

# Hidden Histories - coded lives

## Vera Brittain (1893 – 1970) Edward Brittain (1895 – 1918)

Vera Brittain was a British writer and pacifist who lived in Buxton from 1907-1914.

She is best remembered as the author of the best-selling 1933 memoir **Testament of Youth**, recounting her experiences during the First World War and the beginning of her journey towards pacifism.

Letters, written from 1913 to 1918, between Vera Brittain her brother Edward give an account of their experiences of the First World War.

Edward Brittain participated in the first day of the Battle of the Somme, during which he was wounded and awarded the Military Cross.

He was killed in action, aged 22, on 15 June 1918 during the Battle of the Piave in Italy.

There were however some strange discrepancies in the reports of Edward's death.

Alan Bishop, author of **Letters From a Lost Generation** (1998), points out that Edward Brittain's commanding officer had ordered an investigation into Edward following the discovery of letters written to him by another officer, from which it was evident that Edward had been involved in homosexual relations with men in his company.

As such it remains a possibility that, faced with the disgrace of a court martial, Edward went into battle deliberately seeking to be killed.



### Find out more

**Vera Brittain and the First World War: The Story of Testament of Youth**, a book by Mark Bostridge, includes a chapter on the making of the film of the same name which was released on 16 January 2015.