

## Farnhill Volunteers and the WW1 Poets – 11

### Rebuilding lives

#### – Aftermath by Siegfried Sassoon

Our project has researched what happened to the Farnhill Volunteers who survived the war. Although the full impact is impossible to know, it is clear that the war affected men in many different ways.

Some returned injured, their lives irrevocably altered – for example, Frank Pollard, a playing member of the 1913 Kildwick Albion Cricket Club, who was made honorary Captain in 1920, after having had a leg amputated; others, including John William Clough – according to his daughter-in-law, who talked to the project – seem to have quickly resumed their lives where they had left off.

It is likely that most would have attended the unveiling of Kildwick War Memorial on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1921, by Cecilia Smith, the daughter of Joseph Smith, the first man from the parish to have been killed in the war.



The poem “Aftermath” by Siegfried Sassoon speaks to the men who fought in the Great War and asks them to get on with their lives and yet also to remember the men who fought alongside them.

## ***Aftermath*, by Siegfried Sassoon**

Have you forgotten yet?...

For the world's events have rumbled on since those gagged days,  
Like traffic checked while at the crossing of city-ways:

And the haunted gap in your mind has filled with thoughts that flow  
Like clouds in the lit heaven of life; and you're a man reprieved to go,  
Taking your peaceful share of Time, with joy to spare.

But the past is just the same--and War's a bloody game...

Have you forgotten yet?...

Look down, and swear by the slain of the War that you'll never forget.

Do you remember the dark months you held the sector at Mametz--  
The nights you watched and wired and dug and piled sandbags on parapets?  
Do you remember the rats; and the stench  
Of corpses rotting in front of the front-line trench--  
And dawn coming, dirty-white, and chill with a hopeless rain?  
Do you ever stop and ask, 'Is it all going to happen again?'

Do you remember that hour of din before the attack--  
And the anger, the blind compassion that seized and shook you then  
As you peered at the doomed and haggard faces of your men?  
Do you remember the stretcher-cases lurching back  
With dying eyes and lolling heads--those ashen-grey  
Masks of the lads who once were keen and kind and gay?

Have you forgotten yet?...

Look up, and swear by the green of the spring that you'll never forget.

A moving recitation of *Aftermath* was given by the actor Charles Dance in 2016, at the Thiepval Memorial, delivered in driving rain, as part of the Somme centenary commemorations – look for it online, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nts3nJ-Oe0>

