

We Shall **NOT** Target



From atop the hill rising from the canal bank, past the cows, past the graves, you can see, in the distance, farmhouses and barns, all topped with orange terracotta tile roofs.

Foreground is a meadow of daisies, blowing in the morning breeze. Middle ground is the cemetery. The graves here inspired McCrae – these are the resting places he described in his poem, though after the war the Commonwealth Graves Commission designed a simple uniform headstone to replace those erstwhile wooden crosses.

Loved and were loved, and now we lie, in Flanders fields.

I march along these rows and stop periodically, saddened by the stories told in stone, burdened by the sorrow of those graves – so many – that hold no identified body.

I stop for a very long time at one grave I find here. The memory of that grave haunts me for days after.

Here lies Rifleman Joe Strudwick. Fifteen years young.

Before we leave this place of remembering I climb the hill once more. I stand beside that lonely monument, I gaze at the graves below, I peruse an idyllic landscape, noting great swathes of crimson flowers contrasting with green meadows, blood-red blossoms that seem to dance in the morning breeze.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow



Visit the McCrae House

At 108 Water Street, Guelph, Ontario stands the very same house Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae once lived in from his time of birth in 1872. The McCrae House was built circa 1857 and is constructed from limestone, overlooking a nearby park bordering the Speed River at the south end of Guelph. Today, it remains as a museum and tribute to the poet, doctor and soldier.

The famous poem *In Flanders Fields* is a main attraction, dramatically presented to visitors on floor-to-ceiling wall panels and heard in all the languages into which it has been translated. The presentation was conceived to recognize the poem's global impact. Renovated in 2015, the house features a bold poppy-themed entranceway that leads into McCrae's first home where visitors learn about his childhood and life as a famed writer, doctor and soldier. Artifacts and events are captured in interactive graphics, videos and timelines.

This iconic property on the banks of the Speed River was purchased by a group of Guelph locals with the intent to preserve the house as a museum in 1966. In the same year, the Canadian federal government worked with the Historic Sites and Monuments Board to designate John McCrae as a person of national significance, along with his birth home to be recognized as a location of national significance.

The surviving landscape and the beautiful gardens, replete with poppies in season, adds to the experience of visiting The McCrae House where a national hero had once lived. First opened to visitors in 1968, the attraction consistently welcomes about 7,000 visitors a year from across Canada, as well as Europe.

For more information visit guelphmuseums.ca



Volunteer Val Harrison with some of the poppies that were planted in front of the Guelph birthplace of John McCrae, author of *In Flanders Fields*.
Torstar File Photos



Three kinds of annual poppies are planted at McCrae House in Guelph every spring.



This poppy, known as *Papaver rhoeas* is planted along the white picket fence at McCrae House.



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