4th August 2014

Welcome to this opening occasion of our exhibition commemorating those events of a century ago that we know as the First World War.

This church building was only seven years old in 1914 and so the war memorial would have been one of the first new things to be added to it.

Harry Patch – the last surviving British First World War veteran – said during an interview recorded towards the end of his life, ‘it wasn’t worth even one life’ – and yet in this place alone we have one hundred and two names displayed before us – a poignant reminder of suffering and death; a reminded echoed through the memorials of almost every village, town and city in this land, and a reminder echoed around the planet we now call our global village.

The American writer, poet and civil-rights activist, Maya Angelou, writing out of another set of events of which the world cannot be proud says, in her poem entitled ‘On the Pulse of Morning,’

History, despite its wrenching pain,

cannot be unlived,

But, if faced with courage

need not be lived again.

At 8pm this evening we will be holding our vigil – a time of readings and prayers and a space for reflection.

The vigil is about three things; it’s a lament for the foolishness and failings of humanity; it’s a commemoration of those who died during the conflicts of the First World War and of those whose lives were torn apart in other ways – through trauma, through injury, through bereavement; and it’s a remembrance, because when we forget the events of the past then we too easily begin to repeat its mistakes and misjudge its consequences.

And now I’m going to hand you over to Judy Fletcher to say a few words and to offer her official welcome as churchwarden here at St Chad’s.

The Reverend Elizabeth Davies