

## **Mayor's Address**

### **WW1 Centenary Candlelight Vigil**

On the 28 June 1914 A Serbian nationalist student assassinated the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand and his wife, when their open car stopped at a corner on its way out of the town.

The Austrian government blamed the Serbian government for the assassination and 4 weeks later, declared war on Serbia.

One might look back now on these events and wonder why Britain ever became involved in this dispute, but it would be wrong to now look back negatively on what transpired to be the Great War of our time.

The state of unrest escalated, to involve Russia and France. Germany declared war on France on 3 August 1914. German troops poured into neutral Belgium and the then British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, sent an ultimatum to Germany demanding their withdrawal. It was on this date on the 3 August 1914 that the Foreign Secretary remarked;

***“The lamps are going out all over Europe;  
we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime”***

He was one of the few to foresee the magnitude of events to come. Germany did not withdraw from Belgium and on 4 August 1914 Britain declared war on Germany.

That war would not end until 11 November 1918.

The First World War was not the first war in which Britain had involvement but it was the First War to touch nearly every family, in every community across the whole country. Our ancestors marched into war in 1914 with the genuine belief that they were doing what was right. The invasion of Belgium was seen as a travesty. Our ancestors felt it was their moral and spiritual obligation to defend neutral Belgium, their neighbour, and there is nothing wrong with that.

Almost everyone in the UK has an ancestor directly affected by the First World War. In Thorne alone, we know that 114 lives were lost. We know that these men who gave the ultimate sacrifice' had mothers, fathers, brothers' and sisters. We know that our community did not just go to fight, they went to aid our injured and to feed our men. Some of their ancestors will be here, with us, today.

We find ourselves to be the generation in which this centenary falls. It is our obligation to remember and commemorate those who gave their lives so that we could live ours.

That is why we are here today. We are not here to celebrate war. We are here to acknowledge the enormous sacrifice made by over a million people.

Many of us wear a poppy as an act of Remembrance. Indeed our candles today have been made especially to represent the Poppy and I'd now like to read a short poem, which says something of the Poppy's significance; it's called 'We shall keep the Faith'.

*by Moina Michael, November 1918*

Oh! you who sleep in Flanders Fields,  
Sleep sweet - to rise anew!  
We caught the torch you threw  
And holding high, we keep the Faith  
With All who died.

We cherish, too, the poppy red  
That grows on fields where valor led;  
It seems to signal to the skies  
That blood of heroes never dies,  
But lends a lustre to the red  
Of the flower that blooms above the dead  
In Flanders Fields.

And now the Torch and Poppy Red  
We wear in honor of our dead.  
Fear not that ye have died for naught;  
We'll teach the lesson that ye wrought  
In Flanders Fields.

On behalf of Thorne Moorends Town Council and the Royal British Legion, who are our partners for the purpose of organising this evening's service, I thank you for coming together in this act of remembrance.

I would like to invite you all to light your candles during the Roll Call of Honour, which will immediately precede the lights out at the exact point in time, one hundred years down the line since Britain entered into a war that would cause the death of 1.1million British combatants.

After completion of the service we ask everyone to make their way around the pond to the steps where there will be people available to help you float your candles on the pond in a symbol of shared reflection.

We remember today, those who gave their today, 100 years ago.

Thank you

Cllr Rachel Durant

Mayor of Thorne and Moorends

4 August 2014