



WYP Monthly Newsletter

Staffordshire Freemasons Digital News



Remembrance Special



A Journey of Remembrance: Masonic Memorial Service at the National Memorial Arboretum

Honouring the Past, Embracing Brotherhood



On Saturday, November 1st, 2025, I joined fellow members of Dormston Lodge No. 7821 and Dormston Chapter No. 7821 at the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire. Together with

Freemasons from across the country, we gathered for the Freemasons' National Service of Remembrance. This moving ceremony paid tribute to those who gave their lives for freedom, from World Wars to modern conflicts.

Lodge banners gathered at the Arboretum under sombre skies.

A Parade of Banners and Brotherhood

The day began with a parade of Lodge Banners, proudly carried in procession alongside Masonic dignitaries. Beneath a soft November sky, the Arboretum stood as a living memorial, a place of solemn

reflection and shared history.

The Gresley Brass Band provided stirring music, its notes rising gently through the trees, accompanying hymns that echoed the spirit of gratitude and unity.

Freemasons from across the country gathered in unity and remembrance.

The service was conducted with dignity and reverence by R.W.Bro. Warren Duke, Metropolitan Grand Master, R.W.Bro. Brigadier W. Shackell, Metropolitan Grand Chaplain, and R.W.Bro. John Thompson, Assistant Grand Master.

Personal Reflections Amid the Silence

As the words of remembrance filled the air, my thoughts turned inward to my great uncle, Pt. John Ridgway, killed in action on 14 August 1915 at just 19 years old in the Dardanelles, Gallipoli.



While he fought in that distant theatre, his father, Sapper Job Ridgway, my great-grandfather, a coal miner from Hawkins Pit, Cheslyn Hay, served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers at the Somme. Using his mining skills, he helped dig tunnels beneath enemy lines, where miners could achieve in a day what took ordinary soldiers a week.



Their courage and the courage of countless others are etched into our nation's history. Standing among my Brethren, I felt the weight of those sacrifices and the pride of belonging to a Fraternity that honours such devotion.



The Spirit of Freemasonry Endures

The ceremony was more than remembrance; it was a celebration of unity, service, and brotherhood. Amid the solemnity, there was also warmth, the quiet pride that comes from standing together, shoulder to shoulder, with those who share our values of duty, compassion, and respect for all who have served. Freemasonry teaches us that remembrance is not passive reflection but an active duty to carry forward the legacy of those who came before us. That day at the Arboretum, surrounded by fellow Freemasons, I was reminded that our bonds of brotherhood extend across time, linking us to generations past and those yet to come.

A Meeting to Remember

I was honoured to meet Bro. Warrant Officer Class 2 Johnson Beharry VC, whose gallantry and humility are an inspiration to all. He kindly signed a philatelic first-day cover I had produced, which I intend to auction for charity — a small gesture to continue the cycle of giving that Freemasonry represents.



Final Reflections

The Masonic Memorial Service at the National Memorial Arboretum was more than a commemoration; it was a reaffirmation of what it means to be a Freemason.

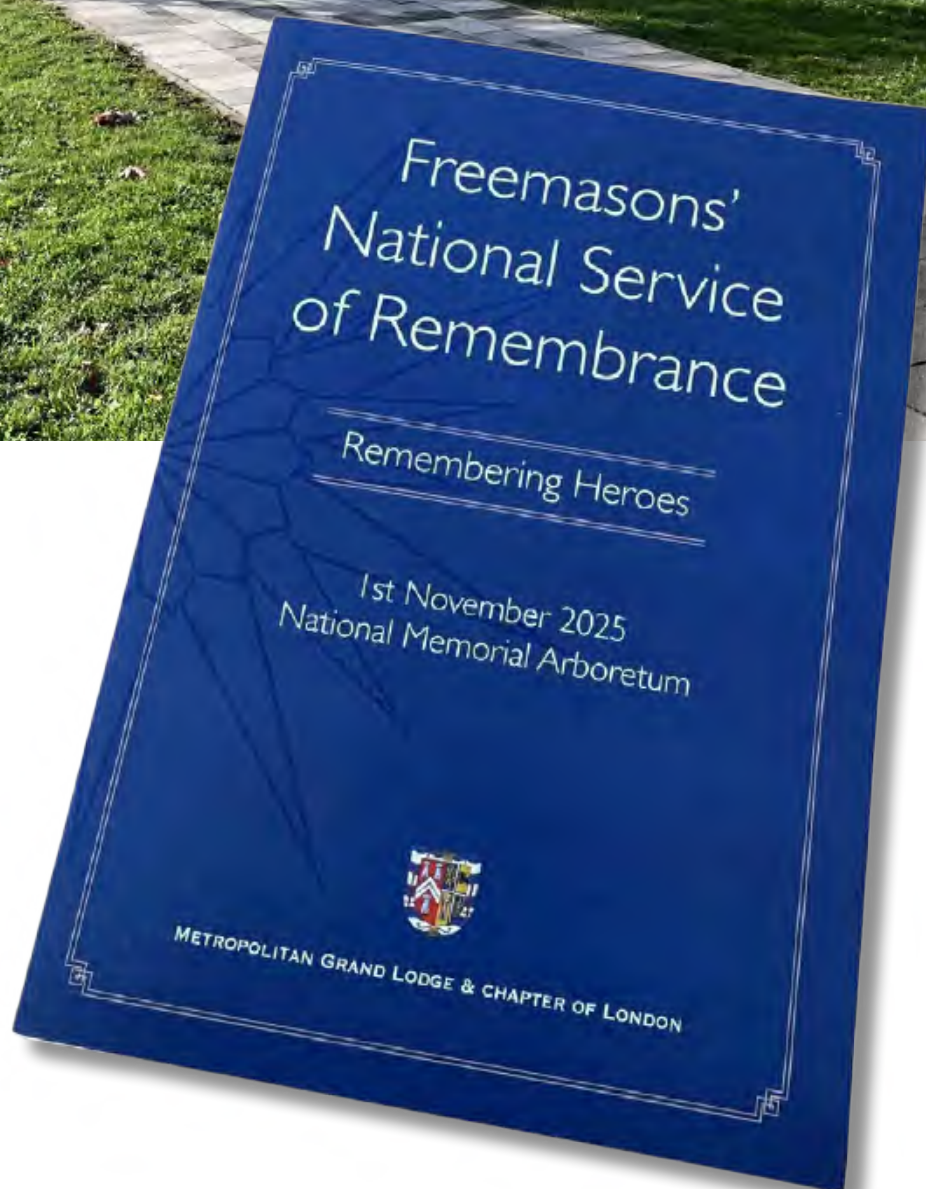
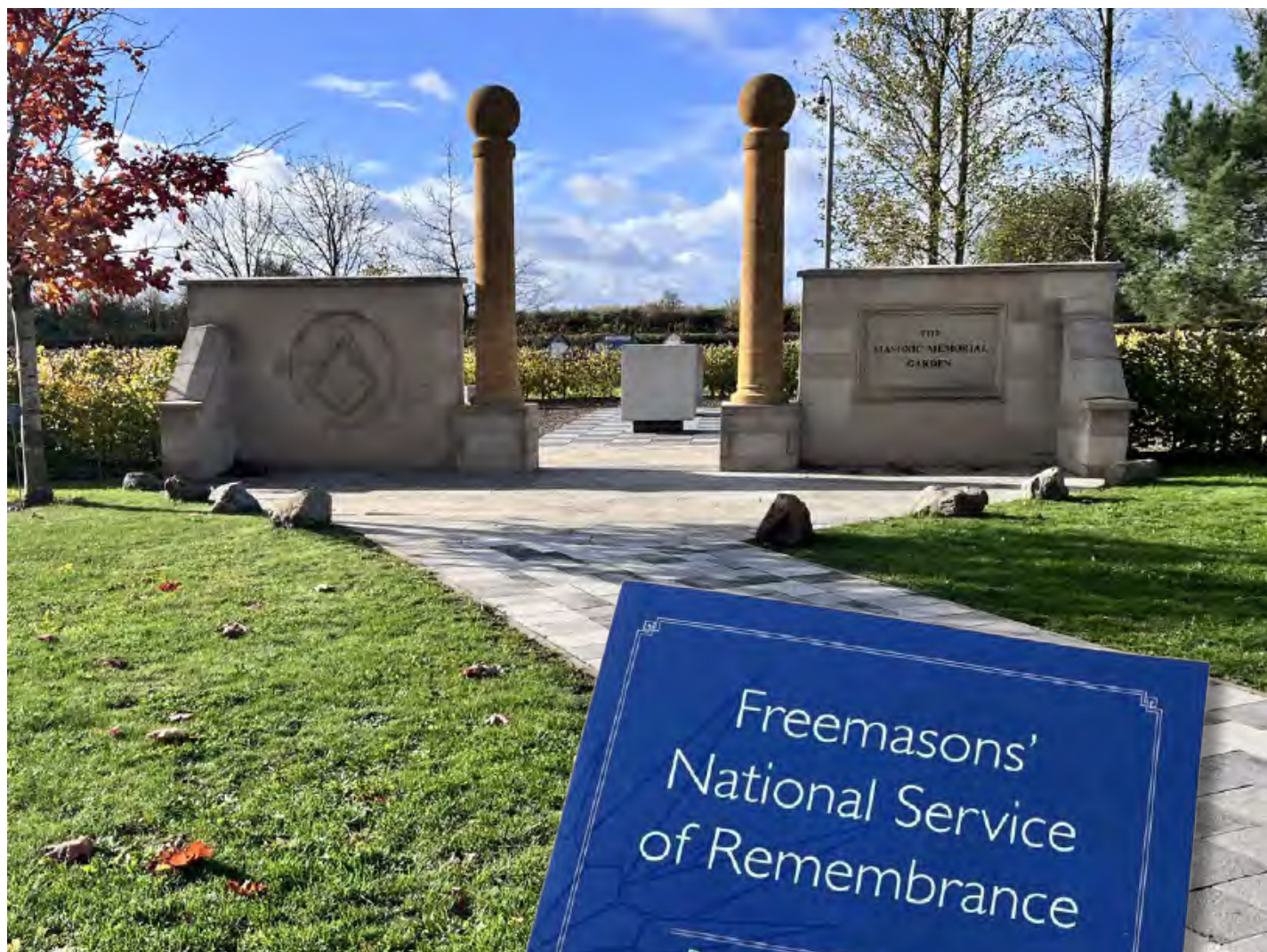
To remember, to honour, and to serve not only in ceremony but in our everyday actions.

In that moment of shared remembrance, I felt deeply privileged to be part of a tradition that continues to inspire, unite, and uphold the memory of all who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

W.Bro. D.J. Evans, PPrJGW (Staffordshire).



Remembrance Service



Remembrance Service



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Remembrance Service - Staffordshire Contingent





The Widows Sons and the National Remembrance Wreath Ride

The annual Masonic Remembrance Service at the National Memorial Arboretum is always a moving occasion. This year, the Widows Sons played a central role in ensuring its success, undertaking the transportation of Provincial wreaths from across the country. Their commitment, organisation, and determination stood out throughout the entire operation.



Co-ordinated by Metropolitan Grand Lodge, wreaths were gathered from Lodges and Provinces nationwide and transported by Widows Sons Chapters, often in challenging conditions. The weather at times was severe, with rain sweeping across large parts of the country, yet riders continued without hesitation, representing their Provinces with pride.

All roads led to Tamworth Masonic Rooms, where the wreaths were brought together on



Saturday 25 October. Upon arrival, the riders were warmly welcomed with tea, coffee, sausage rolls, and cakes thoughtfully provided by the Masonic Rooms. This hospitality was deeply appreciated by all present, especially those who had ridden long distances in difficult weather.

At 13:00, around 210 motorcycles lined up to form a solemn and impressive convoy, preparing to travel to the National Memorial Arboretum. The ride was marshalled by Bro. Dave Eatough, and led by Staffs Chapter President, Bro. John "TT" Hammond, both of Legge Lodge 2784, supported by a disciplined and experienced team of marshals. At one point, the convoy paused in Cricket Lane, Lichfield, forming up two-abreast and completely filling the road end-to-end, before continuing in majestic procession along the A38.

Upon reaching the Arboretum, the wreaths were handed over with dignity and respect in readiness for the Remembrance service on 1 November. Every rider present understood the purpose and significance of what they were doing, and the atmosphere reflected deep honour, unity, and remembrance.

Special thanks must be expressed to the Widows Sons for their dedication and conduct throughout. Their efforts ensured that every Province was represented, no matter the distance or the weather.



Recognition is also due to the organising committee for their work in planning and coordinating the event:

- **W. Bro. Greg Kirby, Widows Sons National Chair**
- **Bro. John "TT" Hammond, Staffordshire Chapter President**
- **W. Bro. Tony Armstrong, Past Staffordshire Chapter President**
- **W. Bro. Clive Andrews-Lewis, Past Staffordshire Chapter President and Chapter Mentor**

In particular, W. Bro. Armstrong and W. Bro. Andrews-Lewis were the initial contacts responsible for establishing the Staffordshire organisation. They personally transported the wreaths from Hanley Masonic Hall to Tamworth in torrential rain and difficult traffic, ensuring everything arrived safely and on time.

Their leadership and perseverance helped lay the foundation for what became a truly memorable display of Masonic unity and fraternal commitment.

The sight of nearly two hundred motorcycles riding in formation to the Arboretum is one that will stay with all who witnessed it. It stood as a visible reminder that remembrance is not simply observed, but actively upheld through effort, respect, and brotherly duty.



Poppy Sellers around the Province



Remembrance Service

