

Wilfred Owen Association

President: *Peter Owen*

www.1914-18.co.uk/owen

Chairman: *Michael Grayer*

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Chairman's Address

It is often said that the First World War is 'fading from memory' yet sadly only 38 British veterans remaining, all with ages ranging from 103 –108. The Gallipoli campaign has already passed from living memory into history with the death of the last veteran in May 2002.

During the saturation coverage of the recent Iraq war there were, not surprisingly, many references to Wilfred Owen. With the risk (thankfully not realised) of the use of chemical weapons, his poetry struck a particular media chord – members will also no doubt recall the many 'gas alerts' all vividly beamed onto our TV screens. One article in the Guardian (16 March) 'Soldier's Fears on eve of Battle', began with *Anthem for Doomed Youth*. Another piece, 'Gas! The cry that warns of death in nine seconds' (The Times, 21 March) was accompanied by *Dulce et Decorum Est*.

Responses to the conflict included poems from the well-known (Tony Harrison, Andrew Motion, Harold Pinter), and the not-so-well-known (100 Poets Against the War). The public outpouring, galvanised by the global anti-war sentiment, resulted in a staggering 13,000 poems published on one website alone.

Since I became chairman in the wake of the events of September 11, we have seen wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, with great uncertainty for the future of those countries and the Middle East. Other conflicts, such as those in the Congo and Liberia – barely covered by the media – have exacted a terrible price in human life and suffering. As we approach the 85th anniversary of the Armistice, let us hope that next year will be a more peaceful one.

Michael Grayer

Wilfred Owen commemorated in Fleetwood

A commemorative 'Heritage' plaque has recently been placed on the house in Fleetwood, Lancashire (111 Bold Street) where Wilfred Owen lodged while in charge of the gunnery range near this small fishing town. He stayed there in November 1916, before his first period of service in France. Originally a private house, it is currently owned by the North British Housing Association who renovated the building into four flats. Several years ago, the local borough council erected fifteen plaques in Fleetwood giving an insight into the town's history and the people associated with it. Five more were due to be placed and, thanks to the persistence of Association member Marian Whitehead, the council agreed to include an additional plaque to Wilfred Owen. The plaque is made from colourful, durable perspex, as painted metal does not stand up well to the rigours of coastal 'weathering'.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 6 September 2003

The Morris Hall, Bellstone, Shrewsbury

The venue is booked from 10.30 onwards.

From 10.30 until 1.00pm a number of speakers will be giving talks on the theme of 'War Poetry through the Ages'.

Tea and coffee will be available in the Morris Hall. At 1.00pm we will break for lunch.

2.30pm: AGM

1. Minutes of the last AGM, which will be available at the meeting, and matters arising.

2. Chairman's report.

3. To receive and consider the annual accounts.

4. Appointment of auditor.

5. Election of officers and committee:

Chairman, Vice-Chairman, General Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Fundraiser, Press Officer and four general committee members.

Nominations by 1st September to be sent to the General Secretary, John Henshaw, 15 Abbotsfield Drive, Sutton Farm, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. SY2 6DJ.

6. Any other business, which must be notified to the General Secretary at the above address by 1st September.