



a window for Wilfred...
and for Dunsoden



Cover and this page: details of previous Stevens competition winners

An invitation to be part of our appeal

The Dunsden Owen Association celebrates the life and work of the renowned First World War poet Wilfred Owen, who lived in the village from 1911 to 1913. In 2014 the Association launched a special trail around the local places Wilfred knew. We also installed an interpretation board on the village green. The trail has been enjoyed by many visitors to the area.

Now the Association has partnered with the parish of Shiplake with Dunsden and with the Glaziers' Company to launch a project to design and install a stunning new stained glass window in our church which will commemorate the poet's time here. We are extremely fortunate that the design of the window will be the subject of the prestigious Stevens Competition, which is run by the Worshipful Company of Glaziers and Painters of Glass. Six prize-winners will be announced early in 2022. Local people will then choose the design of the new window for Dunsden.

But without around £25,000 funding, this exciting project may never go ahead. Will you help us to make it possible?

Who was Wilfred?

'My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity.'

Wilfred Owen was just 18 when he arrived here to assist the vicar, full of hope that he could fulfil his vocation to be a churchman. He soon became enmeshed in village life, visiting the sick, helping to run the school and presenting lantern slide shows in the mission hall on the village green.

Owen was finding his voice as a poet during his time here and the shorter edition of his works includes around a dozen poems written or begun in Dunsden.

But a tragic accident and the extreme contrast between the vicar's lavish lifestyle and the grinding poverty and disease suffered by the farmworkers living in the parish caused a crisis of faith for Wilfred. Over 14 villagers died during his time in Dunsden, including those who perished from common infectious diseases. In 1913 Owen left the parish and, after a period teaching in France, he enlisted in the Artists Rifles. He was subsequently given the rank of Second Lieutenant in the Manchester Regiment.

After suffering severe shell shock when he was catapulted into the air by a mortar blast and lay unconscious for days next to the bodies of his comrades, Owen was sent to a hospital near Edinburgh to recover, where he met the poet Siegfried Sassoon who acted as his mentor and published Owen's poetry in the hospital magazine.

Owen insisted on being returned to the front line. On 1 October, 1918 he led his men in attacks near the village of Joncourt. For his conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty he was awarded the Military Cross.

A final attack

On 4 November, 1918, Owen was told to lead his men in an attack on the Sambre-Oise canal near the village of Ors in northern France. According to his biographer "Through the hurricane [of enemy machine gun fire] the small figure of Wilfred Owen walked backwards and forwards, between his men, patting them on the shoulder, saying 'Well done' and 'You're doing well, my boy' before "at the water's edge, giving a hand with some duckboards, he was hit and killed", He lies buried in Ors with his men. We are proud to have forged links with Ors and to have been part of their annual commemoration of Wilfred Owen's life.

On the 11 November, 1918, bells rang out across England to celebrate the signing of the Armistice marking the end of the conflict dubbed 'the war to end all wars'. The bell of Wilfred Owen's mother's door rang too, heralding the arrival of a telegram with the news of his tragic death.

By the 1960s, Owen had won recognition as perhaps Britain's greatest twentieth century war poet. His best known poems include 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', 'Futility', 'Dulce Et Decorum Est' and 'Strange Meeting'. In Dunsden he wrote 'Deep Under Turfy Grass' in response to a tragic accident at Dunsden Green which killed Alice Allen and her four year old daughter Hilda. It is said to be one of the few early works which foretell his mature style.

Owen's voluminous correspondence with his mother, Susan, was rescued from her garden shed at Emmer Green. She and her husband lie buried in Dunsden churchyard, together with his sister, Mary.



How can I help?

Please make your donation by cheque made payable to 'PCC Shiplake and Dunsden' or make a bank transfer direct to account number: 35112907, sort code: 40 38 04.

You may give using the GiftAid form attached which will enable us to reclaim the tax you have paid on your donation. The names of all donors will be commemorated in a special book to be kept in the church in Dunsden. Major donors will be invited to a prestigious event which will celebrate the unveiling of the window. If donations are greater than required for the window appeal, the surplus will be used to fund other aspects of the work of the Dunsden Owen Association.

Cheques should be posted to 'Owen Window', Long Gardens, Sonning Eye, Reading RG4 6TR. For further information please call 07802 433058 or email [window@owenindunsden.org](mailto>window@owenindunsden.org)

Why is this window appeal important?

'The influence of Wilfred Owen's poetry has been unmatched amongst other chroniclers of the devastation caused by the First World War.

Poets, playwrights and composers such as Seamus Heaney and Benjamin Britten continue to be inspired by his gift for profound and poignant empathy with the suffering of the ordinary soldier. I hope that this new window will delight visitors and worshippers at our church in Dunsden for many generations to come.'

- **The Reverend Robert Thewsey, Rector of Shiplake with Dunsden & Harpsden-cum-Bolney**

'In the words of Jeremy Paxman: "Those who did not return have their meticulously maintained stone memorials on the fields of Flanders. But their memorial in our minds is largely built by Wilfred Owen."

I invite you to seriously consider this opportunity to contribute towards a culturally important project which recognises Wilfred Owen's time in Dunsden. The commemorative book of names will be a lasting tribute to your generosity; it will be there for future generations of your family and friends to view, alongside the magnificent stained glass window."

- **John Bodman, Co-Chair of the Dunsden Owen Association**



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Wilfred Owen
IN DUNSDEN

Charity Gift Aid Declaration for a single donation to Shiplake with Dunsden PCC Wilfred Owen window appeal

Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate

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Please make your cheque payable to 'PCC Shiplake and Dunsden' or make a bank transfer direct to account number: 35112907, sort code: 40 38 04.

In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below:

I want to Gift Aid my donation of £_____ to the Shiplake with Dunsden PCC Owen window appeal

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Please notify the charity if you:

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The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Shiplake and Dunsden registered charity number: 1138065.