

Stella Backhouse

FIRST WORLD WAR GRAVE IN LONDON ROAD CEMETERY

In temperate peace, in Peace's fold interred,
you died believing war had ended war.
And though storms rage without, within, unstirred,
as in a glasshouse, peace for ever more

would prosper in its confines climes benign.
Sweet dreams! In one-and-twenty years, a span
scarce long enough for nature to design
a boy babe's growth from innocent to man,

the paradise was smashed. This very town
an icon of the smashing. Death unclad?
Fie fie, sweet lad, that triumph's not thy crown!
We know what you knew not; we think it mad.

Yet we, where live we that we should throw stones?
Why say we: we dwell not in brittle zones?