioned. It was a year of protests, strikes and mutinies across Europe.

There is little doubt that the war was always supported by the majority of the British population. But as war went on, opposition grew. In 1917, over 200,000 people signed a petition for a negotiated peace and a pacifist candidate won a quarter of the vote in the Rossendale by-election.

The summer of 1918 saw strikes across Britain. On 23 August, women cleaners on the railways struck for equal pay with men. A week later the Metropolitan Police went on strike for the first and (so far) only time in their history, winning a substantial pay increase. Social unrest frightened the government enough to deploy troops to South Wales.

The strikers broke the convention of no strikes in wartime. While they were not all anti-war, they were unwilling to let the government use the war as an excuse to suppress them.



Two days after the armistice, soldiers in Shoreham walked off their base in protest against officers' brutality. The authorities were slow to demobilise the troops and there was talk of sending them to Russia to fight the Bolsheviks. Many soldiers objected to being kept in the army once the war for which they had been recruited was over.

In December, members of Royal Artillery Units rioted in Le Havre. In January 1919 there were mutinies in the British army and navy, notably in Folkestone and Southampton, where officers came close to ordering loyal troops to

fire on mutineers. Meanwhile 4,000 British troops in Calais went on strike and sailors on HMS Kilbride mutinied and raised the red flag. Conscientious objectors in several prisons began hunger strikes.

Protests in Glasgow led to a revolutionary situation. They were brutally suppressed (pictured above) as the government declared martial law and sent troops onto Glasgow's streets. Far from fighting for freedom, the British army, like armies generally, was suppressing it.

The mutinies effectively made it impossible for the

government to contemplate mass deployment to Russia. As the authorities speeded up demobilisation, the mutinies fizzled out. By the spring, most troops were demobilised and conscientious objectors released from prison.

It would be naive to imagine that all those who were involved in these various protests were pacifists. Some protests and mutinies had violent elements, although the majority were without violence. When people refuse in large numbers to co-operate with authority, the powerful lose the ability to oppress them.

In many cases the freedom they gain is limited and temporary. Nonetheless, 1918 and 1919 were years in which sizeable numbers of people stood up to the power of generals, governments and employers. These centenaries can inspire us today. So when Theresa May and Gavin Williamson talk about "remembrance", there are some centenaries they might prefer us to forget.

Join us to challenge Girlguiding army partnership

**Guide volunteer
Pippa Gardner
explains why she -
and thousands of
others - are urging
Girlguiding UK to
ditch their new
partnership with the
British army.**

As a member of Girlguiding UK I want to draw your attention to a campaign to reject funding from military organisations after the charity announced its partnership with the British army at the end of August.

According to the announcement released on their website and in a members' newsletter, Girlguiding have received support from the army to develop a Leadership Skills Builder – a part of their new programme that is delivered through staged activities to all young members aged 4-18. Over the August Bank Holiday weekend, army recruitment stands also attended the 'Wellies and Wristbands' event for girls aged 10-18, where young attendees were encouraged to pose in front of military vehicles for photos later shared on social media.

This angers me and many other members, who were not consulted by the organisation before they entered into the partnership. As a result I, as a former trustee of Girlguiding and current volunteer, started a petition to reverse the decision. The text of the petition reads as follows:

"This runs counter to

Girlguiding's international and peace-orientated membership of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, which is regularly promoted as a global family. It also contradicts Girlguiding's stance that girls should not participate in war-games or shoot at human-shaped targets as part of an activity within the organisation. This partnership is the short-sighted acceptance of money without thought given to how this partnership aligns with the organisation's values, nor does it respect or pay attention to the interests of our sibling guides and scouts around the world."

Earlier this summer, Girlguiding announced a dramatic overhaul of its programme for all age groups. I feel that the new activities reflect the organisation's moves towards encouraging social justice and social action in recent years, with badges such as 'Women's Rights', 'Zero Waste', 'Speaking Out' and 'Protesting'. Therefore the announcement of the partnership with the British army came as a surprise.

Girlguiding was one of the only youth organisations near me when I was grow-

ing up, and leaders encouraged me to get involved in a range of advocacy activities. They empowered me to speak out about issues I care about, and this is one such occasion – the military has no place in our youth organisations or schools.

Through Girlguiding, I was supported to attend the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 and Yo!Fest at the European Parliament in 2016 alongside young people from other organisations more well-known for their political engagement, such as Woodcraft Folk and their umbrella organisation IFM-SEI. Originally established in the 1920s by those opposed to the military connections of Guides and Scouts at the time, Woodcraft Folk offers indoor and outdoor activities for young people of all genders delivered under a tagline of 'Education for Social Change'. Peace education is a key part of their programme of activities. Whilst not as large as the Guides or Scouts, they

Pippa Gardner, (pink t-shirt and scarf, centre), says Girlguiding should be about opportunities to create international friendships and understanding, such as below at the Yo!Fest workshop run by IFM-SEI in 2016.



have over 300 groups across the UK and are opening new groups every year. They demonstrate that it is possible to deliver activities for young people without slipping towards military connections.

However, as the largest organisation for girls in the UK, we are eager to also see an end to Girlguiding's partnership with the British army. We are gathering support to call for the return of any funding received and the introduction of robust consultation with members before such partnerships are agreed in future.

The Peace Pledge Union is pleased to support Pippa and all other Guides challenging everyday militarism.

You can join the campaign by signing the petition "End British Army Sponsorship of Girlguiding" on www.change.org.

Or express your views by writing to Girlguiding UK, 17-19 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 0PT

Czechoslovakia 1968: Nonviolence in action

PPU member John Hyatt was in Czechoslovakia in 1968 when the Warsaw Pact tanks rolled in.

His first-hand account of the nonviolent resistance that followed appeared in the September 1968 issue of The Pacifist - forerunner of Peace Matters.

To mark 50 years since this inspiring example of active nonviolence, we're reprinting part of the article here.

When he wrote, John Hyatt can't have known what effect the resistance would have. The Soviet military commander expected to crush the country in four days. He hadn't counted on mass nonviolent resistance, which held up the occupiers for months and laid the groundwork for the overthrow of the regime two decades later.

Word was passed around by shouting down streets and by telephone calls, and very soon hundreds of people had arrived to express their "welcome" to the troops. They whistled, booed and gave the anti-fascist salute. Scores of leaflets were thrown from the tanks and were avidly seized by the crowd, many of whom could not read them as they were, stupidly, in Russian - not Slovak. Those who could read Russian translated the leaflets which stated that the troops had come to help suppress fascism and counter-revolution. To many Slovaks, it seemed impossible that anyone could believe this. People started reasoning with the troops and many came to me explaining that they were not trying to destroy communism but to strengthen it. They asked me to tell people outside Czechoslovakia that they were not, as many people and papers outside Czechoslovakia would like to believe, restoring capitalism...

Around 3.30am, as I was walking to the station to catch a train to Prague,

the column of tanks and trucks was still moving in to the city, although most of the roads in the centre were completely clogged. Around each vehicle stood a group of Slovaks reasoning and arguing with the troops. Only in one place did I see a half-hearted attempt at a blazing barricade, which had presented no obstacle at all. The young medical student I was staying with said to me that this was no time to talk pacifism. I pointed at a row of tanks and said that this was no time for him to start talking of using violence. He thought for a while and had to nod in agreement...

The first signs of resistance were the large number of slogans which appeared on anything, particularly the tanks and the trams, which persisted in coming through the middle of an area of revolution with infuriating regularity. Slogans were daubed, chalked and painted in Russian, English, Slovak and Czech, with particularly large numbers of the slightly modified "Russia, go

home" written in English. Other slogans included "Hitler=Brezhnev", "1939=1968" and swastikas [to equate the invaders with Nazis].

The tanks persisted in patrolling in front of the station from one end to another. Each time they were stopped for quite long periods in the middle, just by people milling around and quite fearlessly stopping their progress. At one point, when there were not enough people in a particular area to stop a tank this way, with about eight other people, we managed to stop it by sitting down. Strangely enough this was not the time when I came near to being injured. This occurred when I was standing right behind a tank whose driver suddenly decided to put it into reverse...

Even from very early in the day it was easily discerned that most of the soldiers were very young, 18 or 19; they looked as if they had not washed, shaved, eaten or slept for days and were in the most suitable condition to be demor-



alised by the people they had come to "help"...

In what must be the equivalent in Brno of Prague's Wenceslas Square, thousands of people gathered to hear young people who spoke from the foot of the monument. Here occurred the only case of violence which I saw. Three Russian soldiers decided to use strong-arm tactics to force a jeep through this crowd. Whilst two walked in front with machine guns, one drove the jeep into the crowd. By the time the jeep emerged at the other side, because of the battering, shaking and kicking it had received, it looked a very

sorry sight. No violence was offered to the soldiers, who were unable to prevent it happening to the jeep...

I have come away from Czechoslovakia with all my ideas about nonviolence strengthened and modified. Even if the Czechoslovak people do not clear their country of occupying troops, they have succeeded already in many ways and they will eventually succeed in this. The events in Czechoslovakia prove it to be one of the greatest occurrences of nonviolence - and the people did not even have a Gandhi to lead them.

Lest We Forget

Lest we forget
the politicians who preached hate
so their voters would sacrifice those they
loved
At the going down of the sun – we will
remember them

Lest we forget
the hacks who exaggerated and made up
stories
to make the gullible feel threatened
the threatened feel outraged
and the outraged desperate to kill
At the going down of the sun – we will
remember them

Lest we forget
the generals who made the supreme
sacrifice
of others' lives
by the million
At the going down of the sun – we will
remember them

Lest we forget
the armaments manufacturers
for whom every war
is the opportunity for a killing
At the going down of the sun – we will
remember them

Lest we forget
the profiteers whose patriotism and bank
balances
were always beyond question
At the going down of the sun – we will
remember them

Lest we forget
the public schools whose playing fields
trained boys
to lead men
to death
with nobility
At the going down of the sun – we will
remember them

Lest we forget
the popular culture
of stage, books, magazines and songs
which
with most of the population collaborating
glorified killing
At the going down of the sun – we will
remember them

Lest we forget
those who conscientiously objected
At the going down of the sun – we will
remember them

Lest we forget
those who could not endure the hell
created
by others
and were shot at dawn
At the going down of the sun – we will
remember them

Lest we forget
the sanity of deserters
At the going down of the sun – we will
remember them

Anonymous

*This poem was written by a PPU supporter
who prefers to remain anonymous.*

Euphemisms

They call it the theatre
It's enough to make you cringe;
There's no laughs – no feeling better -
No Edinburgh Fringe.

But it's a wicked plot, with subtle
themes:
Control, we're best, we're right!
And if you don't accept our schemes
Our boys come in – we fight!

Audience participation's
A feature of this play -
This drama's so compelling
It blows them all away.

No props these days but fighter jets
And drones drone in the skies;
The lighting is by phosphorus
And gel's for blinded eyes.

No apron or proscenium arch
No tabs, but lots of flies
No downstage left, but by the left quick
march -
Another actor dies.

No intervals or ice cream
Just rations and patrols
You'll hear the ones who die scream
And the funeral drum rolls

No overture or entr'acte
Just last post as they fall.
(Unless they keep their minds intact
It's curtains for them all.)

They're mounting these productions
Because all the world's a stage
And all those not in costume -
Collateral damage.

Ann Banks

*Ann Banks is a PPU supporter who belongs
to Hebden Bridge Quaker Meeting.*



White poppies: Frequently asked questions

What do white poppies represent?

There are three elements to the meaning of white poppies: they represent remembrance for all victims of war, a commitment to peace and a challenge to attempts to glamorise war.

Where can I buy a white poppy?

You can buy them online, or see a list of outlets around the UK, at www.whitepoppy.org.uk. If you would like to sell them in your area, we would be pleased to hear from you. You can reach us at mail@ppu.org.uk.

How many white poppies are sold?

The number of White Poppies sold each year varies and has risen steadily in recent years. For each of the last four years (2014-17) we have distributed around 100,000 poppies per year.

Are white poppies a new idea?

No. White poppies were first produced in 1933 by the Co-operative Women's Guild, who were worried by the growing militarisation of Remembrance events and the detachment between red poppies and the need to work for peace. Today, white poppies are distributed by the Peace Pledge Union.

Where does the money go?

At a local level, groups selling white poppies often donate the money raised to charities supporting victims of war. At a national level, the money goes to fund our education and campaigning work, promoting peace and nonviolence.

Some argue that if you buy a white poppy you are taking away money that would go to wounded veterans if you bought a red poppy. This is not true. There is nothing to stop someone wearing a white poppy while also donating to a charity to help those wounded in war.

We want to see decent support for people affected by war. We believe, however, that such people should be able to rely on a well-funded welfare state rather than charity. The government pays to wage war but does not pay the cost of supporting those who return.

**Keep up to date with the
Peace Pledge Union**

www.ppu.org.uk

mail@ppu.org.uk

@PPUtoday

020 7424 9444