WESTMINSTER ABBEY

UNVEILING OF A MEMORIAL
TO
FIRST WORLD WAR POETS
in Poets' Corner

Monday 11 November 1985
6.00 p.m.
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.
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
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  Isaac Watts (1674-1748)
Supplement to New Version 1708
All sit for

THE ORATION

given by
Professor Michael Howard C.B.E., M.C.
Regius Professor of Modern History and
Fellow of Oriel 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 language, 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.