

# FALL IN, GHOSTS

## The contrasting battlefield experiences of Blunden and Rosenberg

October 22nd -25th 2011 £400 (WPA Members £390) single room supplement £110

The War Poets Association invites you to join a study tour of the First World War battlefields seen through the experiences of two of its great writers—Edmund Blunden and Isaac Rosenberg.

War poet Edmund Blunden survived his time in the trenches from 1916 -1918 taking part in both the Somme and Passchendaele battles. Blunden described himself as a 'shepherd in a soldier's coat' – he wrote about the war for the next fifty years in a continuing struggle to come to terms with his survival.

Our exploration of some of the battlefield locations will focus on the effect that his war experience had on him as a living witness.

With the new 2010 Penguin Modern Classics edition of Blunden's "Undertones of War" as our guide, we will visit places in the Somme area where he was, including Beaumont Hamel, Auchonvillers, Mesnil and Thiepval.

Unlike most of the war poets, Isaac Rosenberg served as a Private in the army, and in this tour we shall be concentrating on what this meant to his poetry. Brought up in poverty in Bristol and Whitechapel, East London, he was fiercely opposed to war but enlisted so that his mother might receive the separation allowance.

We shall visit the area of Hulluch near Loos where, in June 1916, he wrote 'Break of Day in the Trenches', and the Gouzeaucourt sector on the old Hindenburg line where his experience of carrying wire up to the line was the inspiration for 'Dead Man's Dump'. He was killed on 1 April 1918 and we shall see his grave near Arras.

The group will be led by Margi Blunden, Chris Spriet, an expert and writer on Blunden, Jean Liddiard, biographer of Rosenberg and editor of his poems and letters, and others with a deep knowledge of the writing of the First World War. Our journey along the Western Front will bring us into contact with memories of many other writers who fought, and in many cases died, during 'the war to end all wars'.

We travel by luxury coach, stay in a 3\* hotel in the beautiful city of Arras and the fee is inclusive of all major costs for the four day tour.

War Poets Association



Courtesy of the estate of Edmund Blunden



Courtesy of David Philips



Courtesy of the IWM

# Fall in, Ghosts

## Itinerary

### Saturday 22nd October

The coach departs Victoria Coach Station at 10:00 am en route for the Eurotunnel channel crossing. Local pick up points will be organised and, for those travelling from distant parts, local accommodation will be arranged en route. Once in France the group will follow both poets' journeys towards the front, visiting Cuinchy where Blunden started his war, and Lillers and Hulluch in the Bethune area where Rosenberg wrote 'Break of Day in the Trenches', described by Paul Fussell as "the greatest poem of the war". Both men were based in this area in 1916.

We end the day at our hotel in Arras before enjoying dinner in a local and highly recommended restaurant. There will be opportunity for group members to share their experiences of the day over aperitifs before dinner.

### Sunday 23rd October

After a buffet breakfast in the hotel we head east to that part of the Western Front where Rosenberg served for much of 1917. We visit the area that inspired some of his most telling writing and the day ends at Fampoux where Rosenberg was killed on 1st April 1918 and St Laurent-Blagny where he is buried. The area to the east of Arras sees the wars of the two men converge (although they never met) and we are introduced to Blunden's impressions of the battlefield as we drive back to the hotel.

Dinner has been arranged at a restaurant in Place des héros, the beautiful square in the centre of Arras.

### Monday 24th October

After breakfast we travel to the Somme battlefield visiting locations and reading relevant poems and accounts in *Undertones of War*. We will visit Mesnil, Jacob's Ladder, Hamel and Blunden's base at Auchonvillers. We will see Thiepval Wood, and the site of the Schwaben Redoubt. At this tranquil scene, following the description of what he witnessed is a powerful experience. The ghosts of war are particularly accessible in the Ancre Valley – its scars lie just below the surface of each field. Blunden survived nearly two years in the front line, gassed and asthmatic.

We return to Arras at the end of the afternoon for dinner in a restaurant serving regional food.

### Tuesday 25th October

We depart the hotel after breakfast and return to the Somme battlefield to conclude, and end the tour at Hébuterne, a small village where both writers were billeted during the battle. Here we will contrast the experiences of Rosenberg and Blunden who fought in the same war, one being killed and the other who survived.

We return to London via the tunnel with our estimated time of arrival at Victoria being 19:00.

---

Yes, I/we would like to join the War Poets Association 'Fall in, Ghosts' tour and enclose a deposit of £50 per person payable to Eyewitness Tours, c/o 38 Fairfield Drive, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 1JH. Closing date for applications 30th April 2011

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_

I/we are members of the WPA

Confirmation will be sent with a suggested reading list with background notes to the tour being forwarded two months before departure when the balance of cost will be due.

For full booking conditions please go to [www.eyewitnesstours.com](http://www.eyewitnesstours.com)