

GRAY'S INN CHAPEL



WORDS AND MUSIC 2018



Tuesday April 17th

Readings, Poems, and Music from the Gray's Inn Choir,
for the centenary of the end of the First World War



The Gray's Inn Choir is conducted by Christopher Bowers-Broadbent, with Ian Wilson, organ, and Damian Falkowsky, violin.

The readers are Gwyn Evans, James Sharpe and Sandra Villani.
The narration is written and read by Michael Doe.

INTRODUCTION

One hundred years ago, the Great War came to an end. Compared to 1939, what led to war in 1914 is far more complex and disputed. Historians list a number of issues

- The rivalry between the great colonial powers, divided between two main alliances: on the one hand Britain, France and Russia, on the other Germany, Austria-Hungary, and at some point Italy
- Particular stress points, particularly over the Balkans
- The rise of Militarism: the rivalry between the great powers led to a build up of weapons and an increase in distrust. The armies of both France and Germany had more than doubled since 1870, and there was a naval arms race between Britain and Germany.
- An intense nationalism in all the great powers, linked in Britain to pride in the Empire, envied in particular by Germany which had come late into the imperial race
- Fears about what would result from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire
- And inside many countries, the fear within the ruling class of the rise of socialism, which a good war might diffuse.

In June 1914, following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, they were all agreed on one thing: any war would be short one. As was said here in London, 'it'll all be over by Christmas'. Four years later, when they came to count the cost, the total number of military and civilian casualties was around 40 million: 20 million deaths and 21 million wounded. Not to mention eight million horses.

But in 1914 all of this was a world away. Britain believed that God had called it to be a land of hope and glory, and the church music of the Edwardian age echoed that confidence. In 1914 the composer Charles Wood wrote this anthem, O Thou the Central Orb. His son was later killed in the war.

O thou the central orb of righteous love
Pure beam of the most High Eternal light of this our wintry world
Thy radiance bright awakes new joy in faith Hope soars above
Come quickly come and let Thy glory shine gilding
our darksome heaven with rays divine
Thy saints with holy lustre round Thee move as stars about
Thy throne set in the height of God's ordaining counsel
as Thy sight gives measur'd grace to each Thy power to prove
Let Thy bright beams disperse the gloom of sin
Our nature all shall feel eternal day In fellowship with thee,
transforming day to souls erewhile unclean, now pure within. Amen

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee back in 1897 had been a great celebration of Empire. To mark it Rudyard Kipling had written 'Recessional', a poem which includes a phrase that would become familiar during and after the War 'lest we forget'. The poem both celebrates the Empire, and warns of its transience.

God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine-
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget- lest we forget!

In 1914 the poet Edward Thomas wrote 'Adlestrop', which became popular through the war years because it referenced back to a peaceful time and place. Thomas enlisted the following year, and was killed in 1917, just before the poem's publication.

Yes. I remember Adlestrop-
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.
No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop- only the name

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and round him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

1914 - 1915

Here at Gray's, the Great Grand Night of Trinity Term 2014, was followed by a ball attended by 500 guests. The Long Vacation began on August 1st, and three days later came the Declaration of War with Germany.

In the autumn of 1914 the 1st London Welsh - the 15th Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers - was raised and trained at the Inn. Over 1400 recruits enlisted and were drilled here in the Squares and Walks. They left for France at the end of 1915. Many died or were severely injured in Mametz Wood during the Battle of the Somme.

Kitchener's famous Appeal - 'Your Country Needs You' - led to at least 74 of the Inn's 95 eligible students enlisting in the Army. And a battalion of volunteers was also formed in the Inn for men over military age.

In 1914 the poet Rupert Brooke was staying here at Gray's, at the home of Edward Marsh in 5, Raymond Buildings, when he and other friends, including the Australian composer Frederick Kelly, volunteered for service with the Royal Naval Division. On leave over

Christmas he wrote the poem 'The Soldier', his reflections on the outbreak of war. The following year he and Kelly sailed together to Turkey, but Brooke never got to Gallipoli. On board ship he developed septicaemia from a mosquito bite. He died on 23 April 1915 on a hospital ship off the Greek island of Skyros and was buried in an olive grove on the island. Kelly was wounded twice, survived, but was killed at the Somme.

In our longest piece of music this evening we're going to hear Kelly's 'Elegy for Strings: In Memoriam Rupert Brooke', arranged for Remembrance Sunday in this chapel in 2015 by Christopher Bowers-Broadbent and played together with Damian Falkowski. It was requested by our then Treasurer, Desmond Browne, whose uncle, an Australian like Kelly, died at Gallipoli, aged just 21. And they will pause in the middle for us to hear Brooke's poem, 'The Soldier'

['Elegy for Strings: In Memoriam Rupert Brooke' \(part one\)](#)

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

['Elegy for Strings: In Memoriam Rupert Brooke' \(part two\)](#)

1915-17

Over 100,000 men were killed in the Gallipoli Campaign. Meanwhile Europe had become a battlefield. Germany, to get around the heavily fortified border with France, had invaded neutral Belgium and Luxemburg, so as to attack France from the north. When the German march on Paris was halted in the Battle of the Marne, what became known as the Western Front settled into a battle of attrition, with a trench line that changed little until 1917.

In February 1916 and again in 1917, as the bodies of more and more soldiers came back across the Channel, the Royal Choral Society's season at the Albert Hall included Verdi's Requiem Mass. We hear now the concluding movement, Libera Me, 'Deliver me O Lord from death eternal on that fearful day'

Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine: et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord: and let light perpetual shine upon them.

Life in the trenches was miserable, from periods of long tedium to days and nights of acute danger . for both sides. Some historians have doubted the famous Christmas truce of 1914 when the two sides played football in No Man's Land. But there were truces on the ground, they were not unique to the Christmas period, and in that first period of the war they reflected a mood of "live and let live", where infantry close together would stop overtly aggressive behaviour and engage in small-scale fraternisation, engaging in conversation or bartering for cigarettes. In some sectors, there would be occasional ceasefires to allow soldiers to go between the lines and recover wounded or dead comrades, while in others, there would be a tacit agreement not to shoot while men rested, exercised or worked in full view of the enemy. They were symbolic moment of peace and humanity amidst one of the most violent events of human history. But by 2016 soldiers were no longer so amenable. The war had become increasingly bitter after devastating human losses suffered during the battles of the Somme and Verdun, and the use of poison gas.

Just before Christmas 2015 the French composer, Claude Debussy, who died in 1918 as the War came to an end, wrote the words and music for ~~Noël des enfants~~, an outburst expressing the French resentment of the attack upon their country, full of anger and frustration.

Our houses are gone!
The enemy has taken everything,
even our little beds!
They burned the school and the schoolmaster.
They burned the church and the Lord Jesus!
And the poor old man who couldn't get away!

Our houses are gone!
The enemy has taken everything,
even our little beds!
Of course, Papa has gone to war.
Poor Mama died
before she saw all this.
What are we going to do?
Christmas! Little Christmas!
Don't go to their houses, never go there again.
Punish them!

Avenge the children of France!
The little Belgians, the little Serbs
and the little Poles, too!
If we've forgotten anyone, forgive us.
ō . but grant victory to the children of France!

Ivor Gurney had been a choral scholar at Gloucester Cathedral, along with Ivor Novello. In 1915 he enlisted in the Gloucestershire regiment and at the Front he continued writing poetry and composing music. We're going to hear two pieces now, first his poem *De Profundis*, and then his setting of a poem by his great friend F W Harvey, *In Flanders*.

If only this fear would leave me I could dream of Crickley Hill
And a hundred thousand thoughts of home would visit
my heart in sleep;
But here the peace is shattered all day by the devil's will,
And the guns bark night-long to spoil the velvet silence deep.

O who could think that once we drank in quiet inns and cool
And saw brown oxen trooping the dry sands to slake
Their thirst at the river flowing, or plunged in a silver pool
To shake the sleepy drowse off before well awake?

We are stale here, we are covered body and soul and mind
With mire of the trenches, close clinging and foul,
We have left our old inheritance, our Paradise behind,
And clarity is lost to us and cleanness of soul.

O blow here, you dusk-airs and breaths of half-light,
And comfort despairs of your darlings that long
Night and day for sound of your bells, or a sight
Of your tree-bordered lanes, land of blossom and song.

Autumn will be here soon, but the road of coloured leaves
Is not for us, the up and down highway where go
Earth's pilgrims to wonder where Malvern upheaves
That blue-emerald splendour under great clouds of snow.

Some day we'll fill in trenches, level the land and turn
Once more joyful faces to the country where trees
Bear thickly for good drink, where strong sunsets burn
Huge bonfires of glory - O God, send us peace!

Hard it is for men of moors or fens to endure
Exile and hardship, or the northland grey-drear;
But we of the rich plain of sweet airs and pure,
Oh! Death would take so much from us, how should we not fear?

Ivor Gurney "In Flanders"

I'm homesick for my hills again
My hills again!
To see above the Severn plain
Unscabbarded against the sky
The blue high blade of Cotswold lie;
The giant clouds go royally

By jagged Malvern with a train
Of shadows. Where the land is low
Like a huge imprisoning O
I hear a heart that is sound and high
I hear the heart within me cry:
I'm homesick for my hills again
My hills again!
Cotswold or Malvern, sun or rain!
My hills again!

We're going to hear from two more of the War Poets. Siegfried Sassoon both described the horrors of the trenches, and satirised the patriotic pretensions of those who, in his view, were responsible for a jingoism-fuelled war. Here's **§ Suicide in the Trenches**+

I knew a simple soldier boy
Who grinned at life in empty joy,
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,
And whistled early with the lark.

In winter trenches, cowed and glum,
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,
He put a bullet through his brain.
No one spoke of him again.

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
Sneak home and pray you'll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go

And one more. Sassoon noticed how singing would sometimes burst out in the trenches, a temporary and spontaneous way of keeping one's spirits up during a time of death, warfare, and uncertainty. Here, in a setting written some years ago by our own Christopher Bowers-Broadbent, is **§ Everyone Sang**+

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.

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;
And beauty came like the setting sun:
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away ... O, but Everyone
Was a bird; and the song was wordless; the singing will never be done.

Back home, in a Scottish hospital suffering from shell-shock, Sassoon met Wilfrid Owen, probably the greatest poet to emerge from the War. Here are just two of his poems, Anthem for Doomed Youth and Dulce Et Decorum Est.

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.
What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.-
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin,
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,-
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

For all his anger over the war, Owen returned to the Front and was killed in action one week before the signing of the Armistice. Back in Shrewsbury his mother received the telegram informing her of his death as the church bells were ringing out to celebrate the victory. He was still aged only 25.

The composer Edward Elgar was 57 years old when War broke out, and he was horrified at the prospect of the carnage, but his patriotic feelings were nonetheless aroused. His *Land of Hope and Glory*, already popular, became still more so. Elgar himself wished to have new, less nationalistic, words sung to the tune, but in vain. During the war he composed patriotic works, like *For the Fallen*, and pieces in honour of Belgium and Poland. We hear now *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me*, promising *To give unto them that mourn a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning*.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor: He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind . to preach the acceptable year of the Lord; To give unto them that mourn a garland for ashes, the called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel.

In the summer of 1916 the editor of the Morning Post received a letter questioning the War from a soldier calling himself Tommy Atkins. That wasn't his real name. Back in 1890 Kipling had used it as the title for a poem ridiculing the double standards in the way that soldiers were treated

For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an` Chuck him out, the brute! "
But it's " Saviour of 'is country " when the guns begin to shoot;
An' it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' anything you please;
An 'Tommy ain't a bloomin' fool - you bet that Tommy sees!

In reply to the letter the Morning Post received this from someone who called herself *A Little Mother*

To the Editor of The Morning Post
Sir_ As a mother of an only child . a son now in training and waiting for the age limit to do his bit . may I be permitted to reply to Tommy Atkins?
Perhaps he will kindly convey to his friends in the trenches, not what the Government thinks, not what the Pacifists think, but what the mothers of the British race think of our fighting men.
To the man who pathetically calls himself a *common soldier*, may I say that we women, who demand to be heard, will tolerate no such cry as *Peace! Peace!*, where there is no peace. The corn that will wave over land watered by the blood of our brave lads shall testify to the future that their blood was not spilt in vain.
They have all done their share, and we, as women, will do ours without murmuring and without complaint. Send the Pacifists to us and we shall very soon show them,

and show the world, that in our homes at least there shall be no sitting at home warm and cosy in the winter, cool and comfortable in the summer. There is only one temperature for the women of the British race, and that is white heat.

We women pass on the human ammunition of only sons to fill up the gaps, so that when the common soldier looks back before going over the top he may see women of the British race on his heels, reliable, dependent, uncomplaining. The reinforcements of women are, therefore, behind the common soldier. We gentle-nurtured, timid sex did not want the war. It is no pleasure to us to have our homes made desolate and the apple of our eye taken away. We would sooner our lovable, promising, rollicking boy stayed at school. But the bugle call came. We are proud of our men, and they in turn have to be proud of us. If the men fall, Tommy Atkins, the women won't.

Tommy Atkins to the front

He has gone to bear the brunt.

Shall stay-at-homes do naught but snivel and but sigh?

No, While your eyes are filling

We are up, and doing, willing

To face the music with you . or to die!

Such sentiments would have warmed the heart of Arthur Winnington-Ingram who had become Bishop of London in 1901. He saw the war as a great crusade to defend the weak against the strong and accepted uncritically stories of German atrocities. Even Prime Minister Asquith described his pitch as "jingoism of the shallowest kind." His most infamous speech was one in 1915 in which he recalled German atrocities . both real and wartime myths . with a violent call to arms:

Everyone that loves freedom and honour are banded in a great crusade . we cannot deny it . to kill Germans; to kill them, not for the sake of killing, but to save the world; to kill the good as well as the bad, to kill the young as well as the old, to kill those who have shown kindness to our wounded and to kill them lest the civilisation of the world itself be killed.

At the Front, the work of Army Chaplains was rather different. They ministered to the troops and risked their own lives. Here are just two of them. Dick Shepherd spent some months as chaplain to a military hospital in France, before being sent home with exhaustion, where he became Vicar of St Martins in the Field. After the War he was partly responsible for the annual Festival of Remembrance that takes place in the Albert Hall on the evening before Remembrance Sunday, He himself became a pacifist.

One of the Chaplains duties was to take the compulsory church parade. When in the 1960s Joan Littlewood produced what a lovely war she used songs from a book published in 1917 called *Tommy's Tunes* (that's Tommy Atkins again) which had new lyrics written in the trenches to songs of the era, including well-known hymns

Forward Joe Soap's army

marching without fear,

With our old commander,

safely in the rear.

He boasts and skites from morn till night,

(Tune: Onward Christian Soldiers)

And thinks he's very brave,
But the men who really did the job are dead and in their grave.
Forward Joe Soaps army,
marching without fear,
With our old commander,
safely in the rear. Amen.

Another Army Chaplain, Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, volunteered at the outbreak of War as a chaplain on the Western Front, where he gained the nickname 'Woodbine Willie' because he handed out cigarettes alongside spiritual advice. In 1917, he was awarded the Military Cross after running into no man's land to help the wounded. During the war he supported the British military effort with enthusiasm. Attached to a bayonet-training service, he toured with boxers and wrestlers to give morale-boosting speeches. But by the time the war had ended, he had become converted to Christian socialism and pacifism.

When this lousy war is over, (Tune: What a Friend we have in Jesus)
no more soldiering for me,
When I get my civvy clothes on,
oh how happy I shall be.
No more church parades on Sunday,
no more putting in for leave,
I will miss the Sergeant-Major,
How he'll miss me how he'll grieve.

People said when we enlisted,
Fame and medals we would win,
But the fame is in the guardroom,
And those medals made of tin.
When this lousy war is over,
No more soldiering for me,
When I get my civvy clothes on.
Oh how happy I shall be.

From the trenches to life back here in London, and indeed to Gray's. In his Preface to the Gray's Inn War Book, Lord Birkenhead recalls

"the great concourses of statesmen who assembled more than once - sometimes in moments of deep gloom - round the tables of Gray's Inn, austere as became the necessities of the times, to offer words of encouragement to a harassed but unconquerable nation"

In December 1917 there was a Dinner here at the Inn attended by the Prime Minister (Lloyd George) and Winston Churchill who was then Minister of Munitions. It was one of worst moments of War - Russia had fallen out and Romania was suing for peace - British troops were held up in the mud of Flanders. America had joined the war but not many troops had yet arrived. But in his speech the Treasurer (later Lord Birkenhead) was resolute in rejecting talk of Treaties or a League of Nations solution. Lloyd George responded with "Victory is an essential condition to the securing of a free world". Hall echoed to the noise of cheering.

THE ARMISTICE 1918

But In 1918 fortunes began to turn and after a number of successful offensives by the Allies, the Ottoman Empire capitulated and Germany sued for peace. On November 11th an Armistice was signed and at 11am the ceasefire came into effect.

For the Thanksgiving Services at Westminster Abbey the Organist J F Bridge wrote an anthem with words from Shakespeare's Henry VIth Part 2

God's goodness hath been great to thee;
Let never day nor night unhallow'd pass,
But still remember what the Lord hath done.

Here in this Chapel, the Preacher to the Inn, the Revd R J Fletcher, took his text from Psalm 124:

For the Lord himself had not been on our side when men rose up against us, they had swallowed us up quick when they were so wrathfully displeased at us. Yea the waters had drowned us and the stream had gone over our soul+

He characterised the Allies' efforts as not nationalising God but opposing those who claim to be God. Prussia and its might over Right+. the idolatry of force. He spoke of those who had died

Because of that which they have achieved for the world, and because of their fragrant memory, and because of the high example they have left to their generation and to posterity, we reject the thought that these young lives, even with all the seeds of promise which they showed, have in reality been wasted.

So, he said, in words which John Ireland had taken for this anthem written in 1911, let us give loyal gratitude that the waters have not drowned us nor the stream gone over our soul+

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.
Love is strong as death; greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
Who, his own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins should live unto righteousness. Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus. Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness, into His marvellous light.
I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

The great loss of life was made worse for many because there were some 500,000 for whom there was no known grave. Two years later, on November 11th 1920, the grave of the unknown warrior was dedicated in Westminster Abbey. The body had been brought back from the battlefields on the Western Front, and the coffin was covered by a Union flag

which an Army padre had used as an altar cloth in the trenches. In the first week half a million people filed past it

The artist Sir William Orpen was commissioned to portray the occasion. He is best known as a portrait painter, including one of Lord Glenavy which now hangs in our Bingham Room. Orpen was deeply affected by the suffering he had seen, and his 'To the Unknown Soldier in France' showed the coffin with an honour guard of two emaciated soldiers, bearing guns but clad only in tattered blankets. It found great favour with the general public but the Imperial War Museum were less impressed and to show their displeasure they withheld some part of his fee. Later in 1928, Orpen altered the picture to eliminate the half-naked soldiers leaving the familiar image of a simple draped coffin.

At the signing of the Armistice in 1918, Thomas Hardy wrote in the poem "And there was a Great Calm":

Calm fell. From Heaven distilled a clemency;
There was peace on earth, and silence in the sky;
Some could, some could not, shake off misery;
The Sinister Spirit sneered, 'It had to be!'
And again the Spirit of Pity whispered, 'Why?'

And at Christmas 1924 the more caustic

'Peace upon earth!' was said. We sing it,
And pay a million priests to bring it.
After two thousand years of mass
We've got as far as poison-gas.

One might think that given the colossal loss of life, on all sides, this War would have taught everyone, from great leaders to the common man and woman, that this should have been the War to end all wars. But not so. By 1939 Europe, and many places far beyond, was again at war. And in 1945 even the industrial slaughter of the Great War was surpassed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

So how should we finish this Words and Music? Maybe with neither words nor music, just two minutes, or many more minutes, of Silence. But instead two things. It's been said that for Britain the Great War was about what we mean by Home, Land, England and Empire, and those same things have echoed through our national life in the years since, and continue in so many debates today about who we are and where we belong in the world. So we'll have, first, perhaps the most popular song from the War, all about coming home. It's Ivor Novello's 'Keep the home fires burning':

They were summoned from the hillside
They were called in from the glen,
And the country found them ready
At the stirring call for men.
Let no tears add to their hardships
As the soldiers pass along,
And although your heart is breaking
Make it sing this cheery song

Keep the Home Fires Burning,
While your hearts are yearning,
Though your lads are far away
They dream of home.
There's a silver lining
Through the dark clouds shining,
Turn the dark cloud inside out
'Til the boys come home.

Overseas there came a pleading,
"Help a nation in distress."
And we gave our glorious laddies
Honour bade us do no less,
For no gallant son of freedom
To a tyrant's yoke should bend,
And a noble heart must answer
To the sacred call of "Friend."

Keep the Home Fires Burningõ .

And finally Sir Cecil Spring Rice's hymn, "I vow to thee my country". He was our Ambassador to the United States, and had written some of this before War broke out. At its end, in view of the dreadful loss of life, he took out references to "the noise of battle" and "the thunder of her guns", and spoke instead of love and sacrifice. And he added a second verse where love of country is transcended by something much greater. That surely must be our hope, as we stand to sing

I vow to thee, my country
All earthly things above
Entire and whole and perfect
The service of my love
The love that asks no questions
The love that stands the test
That lays upon the altar
The dearest and the best
The love that never falters
The love that pays the price
The love that makes undaunted
The final sacrifice

And there's another country
I've heard of long ago
Most dear to them that love her
Most great to them I know
We may not count her armies
We may not see her King
Her fortress is a faithful heart
Her pride is suffering

And soul by soul and silently
Her shining bounds increase
And her ways are ways of gentleness
And all her paths are peace.

THE TREASURER'S VOTE OF THANKS

It is impossible, is it not, when participating in an event of this nature, whether as a contributor or as a member of the audience, not to reflect on various issues, some of a broad nature, some of an intensely personal nature?

The reference to gas by Thomas Hardy and a similar reference in 'Dulce et Decorum Est' brings into relief the headlines and photographs we have seen in the media over the last week or so. What is the song in which the following words are to be found - "When will they ever learn?"

On a personal note, references have been made on several occasions this evening to the Somme. Had my paternal grandfather not survived the Somme, I would not be standing where I am tonight. His younger brother, aged 18, died in France in 1917, just a few months after Edward Thomas, the poet who composed 'Adlestrop', died.

That poem has a personal connection for me. I was born about 20 miles from Adlestrop. I have visited Adlestrop. I can truly say that "I remember Adlestrop".

Michael has mentioned the events of Sarajevo in June 1914. The notebook of Edward Thomas shows that the incident reflected in the poem took place on 24 June 1914. I do not know the date of the shooting in Sarajevo*, but we can be sure that when it occurred all the birds of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire would have been singing.

It is extraordinary that out of the horrors of this dreadful War so many wonderful words and so much wonderful music emerged.

The Choir was in tremendous form tonight, was it not? And there were some wonderful solos. I will not name everyone, but we know who you are.

Our thanks to Chris (Bowers-Broadbent), Ian (Wilson) and Damian (Falkowski) for their contributions to the evening.

The words were memorable and beautifully rendered by James (Sharpe), Sandra (Villani) and Gwyn (Evans). Many thanks to them.

And, finally, to Michael Doe, for putting the whole thing together.

You will have been bursting to applaud at various stages during the evening. Now is your opportunity.

*POST-EVENT NOTE: it occurred on 28 June 1914, four days after the train stopped "unwontedly" at Adlestrop.

