

# Timothy Corsellis

## Early years

Timothy was brought up in a middle-class family in London and privately educated at Winchester College. While at school Timothy read extensively and engrossed himself in appreciating and writing poetry.

## Poetry before the war

On leaving school Timothy had written over 80 poems, and hoped to be a writer. Unlike his classmates, he did not go on to university but went to work in the Town Hall at Wandsworth. He also volunteered at a club which helped disadvantaged boys and young men in the East End of London, giving him an insight into the deprivation and overcrowding in the area. Until roughly January 1940, Timothy's writing was very political, and was official registered as a Conscientious Objector.

## War service

Timothy's views on the war changed after Dunkirk and the invasion of France in May 1940. He soon applied to be released off the Conscientious Objectors list and was accepted into the Royal Air Force (RAF). After six months training he was to be transferred to Bomber Command. Timothy was honourably discharged from Bomber Command as he was horrified at the possibility of having to bomb civilian areas.

Timothy quickly applied to serve in the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) in February 1941, and began his service in August 1941. While waiting to begin his service in the ATA Timothy worked as an Air Raid Precautions worker in Wandsworth during the most destructive and intense bombing raids seen in London.



*If I should die, think only this of me: That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is for ever England...*

## Poetry during the war

The poems he wrote during his six months in the RAF have been featured in at least eleven anthologies of war poetry and are what he is remembered for the most. Timothy also wrote about the Blitz and the lives of those in London suffering under it.

## Death

While flying a supplies mission on October 10<sup>th</sup> 1941 Timothy's plane crashed near Carlisle killing him instantly. He was, at his family's wishes, cremated in Oxford Crematorium and is commemorated by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

### News reel of embarkation

Where are you going to, laughing men?  
For a holiday on the sea?  
Laughing, smiling, wonderful men,  
Why won't you wait for me?

God, how I love you, men of my race,  
As you smile on your way to a war;  
How can you do it, wonderful face  
Do you not know what's before?

Laugh, laugh, you soldier sons  
Joke on your way to the war  
For your mothers won't laugh at the sound of the guns  
And the tales of the filth and the gore.

Smile and joke young sailor Jack  
For it's the self-same story:  
There'll be no jokes when you come back  
And bloody little glory.



*If I should die, think only this of me: That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is for ever England...*