

Artist Statement

I chose these photos as a representation of “London Life.” In the United States, we celebrate Veteran’s Day, known as Remembrance or Poppy Day here in the United Kingdom. As a freelance photographer in the United States, I have had the opportunity to cover small town events and parades for Veteran’s Day. However, this day in the United Kingdom is celebrated differently; there are many ceremonies leading up to the actual day of November 11th. It was inspiring to see different nationalities and people of all ages showing their pride by sporting a poppy on their coats. It was easy to have the same feeling of pride remembering people who served or are serving in the armed forces. It seems to me that this may be a common truth shared by all people no matter where they may live.

I attended a variety of events such as the parade on Remembrance Sunday and other smaller town functions on the actual day. I wanted to photograph not only one event but several throughout the day to give more of a feeling for what Remembrance Day is about. The parade was an exciting for me and I felt what is must be like to be British for a day! I arrived early for the parade to get a good spot in hopes of catching a glimpse of the Royal Family. British people soon packed in around me hoping for that same glimpse; it was surprising to have learned most of the people in the crowd traveled a far distance to be there and it was their first time as well. Unfortunately, after waiting 3 1/2 hours for the parade to start, the military stood right in front of my view of the Cenotaph. So, like the rest of the crowd I had to stand on my tiptoes to get a glance of the Royal family; next time I will have to find a way to obtain a press pass. Oh well, at least now I can say “I saw them,” even if it was just the tops of their heads!

Moreover, I don’t ever remember observing two minutes of silence on this day in the United States. The two minutes of silence is to commemorate the end of fighting during World War I. It was a unique experience to see this busy city fall silent and no matter what someone was doing, they stopped to observe and reflect. It was quite an emotional feeling for me to realize everyone across the United Kingdom was doing this at the exact same time. This single act had a profound effect on me with respect to the enormity of its significance.



Remembrance day is also a day of caution. There was heightened security around the Cenotaph due to vandalism in 2000. It was a shame because the policemen barricaded the Cenotaph off and didn't allow anyone close to it. I found this slightly ironic because it was a day for remembering liberation, but yet people were being restricted. It was necessary, but nevertheless attests to the need for diligence to ferret out those who would attempt violence for their causes. This is as true here as anywhere else, including the United States.

This day was something I read about and assumed it was like Veteran's Day in the United States. However, I now realize it is much more than this; it is more about honoring people who served while showing pride of country. It is an awe inspiring feeling to see people from all walks of life come together for this day to remember. I will never forget my experiences here. I am leaving with a heightened sense of pride and appreciation for the freedoms all countries provide and I am thankful for the countless men and women who sacrificed to make this happen.

Jessica Rotkiewicz
jmrphotos@hotmail.com
16 Umberston Street
London, England E1 1PY
07531212067
www.jmrphotography.com