

## Holocaust Memorial Day 2026

### Shropshire Council Resources Pack

#### *This year's activities*

#### ***Local schoolchildren thanked for planting 21<sup>st</sup> cherry tree in the Shropshire Memorial Orchard to mark the Holocaust and other genocides***

Shropshire Council and Whitchurch Town Council have thanked children from Whitchurch Juniors for planting what is now the 21<sup>st</sup> cherry tree in the memorial orchard being grown across Shropshire. The orchard commemorates the Holocaust and other genocides, and is added to each year with the help of local primary schools and faith leaders.

A full school assembly was held with the schoolchildren, involving members of Shrewsbury Interfaith Forum, South Shropshire Interfaith Forum, local vicars, Shropshire Council representatives, and the Mayor of Whitchurch Town Council.



Children read their own poetry, listened to faith leaders sharing reflections and perspectives with them around the HMD theme of “Bridging generations”, and joined in prayers and candle lighting to mark the occasion.



The tree was donated by Whitchurch Town Council, for whom the Mayor, Councillor Mrs Rose Hall, addressed the assembly before the tree was then planted outside by several of the children.

Councillor Andy Hall, portfolio holder for children and education, and local Shropshire Council councillor, said:

*“I was delighted to be able to take part in this truly wonderful event, where Shropshire Council and partners were able to take this very timely opportunity to show joint commitment against racism and religious hatred, and work with our children and young people.*

*“Our aim is to help them grow up with greater awareness and understanding about the Holocaust and other genocides, and why these must not happen again. The children shared their key school values of compassion, kindness and courage, all of which they exemplified in their time with us. I was heartened by what I saw and heard, and I have every confidence that they will grow up remembering this Day, and continuing to demonstrate these values.”*

Councillor Mrs Rose Hall, Mayor of Whitchurch Town Council, said:

*“I thoroughly enjoyed the event at Whitchurch Junior School and how our young people engaged with it, and I was honoured and humbled to have taken part. It is important that we learn the lessons of the past to meet the challenges of the ever-changing world we live in today – and this year’s Holocaust Memorial Day ‘Bridging Generations’ theme did just that. Not only does the donation by ourselves of the tree add to our environmental commitments, but it is also a symbol acting as a reminder of times which should never be repeated and an opportunity to reflect and remember those who have suffered unjustly at the hands of others.”*

For the interfaith forums, Reverend Ken Chippindale of the Shrewsbury Interfaith Forum said:

*“We know that the HMD event will bear fruit in years to come in the lives of the children. It was a pleasure to spend time with all the children, including those who planted the tree. We all agreed that they are a real credit to their school and to their families.*

*“As we reflect together on what has been achieved in the last ten years in planting these trees, we also agree how special the Whitchurch tree will be in helping the orchard to continue to grow and flourish across Shropshire”.*



The children were also working towards making an artwork flame, linked to the theme. On the day, visitors were able to see that each child in school had created a handprint which was then mounted into the flame design. The flames are filled with names of family members.

In follow up, Mrs Lois Dale, for the Council, the Mayor of Whitchurch Town Council, Councillor Mrs Rose Hall, and representatives of world faiths, met with a group of the pupils and worked with them to add to the artwork.

The pupils also shared their thoughts on what the previous week's ceremony had meant to them all, and what they would remember about it.

Alfie – 11 years old

- *I liked learning about how the candle represented the Holocaust and how it represented peace and the 3 world faiths.*
- *I enjoyed planting the tree as a team*

Isla – 10 years old

- *I liked that all the religions came together last week*
- *I will remember planting the tree and helping it to grow*

Max – 10 years old

- *I liked that everyone got a chance to plant the tree, and that we were all involved – togetherness.*
- *I will take the memory of the candle being lit, because it has been to every school that you have been to.*

Violet – 10 years old

- *I liked how we all gathered to remember the people that died*
- *I will remember that everyone needs to remember the people.*
- *How many people died? - Mark told us that 6 million Jewish people and half a million Romany Gypsies. He talked about the Cambodian Genocide and the Rwandan genocide, as well as Bosnia and Darfur. Mark told us about how racism and discrimination often begins with one group, but then spreads to other groups too*

There is now a collective piece that brings the theme to life, like the tree, and provides a fitting way for everyone in Shropshire to commemorate the planting of the 21<sup>st</sup> tree. Pictures will be shared with the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.



### **More about the trees**

In Shropshire, the approach that we have been taking for the last ten years is to work with primary schools through planting cherry trees across our very large and rural county. We involve faith leaders, through the Shrewsbury Interfaith Forum and South Shropshire Interfaith Forum, and local Shropshire Council councillors, as community leaders. We identify a different primary school each year, so the orchard can grow in rural villages and market towns throughout Shropshire.

As well as sourcing the trees through our arboriculturist team here, John Blessington from the team helps 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. This was 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  
2025 Ludlow Primary School

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 11<sup>th</sup> July. This commemorates the humanitarian role of the armed forces, and brings the total number to 21 trees including the one to be planted in 2026 in Whitchurch. 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. 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.