

## Chief executive's message – 16 November

Standing amongst the graves in Kirkbymoorside church yard, with well over 200 people crowding around the memorial cross that remembers those who had fallen in the First and Second World War, was a moving experience. The dignity of the short ceremony, the saying of the words and declaring that "We will remember them", the Last Post and the silence so respectfully observed. But the poignancy came not just from the ceremony itself but from the coming together of so many different people who formed our community intent on collective duty and respect. Here are a couple of photos I took:



The light rain seemed somehow fitting and added to our sense of purpose. In between silences and bugling I could hear parents explaining to children the meaning of the occasion and what had happened 100 years before.

It had been a weekend dominated by remembrance. The first service I attended was on Friday afternoon at Ripon Cathedral. The service organised by County Council along with the Military had around 700 children and young people in the audience who had in common the fact that one of their parents served in the Military. It was a fantastic occasion of music, drama, poetry, of course remembrance, but also some celebration of what the Military and their families bring to our county.



It was then quickly back to County Hall and to a short service of our own at which the new Lord-Lieutenant of the County, Jo Ropner, and the Chairman of the County Council, Councillor Robert

Windass, laid wreaths at our own memorial watched over by the Group Leaders of the political parties. Many staff also came out to pay their respects.



On Saturday evening I attended a remembrance and commemoration service at the Spa in Scarborough. The town remembered the lives that it had lost in the First World War including the bombing of the town in one of the first acts of the war and again was also a celebration of the town's links and support to the military and, in particular, the Yorkshire Regiment.



Also I'd like to make a particular mention to Ella Wheeler, pictured below, one of North Yorkshire's music service student who performed as a state trumpeters at the Royal British Legion festival at Albert Hall on Saturday.



I know that schools across the county have been commemorating the centenary and making sure that future generations understand the significance of this historic event. Here are a couple of photos of the Dales School, Morton-on-Swale:



Archives (The triennial report 1919) tell us that our own County Council staff, too, served in HM Forces during WW1; sixteen members of the Council and 41 members of staff, based at County Hall, served with one councillor, the Earl of Feversham, and four members of staff being killed in action. The memorial in County Hall records 29 names of staff who gave their lives which we believe also includes police and teachers.

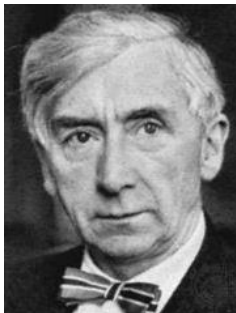
Two members of staff were awarded the Military Cross, including Thomas Flynn of Romanby Road, Northallerton. Flynn voluntarily enlisted in 1914. The London Gazette reports that on 29 September 1918, during the storming of the Hindenburg Line, near Bellenglise, Flynn came across a trench with seven machine guns and a garrison of 130 of the enemy. He immediately rushed in and, by his quick presence of mind, made them all prisoners. On 2 October he led his men forward under heavy fire and filled a gap in the line, pushing further and holding the enemy up, whereby the flank was made

good and the enemy driven back. Following the war, Flynn returned to work for the Council at the Registry of Deeds.

So, that was the weekend with great tales of courage and resilience. Earlier in the year, the County Council had already brought as many as 750 people together in a fantastic musical extravaganza organised by our own music service to commemorate the end of the First World War.



As well as music this occasion remembered the war poets and reminded me that one of the most famous war poets, Wilfred Owen, had spent a winter in Scarborough before being posted, in March, to Ripon where he composed a number of his famous poems. It was also interesting to hear that one of the country's most famous war poets lived just four miles south of Kirkbymoorside. He was Herbert Read (pictured below), who left university at the outbreak of the First World War to serve with the Green Howards in France. He received the Military Cross in the course of his service and wrote many famous war poems, including the one at the end of this blog.



Over this remembrance weekend across the county my experience in Kirkbymoorside was replicated as tens of thousands of people came together in their own communities standing alongside different people from different backgrounds, in a common cause.

As I write this reflecting on the latest Cabinet resignations and the bitter turmoil around Brexit, it is heartening to bear in mind how our communities do and can come together.

Best wishes,  
Richard

### **To A Conscript Of 1940**

A soldier passed me in the freshly fallen snow,  
His footsteps muffled, his face unearthly grey:

And my heart gave a sudden leap  
As I gazed on a ghost of five-and-twenty years ago.

I shouted Halt! and my voice had the old accustom'd ring  
And he obeyed it as it was obeyed  
In the shrouded days when I too was one  
Of an army of young men marching.

Into the unknown. He turned towards me and I said:  
'I am one of those who went before you  
Five-and-twenty years ago: one of the many who never returned,  
Of the many who returned and yet were dead.

We went where you are going, into the rain and the mud:  
We fought as you will fight  
With death and darkness and despair;  
We gave what you will give-our brains and our blood.

We think we gave in vain. The world was not renewed.  
There was hope in the homestead and anger in the streets,  
But the old world was restored and we returned  
To the dreary field and workshop, and the immemorial feud

Of rich and poor. Our victory was our defeat.  
Power was retained where power had been misused  
And youth was left to sweep away  
The ashes that the fires had strewn beneath our feet.

But one thing we learned: there is no glory in the dead  
Until the soldier wears a badge of tarnish'd braid;  
There are heroes who have heard the rally and have seen  
The glitter of garland round their head.

Theirs is the hollow victory. They are deceived.  
But you my brother and my ghost, if you can go  
Knowing that there is no reward, no certain use  
In all your sacrifice, then honour is reprieved.

To fight without hope is to fight with grace,  
The self reconstructed, the false heart repaired.'  
Then I turned with a smile, and he answered my salute  
As he stood against the fretted hedge, which was like white lace.