



## Francis Ledwidge – Soldier. Poet.

### 1887-1917

This special edition of Corncrake is part of the many celebrations around the centenary of Meath poet Francis Ledwidge. He was serving with the 1st Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers when he was killed at Passchendaele in 1917.

The poems in this issue were written as part of a concert organised by Dr John Graham of the Inniskillings Museum on 20th July, and some were read in St Michael's Church and in Blakes of the Hollow. The concert featured some of Ledwidge's own poems and letters, read by Frances Mulley, Seamus Mac Annaidh, Marcus Crawford and others; musical settings by [Ivor Gurney](#) and [Michael Head](#), sung by soprano Lauren Coalter, accompanied by Matthew Murphy; and a reading by Adrian Dunbar of Seamus Heaney's poem *In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge*.

As a blend of the two most well-known portraits, our featured image aptly illustrates the complexity of the man: a sensitive and romantic poet, able to converse with the likes of A.E. and W.B. Yeats, yet also a more-than-competent soldier and leader, with a passion for justice – road mender, Union organiser, County Councillor, and founder member of the local Irish Volunteers. We hope that complexity is reflected in our poems.

Most of all in our researches, we were struck by the deep integrity and sheer humanity of his letters. Though unlucky in his love for Ellen Vaughey, Frank Ledwidge had a talent for friendship – whether with his literary patron Lord Dunsany, his fellow soldier and staunch Belfast Unionist Bob Christie, or the executed leader of the Easter Rising and fellow poet, Thomas MacDonagh.

The project would not have been possible without the generous funding and support of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin. Their staff provided invaluable guidance and encouragement. We would also like to thank Dr Graham and the [Inniskillings Museum](#), as well as all the staff of the [Francis Ledwidge Museum](#) in Slane.

**Jenny Brien Editor**

*The Inniskillings Museum has produced a [booklet](#) with details of Francis Ledwidge's military career and an appreciation of his life.*

The cover image is courtesy of the [Solstice Arts Centre](#), Navan, County Meath



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**FRANCIS LEDWIDGE**  
— 1917 — 2017 —

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