

Legion beneficiary kick-starts poppy production

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A former weapons engineer and ships diver in the Royal Navy, was invited to help specialist materials group, James Cropper, kick-start the production of the red paper which is turned into more than 50 million remembrance poppies each year.

Every year 155 miles (250km) of red paper is produced in Burneside, Cumbria, which is then turned into more than 50million remembrance poppies. Specialist materials group James Cropper has been producing the biodegradable paper since 1978, when the Legion stopped using fabric.

David Horsman, a former weapons engineer and ships diver in the Royal Navy, was invited to symbolically kick-start the production process last week.

The firm, overseen by the Cropper family's sixth generation, has taken colour samples from real poppy petals to make the paper close to the real thing.

This year, of course, holds special significance for the Appeal as the world prepares to mark the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War in 1914.

Phil Wild, Chief Executive of James Cropper, said: "Although we are involved each year in the production of papers for remembrance poppies, we don't take it for granted what the poppy means to so many families and the country as a whole.

"Everyone at both James Cropper Paper and Technical Fibre Products are proud to be able to arrange this special gesture of remembrance and support for the Poppy Appeal and are grateful to Mr Horsman for his service, fundraising contributions and time to mark the occasion with us." (Photo right: Dave Watson, chief operating officer of materials group James Cropper, and ex-Navy serviceman David Horsman pour the dye into the blender)



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David Horsman saw the concentrated red colourant gradually turn the swirling container of paper pulp deep crimson, helping to celebrate and raise-awareness of the Poppy Appeal. After serving on vessels including HMS Liverpool from 1979 to 1987, David called on the help of the Legion for financial assistance. Now a successful businessman, he gives thanks for the support offered to him, by giving his time as a Poppy Appeal Organiser.

David said: "Being an ex-servicemen, I have been overwhelmed by the fact that I have started off the production of poppies that will go absolutely everywhere. It really has not sunk in yet.

"The Legion really helped me get on my feet when I left the Navy. The biggest thing they did was to help me set up my own business."

Marcus Hawthorn, Area Manager for the North East, Cumbria and Isle of Man at the Legion, said: "It's a pleasure to witness the start of the poppy journey at

James Cropper.

"The red paper will be transformed into millions of poppies, which enables the Legion to continue providing practical help and support to the whole Armed Forces community."

From Cumbria, the paper makes a 300-mile trip to Kent. Poppy Factories produce more than 50 million remembrance poppies, 500,000 poppies of other types, five million remembrance petals, 100,000 wreaths and sprays, 750,000 remembrance crosses and other remembrance items.

Coloured paper is cut into smaller rolls: Specialist materials group James Cropper has been producing the biodegradable paper since 1978

Dave Watson, James Cropper Chief Operations Officer, said: "We are very proud of our longstanding involvement in the production of the paper poppy.

"It must be said that there is more to this iconic emblem than at first meets the eye - the paper colour does not run in the rain or rub off onto clothing, it retains its vibrant colour and holds its shape.

"The diverse technical chemistry required to achieve this ensures the paper poppy is worn with confidence the world over as a symbol of respect and remembrance."

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