

Town could be seeing double after collapse

Two groups want to bring a replacement poppy to Royal Wootton Bassett

Levana Hayes

levana.hayes@nevvsquest.co.uk

FIRST there was one, then none but now there is the possibility of two poppy statues in Royal Wootton Bassett.

The original marble stone Forever poppy was unveiled by Princess Anne four years ago but collapsed under its own 4.5-tonne weight in October 2017.

It was built to show respect to those repatriated between 2007-2011, to their families and to pay tribute to the British armed forces.

After much debate on how to replace it, a bronze alternative by sculptor Stephen Pettifer was chosen for the empty plinth at the end of Marlowe Way. A group has formed in a bid to raise the £300,000 needed.

But now the creator of the original poppy is constructing what he says is a stronger replica for free – and is looking for a site to place it meaning there could be two built in the town.

Mark Humphrey said: “The overwhelming public admiration and support for the Forever marble poppy has been very encouraging – I can’t wait to see it back to its full glory.

“When it collapsed I was devastated, it’s the only piece I have done that’s ever collapsed, so I felt a strong urge and determination to correct it.”

The four petals on the poppy represent love, honour, gratitude and respect, the stem represents a bolt from a Lee-Enfield .303 rifle used in



Mark Humphrey with the Forever poppy in 2015, before it collapsed under its own weight

the First World War.

Once a site for Mark’s poppy has been confirmed he says it should take between six months and a year to complete.

The Forever Poppy Replacement Fund started its drive to generate the cash needed for the bronze version earlier this year.

Its founder Tom Patterson started it because he wanted to see the poppy return.

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He is planning on organising a number of fundraisers, with St Bartholomew’s, Noremarsch and Longleaze primary schools already getting involved through non-uniform days.

And he is not letting the plan for the free return of the original marble sculpture put him off.

Tom said: “I still plan on fundrais-

ing and have got a few big things in the future to help.”

Martin Lansdowne is working with Mark on bringing back the original.

He told the Adver: “I think Mark is very keen, there’s a message in the original poppy but he’s never given up on bringing it back. He recognised that there’s a mistake that’s been made but he wants to fix it.”