BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Bedford and District Branch
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

A Service of Remembrance

Sunday 8th November 2026, from 10.30am

Bedford War Memorial, The Embankment

Led by the Bishop of Bedford, The Right Reverend Richard Atkinson OBE

Members of the Public are kindly requested to keep the entrance to the War Memorial clear to enable easy access and egress by the Dignitaries, Clergy, Standards and Veterans, and to enable the younger participants in the Parade to move to the front and have an uninterrupted view of the Service.

Please follow the directions of the Stewards.

The Service is being relayed live on the Internet and DAB Radio by Bedfordshire Health Radio and Bedford Radio.

For information about the Royal British Legion and its work, please visit https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/

For information about becoming a member of the RBL, please visit https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/membership

The organisers wish to express their grateful thanks to the Swan Hotel, Bedford, for their kind support over many years, and for providing hospitality for the Civic Dignitaries.

Welcome

The Parade and Dignitaries assemble. Brief words of welcome are given.

The Exhortation

The Branch Chairman of Bedford and District Branch, Royal British Legion will give the exhortation.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,
We will remember them.

All respond: We will remember them.

Two Minute Silence

At 11.00am, marked by three blasts of the whistle and the last post will be sounded. The silence will be kept for two minutes.

Suggested subjects for thought and prayer during the Silence are:

We remember those who made the great sacrifice during the two World Wars;
We remember those who have given their lives in the service of their country in other conflicts;
We pray for those who suffer at this time;
We pray for those who have been bereaved; We pray for peace;
We pray that we may be worthy of the sacrifice made on our behalf.

The end of the silence will be marked one long blast of the whistle followed by the playing of the Reveille.

Laying of the Wreaths

Wreaths will then be laid at the War Memorial during which music is played: Beethoven's Funeral March No 1.

Members of the public wishing to place wreaths or other tributes at the War Memorial are invited to do so after the Service has concluded.

Service Introduction and Prayer

Delivered by The Bishop of Bedford, The Right Reverend Richard Atkinson OBE:

O Almighty God, grant, we beseech thee, that we who here do honour to the memory of those who have died in the service of their country and of the Crown, may be so inspired by the spirit of their love and fortitude that, forgetting all selfish and unworthy motives, we may live only to thy glory and to the service of mankind through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: O God, Our Help in Ages Past

All present are invited to join in singing:

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

Beneath the shadow of thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

Prayer

The Bishop of Bedford, The Right Reverend Richard Atkinson OBE will deliver the following prayer:

Teach us, good Lord, to serve thee as thou deservest;
to give and not to count the cost;
to fight and not to heed the wounds;
to toil and not to seek for rest;
to labour and not to ask for any reward,
save that of knowing that we do thy will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All present are invited to join in saying The Peace Prayer:

Lead us from Death to Life
from Falsehood to Truth
Lead us from Despair to Hope
from Fear to Trust
Lead us from Hate to Love
from War to Peace
Let Peace fill our Hearts
our World, our Universe: Peace. Peace. Peace.

Intercessions

Offered by the Bishop of Bedford, the Right Reverend Richard Atkinson OBE.

Let us give thanks for the selfless and courageous service and sacrifice of those who brought peace to the World, and for the good example they have given us; for those who work for peace and liberty throughout the world, for the Armed Forces of the Crown, and for all who strive to bring an end to injustice and oppression.

We pray for nations still devastated by war, for their people and their leaders, and for those who suffer the effects or memories of past wars; for veterans, for those who mourn, and for all innocent victims whose lives have been shattered by the cruelty of others.

We pray for those in our own day who have grown weary or lost hope as a result of violence or terror; for all refugees and displaced people, and for those who seek to address the causes of discord and distrust.

Let us give thanks for the reconciliation of former enemies, for the flourishing of goodwill between them, and for the many blessings we enjoy as a result of the sacrifices which have been made for peace.

The Lord's Prayer

All present are invited to join in the prayer:

Our Father, Which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Kohima Epitaph

Delivered by a member of Bedford & District Branch, Royal British Legion:

When you go home, Tell them of us and say:
“For your tomorrow, we gave our today”.

The Blessing

Delivered by The Bishop of Bedford,
The Right Reverend Richard Atkinson OBE:

Unto God’s gracious mercy and protection, we commit you:
The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you his peace, this day and always. Amen.

Reveille is sounded.

The National Anthem

All present are invited to join in singing:

God save our Gracious King, Long live our noble King,
God save The King.
Send him victorious, happy and glorious;
Long to reign over us,
God Save The King.

Thy choicest gifts in store, on him be pleased to pour,
Long may he reign.
May he defend our laws, and ever give us cause
To sing with heart and voice
God Save the King.

The Procession

The Dignitaries process from the War Memorial to the Saluting Base.

The Standards and Veterans march off to The March of the Royal British Legion - Thomas Bidgood.

In Retrospect

The world asks a great deal of the poppies,
insists they carry the wounds of war
and shoulder the weight of remembrance.
Such flimsy, wavering plants;
we painted their flowers the colour of blood
and punched dark holes in their heads
as if bullets had passed through,
then trimmed them with green sprigs of hope.
And from deep in the seeds we concocted
the essence of sleep and dreams and resting-in-peace.
Almost weightless even in full bloom
we made them souls, the poppies, souls
of those who we lost, and – let it be said –
those who we killed.

Poppies – nursed in darkness, nourished by dirt.
But for all their spindly roots, frail stalks
and papery petals – as easily smudged
as a butterfly wing –
they joggle into existence
again and again, unearthing themselvesin fallow fields
and railway sidings,
on roundabouts, verges and no man's land,
from the brickwork of old chimneys and bridges
and cracks in the pavement.
They nod and they nag,
reminding us not to forget, flagging a red alert
as their crumpled petals unfold.
So, rightly, the poppies ask a great deal of the world.

Simon Armitage, Poet Laureate
Composed to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of VE Day

SCAN ME

An online version of the Order of Service is available; please scan the QR code or go to:

http://www.bedford.gov.uk/Order-Of-Service

Everyone is welcome at the Armistice Day Commemoration on Wednesday 11th November 2026 in Harpur Square, Bedford, from 10.30am onwards