

YOU ARE HERE

I trace my fingers over one of the carved names tucked away on the balcony area of All Saints' Church as we set up for the first wedding for a very long time. I'm not encouraging graffiti, but the age of the carving does make it an interesting slice of the past.

Our history has reached another turn in the road: along with weddings happening again, we have cafés opening, the Bloomers planting tubs and displays with glorious flowers, families and friends reuniting, shops and businesses open, weather taking a turn for the better, Open Gardens. The Museum, All Saint's Church and the Lido are opening for tourists and locals alike.

A great unfolding seems to be taking place. A careful unfolding that has cost organisers many sleepless nights, but something to be appreciated after the isolation of lockdown. The risks are not gone, but we have accepted a new way of being that makes certain things possible again.

It is at times like seeing old graffiti, wandering the museum, celebrating the Blessing of the Waters, or marking the 100th Anniversary of the Brightlingsea Branch of the Royal British Legion that we become aware that we are part of history. We don't only keep the memory of the past alive, we are living a very definite time period in the life of our nation where momentous things are happening around us that future generations will talk about and ask us about. That shows the enormity of what is happening but also its transience. This, too, will pass and become a memory.

I watch photos being snapped of children on the beach and think back to being a child on that beach and to bringing my children to that beach and I wonder if I will bring grandchildren there someday to make memories. Time seems to be picking up speed. For child-me, it dragged and I felt I would never grow up, now I find myself telling my teens what my parents told me: don't be in too much of a hurry to get through your life. They scoff at me just as I did at my parents, and rush onwards.

100 years of our Brightlingsea branch of the Royal British Legion on 24th June 2021 is quite a marker. The Legion began life before that date as 'Comrades' – a gathering of those who had come through a particular experience (the Great War) and been shaped by it and sought to support each other through the struggles of life that followed it. The first Chairman was also instrumental in its founding as the Royal British Legion – an Oyster Merchant called Noble Eagle, a Sergeant in the Gallipoli campaign. Early meetings were held in the 'Duke of Wellington' or the 'Freemasons' Arms' but they then secured their own premises. The Brightlingsea War Memorial was first unveiled in November 2021 and the first Poppy Day was November 1922 and it has been held every year since – even in lockdown, thanks to modern technology.

What changes it and the Legion have seen in 100 years! I wonder what the next 100 will hold, and what future generations will choose to commemorate and recall from this time we are living through now.

One challenge for all of us is this: how are we building for the future of our community, of our young people, of our values and way of life? Each of us has a role to play.

We may not be named in history books, but like that long-ago graffiti carver, we are here and we can make memories and leave a better mark than carved initials. The

life of faith and the love of God for humanity challenges us to live lives of love and to plant the seeds of love that those coming after us can harvest.

As we recall the movers and changemakers of the relatively recent past, in our small lives and in the bigger life of our community, let's ask ourselves: what will our legacy be?

Blessings to you all, Caroline