

In Flander's Fields

by John McCrae, May 1915

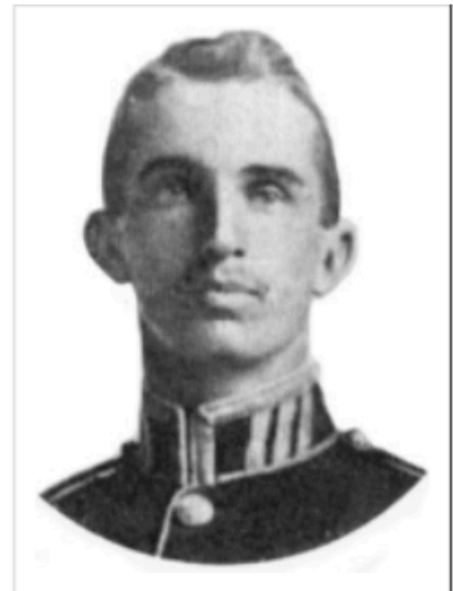
In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.



Major John McCrae, second in command of the 1st Brigade Canadian Field Artillery during the Second Battle of Ypres in April and May 1915.



Inspiration for the poem 'In Flanders Fields' by John McCrae

It is thought that doctor **John McCrae** (30th November 1872 — 28th January 1918) began the draft for his famous poem 'In Flanders Fields' on the evening of the 2nd May, 1915 in the second week of fighting during the Second Battle of Ypres.

It is believed that the death of his friend, Alexis Helmer, was the inspiration for McCrae's poem 'In Flanders Fields'. The exact details of when the first draft was written may never be known because there are various accounts by those who were with McCrae at that time.

- One account says that he was seen writing the poem sitting on the rearstep of an ambulance the next day while looking at Helmer's grave and the vivid red poppies that were springing up amongst the graves in the burial ground.
- Another account says that McCrae was so upset after Helmer's burial that he wrote the poem in twenty minutes in an attempt to compose himself.
- A third account by his commanding officer, **Lieutenant Colonel Morrison**, states that John told him he drafted the poem partly to pass the time between the arrival of two groups of wounded at the first aid post and partly to experiment with different variations of the poem's metre.

John McCrae, was serving as a Major and a military doctor and was second in command of the 1st Brigade Canadian Field Artillery. The field guns of his brigade's batteries were in position on the west bank of the Ypres-Yser canal, about two kilometres to the north of Ypres. The brigade had arrived there in the early hours of 23rd April.