



**CATEGORY: Dear Mum**

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**OVERALL WINNER:**

**Dear Michael**

The stone came for Dad.  
We're going up the Llan next Tuesday  
And John Chapel says he'll do the prayers, what with the vicar  
On sabbatical in Belgium.  
Dad wouldn't mind, said Mam.  
He was all for practicalities:  
Doing what has to be done.

She says I oughtn't to fret,  
You'll have other things to do.  
No time for writing to a little brother.  
I'm not little, I said,  
Daf Jones from my class joined up last week.  
Mam said he was as stupid as he looked and that I should know better.

But it's been two weeks, Michael,  
Since we last heard word.  
I sit in the wardrobe where it's dark,  
Between the coats and shirts,  
And that stupid thing you wear for church;  
There the fear can't touch me.

Our tree is bare.  
They've taken the last of the apples.  
Mam managed two jellies and a cake  
But the windfall's too far gone now,  
Food for the worms, and  
The tree fit for firewood.  
I don't know if it will be there  
When you get home.

*Elin Heron*

## HIGHLY COMMENDED:

### TIME AND WORTH

(i)

If you should ever stand my friend,  
One trembling hand upon that rung,  
A world apart from kith and kin,  
And firelit hearth and fervent song,  
You would not grieve the price of ale,  
Nor fickle English weather scorn,  
But crave a clean and quiet bed,  
And curse each squandered summer's morn

(ii)

And Mother I can see your face;  
You muss my hair with tender hand  
But you are far from here I know,  
It is the mist and breeze uncanned,  
And seldom do you rest at night,  
Or lend your trust to prayer and Grace,  
But at that solemn table weep,  
And set me still an empty place

(iii)

If you could see me now, my love,  
One quivering hand inside my coat,  
And fumbling for your picture torn,  
And tucked within a parting note,  
You would not know this raddled face,  
This portrait of a young man spent,  
But pick apart each careful lie,  
In every letter home I sent

(iv)

If you should ever know my son,  
How keenly men in battle kill,  
You would not let your loved ones stray,  
But draw them close and closer still,  
And should you leave some stinking trench,  
And out above the sandbags climb,  
You too would know your worth my boy,  
And that of time. Such precious, precious time

*Lee Armstrong*

**Memorium** (*Using phrases extracted at random from the WW1 diaries of Captain Vyvian Trevenen MC 2nd January 1894 - 10th June 1918*)

I witnessed a first class firework display.  
The news is not serious - merely  
to keep the line straight.  
We did nothing, as there was nothing to do.  
**... a beautiful summer's evening  
and the air alive with aeroplanes.**

We seem to be fighting day and night  
without any visible result.  
Another blazing hot day,  
almost too hot to live.  
**... a beautiful summer's evening  
and the air alive with aeroplanes.**

I was quietly reading when the shell burst,  
making a lot of noise and nearly choking me.  
And we're all awfully surprised  
to find ourselves still alive.  
**Beastly cold & my fire refused to burn  
And I said 'this is no place for me'.**

Once when I woke up,  
I found that my horse had lain down beside me.  
And I slept on a stone floor,  
more soundly than I have ever slept before  
**Beastly cold & my fire refused to burn  
And I said 'this is no place for me'.**

Time to show myself in my true colours.  
'Crawling out under cover of darkness  
... great coolness under shell fire ...  
a fine example to the men under him.'\*  
**This was Happy Valley but ...  
it might well be called the Valley of Death now.**

Knowing these scares of old  
all I did was put on my spurs.  
And I saw a scene which I hope never  
to see again for somebody's honour.  
**This was Happy Valley but ...  
it might well be called the Valley of Death now.**

But I really believe the summer has come at last  
The light was perfect  
Very quiet all day  
& the evening as well.\*\*  
**And I slept on a stone floor,  
more soundly than I have ever slept before.**

\*Citation when awarded the Military Cross. \*\*Last diary entry before he was killed.  
Katherine McInnes 2014