

THE WATERMARK

CANADA'S ONLINE MASONIC PHILATELIC NEWSLETTER.



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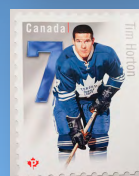
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Collectable Freemasons and Terrorists

I know this is supposed to be a newsletter devoted entirely to notable people connected to Freemasonry from a philatelic perspective. But I have discovered that there are some pretty notable and impressive Freemasons who have yet to be recognized on a postage stamp but have other collectables about them. In this issue I would like to introduce to one. This being the month of Remembrance, which this year has been amplified in Canada by the terrorist murders of two of our soldiers, I thought it appropriate to republish my article about Flanders Fields that was originally published in November 2012. Now that I too am a veteran I will continue as always to attend my local Remembrance Day service on November 11th and join my comrades in sending a message to the terrorist cowards who kill the innocent, that we remember and we will not be intimidated!

Canadian Freemason – Whipper Billy Watson

Born William John Potts on June 25th 1915 in East York, Ontario (Toronto) became one of Canada's most famous and admired professional wrestlers "Whipper Billy Watson". The debonair Canadian stuntman and movie player wrestled from the 1940s through the 1960s. His love of wrestling resulted from his older brother convincing him to skip his piano lessons and accompany him to a wrestling match at a local Anglican Church gym. After that he was smitten and began training and in 1936 he began his wrestling career at Toronto's Consols Stadium wrestling as Bill Potts. In June of 1936 the 21-year old went on a tour of the United Kingdom with some fellow Toronto wrestlers. There he suffered a fractured shoulder and several broken ribs and had to bow out for six months. After recovering he continued to wrestle and assumed the stage name of Billy Watson. After being booked by the former Olympic Gold Medalist George de Relwyskow he toured throughout England and Ireland becoming one of the best wrestlers in the world. After four years in the United Kingdom Watson returned to Canada and began wrestling at Toronto's Maple Leaf Gardens on October 3rd 1940 where he spent the next 31 years entertaining wrestling fans. Watson quickly became a crowd favorite, a mainstream celebrity and one of the most popular citizens in Toronto. It is estimated that Watson popularity drew more than five million people to wrestling events of in Toronto. He was known to be clean fighter in an era of dirty tricks. Over the course of his career he fought all of the greatest wrestlers the Gardens attracted. Names forgotten today but were household in past such as Nanjo Singh, Bill Longson, Lou Thesz, Yvon Robert, Gorgeous George, fellow Freemason Lord Athol Layton and the famous



George Kininski. On April 30th 1942 Whipper Billy Watson defeated Nanjo Singh for the British Empire title and went on to hold it many times. One of the Gardens best-remembered events was the "hair vs. career" match in 1959 against an aging 44-year-old Gorgeous George. The deal was that if Whipper lost he would have to retire. If Gorgeous lost would have to have his head shaved in the ring.



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Whipper had two signature moves, the Canuck Commando Unconscious (a sleeper hold) and the "Irish Whip" (a hammer throw). He used both techniques and put Gorgeous George in a Canuck Commando Unconscious. While the Whipper he was in the process finishing him off bad boy Gene Kiniski rushed into the ring and attacked Watson. Pandemonium broke out when several other wrestlers ran from the dressing room to help Watson and chasing off Kiniski. Watson won the match as a disqualification and the extra wrestlers helped the referee keep George still while the barber shaved his head in front of 14,000 cheering fans.

Other notable titles Watson earned included:

- National Wrestling Association World champion, 1947
- National Wrestling Alliance World champion, 1956
- 9-time British Empire champion (Toronto), 1942-67
- 13-time Canadian tag champion (Toronto), 1952-60

7-time International tag champion (Toronto), 1961-68

Outside the ring Watson was no slouch either. A wise investor and promoter enabled him to become a millionaire. He

had his own line of soda pop on which he included different wrestling moves included on the bottles. He also marketed his own trademarked weight lifting equipment. Watson was known as much for his charitable work in Toronto and across Canada as he was for his wrestling. As director of the Ontario Society for Crippled Children, a position he held for 37 years he used his own money to spread the word on the plight of the physically disabled across Canada and was a prominent figure in the Easter Seals campaign.

In the 1965 federal election he ran unsuccessfully as a Progressive Conservative

In 1974 He was awarded the Order of Canada and became one of the first 20 recipients of the Order of Ontario in 1987. While on vacation in Florida he suffered a heart attack and died on February 4th 1990 at age 74. At his funeral his long-time rival Joe Kiniski was one of Watson's eight pallbearers.



Whipper Billy Watson was initiated in 1944 at Temple Lodge No. 525 in Toronto.

A Mountie In Flanders

The green fields of Flanders no longer bear visible signs of war or poppies. However, daily reminders of the horrors of the First World War still exist. The Flemish countryside of southwest Belgium is picturesque on this drizzly October day as our police car winds its way down narrow roads traveling towards the town of Ieper (Ypres) and the “Flanders Fields Museum”. Our guide explains that Ieper (pronounced eep-er) was completely destroyed in WW1 and was painstakingly rebuilt the way it originally was.

This far away land is full of history for Canadians. This is the land where over 16,000 Canadians are buried having died in a series of futile battles in a prolonged stalemate with the German Army. Our guide, a Belgian police officer, explained that his grandfather lived in the trenches for four years after the Germans destroyed his home and that this land for many years after the war was a large graveyard strewn with rubble. The picturesque local towns were finally rebuilt after many years of debate about leaving this field of death, as it was, a perpetual reminder of the horror and ravages of a war so long ago.

Forty-five years before my birth, my great grandfather, and my grandfather both lived and fought in the trenches near here. My father while stationed in Germany with the RCAF brought me here as a little boy over thirty-five years ago to see first hand where so many Canadians fought and died. Over eighty years after WWI, I returned to this hallowed ground, a guest of the Belgium Police to see first hand the land of John McCrea, Flanders Fields. Nearly every Canadian is familiar with the immortal words of Col. John McCrea, his poignant poem also are precious words to the residents of Ieper and many other nations. I have heard the poem recited more times than I can remember. But, like most Canadians I had a vague idea where Flanders Fields was and I assumed it was one big field full of poppies.

I was quite surprised to discover that the Flanders Fields of John McCrae’s poem was not one location but an entire region! Strange place names like “Ypres” and “Passchendaele” were actual communities where people lived, loved and died.

The Flanders Fields Museum is in the rebuilt Cloth Hall, originally built between 1260 and 1304, which along with the entire town of Iepers was reduced to rubble in four years of war. This somber museum is a combination of traditional materials and interactive exhibits which succeed in explaining the war and the effects it had on the Belgian countryside. There we learned how King Albert the 1st of Belgium ordered the canal locks to be opened to prevent the German Army breaking through, towards Dunkirk and Calais in France. This resulted in flooding the low countryside thereby halting the advance of the Germans and forcing them to transfer the offensive to the area around Ypres. This tactic created a prolonged stalemate in the area that lasted for several years and subsequently lead to the land and nearly everything on it being demolished by prolonged artillery. The beautiful and productive farmland was turned into a crater-ridden wasteland of mud, trenches, and death. In addition to the physical effects of war, the museum provides insight into the lives of the people who lived and died in this terrible conflict. Not only does it show what happened to the allied soldiers (Belgium, France, Britain, Australian, Indian, and Canada etc.), but it also tells the story of the suffering and devastation experienced by both the German soldiers and the local inhabitants. Visitors to the museum are given a card bearing a name of an individual, which you are encouraged to insert into a computer at the end of the exhibits.

When inserted the cards provide a photo and the histories of real people, men, women, soldiers and civilians who lived and died in the area.

After touring the museum we walked down the street to the Menin Gate. Here the names of 56,000 soldiers of the British Empire who were killed in the battles in and around Ypres and whose resting place is unknown are engraved on the walls of the gate (another 34,888 names are record at the nearby memorial at Tyne Cot in Passchendaele). Names of young men long since forgotten by most of the empire, but not by the people of Ieper who at 8pm every single night since World War One (excepting the Second World War when the community was occupied by the Germans) remember the dead by the playing of "The Last Post" by buglers in the massive memorial.

Reviewing the names of the fallen, I was dumbfounded by the size of the memorial and the approximately 56,000 of names of the dead carved into every wall both inside and out of this massive structure. When I searched out the names of Canadians, I discovered that nearly 12% (6900) of the memorial was comprised of names of Canadian soldiers from every region of the country. Until now I had not appreciated the sacrifice my country had made in this bloody, useless war. Canada proportionally had sacrificed more of her sons (60,661) in World War One than any other country in the empire and shared in the near extinction of an entire generation of young men!



Our time was running short and on our return trip to the coast we stopped at the Canadian Memorial which was located at a cross road in the tiny village of St. Juliaan. I stared up at the 35 foot high towering and imposing monument of a Canadian soldier atop the column.

The soldier emerging from the stone waist up, with his head bowed and his eyes staring mournfully towards the ground immediately makes direct eye contact with all who approach the memorial.

Attached to the column was a brass plaque inscribed upon *"This column marks the battlefield where 18,000 Canadians on the British left withstood the first gas attacks the 22-24 April 1915, 2000 fell and are buried nearby"*

I was overcome with emotion, and could not look into the statue's eyes without feeling his pain and despair over the number of fallen comrades that were buried near this place.

At the base of this massive monument were arrows pointing in different directions to the nearby battlefields "Passchendaele", "Ypres", "Hooge", "Zonnebeke", "Langemarck", "Poelcappelle", "Boesinghe", where thousands of young Canadians saw intense action and suffered the grisly effects of mustard gas. As I wandered the grounds of this stately memorial blanketed in light rain thinking of my grandfathers enduring the hardship of living in the mud of the trenches with the rats, artillery and gas. Had they not survived this place I would not be here either. As I meditated upon the sacrifices made in this area, I realized that I had wandered into a small grove of Maple trees and scattered upon the ground all around me were a variety of colours and types of maple leaves.

The symbolism of the maples leaves lying on Belgian soil and the variety of colours of the leaves before me made a deep and lasting impression.

I gathered up a few leaves and returned to the car and placed them inside a writing pad where later that night, wide awake wrestling with the effects of jet lag and a nine hour time change I composed a poem “Maple Leaves Upon The Ground” in an effort to try and express the impression this land had made upon me and the feelings for I had for this place.

Our next stop was very special to our guide, for his grandfather had labored in the trenches along the Ijser River at “De Dodengang” the infamous “Trench of Death” in Diksmuide. This is where the entire Belgian army struggled for nearly four years in the trenches, literally a stone throw away from the Germans who were trenched in on the opposite side of the river. Soldiers lived in these trenches, three days on and three days off under heavy fire, artillery, and gas, with the dead, the dying and the rats. The memorial site, nearly a kilometer in length is a fraction of the size of the original trenches that ran along the bank of the River Ijser, several miles in length.

As we travelled across the Belgian countryside, I noticed that the telephone poles in the area were different from poles I had seen elsewhere and asked our guide “Rick” about their design. The poles are concrete “A -frame” style, with a series of large holes running the length of the pole. He explained that the farmers still regularly dig up unexploded bombs from WW1 and place the unexploded shells in a hole in the pole. The Belgian Army makes regular patrols of the area and collect the shells and dispose of them. As we were driving along Rick turned up the police radio and then advised us that someone in his neighborhood had just dug up three unexploded bombs on his own street! It was as if the dead in this area cannot rest and are busy pushing up the unexploded bombs, until all of the explosives in the area are removed from the ground and the soil made pure again.

As we continued our journey back to the coast our guide insisted we stop in Langemark where one of two German graveyards was located. This dignified and solemn place held the remains of 44,061 German soldiers who died in this area between 1914 -1918. A poignant reminder that it is not just allied soldiers buried in this place, but that there are the sons of parents from many lands who never returned home to their friends and family, but lie buried here in Flanders Fields. I could not help but think about the closing line in John McCrea’s poem;

*“If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields.”*

The so-called “Great War” did not end all wars as it promised. Only twenty years later, death and destruction rained upon this beautiful land again. Over ninety years later war still rages around the world. Though few poppies grow today in Flanders Fields, the dead have kept their promise, they do not sleep and likely will not sleep for a very long time. Meanwhile the ghosts of the dead, now all allies in spirit, continue to push up explosives from the soil in an attempt to purify the ground where they are buried and try to remind the living of the sacrifice they all made so many years ago in a far off land called “Flanders Fields”.

Maple Leaves Upon The Ground

*Maple leaves upon the ground
 Where granite eyes, stare sadly down
 Sixteen thousand lie near by
 Where larks, still singing fly*

*Granite eyes in downward cast
 Provide a testament, to the gas
 The craters gone, the grass returned
 Historic lessons, never learned*

*Names upon the Menin Gate
 Reminders of, the cost of hate
 Where silver trumpets, each evening sound
 Red leaves of maple, fall to the ground*

*Poppies awakened once, in the fields
 Where bombs each day, are still revealed
 Restless souls in Belgian soil
 Rush up explosives, to end their toil*

*From graves the fallen, from far and near
 Cry to the visitor, we are still here
 The torch we passed so long ago
 The path to peace, its intent to show*

*Hope, not death, is the message we still give
 From the dead, to you who live
 In Flanders Fields, stone eyes stare down
 At maple leaves, on Belgian ground*

Hockey Star / Doughnut King, Gets Another Stamp

Canada Post recently released a new series of hockey stars on stamps. Included in the six stamp series was another stamp featuring hockey legend Miles Gilbert "Tim" Horton 1930-1974. (See May 2013 issue of *the Watermark*) The first stamp depicting the hockey star and businessman was issued in 2002. He played professional hockey for 24 years primarily for the Toronto Maple Leafs and then the New York Rangers, Pittsburgh Penguins and the Buffalo Sabres. He played for the Maple Leafs' from 1952 to 1970 winning four Stanley Cups.



2002 Scott #1935a

100 greatest Hockey Players in in the Canadian Broadcasting Canadians.

In 1964, Tim Horton opened his Shop in Hamilton Ontario and become a multi-million dollar death from a car crash in 1974 Police officer Ron Joyce shares and since has grown the the restaurant business with



Between 1961 through 1968 he appeared in 486 consecutive regular-season games, which was a league record for a defenceman that lasted until 2007. He was generally acknowledged as the strongest man in hockey and was known for his tremendous strength and calmness under pressure. He was inducted posthumously into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1977 and ranked number 43 on The Hockey News list of the 1998. In 2004 he was ranked 59 Corporations list of greatest

first Tim Horton Doughnut by 1967 Tim Horton's had franchise system. Upon his his partner, former Hamilton purchased the Horton family company into a major player in over 4600 stores.

Tim Horton was a member of Kroy Lodge No. 676 in Toronto, Ontario.



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