

LOOKING BACK

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OVER 150 YEARS

*issue 8*

# A period of silence for fallen soldiers

*Sir Crawford McCullagh*



**FREEMASONS' HALL**

ARTHUR SQUARE

Since 1st November 1867



# A PERIOD OF SILENCE FOR FALLEN SOLDIERS

Sir Crawford McCullagh was not the pioneer of the 'Two Minutes Silence', as Newtownabbey author Bob Armstrong claimed in his publication "Through The Ages To Newtownabbey."

According to The Belfast Telegraph at the time Sir Crawford called for a 'Five Minutes Silence' on 11th July 1916, following receiving news of the death of thousands of soldiers from the 36th (Ulster) Division at the Somme. However, significantly, he was the first recorded person to publicly call for a period of silence for fallen soldiers. This was in response to a decision made by the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland to cancel the annual 12th July celebrations.

The Lord Mayor of Belfast Sir Crawford McCullagh instead requested that all businesses be suspended for the duration of 5 minutes from noon till 12.05pm. He asked that street traffic be at a complete standstill for 5 minutes, so that the City's tribute to the heroes of the Ulster Division would thus be impressive and universal.

Trains stopped in their tracks, the city's trams came to a halt and the Police Courts were adjourned. As men and women on factory floors, in hospitals, in shops and in homes all over Ulster bowed their heads in respect of the 36th Ulster Division who had lost their lives at the Battle of the Somme. Silence echoed through the streets of Belfast as the city came to a complete standstill.

Susan B Cunningham author of Sir Crawford McCullagh: Belfast's Dick Whittington says,

The first recorded instance of such an "official moment of silence" was in Portugal in 1912. In the UK, the formal adoption of a two-minute silence to remember the war dead occurred in 1919. But, she added: "I think it can be held that Sir Crawford was the pioneer."

This silence was the precursor of the 2 minute silence which is now recognized world wide. Therefore it can be argued that Sir Crawford McCullagh was the first recorded person to publicly call for a period of silence to honour those who have fallen in battle.

VW Bro Tim Whiteside

[www.arthursquare.org](http://www.arthursquare.org)

**T:** 028 9023 4556

**E:** [info@arthursquare.org](mailto:info@arthursquare.org)



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