

# The Road Maker

Huddled in a ditch in Ypres  
bowed beneath the rain  
hunkers Francis Ledwidge,  
keeping low, trying to stay alive.  
bowed beneath the rain  
and German artillery shells  
hunkers Francis Ledwidge.

Ledwidge is an Irishman,  
a son, a brother, a road maker,  
a forsaken lover, a reasoning man.  
He is an Inniskilling Fusilier,  
an Irish Patriot from Meath  
and a poet  
in a British Uniform.

He is weary,  
tired of mud,  
tired of dust,  
tired of fighting,  
tired of war wounds.

He is tasked to make a road,  
when the rain stops.  
Road making is a skill  
Ledwidge is proud of.

Looking at no-one he shelters  
under his greatcoat and helmet  
and thinks again of home  
and the green fields of Slane.  
When he closes his eyes  
he can hear a blackbird  
singing in his mother's garden  
in Janeville.  
He listens awhile

A whiz-bang jerks him back  
to making roads in Passchendaele.  
Will the Belgians keep his road  
after this war is over, he wonders?  
He wonders if,  
after this bloody war is over  
will they let him help  
to build a New Ireland?  
So many Irishmen, Welshmen,  
Englishmen and Scots here,  
fighting for what?

The same old same old?

All these experiences shared.  
All these wisdoms learned.  
Surely with these we will make  
A new Britain,  
A new Ireland,  
Free, proud and safe.

But first a road to make  
to Boezinge.

Ken Ramsey