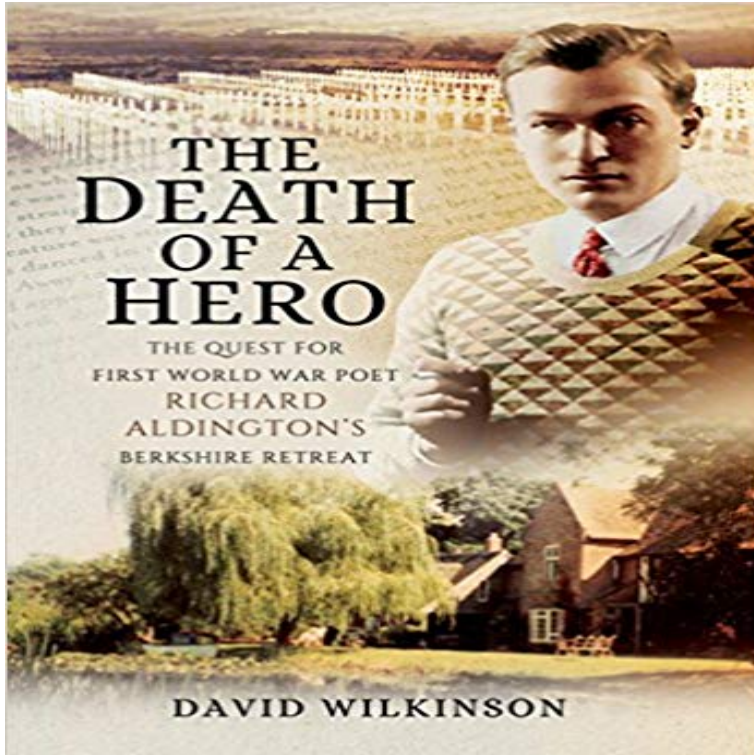


Death of a Hero: The Quest for First World War Poet Richard Aldington's Berkshire Retreat



When David Wilkinson bought a picturesque cottage alongside the Kennet and Avon Canal in Berkshire, he was astonished to learn that the writer Richard Aldington, a WWI veteran, had lived there in the 1920s. In his most famous novel, *Death of a Hero* (1929), Aldington mourned the loss of a generation of young men in the First World War, while in *The Colonels Daughter* (1931), he set out to show the effect of that loss on the young women left behind. Intrigued, Wilkinson decided to trace the people who had inspired this later novel. From servant girls to army officers, he interviewed those who knew and talked freely about Aldington's time amongst them, and the worrying effect that the work had on their lives. Aldington had moved on by the time he wrote *The Colonels Daughter*, but for those involved the story would prove to be far closer to the truth than was easily palatable. One woman in particular was immediately recognizable and had to live with the consequences of Aldington's story for the remainder of her long life. Wilkinson's research led him to shoulder the uneasy truth of his findings, and the mantle of assumed guilt followed him as he discovered, firsthand, the uncomfortable effect of the novel on the village, and on the women of the Lost Generation.

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