

ST BOTOLPH'S LONGTHORPE WORLD WAR ONE COMMEMORATION EVENT
SATURDAY 3RD NOVEMBER 2018 AT 7 PM

On Saturday 3rd November St Botolph's held an event to commemorate the men who served in World War One and are named in the church and to remember those who also served and are known to members of the congregation, wherever they came from and, like those on the church's roll of honour, whether they died or survived. It was a three-fold commemoration including an exhibition, a poppy display and a programme of readings, poems, hymns, World War One songs and hand bell music with which the evening began.

The readings were the stories of the men whose memorials feature in the church. John Tidy wore his scout uniform to read the story of William Leonard Slaughter who was Assistant Scoutmaster to the Longthorpe Scout Troop and who died at Nurlu, north of Peronne on the Somme aged 23, in September 1918. The rood is dedicated to William. The stories of Horace Ebutt to whom the reredos is dedicated, of the men on the altar rail and the two sons of the Revd Gaskell were also told. Survivors whose stories were told included Norman Loder, Master of the Fitzwilliam Hunt, who was friendly with Siegfried Sassoon, taking him hunting in the Longthorpe area. One of the poems read was "Does it Matter?" by Sassoon.

The hymns included new words specially written by Ally Barrett for the 100th anniversary of the World War One armistice to the old favourite "My Song is Love unknown." A lighter note was struck when David and Caroline Worth, accompanied by Pat Hemsley, led everyone in singing popular World War One songs, including "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" at the same time as "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag". "I'm forever blowing bubbles" was also included as it was written in 1918 and sums up the greater optimism felt as the war ended. The hand bells group played songs and extracts from Elgar and Pastoral Symphony. This part of the evening ended with a recording made by Bill Kettle of the Last Post and Reveille at Menin Gate.

I wrote the stories of the local men who served with the help of research undertaken by Jane King. Jane King is an Imperial War Museum volunteer who visits war memorials, photographs them and records the details. She then researches the lives and military careers of the casualties named. She puts the results of the research into a document and she presented the one she has made on St Botolph's casualties to Revd Jackie. Jackie thanked Jane very much for her tireless work and gave her a small token of our appreciation. Jane has also researched the lives of the survivors on the church roll of honour and promises to let us have a bound copy of that work as well when it is ready.

In the second half of the evening, while refreshments were served, people were able to admire the poppy display and look at the exhibition. Many thanks to those people who knitted them over the last few months. They included purple poppies in memory of the animals who were killed in battle and white poppies to remind us not to glorify war in any way. The children and their teachers cut leaves out of paper during their Sunday classes, making over 100 in all. Each leaf had on it the name and dates of a person named in church or known to someone local. Poppies and leaves were mounted on to garden netting which was hung on a wall. The team who did this were on a steep learning curve, discovering that

strawberry netting is too bendy and that poppies and leaves fall off if only held on by a Velcro dot!

The exhibition included more items about the men named in church, details of the casualties and survivors and a display of the legacy of World War One. Sandra Greenwood has long been a Toc H member and she produced an article about the beginnings of Toc H (which started to provide support to servicemen during the war). It also featured the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which was set up by Sir Fabian Ware when it became clear that so many men were dying and being buried overseas and of the British Legion in 1921, to help returning servicemen and their families after the war.

A dominant feature of the exhibition were posters of stories handed in by parishioners. So many of you responded to my appeal earlier this year that there were 33 fascinating stories. There was a display of silk cards which Louis Verdegem's grandfather bought from local Frenchwomen during the war and sent home to his childhood sweetheart, later his wife and of the Death Pennies received by his family for the two great-uncles who died. Ann Davis brought a violin which her father bought and learned to play while he was in the trenches in France.

The event was attended by about one hundred people, including two descendants of men named in the church: John Hucklesby, nephew of William Alexander Hucklesby who is named on the altar rail and Tim Horman, whose great-uncle John Edward Claxton was one of the survivors named on the Roll of Honour. It was a timely, thought-provoking and respectful acknowledgement of the sacrifices made by so many people in so many ways during World War One.