Guide to the Francis Ledwidge Letter and Poem
MSS.2766

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists’ Toolkit
August 23, 2010
Describing Archives: A Content Standard
# Table of Contents

Summary Information ................................................................. 3
Biographical/Historical note ....................................................... 4
Scope and Contents note ............................................................ 4
Administrative Information ......................................................... 5
Controlled Access Headings ....................................................... 5
Collection Inventory ................................................................. 6
## Summary Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repository</th>
<th>W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creator</td>
<td>Ledwidge, Francis, 1887-1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Francis Ledwidge Letter and Poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>1914-1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent</td>
<td>0.1 Linear feet (photocopies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Photocopy of a letter from Francis Ledwidge to his cousin, Elizabeth Ledwidge, in which he gives some family background and asks her to now accept his latest poem (included) and a copy of his book when published.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Preferred Citation note**

Francis Ledwidge Letter and Poem, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama
Biographical/Historical note

Francis Ledwidge was born at Janeville in Slane, County Meath, Ireland on August 19, 1887, the eighth of nine children. His parents, Patrick and Anne Ledwidge, gave their children the best education they could afford, but Patrick's untimely death in 1891 or 1892, forced the children to leave school and work to support the family. Francis worked as a farm hand, road mender, copper miner (he was sacked for organizing a strike) and shop assistant.

Ledwidge was a keen patriot and nationalist. He and his brother Joseph were founding members of the Slane Branch of the Irish Volunteers, a force sworn to defend the introduction of Home Rule for Ireland. At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the group split into two factions, one that supported the appeal to join Irish regiments in support of the Allies and those who did not. Francis was originally part of the second faction, however after defending his position strongly at a local authority meeting, he enlisted on October 24, 1914 in Lord Dunsany's regiment, joining the 5th battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, part of the 10th (Irish) Division. Dunsany, Ledwidge's patron in Dublin before the war, strongly counseled against enlistment and had even offered Ledwidge a stipend to support him if he stayed away from the war. Although there was some speculation that he went to war because his sweetheart had jilted him, Ledwidge maintained that he could not stand idly aside while others sought to defend Ireland's freedom.

Having survived despite huge losses by his company in the Battle of Gallipoli, he became ill after a back injury on a journey in December 1915 through the mountains of Serbia. In January 1917, as a lance corporal, Ledwidge was posted to the Western Front, joining the 1st Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, part of the 29th Division. On July 31, 1917, a group from Ledwidge's battalion was laying a road in preparation for an assault during the third Battle of Ypres, near the village of Boezinge. Ledwidge was drinking tea in a mud hole with his comrades when a random shell exploded alongside, killing Ledwidge and five others.

Dunsany arranged for many of Ledwidge's poems to be published posthumously and although his work faded from view for many decades of the 20th century, much of it has come to life again thanks to a renewed interest in the literature of the era.

Scope and Contents note

This collection contains a photocopy of a letter from Francis Ledwidge to his cousin, Elizabeth Ledwidge, in which he gives some family background and asks her to now accept his latest poem (included) and a copy of his book when published.
Administrative Information

Publication Information

W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama August 2010

Provenance

gift of Wade Hall, 2008

Controlled Access Headings

Subject(s)

- Poets
- World War One
- World War, 1914-1918
- World War, 1914-198 - Poetry
## Collection Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter and Poem</th>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SC0041</td>
<td>2766.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>