



## Armistice of November 1918: Centenary Debate on 5 November 2018

### Summary

This House of Lords Library Briefing has been prepared in advance of the debate due to take place on 5 November 2018 in the House of Lords on the motion moved by Lord Ashton of Hyde (Conservative), “that this House takes note of the centenary of the armistice at the end of the First World War”.

On 11 November 1918, an armistice between the Allied Powers and Germany was signed, ending the fighting on the western front during the First World War. The armistice was signed at 5am in a French railway carriage in Compiègne, and the guns stopped firing six hours later, at 11am. Under the terms of the armistice, Germany was to relinquish all the territory it had conquered since 1914, as well as Alsace-Lorraine. The Rhineland would be demilitarised, and the German fleet was to be interned in harbours of neutral countries or handed to the British. Announcing the terms in the House of Commons, the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, expressed relief at the “end[ing of] the cruellest and most terrible war that has ever scourged mankind”.

The centenary of the signing of the armistice will be marked on 11 November 2018 by a series of events. The traditional national service of remembrance at the Cenotaph will take place, as well as the Royal British Legion’s veteran dispersal and march past the Cenotaph. The veterans’ parade will then be followed by a ‘people’s procession’ made up of 10,000 members of the public. During the day, church and other bells will ring out as they did in 1918 to mark the end of the war. The Government is supporting the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers to recruit 1,400 bell ringers (the number of bell ringers that were lost during the war). They will ring on armistice day alongside existing bell ringers across the country. The commemorations will conclude in the evening with a national service of thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey in London. Similar services will also take place in Glasgow, Cardiff and Belfast.

In addition to the national events, other commemorative projects are continuing in 2018, such as the Victoria Cross paving stones programme, where commemorative stones are being laid for those who were awarded the Victoria Cross during the First World War.

This briefing provides an overview of the events leading up to the signing of the armistice, and a summary of the terms agreed. It then provides a brief description of some of the commemorative events taking place in the UK to mark the centenary of the signing of the armistice.

### Table of Contents

1. Events Leading to the Armistice of November 1918
2. Armistice of November 1918
3. Centenary Commemorations of the Armistice in the UK

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Events Leading to the Armistice of November 1918</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 German Spring Offensive .....	1
1.2 Hundred Days Offensive .....	3
<b>2. Armistice of November 1918</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Negotiations for an Armistice.....	5
2.2 Terms of the Armistice .....	6
2.3 Announcement in Britain .....	7
<b>3. Centenary Commemorations of the Armistice in the UK</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Government Programme of Centenary Commemorations .....	9
3.2 Other Projects.....	13

---

A full list of Lords Library briefings is available on the [research briefings page](#) on the internet. The Library publishes briefings for all major items of business debated in the House of Lords. The Library also publishes briefings on the House of Lords itself and other subjects that may be of interest to Members.

House of Lords Library briefings are compiled for the benefit of Members of the House of Lords and their personal staff, to provide impartial, authoritative, politically balanced briefing on subjects likely to be of interest to Members of the Lords. Authors are available to discuss the contents of the briefings with the Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

**Any comments on Library briefings should be sent to the Head of Research Services, House of Lords Library, London SW1A 0PW or emailed to [purvism@parliament.uk](mailto:purvism@parliament.uk).**

## I. Events Leading to the Armistice of November 1918

### I.1 German Spring Offensive

On 3 March 1918, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed by the Central Powers (an alliance comprising Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria) with Soviet Russia.<sup>1</sup> The treaty signified an ending of hostilities between those countries. According to the historian Christoph Mick, the treaty “confirmed what everybody had known since autumn 1917”, when an armistice had been agreed between the parties: “the Central Powers had won the war on the eastern front”.<sup>2</sup> As a result, Germany was able to direct more German army divisions to the western front and launch a major offensive against the Allies (which included Britain, France, Italy and, as of April 1917, the US) on that frontier in spring 1918.

The ‘German spring offensive’ was a series of German attacks along the western front.<sup>3</sup> It was launched on 21 March 1918 and lasted until 18 July 1918. Operation Michael, the first of the offensives, began along the western front from Arras to Le Fère on 21 March 1918.<sup>4</sup> British and Allied troops were met with a huge concentration of German artillery, gas, smoke and infantry.<sup>5</sup>

At 4:40am the German artillery bombardment began, lasting five hours. It was followed by an infantry attack. The first troops were specially-trained soldiers known as stormtroopers.<sup>6</sup> They bypassed British strongpoints and destroyed lines of communication and created disorder and confusion in the rear areas. They were followed by an “overwhelming mass of infantry”.<sup>7</sup> By the end of the day, a considerable part of the British fifth army was destroyed as a result of the artillery fire and the first German assault.<sup>8</sup> On the first day, British casualties numbered over 38,500, and almost 21,000 British soldiers had been taken prisoner. The number of German

---

<sup>1</sup> Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 134; and JM Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914–1918*, p 83.

<sup>2</sup> Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 134.

<sup>3</sup> Imperial War Museums, ‘[10 Significant Battles of the First World War](#)’, 3 January 2018.

<sup>4</sup> JM Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914–1918*, pp 83–5; Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 148; and Commonwealth War Graves Commission, ‘[Operation Michael](#)’, accessed 18 October 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Imperial War Museums, ‘[10 Significant Battles of the First World War](#)’, 3 January 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 146; and Commonwealth War Graves Commission, ‘[Operation Michael](#)’, accessed 18 October 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Commonwealth War Graves Commission, ‘[Operation Michael](#)’, accessed 18 October 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 149; and Commonwealth War Graves Commission, ‘[Operation Michael](#)’, accessed 18 October 2018.

casualties was higher, at 40,000 men. According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), the first day of Operation Michael remains the “second worst day in terms of casualties in British military history, surpassed only by 1 July 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme”.<sup>9</sup>

On 26 March 1918, the Supreme Allied War Council appointed the French general, Ferdinand Foch, as overall commander of the Allied forces on the western front.<sup>10</sup> French reinforcements began to arrive in the Amiens sector and the German advance was halted.<sup>11</sup> The last German attempt to capture the town was made between 4 and 5 April and was repelled. On 5 April, the German first quartermaster of the Third Supreme Army Command (OHL), General Erich Ludendorff, who was leading the offensive, finally closed Operation Michael.<sup>12</sup>

During the operation, approximately 75,000 British soldiers had been taken captive, the British and French suffered around 250,000 casualties, and approximately 240,000 German soldiers were wounded, captured or dead.<sup>13</sup> According to Christoph Mick, the German army had “overrun” the British defence on a fifty-mile sector and gained 12,000 square miles of territory.<sup>14</sup> However, Professor Mick states that for Germany, the “failure to achieve a strategic victory was nothing short of a disaster”: the front was pushed back 40 miles in some areas, but neither the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) or French army had been permanently separated nor had Amiens, with its “important railway”, been taken.

Operation Michael was the first of several operations.<sup>15</sup> The fighting became open as isolated divisions of the Allied forces attempted to slow the German advance.<sup>16</sup> The situation for the British forces became increasingly precarious. On 11 April 1918, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig issued a special order for all “backs to the wall”: in an appeal to the troops he demanded that they defend every position as further retreat might end in defeat.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Commonwealth War Graves Commission, ‘[Operation Michael](#)’, accessed 18 October 2018.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*; Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, pp 148–9; and J M Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914–1918*, p 87.

<sup>11</sup> J M Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914–1918*, p 87.

<sup>12</sup> Commonwealth War Graves Commission, ‘[Operation Michael](#)’, accessed 18 October 2018.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*; and Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 149.

<sup>14</sup> Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 149.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*, p 150.

<sup>16</sup> Imperial War Museums, ‘[10 Significant Battles of the First World War](#)’, 3 January 2018; and Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 150.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*.

However, while the Allied line was pushed back it did not break.<sup>18</sup> In the second Battle of the Marne (15 July–6 August 1918), the German army launched an unsuccessful attack on the French army in Champagne.<sup>19</sup> On 18 July 1918, the Allied counter-attack, led by the French with a few American divisions, pushed the German forces back again. In four days of fighting a total of 30,000 German soldiers had been killed.<sup>20</sup>

During the spring offensive, the German army had retaken old battlefields and territory, and the front had been extended from 390 to 510 miles (as at 25 July 1918).<sup>21</sup> However, the BEF and the French had not been separated, nor had the British been pushed back to the Channel ports nor had Paris been taken. The positions held by the German army still had to be fortified, and it had lost approximately 800,000 men during the campaign.

## 1.2 Hundred Days Offensive

The ‘hundred days offensive’, also known as the ‘advance to victory’, was a four-month campaign and series of Allied successes that pushed the German army back to the battlefields of 1914.<sup>22</sup> In August 1918, Allied forces, under the leadership of Marshal Foch, launched a counter-offensive which consisted of a series of attacks aimed at reaching important railway hubs and improving lines of communication.<sup>23</sup> The offensives were launched in rapid succession to prevent the OHL from directing reinforcements to critical points. From the summer of 1918 onwards, the Allies were constantly on the advance. The Allies were able to attack with superior manpower, artillery fire and tanks.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the British, French and US aircraft outnumbered their German counterparts.<sup>25</sup> Dominance in the air enabled the Allies to photograph German positions and direct their artillery fire from aircraft, as well as prevent the Germans from doing the same. This allowed the Allies to conceal their preparations about where the next attack would come from.

---

<sup>18</sup> Imperial War Museums, ‘[10 Significant Battles of the First World War](#)’, 3 January 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Maria Anthony, ‘[From Amiens to Armistice: The Hundred Days Offensive](#)’, Imperial War Museums, 6 August 2018; and Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, pp 151–2.

<sup>20</sup> Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 152.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Maria Anthony, ‘[From Amiens to Armistice: The Hundred Days Offensive](#)’, Imperial War Museums, 6 August 2018; and Imperial War Museums, ‘[10 Significant Battles of the First World War](#)’, 3 January 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Maria Anthony, ‘[From Amiens to Armistice: The Hundred Days Offensive](#)’, Imperial War Museums, 6 August 2018; and Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 153.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p 154.

<sup>25</sup> Maria Anthony, ‘[From Amiens to Armistice: The Hundred Days Offensive](#)’, Imperial War Museums, 6 August 2018.

At 4:20am on 8 August 1918, the Battle of Amiens began, signifying the start of the Allied counter-offensive.<sup>26</sup> The BEF advanced alongside French troops on a 14-mile front behind artillery barrage. Planned in secrecy, the assault came as a surprise to the German army. Troops of the Canadian and Australian Corps spearheaded the surprise attack and advanced quickly behind 534 tanks.<sup>27</sup> There was also more than 800 aircraft for the attack.<sup>28</sup>

On the first day of the offensive, the German army suffered around 27,000 casualties and some 15,000 soldiers surrendered.<sup>29</sup> General Ludendorff later described it as the “black day of the German army”.<sup>30</sup> The fighting continued for three more days and was halted on 11 August 1918, with the Allies shifting their attack to a different part of the front.<sup>31</sup>

The Allies continued to attack in this way and the strategy contributed to a further series of successful attacks.<sup>32</sup> By the end of August 1918, the Allies had captured Albert, Bapaume, Noyon and Peronne during the second Battle of the Somme. In August 1918, the German army had 228,000 casualties, 21,000 dead and 110,000 missing.<sup>33</sup>

By late September 1918, the Allied forces had reached the Hindenburg line, a series of heavily fortified zones that formed the main German defences.<sup>34</sup> It extended from Tilloy, outside Arras in the north, to near Vailly on the river Aisne in the south. For the German army, holding the Hindenburg line was critical to avoid defeat and to prolong the fighting into 1919.<sup>35</sup>

In the last week of September 1918, several major Allied offensives were launched on the western front.<sup>36</sup> On 29 September 1918, victory at the Battle of St Quentin Canal saw two key positions in the Hindenburg line

<sup>26</sup> Commonwealth War Graves Commission, ‘[Battle of Amiens](#)’, accessed 22 October 2018.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*; Maria Anthony, ‘[From Amiens to Armistice: The Hundred Days Offensive](#)’, Imperial War Museums, 6 August 2018; and JM Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914–1918*, p 99.

<sup>28</sup> JM Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914–1918*, p 99.

<sup>29</sup> Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 154; and Commonwealth War Graves Commission, ‘[Battle of Amiens](#)’, accessed 22 October 2018.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*; and Maria Anthony, ‘[From Amiens to Armistice: The Hundred Days Offensive](#)’, Imperial War Museums, 6 August 2018.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*; and Imperial War Museums, ‘[10 Significant Battles of the First World War](#)’, 3 January 2018.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>33</sup> Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 154; David Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall: Victory and Defeat in 1918*, 2011, p 36; Martin Kitchen, *The German Offensives of 1918*, 2001, pp 260–78; and Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: Complete History*, 2008, p 452.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*; and HM Government, ‘[Centenary of the First World War: Battle of Amiens](#)’, August 2018, p 48–9.

<sup>35</sup> JM Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914–1918*, p 100; and HM Government, ‘[Centenary of the First World War: Battle of Amiens](#)’, August 2018, p 49.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*.

broken. Between 30 September and 2 October, Allied forces pushed the German army back to their final prepared defences: the Beaulieu line, roughly three kilometres behind the main Hindenburg system. The fighting was “ferocious and intense”.<sup>37</sup> However, on 5 October, Australian and British infantry were able to secure the last German positions. While Allied troops attacked the Hindenburg line in France, Foch’s series of coordinated offensives continued, and on 28 September began the liberation of the Belgian coast.

## 2. Armistice of November 1918

### 2.1 Negotiations for an Armistice

In early October 1918, Germany petitioned the US President Woodrow Wilson for an armistice, on the basis of his Fourteen Points; Wilson’s programme for post-war peace, which he set out in a speech to the US Congress in January 1918.<sup>38</sup> The breaking of the Hindenburg line was only one of a number of factors which led the German army high command to seek a ceasefire.

By late 1918, the western front was one of several frontiers on which the Central Powers were coming under increasing pressure.<sup>39</sup> On 29 September 1918, Bulgaria surrendered and agreed terms after an Allied offensive into Serbia. In Palestine, the Battle of Megiddo precipitated the end of the Ottoman Turkish Empire’s war effort, and on 30 October 1918, Turkey signed an armistice with the Allies. A few days after Turkey’s surrender, on 3 November, the Austro-Hungarian Empire signed an armistice with the Allies, following its defeat in the Battle of Vittorio Veneto in northern Italy.

In response to Bulgaria’s surrender, Ludendorff advised the German crown council that terms should be negotiated immediately and urged the Kaiser to appoint a chancellor who would have support of the Reichstag.<sup>40</sup> On 3 October 1918, Max von Baden was appointed.<sup>41</sup> In the night of 3 to 4 October, the German government sent a message to President Wilson asking him for his help in arranging an armistice based on his Fourteen Points. President Wilson’s programme for post-war peace included the removal of economic barriers and the freedom of the seas; the reduction of national armaments; the evacuation and restoration of Belgium; the liberation of France and the return of the Alsace and Lorraine region; and

<sup>37</sup> HM Government, [Centenary of the First World War: Battle of Amiens](#), August 2018, p 52.

<sup>38</sup> Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 163; and UK Government History of Government blog, [‘President Wilson’s Fourteen Points: A Recipe for World Peace?’](#), 8 January 2018.

<sup>39</sup> HM Government, [Centenary of the First World War: Battle of Amiens](#), August 2018, p 52.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*; and Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 162.

<sup>41</sup> Christopher Culpin and Ruth Henig, *Modern Europe 1870–1945*, 2002, p 256.

the creation of an international association of nations to guarantee to its members political independence and territorial integrity.<sup>42</sup> A public exchange of notes between President Wilson and the German government followed, while the coordinated Allied attacks continued. The German army withdrew where necessary but continued to fight.<sup>43</sup>

In the first two notes, President Wilson demanded the immediate evacuation of Belgium and France and an end to submarine warfare.<sup>44</sup> However, after the intervention of the British, French and Italian prime ministers, David Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau and Vittorio Orlando respectively, Woodrow Wilson informed the German government about additional conditions in his third note dated 23 October 1918.<sup>45</sup> Wilson indicated that the Allies were not willing to negotiate with the OHL or the Kaiser.

## 2.2 Terms of the Armistice

Between mid-July and mid-November 1918, the Allies had suffered just over 1 million casualties wounded, killed, and missing.<sup>46</sup> Of these, more than 530,000 were French troops, around 410,000 were from British Empire forces, and 127,000 were US forces. However, German forces had lost over 1.1 million casualties, including over 380,000 that had been captured. According to professors John Bourne and Christoph Mick, by the beginning of November 1918, the German troops on the western front were nearing the end of their endurance.<sup>47</sup>

Christoph Mick states that the new German government was “no longer willing to leave the fate of Germany [...] in the hands of irresponsible commanders”, and on 26 October 1918, Ludendorff was “forced” to resign.<sup>48</sup> The historian, David Stevenson suggests that the “primacy of politics” was restored and the “dictatorship of the [...] OHL was finally over”.<sup>49</sup> John Bourne states that the German military high command could not “bring itself to accept responsibility for defeat”, and left the negotiations for surrender to junior offices and civilians.

---

<sup>42</sup> UK Government History of Government blog, ‘[President Wilson’s Fourteen Points: A Recipe for World Peace?](#)’, 8 January 2018.

<sup>43</sup> Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 162.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, p 163.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*; and Christopher Culpin and Ruth Henig, *Modern Europe 1870–1945*, 2002, p 146.

<sup>46</sup> HM Government, [Centenary of the First World War: Battle of Amiens](#), August 2018, p 54.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid*; JM Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914–1918*, p 100; and Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 162.

<sup>48</sup> Christoph Mick, ‘1918: Endgame’, in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 162.

<sup>49</sup> David Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics*, 1991, pp 222–7.

On 6 November 1918, an armistice commission was appointed in Berlin, chaired by German government minister, Matthias Erzberger, along with military and diplomatic representatives.<sup>50</sup> On 8 November 1918, the German delegation crossed the front and was brought onto Marshal Foch's train in the forest of Compiègne.<sup>51</sup> Foch, as head of the Allied commission, had drafted the terms for the armistice, which were handed to the German delegation. Germany was given seventy-two hours to accept or reject them: it was to relinquish all the territory it had conquered since 1914, as well as Alsace-Lorraine.<sup>52</sup> The Rhineland would be demilitarised. The left bank of the Rhine would be occupied by the Allies, and the Allies would also establish three bridgeheads on the right bank of the Rhine. The conditions of the armistice gave Germany 14 days to leave all occupied territory and 28 days to withdraw across the river Rhine. The German fleet was to be interned in harbours of neutral countries or handed to the British. Germany also handed over the greater part of its machinery of war, its submarines, its heavy guns, its mortars, its airplanes and 25,000 machine guns.

The fighting continued during the exchange of notes between President Wilson and the German government and during the negotiations in Compiègne.<sup>53</sup> More than half a million soldiers were killed or wounded during this time.<sup>54</sup> Max von Baden had authorised the German delegation to accept any conditions. On 9 November 1918, the Kaiser abdicated for himself and for his sons and travelled to neutral Holland. On the same day von Baden handed the chancellorship to Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the Social Democrats. Christoph Mick states that Erzberger was unable to get new directives from the German government, and so signed the armistice agreement in a French railway carriage on 11 November 1918, at 5am. The armistice took effect six hours later, at 11am.<sup>55</sup>

At 11am on 11 November 1918, the guns, which had continued firing until the very end, "fell silent".<sup>56</sup>

### 2.3 Announcement in Britain

At 6am on 11 November 1918, the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, received a message from France that the armistice had been

<sup>50</sup> HM Government, [Centenary of the First World War: Battle of Amiens](#), August 2018, p 55.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid*; David Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics*, 1991, pp 229–36; and Christoph Mick, '1918: Endgame', in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 164.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid*; and Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, 2001, p 168.

<sup>53</sup> Christoph Mick, '1918: Endgame', in Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War: Global War*, 2004, p 164; and Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, 2001, p 168.

<sup>54</sup> C Cruttwell, *A History of the Great War 1914–1918*, 1982, p 577.

<sup>55</sup> Estimates of the total number of soldiers who died during the First World War can be found in: Jay Winter (eds), *Cambridge History of the First World War*, vol III, 2014, pp 587–8.

<sup>56</sup> David Stevenson, *1914–1918: The History of the First World War*, 2004, p 498.

signed.<sup>57</sup> He met with his war cabinet at 9:45am to discuss when to make the news public, and the form that the announcement should take.<sup>58</sup> The cabinet decided that the announcement should be made at once through the press bureau. It agreed that the news should be celebrated by the firing of maroons—a type of rocket which made a loud banging noise and a bright flash, playing of bands, blowing of bugles and the “ringing of church bells throughout the kingdom”. The wraps were to be taken off the striking mechanism of Big Ben, and its bells were to be rung for the first time since the war had been declared.<sup>59</sup> The cabinet also settled that the details of the armistice would first be communicated by the Prime Minister to the House of Commons simultaneously with a similar pronouncement by the French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, in the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>60</sup>

In a statement to the House of Commons on 11 November 1918, Lloyd George set out the terms of the armistice. Concluding his speech, he expressed relief that the war had ended:

At eleven o'clock this morning came to an end the cruellest and most terrible war that has ever scourged mankind. I hope we may say that thus, this fateful morning, came to an end all wars.

This is no time for words. Our hearts are too full of a gratitude to which no tongue can give adequate expression. I will, therefore, move “that this House do immediately adjourn, until this time tomorrow, and that we proceed, as a House of Commons, to St Margaret’s, to give humble and reverent thanks for the deliverance of the world from its great peril”.<sup>61</sup>

Because 11 November 1918 fell on a Monday, many people did not turn up for work.<sup>62</sup> Schools and factories were closed, and people celebrated in the streets across Britain. The *Daily Express* described London as in “the throes of jubilation”.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Alan GV Simmonds, *Britain and World War One*, 2012, p 283.

<sup>58</sup> National Archives, ‘[Announcing the War was Over](#)’, CAB23–14, accessed 23 October 2018; and ‘[Armistice](#)’, accessed 23 October 2018.

<sup>59</sup> Alan GV Simmonds, *Britain and World War One*, 2012, p 283.

<sup>60</sup> National Archives, ‘[Announcing the War was Over](#)’, CAB23–14, accessed 23 October 2018.

<sup>61</sup> [HC Hansard, 11 November 1918, col 2463](#).

<sup>62</sup> Alan GV Simmonds, *Britain and World War One*, 2012, p 283; and JM Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914–1918*, p 241.

<sup>63</sup> Further details about memorials and commemorations that were established in Britain and the British Empire during and shortly after the war can be found in the House of Lords Library Briefing, [Britain and the First World War: Parliament, Empire and Commemoration](#), 24 March 2014.

### 3. Centenary Commemorations of the Armistice in the UK

#### 3.1 Government Programme of Centenary Commemorations

##### Overview

The Government has announced a series of events on 11 November 2018 to mark the centenary of the signing of the armistice at the end of the First World War. The programme will include:<sup>64</sup>

- The national service of remembrance at the Cenotaph, which “will follow traditional lines, to respect its wider purpose in remembering the fallen of all conflicts”.
- The Royal British Legion’s veteran dispersal and march past the Cenotaph will be followed by a ‘people’s procession’, made up of 10,000 members of the public.
- During the day, church and other bells will ring out as they did in 1918 to mark the end of the war. Bell-ringing will take place after the veteran’s march and will include 1,400 new bell ringers, recruited to take part in the armistice day commemorations.
- The commemorations will conclude with a national service of thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey in London. Similar services will also take place in Glasgow, Cardiff and Belfast. The Government has stated that the services will “reflect on the four years of war and will give thanks for the soldiers who returned and remember those who did not”.

The Government’s [Armistice 100 website](#) allows people holding commemorative or bell-ringing events to add its details to the [Armistice 100 Map](#), which allows members of the public to search for local events.

In addition, the Government has stated that other elements of its centenary commemorations programme, such as the schools’ battlefields tours and the Victoria Cross paving stones, would “continue to ensure that the final year of the war and the armistice are commemorated appropriately”.<sup>65</sup>

The following sections briefly describe the Government’s commemorative events scheduled to take place on 11 November 2018; the ‘people’s

---

<sup>64</sup> House of Commons, ‘[Written Question: World War I: Anniversaries](#)’, 3 April 2018, 134590; and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, ‘[Descendants Invited to Battle of Amiens Centenary Commemoration](#)’, 9 March 2018.

<sup>65</sup> House of Commons, ‘[Written Question: World War I: Anniversaries](#)’, 3 April 2018, 134590. Further information about the UK government’s centenary commemorative programme can be found in the House of Lords Library Briefing, [Britain and the First World War: Parliament, Empire and Commemoration](#), 24 March 2014.

procession' and the 'ringing remembers' project. It then provides an overview of the Victoria Cross paving stones programme and the schools' battlefields tours. The last section summarises a selection of other First World War centenary commemorative projects taking place in 2018. Further information about the Government's programme of centenary commemorative events and projects can be found in the House of Lords Library Briefing, [Britain and the First World War: Parliament, Empire and Commemoration](#) (24 March 2014).<sup>66</sup>

### **People's Procession**

In July 2018, the Government announced that it was opening a ballot for 10,000 members of the public to apply to take part in a people's procession on Sunday 11 November 2018.<sup>67</sup> It stated that after the Royal British Legion's veteran dispersal and march past the Cenotaph, the procession would march down Whitehall where successful applicants would be able to lay wreaths at the Cenotaph. Making the announcement, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Jeremy Wright, stated that the centenary offered "a unique opportunity to show our appreciation for the generation who gave so much to secure this hard fought victory".<sup>68</sup>

### **Ringling Remembers Project**

The government funded 'ringing remembers' project was set up to recruit 1,400 new bell ringers to take part in armistice day 2018 commemorations.<sup>69</sup> It is planned that bells will ring out in unison from churches and cathedrals in villages, towns, and cities across the country. Ringing remembers recruits will ring on armistice day alongside existing ringers across the country.<sup>70</sup> The campaign has been run by the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government in collaboration with the Big Ideas Community Interest Company and the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers.<sup>71</sup> The aim of the project has been to recruit the same number of bell ringers as those who lost their lives in the First World War.<sup>72</sup> Bell ringing and the people's

<sup>66</sup> Further information about commemorative events taking place in Scotland and Wales can be found on the websites [WW100 Scotland](#) on [Wales Remembers](#) respectively.

<sup>67</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, '[Bells to Ring Out and 10,000 to March Past the Cenotaph as the Nation Says "Thank You"](#)', 12 July 2018.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, '[Faith Minister Calls for New Bell Ringers as the Nation Readies for the First World War Centenary](#)', 25 July 2018.

<sup>70</sup> Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, '[Ringling Remembers Badges](#)', 30 September 2018.

<sup>71</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, '[Faith Minister Calls for New Bell Ringers as the Nation Readies for the First World War Centenary](#)', 25 July 2018. Big Ideas is a company which delivers community and educational projects. The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers is the representative body of 65 affiliated societies of bell ringers. It covers all parts of the British Isles, as well as centres of ringing in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the USA, South Africa and Italy.

<sup>72</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, '[Faith Minister Calls for New Bell Ringers as the Nation Readies for the First World War Centenary](#)', 25 July 2018.

procession are to take place after the conclusion of the Royal British Legion's veteran march past the Cenotaph, which follows the national service of remembrance on 11 November 2018.

In July 2018, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, launched the new ringing remembers badge, which will be given to recruits to recognise their participation as learners in the campaign.<sup>73</sup> Speaking about the aim of the project, Lord Bourne said:

The bell ringing community tragically saw 1,400 members lose their lives to the war effort. Their sacrifice will be honoured by our ringing remembers project, which will recruit the same number of bell ringers to take part in the centenary armistice day celebrations. One hundred years ago bell ringers across the country caught and amplified the national mood as four years of war came to an end. In remembrance of that special moment, and of the sacrifice bell ringers made during the First World War [...] we honour those that gave so much to defend our freedom and liberty one hundred years ago.<sup>74</sup>

The Government also announced in July 2018, that with the support of the German government, it was inviting nations across the world to participate in international bell ringing on 11 November 2018.<sup>75</sup> The Government stated that it was encouraging people “to ring bells around the world, as the Government is seeking to replicate the spontaneous outpouring of relief that took place in 1918”.

The Government has invited bells of all kinds—church, military or any other—to ring out at the following times:<sup>76</sup>

- Bells in countries observing Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and Central European Time are invited to ring at 12:30 hours GMT (13:30 hours CET).
- Bells in countries throughout the rest of the world are invited to ring at either 12:30 hours GMT or 12:30pm local time.

### ***Victoria Cross Paving Stones***

In August 2013, as part of the Government's First World War centenary programme, the Department for Communities and Local Government

---

<sup>73</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, '[Faith Minister Calls for New Bell Ringers as the Nation Readies for the First World War Centenary](#)', 25 July 2018..

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, '[Bells to Ring Out and 10,000 to March Past the Cenotaph as the Nation Says 'Thank You'](#)', 12 July 2018.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*

launched a campaign to “remember and honour” all those awarded the Victoria Cross (VC) during the First World War with a commemorative paving stone.<sup>77</sup> There were 627 individuals who received the VC during the First World War.<sup>78</sup> Of these individuals, 361 were born in England, 70 were born in Scotland and 16 were born in Wales, 35 were born in pre-partition Ireland and 145 were born in other countries overseas.<sup>79</sup>

Over the course of the four-year period of the centenary of the First World War (2014 to 2018), on a date corresponding or close to when they were awarded the VC, a commemorative paving stone will be laid close to where the VC recipients were born or lived following the war.<sup>80</sup> In addition, 145 servicemen born overseas, across 19 different countries, have been commemorated in a permanent memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.<sup>81</sup> The first VC paving stones were laid on 23 August 2014 to mark exactly 100 years to the day that the first VCs were awarded during the First World War. The last stones will be laid in November 2018.

### ***Battlefields Tour Programme and Legacy I10 Project***

In June 2013, the Department for Education and the Department for Communities and Local Government announced that they were jointly funding an educational project as part of the Government’s programme of centenary commemorations.<sup>82</sup> The battlefields tours programme provides an opportunity for two pupils and one teacher from every state-funded secondary school in England to visit the western front battlefields of northern France and Belgium from 2014 to March 2019.

In January 2015, the Government launched the legacy I10 project, which was designed to encourage the 8,800 students who were visiting the

<sup>77</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [‘First World Heroes Commemorated as Britain Remembers Battle of Loos’](#), 25 September 2015.

<sup>78</sup> Although in total 628 VC’s were awarded. This is because Noel Chavasse, was awarded the VC twice during the First World War.

<sup>79</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [‘Britain Remembers the Heroes of Passchendaele with Community Ceremonies’](#), 31 July 2017.

<sup>80</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [‘PM Praises the Remarkable Valour and Devotion to Duty of the Overseas-born Recipients of the Victoria Cross’](#), 5 March 2015.

<sup>81</sup> 145 servicemen born in 19 different countries were awarded the Victoria Cross during the First World War. They are Australia (52), Canada (32), India (17), New Zealand (14), South Africa (5), Pakistan (4), United States of America (4), Denmark (2), Germany (2), Netherlands (2), Nepal (2) and Sri Lanka (2) Belgium (1) China (1), Egypt (1), France (1), Iraq (1), and Ukraine (1) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [‘PM Praises the Remarkable Valour and Devotion to Duty of the Overseas-born Recipients of the Victoria Cross’](#), 5 March 2015). For more details and selected biographies see the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government’s brochure, [‘Commemorating the Overseas-born Victoria Cross Heroes’](#) (5 March 2015).

<sup>82</sup> UK Government website, [‘Maria Miller Sets Out How Government Will Mark First World War Centenary in 2014’](#), 10 June 2013.

battlefields on the western front through the battlefields tours programme to share their experiences with 110 other people.<sup>83</sup> Launching the project, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, stated that if every student that went on a tour achieved the legacy 110 target, “880,000 people will have gained a deeper understanding of the First World War—the same as the number of British and colonial soldiers who died during the war”. To qualify, projects must be added to a [designated online map](#) detailing how many members of the local community have been engaged. Each student who successfully completes a legacy 110 project will receive a certificate and specially-commissioned pin badge.

### 3.2 Other Projects

There are various other projects that are being led by both the Government and other organisations to commemorate the centenary of the First World War in 2018. These include:

- The ‘unremembered’: funded by the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government and led by Big Ideas, with additional funding from a National Lottery fund.<sup>84</sup> The UK-wide community project was set up to raise awareness of the contribution of the Labour Corps by delivering a series of initiatives each month. The Labour Corps supplied the army with weapons and ammunition, food, water and fuel, and built and maintained roads and railways. The project was launched in 2017 and is set to continue until the centenary of the armistice.
- Armistice 100 days project: the First World War Centenary Partnership engaged with 100 volunteer writers from 26 Characters Ltd.<sup>85</sup> Each writer has created a 100-word piece based on the life of an individual who experienced the First World War. The pieces were to be released daily from 5 August to 12 November 2018, to mark the centenary of the hundred days offensive and the end of the First World War.
- The ‘lives of the First World War’: an Imperial War Museums (IWM) project to build a permanent digital memorial.<sup>86</sup> Each individual whose contribution to the First World War is

---

<sup>83</sup> Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, ‘[Lord Ahmad Launches First World War Battlefields Legacy Project](#)’, 29 January 2015.

<sup>84</sup> Big Ideas, ‘[The Unremembered: World War One’s Army of Workers \(2018\)](#)’, accessed 24 October 2018.

<sup>85</sup> First World War Centenary Project, ‘[Armistice 100 Days](#)’, accessed 24 October 2018. The IWM established the First World War Centenary Partnership, which consists of a network of over 1,800 cultural and educational organisations from 37 countries. 26 Characters Ltd is a not-for-profit organisation for writers.

<sup>86</sup> Imperial War Museums, ‘[Lives of the First World War: About Us](#)’, accessed 24 October 2018.

recorded in official documents will have a personal 'life story' page.

- Every one remembered: set up by the Royal British Legion in partnership with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) to create a digital memorial to all those from the Commonwealth who died during the First World War.<sup>87</sup> Its objective is that by the end of the centenary in 2018, everyone who died is remembered individually by those living today. People can search the database for a name and add a digital poppy, write a remembrance message, and upload photographs. The information on casualties has been supplied by the CWGC.

---

<sup>87</sup> Royal British Legion, '[Every One Remembered: About](#)', accessed 24 October 2018.