

Irvine Burns Club remembers its links with Flanders fields



Looking over the Centre of The City of Guelph in Western Ontario is a statue of a Canadian Soldier, seated and surrounded by red poppies. But this is no ordinary soldier for it commemorates Major John McCrae, a local Canadian doctor who signed up for the First World War and was posted to France. While there, in May 1915, John McCrae wrote the poignant and remarkable poem "*In Flanders field ...*" and that short poem was later adopted around the world by Veterans' Associations, including The Royal British Legion, to symbolise Remembrance.

Guelph was founded in 1827 by Irvine-born explorer and novelist John Galt who, as a mark of respect for his achievements in opening up Canada, was invited in 1828 by The Irvine Burns Club directors to become their first Honorary Member. His letter of acceptance is proudly displayed in Irvine's Wellwood Burns Centre & Museum, the home of The Irvine Burns Club.

With restrictions in place to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, this year's Remembrance Day will be markedly different to what has happened in previous years but members of The Irvine Burns Club are being invited to respect and commemorate the day individually rather than collectively and to remember those who fought in that conflict and in later wars by quietly reading John McCrae's poem.

*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*



Sadly, John McCrae, who rose to become a Brigadier General, did not survive the War and like millions of others, for ever lies in Flanders fields.