

Hearts tribute to the fallen

November always marks a poignant moment in the calendar as the nation once again comes together to remember and commemorate those who served in conflict.

It's a time of particular significance for many football fans in Edinburgh as, given the social role played by the sport, many men signed up to serve in the Great War direct from recruitment drives held at matches. McCrae's Battalion was born, the first of the so-called 'footballers' battalions – including players from clubs including Hearts, Hibs, Dunfermline, Raith Rovers, St Bernards, East Fife and Falkirk – and many young men from Edinburgh and nearby.

Indeed, Hearts will again this year – after the pandemic interruption – hold a formal service at the memorial at Haymarket. It's a time that always lends itself to looking at the history books and learning about those who gave everything.

One organisation that takes part in the annual ceremony at the invite of the club is [Lodge Heart of Midlothian](#), a Freemasons lodge from Gorgie and Dalry dating back to 1896 with strong links to the football club – which endure today with their partnership with local charity, Big Hearts.



A wreath laid at the Heart of Midlothian memorial in November 2019. Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

Meeting originally, and up until 2008, at Murieston Crescent, esteemed lodge members include Hearts greats such as Alex

Massie, Charlie Thomson, Tom Purdie and the legendary Bobby Walker. The organisation's roots go even deeper with the community and the social history of the area – albeit now meeting the short distance at Roseburn Gardens – with the sacrifice many members made in the war a prime example.

In 2013, a commemorative bronze plaque, based on the iconic photograph of the Hearts team who went to war, was unveiled at the rear of the new main stand at Tynecastle Park. That image, now etched to the Tynecastle and Gorgie fabric on Foundation Plaza, features four members of Lodge Heart of Midlothian – John McCartney, Bobby Preston, Alfie Briggs and Jimmy Frew.

Alex Lyon, the assistant trainer, who, although not enlisted went out on the route marches and looked after the team during their army training was also a member. As were many fans and local residents who signed up and headed to France.



Club Chaplain Andy Prime addressing those attending the Hearts Remembrance Day service at Haymarket. Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

Featuring prominently in the McCrae's Battalion story was John McCartney – manager and secretary of the team at the time – and a father figure and confidant to many of those brave men. A lodge member, he was responsible for introducing many of the players to the lodge.

In April 1916, the *Edinburgh Evening News* reported that 100 wounded soldiers and their nurses attended a game at Tynecastle Park as guests of Heart of Midlothian Football Club and thereafter retired for refreshment and entertainment to the premises of Lodge Heart of Midlothian at Murieston Crescent. In attendance were Lord Provost Sir R. K. Inches, Cllr Harkess, John McCartney (all Freemasons) and Elias H Furst – the then chairman of the football club. A rousing speech was given by the lodge chair (Master) Davidson Scott and afterwards they each received a small gift.

As again we reach Remembrance Sunday and join together again to commemorate those who have served in conflict, we recall with fondness and warmth the sense of duty and community felt across Edinburgh.

Special thanks to David Baird from Lodge Heart of Midlothian.

The annual [Remembrance Sunday Service](#) will be held at the Heart of Midlothian War Memorial at Haymarket on Sunday, November 14th.

Conducted by Club Chaplain Andy Prime, the service will be attended by the first-team, coaching staff and members of the board and will begin around quarter to eleven and finish around 11.30am.



Hearts Memorial Haymarket. Photo: Martin P. McAdam
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