

# WESTMINSTER ABBEY



UNVEILING OF A MEMORIAL

TO

FIRST WORLD WAR POETS

in Poets' Corner

Monday 11 November 1985

6.00 p.m.

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ON 11 November 1985, a very evocative day, a memorial is to be unveiled in Poets' Corner in honour of poets of the First World War, sixteen of whom are mentioned by name. This is indeed timely since there has seldom been such an outpouring of verse as was produced by those involved in this internicene conflict which dragged itself on till all was quiet on the western front. Nor, one may suspect, will such verse ever be produced again. These poets did not simply write during the war years, but wrote about war from within their deep personal involvement. The mood changes as the carnage goes on. The initial aura of romance and high dedication takes on a more sombre and bitter note as the combatants get bogged down in the mud, the monotony and malaise of trench warfare. Pity turns to protest and a sense of futility. Thus 1914-18 certainly marks a water-shed not only in the annals of war but in the moving pageant of world history. The poets of the First World War, to whom we pay tribute today, some killed in action, one still surviving, faced chaos and catastrophe with courage, leaving behind them a literary output which shocks and shames and as it does so combats complacency and quickens the conscience to banish such heart-ache and travail from the face of the world.

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The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see  
them lit again in our lifetime.

*\*Viscount Grey of Fallodon (3 August 1914)*

ONLY a man harrowing clods  
In a slow silent walk  
With an old horse that stumbles and nods  
Half asleep as they stalk.

Only thin smoke without flame  
From the heaps of couch grass;  
Yet this will go onward the same  
Though Dynasties pass.

Yonder a maid and her wight  
Come whispering by:  
War's annals will cloud into night  
Ere their story die.

*Thomas Hardy In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'*

Poets are the trumpets which sing to battle. Poets are the  
unacknowledged legislators of the world.

*Shelley Defence of Poetry*

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## ORDER OF SERVICE

*At 6.00 p.m. the Procession of the Collegiate Body moves to Poets' Corner. All stand.*

*The Dean gives*

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

*All remain standing to sing*

O GOD, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home;

Beneath the shadow of thy throne  
Thy saints have dwelt secure;  
Sufficient is thine arm alone,  
And our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,  
Or earth received her frame,  
From everlasting thou art God,  
To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in thy sight  
Are like an evening gone;  
Short as the watch that ends the night  
Before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,  
Bears all its sons away;  
They fly forgotten, as a dream  
Dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Be thou our guard while troubles last,  
And our eternal home.

*St Anne 99 AMNS  
Supplement to New Version 1708*

*Isaac Watts (1674-1748)*

*All sit for*

THE ORATION

*given by*

Professor Michael Howard C.B.E., M.C.  
*Regius Professor of Modern History and  
Fellow of Oriet College, Oxford*

*All stand.*

*The Dean invites Mr Ted Hughes, the Poet Laureate, to  
unveil the Memorial Stone.*

*The Stone is unveiled.*

*A wreath is laid by In-Pensioner E. Claridge, M.M., of the  
Royal Hospital, Chelsea.*

*The Chaplain General, The Venerable W. F. Johnston Q.H.C.  
says:*

May I ask you, Mr. Dean, to receive into the safe custody  
of the Dean and Chapter, here in Poets' Corner, this  
Memorial Stone in honour of the First World War Poets.

*The Dean says:*

To the greater glory of God and in thankful memory of the  
First World War Poets we dedicate this memorial, in the  
name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

O God, who through the ages dost inspire men to explore  
the richness and diversity of our human nature, we give thee  
thanks for the skill of the Poets of the First World War, who  
through their sensitivity of spirit and disciplined use of lan-  
guage, bore witness to the truth that was in them. **Amen.**

Lord, we pray that beyond the beauty of this world we may  
see thy beauty; that beyond the skill of man we may see thy  
creative power; that beyond the destruction of man we may  
see thy power to make all things new; that beyond the Babels  
built by man we may see and reach out to the city that hath  
foundations, whose builder and maker thou art. **Amen.**

O God who wouldest fold both heaven and earth in a single peace; let the design of thy great love lighten upon the waste of our wraths and sorrows, and give peace to thy Church, peace among nations, peace in our dwellings, and peace in our hearts; through thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*All sit for the readings from the Poets by Jill Balcon, Ted Hughes, Stephen Lushington and Richard Pasco.*

On the march *Richard Aldington*

They went with songs to the battle,  
they were young *Laurence Binyon*

The Soldier *Rupert Brooke*

The Dead *Rupert Brooke*

A Lament *Wilfrid Wilson Gibson*

To the Poet before battle *Ivor Gurney*

Into Battle *Julian Grenfell*

By the wood *Robert Nichols*

Anthem for doomed youth *Wilfred Owen*

*The Sub-Organist of Westminster Abbey, Harry Bicket, plays*

Sonata in G major (3rd movement) *Elgar*

Futility *Wilfred Owen*

Break of day in the trenches *Isaac Rosenberg*

The refugees *Herbert Read*

The Hero *Siegfried Sassoon*

All the hills and vales along *Charles Sorley*

Two Fusiliers *Robert Graves*

Reconciliation *Siegfried Sassoon*

Lights out *Edward Thomas*

In Memoriam—Easter 1915 *Edward Thomas*

*All kneel for the Dean to conclude the memorialization with*  
**THE BLESSING**

*All remain seated for the organist to play:*

**For the Fallen** . . . . . *Elgar*

*All stand for the Collegiate Body to return to the West end  
of the Church.*

**Members of the Congregation are requested to remain in  
their seats until directed to move by the Stewards. Those  
wishing to see the Memorial are invited to move under  
the direction of the Stewards.**