



Image: The Royal British Legion

DBA Design Effectiveness Awards
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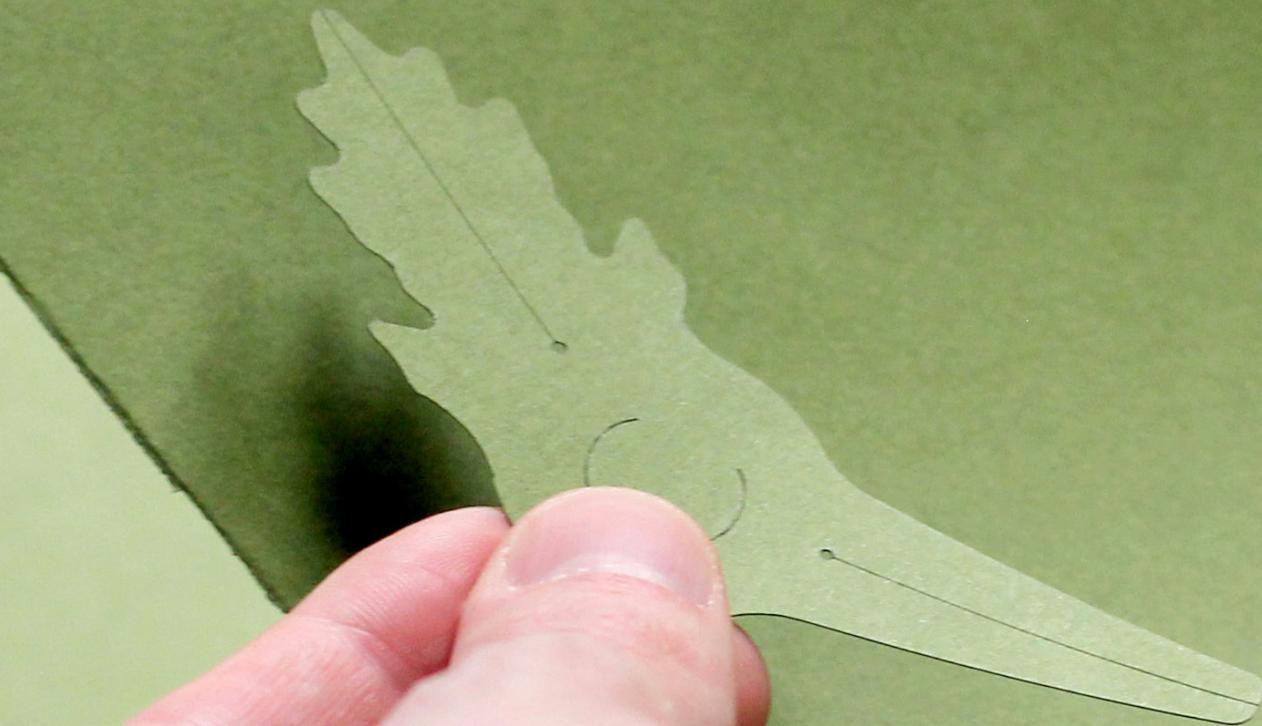


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The iconic remembrance poppy had remained unchanged for almost three decades. Our partnership with The Royal British Legion led to a new poppy for the current era, made entirely from paper.

We set out to remove 70 million pieces of single-use plastic from production annually, while respecting the symbolic iconography. The new poppy is made from 100% paper, using 50% up-cycled fibre and is assembled without the use of any adhesive. It is 100% recyclable via ordinary paper collections and a life cycle assessment shows a 40% reduction in carbon emissions.

Responsibly designed, for a positive purpose.



PROJECT BACKGROUND

This project has become one of our leading case studies to demonstrate the varied roles of effective design in industry. Not only to craft the executional solution to a problem, but to provide informed provocation to influence a client's ambitions. To facilitate design process and navigate progress with multiple stakeholders. And to prototype, simulate and validate design solutions, to give confidence for implementation.

The ambition of creating an all-paper poppy was something that emerged within our studio. It was an idea that we felt would offer a hugely positive impact to the charity and the environment and would communicate an important message more broadly, given its extremely high public profile. We felt inspired and very motivated to try to make it happen. We embarked on a first phase of self-initiated, creative provocation, to demonstrate the potential to The Royal British Legion (RBL), with the objective of establishing a live project with them. We first took our provocation to James Cropper, the paper mill who made the stock used to produce the petals of the existing poppy. We then approached The Royal British Legion (RBL) in partnership, as solution and supplier. The RBL were highly receptive and the plastic-free poppy became the lead project within their existing development programme - to reduce single use plastics across their portfolio.

Alongside our original partner James Cropper who would produce and supply the paper, we established a strong relationship and worked closely with Automated Industrial Robotics (AIR) who would build the automated assembly machines, and Univercity College London (UCL) who provided life cycle assessment for the new design. We also subcontracted an animation studio and print supplier for the production of marketing materials. At The RBL we worked with the Transformation Leader, the Environment and Sustainability Advisor, the Product Testing team and later with the Marketing and Social Content teams.

As a design consultancy, we stayed central to the holistic team, working independently with each partner organisation, to keep the process collaborative, on track and ensure the new poppy would deliver against everyone's needs.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

CREATIVE PROVOCATION

NOV 2020 - MAR 21

Self-initiated design concepts to engage James Cropper and The RBL in an all-paper poppy ambition.

DESIGN PROPOSAL

MAR 21 - APR 21

Updated design concept and video pitch to win The RBL's formalised Supplier Engagement Application.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

APR 21 - APR 22

- _Workshop hosting and facilitation*
 - _Iterative design development and refinement*
 - _Prototyping for technical testing*
 - _Translation to Poppyscotland poppy and assembly.*
 - _Prototyping and communication for board review and approval*
 - _Lead design specification for production*
 - _Support of paper development and specification X James Cropper*
 - _Design for automated assembly solution X AIR*
 - _Support with design details for LCA X UCL*
-

LAUNCH ACTIVATION

FEB 23 - OCT 23

- _Creative support for the activation concept and strategy*
 - _Design and creative direction of marketing video*
 - _Design and build of large scale paper-poppy displays*
 - _Press-release content and photography*
-

LAUNCH

26TH OCT 2023

The plastic-free poppy was successfully launched during the Poppy Appeal 2023. Since launch, there has been a 'blended' role-out that sees the new and old poppies both available. This is to utilise all existing stock of the old poppy.

MARKET & CLIENT CONTEXT

Every October and November, the RBL and Poppyscotland give out tens of millions of poppies across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland in return for a donation to the annual Poppy Appeal which provides support for serving and ex-serving personnel and their families.

The previous poppy was non-recyclable and contained two components of single-use plastic, resulting in a mixed material product that was typically used for only 2-3 weeks before being discarded as waste. The plastic components equated to 28 tonnes of single use plastic produced and disposed of annually. The poppy was a threat to the environment, but also donations and reputation due to increasing public awareness of the waste.

The RBL poppies were being assembled on bespoke automated production lines in Aylesford. The Poppyscotland poppies were being assembled both by automation and hand assembly at the Lady Haig's Poppy Factory, Edinburgh.



Image: The Royal British Legion

SCOPE OF WORK & THE JOURNEY

Once engaged with our initial provocation of a plastic-free opportunity, The RBL issued us a formal 'scope of work' as part of their Reduction In Single Use Plastics Project:

Scope of work

Reduce the use of single-use plastics within the Legion and Poppyscotland areas of distribution initially focused on providing a solution to the poppy and wreath manufacturing that is economical, sustainable and less impactful on the environment.

Key Requirements

- Suitable recovery or recycling pathways are available at end of life.
- Poppy must be able to retain structural integrity during 2-3 week in use period.
- The Poppy must be able to be produced by our current and future machines.

Challenges

- Suitable end of life disposal route not yet identified i.e. compostable or recyclable.
- Need to address single use plastic in all components.
- Non SUP components are out of scope i.e. Poppy petal, which reduces the ability to do a 'one size fits all' disposal.
- Current production method is limited to injection moulding.

Central to all, was the requirement to deliver a symbol of remembrance that remains true to the iconic poppy. We were not engaged to redesign or reposition the visual aesthetic.

Throughout the process we stayed true to our original ambition of removing *all* single use plastic and delivering a bold, mono-material, all-paper solution, to ensure a simple and highly accessible end-of-life. This ambition led us to our first significant challenge to the scope - that the Poppy must be able to be produced by current and future machines.

After an initial push-back on our design proposal, due to it not being suitable to run on current machines without changes, we contacted AIR who had been commissioned to make new poppy assembly machines, to understand the broader picture from their perspective. We learned that the old machines were no longer fit for use and would be de-commissioned and new replica machines were to be made. We were able to connect AIR with the RBL project team and convince the development of new machines to be paused until a new all-paper poppy design was finalised. We feel this is a great example of design's ability to transition between stakeholders and facilitate collaborative decisions.

Having had extensive talks with AIR we were able to establish detailed development specifications to ensure automated assembly would be feasible and efficient. The resulting refinement to our brief specifically identified the need for the paper poppy to be produced at extremely high-speed, without the use of adhesives. There are perhaps unexpectedly significant challenges involved with achieving this. However, through numerous design iterations we were able to create a technically feasible solution and demonstrate assembly through a prototyped 'production rig' created in our workshop. The rig demonstrated a mechanism, that harnessed the structural properties of paper, and featured a single mechanical action which would join petal to stem. We briefed AIR with the solution and they were in full agreement to proceed in developing and automating our design. We followed their progress, working closely with AIR and visiting their site at various stages to help solve issues and ensure design intent was successfully maintained.

As a specialist paper mill, James Cropper were instrumental in supporting our ambition and developed two bespoke papers, 'Poppy Red' and 'Poppy Green', unique in colour and made with 50% recycled fibres from coffee cup production. We collaborated closely, ensuring paper samples met the structural requirements for the poppy's production, longevity, colour-fastness, distribution and end-of-life.

Introducing new materials and assembly methods brought new product durability challenges. During our development, we repeatedly evaluated design iterations against the incumbent poppy in a set of tests we developed in the studio, to simulate use-environments. The continued success of our test results gave The RBL team the confidence to proceed.

The project team at The RBL were highly aware that such a significant change to the poppy would be viewed as critical decision at board level. We supported the team with digital communication and storytelling, alongside boxes of studio-made prototypes to engage and excite the business. The RBL commissioned UCL to work with us and our design, in order to run a life cycle analysis and provide clear sustainability evidence. We feel we built an extremely robust proposal for the new poppy by maintaining brand renown and delivering production feasibility, business viability and greatly improved sustainability. The sum of these parts served to invigorate the stakeholders at The RBL and ultimately to bring about their approval for implementation.

DESIGN SOLUTION

The final design solution was the first redesign in 28 years of The Royal British Legion and Poppyscotland's iconic Remembrance Poppy. The redesign was successfully launched in the 2023 Poppy Appeal. When remaining stock of the previous design is diminished, it will ultimately be replaced entirely.

The poppy is now 100% paper. A beautiful, tactile and cost effective, mono-material solution, with responsible source and end-of-life. We partnered with James Cropper who developed two bespoke papers, unique in colour and made with 50% recycled fibres from coffee cup production. The mill will deliver over three miles of Poppy Red and Poppy Green paper rolls each year to be made into millions of poppies.

The new poppy is an assembly of just two components, using a single linear action to create a mechanical snap fit, without adhesives. We developed the unique assembly mechanism and tooling principles and built a proof of principle production rig to inform the development of new assembly machines with AIR. The machines are capable of converting 170,000 poppies a day.

We supported the plastic-free poppy launch with activation concepts and content. We art directed an animated video story of the new design and it's benefits for social content, and we created huge 15:1 scale paper sculptures of the new design for on-site media reveals and public engagement.

As designers, we love an elegant solution and we are pretty proud of this one.

Simple, elegant and cost effective, the new plastic-free poppy uses just two pieces of paper, 'clicked' together, with the central text crisply embossed into the paper itself.





Image: Matter

The new, responsible poppy design serves to sustain the remembrance symbol for years to come and encourage more people to wear a poppy.



RESULTS

- The new poppy has removed all single use plastic. This equates to 70 million pieces, or 28 tonnes, of single use plastic produced annually.
- The new poppy is made from 100% paper and is 100% recyclable via ordinary, household paper collections.
- The bespoke paper for the new poppy has been improved, now using 50% renewably sourced fibres and 50% recycled fibres from coffee cup production.
- The new poppy is assembled efficiently on a high speed production line without the use of any adhesives.
- A life cycle assessment shows a 40% reduction in carbon emissions compared with the previous poppy.
- The symbolic icon of the poppy has remained unchanged. The leaf is now formally fixed in the '11 O'clock position'.
- The new poppy can be worn in the same way, tucked behind a pin or placed in a button hole. Additionally, the new poppy can be securely fastened by pinning through the paper stem.
- The new poppy assembly has a flat back to the product, where the previous poppy did not. This has allowed a self-adhesive (peel and stick) version to be implemented which does not require a pin (great for kids).
- The 2023 Poppy Appeal media campaign effectively conveyed the innovation of the new poppy, garnering widespread attention and enthusiasm from national and regional press, leading to increased demand at roll-out.
- Public feedback has shown increase in brand reputation where 78% think the plastic-free poppy shows The RBL as forward thinking, 74% as relevant, and 71% as focusing on important matters.
- As a result of this project's success, we have since been engaged in exploring plastic free and environmentally focussed solutions to other products in the charity's portfolio.

INFLUENCING FACTORS

The launch of the new poppy was undoubtedly made possible by the successful partnership of a multi-discipline team and the credibility of The Royal British Legion, Poppyscotland and the heritage of their iconic remembrance poppies. As is typically the case, we did not start with nothing, and we did not embark on the project alone. However, we believe we (design) played a significant role in this particular project's success. We self-initiated the ambition and approached client and partners to help make positive change a reality. We challenged the scope of work with creative thinking and technical problem solving. We facilitated collaborative progress between multiple stakeholders. And we helped demonstrate and communicate the benefits of the design, throughout the development, as well as with the public and press at launch.

Specific influencing factors to note:

- When we approached The RBL, it turned out that they already had an initiative in place to reduce single use plastic in their portfolio. This greatly supported The Legion's engagement in our idea. However, we challenged the scope of their formal requirements, by researching and developing a viable solution, which in turn led the organisation to changing their new assembly line specification. An all-paper poppy would not have been achievable without this significant design intervention.
- Having designed the structural solution in our studio, James Cropper took the paper poppy to the next level. The paper specialists created two tailor-made papers for the legion with a blend of 50% renewable fibres and 50% recycled fibres from coffee cup production. This material solution had a notable, positive impact on the final LCA. We initiated the partnership with the paper mill, set the ambition of the project and provided the design for which they developed the paper.
- The bespoke automation development was delivered by AIR. The engineers stepped up to the formidable challenge and translated our principle into a high speed assembly line - it's no mean feat to automate lightweight and delicate pieces of paper at speed. We briefed AIR on the poppy design and the automated assembly approach, having prototyped and proved the principle in our workshop.
- UCL created the data to prove the design's sustainability benefits. This was fundamental for internal approval and market success. The RBL's Environment and Sustainability Advisor engaged UCL to deliver this input. Our role was simply to provide them with the design details, and our design solution provided the successful results.
- The Royal British Legion's PR, Marketing and Social Content teams delivered the launch. Their established social channels and relationships with national press greatly enhanced the campaign. We supported with activation strategies, as well as digital and physical content.

CREDITS

MATTER

We are a design and innovation partner. We create products with transformative ideas and category defining experiences, to elevate daily lives, grow brands and serve sustainability. Difference, made. www.matter.co.uk

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THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

The Royal British Legion (RBL) is the UK's largest charity dedicated to supporting the needs of the Armed Forces community, past and present and their families. The RBL is the champion of Remembrance and safeguards the Armed Forces Covenant. It is well known for the annual Poppy Appeal and its emblem the red poppy. rbl.org.uk

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