

Tributes paid to “ordinary people who did extra-ordinary things” at Aysgarth Festival of Remembrance



The ‘Tommy’s’ at St Andrew’s ‘on guard’ as some of the large congregation processed to the church for the Remembrance Day service. Photo: Pip Pointon.

More than 1,000 people including school children participated in the Festival of Remembrance events hosted by Aysgarth church last weekend.

In her address at the Remembrance Service on Sunday, Juliet Barker said: “If our festival of Remembrance does nothing else, I hope it pays appropriate tribute to the so-called ordinary men and women of our dale who, not of their own choosing, were called upon to do extra-ordinary things.

“In a period when hatred and violence seemed all-powerful, they demonstrated time and again the selflessness of love: love for their families and friends back home.”

Mrs Barker chaired the committee which worked for more than a year on the arrangements for the festival.

This included an inspiring flower festival, organised by Barbara Hadlow, with floral displays depicting the battles and poets of WW1 created by the ladies of the church’s congregation and friends from Wensleydale Flower Club.

“That’s the value of what you have done – bringing together the many communities in an act of remembrance and a mark of remembering and paying tribute to the sacrifice of those who gave up their freedom so that we might enjoy ours today,” Richmondshire MP Rishi Sunak said when he officially opened the festival of Friday, November 9.

Mr Sunak took time to study the Roll of Honour created by Penny Ellis which listed 193 men and women from Aysgarth, Bishopdale, Carperby, Thorlby, Thornton Rust, West Burton and Walden who served during WW1. The stories of some of them were told in the festival exhibition.



Rishi Sunak MP studying the Roll of Honour at Aysgarth church. With him are l-r: Stuart and Ann Guy, and Christine and Richard Tuer. Photo: Pip Pointon.

On the Saturday afternoon over 250 people attended a superb and often very moving Concert of WW1 Words and Music in the church.

The music was provided by the Hawes Silver Band, the Aysgarth Singers and the children of The Songbirds community choir based in West Burton.

About 180 residents attended the short Acts of Remembrance at village memorials on the Sunday morning.

Many then joined the procession to the church for the Remembrance Service passing the wooden 'Tommies' along the drive from the WW1 memorial gates on Church Bank. The memorial pillars had been renovated ready for the festival.

The following day 90 school children from Askrigg, Bainbridge and West Burton schools (with many of their parents and grandparents) spent over an hour at the church.

This gave them an opportunity to see and touch the WW1 memorabilia brought along by a curator of the Green Howards Museum in Richmond, and also to find some of the gravestones in the churchyard on which the soldiers of two world wars have been remembered. For the latter they used the pictorial guide produced by Pip Pointon, copies of which are available at the church.

The Vicar, the Rev Lynn Purvis-Lee, praised what she described as the amazing team which had planned and prepared the festival and especially thanked the sponsors.

These were: Aysgarth and District Parish Council, the Richmondshire Area Partnership Fund, Tennants of Leyburn, The Wensleydale and Swaledale Quaker Meeting, Lambert's Florists of Leyburn, Outhwaite Ropemakers of Hawes, RCP Parking Ltd, the Wensleydale Creamery and Campbells of Leyburn.

Mrs Purvis-Lee also thanked those in the parish who had knitted poppies and made the paper ones for the 'waterfall' of poppies which cascaded over the altar. This began with 1,100 poppies and grew throughout the weekend as visitors made more.

Throughout the weekend there was a steady flow of visitors with some returning to spend more time in the exhibition and to enjoy the floral displays and excellent homemade refreshments. The exhibition created by Mrs Ellis and Mrs Pointon will remain in the church after the festival.

The Roll of Honour can be viewed on the WW1 section of www.thoralbythroughtime