

On this day, 28th April 2024, we are gathered to commemorate the events of June, 1944, but also to remember the inestimable value of our freedom.

Here in Asnelles, in the heart of the Gold Beach sector, during the fighting for liberation from the Nazi yoke, 220 British soldiers paid with their lives. In particular, the 66 men of the 1st Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment and all their comrades who died during the Second World War.

We Free and Accepted Masons cherish all moral and social virtues, in particular, freedom. Freedom to meet in our Lodges, Conclaves, Chapters or Consistories. Freedom of opinion, of religious & political beliefs.

We owe our freedom to them. We know the price of this sacrifice, which allows us to come together today or at our Masonic meetings. We raise up our thoughts and prayers to the Almighty that all those who paid the price with their lives in every battle and on every battlefield may find eternal rest and be blessed forever.

Now, British, French and Belgian Brothers, in an act of remembrance and fidelity, as an emblem of our deepest gratitude, we offer to the earth this tree, symbol of Peace and Life. May this tree grow and soar.  
May its branches multiply.  
May its flowers blossom and shine.

Our Brother Vincent Pouchaine has asked me to read a short, and very appropriate poem:

*Trees by Joyce Kilmer (August 1915)*

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.  
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;  
A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;  
A tree that may in Summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;  
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.  
Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

In the name of the Most High and on behalf of all the Brethren in the Masonic Province of East Lancashire and of all the Secret Monitors and Companions of the Scarlet Cord, our eternal gratitude.

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.  
We will remember them.