



Growing Remembrance: The Story of the National Memorial Arboretum

David Childs

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The story of the inspiration for, establishment and evolution of the National Memorial Arboretum is a fascinating one. Sited at Alrewas, Staffordshire, the Arboretum has become the Nation's all year round focus for remembering and paying tribute to all who have served their country in both peace and war not only in the armed forces and merchant navy but in the emergency services as well.

Planting began in 1997 and was supported by hundreds of organizations both serving and retired. Among the early memorials was a life-size wooded polar bear, for 49th Division, a grove of Irish trees for the Royal Irish Regiment, an Avenue of Chestnuts for the Police and a Chapel of Peace and Forgiveness to mark the coming of the Millennium. Britain's war-widows had a rose-garden planted for them while the Far East Prisoners of War managed to fund a small museum to stand alongside a length of railway track brought back from the notorious Burma Railway.

In October 2007 HM the Queen confirmed the importance of the site when she opened the Armed Forces Memorial to commemorate all service personnel lost on active service since the end of the Second World War; this is especially poignant given the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The importance of the National Memorial Arboretum is well demonstrated by the growing number of stands and the steady increase in visitor numbers.

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