

Holocaust Memorial Day 2025

Shropshire Council Resources Pack

Planting a cherry tree orchard of remembrance in Shropshire

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) takes place on 27 January each year and is a time to remember the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust, under Nazi Persecution and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. It marks the Holocaust and other atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis, including against the six million Jews who were murdered, and atrocities against people with disabilities, Sinti and Roma communities, people who were black or Slavic eg from Poland, and people who were gay.

Here in Shropshire, our aim is to help primary school children to learn about the Holocaust and other genocides in a way that will be age-appropriate and memorable, and that will help them to grow in their understanding of and respect for world faiths as well.

We find a different primary school each year, in different parts of our large rural county, at which to plant a cherry tree in an ecumenical ceremony to commemorate the Holocaust and other genocides. We planted our first tree at Mereside School in Shrewsbury in 2015.

We also return each July to the Remembering Srebrenica tree that we planted in Shrewsbury in July 2021, to commemorate the humanitarian role of the armed forces. Mereside School take part in ceremonies here, as do the Shrewsbury Interfaith Forum and South Shropshire Interfaith Forum

We are planting our next tree in the south this year as part of our efforts to grow a cherry tree orchard across Shropshire, after planting in Ellesmere last year. It will be planted on the morning of Monday 27th January, at Ludlow Primary School. There will then be 20 cherry trees planted with primary schools, plus five that we planted with secondary schools in 2016 as well.

We will hold a ceremony involving South Shropshire Interfaith Forum, the school itself, and the local Shropshire Council councillors, in which we will think about the theme for the year, and say prayers and light candles, and in which the school will make a promise to look after their tree.

This year, we are thinking in particular about the theme “For a better future” and how this links with helping children and young people in Shropshire to grow up with a deeper understanding of the need for acceptance of each other as we are, and what people are capable of if they forget what humanity is.

It is the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp complex, and the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia.

80 years on from the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred) has increased significantly in the UK and across the world. Extremists are

exploiting the situation to stir up anti-Muslim hatred in the UK. Many UK communities are feeling vulnerable, with hostility and suspicion of others rising. The hope articulated by the HMD Trust is that HMD 2025 can be an opportunity for people to come together, learn both from and about the past, and take actions to make a better future for all.

Shropshire Council will encourage people to join in with the national moment of remembrance. This is at 8pm on 27 January, when people across the nation will light candles and put them safely in their windows to:

- remember those who were murdered for who they were
- stand against prejudice and hatred today

Iconic buildings and landmarks will light up in purple during this powerful national moment of commemoration and solidarity.

More about the trees

As well as sourcing the trees through kind support from our arboriculturist team here, John Blessington from the team is helping with practicalities including guidance on looking after the trees as they grow alongside the children of the schools involved.

They are Black Oliver flowering cherries, a variety native to the West Midlands, chosen to link in with the importance of fruiting trees in Judaism, Islam and Christianity, and to illustrate our wish to show welcome for different faiths within our local area.

The trees were planted, in year order, as follows:

2015 Mereside in Shrewsbury
2016 Woodside in Oswestry
2017 Bishop Hooper in Ashford Carbonell (two trees)
2018 Trinity CoE, Ford
2019 St Peter's, Wem
2020 Lydbury North and Onny, nr Craven Arms (two trees)
2021 Longlands, Market Drayton
2022 Sheriffhales, Shifnal
2023 St John's and St Leonard's, Bridgnorth (two trees)
2024 Ellesmere Primary, Ellesmere

Five further trees were also planted in 2016 with Belvidere in Shrewsbury, Church Stretton, Corbett in Baschurch, The Priory in Shrewsbury, and at Sundorne in Shrewsbury, reaching secondary school students across the county.

We also have a special Remembering Srebrenica tree planted in July 2021 at Shirehall in Shrewsbury, to coincide with Remembering Srebrenica Day on 11th July. This commemorates the humanitarian role of the armed forces, and brings the total number to 20 trees including the one to be planted in 2025 in Ludlow.

There is more about the role of the local armed forces, in blogs produced by Shropshire Archives Team, at <https://www.shropshirearchives.org.uk/>

More about Holocaust Memorial Day

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) takes place on 27 January each year and is a time to remember the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust, under Nazi Persecution and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

Holocaust Memorial Day is a time when we seek to learn the lessons of the past and recognise that genocide does not just take place on its own – it's a steady process which can begin if discrimination, racism and hatred are not checked and prevented.

The aims of HMD are laid out in the [statement of commitment](#). HMD activity organisers bring together the diverse strands of their communities to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day in their neighbourhoods. This is a real demonstration of how the lessons of the past can inform our lives today and ensure that everyone works together to create a safer, better future.

Each year thousands of activities take place for HMD, bringing people from all backgrounds together to learn lessons from the past in creative, reflective and inspiring ways. From schools to libraries, workplaces to local authorities, HMD activities offer a real opportunity to honour the experiences of people affected by the Holocaust and genocide, and challenge ourselves to work for a safer, better future.

Local activities and events

Date and time: Saturday January 25th 5-00pm

Title: HMD 2025 - For a better future: remembering past genocides

Location: Church Stretton United Reformed Church, 75 High Street, Church Stretton, Shropshire SY6 6BY

Presentations, discussion, remembrance. Organised by South Shropshire Interfaith Forum. All Welcome

Date and time: Monday 27th January 1030-12 noon

Title: Poetry for Holocaust Memorial Day

Location: Shrewsbury Abbey, Shrewsbury

A recital of poems from the Holocaust and other genocides, and some poems of hope. On Holocaust Memorial Day we remember the victims of the Nazi regime from 1933 to 1945, when 6 million Jews were systematically murdered, as were thousands of disabled people, Roma people, gay men, political opponents of the Nazis, and many others. We remember that genocide did not stop in 1945, and so we also recall more recent events in Cambodia, Bosnia, and elsewhere. By hearing poems written by victims of genocide and atrocity, we can think of the individuals behind the statistics, and also try to feel hope for a better future.