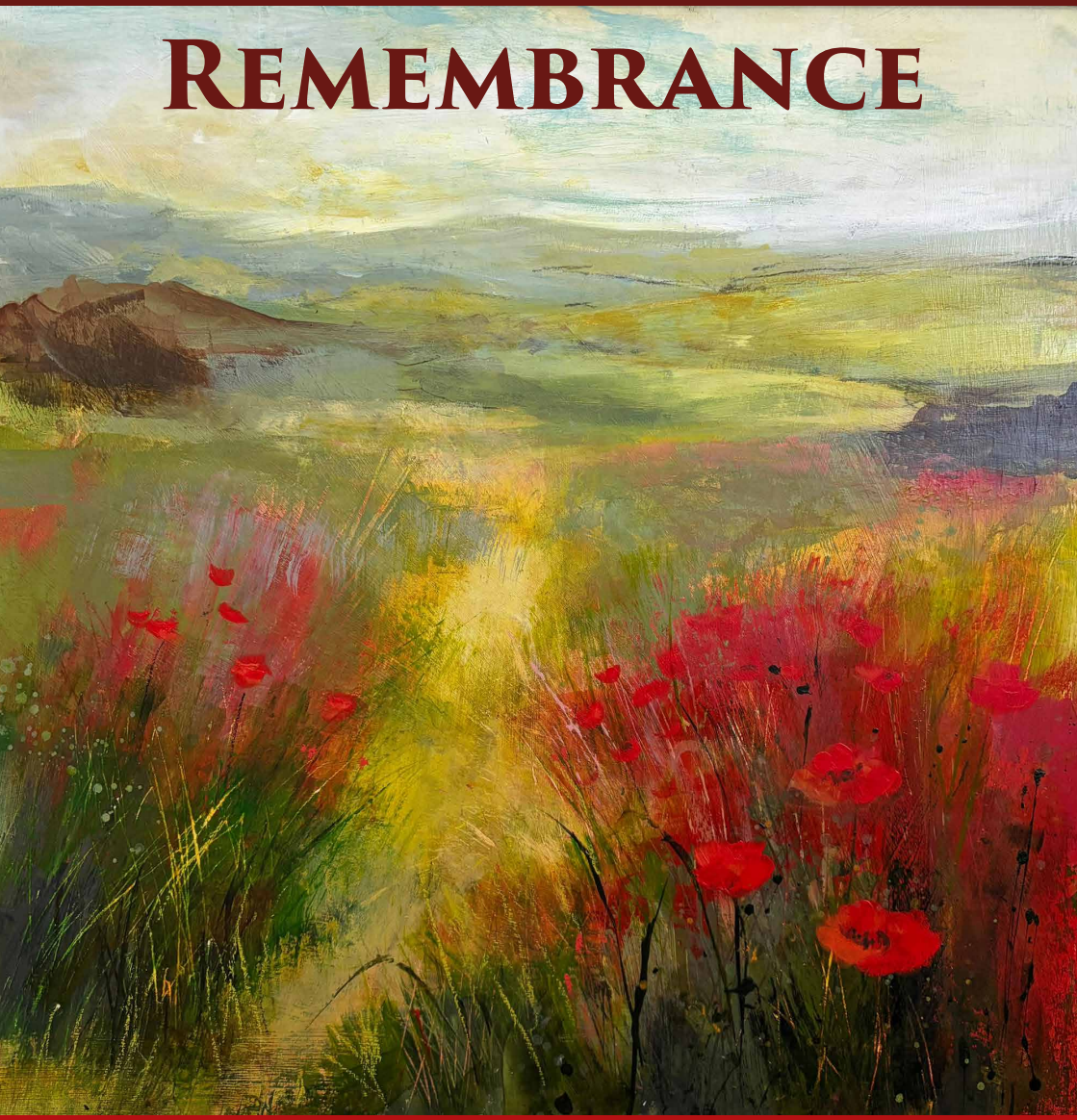
Routes to Remembrance



A brief selection of special memories from
recent community events with veterans
& Penistone Line Partnership

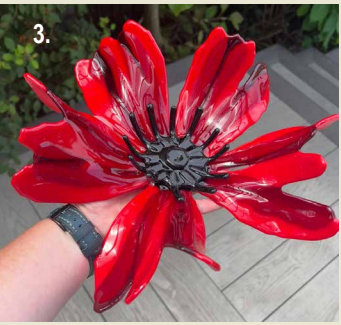




Routes To Remembrance

Introduction

Penistone Line Partnership (PLP) is proud to work closely with Penistone Arts Week, celebrating creativity, community, and local heritage. In March 2026, PLP hosted a successful Metro Poetry Event and buffet at the St John's Centre in Penistone, bringing people together through the shared power of words. Building on that success, PLP hopes to develop further Poetry Train events as part of Penistone Arts Week's 10th Anniversary celebrations in March 2027, showcasing and expanding the wonderful collection of poetry created by participants.



Remembrance has always been an important part of PLP's community work. Each year, a wreath is laid at the memorial at Penistone Station in honour of local railway workers who gave their lives in service. Inspired by this tradition, Sarah Wells, PLP's Community Rail Officer, saw an opportunity to bring together poetry, remembrance, veterans, and the Penistone Arts Week Proms event in a meaningful and lasting way through the creation of this keepsake booklet.

PLP has enjoyed a longstanding relationship with Kirklees Rural Veterans through its Travelling with Confidence project, and those connections have continued to flourish. Inspired by East Midlands Railway's annual Routes to Remembrance initiative, the partnership recognised an opportunity to combine remembrance, creative expression, and community engagement through poetry and storytelling.



This booklet is the result of that journey. It has been developed through a rail trip from Shepley to Harrogate with members of Kirklees Rural Veterans, using poetry and creative writing to reflect on service, sacrifice, remembrance, and personal experiences. The booklet also showcases artwork created by local artists for the Poppies for Purpose Proms Event, with all contributors acknowledged for their invaluable support and creativity.

PLP is delighted to share this keepsake with the veterans who participated in the project and helped bring it to life. Funding support from Creative Minds and Northern has made this work possible, enabling stories, memories, and reflections to be preserved and shared with a wider audience.

On 8 November 2026, following the annual wreath-laying ceremony at Penistone Station, PLP volunteers will travel along the Penistone Line, distributing copies of the booklet to passengers as a lasting tribute to those who have served and sacrificed.

We hope these pages encourage reflection, inspire remembrance, and celebrate the enduring connections between railways, communities, creativity, and service. A QR code and website link included in this booklet provide access to additional poetry, writing, and information about the project and commemorative events.





Left Page: *Veterans at Huddersfield station*
Top: *Writing poetry en-route to Harrogate*
Bottom: *Harrogate War Memorial, Prospect Square*

ARTWORK CREDITS: COVER: RACHAEL SINGLETON, **2.** Deb Hepplestone (Big Skies Art), **3.** Pam Goodison Glass Art, **4.** Catherine Embleton, **5.** Tracey Hawley, **6.** Joanne Molloy (JM Flora & Fauna Art), **7.** Andrea Daniels, **8.** Caroline Ballard, **9.** Ann McCall Evans, **10.** Jennifer Margaret Jones, **11.** Karen L Watson, **12.** Helen Davison.

When Penistone held an Armed Forces Day, Penistone Line Partnership hosted a stand and activity for children to craft their own medals. PLP were delighted to meet with war veteran Tom Hicks who lived in Royston. Tom was a railwayman all his working life from calling up lad to engine driver. He had served as a Royal Engineer and was attached to the 1st Para Squadron. He fought in North Africa, Sicily and in the Battle of Arnhem where he was parachuted in on the 17 September 1944. After days of intense fighting he, along with many comrades, was sadly captured and forced to work in lead mines until the war was over. Tom lived to an amazing age of 101 and was an active member of Barnsley Breakfast Club for Veterans.

Norman Hicks, Tom's son wrote Captured at Arnhem: From Railwayman to Paratrooper, available from Amazon.



A poem by Veteran Poet
Cyril Crain

Take my hand and come with me
To a special place across the sea
A secret place in hallowed ground
A place where love and sorrow's found
It's not a church you'll understand
Just a part of home in another land
A place where gravestones stand arrayed
Like a phantom army on parade
Stand close by me and patience keep
And soon you'll see a brave man weep
He cries for his comrade beneath the stone
And you tell your friend he's not alone
Scenes like this are commonplace
In our special meeting place.
So, as you stroll down Memory Lane
Think of us who must remain
And now it's time to say adieu
But remember friend
We died for you.

4.



A Soldier's Remembrance
Keith Gardner

I've attended services across many continents,
each one different in place but united in purpose.
From peaceful towns to places still carrying the dust of conflict,
I bow my head for friends I've lost,
for those taken long after conflict,
for those who still carry the scars.
Faces I still see in the silence,
memories that stay wherever I stand.

A friend lost, eager to go home to see their loved ones.
Another close to retirement lost on operations.
A third who lost all hope after struggling to fit in after leaving the service.
These are just a few amongst the many who have paid the ultimate price.
I remember more than grieve.

I remember the good
our services brought
to the hardest corners of conflict.
That's where my pride rises,
steady and unshakeable,
because I've seen bravery,
compassion, and sacrifice with my own eyes.
Remembrance is the pause we share,
the honour we carry, and the truth we keep alive
for those who gave their tomorrow
so we all could have today.

Bunting kindly crafted by P & E Barkworth

The Penistone Line
Linda Rudkin

Before the dawn of D-Day's tide,
Through Penistone the freight trains sighed,
With Sherman strength and Churchill might,
They rolled unseen through depth of night.

At ramp and siding, crews stood near,
To guide the engines, calm and clear;
Then tanks moved on to Langsett Moor,
Where thunder shook the heathered floor.

There men prepared with grit and flame,
For distant shores and history's name;
And Penistone, in quiet pride,
Helped carry courage to the tide.



On The High Sea
Brenda Kirby

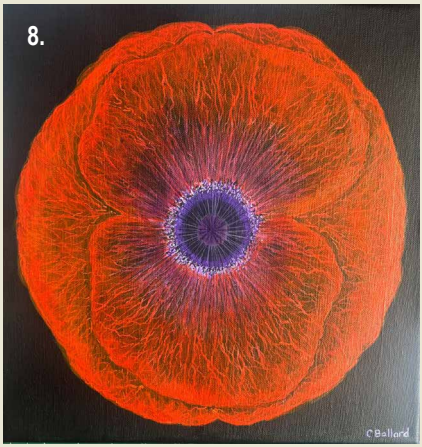
On June the sixth in forty-four,
The Allied navies sailed once more;
Operation Neptune crossed the foam,
To carry brave troops far from home.

Great ocean ships moved through the night,
Then, landing craft pressed on to fight;
Across the Channel, wave by wave,
They bore the bold, the strong, the brave.

The battleships, cruisers, destroyers too,
Sent thunder where the danger grew;
Their gunfire roared along the shore,
To guard the men who went before.
Nearly seven thousand vessels wide, moved together on the tide;
Warships, craft, and merchant crews,
All sailed on with hope to choose.




7.



8.


9.

Untitled

Yvonne Harding

How shall I remember those who fell,
and those once near who are here no more?
I walk through memorials and quiet graves,
past marble rows carved deep with sorrow,
each stone crowned gently with pride.
I wander through woods and along the shore,
where wind and sky lift my thoughts
to those who gave their lives,
and those whom illness carried softly away.
I stand in silence as poppies drift down,
remembering laughter, love, and happier days –
the lives once lived before conflict came,
before courage asked its final price.
And I remember what they gave,
So others might live, love, and hope: the ultimate sacrifice,
never forgotten.


10.

Normandy
Brenda Kirby

In morning light, the poppies grow,
In solemn rows, where white stones show;
Beneath them lie the brave and true,
Who gave their lives for me and you.

On Remembrance Day, we speak their name,
And honour still their sacred flame;
Mothers, fathers, daughters, sons,
Wept for the lost, the cherished ones.

Some rest beneath a foreign sky,
Where gentle hands keep memory nigh.

The Beaches
Linda Rudkin

The beaches roared with fire and smoke,
Where mortar, gun, and shellfire broke;
Among the blood, the wreckage, cries,
Young voices called beneath grey skies.

Across five shores the price was paid -
Sword, Juno, Gold, where courage stayed;
Omaha, Utah, scarred the sand,
As thousands fell on foreign land.

They would not love, nor children hold,
Nor watch the years turn bright to old;
While mothers prayed through sleepless night,
For sons and brothers lost from sight.



At Ardenne Abbey

Linda Rudkin

I came to Caen because sorrow had a name,
and it was spoken softly at Ardenne Abbey,
in St Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe,
where June had opened the earth
and left the living to listen.

Mrs Vico returned from the Gestapo
through the mercy of the Red Cross,
back to walls that had forgotten their shape,
back to an abbey broken open by war,
with her children beside her
and silence waiting in the fields.

Her son, Jean-Marie Vico,
a fighter of the Resistance,
stood with her among the ruins,
where every stone seemed to know
what men had tried to hide.

In September, Sergeant Dudka came,
a Canadian escaped from captivity,
carrying in his voice the weight of the others.
He spoke of the little Bayeux door,
of prisoners taken,
of bodies seen,
of a darkness that had not ended
when the guns fell quiet.

In early 1945,
children noticed the earth disturbed
beneath a small chestnut tree.
They dug down into the frozen truth
and found the first soldier
face down in the soil,
a uniform still clinging to him,
a wound at the nape of his neck
where mercy should have been.

Then more were found,
laid in the same sorrowful way,
and crosses rose above them,
thin and trembling,
as if the living could apologise
only with wood and prayer.

In March, Mrs Vico saw the snowdrops
growing strangely around the lawn,
white little bells in broken order.
She asked her sons to dig again,
and four more sons of Canada
were given back to the light.

In May, Jacques came home on leave
from the Leclerc Division,
and Father Gab searched the grounds.
The last hidden dead were found,
not lost after all,
only waiting beneath the grass
for someone gentle enough to seek them.

The British authorities named them,
and their names were carried away
to Bény-sur-Mer and Cintheaux,
cemeteries where the wind moves carefully
between the rows.

Twenty bodies in all:
twelve North Nova Scotia Highlanders,
six from the Sherbrooke Fusiliers Regiment,
the 27th Canadian Armoured Regiment,
and two from the Stormont, Dundas and
Glengarry Highlanders -
twenty lives ended far from home,
twenty mothers left with the sound
of doors that would not open.



In June 1945,
an eyewitness gave his story to the authorities:
the questioning,
the voices,
the knowledge no heart should have to carry -
that prisoners had been executed
where they should have been protected.



The Canadian inquiry began,
and German accounts were gathered,
matching what Jesionek had said -
piece by piece,
truth rose from testimony
as it had risen from the ground.

The evidence against Kurt Meyer was
overwhelming.
The Geneva Convention had been broken,
and he was accused of the torture and murder
of Canadian prisoners of war -
men who had already laid down their arms,
men whose last battlefield
was a wall, a courtyard, a command.

He was sentenced to death,
then spared that sentence,
and sent to prison in Canada.
But no prison could hold
what had been taken from the dead,
or return the years
they never lived.

And people say,
before the shots,
the soldiers held hands.



The Flanders Watch, St John The Baptist Church, Royston



Extract from 'THE MATRIARCH', a novel by CHRISSIE YATES

Whistling sounds of bullets perilously close, screams of those dying in agony were the same hollowed out screams as those charging towards the guns and shells that were falling all around. Firing their guns aimlessly, probably killing their own as well as their enemy or firing at nothing but the mist; a man-made fog that made visibility difficult as they bellowed out their advance forward like crazed banshees. Men running for their lives or towards their deaths, depending on fate's choice that day, for each of the damned souls ordered out of their respective trenches.

Albert found himself diving into a shell created 'fox-hole', his heart beating out of his chest' whilst his lungs screamed for respite. Then he saw that he wasn't alone.

"Christ but he's nowt but a bairn," was Albert's first thought as he looked at the wide eyed terrified youngster who could have been one of his own sons if not for the uniform he was wearing. Suddenly the boy began to fumble with his rifle, pointing it directly at Albert who lunged at him, easily taking the rifle from him as the child started crying, "Bitte! Bitte!" as he held his hands in the air. Albert pointed his rifle at the boy whose whole body was shaking with abject terror as he now cried the words, "Mutter! Mutter!" as tears ran down his mud streaked cheeks. Albert lowered his rifle and shook his head. "For Christ's sake, silly little bugger. Get thi' sen home. Go on," he screamed, now pointing his rifle towards the direction he was also heading. "Go on I said! Get thi sen home!"

The boy suddenly seemed to understand as nodding gratefully, he scrambled over the top and ran for his life.

Slumping back Albert felt his hands shaking, feeling the adrenaline still coursing through his bloodstream. He had come face to face with the enemy, and he was little more than a child.

Suddenly another shell exploded perilously close, alerting him to move.

Running with the pack Albert suddenly felt the hard ground beneath his feet become more mud than solid earth, and without warning, he found himself sinking as if in quicksand. It was up to his waist in seconds as his body became immersed in the perilous earth, his feet finding no purchase. Waving his arms, his rifle now lost, the mud now up to his chin, he knew this was it. No bullet was going to finish him, just this foul stinking man created mud.

He was drowning and felt a bizarre calmness, as his thoughts turned to Ada and home. “All this way from you my Ada, just to die like some godforsaken rat in mud,” as the foul smelling black monstrous substance, now consumed him.

As he sank deeper into the blackness, his lungs exploding with the pain that comes from a lack of oxygen, he suddenly felt a violent pull as he was hauled back to the light, water being poured over his face as he began to retch up what he had involuntarily ingested.

As he opened his eyes, he looked into the face of the man who had saved him. His eyes were large, very brown, beautiful even and kind in a face which looked like it belonged elsewhere but somehow looked familiar. It looked like the face of a Christ he had never really believed in.

Barely able to speak, his mouth and throat caked in mud and slime, Albert had to know as he whispered, “Are you Jesus? Have you come to save me?” Shaking his head, his chuckles almost surreal in the circumstances they were in, his rescuer merely replied with an accent heavy and unfamiliar, “I am not your God ‘Tommy’, just another man trying to survive in a world gone mad. Come on and watch where you put your feet.”

‘The Matriarch’ is available to buy on Amazon, ‘All Is Good’ and ‘The Wise Donkey’.

Further Reading on the Penistone Line Partnership website

Rules of Engagement
Peter Waugh

A Journey to Remember
by Keith Gardner

Normandy Poem
Linda Rudkin

Reflections on Visiting Normandy in June 2018
Linda Rudkin

My Childhood Memories of WW2 & Memories Of Working In London In The 1980’s
by Malcolm MacDonald

While Travelling by Train
by Lorna MacDonald

Visit: www.penline.co.uk/routes-to-remembrance/

Scan the QR Code for further reading

Rural Veterans Hubs

Charity No: 1204103

For many years, I have campaigned to improve support for veterans leaving the Armed Forces, particularly those affected by PTSD and other service-related mental health challenges.

My involvement with Rural Veterans Hubs began when Dr Walker of Shepley Surgery approached me about creating local support for veterans. The practice had identified significant health inequalities among veterans, a cause close to my heart. My husband's experience of complex PTSD following service in Northern Ireland reinforced my understanding of the long-term impact of military trauma on veterans and their families.

Working with local healthcare professionals and community partners, we established hubs at Shelley Village Hall and Denby Dale. Their aim is simple: to provide friendship, peer support, practical help and signposting for veterans who may be experiencing isolation, poor mental health, disability, bereavement, or difficulties adjusting to civilian life.

Today, around 40 veterans are registered with the hubs. Alongside regular support meetings, we offer guest speakers, creative workshops, social activities and trips, helping veterans reconnect with their communities and build lasting friendships.

The hubs exist thanks to the generosity of organisations including the Army Benevolent Fund, BFBS Big Salute, the Co-operative Society, South West Yorkshire Mental Health, Inner Wheel, Kirkburton Parish Council and Shepley Women's Institute.

As veteran support services continue to reduce nationally, accessible local initiatives like Rural Veterans Hubs are more important than ever in ensuring veterans and their families receive the support they deserve.

Linda Rudkin, Founder and Trustee (Veteran)

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Acknowledgements Thank you to everyone who has played a part in organising the Remembrance events and Penistone Proms for Poppies, whether by creating art, writing poetry, performing, or supporting the project in any way.

This booklet celebrates the power of working together within our communities. We are grateful to Penistone Line Partnership, Kirklees Rural Veterans, Penistone Arts Week and Gable Lake Design, for their collaboration and support.

Special thanks also to our funders, Northern and Creative Minds, whose generosity made Routes to Remembrance and this keepsake booklet possible.

PLP has endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information contained within this booklet. Despite every effort to the contrary, errors, omissions or discrepancies may have occurred. PLP assumes no liability for loss or damages incurred due in part or in whole to such errors.