

The modern elastic brassiere is 100 years old this year. Hardly memorable. More memorable are the centenaries of suffragettes Emily Pankhurst going to jail and Emily Davison trampled to death by the king's horse at the Epsom Derby.

Next year is the centenary of the outbreak of WW1, so this month I thought it might be interesting to see what was happening the year before that led to it.

Revealed was the 2nd Balkans war. Serbia and Greece, later Romania, too, went to war with Bulgaria. Bulgaria lost. Serbian troops marched into Albania; Austria-Hungary vexed about the whole thing started rattling its sabre. Greece grabbed Crete. Our government, meanwhile, was being told by our intelligence services that Germany was becoming heavily militarised and that Russia was looking for an excuse to invade Austria. We were the biggest empire the world had seen at the time, so our position was superior. Or so the public thought. Foreign policies based on the balance of power, meant that if one country got ahead on military resources, the others felt compelled to match it. An arms race. The stage set for settling disputes by war.

On the face of it, that all seems rather modern: wars in little-known places, not much to do with us, we're alright (Jack), not suspecting the spark that might suddenly involve us in carnage. However, we've come a long way; we no longer think ourselves masters of the world and do not think, as in 1913, war is inevitable. It is a better world than the one where humility was scorned as weakness. We do try to listen. And yet...

Humanity is always fallible and we do get things wrong. The world stills needs the good news of Jesus: there is forgiveness, a chance for a new beginning, for all who repent.

This Remembrance time it would be good to remember that applies to all of us, all fallible, all needing the humility of repentance. We can mark our Remembrance season 2013 by forgiving one another and also remembering that the rug seller in Kandahar has equal worth to the gentry of the Burnhams. Do that now and 2014 might not remember WW1 by allowing WW3.