

## A MASONIC MINUTE

*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

John 15: 13

*'Lest we forget'*

Out of the horrors of war comes some of the most inspired and evocative poetry in the English language? As we commemorate the centenary of The Great War— *The War to end War* (1914-1918) – now known as World War I, in this Month of Remembrance, these poems help us to reflect and transform history into a personal experience. These poems articulate our inexpressible feelings when we are lost for words.

A poem by Sir John Stanhope Arkwright (1872–1954), published in *The Supreme Sacrifice, and other Poems in Time of War* (1919), embodies the essence of Remembrance – honour and self-sacrifice. It was set to music by the Rev. Dr. Charles Harris, Vicar of Colwall, Herefordshire (1909-1929) and is frequently sung at cenotaph services.

*O valiant hearts who to your glory came  
Through dust of conflict and through battle flame;  
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,  
Your memory hallowed in the land you loved.*

*Proudly you gathered, rank on rank, to war  
As who had heard God's message from afar;  
All you had hoped for, all you had, you gave,  
To save mankind—yourselves you scorned to save.*

*Splendid you passed, the great surrender made;  
Into the light that nevermore shall fade;  
Deep your contentment in that blest abode,  
Who wait the last clear trumpet call of God.*



**VIMY RIDGE**

Hanging in many lodge rooms throughout this jurisdiction are engraved plaques and Honour Rolls list the names of those young Masons who served King and Country and paid the Supreme Sacrifice. These are men that preserved the many freedoms we enjoy. During this Month of Remembrance, let us pause in grateful tribute and read aloud those names forever enshrined in the annals of Masonry.

A few weeks after the outbreak of World War I, Laurence Binyon (1869-1943) wrote these lines in *For The Fallen*, which were published in The Times of London, 21 September 1914.

*Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal  
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.  
There is music in the midst of desolation  
And a glory that shines upon our tears.*

*They went with songs to the battle, they were young,  
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.  
They were staunch to the end against odds uncouth,  
They fell with their faces to the foe.*

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.*

Colonel John McCrae's much loved poem, *In Flanders Fields* was written on May 3, 1915 while still at the battlefield during the second battle of Ypres in Belgium. During November, the month of Remembrance, this poem will be recited in many lodge meetings as part of a Service of Remembrance. For us as Freemasons, the challenge issued in the third stanza remains germane a century later.

*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*



A century later, 'The Foe' – man's inhumanity to man, despotism, prejudice, dishonesty, breach of trust – is very much with us today. As men and as Masons we are pledged to take up 'The Torch' and to 'hold it high' – a beacon of light, a symbol of hope.