

Audioguide (Free)

Sur les pas de
Wilfred Owen
FOLLOWING IN
WILFRED OWEN'S FOOTSTEPS



Communauté de Communes de
Caudrésis - Catésis



OFFICE DE TOURISME DU
Cambrésis

Association
Wilfred Owen
France

Création ALM 06 87 41 87 08

MAISON FORESTIERE WILFRED OWEN

BOIS LEVEQUE, RD959 59360 ORS

Open : From April 15th till November 15th
From wednesday to saturday 2^{am} till 6^{pm}
On the 1st Sunday of the month from 3^{pm} to 6^{pm}
For the groups opened on reservation

INFORMATIONS and VISITS

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4 itinéraires reliant 90 étapes ont été conçus pour vous emmener à la découverte de ces pages majeures de l'Histoire :

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Loi du stress, proche de l'essentiel...

Maison Forestiere - Ors



Childhood and adolescence

Wilfred Edward Salter Owen was born on March 18th 1893 in Owestry, Shropshire. He was the oldest of the four children of Tom Owen who was then a railway clerk and of Suzan Shaw who belonged to the local upper middle class. In 1897 Edward Shaw's death doomed the Owen family's golden days to oblivion, thereby compelling them to adjust to a more humble way of life. After moving to Birkenhead on Merseyside, the Owens returned to Shropshire, the county where Wilfred was born. In those days he was attending lessons at the Technical School. Young Wilfred Owen was already enraptured by poetry and by John Keats's in particular. From then onwards he kept on writing. In 1913 after a demoralizing experience as a lay assistant in Dunsden near Reading (he gave up most of his religious convictions at this time) and an unsuccessful application for university entrance, he moved to Bordeaux where he taught English at the Berlitz School and became a private tutor.

The war

In October 1915 compulsory military service was unknown in Great Britain. Wilfred Owen enlisted as a second lieutenant and made for the front line in January 1917. Suffering from a violent trauma after a dreadful explosion, he was evacuated to Craiglockhart Hospital in Scotland. There he met Siegfried Sassoon, a poet and an officer like himself, a decorated hero too, who had just issued a thundering denunciation of the war. Sassoon encouraged Owen to use personal experience in his poetry. This triggered something in the mind of Wilfred Owen who so far had only written rather classical pieces without much originality. The apprentice had found his voice, which can be heard through a period of intense creativity culminating in a series of major poems such as 'Strange Meeting' and 'Exposure'.

The end of the war and the death of the poet

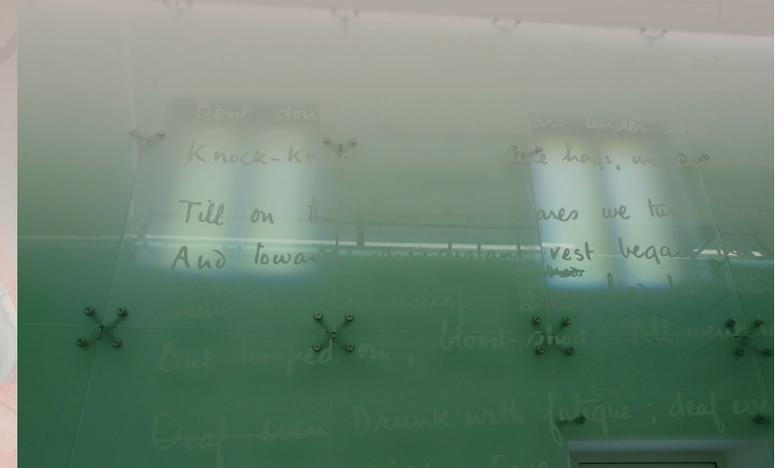
In his lifetime, Wilfred Owen only published four poems. But he had little time to do so. He soon headed for the front again, and distinguished himself in September 1918 with his courageous action on the Bearevoir-Fonsomme line. He was killed at Ors on November 4th 1918 as he was leading his group across the Sambre canal. He was 25 years old. Seven days later, the Armistice was signed. That very day, while the church bells were pealing out, his parents received the fateful telegram.

Maison Forestiere : a work by Simon Patterson

Simon Patterson, b. in 1967

the British artist Simon Patterson was invited to respond to the commission. He proposed, with support of the mayor and the village of Ors, to focus on the Maison Forestiere, and give the disused building new life both as a homage to Wilfred Owen but also as a venue for poetry. The artist's design has been realised by the French architect Jean-Christophe Denise. The house is simultaneously a sculpture, a visual work and a sound piece: its roof is remade to represent an open book while the internal space is filled with animated projections of texts by Wilfred Owen on the walls. A circular ramp leads down to the cellar where Wilfred Owen wrote his last letter home to his mother. It is the only original part of the building and the artist has preserved it exactly as it was.

The Maison forestiere is not a museum, not a memorial, but a quiet place for meditation, reflexion, poesy.



The House

Poesy are graved onto the wall and texts are projected in french and english. English Texts read by famous actor Kenneth Branagh and Philippe Capelle for french.

The cellar

The cellar remains untouched and is accessed by a curved ramp alongside which runs the text of Owen's last letter home to his mother.

