



Scottish Poets and Poetry

Ewart Alan Mackintosh

Mackintosh, widely regarded (along with C. H. Sorley) as being one of Scotland's finest war poets, was born in Brighton of Highland parents and educated at St Paul's School and Christ Church College, Oxford, where he studied classics.

His earliest poetry is influenced by W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) and the Celtic Twilight school whose Scottish followers included William Sharp and William Black.

It was World War I that brought him to maturity as a poet, moving from exultation and excitement to horror and anguish. Mackintosh spoke Gaelic as a child and had perfected it as a student. He played the pipes and folk-song influenced the songs he wrote, some of which became widely popular with the Scottish troops.

He was sent to the Western Front and served as an officer in the 5th Seaforth Highlanders from December 1914. He was invalided home after being gassed at High Wood, and was offered a post instructing cadets in Cambridge, but he chose to return to France and was killed at the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917.

Mackintosh was loved by his men who affectionately called him "Tosh." For his part, he returned that love. On May 16th, 1916, during the battle of the Somme, he carried wounded Private David Sutherland through 100 yards of German trenches with the Germans in hot pursuit. However, before Mackintosh could bring him to friendly trenches, Private Sutherland died and his body had to be left behind. Mackintosh's bravery would win him the Military Cross, and in memory of Private David Sutherland, and in recognition of his unique role as a 23-year old "father" to his men, he wrote "In Memoriam", the full title of which is **"In Memoriam, Private D. Sutherland, killed in action in the German trench 16 May 1916, and the others who died."**

In August 1916, after being wounded and gassed at High Wood on the Somme, Mackintosh wrote "To the 51st Division: High Wood, July — August 1916." During his recovery and rotation to England, Mackintosh became engaged.

In October 1917, Mackintosh returned to France, and on the second day of the Battle of Cambrai, November 21, 1917, was killed. He was 24. In "Cha Till Macrimmein" -- a poem once considered by Scottish enthusiasts to be an authentic Highland lament — Mackintosh foretells his own death.