The autumn concert by Seaford Choral Society, held on November 24th in Seaford Baptist Church, cleverly combined a very moving contribution to the centenary commemorations of the Armistice which ended World War One in 1918 with a selection of music anticipating the celebrations of Christmas.

As the choir, directed by Colin Hughes, opened the programme with the hauntingly beautiful ‘Only Remembered’, images projected onto the plain walls of the church illustrated that war’s brutality and the enormous sacrifices made by the whole country, but also told the particular experiences of named individuals, all relatives of choir members or Seaford residents. A common theme gradually emerged: the losses were dreadful, but we should also remember the patriotism, resilience, enthusiasm and stoicism so many showed, and not lose hope for a more peaceful world in the future.

In selected extracts from Karl Jenkins’ mass ‘The Armed Man’ words and music initially conveyed the relentless progression into conflict, emphasised by Jonathan Chappell on percussion, but gradually emerged into the peacefulness of the Benedictus, with a poignant cello solo from accompanist John Eady.

The solemn mood was then lifted, dramatically, as the children of Seaford Primary School Choir, directed by Kate Steer, marched around the church, cheerfully singing, as their great-grandfathers might have done, the famous words of ‘Long Way to Tipperary’ and ‘Pack Up Your Troubles’, soon joined gustily by the adult choir and audience.

A recognition of the contribution women made to the war effort, and their subsequent enfranchisement, was heard in the ‘Pankhurst Anthem’, before the first half drew to a close in reflective mood with Brahms’ ‘How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place’, a setting of Binyon’s poem ‘For the Fallen’ and a beautiful rendering of ‘Silent Night’, anticipating the Christmas festival to come, but also casting a last look back to WW1 and the famous Christmas Day truce of 1914, when the guns briefly stopped.

After the interval a generally lighter mood prevailed, with the school choir playing a delightful major role. A combination of traditional and contemporary pieces (including ‘I Saw Three Ships’ and Rutter’s ‘Star Carol’) concluded with a rousing rendition of ‘Jingle Bells’, which sent the audience out into the damp November evening cheerful, but thoughtful too.

Congratulations to concert director and choir chairman Steve Machan and all involved in this excellent evening.

*A member of the audience*