**WELCOME SPEECH FOR THE OPENING OF THE**

**WORLD WAR 1 EXHIBITION**

On behalf of everyone at St Chads it is my great pleasure, as Church Warden, to welcome you all to our church on this very special occasion. We are delighted that our MP Mr John Leech ; the Lord Mayor of Manchester, Mrs Susan Cooley, and our local Councillors, Chris Paul, Daniel Gillard and Rebecca Moore, are all able to be with us.

We have gathered here this evening to honour the Ladybarn Men who lost their lives in World War 1, and are remembered in this church. This event is part of a world-wide commemoration of World War 1 and many such events have been happening around the world in recent weeks. However, tonight, here and across Europe, we are remembering the moment that Britain entered World War 1.

It is not possible for any of us alive today, to actually remember the First World War, as clearly we have no memories of our own. Instead, what we try and do is to ‘**commemorate’** or **‘bring to remembrance’** something of what happened, as far as we can know.

There has always been commemoration, since November 11th 1918. This has included : national acts of remembrance ; information gathered from veterans and film archives ; the thoughtful accounts of the war years from historians ; and reflections about the war in poetry, novels, art and drama. These have all helped us to gain a vivid sense of those, often terrible events, 100 years ago. What happened at that time still reverberates with us today, particularly on the edges of Europe, and across the Middle East.

One person from our own congregation has made a significant addition to the commemoration of the events of World War 1. That person is John Davies, here with us this evening. John has dedicated an enormous amount of time and effort, over many years, gathering as much information as possible about the 102 men named on the Roll of Honour in our Memorial Chapel, here behind me. John’s personal tribute to these men has been recognized by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The award they made to us has made possible the publication of a book about his research, together with the display in the south aisle of the church.

John has been ably supported in these endeavours by Muriel Hargreaves, who has given huge administrative support to the project, and is also here this evening. It was Muriel who took forward the Heritage Lottery Fund Grant application, and also did a lot of typing, and surfing,---of the internet, that is !

On behalf of us all, I would like to say thank you to you both for the efforts you have made to honour these Ladybarn Men.

As well as remembering the men themselves, we should also reflect this evening upon how many other lives were changed forever by this tragic conflict. The bereaved families and friends of our men would have felt a very great sense of loss, and their many skills and talents would never have come to fruition within the wider community.

Since the time of the dedication of our Memorial Chapel in 1922, many others have also paid tribute to those who are remembered here. This has happened through our solemn annual Armistice Day Remembrance Services, and through the restoration of the chapel five years ago. The chapel is always kept as an orderly and beautiful place in which to reflect and give thanks. Our reflections could perhaps include peacemaking and peacekeeping in our own lives.

And finally, a sincere thank you to a great team of people who have been working very hard in recent weeks. Some have contributed to the displays that you see around you, and many others have helped to make St Chad’s church look at it’s very best for us for this evening’s event. Thank you all.

I am now going to invite John Leech to formally open our exhibition.