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Dear friends,

During September there were many items on the television news about the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the blitz. It is appropriate that on Remembrance Day we remember those who went to war and paid the ultimate sacrifice. But we should also not forget those who were left behind. As those who were adults during the Second World War become less in number in our midst, it is surely right to recall the suffering that the war brought to many people who never left these shores.

It is difficult for us who have never experienced war, or living in a country that was permanently under attack, to understand how people coped with life during difficult times. I know someone, who was a born during the blitz. For all of her life she has hated November 5th and the sound of the fireworks. In a moment all the loud explosions take her back in her mind to hiding under the kitchen table and the sheer horror of the whole experience. As a very small child she knew of people killed when a V2 flying bomb fell on their house. She lived with her grandmother, grandfather and mother near a munitions factory that was a prime target. Night after night the planes would come, the sirens scream and bombs would fall. She lived with this as part of life. Her grandmother died six years after the end of the war, a broken woman who was forever terrified of loud noises. When her father was demobbed and returned, he was a complete stranger. This was one small girl, now in her seventh decade. In a real sense, her war has never been over, for she carries with her memories. There are millions like her, and we should remember them.

In sorting through some old papers at Ingatestone church, I came upon a photograph that dates from 1919. On the back is written, 'Peace Day'. The photo shows a large number of people gathered on Fairfield. This was the 19th of July 1919. It is often forgotten that World War 1 did not officially end on the 11th of November 1918. Negotiations went well on into the next year. Peace was officially signed at the end of June. The Cenotaph in

London was in place and on the 19th of July 15,000 troops walked past to honour comrades who had not returned. This might explain why there are so few men in the Ingatestone photograph. The day of celebrations were not universally popular. In Norwich the ex-servicemen's federation refused to take part complaining that it glorified militarism. In Luton ex-servicemen rioted. We cannot know the emotions running through those whose faces are in our local photograph. But we know those who gathered must have had a sense of relief at the end of hostilities and hope for a better future. They did not realise that the peace signed at Versailles would be one of the reasons for the rise of Nazism that led to World War 2.

I took items relating to the instillation of the War Memorial in Ingatestone in 2006 to the Essex County Record's Office. What will future generations make of our belated acknowledgement of debt to those who did not return from our community? I hope that they will think it important that we finally had somewhere that we could unite together to remember the sacrifice of so many from such a small community. It has been a reality that the service has grown in number each year since 2006, with many young people in attendance. This year the service begins fifteen minutes earlier at 9.45 a.m. so that we can be joined with others from the URC and anyone else at 11 o'clock at the memorial. As we do, in the silence of the two minutes, let us not just recall those who died, not only those who returned who we injured physically or mentally, but also those who lived through the experience of war. Their ordeal was different, but still a long and difficult experience.

We should also ally our thoughts with the universal hope for peace and a better future that we can see in the 1919 photograph. We live in difficult and troubled times. I know people who have fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, as many of us do. I have a friend who is a Chaplain in the R.A.F and has been in both theatres of war. Rightly our Remembrance Day services both remembers the human cost of war and includes prayers for peace. These are as important now as in 1919 when Revd. Robert Pemberton led them on Fairfield.

Yours in Christ, *Patrick*.