

The Newsletter Autumn 2018

Parish Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Charlcombe



image © Beyond the Battlefield Charity

It's always been a source of sadness to me that I have no record or story of anyone in my family having served in the Great War. I'm sure they did, but it has not been passed down to me. Particularly sad this year as we mark the end of the first World War for the hundredth time.

In spite of that I have always considered Remembrance Day to be vitally important. Steve Turner wrote a poem called 'History Lesson':

*History repeats itself.
Has to.
No-one listens.*

In remembering we listen. Not necessarily to the voices that glorify war or the dead, nor tell us that we are the only nation to suffer, nor still that it is all bound up in God's judgement finding in favour of us alone. But to listen to those who gave their lives, those who want to say 'never again', and to try a bit harder to make that idea become practice. One of the most poignant moments of the eight Remembrance Services we have had at St Stephen's happened four years ago. Later in the service, after the children had brought the poppies they had made to the altar, a serving soldier brought forward a simple wreath and handed it to the children for them to lay at the altar. It symbolized the handing on of the importance of remembering, and to keep it alive.

If we take seriously Christ's words to love our enemies, we take a courageous step towards peace.

Revd Philip

The unplumbed salt estranging sea

Yes, Matthew, the lights are going out. It seems
As if already we stand far away
From so much that we loved, was almost ours,
The cafes, towers, streets, the wine, the dreams
That filled our heads, put there we thought to stay,
Like Bel-Ami, the Count who digs for hours,
Sagan's Cecile and Swann and his Odette,
The films, the larky Sartre: they're all still there
While I am called to be the whole world's child,
Alone in echoing straits and deep in debt
And hearing voices telling me, "Elsewhere
Is fine! Across the water, wide and wild,
You'll find America, and China waits,"
While from the South I hear the closing gates.

John Mowat

This poem salutes Matthew Arnold's 'To Marguerite – Continued' and 'Dover Beach'

Ours are strange and disturbing times.

Is it not ironic that, as we reflect upon four years of slaughter between Christian nations, our leaders stumble towards leaving a union set up to prevent conflict? We commemorate the end of the Great War which, despite its horror, was but the prelude to the Second.

In September 1946, seventy-two years ago, Winston Churchill made a speech in Switzerland, a neutral country, setting out a vision of a future Europe. At no point did he mention the economy. His argument was make to prevent further conflict between nations who share deep cultural roots. He spoke of 'this noble continent, the home of all the great parent races of the Western world, the foundation of Christian faith and ethics, the origin of most of the culture, arts, philosophy and science both of ancient and modern times'. He went on to say 'We must build a kind of United States of Europe. In this way only will hundreds of millions of toilers be able to regain the simple joys and hopes which make life worth living. The process is simple. All that is needed is the resolve of hundreds of millions of men and women to do right'.

At no point during or following the referendum has the issue of PEACE or the prevention of war been a theme in this shameful episode. Its absence says much about our selfishness and petty-mindedness. We have had the endless repetition by self-serving politicians with 'Money, Money, Money'. Our offerings in this Newsletter demonstrate how that shared European experience still resonates deeply in all of us.

Richard Frewer

'All in a day's work'..... The terrible made ordinary

When I was censoring the letters in the afternoon, I came across rather a pathetic thing.

One of our men, apparently searching a dead comrade before burying him, had found about five post cards in his pocket addressed to his nearest friends and relations. They were all picture postcards of the places to which the cards were addressed. On them, in much the same words in each case, he had said that this was the last they would hear of him & that he had done his bit. Apparently some poor fellow had been mortally wounded & had spent the last few moments of his life in writing to all his friends.

From the diary of Captain R. St. C. Brooke, Sept. 23rd 1916 at the Somme



‘Love is strong as death’

Since 2014 we have been marking the centenary of the First World War. On November 11th 2018 the commemorations will be completed as pipers play, church bells ring out and beacons are lit to signal the hundredth anniversary of the Armistice. There have been impressive national and international ceremonies - but also personal and family occasions for remembrance.

On May 6th Sarah and I went to the British Cemetery at Dainville near Arras and spent time beside the grave of Private Harold Brown of the London Regiment who had been killed nearby exactly a hundred years before. He was 20 years old and he was my Aunt’s fiancé.

Auntie Edie played a big part in my growing up. She was a lovely person: it was she who first took

me to church. She never married and as a child I was told in hushed whispers about her loss – after which the family never spoke of it. As a result I don’t know how Harold and Edie met. He lived in Kentish Town, London and she in Torquay. Did someone in our family come from London, so that Edie visited her cousins, say, and met him there? Alternatively, we know that Harold was wounded twice (before the shell that killed him). Maybe he convalesced in Torquay and met her there?

May 6th 2018 was a beautiful sunny day and the cemetery on the countryside edge of the village was immaculately kept. It seemed small but if you counted the Portland headstones there were about a hundred. We had brought a copy of the only photo we have of Harold, spruce in his uniform, and a photo of Edie around the same age. Sarah was wearing their engagement ring. We just spent time in his company and amid the sadness the thought kept recurring that ‘Love is strong as death’ (Song of Songs 8:6).

Peter Chave

On **11.11.1918** Everyone suddenly burst out singing;

*Everyone suddenly burst out singing;
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields; on - on - and out of sight.*

Siegfried Sassoon

Lieutenant Kenneth Haslam Ford. Died in Belgium Dec. 1st. 1915, aged 20.



Ten years old little Bidy stands at her bedroom window. The sky is a dull gray and the evening unusually quiet as the last bird flits across the garden to roost. Looking down towards the lawn, she sees her father with his funny baldhead and dog collar. Next to him walks her mother, her upright elegant figure made taller by her sheer long dress and high collar. Bidy is proud of her beauty. But why, all of a sudden, does she seem smaller, does her head drop and does her father take hold of her hand? They stop and stand looking at each other as time seems to stand still.

They turn round and now, as if in slow motion, they walk back towards the Rectory. Bidy waves, they look up but seem to stare straight through her. Surely there is something wrong. Her little heart bumps and many dark thoughts race through her mind. Granny had died, no, maybe Patricia, her elder sister, has caught measles or perhaps the cook has given in her notice. Surely nothing could have happened to her handsome teasing brother,

Kenneth, so recently out of Marlborough College. After all, he had promised to see her very soon when he kissed her goodbye in his smart uniform on his way

to Belgium. She sits on her bed thinking but soon hears steps on the oak staircase; the door opens and her mother lifts her, holds her tight and with little emotion says 'Sadly darling, Kenneth will never come home again'. Bidy does not understand.

Next morning her young mind is confused. There is the usual grace at breakfast, but nothing is said of last night? Had she dreamt it? ... she did not feel able to enquire. Life went on as before with no mention of dear sweet Kenneth. Not until Bidy's own first child, Kenneth, born in 1930, was the name of her brother ever more that whispered again.

That ten year old girl was Richard Frewer's mother.

Regular Services at St Mary's

9am every Sunday

last Sunday of month: bring coffee to share after the service.

9am Tuesday

7pm Thursday

6.30pm: Third Sunday of the month.

Sung Eucharist

Morning Prayer

Meditation in the Christian Tradition

Evensong with Music and Reflection

We now have a website which covers all aspects of our church activities and encourage you to visit it: www.stmaryschalcombe.org.uk

There is always work needed in the church garden.

If you have any time and are able to help, please contact Jeremy Labram or Richard Frewer