



## *The Overy Papers*

### Number 16 The "Forget-Me-Not"

The "Forget-Me-Not"  
Of Newfoundland and Labrador and Freemasonry world wide

This was prepared with the help of VW Barry Thom in Newfoundland, Florence Thom who supplied the Forget-me not, the website of Bro. Paul Bessell and numerous papers from the publications of the German Quatuor Coronati Lodge of Research

In a German legend, God named all the plants.

When a tiny unnamed one cried out, "Forget-me-not, O Lord!" God replied, "That shall be your name."

During exile in 1398, Henry IV adopted this flower as his symbol and retained it upon his return to England the following year.

In 15th-century Germany, it was supposed that the wearers of the flower would not be forgotten by their lovers.

Another Legend is that in medieval times, a knight and his lady were walking along the side of a river. The knight picked a bunch of flowers, but because of the weight of his armour he fell into the river. As he was drowning he threw the flowers to his loved one and shouted "Forget-me-not." Ladies often wore it as a sign of faithfulness and enduring love. One wonders what sort of person would take his lady love for a walk beside the river in a suit of amour but that is what legions are made of.

During World War One, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1916 at the battle of Beaumont Hamel, in France 733 of 801 men in the 1st Newfoundland Regiment died or were injured in battle that only lasted one hour. It was a devastating blow to their families back home.

Prior to that day, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1867 the Dominion of Canada was formed but it wasn't until 1949 that Newfoundland and Labrador entered Confederation.

Therefore July 1<sup>st</sup>, is a day of mixed emotions in Newfoundland and Labrador as it is Canada Day and is still held as Memorial Day, not only for those lives lost in the First World War but all wars and conflicts, as well as those

Canadians lost in Peace keeping missions.

After WW I the "Forget-me-not" flower was used as the symbol of Remembrance, in Newfoundland and Labrador but the Poppy slowly displaced it on July 1<sup>st</sup> as well as November 11<sup>th</sup>.

Then this year in Newfoundland and Labrador the Provincial Command of the Royal Canadian Legion met and it was agreed that there would be a return to the Forget-me-not, on Memorial Day.

A member of Bay Robert's Legion Branch # 32 was approached and asked to design a pin using silk Forget-Me-Not flowers. This was achieved and approved by Provincial Command. Legions from as far west as Goose Bay, Labrador and as far east as St. John's all placed orders for the pin.

In a time when many things are mass produced in developing countries it is comforting to know that this pin was designed and hand crafted in Port de Grave, NL by Florence Morgan-Thom. Florence is the wife of VW Barry Thom who developed our Correspondence Course and she was born in NL when this country was still under the British flag. Today she makes thousands of the pins.

In the years between World War I and World War II the blue Forget Me Not flower was a standard symbol used by most of the charitable organizations in Germany, with a very clear meaning: "Do not forget the poor and the destitute".

It was first introduced into German Masonry in 1926 at a meeting of the Grand Lodge of the Sun that was one of the pre-war German Grand Lodges.

By early 1934, it became evident that Freemasonry in Germany was in danger. In that same year, the Grand Lodge of the Sun realizing the grave dangers that were involved adopted the Forget Me Not flower as a substitute for the traditional Square and Compasses.

In 1936, the Nazis started the Winterhilfswerk, which consisted of children collecting money on the streets during certain weeks in winter. All youngsters were requested to participate, and they each received about one hundred pins for them to sell. Something like the Girl Guide Cookies except the money was used for rearmament.

Each winter a different pin was chosen and the pins were allowed to be worn but only during the time of the collection drive, to identify those who had already contributed.

By an extraordinary coincidence, the pin used by the Nazis for the collection made in 1938 happened to be the very forget-me-not pin chosen by the Freemasons in 1926 and it was made by the same factory in Selb.

There is no doubt that the Freemasons who attended the meeting of 1926 were glad to wear it again twelve years later.

However it is out of question that such a pin could have been worn after the 1938 collection because the wearing of any badge which did not originate from the Nazi Party was a criminal offence under the Nazi regime.

So in truth the Freemasons would never have worn a pin on the streets and never in a concentration camp.

It is estimated that Hitler killed over one hundred thousand Freemasons and Freemasonry went underground but still this delicate flower assumed its role as a symbol of Masonry surviving throughout the reign of terror.

Then in 1947, the Grand Lodge of the Sun was reopened once more in Bayreuth and a little blue pin, the shape of a forget me not, was proposed and adopted as the official emblem of the first Annual Convention of those who had survived the bitter years of semi-darkness, bringing the Light of Masonry once again into the Temples.

A year later, at the first Annual Convention of the United Grand Lodges of Germany the pin was adopted as an official Masonic emblem that was to honour those valiant brethren who carried their work under very adverse conditions.

Thus did this simple little flower blossom forth into a meaningful emblem of the Fraternity, becoming perhaps the most widely worn pin among Freemasons in Germany today.

Today, in Germany, the Forget-Me-Not is an interchangeable Masonic symbol with the Square and Compasses and is used it to remember those Masons who were victimized by the Nazi regime.

It was more likely the result of an unconscious effort to inhibit the past and to imagine Freemasons acting according to their ideals of fighting for freedom and defending it.

And so a new legend was born.

So let us keep it and let us wear the "Forget-Me-Not", to remember with pride all those who have died because of their membership of our Masonic Brotherhood and also those who today live in countries who would persecute our brothers.

Thank you and whatever I say may we continue in peace and harmony.

Bro. Bill Overy

Member of the Education Committee of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon.



The Newfoundland Forget me Not.