

St Luke's Memorial Window

History by Doreen Green

On 3 August 1952 the Governor-General of NZ, Lieut-General Lord Freyburg V.C., GCMG., KCB., KBE., DSO unveiled this memorial window. It was placed in St Luke's Church, Wadestown in honoured remembrance of those who served and those who lost their lives in World Wars I and II.

This is no repetition of the usual time-honoured type of memorial, it is a brilliantly modern and inspired stained glass window and I feel honoured to show it to you in greater detail.

At the lower edge of the window there are badges symbolising the war time services in New Zealand – the air force, army, nursing services and navy (broadly symbolic of the merchant navy too). These, the ones we think of first at ANZAC, are placed nearest to our eyes.

Then a little further away, on the right stands a mother who symbolises women at home in war-time I would like to tell you something about them later on. Next to her is the soldier in battle-dress, symbolising the Allied forces of both major wars; graves and memorials with names on, row on row lie in France, Flanders, around the Pacific, etc. Their war-time service has been made known to us in films and television programs but their private stories are treasures which should be recorded by their families. The figure to his left stands for bravery and endurance in all other fields, such as was shown by the Antarctic explorers. The fact that they all stand together emphasises a most important aspect of wartime – courage, determination to succeed in halting the catastrophic evils spreading and threatening to engulf us, and faith in the justice of our cause led us all to stand together, to re-arranged our priorities, we all had one single aim and objective and co-operated to achieve it in the certain faith that evil could be conquered, peace would be attained and the ultimate victory of God's righteousness was certain. The faithful witnesses beckon us to press on towards the goal of their endeavours.

On the left three figures symbolise the fellowship of faith with those who strove and endured in past ages to overcome evil. The figure on the left reminds us of the early Christian martyrs, Political manipulation by fear is as old as history itself. Widely used as a means of controlling the Roman Empire it was thought that Christianity could be stamped out by capturing Christians, locking them in pits (which are still pointed out to tourists today) and feeding them to lions. An age old policy resurrected in the plan to break the resistance of Britain in World War II by bombs and incendiaries, shattering London night after night. The central figure stands for the founding of the church to bring Christ's message of love, kindness and hope to the world. From the earliest missionaries to Britain who risked enslavement and dying from the plague, to Thomas a Becket Archbishop of Canterbury who opposed the power of the state when it clashed with Christian principles and was murdered in the cathedral, to Bishop Ridley who helped to make the first translation of the bible into English to allow people to read it for themselves and have freedom of conscience, for which he was burned at the stake, brave people have been prepared to uphold the right at the risk of their lives. The last figure is a prophet foretelling that whatever the trials and tribulations to come they would get through because the coming of the Messiah was certain to help them. So the Memorial window carries this message from Hebrews X11 1-2; 'Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the win which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and

finisher of our faith.' The communion chalice reminds us that Christ died for us. In the centre we unite in thinking about the faithful whose battle is won. We are called to take up the fight, united under the Kingship of the risen Lord, the leader of the armies of the Revelation where it is written; 'And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and go to war'. The figure of Jesus supreme over all is at the top of the window reminding us that he is with us always.

Women in War-Time

In World War I Wadestown was a small isolated community. The first tram which linked it to a public transport system did not start until 1918. The facilities and communication systems we have today did not exist. Wives with husbands away at the war were trying to grow their own vegetables to manage, often with large families to feed. When Molly Cook died her mother's cookery book came to light and at the back, handwritten by her father, were the minutes of the first meeting of the Wadestown Cottage Garden and Beautifying Society which was formed by experienced gardeners to help those in need whose husbands were away at the war. But when the troops returned many were sickening with a virulent and highly infectious form of 'flu from which more people died than in the war. The risk of infection was so great that all Societies and groups had to close down temporarily.

In World War II the situation was different. Food was rationed with a system of coupons to ensure fair distribution of available supplies. Instead of an overseas war in unknown places New Zealand had the enemy in the Islands and worse still they landed in Australia and had attacked Darwin. Their kindred and men from here stationed in Britain were in even greater danger. The enemy forces poised for invasion were as near as the South Island is here, air raid warnings were frequent day and night, gun-fire could be heard from across the Channel, the Channel Islands had already been captured and gas chambers built, and the evacuation of our troops from France had been achieved by small sailing boat volunteers from Sailing Clubs around the south coast, under fire with air force cover. While we were out at work my mother had been told to go inside and lock the doors because the invasion had started and enemy planes were landing all along the coastal road. For security reasons it was a few years later that we learned the real story about that – the Polish air force had taken their planes and flown them over to England to join the R.A.F! Enemy planes and unmanned buz-bomb missiles would zoom overhead on their way to London and defence force planes would force them down if they could in dog-fights overhead. The women in New Zealand rose to the occasion by kindly giving hospitality to American troops stationed here, many of whom were boys far from home for the first time. In our area of Britain there were no Americans but my mother kindly gave hospitality to numerous visitors and relations in the army and air force from England, Northern and Southern Ireland, Australia, New Zealand etc. When loved ones returned at the end of the wars women had to cope with the effects. There were casualties- Margaret Copperwheat's father had lost a leg, and there were changes. The baby in the window reminds us how it must have added to their mother's difficulties at the end of the war to explain to a 4 or 5 year old child who was that strange man who had suddenly moved into their home and expected to share their mother's love. My sister married Lt Evan Edwards from Palmerston North at the beautiful old Herne church where Bishop Ridley had once been vicar, and they left for New Zealand at the end of the war on separate ships so decrepid that the engines on hers broke down stranding the wives for weeks in Panama, but

that is another story. Evan and his wife became residents of Wadestown and parishioners of this church for more than 20 years and both their daughters were married here.

One last thing in the window, the dove reminds us that we have preserved the precious values of peace-time by winning the wars, and it is placed above the symbol for women at home because the Christian values of peace-time were never lost, they remained preserved in our homes in war-time, and need to be there to-day.

Doreen Green (deceased) and her mother Florence were St Luke's parishioners for many years.