

A few words from the Vicar

He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. (Isaiah 2:4)

The First World War was a disaster for this parish; 26 young men were killed. How many were wounded but survived, I don't know.

Of course, we were not alone in this. Our experience was replicated in cities, towns and villages throughout the UK, Europe and the Commonwealth. Most places have a war memorial.

All men from the village of fighting age, about 300 in all, served in the forces; about one sixth of the population at that time. Their names are listed on the Roll of Honour in Church.

It seems that many were inspired to join up when the village woke one morning to the clattering of hooves, the rat-a-tat of the drums, the call of the bugle, the roar of rumbling wagons and guns and the singing of 'Tipperary' as the Territorials made their way to Turton. Sadly, many of the Lancashire Fusiliers on that day were heading for Gallipoli and a soldier's grave.

On 3rd July 1915, Herbert Brooks became the first Ainsworth man to be killed in action. He had been a fine cricketer and footballer. He was a young widower, having lost his wife shortly after getting married. It is said that, somehow, he knew he would die in the war, telling everyone he would not be coming home.

Later that same month, William Lauria, the son of a previous vicar of Ainsworth was killed. The son of the then serving vicar, Shirley Wood, also died in the war. I often wonder how his father, Revd Alfred Wood, managed to minister to those in the

village who had been bereaved by the war whilst coping with his own loss.

With Germany's defeat, a ceasefire was agreed and, at 11am on 11th November 1918 the Armistice took effect. As you can imagine, the end of the war was greeted in the village with relief, but also sorrow for the large number of men from the village who had been killed or injured.

The saddest thing for me is that the war to end all wars did nothing of the sort; there have been many others since. So, let us mark the centenary of the Armistice, the end of the First World War, with the same attitude as our predecessors from 100 years ago. With gratitude for the sacrifices of the past, including the recent past. With gratitude, also, for those members of our armed forces today who risk life and limb to ensure our security. But with sorrow as we remember those who died and pray that, in God's grace, wars will become a thing of the past.

Please join me at 10.30am in Church on 11th November for our Remembrance Sunday service.

They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old: age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.

Every Blessing

Dave