

'Till the boys come home

On Monday evening, 29 June, Churston Church proudly hosted this 100th anniversary musical tribute to the Canadians who served their King and country in the Great War 1914 – 1918. 75 members of the North Lakeshore Chorus filed into our choir pews led by a Piper, Garret Rodgers, and the British Legion colours were then presented to Revd John Gay. Under the guidance of their musical director, Ian Juby, the programme commenced with Canada's National Anthem, *O Canada*, followed by *Now is the Hour, Farewell to Nova Scotia, Keep the Home Fires Burning* ('till the boys come home'), *Be Still my Soul* and *Abide with me* with a descant in the last verse sung by one of the many sopranos present. Between each group of songs Michael Korn, the producer, explained in more detail the arrival of the first contingent of Canadians to our shores. Did you know that 33,000 men, in 33 transatlantic liners, left Quebec City bound for Southampton but, because of the fear of attack, sailed into Plymouth Harbour?

We then held two minutes silence, followed by the Piper's Lament *Flowers of the Forest*. It was then explained that the Canadian troops travelled by train to Amesbury, north of Salisbury, and spent months training on Salisbury Plain in one of the wettest winters on record. The choir then sang *Let there be Peace on Earth, In Flanders Fields* and *Un Canadien Errant*.

Then it was time for audience participation and we joined in with *K-K-K-Katy, It's a long way to Tipperary* and *Pack up Your Troubles*. The last three items were *Jerusalem*, where we faithfully followed the instructions 'Ladies only' or 'Men only', *Song for the Unsung Hero* and *God Save the Queen*. The official peace version 1919 was sung for the second verse:

*Of many a race and birth, From utmost ends of earth, God save us all.
Bid strife and hatred cease, Bid hope and joy increase,
Spread universal peace, God save us all!*

The third verse read:

*Our lov'd Dominion bless with peace and happiness, From shore to shore,
And let our people be loyal, united, free,
True to herself and Thee, For evermore.*

A fitting tribute to the 66,000 Canadians who never came home, and a message for today's troubled world. The colours were returned to the

bearer, and the choir was led out by the piper.

In our programmes we found two lapel badges: one a Canadian flag, the other a maple leaf with two poppies, one in front representing those Canadians who served and one behind representing those who played a supporting role at home. We were all given a poppy to take home. The Canadian flag flew proudly from our church tower and, to my personal delight, the 'Ladybird' poppies in our War Remembrance Garden had bloomed and were nodding their heads in the gentle breeze.

Michael Korn caused merriment when, after thanking all the organisers and participants in this event, he admitted that he himself had left his evening suit behind in the hotel. Fortunately, being almost the same 'size' as one of our Churchwardens, he was lent the appropriate outfit for the evening!

We wish the North Lakeshore Chorus every success in their huge programme: Plymouth, Exeter Cathedral, Honiton, Bramshott, Amesbury, Canterbury Cathedral, Cheriton, then on to Ypres, to London Canada House etc – 17 June to 11 July. A concert every day (sometimes two!). A big thank you to all those behind the scenes in Churston, who worked so hard to make our visitors feel welcome, the contribution of church flowers beautifully displayed and the refreshments afterwards. A special thank you to Jill (Burton) for arranging a visit to Churston Church in the choir's heavy schedule: it was a wonderful tribute, a delightful occasion with surely a touch of emotion thrown in. The magnificent sum of over £700 was raised of which £300 was given to the North Lakeshore Chorus.

Sue Potts

(I have many more pictures and will include some more in the next issue—Editor)



After a truly wonderful and exhilarating evening with the **Canadian North Lakeshore Chorus on 29 June in Churston Church**, I would like to thank all those behind the scenes who made it possible: the Social Committee for the endless cups of tea and all the scones and cakes throughout the day; everyone who arranged and brought flowers to decorate our lovely church; the bell ringers with their joyous peals; Michael Parnell who played music of the 1914-18 era before the concert and then his rousing rendition of Jerusalem which, with audience participation, nearly raised the roof; the Manor Inn for loan of the bunting; Bob Brooke who accompanied Bryer, the smart young British Legion lady representative who paraded the standard which was received by the Revd John Gay and, not least, Betty and Gay who were in church early the next morning cleaning, tidying up and washing floors! Also a big thank you to everyone who came to support us and joined in the audience participation tunefully and with such gusto!

All the Canadians said it was the best welcome they have had on their tours anywhere and just loved our church, and were quite emotional when they saw the Maple Leaf Flag flying from the tower. From our point of view, to see Churston packed and everyone enjoying the superb singing on a Monday evening, was such a joy and a true blessing. Thank you.

Jill Burton