Sermon from Wildflower Memorial Walk Inaugural Service

So why have we come here today?
What is so special about this walk that we want to surround it in prayer, that we think it is important enough to spend the time and energy putting it all together and doing all the research as some of you most definitely have and for which we as a village thank you, the time and energy into tending each of the sites which is not just a one off event but a commitment to tend it throughout the years ahead, so why do we feel this need to remember, what is so important about it?

As some of you know my mum died last week. And one of the realities when a loved one passes away is that we remember them and we can't not remember.

So Is there any value in remembering? What is the value of having a time like this in which we remember these men who gave their lives so we might have our beautiful peaceful countryside still in which to remember them?

One value is that remembering honours them in a number of different ways.

Firstly they are not forgotten
I have lived in at least five or six communities in our married life. After we left a community and had been gone for a while, there were many things we forgot about that community. But once in a while we have met someone from that community and as we began to talk the memories flooded back.

We sometimes think that the same thing happens when a person passes away. We fear that after they die, they will soon be forgotten. Remembering and being deliberate about remembering means that they are not forgotten and in that we honour their memory.

Remembering also helps us think about what they meant to us. There is a story in the Acts of the apostles which I love. A woman by the name of Dorcas became ill and died. The people of her community sent for Peter. Were they perhaps hoping that he could raise her from the dead? When Peter got there we read in Acts 9, "...they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them."

In this story they were remembering and they were declaring what Dorcas meant to them. I like that picture and as we walk this walk and remember we also are thinking about and declare what they did for us means something.
Such memories can also do more than just give us an opportunity to be encouraged by what they meant to us, they can also encourage and perhaps even challenge us by remembering their impact on our life.

So as we walk the walk, let’s think about how life might have been if it had not been for what they, and many others did for us, for our freedom, for our peace?
As we remember, we also hopefully are encouraged to continue to imitate their lives. To live in peace and harmony with one another and yet not be afraid to speak out, to stand up and be counted when things happen which are wrong and need addressing.

When we build on such memories and share them with others, especially children and young people, we are part of passing on a heritage.
Hebrews talks about being surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. This comes after a whole chapter which reflects on the different people who followed God and how their life turned out.
And so as we walk this walk let us take time to appreciate these people who are a part of the crowd of witnesses urging us onward, urging us to remember so that we might remember and cherish the peace we have.

This walk will give us opportunities to remember with thanksgiving all those who, in family and friendship, in the community of faith, and in the life of our community have been part of the shaping of our lives, even if we don’t know them except by name.

So calling to mind all that has been, we look to God’s future for a time of peace.

Peace means so much more than the absence of war. It means the establishment of a just society; it means compassionate relationships. Each of us is called to be a peacemaker in the places where we live and work. Peace needs to start with ourselves.
Our prayer needs to be, “And let it begin with me, Lord”. If we have a deep conviction about real justice and real compassion, then we need always to be on the lookout for ways of being part of the solution, not part of the problem. God calls us to be different, to stand up and be counted for what we believe in.

So, I pray as we spend time walking this walk tending the places along it pausing and reflecting on those named we look to God’s future with renewed hope for true peace - not as the world gives, but that which comes from God himself.

Amen.