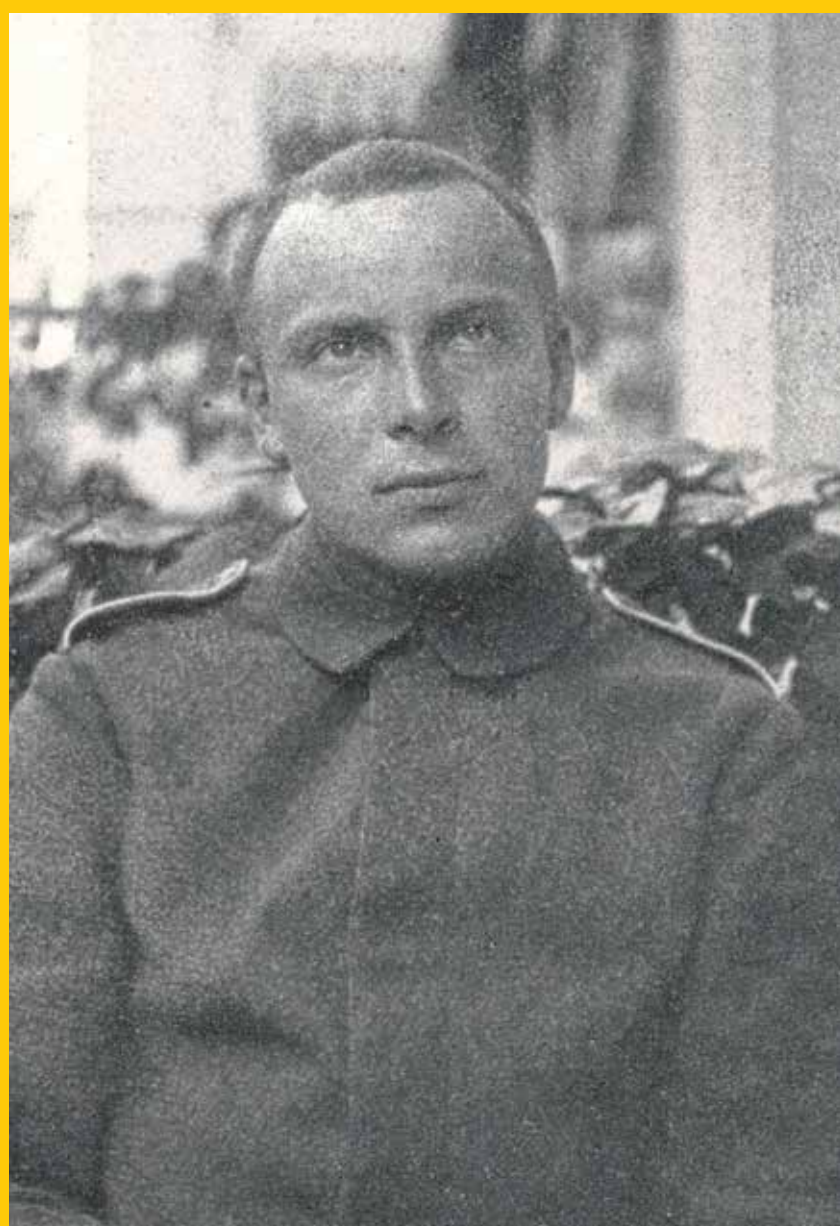


POETS AT THE SOMME

CURSE

11



**Reinhard
Sorge**
(1892-1916)

Sorge was born in Berlin and brought up in a strict Lutheran household. As an act of rebellion he immersed himself in the artistic and literary life in Berlin at the time becoming part of the German Expressionist movement. Both a playwright and poet he is probably best known for his drama *The Beggar / Der Bettler*. He was one of the first winners of the Kleist Prize awarded annually from 1912 for German literature. Conscripted into the German army in 1915 he was mortally wounded on July 20th during the Battle of the Somme, dying at a field dressing station near Ablaincourt. His most famous poetry collection is "*Mutter der Himmel*" published in 1917.

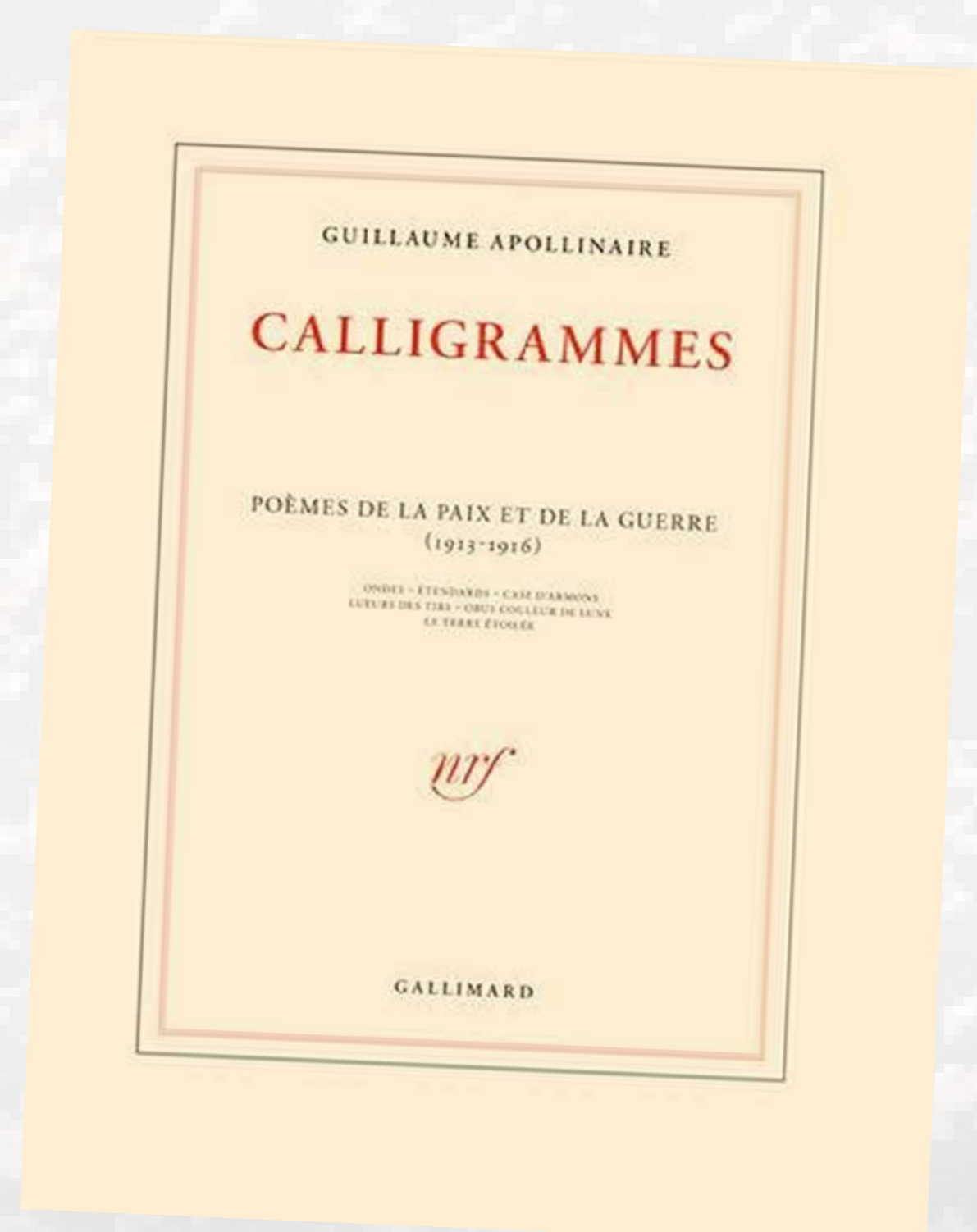
He is buried in a communal German war grave in Vermandovillers along with his compatriot the anti-war German poet Alfred Lichtenstein who also died on the Somme (but earlier, in 1914).



**Guillaume
Apollinaire**
(1880-1918)

Born in Rome, of Polish descent, and raised in France, poet, novelist, playwright and journalist Apollinaire was very much part of the Parisian artistic scene at the turn of the century and counted among his friends Matisse and Picasso. He joined the French army and fought on the Western Front serving on the front line between Verdun and the Somme. He suffered severe shrapnel wounds to his head in 1916 and was invalided out of the army. His landmark experimental poetry collection *Calligrammes : poems de la guerre 1913-1916* features poems dealing with the excitement and intoxication of war on the one hand and the loneliness, longing and war weariness on the other. Even though he survived the war he died in the influenza epidemic of 1918 and is buried in the Père Lachese cemetery in Paris.

Note - Calligramme was a form of poetry invented by Apollinaire in which words are written or typed to form drawings.



A POET AGAINST THE WAR



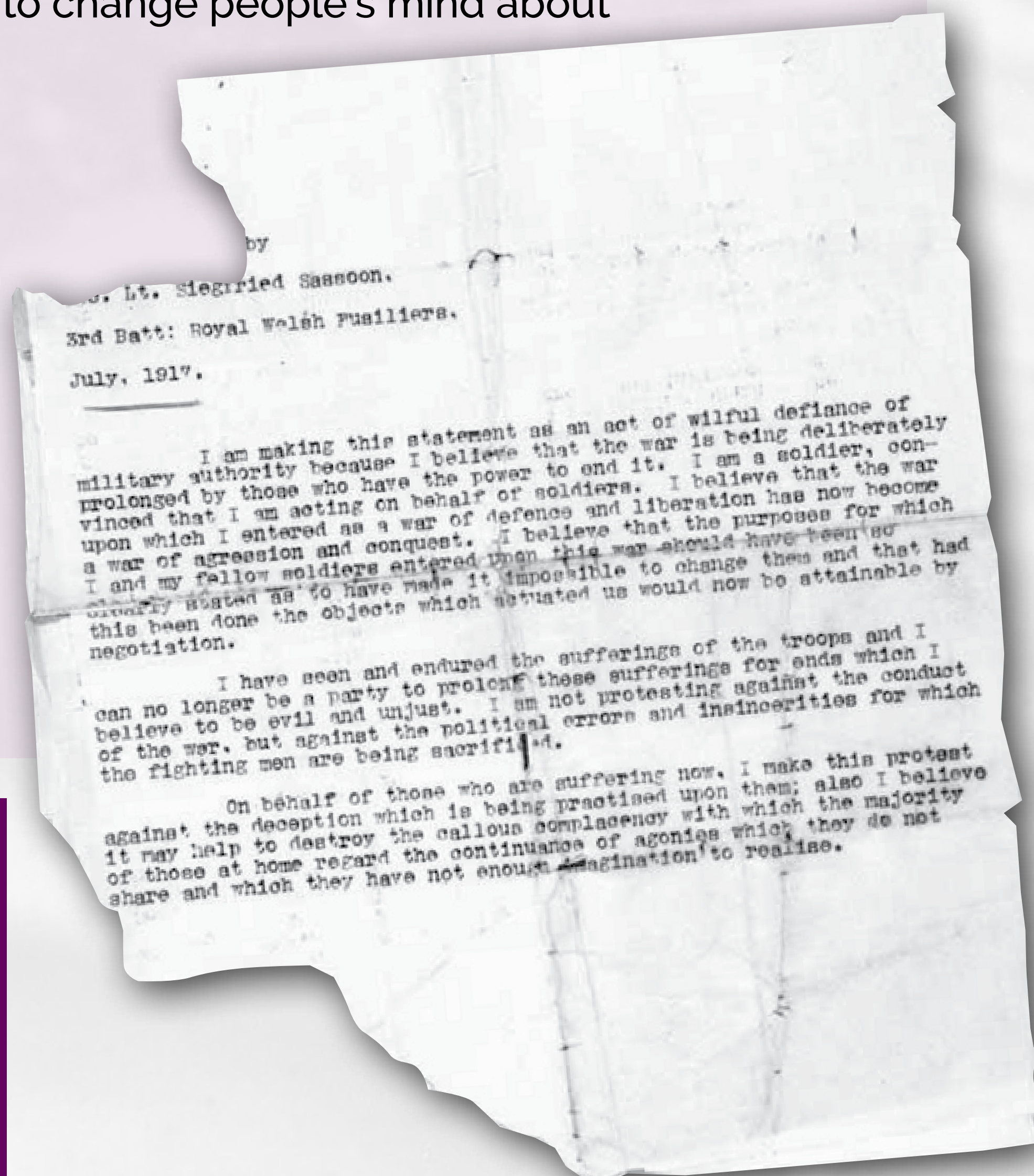
Sassoon had just published his anti-war document *Finished with the war: A soldier's declaration*, and, in danger of being tried for treason, he was admitted to Craiglockhart thanks to the intervention of his friend Robert Graves. Even though both Graves and Rivers sympathised with Sassoon's anti-war stance they didn't really agree with it - both regarded it as their patriotic duty to serve no matter what.

".... the way I see it, when you put the uniform on, in effect you sign a contract. And you don't back out of a contract merely because you've changed your mind. You can still speak

up for your principles, you can argue against the ones you're being made to fight for, but in the end you do the job. And I think that way you gain more respect. Siegfried isn't going to change people's minds like this. It may be in him to change people's mind about the war but this isn't the way to do it."

**Graves commenting
to Rivers on
Sassoon's position
on the war.
taken from
Regeneration by Pat
Barker**

**See also The Somme
& Memory panel**



Extract from *Wonder of war / Merveille de la guerre*

–But I have flowed into the sweetness of this war with my
whole
company along the long trenches

A few cries of flame keep announcing my presence

I have hollowed out the bed where I flow and branch into
a thousand
small streams going everywhere

I am in the front line trenches and I am everywhere or
rather I am
beginning to be everywhere

For it is I who begin this affair of the centuries to come

It will be longer to realize than the myth of soaring Icarus

I bequeath to the future the story of Guillaume Apollinaire

Who was in the war and knew how to be everywhere

In the lucky towns behind the front lines

In all the rest of the universe

In all those who died tangled in barbed wire

In women in cannons in horses