It is time to remember the heroism of nurses

The annual rituals surrounding Remembrance Day have become all the more poignant in recent years, as members of our armed forces have been embroiled in conflicts overseas. Sadly, hundreds have not made it back alive, but many others have been saved and rehabilitated thanks to the extraordinary efforts of the nursing and medical teams in the field and back here in the UK.

Celebrating war is of course a ridiculous notion, but the life-or-death pressures faced by nurses and doctors in war zones have been responsible for innovations that have transformed trauma care in peacetime. Armed conflict has also produced heroic nurses, not only Florence Nightingale and Edith Cavell, but unsung professionals such as Rebecca Warren, who tells her story in this week’s Nursing Standard.

Sergeant Warren is a member of the Territorial Army who spent four months in Afghanistan. She tells her story in matter-of-fact fashion, which belies the bravery behind the simple act of flying into that country, let alone of providing physical and mental health care to the wounded in the most hostile of environments.

Over the years there have been nursing casualties in wars and other conflicts around the globe, but remarkably there is no memorial to them in the UK. However, moves are afoot for a national nursing memorial that would recognise the 1,500 nurses killed in the two world wars. It would be sited at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. Find out more and watch a short video about the plans at www.facebook.com/NursingMemorialAppeal

LESSONS LEARNED BY NURSES IN WAR ZONES HAVE TRANSFORMED TRAUMA CARE IN PEACETIME

The UK’s military efforts will come under the spotlight over the next 12 months. Our troops will be coming home from Afghanistan, and in the summer the nation will mark the centenary of the outbreak of the first world war.

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Have your say by joining our weekly Twitter debate. Every Thursday from 12.30 to 1.30 use #NsComment and share your views with other nurses on a hot topic of the day.