



The Overy Papers
Number 104A - The Empty Chair

The Empty Chair
By
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Member of the Education Committee of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon

Layout

A **black-draped** "Empty" chair should be placed with enough room to allow members to pass in front of it, about 6 feet. A poppy should be placed on the top of the black draped chair. An **English poppy** on the right corner a **Canadian poppy** in the centre and an **American Poppy** on the left corner. Any problems with Chair Poppies call **Bro. Bill Overy**.

The **USA and Canadian flags** should be positioned beside the chair and will represent our two countries.

A framed copy of the Commonwealth War Grave Commission Certificate showing the cemetery where Bro. Sergeant James Dunbar Blacklock rests will be placed on the chair. (*Use your own Member or just a general name for all Canadian Servicemen*)

The **Apron** will be needed. We had one that was supplied by a brother's that belonged to father who served during the Second World War.

Each Brother should have a **sprig of evergreen**.

Aprons will be worn under the jacket.

No collars except for the WM and DDGM.

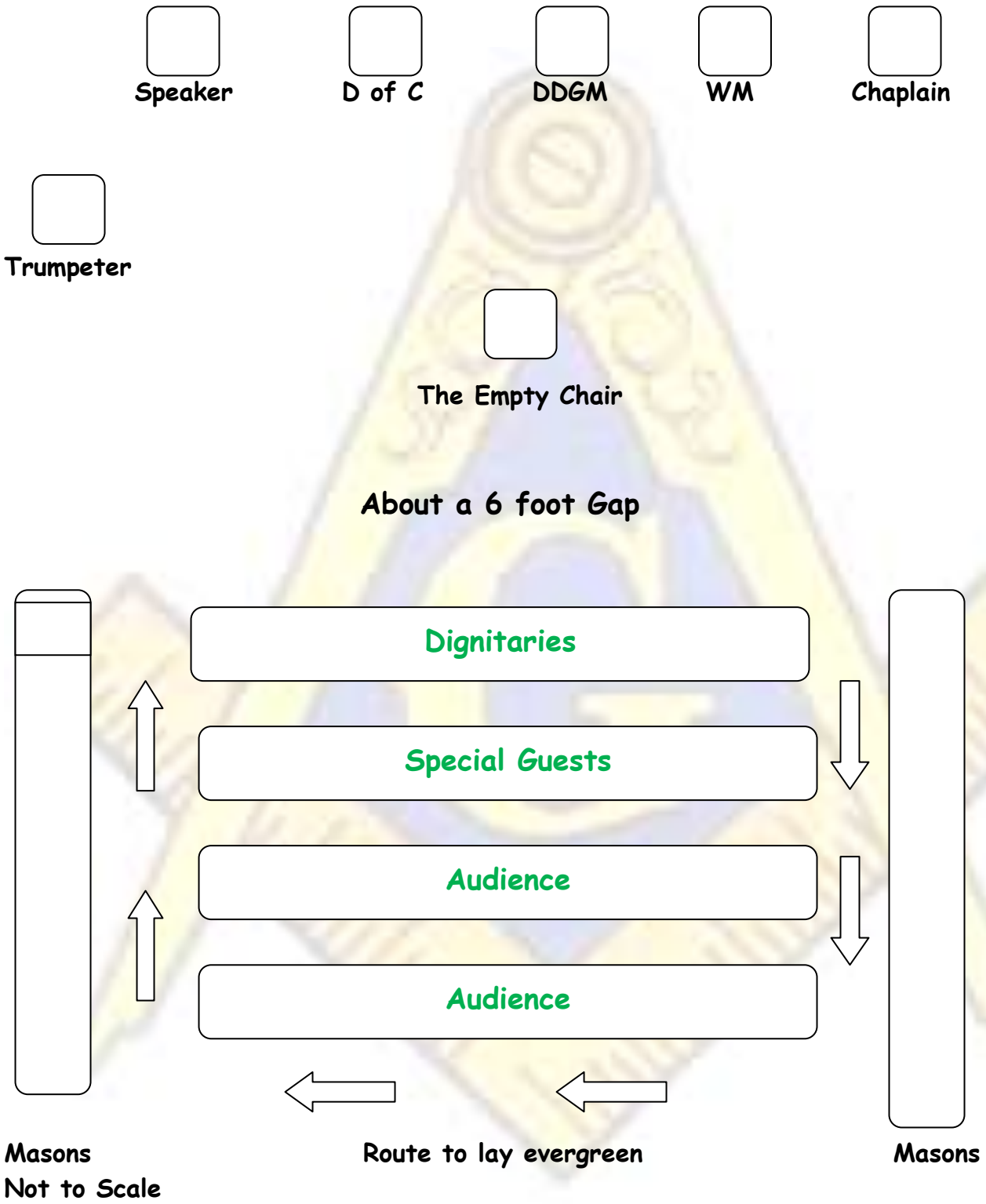
Aprons of your Mother Lodge will be permitted.

Military Medals and Jewels can be worn.

Dress- Business Suit - Canadian Legion Uniform

A **Tray of Poppies** will be provided by the **Canadian Legion** to be placed at the entrance.

Room Layout



The Empty Chair

A Ceremony of Remembrance

Introduction by Director of Ceremonies

The Empty Chair ceremony dates back to 1875, a decade after the close of the American Civil War when it was used in Masonic lodges to pay tribute to those who did not return from the war.

The first Mason John Holt Beever honored by this U.S. program was a British Freemason who was killed in action in the U.S. Army on the northern plains in what was then known as Dakota Territory.

Since then it has been used by many lodges at Remembrance Day to pay homage to those Brother Masons who fell during WWI, WWII, and other wars.

The basis for our Ceremony is taken from the rituals of 1875 Frontier Army Lodge of Masonic Research #1875 in the USA, The Grand Lodge of New Brunswick which they presented in 1948 and the ceremony prepared by Moira Lodge #11 of The Grand Lodge of Canada in Ontario on 7 November 2001.

Since then it has been carried out by many Lodges WORLD WIDE as it is in Australia and NZ

This version of the ceremony was first produced in November 2015 and this year of 2016, I altered slightly to make it a presentation to the general people of the City of Abbotsford.

We trust that you will enjoy this presentation.

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THE CEREMONY OF THE EMPTY CHAIR P

Parts in Red change to suit your Lodge

WM: This evening we will be honoring a member of our lodge who was raised to the Grand lodge above and can no longer attend this lodge with us in person. In addition we will honour all those Comrades in Arms who sacrificed everything in war. It will be our duty to escort their symbolic representation to us, that we may pay them the respect they are due.

Bro. (Speaker) who carries the apron sits at the back in the last chair in the left hand row.

WM: *Bangs on a gavel.*

WM: Brother **(Speaker)** ascertain who wishes to join us?

Bro. (Speaker) walks to the front and will carry the apron.

Bro. (Speaker)

Worshipful Master it is Brother, **(Sergeant James Dunbar Blacklock)** and his fellow Comrades in Arms who have fallen in the service of their country. They seek admission here, not in person, but through their spiritual presence. They seek our continued remembrance and they wish to honour the memory of our fallen Brothers **(Brother Sergeant James Dunbar Blacklock of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division. Who on D-Day, 6 June 1944 landed at Juno Beach, was wounded and 4 days later)** answered the summons to the Grand Lodge above.

WM: Brother **(Speaker)**, admit them and then open your hearts to their memory. It is my order that in recognition of our fallen Brother's presence, and his status as a Master Mason, that the apron of a Brother Master Mason be positioned as it would be were our Brothers' presence in body as well as spirit. You, also as a Brother who has honorably served his country in uniform, in time of conflict, will approach the seat of our Brothers' memory, and perform this honour.

Bro. (Speaker) walks forward to the empty chair where he holds up the apron.

Bro. (Speaker) The apron of a freemason is more antient than the Golden Fleece or the Roman Eagle and when worthily worn, more honorable than the Star and Garter or any other Order in existence. This emblem I now place on the seat of our deceased Brother, it is a symbol of recognition of his dedication to the highest ideals of the Craft during times of conflict.

Bro. (Speaker) then places the Apron on the seat of the chair, turns to the audience and says:

By this act we are reminded of the Masonic ideals of our fallen Brother and his comrades. We see in clear vision the noble thoughts, generous impulses, words of truth, acts of love and deeds of mercy.

The Masonic Apron represents these highest aspirations of a Brother in all ways, as each Brother knows, they give to man his only genuine happiness and his lasting satisfaction. To these precepts our Brother willingly and gladly subscribed.

Bro. (Speaker) then goes to his own seat to the left of the vacant chair.

WM: Our Brother, **(Sergeant James Dunbar Blacklock)**, having given himself freely not only to the obligations of the Degrees of Masonry, but also to the obligations of service to his ideals as his lights showed them, thereby garnered the honors of his peers in service, his superiors and those who looked to him for leadership. It is said a Man is made a Mason first in his heart. The Mason may have earned honors before, or after he is raised to the Sublime Degree. But as the world sees, those honors do not decorate his Masonry, but rather highlight the spirit which made him both a Mason and a man of service. These honors of mankind for our Brother, whether in material or purely from the heart, represent mankind's decoration upon a life of honor and service.

The Chaplain will stand, and: Recites The 23rd Psalm

*The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name' sake.*

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: For thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;
Thou annointest my head with oil; My cup runneth over.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever.*

Amen

Brethren: So Mote it Be.

The WM

W.M. As we have recognized our Brother (**Sergeant James Dunbar Blacklock**) and his fallen comrades in arms, let us take this, also as both an affirmation of his virtue and recognition of our own frailty.

W.M. Holding up the evergreen

This evergreen is an emblem of immortality of the soul. Let it remind us of our high and glorious destiny beyond this world of shadows and of that imperishable and immortal spirit over which death hath no dominion.

Brothers, will you reenact with me part of the Masonic Funeral Service to a Brother raised to a Higher Lodge by first forming a line before the vacant chair of our Brother and his comrades starting with those on my right.

The DDGM walks to the Empty Chair then take the evergreen in his right hand. He places his hand in the sign of fidelity, he will then extend his right hand palm down ward and place the evergreen on the apron and then points upward.

He will be followed in turn by the Worshipful Master, the Chaplin, the D of C and the speaker will approach the Empty Chair in turn, place their hand in the sign of fidelity, then extend their right hand palm down ward, place the evergreen on the apron and then point upward.

Then the other Brethren, starting on the left will start the procession of other Masons. Each will approach the Vacant Chair and holding his evergreen in his right hand, give the sign of fidelity. Then place it on the apron with his right hand and return to his seat in the hall.

The right hand side will walk round the back of the audience and follow behind the left hand side then return to their seat.

W.M. We cherish his memory here and we commend his spirit to God who gave it. Gracious God, give rest for this our Brother, who once walked here with us. Everlasting life give unto him, and if it be Thy will, lead him through the gates into the Eternal City. Amen.

WM: Brethren we will now have a one minute silence for **(Brother James Dunbar Blacklock)** and his fallen comrades in arms and for all Brethren and Veterans who fell during a time of conflict.

*A member of the **(we used the local Air Cadets)**, will now play the last post at the beginning of the one minute silence. The WM will signal the end of the one minutes silence with his gavel and a signal to the trumpeter to play reveille.*

The D of C will now stand and recite:

The fourth Stanza of "For the Fallen" by Laurence Binyon in 1914

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.

All Brethren: We will remember them.

Followed by "In Flanders Field" by John McCrae, May 1915

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly

Scarce heard amid the guns below
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die

We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

And Finally

"Why Wear A Poppy?" by Don Crawford

"Please wear a Poppy," the lady said,
And held one forth, but I shook my head,
Then I stopped and watched as she offered them there,
And her face was old and lined with care;
But beneath the scars the years had made
There remained a smile that refused to fade.

A boy came whistling down the street,
Bouncing along on carefree feet,
His smile was full of joy and fun:
"Lady," said he, "May I have one?"
When she pinned it on he turned to say,
"Why do we wear a poppy today?"
The lady smiled in her wistful way,
And answered, "This is Remembrance Day,
And the poppy there is a symbol for
The gallant ones who died in war,
And because they did, you and I are free,
That's why we wear the poppy, you see.

I had a boy about your size,
With golden hair and big blue eyes.
He loved to play and jump and shout,
Free as a bird he would race about.
As the years went by he learned and grew,
And became a man - as you will, too.

But the war went on and he had to stay,
And all I could do was wait and pray.
His letters told of the dreadful plight,
(I can see it still in my dreams at night)
With the tanks and guns and cruel barbed wire,
and the mines and bullets, the bombs and fire.

Till at last, at last, the war was won -
And that's why we wear a poppy, son."

The small boy turned as if to go,
Then said, "Thanks lady, I'm glad to know,
That sure did sound like an awful fight,
But your son - did he come back all right?"

A tear rolled down each faded cheek:
She shook her head but didn't speak.

I slunk away in a sort of shame,
And if you were me you'd have done the same:
For our thanks, in giving, is oft delayed
Though our freedom was bought
And thousands paid.

And so when we see a poppy worn,
Let us reflect on the burden borne,
By those who gave their very all,
When asked to answer their country's call.
That we at home in peace might live.

W.M. This concludes our ceremony of remembrance and in the Canadian tradition, when you leave, please come forward and leave your poppy on the Empty Chair.

Comments

The parts in RED are our names but you can use who you wish or a generic group.

I selected the Brother Speaker who was the youngest who had been on Active Service in the Military.

As this was performed in an area open to the public and they were invited I discussed it with Grand lodge who said if it was performed on the 11th November aprons could be worn and they had no issues with it.

We also invited the City Mayor and councilors, the Local Member of Parliament and the local MLA's

If you have any questions please ask and I will try to assist.

Yours Fraternally

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Photograph

