

Edinburgh represented at Contalmaison

An agreement signed in July 2020 between Edinburgh and the Mayor of Contalmaison recognises “the long-standing ties between both communities and the shared history they possess”.

The French town has a particular place in Edinburgh’s history as it is the final resting place of many soldiers who fought in McCrae’s Battalion during the First World War. The [agreement](#) is an indication of the bond between the two.

At the beginning of July a ceremony which is organised by McCrae’s Battalion Trust when Bailie Jason Rust represented the Lord Provost and took part in a reaffirmation of the friendship.

Bailie Rust said: “The first of July and the Battle of the Somme is an important date in the history of our Capital city. The sacrifice made by so many courageous men from Edinburgh and the region is still remembered today. As many of us know, a great number of them were local footballers and very young, and bravely enlisted following McCrae’s stirring speech at the Usher Hall.

In 2004 the building of the McCrae’s Battalion memorial in Contalmaison allowed us to have a physical focus that we can use to commemorate these brave individuals on an annual basis. It has been an honour to attend this weekend’s events and take part in this special ceremony and reaffirm our friendship

agreement. My thanks to the McCraes Battalion Trust and our friends in the village who ensure long-term care of the Contalmaison Cairn. Lest we forget.”

Jack Alexander of the McCrae’s Battalion Trust, said: “McCraes’ Battalion Trust is delighted that Edinburgh has reaffirmed its Friendship Agreement on this year’s visit. Several hundred young men from the capital and its surrounding areas lie buried in the fields around the village.

“The Contalmaison Cairn is a place to gather and remember their sacrifice. A poignant story of sportsmen and sacrifice that was forgotten but which we’ll make sure is not forgotten again.

“The loss of the two City of Edinburgh battalions on 1 July 1916 left us a legacy of friendship between Scotland and France that builds upon the Auld Alliance. Edinburgh and Contalmaison are indivisibly linked by a tragic historical event, but the formal recognition of that link this week offers nothing but good for the future of our two municipalities.”

On July 1 1916 the 16th Battalion of the Royal Scots, affectionately referred to as McCrae’s Battalion, helped to lead an offensive charge from British lines onto Contalmaison.

The McCrae’s Battalion was a volunteer battalion of the 16th Royal Scots formed by Lieutenant-Colonel Sir George McCrae who rallied the men of Edinburgh to enlist beside him. It was also referred to as “The Sporting Battalion” because of the high number of professional sportsmen drawn from Heart of Midlothian FC, Hibernian FC and a number of other sporting clubs from across the City and beyond.

In 2004 the McCrae’s Battalion Great War Memorial, designed by the historian Jack Alexander, was unveiled. This memorial cairn was first proposed by the survivors of the battle in 1919 and, as such, is considered to be the last of the Great War memorials to have been built. The service and sacrifice of the Battalion continue to be remembered annually.

The City of Edinburgh, represented by the Council and particularly through the civic leadership of the Lord Provost, Depute Lord Provost and the Bailies have, for a number of years, ensured that the special ties between the two communities and the anniversary of the commencement of the Battle of the Somme is commemorated.

[Read more here.](#)



Contalmaison signing City Chambers July 2020 with Rt Hon Lord Provost Frank Ross. PHOTO © The Edinburgh Reporter





*Friendship Agreement between
The City of Edinburgh and The Village of Contalmaison*

*THE CITY OF EDINBURGH, herein represented by the Frank Ross,
The Rt Hon Lord Provost*

and

THE VILLAGE OF CONTALMAISON within the Region of Hauts-de-France herein represented by Mayor Mme Jocelyne Gougeon.

On 17 July 2020, we commit formally to this enduring agreement of friendship and mutual respect between the City of Edinburgh and the Village of Contalmaison and our respective peoples, in memory of all those who served and sacrificed themselves during a time of great war and strife, particularly the young men of the 16th Royal Scots, so that we could all benefit from a free, fair and democratic way of life in the future.

The fact that our two communities are bound together through ties of blood does not diminish over time, it only grows stronger and deeper. By further cementing our mutual respect through this agreement, we ensure that, although some memories may fade over time, we will never forget, and we will remember and commemorate them each year.

Signed

Jason Rust

*Baird Jason Rust
For and on behalf of
The City of Edinburgh*

*Mayor Mme Jocelyne Gougeon
For and on behalf of
The Village of Contalmaison*

