



24 November 2023 | @MCCRAESOWN | JACK@MCCRAESBATTALIONTRUST.ORG.UK



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PHOTOGRAPHY

Welcome to our 4th McCrae's Battalion Newsletter.

As you can see, we don't stick exclusively to the story of McCrae's or WW1. We could never compete with Jack Alexander's excellent book on McCrae's Battalion (or so he told me) so we don't try. (Only joking, Jack didn't say that but he did buy me lots of alcohol the last time we had a wee tipple together so I can take a hint).

Hopefully, you will find something of interest in this latest edition, if not maybe print a copy off, it will come in handy considering the price of Andrex nowadays!

All of us at McCrae's Battalion Trust would like to send you our best wishes for the New Year and hope you all have a very merry, peaceful and safe Christmas, full of love and kindness.

Thank you, sincerely, for your continuing support for McCrae's Battalion Trust and we hope that we can all find a moment, at some point, to remember the fallen and those who are no longer with us but remain in our hearts and memories at this special time of the year.

If you're looking for a last-minute Christmas present, I believe esteemed author Jack Alexander has a few copies of his book in a drawer somewhere. (Jack, if you're reading this, I'll have a pint of lager...or two...or three, my friend!)

As always, if you have any suggestions or comments, good or bad, regarding the Newsletter, please contact me at: sandy.potter7@hotmail.com or through the McCrae's Battalion Trust website.

Thank you

-&-

MERRY
Christmas

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2023

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CONTALMAISON PILGRIMAGE 2023

After several last-minute issues, out of our control, resulting in several last-minute changes, we set off from Edinburgh on our latest pilgrimage to Contalmaison.

The original plan was to travel to Hull and catch the overnight ferry to Rotterdam however we are now heading to Maidstone by coach where we would stay overnight before catching the morning ferry to Calais and onward to Arras. This caused our trip organiser Eddie to have kittens and age at least 20 years overnight.

The journey south was long, very long, and everyone was glad to finally arrive at our last-minute accommodation in Kent. We also discovered how long you can hold it in if you sit with your legs crossed and don't sneeze!

After a good night's sleep, we set off first thing in the morning for the ferry terminal where we sat in the 'you're not in Europe anymore Brexit' queue to have our passports checked, cases searched and body strip searched (ok I made that bit up, but one can hope, can't one?)

On the journey across the channel, we waded to a few rubber dinghies, lost a fortune at the casino and suffered daylight robbery at the cost of a sandwich and a Diet Coke, but at least toilets were available and there wasn't the need to cross our legs again!

On deck, however, our illustrious chairperson couldn't find the toilet! He also forgot to stand with the wind at his back when caught short, much to the horrified fellow travellers alongside him! I don't know what the fuss was about, the sea breeze soon dried them out!

The French welcomed us with open arms, and we were rushed through customs at a snail's pace before heading to Arras only a few hours behind schedule.



We arrived at our hotel and found there had been a breakdown in communication somewhere along the line. There was some confusion as to who was sleeping with whom. Where and in what room? Was it a double bed or twin bed or even a camp bed we had? (It was at this point I started to worry when Tom Wright from Hibs started putting on mascara!)

Then Eddie found a public telephone, changed into a slinky blue skintight number with a red cape, and with his underpants outside his tights, sorted everything all out!

Not a good look for a man of his age but we were extremely impressed with the amount of swear words Eddie knew in French! (I may be exaggerating things a tiny bit, there again...)

After something to eat and a few lemonades later we all had a good night's sleep and woke early ready to face what lay ahead. Tom still had the mascara and during the night had added some lipstick, but at least it was a subtle shade of pink!



Saturday 1st July - The village of Contalmaison

The ceremony began at 0900 hours followed by the laying of the wreaths. After the benediction, the formal unveiling of the Friends Memorial Bench took place, dedicated to the memory of Lt. Col. Gary Tait MBE and Patricia Leroy former Maire of Contalmaison.

Dignitaries from the French and Scottish Governments took part as well as the Lord Provost Office of Edinburgh, and representatives from Heart of Midlothian, Raith Rovers, Dunfermline Athletic and Hibernian also took part. In addition, a group from Lady Haig's Poppy Factory joined us and laid wreaths.

A nice surprise was the attendance of our friends from the Leyton Orient Somme Memorial Fund Committee who joined us at Contalmaison during the service.

This was followed by lunch under canvas provided by the people of Contalmaison and involved informal speeches, presentations and entertainment from Craig Herbertson, Chris Woods, and Jack Alexander.

We then returned for a free evening of socialising in Arras. Tom was persuaded to remove the make-up but he insisted on wearing high heels!



Monday 2nd July - Battlefield Tour Day

The day was spent visiting various sites including the British Cemetery at Gordon Dump and the village of Flesquieres where there is a purpose-built museum containing D51, an almost intact British Tank that took part in the Battle of Cambrai in 1917. Known to all as Deborah she looked majestic despite her scars and twisted metal, and what a story she had to tell.

Monday 3rd July - Flanders Day

Monday was spent in Ypres as usual. Always a popular place to visit and an opportunity to buy gifts and souvenirs to take home. It is also the chance to visit the awesome Menin Gate Memorial to The Missing with almost 55,000 names of British and Commonwealth soldiers still lying in wait to be found in the fields of France and Belgium. The 'In Flanders Fields' Museum is also a very popular place to visit along with the many book and gift shops where souvenirs can be purchased, and of course copious amounts of Belgian chocolate. A lot of which isn't guaranteed to make Edinburgh!

We then leave Ypres and head for Rotterdam, the overnight ferry to Hull then home.

Our friends from Leyton Orient held their own ceremony in Flers later in the month but stopped off at Contalmaison again to pay their respects at the Cairn. Their constant support is greatly appreciated.

Plans are already being discussed for next year's pilgrimage, watch this space!



THE ROYAL SCOTS CLUB LUNCH

In the morning, members of McCrae's Battalion Trust attended the memorial service at St. Cuthberts Church and also the Hearts Memorial at Haymarket, where they laid wreaths.

At Haymarket, a Trust member was kindly invited to take part in the actual service and recite 'To The Fallen'. It was an honour to do so, and we are grateful to Hearts for the invitation.

After the ceremonies, all roads led to the Royal Scot Club for the McCrae's Battalion Trust Annual Remembrance Lunch and fund-raising event. The Rev. Peter Sutton kindly said Grace before a lunch of Roast Beef and Yorkshire Pudding was served to one and all.

An afternoon of entertainment followed with music from Craig Herbertson and Ivor Ramsay and, for the first time at this event, the comedian Peter C. Brown.

Our Chairperson, Craig, also took on the role of compere for the day and what a job he did! (The good news is James Bee will be returning next year to act as a compere.)

The songs and laughter were interspersed by several fundraising activities including an Irish Raffle, a 'normal' raffle, and an auction. The auctioneer was none other than, 'the Voice of Tynecastle' himself, Mr. Scott Wilson. Thanks go to Scott for offering his services this year.

Again, a big thank you goes out to everyone who donated raffle prizes and items for the auction.

Jack Alexander presented a slide show based on the work of McCrae's Battalion Trust, including the upkeep of the cairn and memorial benches and the plan to purchase more land in Contalmaison with a view to constructing a Garden of Remembrance.

In total, over £5000 was raised. The Trust would like to thank everyone who contributed. The day was a great success, in fact, we already have places booked for next year's lunch.

Special mention must go to Pam Forbes who practically organises the day single-handedly every year. To be honest, she puts the rest of us to shame as we sit back and let her get on with it, but she does such an excellent job. Well done Pam, we don't deserve you. Feel free to start planning for next year any time soon though! Our chairperson might even think about buying you a drink, but don't hold your breath!

We must also mention her 'team' of helpers who contributed to the success of the day, selling raffle tickets, and collecting money, amongst many other duties.

To all who attended, thank you once more, without your help none of what has been achieved so far would have been possible. With your continued support, we hope to keep the memory of the 16th Battalion Royal Scots, McCrae's Own, alive and well for years to come.

Thank you.



Scott
Wilson!



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PHOTOGRAPHY

SGT. DICK MUSGRAVE 7TH. CANADIAN INFANTRY BATTALION

In June this year, in the run-up to our Contalmaison Pilgrimage, I read about a young Scottish soldier being buried with full military honours at the British cemetery in Loos, France.

His name was Sgt. Dick Musgrave from Blackrigg, near Langholm in Dumfries and Galloway.

Sgt. Musgrave, on April 14th, 1917, led his platoon at the Battle for Vimy Ridge in the Pas-de-Calais area of the Somme. A place McCrae's Battalion Trust has visited often. He was awarded the Military Medal for his actions.

The commendation states:

For conspicuous gallantry in action during the attack on April 9th, 1917, he handled his platoon with great courage and showed marked ability in reorganising them after suffering very heavy casualties on reaching the first objective and leading them forward to their final objective.

Three months later, Sgt. Musgrave was reported missing on the first day of the Battle for Hill 70, an engagement that resulted in over 10,000 casualties from the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

It would be more than a century later before he was found.

In 2017, munition clearing work unearthed human remains north of the city of Lens. Alongside the body, there was a military medal ribbon, a silver-plated pencil, buckles and a whistle. Using DNA testing, carried out in Scotland along with other scientific techniques, investigators were able to confirm his identity.

His surviving family from Hawick were able to attend the full military ceremony along with representatives from the Canadian Military, the British Columbia Regt., and the Canadian Department of National Defence. However, they stated how proud they were to do this for the family and for all Canadians, and to honour a hero from the Great War after 100 years had passed.

Dick Musgrave was a Border Stables groom who had travelled across the Atlantic to Calgary, in 1915, to deliver horses at the request of his employer. While there, he signed up for active service with the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

After the war, his family kept a picture of him in the house. Every year, on Remembrance Day, they placed a fresh poppy next to it.

Now, after 100 years of not knowing where he lay, he has been found, buried with full military honours, and has a headstone engraved with his name.

The Battle for Vimy Ridge cost the lives of more than 10,600 Canadian soldiers.

At the start of the war, it was the Newfoundland Regiment that made up the majority of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Canada was basically a divided country split between the English-speaking community and the French-speaking community. At Vimy Ridge however, the whole nation joined together to fight and did what the British and the French failed to do, they took Vimy Ridge from the Germans. Throughout the war, the Canadians fought with great distinction and immense bravery. They did so again in the Second World War and have developed into the great nation they now are.

Today, an iconic memorial of Mother Canada looks out over her fallen, mourning all those who fell and those still lying somewhere on the battlefield. Once visited, you will never forget the scene or the emotion it invokes.

Sgt. Dick Musgrove won the Military Medal for refusing to leave his platoon and, despite his wounds, continued to lead them whilst under heavy fire from the Germans. Dick Musgrove still refuses to leave his men and will always remain with them in the killing fields of France and Belgium.



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HOLLYWOOD & THE GREAT WAR

What has Hollywood got to do with McCrae's Battalion Trust I hear you all shout.

Not a lot to be honest. But were you aware that a certain James Garner (the Maverick and Rockford star) had family connected to McCrae's Battalion, along with an ex-Edinburgh milk boy called Sean Connery? Both contacted Jack Alexander after reading his book, 'McCrae's Battalion'.

Or that James Stewart (yes THE James Stewart) once stayed with Jack's parents in Edinburgh while based over here during the 2nd World War?

This article might only appeal to the more mature members of McCrae's Battalion Trust, as the younger members will probably never have heard of those mentioned in the next few paragraphs.

Long before Batman, the Avengers, or even Star Wars, there was what became known as 'The Golden Age of Hollywood'.

It included the very beginning of motion pictures, the 'silent era' followed by the 'talkies', and evolved into what we watch on screen today.

Many of those early stars became idols, heroes to the mass audiences that swarmed in their thousands to escape the humdrum of reality.

They indulged themselves in a fantasy world that excited them, made them laugh and at times made them cry. A few may have even choked on their popcorn at the sight of Dracula seen for the first time on screen.

Early Westerns were very popular. The first recognised feature film, with a recognised plot and a beginning and an end, was 'The Great Train Robbery.' A western filmed in New York!

These short, but full-of-action two-reelers, starred actual Wild West cowboys straight off the range. It saved hiring stunt men as they could rope and ride, which was much more important than being able to act.

Guys like Bronco Billy Anderson, William S Hart, Tom Mix and Harry Carey (told you you'd never heard of these stars).

Heartthrobs like Rudolph Valentino, Mary Pickford and Lillian Gish. Swashbucklers like Douglas Fairbanks Snr. And comedians like Charlie Chaplain, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy and Buster Keaton.

Many of them became film stars by accident, some by design. Most were willing but some were not, especially when 'sound' took over.

Talkies more or less ended Tom Mix's film career as his voice wasn't 'compatible' with the new sound system.

It was Mix, that gave a certain college student called Marion Morrison a part-time job on his film set where he caught the eye of film director John Ford. Morrison changed his name to John Wayne and the rest is Hollywood history.

When war came it changed Hollywood forever.

War films like 'All Quiet On The Western Front', replaced westerns for a while, and some actually featured 'extras' that had taken part in World War 1.

In fact, both the World Wars and the Korean War that followed had a big influence on what the studios turned out and still do to this day. E.g., 'Saving Private Ryan,' 'Dunkirk', and the remake of 'All Quiet On The Western Front.'

One of my early screen heroes, Victor McLaglen, claimed to have been born in Kent in 1886,

Although his birth records state he was born in the East End of London, the family were of Scottish descent and had connections with South Africa.

One of 10 brothers and sisters, he left home at the age of 14 to join the army and fight in the Boer War. But he ended up serving at Windsor Castle in the Lifeguards. When his real age was discovered, he was discharged and sent home.

He emigrated to Canada, at the age of 18, where he gained fame as a wrestler and successful heavyweight boxer. He also joined the Winnipeg Police Force for a while and served as a constable.

He returned to Britain in 1913 and, when war broke out, he served as an Acting Captain with the 10th Battalion Middlesex Regiment before joining the Royal Irish Fusiliers, where he was posted to the Middle East and served as military assistant provost marshal in Baghdad.

Throughout his army service, he continued boxing and was named Heavyweight Champion of the British Army in 1918. He finished his boxing career in 1920 after being knocked out in his last fight. His record of 16 wins, 8 losses and 1 draw was not to be sniffed at.

McLaglen moved to Hollywood in 1925 and became a popular character actor, usually playing a drunk Irishman or in westerns, despite his English accent.

His big break came when he landed the lead in 'What Price Glory', directed by Raoul Walsh. The film is a World War One classic and was a huge success. He was signed up by 20th Century Fox and never looked back.

He made several top-grossing films, including musicals, and played alongside many who would become stars of the future. Marlene Dietrich, Humphrey Bogart and Boris Karloff to name but three.

In 1934, perhaps the greatest film director ever, the legendary John Ford, cast him in 'The Lost Patrol' followed by the lead in 'The Informer', for which he won the Academy Award for Best Actor, again directed by Ford. He played an Irishman involved with the IRA during the Irish Civil War in the 20s.

He returned to Britain to star in the classic, 'Gunga Din', in 1939, with Cary Grant and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. The film was based on a poem by Rudyard Kipling and was later used as a template for, 'Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom', in 1984.

Victor McLaglen became one of John Ford's favourite character actors usually cast as a whiskey-drinking, two-fisted Irishman, often in a comic role, hard and as tough as old boots but never evil or nasty.

He continued to act in many classic films, but it was Ford that got the best out of him. 'She Wore A Yellow Ribbon,' 'Fort Apache,' 'Rio Grande', all with his great pal John Wayne and also in the unforgettable, 'The Quiet Man.' Where he slugged it out with Sean Thornton (Wayne). When first released it featured the longest screen fight in Hollywood history, played mainly for laughs it must be said, and still worth watching today.

In 'She Wore A Yellow Ribbon' still playing the Irishman that liked a 'little drop of the whiskey, for medicinal purposes only' he richly declared as Sgt. Quincannon before punching out 4 troopers and marching proudly, as only an Irishman in a John Ford film would, to the guardhouse.

Later years saw him in guest starring on TV in, 'Have Gun Will Travel,' 'Wagon Train', and 'Rawhide', and other serials.

After a long and distinguished career as an Oscar-winning actor, heavyweight boxer and soldier, Victor McLaglen, died of a heart attack in 1959. The following year he was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

The English-born actor spoke 5 languages, including fluent Arabic, but will always be remembered on screen as a larger-than-life Irishman who let his fists do the talking and who loved a 'wee taste of the whiskey, Irish that is.'

Other notable Hollywood stars that were involved in the Great War were Walter Brennan, another of John Ford's favourite actors, Maurice Chevalier, Humphry Bogart, Buster Keaton, Randolph Scott, Basil Rathbone, Charles Laughton, Leslie Howard, whose plane was shot down by the Luftwaffe in 1942 allegedly after gathering intelligence to help the allies war effort in WW11, Arnold Ridley and John Laurie, both of Dad's Army fame and many more.

Then there are those that served in WW11 like Clark Gable, James Stewart, Paul Newman Charlton Heston...



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PHOTOGRAPHY

HIBS IN THE GREAT WAR

Hearts weren't the only professional football team to answer the call back in 1914. For example, players and officials from Aberdeen and Queens Park rushed to join up when war was declared.

Many teams from the east of Scotland joined McCrae's Battalion. Players from Dunfermline, East Fife, Falkirk, Raith Rovers and Hibs for example, along with many amateur footballers, golfers, tennis players, cricketers and various other sports, earning the 16th Royal Scots the nickname, 'The Sporting Battalion'.

Within days of the 'Sporting Battalion', or 'McCrae's Own', being raised, many Hibs supporters had joined Hearts supporters, their city rivals, in the 16th. Battalion Royal Scots.

The future Hibs Chairman, Harry Swan, was one of the first, along with popular player Sandy Grosert. Swan however was discharged under medical grounds soon after.

A Territorial Regiment, the 7th Royal Scots, had been raised in Leith. It included many Hibs supporters, but disaster struck when the Regiment was decimated in the Gretna Rail Disaster.

As mentioned, within weeks of the start of hostilities, many Hibs players joined the Armed Services.

Centre forward, James Hendren, served in the Army Transport Corps days after his wife gave birth. Sadly, he fell ill within a few months of joining and died in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

Hibs players David Stevenson, James Williamson and Robert Reid, along with Chicago-born Robert Wilson, quickly signed up too. Wilson was to lose his life in November 1918, days before the armistice was signed.

John Aitken, signed by Hibs from Perth Violet, enlisted in the Gordon Highlanders and was killed at Ypres in July 1917. He is buried at Vlamertinghe New Military Cemetery in Belgium.

Sgt. Paddy Hagan died on the 14th of July 1916, during the Battle of the Somme. He served in the 11th Royal Scots and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to The Missing, alongside Hearts player, James Boyd, from West Calder. Hagan had previously served his country in the Boer War.

Robert Atherton signed from Hearts and captained the Hibs side that won the Scottish Cup in 1902. A merchant seaman, his ship struck a mine, and he was drowned in October 1917.

Robert Rollo signed with Hibs from Clydebank Juniors and was reported missing in April 1917. Another of the fallen whose remains have never been identified.

Sandy Grosert, who joined McCrae's Battalion, transferred to the Machine Gun Corps in 1915. He won the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry at the battle for Rouex and Greenland Hill in 1918. Second Lieutenant Grosert survived the war and ended his playing career with Dunfermline in 1924.

Second Lieutenant George Rae, of the Royal Warwick Regiment, played with Hibs since the start of the decade and was awarded the Italian Silver Medal of Honour.

Hibs supporter James McPhee, whose father had been a director at Easter Road, was awarded the Victorious Cross as described in the previous Newsletter. James is buried at Naves, a few miles from Cambrai.

Bernard Donaghy was killed on the 1st. July 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

Other Hibs players such as John Frail, Harry Gildea and James Conlin all served their country.



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With acknowledgement to Hibs Historian,
Tom Wright,
for his assistance in this article.

On 21st. September 1921, a combined Hearts/Hibs select played a combined Celtic/Rangers select, at Tynecastle, to raise funds for the construction of a memorial to the Hearts players at the Haymarket, where it stands proudly to this day and will remain standing there, no matter what.

At the unveiling of the memorial in 1922, a wreath was laid by Hibernian Football Club. All the players and staff from Easter Road were present. A wreath from the club has been laid at Haymarket every year since.

In 2004, the Cairn at Contalmaison was unveiled and again a wreath from The Hibs was laid there. A representative from Hibs, club historian Tom Wright, still attends the ceremony on the 1st of July every year and lays a wreath to the men of McCrae's Battalion.

Bitter rivals on the football field, brothers in arms on the battlefield, and now together for eternity in the fields of the Somme.



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PHOTOGRAPHY

BAINSFORD WAR MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Last month, McCrae's Battalion Trust was invited along to a meeting with the Bainsford War Memorial Committee in Falkirk. Jack Alexander attended and gave an insight into the work of the Trust, specifically the annual Pilgrimage to Contalmaison.

The committee are considering arranging a battlefield tour of their own and was keen to learn the details of what is involved in planning such a trip. The accommodation and transport arrangements, best time of year to go, places to visit, etc.

They were already aware of the connection with McCrae's Battalion and the Falkirk area and wanted to include a visit to the Cairn in Contalmaison.

The group also showed interest in 'The Scarf', the play about four young men who join McCrae's Own and end up at the Somme, and asked if they could be sent a copy of the script.

We hope to have representatives from the Bainsford War Memorial Committee with us on our next visit to Contalmaison for them to witness first-hand what is involved.

A big thank you to them for their invitation to attend their meeting and their interest in learning more about McCrae's Battalion Trust.



LEYTON ORIENT SOMME MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

On the 15th of December 1914, a meeting was held in Fulham Town Hall in London with a view to following the example set by Heart of Midlothian Football Club in raising a battalion to fight in WW1. The 17th Battalion Middlesex Regiment (1st Football) was formed.

It became known as the 'Footballer Battalion' and was mainly comprised of footballers, club officials and supporters of Clapton Orient, now known as Leyton Orient. The battalion was heavily involved in the Battle of the Somme and, like McCrae's Own, suffered horrendous casualties.

In 2011, 'the O's' unveiled a memorial to their fallen in the village of Flers in Northern France, not far from Contalmaison. McCrae's Battalion Trust was invited and was privileged to lay wreaths and pay their respects.

A good rapport and friendship have been established over the years between the O's Somme Memorial Fund Committee and McCrae's Battalion Trust. Representatives from Leyton Orient have attended both the Remembrance Ceremony at Haymarket and McCrae's Battalion Trust's Commemorative Lunch and fundraising event at the Royal Scot Club on several occasions. They also attended our ceremony in Contalmaison.

In October 2021, representatives from McCrae's Battalion Trust were invited to take part in the unveiling of a 2nd memorial to honour the service and the sacrifice of those from Clapton Orient at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

Chairperson, Craig Herbertson, and Eddie Dalgleish, along with Tom Wright, who represented Hibs, attended.

The 'O's' always acknowledge the example set by the Hearts players and that of McCrae's Battalion, the 16th Royal Scots, in setting up the 17th Middlesex Battalion all those years ago and, with that in mind, a 'friendly match' has been arranged between Leyton Orient and Heart of Midlothian.

As part of their 150 Years Celebration next year, Hearts have announced that a pre-season match will take place at Tynecastle against the highly rated Leyton Orient on 13th July 2024.

It is also the 20th anniversary of the unveiling of the McCrae's Battalion Cairn in Contalmaison next year.

A massive thank you must go to those at Hearts and Leyton Orient for arranging this match and reviving the connection between both Heart of Midlothian and Clapton (now Leyton) Orient that inspired the raising of two of the finest Battalions to serve in WW1.

It's a magnificent gesture by both teams and we hope the match will be a sell-out.

It will be a fitting tribute to the heroes of yesteryear who paid the ultimate sacrifice in order that we can watch our present-day heroes today.

Well done Hearts and Leyton Orient.
Lest We Forget.





NEW BLOOD WANTED

As Count Dracula once said, "New blood needed to join McCrae's Battalion Trust!" All blood types are welcome, bats and werewolves join free.

Although the Count may have been misquoted, if anyone out there would like to supply a pint or two, please contact Vlad the Impaler c/o The Inland Revenue, Bram Stoker House, Whitby.

On the other hand, you might think about joining McCrae's Battalion Trust instead. That way you won't need to avoid garlic, mirrors or wooden stakes on a night out!

No offence to present members but we are getting on a bite, I mean bit!

None of us have reached the same age as Count Dracula yet but some of us are getting closer and closer. This is probably why we only see our chairperson Craig 'Christopher Lee' Herbertson during the hours of darkness. Strange that!

As the esteemed vampire hunter, Jack Alexander, often says, "The future of Remembrance lies with the young." we would welcome fresh, enthusiastic, exciting, young recruits (anyone older than 5 and under the age of 80 that is!) to join the Trust.

Details of how you can join are available on the McCrae's Battalion Trust website. It only takes a minute or two to have a look, less time than it takes to bite into a neck and down a pint or two.

It is not a big commitment, nor will you be tasked with anything to do unless you volunteer, but your support will be greatly appreciated. There is the opportunity to visit Contalmaison and join in with the Remembrance Service held there, again details are on the website. If you haven't been before, it is highly recommended.

Apart from the actual service itself the rest of the trip is very much a social occasion with lots of laughs and the occasional Bloody Mary. Ask anyone who has attended!

You would also be welcome to attend our annual lunch at the Royal Scot Club in Edinburgh on Remembrance Sunday. If you don't know where that is, it's the building with the Blood Transfusion Van parked outside. Music, comedy and indigestion are included in the price.

If you feel it is important to remember the fallen and those who came home, many with horrendous wounds and amputations, please give some serious thought to joining us.

We promise not to drain all the blood from your veins, trust me...then again would you trust a vampire?



A MESSAGE FROM DOWN UNDER

McCrae's Battalion Trust recently received a message all the way from Australia, and we thought it worthy to feature in the Newsletter. It is from Richard Barclay on his recent return visit to Contalmaison.

"My name is Richard, I served with 1st. Battalion the Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment) from June 1998 to March 2006. I then served with the Royal Scots Borders 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland from March 2006 to September 2011.

I had the honour and privilege of travelling as part of the military contingent in 2006 and again in 2008 on the Contalmaison Pilgrimage with McCrae's Battalion Trust, as the bugler taking part in the Remembrance Service.

I currently live in Sydney, Australia and was lucky enough to take my family to visit the memorial in Contalmaison again in August this year, whilst on a European holiday."

Richard included a couple of photographs, one of his previous visits whilst in the army and one from this year. The fact that he took the time and effort to include a visit to Contalmaison and introduce the Cairn and the story of McCrae's Battalion to his family is greatly appreciated.

A few of our older members remember Richard and his excellent involvement in the actual memorial service.

Attending at the ceremony and playing The Last Post obviously made a big impact on Richard and still does. We thank him sincerely for his continuing support and we welcome him and his family into our McCrae's Battalion Trust family.

Thanks again Richard for getting in touch and we wish you and the family all the very best.

(Have you still got the bugle? Are you busy next year maybe? Just asking!)





JAMIE'S LOTTERY

So, who is Jamie?

For those who don't know, Jamie Colquhoun is a member of the Royal Scot Association and one of the official Colour Party annually attending Contalmaison, an essential part of the ceremony.

Jamie and his good lady Lexie have offered to organise a monthly lottery to help raise badly needed funds for the Trust.

Jamie and Lexie already run a 1 to 100 Lottery to raise funds for the Royal Scot Association. You pay £5 per month, by bank transfer or direct debit if you prefer, and pick a number between 1 and 100. You can buy additional numbers if preferred for £5 each.

You can then keep the same number(s) or pick a different number if available each month. You then inform Admin (Jamie) on Facebook and be placed on a nominal list once payment has been received.

The draw will be done live on McCrae's Battalion Trust website on the 1st Sunday of every month. Alexa will choose the winning number at random, shown live on the internet.

The winner each month receives £250, the other £250 will go to McCrae's Battalion Trust.

OK, it's not the National Lottery but the odds of winning are a lot better.

It's very good of Jamie and his wife Lexie to offer to do this for the Trust and the fact that he has just bought a luxury yacht and a new Bently has nothing to do with where the money ends up!
(Only kidding...it was a Rolls Royce, not a Bently, and the winnings will be posted straight to you from his luxury villa in the Bahamas).

Please think about taking part, the money goes to a good cause, (not Jamie), and it's only £5 a month. (That's slightly less than Hearts have spent on new players...and a lot more than what the Hibs spend, allegedly!)

Thank you.

TRUSTEES UPDATE

Finally, we have learned that two of our stalwarts, Tommy Douglas, who represents the Royal Scot Association on the board of trustees, and Sonny Walker, from the Royal Scot Association, both of whom form part of the colour party in Contalmaison annually, will not be joining us on our Pilgrimage next year.

Tommy will remain involved with McCrae's Battalion Trust but Sonny intends to put his feet up and just relax.

Both will be greatly missed.

We thank them sincerely for their support, guidance and advice over the years, as well as for their irrepressible humour and friendship.

We wish them both well.

Slainte Mhath Gentlemen!





24 November 2023 | @MCCRAESOWN | JACK@MCCRAESBATTALIONTRUST.ORG.UK



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PHOTOGRAPHY



Important Dates

Thursday 7th December

McCrae's Battalion Trust AGM
See www.mccraesbattaliontrust.org.uk
for details

Saturday 29th June - Thursday 4th July

Contalmaison Pilgrimage

Saturday 1st July

Memorial Service at Contalmaison

On the anniversary of the first day of the
Battle of the Somme

Sunday 7th July

Memorial Service at St Cuthbert's Church
Edinburgh

