

📣 Calling all Knitters 📣

Message from 'The Wilderness'

Do you live in or nearby Shirley (Croydon) and can spare some time to knit for us?

2023 marks 100 years since Revd. William Wilks' death and 180 since his birth.

We are asking local knitters to help us craft at least 180x poppies that we can share with the community to help raise money for The Wilderness. Knitters are welcome to take some of the wool we have here at the cabin and we have knitting patterns (created by one of our conservation volunteers) to take home also. Part of the pattern talks of sewing in a safety pin and we can do that here in the Cabin if it's easier.

We are aiming to have at least 180x poppies by 3rd March which was the day of his death. From there, we will lay them on his grave which is in the churchyard of St. John's the Evangelist on Shirley Church Road.

We are currently stringing knitted poppies to our fairy lights for visitors to admire but on the 3rd March (weather permitting), we'll place them on Wilks' grave for passers by to see.

For those wishing to buy a poppy, they can do so here at The Cabin and the money raised will go towards the ongoing conservancy of The Wilderness.

Background:

Revd. William Wilks was ordained vicar of Shirley in 1879 and his ministry continued until 1912. He was a very enthusiastic gardener and also a Fellow of the [RHS - Royal Horticultural Society](#). One day while walking in a cornfield near to the vicarage, he spotted a red poppy edged with white amongst the common field poppies.

*Delighted by his discovery, he spent the next ten years from 1880 developing what became the world-renowned Shirley Poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*).*

He wrote:

'I marked the flower and saved the seed heads. Next year I planted them in the vicarage garden and out of 200 plants, 3 or 4 had white edged petals. Then after years of selection I got flowers of pure white, pale pink, and other colours with golden instead of black edged petals.'

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