

## ALFRED VICTOR RATCLIFFE (MASTER)



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|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Date of Birth</b>      | 1 February 1887 in Gravesend, Kent  |
| <b>School Information</b> | Attended Dulwich School before going to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge in 1907, where he got his BA in 1914.  |
| <b>Career Information</b> | Master at the College. He enlisted at the outbreak of the war, abandoning his studies to become a barrister at Inner Temple and poet.                                 |
| <b>Date Of Death</b>      | 1 July 1916   |
| <b>Cause of Death</b>     | Killed in action leading his company on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme.   |
| <b>Location</b>           | Fricourt, Somme, France   |
| <b>Cemetery</b>           | Fricourt New Military Cemetery, Somme, France <b>Grave : C 8</b><br>He is also mentioned on Harrogate Cenotaph and on the Harrogate St Roberts RC Church War Memorial |
| <b>Rank</b>               | Lieutenant  |
| <b>Branch of Service</b>  | 10 <sup>th</sup> Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales Own)   |

While in the trenches he wrote the poem "Optimism" –

At last there'll dawn the last of the long year,  
Of the long year that seemed to dream no end,  
Whose every dawn but turned the world more drear,  
And slew some hope, or led away some friend.  
Or be you dark, or buffeting, or blind,  
We care not, day, but leave not death behind.

The hours that feed on war go heavy-hearted,  
Death is no fare wherewith to make hearts fain.  
Oh, we are sick to find that they who started  
With glamour in their eyes came not again.  
O day, be long and heavy if you will,  
But on our hopes set not a bitter heel.

For tiny hopes like tiny flowers of Spring  
 Will come, though death and ruin hold the land,  
 Though storms may roar they may not break the wing  
 Of the earthed lark whose song is ever bland.  
 Fell year unpitiful, slow days of scorn,  
 Your kind shall die, and sweeter days be born.

