

Remembrance, Service and Freemasonry – a personal journey of service.

My sojourn to serve.

“Remembrance honours those who serve to defend our democratic freedoms and way of life. We unite across faiths, cultures and backgrounds to remember the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces community from Britain and the Commonwealth”. A very apt succinct description for something that is very personal and so much deeper for all those who are directly or indirectly touched by the need to Remember.

Ever since I can remember I wanted to serve my Country, it is something that I cannot explain from whence it came, but I just know that it is something within my heart that I had always wanted to do. I did come from a fairly traditional Kirk of Scotland family, Kirk and Sunday school was always part of our weekly ritual. I also knew that part of my father’s weekly ritual was also to attend his Lodge. He was then and is still now a very active Freemason and is in fact at 84 year old our longest serving mason, joining his father and brother in our Lodge, Lodge Earl Haig No 1260 as a Lewis in 1956.

One of my other early memories is that I can always remember wearing a Poppy and every November walking along to the local War Memorial in Markinch and seeing the “old and the bold” proudly standing with their chest full of medals, in the 1970’s there were so many more of them than there is now and even though they were failing in health and age they always stood with a sense of honour and decorum that can, looking back, only come from someone who has served and has seen the awfulness of conflict.

Maybe it was this blend of Kirk and Freemasonry at home that gave me this desire to serve. Little did I know at that time that my future would be so entwined in Remembrance, Service and Freemasonry.

That Service to community started as a Scout and then later as an Air Cadet before leaving home at 17 years old to join the Royal Air Force on the 5th January 1988. My Father and Uncle had both served during their National Service in the 50’s and it made sense to me to follow in their footsteps – yes knowing what I know now, I may have made different career decisions. But on the other hand had I done so I may not be writing this paper today.

My Service to the Lodge was to start some 16 months later in March 1989 whilst I was serving at RAF Wyton in Huntingdonshire. During Christmas leave I was put through my enquiry committee and then on my return for Easter Leave I was initiated into my Grandfathers and Fathers Lodge. That Lodge was in the small village of Windygates in Fife and it takes the name of in my opinion the Father of Remembrance across the Commonwealth of Nations. My Mother Lodge is Lodge Earl Haig no 1260 within the Province of Fife and Kinross under the Constitution of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Haig was a name I was familiar with as I grew up in Markinch – the Home of Haig. Markinch was the Headquarters of Haig’s Whisky and all around me growing up there were connections to the Haig name and family. Little did I know then that this family would follow me in many ways through my journey of Remembrance, Service and Commemoration!

Bro Field Marshal Earl Haig and my mother Lodge.

As a young freemason, and to this day, I am always eager to make my daily advancement in knowledge, a trait that my father says I have always had, that thirst for knowledge. This knowledge to understand our Lodges name and the connection with the Field Marshal would take me on this journey, first of all understanding why a small relatively rural Lodge in Fife would want to bear his name and why did the members feel a connection. Well I found out the simple explanation was that

the majority of our founder members worked at Cameron Bridge distillery, which was part of the Haig Whisky Empire and as our Lodge was founded in the relatively near aftermath of the First World War, at a time when Haig was still lauded as National Hero by being able to bring the War to an end and bring our boys home. The founders did however debate should we be called Lodge Cameron brig or Lodge Earl Haig and the latter won the vote.

These early members of our Lodge knew that Haig was a Freemason, in fact 16 of our founder members came from our neighbouring Lodge, Elgin's Lodge at Leven No 91. FM Haig at this time was a member of that Lodge but due to all of his other duties he was not active as a Freemason and in fact at that time he had only taken his 1st degree when he was initiated into the Lodge in December 1881. His Army career then took him away from the family home at Cameron and it was not until after the Great War that he returned to Freemasonry and was passed and raised in 1924. He then had a very rapid progression to the Chair of King Solomon and was the Master of the Lodge in 1925. During his tenure he initiated 19 candidates. This can be testified to by the Masters journal that sits on the Dias of 91 to this day. Where along with his signature are the signature of all of his candidates. As was normal practice on those days he also received rapid promotion within Grand Lodge and at the time of his death he was Grand Senior Deacon.

So with this close connection with his Mother Lodge the founders of 1260 approached the FM to ask his permission to call the Lodge after him, which he readily granted and he presented the Lodge with a sword, which had been presented to him as his first pattern cavalry sword. This sword can be seen in all the great statutes of Haig around the country and is still carried by our sword bearer in open Lodge. Incidentally my first office was that of Sword-bearer and I can still remember how humbling it was as a young serviceman to have the privilege of carrying this National Hero's sword. To this day I ensure that all of our new candidates are very well aware of the antiquity of this treasure.

Haig and the masonic foundations of Remembrance.

At the time of our Lodge's consecration in 1921 Haig was in the process of bringing together a variety of disparate veterans groups that had emerged in the aftermath of the Great War, his drive, enthusiasm and dedication to his men was to prove vitally important for our Nation as out of his endeavours the British Legion and British Legion Scotland was formed in 1921. When you look at the early constitutions and the structure of Legion Branches anyone with a small understanding of the structure of Freemasonry will be able to see at a glance where Haig took his idea from for his new organisation structure from.

Haig's reputation over the years has been very mixed, from being lauded as a hero in the aftermath of the Great War to being accused of being a donkey leading lions. Somewhere in the middle is likely to be the true answer. I am gladdened that modern day historians are coming back to the view that he was a national hero and his actions shortened the Great War and saved countless thousands of lives. From my discussions with current members of the Haig family and the various books that I have read on all sides of the Haig – hero or villain debate – I like to believe that his men, his family, his brethren and his country were all at the forefront of his mind in all that he did. He was a relatively shy man by nature and circumstance did catapult him into the spotlight and he was caught in the political machinations of a Nation in a post war time of crisis. This was through no fault of his own or through any desire to be in charge, in many ways it reminds me of the fictional President Tom Kirkman in the Netflix series Designated Survivor, like the fictional Kirkman, Haig took what life gave him and he did what he believed was right.

He was however driven by a sense to look after his men and this was why he became instrumental in the design and delivery of what we now know as Remembrance in the UK. It was his leadership and vision that brought the many veterans groups that were forming in the aftermath of the War together to ensure that they were not competing with each other not only for money but to provide a welfare

service, but maybe also he saw that politics could hijack some of these groups and not for the best of reasons. The history of the Royal British Legion movement is a presentation in itself and as such I will not go into too much detail in this paper about those great organisations that are looking forward to 100 years of “service before self” in 1921.

Although many members will credit Haig with being the first to use the poppy as a symbol of Remembrance and to use it to help fund his fledgling organisations, the credit for this must go to a number of people before Haig. Firstly, Lt.Col John McRae a Canadian military doctor was inspired to write the Poem in Flanders Field in commemoration of a close friend who was killed at Ypres. This poem has been instrumental in the story of making the poppy become the symbol of remembrance across the English speaking world.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.
Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

This poem inspired an American academic Prof. Moina Michaels to adopt the poppy in memory of those who had fallen in the war. She tirelessly campaigned to get it adopted as an official symbol of Remembrance across the United States and worked with others who were trying to do the same in Canada, Australia, and the UK. It was not just Prof. Michaels who had been inspired by the poppy of Flanders field. A French woman, Anna Guérin was in the UK in 1921 where she planned to sell the poppies in London after being inspired by French widows who had been selling them in France for the benefit of wounded and returning soldiers. It was a meeting between our Brother the FM Haig and Ms Guerin where he was inspired to use the poppy as the emblem for his fledgling organisation the British Legion. Not yet Royal, as the Royal appendage was not added until 1971. He ordered 9 million poppies that first year and sold them to public on our Remembrance Day the 11th November 1921.

Being a member of both organisations I can clearly see the similarities in structure, in ethos and desire to do well and albeit I cannot evidence that it was Haig’s masonic knowledge that inspired the way he

formed the Legion, I like to think that it did. My belief in this is strengthened by conversations that I have had with Bro, The Rt. Hon. Earl of Elgin and Kincardine KT. Past Grand Master and Past Provincial Grand Master of Fife and Kinross, my mother Province. I was honoured that in his last term as our PGM he invited me to become an active member of his PGL a body that I have now served with great honour to my mother Lodge for the last 19 years. Bro Lord Elgin shared with me a story about his father and one of his meetings with Haig. Actually it was more than a meeting as Haig was staying at Broomhall the Bruce family seat just outside Dunfermline. This story was also reprinted in the MQ Magazine no 9.

“By chance, just after I had read the article about the Duke of Wellington and Freemasonry (MQ, Issue No. 9), there was a visit from Archie Eglinton, who is my wife’s cousin, and I told him about a more modern Field Marshal and his interests in Freemasonry. Archie instructed me to write to you with this story.

In 1920, Lord Haig came to visit at Broomhall in order to visit a club of ex-servicemen that had been developed in our local town of Dunfermline. My father told me that, in the morning following this dinner of the ex-servicemen, Haig said that he was hoping to be able to form a number of these groups all over Scotland and elsewhere.

My father said that he then told Haig that he was finding similar groups of ex-servicemen who were joining or had recently joined Freemason Lodges in Scotland.

Father went on and said to Haig: “You didn’t by any chance become a Freemason, did you?” Haig apparently looked surprised but admitted that, as an undergraduate at Oxford he had joined the local Lodge at Leven in Fife near to their Cameron Bridge distillery and had become a Freemason in Elgin’s Lodge at Leven No. 91. This Lodge was named after the fifth Earl, who was Grand Master Mason in 1761.

My father then discovered from the Lodge secretary that indeed Douglas Haig, described as an undergraduate at Oxford, had taken his First and Second Degrees and was still awaiting his Third.

A suitable date was arranged for Field Marshal the Earl Haig, K.T., to receive his Third Degree and he later went on to become Master of the Lodge and was persuaded to take office in Grand Lodge, which he did. When he died he was Senior Grand Deacon.”

Listening to Bro Lord Elgin, speak is one of life’s great masonic privileges, he is one of the most dedicated Freemasons I have had the honour to meet and his knowledge on our Craft is second to none, his ability to hold a room is something that will be discussed in masonic circles long after the has ascended to the Grand Lodge above. Yes, it is an honour to be with your brethren, but even more so to have the pleasure of a private audience at Broomhall and listen to his memories.

The discussion about the future of Remembrance that evening at Broomhall by two of our countries leading aristocrats and soldiers is one of those dinners that you wish you can go back in time to witness. This meeting strengthens my belief that we as a Craft and more particularly members of my Province had a hand in defining the future of Remembrance in our nation.

Yes, it is tenuous, to believe that our Freemasonry is behind Remembrance, but as this story is entwined with my personal journey, I am happy to view it that way. When we look to the story of the third degree and what that means and the allegories that it explores it may be an easy step to make bearing in mind that although the Field Marshal had been a member of the Craft it was only in the aftermath of the war and around the time of his meetings at Broomhall that he was raised to the high and sublime degree.

As we know the third degree teaches the immortality of the soul. It teaches the truth that whilst man withers away to crumble and decay, there is something within him that will never perish. The third degree in freemasonry stirs men to serve the truth by steadfastly maintaining their noblest aspirations even in the face of appalling adversity, out of which can rise a more perfect tribute to our Masonic ideal. Was it these noblest of aspirations that drove Haig to ensure that his men were never forgotten?

During this time he would have also been reminded of the word of God in Ecclesiastes 12, 5
Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: and 12,7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

These sentiments are what I believe led him to insist that his grave would be the same as his men a standard Imperial War Grave Headstone and not one that you may have expected from a Scottish family of their standing. Lady Dorothy is also buried under a similar grave marker to her husband in the ground of Dryburgh Abbey a short drive away from the family home of Bemyside. They are both buried in the next plot to that other distinguished Scottish Freemason, Sir Walter Scott. Every time I visit the graveside in the ruined Abbey my belief in the goodness of our Craft and the work of the Royal British Legion is renewed as it is a beautiful place of contemplation and I am not surprised at all that the Companion of the Royal Arch every year have a meeting within the ruins of the Abbey as there are few other places I have visited that pull together the feelings of remembrance, faith, hope and benevolence for you to contemplate on your own masonic journey.

A Nation's tribute built by Freemason's.

In terms of buildings and monuments that we have created to honour our dead, I find none so more humbling and fitting tribute than the Scottish National War Memorial that is sited in the centre of Edinburgh Castle, the Castle itself sits powerfully above the beautiful city of my birth and has been a place of strength and security since the bronze age.

The Scottish National War Memorial commemorates nearly 135,000 Scottish casualties in the First World War, 1914-18, more than 50,000 in the Second World War, 1939-45, and the campaigns since 1945. The Memorial itself is to be found in Crown Square at the very top of the rock and was commissioned in 1927 by the architect Sir Robert Lorimer and along with 200 Scottish artists and craftsmen created a serene Hall of Honour and the Shrine, where the names of the dead are contained in books that are on permanent display. But in terms of Freemasonry and Remembrance what connections are there? Yes, like the story of Haig and Remembrance they may be tenuous as they will have happened even if those involved were not Freemason's but as I have said before in this paper, I like to believe that our principles were strong motivators in their lives and help make them the men they were.

One such masonic brother who was the driving force behind the vision to create the Scottish National War Memorial was John George Murray, 8th Duke of Atholl. A leading member of the Scottish aristocracy, the Duke of Atholl, or "Bardie" as he was known from his title, the Marquis of Tullibardine, was a serving soldier who had fought in the Sudan and had raised the Scottish Horse Yeomanry. He was a man of considerable vision and energy and, what was more important, he had both influence and connections. Many of these connections were Masonic and in our Masonic world he was certainly a brother of influence and connection, he was the Master of Lodge of Dunkeld St John No 14 (1895-1909) and importantly for the Scottish Craft he was Grand Master Mason of the Grand Lodge of Scotland between 1909 -1913.

In the spring of 1917 The Duke of Atholl gathered around him a number of leading and powerful Scots: Lt. General Sir Spencer Ewart, GOC Scotland, Lt. Colonel D. W. Cameron of Lochiel, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Captain George S. C. Swinton (the Grand Father of the famous Hollywood actress Tilda Swinton) and also and importantly for this paper Sir Hector Munro of Foulis, PM Lodge Fingal, he was also the first Provincial Grand Master of the PGL of Ross and Cromarty 1890-1911. His son and heir Captain Hector Munro MC, Younger of Foulis, was killed in action while serving with the 2nd Battalion Seaforth Highlanders in 1918. So, we can see that in the death of his son Bro Munro had very personal reasons to be involved in the development of this memorial. Speaking to our current Grand Master Mason Bro Ramsay McGhee who is also a Past PGM of Ross and Cromarty

the Munro family are still well known and active on the Black Isle but unfortunately currently no masonic connections.

Masonic civic involvement and the Royal British Legion Scotland and Poppyscotland.

My interest in the connection of Freemasonry and Remembrance was further developed when I became involved with Poppyscotland, firstly as a volunteer in the Garden of Remembrance in Princes Street Gardens around 12 years ago and then when I was fortunate enough in 2016 to be appointed as Head of Fundraising and Learning. During my time as volunteer and at a time before I became more involved with the National Services of Commemoration and the organisations that were involved in the various parades every November. I was aware that the Grand Lodge of Scotland was not involved but it was as you would expect mainly military and civic bodies involved in wreath laying, although across the country many Lodges laid wreaths at their local memorials. I asked myself why where we not involved at a National level. After a variety of conversations with more learned brethren than I am the consensus was that after the Second World War and the changing of times and cultures. The previously open and public masonic community somehow went into “hiding” we no longer opened the municipal buildings with great flare, pomp and ceremony. The UGLE recently commented during the TV programme Inside the Freemasons that it was to do with Hitler’s persecution of masons that we went into hiding. This is not a view that I hold, but that thought stream is worthy of its own paper. But, what I do know is that we no longer parade in our communities, yes some Lodges, but very few have kept that tradition alive!

So what had happened to our civic involvement? No one could really tell me. I then found out that in Scotland there is no formal order of precedence for organisations but loosely it was based on age of foundation. In my youthful naivety I approached the then CEO of the Royal British Legion Scotland, Mr Kevin Gray MM (Scots Guards). He was not a mason and was not sure about the protocol of inviting the Grand Lodge of Scotland but he did however make a promise that he would investigate and come back to me. Little did I know at the time that one of our the Lodge treasurers in my Province was also the National treasurer of the Royal British Legion Scotland at the time and it was he that Mr Gray spoke to about Freemasonry and the National Service of Remembrance. A few short weeks later I was invited back to New Haig House, which is incidentally where I know work from, or at least where my desk is as I am writing this paper during the COVID-19 lockdown and we are under a working from home regime. The discussion with Mr Gray was very fruitful and interesting and although we did briefly speak about Remembrance he was more interested in the history and meaning of Freemasonry. After a very pleasant few hours talking about my passion about Freemasonry, my mother Lodge and Bro FM Earl Haig, Mr Gray informed me that he would be extending an invite to the then Grand Master Mason, Bro Charles Iain Robert Wolrige Gordon of Esslemont to join with the Nation and lay a wreath on behalf of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. This invitation stands to this day along with the opportunity to lay a wreath at the opening of the Gardens of Remembrance in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness. So precedence waived, interest piqued, a few more conversations with the National Treasurer and Kevin Gray MM is now a very active Freemason in my Province and I am deeply honoured to call him a friend and Brother.

As part of the field of Remembrance in Princes Street Gardens where every year nearly 10,000 religious symbols are laid, it was also agreed with Poppyscotland that there would be a dedicated plot for Scottish Freemasons. A partnership was agreed and since 2013 every Lodge in Scotland is invited to purchase crosses on behalf of their Glorious Dead and these are planted in one masonic plot and the Grand Lodge of Scotland makes a significant donation in order to lay an individual cross/Star of David for every Home Lodge. These symbols are all stamped with the square and compasses and a group of volunteers hand write the number of every Lodge and then come along and plant them in the Field of Remembrance. A very humbling experience to be involved in and a partnership that has raised in excess of £120k for the vital life changing work of Poppyscotland. The site of nearly 1200 masonic symbols is also a very public statement of our support as the Craft for Remembrance and charity.

The Commemorations of the Armistice.

As we were approaching the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice in 2018 and it was more common knowledge that I was heavily involved in our Nations Remembrance more and more brethren began to approach me to see ways in which individual Lodges could become more involved to not only raise vital funds for our work but to allow them as Brethren, Lodges and Province to be part of the Centenary commemorations. My sense was that it was particularly important for Lodges that had members who had given the ultimate sacrifice and their names were always remembered on the Lodges own memorial tablets. It was also important to those Lodges such as my own Lodge Earl Haig who were formed in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. The various discussions that I had with many brethren reaffirmed in me that my own belief that our masonic teachings inspired us to commemorate those that had served our Nation.

When you do explore individual Lodge histories not only across our own Constitution in Scotland we have always felt the need to honour the sacrifice of our brethren that have given the ultimate sacrifice and the two main ways of doing this in Scottish Lodges was by memorial plaques, or pieces of furniture of the Lodge dedicated to their memory. In the temple that I meet in there is a beautiful marble plaque for the brethren of Elgin's Lodge at Leven which include the name of their Master who was killed in action. As we have said earlier this Lodge is the Mother Lodge of Earl Haig and this must have been emotional for the FM. The other permanent record was not just to include the names of the dead, but was the development of a Roll of Honour for all those that have served and across the length and breadth of the country you will see on the walls of Lodges these very ornate and beautifully decorated scrolls listed the Brothers name and his Regiment or Branch. I would encourage all to take the time to look at these items when you visit as I do sense sadly at times that so much of our history that adorn our temple walls is ignored by the majority of our brethren, maybe it should be much more part of the instruction and intendership of our new brethren.

The ideas to commemorate the 100th Anniversary were wide ranging and I am very grateful that many of these initiatives will last for many years in the mind of today's brethren. One such initiative was the striking of mark tokens from Lodges that had VC holders. With the Lodge being depicted on one side and the reverse depicting the VC and the holder's name. These have become collectors' items and I believe will be long lasting items of commemoration. Like all good ideas it was a very simple one but one with far reaching benefit.

The Grand Lodge of Scotland during this period of time become involved in three major projects of commemorations. For those that have visited Freemason's Hall in George Street, you cannot help be impressed with the beauty of the building that we are proud to call home to the Scottish Craft, but unlike the Grand Lodge building in Great Queen Street London our home was not built as a memorial to the War. A subject that I will address later in this paper. Within Freemason's Hall there are many memorials and bust of famous masons, a fantastic museum and library looking after our historic artefacts, books and records. But unlike in the majority of the daughter Lodges there was no War Memorial. It was felt that it would be fitting to commission such a memorial during the 2014-2019 commemoration period.

In October 2015 a memorial to all those brethren that had given their life in service was officially opened by Bro Lord Elgin. The statue which comprise a 2/3rd life size figure of St Andrew carrying his wooden saltire sits atop a bronze square which hosts the words of dedication. Behind the statue on the wall supports a freeze of all those who served and not just those who served in the military. It includes farmers, miners, fishermen, soldiers, sailors, airmen, clergymen, pipers and animals. Annually this memorial is now where the Grand Lodge lay their own wreath.

The next major partnership to commemorate the Armistice was undertaken by the Widows Sons Scotland motorcycle club. Again there is a whole paper that can be written on the subject of the Widows Sons but this is not the time or the place. During the summer and early autumn of 2018 the bikers took on the mammoth challenge of visiting every Province within Scotland and in partnership with the local Provincial Grand Lodges held wreath laying services at sites of either masonic or military importance. One such event was held at Haig's graveside at Dryburgh Abbey when the newly formed PGL of the Scottish Borders came together for the first time wearing their new regalia to commemorate their forebears. Humbling is an understatement. This Tour of Remembrance saw up to 100 brethren bikers cover thousands of miles around Scotland in all weather. Their efforts were widely covered in local papers which gave great media exposure to the Scottish Craft and during their sojourn they raised in excess of £65,000. Part of this money was raised with the sale of the first officially recognised GLS and Poppyscotland pin badge.

The final major event undertaken by the Grand Lodge of Scotland to commemorate the Armistice centenary was a Service of Remembrance and Parade along George Street in Edinburgh. A very moving service was conducted in the presence of the Lord Provost of Edinburgh the Rt. Hon. Frank Ross – a non-mason. The outdoor parade was the first under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of Scotland in many decades and what a beautiful site to see some 500 Freemasons in all diverse regalia of the Scottish Craft, march (bimble) along George Street to the sound of the Pipes and Drums.

All of these events were very fitting ways to round off what has been 100 years of the Scottish Craft's involvement in our Nations Remembrance. Knowing the current custodians of Scottish Freemasonry I have no doubt that we will continue to remember all who have served in all conflicts since and whatever may lie ahead.

These last few years in particular have inspired me to find out more about my forebears and these great Freemasons of yesteryear. It has led to many questions in my mind and has helped me to ensure that I live and breathe the charge of the first degree in that I will strive to make that daily advancement in masonic knowledge.

During the centenary commemorations and as a small way to thank many of the Lodges that had made a donation to the work of Poppyscotland I pulled a small presentation together on the connection of Freemasonry and Poppyscotland and in effect this was the genesis of this paper and my deeper researches into Freemasonry and Remembrance and Freemasonry and the military. I realised that although I was conversant about Remembrance in Scotland I did not fully appreciate what Freemasonry and Remembrance looked like in other constitutions and in particular the home constitutions, I was also aware of the long connection between the military and freemasonry and the connection to traveling military lodges, yes, I was aware, they existed, but did I really know the impact they had made on the expansion of Freemasonry across what was then the British Empire. I am currently the Master of The Lodge, Hope of Kurrachee no 337, we were originally derived from a military charter and were the first Lodge on the role of Scottish Lodges in the Indian sub-continent. After partition we were in Pakistan and became dormant in 1972 and then reponed in 1988 as a research Lecture Lodge in my Province.

A Perpetual Memorial.

As Master of a research/lecture lodge during a pandemic I felt that one way that I could best spend my time was to further my studies out with the Scottish Craft in terms of the connection of Freemasonry and Remembrance. Even with so much more spare time, I found I was only scratching away at the tip of the iceberg and there was no way that could I do the topic justice. However, it is a journey I will continue until the lessons of the third degree become a reality. To give a wider perspective I felt it was easier to stay within the British Isles to look at the Masonic, Military Remembrance connections and I added to my reading list a Prestonian Lectures, the Freemasons at Arms by Bro Fredryck Smith. I also managed to buy on Ebay Gould's book the Apron and the Sword. I would highly recommend both to anyone interested in these areas of masonic research.

During my 30 years in the Craft I have had the pleasure to visit and attend meetings of a variety of Lodges under the English Constitution at Great Queen Street in London's Covent Garden, I have even enjoyed a few libations in the Freemasons Arms – where it turned out that the landlord knew my good friends brother back home in Fife. Yes, I was aware that part of the building was a memorial to the Great War but I was certainly taken aback at the determination of the brethren of the 20's and 30's to commemorate their brethren. Although the following may not be new to many brethren from UGLE I am sure that the extent of what I now know will also be new to many brethren from other constitutions and over the following paragraphs I will introduce to you the Perpetual Memorial that is Freemason's Hall in Great Queen Street.

During the Great War the Grand Master of English Freemasonry was another Field Marshal to add into this story. He was Arthur, Duke of Connaught and Strathearn and had been initiated into the Prince of Wales Lodge in 1901. Similar to many of the great and the good of those times he received quite a meteoric rise in our fraternity. Eventually, becoming Grand Master. During a special meeting of the UGLE in June 1919 he announced his desire to create a fitting memorial to the freemasons that had fallen in conflict and to make a new and fitting home for the Grand Lodge. That new building, the third to be on that site, the one we know today, the one that is the star of many TV and film productions and members of the public watching programmes such as Spooks probably do not realise that this is a memorial to the fallen.

For those that have visited or have seen it on TV will surely appreciate to fund such a building in the immediate aftermath of the Great War when a depression was looming would have been an enormous feat in itself. But ultimately a lesser feat than those who gave their all that it was intended to honour. So to help raise the money the Duke announced the Masonic Million Memorial Fund which raised in excess of £1m in today's money that is nearly £13million. I would suggest to make something on par with what they did back then today would cost more like £100million if not more.

We know that from December 1914 Grand Lodge had begun to compile a Roll of Honour of all members who had died in the war. In June 1921, the roll was declared complete, listing 3,078 names, and was printed in book form. After completion of the memorial shrine, the Roll of Honour, with the addition of over 350 names, was displayed within it on a parchment roll. The new building would become the resting place of the scroll and maybe this is a small nod to King Solomon's Temple where the Ark of the Covenant was housed.

The building was designed by two of the leading architects of the day, Henry Victor Ashley and F. Winton Newman and the chose to honour the 3,225 Freemasons who gave the ultimate sacrifice by a stunning interpretation in the Art Deco style. But similar to today you need to be able to fundraise the money for such an edifice. The first major event was lunch held at Olympia in August 1925 that was attended by over 7000 brethren who were treated to the finest of fayre over a five course meal that was served in just over an hour by 1250 waitresses. The numbers for the lunch are amazing and I shudder to think what it would have looked like if it were to be dinner. But the lunch consisted of five miles of tables that were laid with 50,000 plates, 30,000 glasses, 30,000 knives, 37,000 forks and 15,000 spoons. The brethren enjoyed salmon, lamb, chicken garnished with tongue and York ham.

So the fund was certainly off to a great start. The second way of raising money from the brethren was to ask for donations and in return they would be awarded a jewel. This Jewel would become known as a Hall Stone Jewel. Unfortunately they are readily available to buy on Ebay today. The donations levels for the jewels were as follows:

- Members who contributed at least 10 guineas (£10.50) were to receive a silver medal.
- Those who gave 100 guineas (£105) or more, a gold medal.

- Lodges that contributed an average of 10 guineas per member were to be recorded in the new building as Hall Stone Lodges and the Master of each entitled to wear a special medal as a collaret.

By the end of the appeal, 53,224 individual medals had been issued and 1,321 lodges had qualified as Hall Stone Lodges. My understanding from speaking to members of Hall Stone Lodges is that there is a great sense of pride in being part of this part of masonic and remembrance history.

In June 1938, the Building Committee announced that a memorial shrine, to be designed by Walter Gilbert, would be placed under the memorial window. Its symbols portrayed peace and the attainment of eternal life. It took the form of a bronze casket resting on an ark among reeds, the boat indicative of a journey that had come to an end. In the centre of the front panel a relief shows the hand of God in which rested the soul of man. At the four corners stood pairs of winged seraphim with golden trumpets and across its front were gilded figures of Moses, Joshua, Solomon and St George.

The Roll of Honour is guarded on top by kneeling figures representing the four fighting services: Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army and Royal Flying Corps. On either side of the casket are bronze Pillars of Light decorated with wheat (for resurrection), lotus (for the waters of life) and irises (for eternal life) with four panels of oak leaves at their base.

So the United Grand Lodge of England had produced a very fitting memorial to those that gave there all and I have no doubt in my mind that Earl Haig had discussions with the Duke of Connaught. As we move forward 100 years we were also approaching the date that the UGLE had chosen to commemorate 300 years of English Freemasonry and this date sat squarely in the middle of the commemoration period of the Centenary of the Armistice.

For Valour.

To commemorate both the 300th anniversary and the Armistice Centenary UGLE commissioned a new Remembrance Stone, this commission was given to Granville Angell to commemorate all English Freemasons who were awarded the Victoria Cross. More than 200 Freemasons have been awarded the Victoria Cross – making up an astonishing 14% of all recipients. Granville Angell also wrote a very interesting book about Masonic VC holders.

The VC is the highest award for gallantry that can be conferred on a member of the British Armed Forces and was first introduced in 1856. The VC was first suggested by Lord Newcastle but due to circumstance he could not progress it and it was left to Lord Panmure to follow it up, which he did and after some discussions with Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, the Victoria Cross came into being.

Therefore arguably it was down to a Freemason that the VC was introduced, Fox Maule-Ramsay, 11th Earl of Dalhousie, KT, GCB, PC (22 April 1801 – 6 July 1874), known as Fox Maule before 1852, as The Lord Panmure between 1852 and 1860, Maule was appointed Senior Grand Warden of the United Grand Lodge of England in 1832, and later, as Lord Panmure Deputy Grand Master in 1857. He was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1867. In 1860, Panmure Lodge (now No. 723) was warranted, being named after the then Deputy Grand Master. This is a Lodge I have visited on numerous occasions in my neighbouring Province of Forfarshire.

Outside the main tower of Freemasons Hall in 2017 a new pavement was laid commemorating 64 of the masonic VC holders. The pavement includes three of the famous ‘Six VCs before Breakfast’ awarded to members of the 1st Battalion, The Lancashire Fusiliers during their capture of ‘W’ Beach at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915.

Cpl John Elisha Grimshaw, 1893 -1980, Llangattock Lodge No 2547

His role was to maintain contact between the HQ on board HMS Euryalus and the units on the ground. During the landing and the fighting on hill 114, urging his fellow soldiers on when they

faltered under fire. Grimshaw's water bottle and backpack were riddled with bullets and his cap badge was smashed - but he escaped any injury.

Capt. Richard Raymond Willis, 1876 – 1966, Lodge of St John and St Paul No 349

Willis was in charge of "C" Company at Gallipoli and it was from his Company that four of the six VCs came. As the boats approached the beach the slaughter began and Willis stood up in full view of the enemy to calm his men, famously holding his cane aloft and shouting the battle cry, "Come on Boys, Remember Minden". He died in a nursing home in Cheltenham in 1966, aged 89, having tragically sold his VC due to financial difficulties.

Maj Cuthbert Bromley, 1878 – 1915, Invicta Lodge No 2440

He was the adjutant to the Commanding Officer at Gallipoli and was shot in his back on the first day. He refused to leave his men, only reporting the wound three days later, after receiving a further wound in his knee. Promoted to Maj. he led his men during the battles of Krithia before being badly wounded in the foot at Gully ravine, refusing to leave his post until the battle was over. After a spell in hospital in Egypt he managed to get onto the troopship the Royal Edward to return to Gallipoli but was killed when the ship was sunk in the Aegean Sea. He was seen helping people, before being hit on the head with driftwood and drowning.

Every time I walk along Great Queen Street from Holborn towards Grand Lodge or if coming along Long Acre I now spend some extra time contemplating a War Memorial that probably the vast majority of the population pass by every day blissfully unaware of its symbolism and meaning, just as much as they are unaware of the other masonic symbolism that they probably come across daily.

The Masonic Builders of the Silent Cities.

During this paper I have introduced three organisations that are heavily involved in the delivery or Remembrance in our country that arguably have masonic connections. But there is another organisation set up in the aftermath of the Great War and the leading lights in this organisation were also Freemasons. These brethren took the connection to the organisation one step further and also set up not one but three masonic Lodges connected to their organisation.

Bro. Major General Sir Fabian Arthur Goulstone Ware, KCVO, KBE, CB, CMG, was a British educator, journalist, and the founder of the Imperial War Graves Commission, now the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. An organisation that to this day tends lovingly for all the graves of those who gave their all for our nation, be they at rest in a foreign field or as many were brought home to their local cemeteries. I am sure that the small green and white plaque will be unnoticed by many but is present at most cemeteries across the country I have no doubt many brethren will lie at rest beneath these standard size grave markers. It was in October 1917 that a Royal Charter for the Imperial War Graves Commission was approved by the Imperial War Conference. As the war was fought by all races, creeds and religion the Commission had therefore to be free from both religious and political partiality. What other organisation do we know that has this as one of their cornerstones?

Out of the Imperial War Graves Commission, The Lodge of the Silent Cities no 12 was to grow, firstly as a Lodge under the constitution of the National Grand Lodge of France. It was originally based in St Omer, in the Province of Neustrie, that was between Flanders and Normandy and where so much of the carnage of battle raged, remember that poem where the poppies blow in Flanders field. When the Commission moved its HQ to Arras in 1929 the Lodge followed. Arras is a place of pilgrimage for many Scots and Canadians in particular with it being near to Vimmy Ridge, for the Scots it was the site of the largest gathering of Scottish soldiers anywhere at one time in the history of our nation. I was humbled in 2017 to be one of the Royal British Legion Scotland working party that delivered a Beating Retreat in the Square in Arras with the Band of the Royal Regiment of Scotland. This event was attended by many local dignitaries and included the First Minister of Scotland.

Among the founder members of No.12 was Bro. Rudyard Kipling and he knew only too well the agonies of war as his son 2nd Lt. John Kipling was killed at the Battle of Loos in September 1915. It was Kipling that came up with the haunting name for the Lodge. When you visit the War Graves on the continent and you see them row on row you can picture what he means by silent cities! When I was a young airman stationed in Germany, I was part of a military funeral pall bearer party. An RAF flyer and his plane had been discovered in a marsh and some 45 years later he was laid to rest. This duty has remained with me and I can still feel the hairs on the back of my neck when I remember that day long ago in Germany. When the Piper played the Flowers o' the forest and the bugler played the last post!

With the Commission again moving its HQ this time to London it was by necessity that a new Lodge under the auspice of the UGLE was needed and this led to the forming of The Lodge of Silent Cities no 4948 and the Bro Sir Fabian Ware a member of the French Lodge joined the English Lodge and went onto become its Master in 1930. This Lodge still survives and thrives in the 21st century

The final place on the UK mainland that I want to speak about is the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire which since the first tree being planted in 1997 has grown to house over 300 memorials and is now alongside the Cenotaph in London the focus of our Nations remembrance. The focal point of the NMA is the Wall and many of our brethren particularly in the biking communities now make an annual pilgrimage called Ride to the Wall, where they join in with veteran biking organisations. This annual event sees thousands of bikers from all over head towards Alrewas.

The whole site now houses over 300 memorials to all aspects of the military family and I would heartily recommend a visit. In 2017 as part of the Tercentenary celebrations a Masonic Memorial Garden was commissioned and opened by Bro Peter Lowndes Pro Grand Master – the Masonic Memorial Garden can be found just outside the visitor centre. What makes it special is that it is one of the few memorials not dedicated to a Branch of our military be that a Regiment, Squadron or Service but is a memorial dedicated to all who were Freemasons.

Footballing, flyer from Fife.

Brethren, this journey through Freemasonry, Remembrance and Service brings me full circle to my mother Lodge, Lodge Earl Haig, the only masonic Lodge in the world to commemorate Bro Field Marshal Earl Haig in their name. As my journey hopefully has shown to you I always took an interest in the military connections with Freemasonry and although I knew that we were a Lodge that was formed in the aftermath of the Great War something was still niggling away at me. In the lead up to the 75th Anniversary of Lodge Earl Haig, No 1260, in 1996 I undertook to write the history of the Lodge and during my researches one thing stuck in my mind – that we did not have any Brother who had given the ultimate sacrifice in any of the later day conflicts and of course World War 2. Yes, we had many brethren throughout the years that had signed up and taken the King or Queen's shilling. As you know I served in the Royal Air Force between 1988 and 1995 and had the pleasure to introduce four of my comrades in arms into our beautiful Craft. I just assumed that our brethren were very lucky and had come through their service unscathed. In many ways I was glad that our Lodge did not have the need to have a memorial plaque to sit alongside the beautiful memorial in the west of Elgin's Lodge at Leven commemorating their brethren that had given their all for peace.

I was therefore very surprised in the late summer of 2012 when our Secretary Bro Bob Christie forwarded to me an email from a Mr Mark Watson a retired Warrant Officer in the Canadian Armed Forces asking about his maternal grandfather. The email read as follows:

Mr Christie,

My name is Mark Allan, a retired Canadian Army Warrant Officer. Recently my mother, Margaret Allan (nee Watson) gave me my grandfather's WW11 flight log book. As my mother was only 8

years old at the time of his passing and she will be a spry 75 years old in April 2012, I thought that I would try and find out as much as I could about her father.

He was declared missing in June 1944 after his Sunderland, he was the nose gunner, never returned from an anti- submarine patrol of the coast of France. In the back pages of the log book was a receipt. The receipt states:

Lodge Earl Haig, No 1260

No 190

Windygates 17th January 1944

Received from Edwin Watson the sum of £5 and ten shillings being fee for admission and registration in books of GL and diploma.

Signed Robert F Robertson, Treasurer.

Can you tell me what this was for as I can only assume that he joined the Lodge, however, back then I would think that £5 and ten shillings would be a considerable amount of money for A Flight Sergeant with 2 small children? He was prior to the war, a professional footballer.

Any information you can provide on my Grandfather would be gratefully received.

Regards

WO (Ret) Mark Allan

This email from Mark did very much spark very many thoughts within my mind, we need to know more about Edwin Watson, we must commemorate the ultimate sacrifice he gave for us all and we must help his family fill in the blanks of his life.

Thankfully filling in the blanks was not going to be an onerous task as his Grandson Mark had done the leg work and he was able to supply me with chapter and verse on his Grandfather which I will recount in these pages and I trust that going forward our once forgotten Brother Edwin Watson and the memory of him will never be forgotten in the memories of the Brethren of Lodge Earl Haig.

After looking back the Roll book of the Lodge it became evident that Bro Watson was a very new and young mason, so new that he had not yet received his 3rd degree. He was initiated on the 17th January 1944 and was passed to the 2nd degree on the 26th April 1944.

As he never received his 3rd degree and therefore never received his certification of being a member of the Craft all he had was his receipt that lay in the back of his log book. Although he was a member of the craft for less than 6 months at the time of his last flight, I can only speculate that his admittance into the Craft must have been important to him and made an impact as he felt the importance of his receipt to keep it with his flying log book, which arguably was his most important document in his possession.

So what of the man and what had his Grandson Mark uncovered about his Grandfathers life. Prior to the war Edwin was a professional footballer and played as either a centre forward or inside left.

Edwin was born in Pittenweem in the picturesque East Neuk of the Kingdom of Fife on the 28th May 1914 and originally played for Crossgates Primrose and a variety of other local teams as you will read later in this article before joining Partick Thistle in season 1936/37. He scored six goals in 14 matches for Partick and then signed for Huddersfield Town in January 1938. He made the following appearances for Huddersfield Town:

29 Jan 1938 (h) 0-3 Leeds United Div 1

5 Mar 1938 (a) 0-0 York City FA Cup rd 6

9 Mar 1938 (h) 2-1 York City rd 6 replay and scored the first goal

12 Mar 1938 (a) 0-4 Charlton Athletic Div 1

26 Mar 1938 3-1 Sunderland FA Cup Semi Final (played at Ewood Park, Blackburn)

2 Apr (h) 1-2 Liverpool Div 1

After a further year in the reserves Edwin left Huddersfield Town in April 1939 to join Bradford Park Avenue but played just once for them in the Second Division scoring in a 2-2 draw at Millwall on the 2nd September 1939. Unfortunately World War 2 was declared the following day and so the game, like all others played thus far that season, was declared void.

He played a further three times for Avenue in the temporary regional competitions set up during the 1939/1940:

21 Oct 1939 (a) 1-4 Huddersfield Town

25 Nov 1939 (h) 2-1 Hull City

26 Dec 1939 (h) 3-0 Halifax Town

Edwin also played in a number of friendly matches and is known to have scored in the following:

7 Oct 1939 (a) 2-2 Hull City (scored both goals)

28 Oct 1939 (h) 2-0 Army XI (scored first goal)

30 Dec 1939 (a) 4-7 Stockport County (scored 4th goal)

Edwin's footballing career took him a long way away from the fishing community of his birth and the mining communities of Leven-mouth where he grew up and this promising career was only cut short by the onset of War.

Due to Edwin's footballing career in the top flight of the English leagues prior to the start of the war this has afforded more information to be available to the family and some of his exploits during the war were recorded in a local paper. Unfortunately we still do not know which paper that this was published but the following is the article as published which had a head shot of Edwin and also a photo of him walking out onto the field and we can only assume it is Huddersfield Town's ground.

Footballer Attacks U-Boat – Dash from Galley to Guns. (Unknown newspaper)

“Homeward bound at the end of a long patrol, the crew of Sunderland “w” for William of an RAF Coastal Command Squadron were ready for a hot meal.

Over the galley stove Flight Sergeant Edwin Watson former Partick Thistle and East Fife footballer was carrying out the domestic third leg of his triple job. He mixes cooking with engineering and air gunnery. Bacon was sizzling in the pan, eggs awaited cooking.

Suddenly the penetrating screech of the klaxon horn rising above the drone of the engines sounded “action stations”.

In a matter of seconds Watson had extinguished the fire under the stove, rushed through the bomb bay, and, after opening the bomb doors and checking the mechanism, manned one of the guns and

sprayed the conning tower of the U-Boat to such good effect that that the few shots that were aimed at the Sunderland in the early part of the run in flew wide of their target.

The only casualty was an egg "I put it down in such a hurry" said Watson, "that it rolled onto the galley floor and to make matter worse I trod on it"

"Six years of big time football never gave me the thrill that U-Boat did" he remarked later "perhaps it was that I had to wait so long to see some action. You see I completed a tour in West African waters without spotting so much as a periscope wake, and I've knocked a few hours of this tour"

"By the time I reached the gun. Jerry was plainly visible, and, holding my fire until I got within ranger, I let him have it. The Flight Sergeant who was on the guns in the nose added to the confusion in the conning tower, and when we went over the submarine her guns were unmanned and sailors could be seen crouching as they tried to shield themselves from our cannon shells and bullets"

Flight Sergeants Watson's home is at Methil. For six years until the war interrupted his career he played first class football for Partick Thistle, Huddersfield Town and Bradford. When War broke out he returned to Fife to work while playing for East Fife. He has a brother serving in the 8th Army.

Edwin Watson (inside left 5'9", 11st) – has had less experience of English play than any other finalist, but was preferred in the semi-final to better known performers. Adaptable, quick moving and an opportunist who can take a chance as readily as he creates one. Another Scot in the infancy of his career, and has known no outstanding honour yet, for he was Partick Thistle's reserve leader when he was brought to Huddersfield on January 6 of this year."

The above newspaper articles give a good insight into the man who was Edwin Watson, the humorous streak that must also have been within him with the story of the egg rolling about the floor and him trodding on it. We are fortunate also to be able to build more of a picture of Edwin Watson the Flight Sergeant from a book that was written about the brave men of Coastal Command – Wavetops at my Wingtips – written by a crew mate of Edwin's. Within the book there is a picture on page 237 of Flt Lt Longland and his Sunderland crew that included Flight Sergeant Watson taken shortly before their final mission on-board the ML 760 Sunderland "s". Six days earlier they had flown together and had sunk U-955.

To mark the 75th Anniversary 201 Squadron commissioned an artist to paint a commemorative print and the attack and sinking of U-955 on the 6/7th June was chosen. The print is titled "Flare Attack.

Flight Sergeant Watson's Log Book makes interesting reading not only for the family and hopefully for those that take the time to read this paper but it shows that Edwin saw action on another occasion when he fired off 4 to 500 rounds from the nose gun of his Sunderland. The records that are available confirm that on this occasion the U- Boat suffered minor damage to the diesel engine and that one sailor was killed.

From a situation in Lodge Earl Haig where we thought we had no brethren that had given the ultimate sacrifice we find ourselves honoured to count amongst our numbers FS Edwin Watson , 1361241, of 201 Squadron Royal Air Force Reserve. A footballing, flyer from Fife!

As we believe that freemasonry must have made an impact on Bro Edwin, due to the fact he carried with his receipt from his initiation, we are led to hope that the camaraderie found on the football pitch and within the Royal Air Force would have given Bro Watson that desire to find a home within Lodge Earl Haig and enjoy the camaraderie of his Brethren. This was not to be but as a Lodge we felt that we wanted to commemorate his service to his country and to remember for all times the sacrifice he gave. The words of the scroll that sit proudly with his medals are very fitting:

But rightly they remain with his family in Canada. So the Lodge had commissioned a memorial plaque that will be unveiled at the closest meeting to what would have been Bro Edwin Watson's 99th birthday. The words on our plaque read:

To the Glory of God
And in Remembrance of a Brother of
Lodge Earl Haig, 1260
Flight Sergeant Edwin Watson, 1361241
Killed in action 12th June 1944, aged 30
201 Squadron Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself.

The memorial plaque was dedicated by Bro Revd Andrew E Paterson JP, Provincial Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Fife and Kinross and will be part of an annual memorial we will instigate within the Lodge at the closest meeting to Remembrance Day. Hanging proudly next to the memorial plaque is a copy of the picture "Flare Attack"

Our local paper that has carried the intimations of our meetings since 1921 carried this notice.

Presumed Lost – Mrs Elizabeth Watson, 158 High Street Methil, has received notice from the Air Ministry that her husband Flight Sergeant Edwin Watson RAF, who was posted missing on June 12th last, must now be officially presumed lost, Edwin was the third son of the late Mr Edwin Watson and Mrs Margaret Watson, Kildare House, Methil. He leaves a wife and two children, the youngest born eight months after he was lost. A keen footballer, Edwin played for Markinch Vics, Dunnikier and Partick Thistle before going south to Huddersfield Town. At one time he created what was believed to be a record by playing juvenile, junior and senior all in one week. Prior to joining the RAF Edwin was employed in the National Steel Foundry, Leven. And the many friends he made there and elsewhere will remember him for his cheery disposition. A younger brother, Alex, one of the "Desert Rats" is in hospital in Wales slowly recovering from serious leg wounds received in Germany on January 27th.

Brother Edwin Watson FC, good and faithful servant your Lodge is proud of you.

Lest we forget.

Every year since the unveiling of our memorial plaque we have at the first meeting in November instigated a memorial service into the business of the Lodge. As the Lodge were aware of my interest they gave me the honour of developing our Service of Remembrance and we now have a variety of services that reflect the three branches of the military who annually become the lead Service for commemoration and as such the hymns, prayers (collects) come from that Service. The meeting is also enhanced with solemn music as within our Province we are blessed with many great military pipers and buglers who without hesitation accept our invite every year to join in our commemorations.

Brethren as I hope you will see from this paper that all through my life I have had a connection to Remembrance a connection that I cannot explain, but a connection that I trust will never leave me. It may be another sign of this connection that I complete this essay on Founders Day. The day that along with my colleagues from the Royal British Legion Scotland we should have made our annual

pilgrimage to our beloved Bro. Field Marshall Earl Haig's grave at Dryburgh Abbey. This pilgrimage will happen this year as and when this Covid-19 lock down restrictions change.

As I come to the conclusion of this paper it is only fitting that the current pandemic is considered and the changes that will have happened in the lives of our Lodges since we went into lockdown across the country. I am certain of one thing and that is our Lodges will not be the same again, yes we have come through many great crisis from world wars to previous pandemics, but this is the first one that has closed down our meetings and our ability to share in fraternity. During this time many of our brethren have ascended to the Grand Lodge above and we have not been able to pay tribute to them. But I am guided with the inner strength that comes from understanding the allegories and meanings of our third degree. The degree that to me epitomises our sojourn through the intricacies of our mortal life and I know that these brethren will be happy with a consciousness of a life well spent.

So as and when we go back to our own Lodges a time currently unknown and we continue to Remember those who have served our Nation in times of need I have no doubt we will also Remember those that we were not able to pay tribute to in our normal manner. By doing so we will be able to yet again show to the outer world that our brethren go through life with such exemplary conduct that the outside world will be convinced that merit has been their title to our privileges and that on them favours have not been undeservedly bestowed.

Lest we forget!

Bro Gordon Michie

Internet Lodge 9659 (EC)