

Perhaps – Vera Brittain

To R A L - Roland Aubrey Leighton (1895-1915).

Perhaps some day the sun will shine again,
And I shall see that still the skies are blue,
And feel once more I do not live in vain,
Although bereft of You.

Perhaps the golden meadows at my feet
Will make the sunny hours of spring seem gay,
And I shall find the white May-blossoms sweet,
Though You have passed away.

Perhaps the summer woods will shimmer bright,
And crimson roses once again be fair,
And autumn harvest fields a rich delight,
Although You are not there.

Perhaps some day I shall not shrink in pain
To see the passing of the dying year,
And listen to Christmas songs again,
Although You cannot hear.'

But though kind Time may many joys renew,
There is one greatest joy I shall not know
Again, because my heart for loss of You
Was broken, long ago.

Vera Brittain



Vera Brittain was born in 1893.

She was studying at Oxford University when the war broke out and in 1915 gave up her studies to become a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse.

She worked in hospitals in England, France and Malta helping to care for the wounded and sick of the war, including German soldiers.

Brittain was engaged to one of her brother's friends, Roland Leighton, but received the news that he had been killed in action on the 23rd December 1915, whilst she was waiting for him to come home on leave.

Her beloved brother, Edward, was also killed during the war in June 1918, as well as their close friends, Victor Richardson and Geoffrey Thurlow.

Brittain survived the war and went on to publish a famous book about her wartime experiences called 'Testament of Youth'

Leighton is buried in CWGC Louvencourt Military Cemetery, France.

In Memoriam – Lieutenant

E.A. Mackintosh

*Private D Sutherland killed in action in the
German trench, May 16th, 1916, and the
others who died.*

So you were David's father,
And he was your only son,
And the new-cut peats are rotting
And the work is left undone,
Because of an old man weeping,
Just an old man in pain,
For David, his son David,
That will not come again.

Oh, the letters he wrote you,
And I can see them still,
Not a word of the fighting,
But just the sheep on the hill
And how you should get the crops in
Ere the year get stormier,
And the Bosches have got his body,
And I was his officer.

You were only David's father,
But I had fifty sons
When we went up in the evening
Under the arch of the guns,
And we came back at twilight -
O God! I heard them call
To me for help and pity
That could not help at all.

Oh, never will I forget you,
My men that trusted me,
More my sons than your fathers',
For they could only see
The little helpless babies
And the young men in their pride.
They could not see you dying,
And hold you while you died.
Happy and young and gallant,

They saw their first-born go,
But not the strong limbs broken
And the beautiful men brought low,
The piteous writhing bodies,
They screamed "Don't leave me, sir",
For they were only your fathers
But I was your officer.



Ewart Alan Mackintosh



Ewart Alan Mackintosh was born in 1893.

He joined the army in 1914 and served as an officer in the Scottish Seaforth Highlanders.

Mackintosh was affectionately nicknamed 'Tosh' by his men who thought very highly of him.

On May 16th, 1916, in a trench raid near Arras, Mackintosh tried to save one of his men, David Sutherland, when he was wounded. Mackintosh tried to carry Sutherland back to safety, but he died in his arms and had to be left on the battlefield.

Mackintosh was awarded the Military Cross for his bravery in trying to save David Sutherland.

He was killed in action during the Battle of Cambrai on the 21st November 1917, aged 24.

Mackintosh is commemorated at the CWGC Orival Wood Cemetery, France.

Sutherland has no known grave and is commemorated on the CWGC Arras Memorial, France.

Before Action – Lieutenant William Noel Hodgson, MC
Published 29th June 1916

By all the glories of the day,
And the cool evening's benison,*
By that last sunset touch that lay,
Upon the hills when day was done,
By beauty lavishly outpoured,
And blessings carelessly received,
By all the days that I have lived,
Make me a soldier, Lord.

By all of man's hopes and fears,
And all the wonders poets sing,
The laughter of unclouded years,
And every sad and lovely thing;
By the romantic ages stored
With high endeavour that was his,
By all his mad catastrophes
Make me a man, O Lord.

I, that on my unfamiliar hill
Saw with uncomprehending eyes
A hundred of thy sunsets spill
Their fresh and sanguine** sacrifice,
Ere the sun swings his noonday sword
Must say good-bye to all of this;-
By all delights that I shall miss,
Help me to die, O Lord.

*benison - blessing

**sanguine- blood red/positive in a bad situation



William Noel Hodgson



Hodgson was born in 1893, the son of a clergyman.

He wrote stories and poetry from a young age.

Hodgson volunteered to join the army only a few days after war broke out in August 1914.

He served as an officer in the 9th Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment. The Military Cross was awarded to Hodgson for his bravery at the Battle of Loos in 1915.

Hodgson and his fellow soldiers were on the Somme in France in the weeks leading up to the battle.

His poem, 'Before Action' was published on the 29th June 1916 and was believed to have been written during those weeks.

Hodgson was killed in action on the 1st July 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme, aged 23.

He is buried alongside his men in the CWGC Devonshire Cemetery in France.