

Via E-Mail



Saluting and wreath laying!

I was recently asked what was the history behind the placing of our right hand over our hearts at funerals and remembrance services and such like.

After some research I found the following and was surprised to learn that we are actually placing our hand over our medals.

The Salute by Veterans at the Cenotaph or Wreath Laying Ceremony

(Remembrance Service)

It will be noticed at any Remembrance Service or when passing a Cenotaph Veterans will place their Right Hand over their "Left Side" many believing that they are placing their 'Hand over their Heart" in Respect or Remembrance of their Fallen Comrades";- this is not so.

The Veterans Salute to their "Fallen Comrades" originated in London on Armistice Day in 1920, during the ceremony to unveil and dedicate the Cenotaph in Whitehall at the same time a funeral procession accompanying the remains of the "Unknown Soldier" halted at the Cenotaph during the ceremony before proceeding to Westminster Abbey for internment

Those present included the senior Soldier, sailor and many Victoria Cross winners.

The ceremony concluded with a march past.

The Regimental Sergeant Major of the Guard Regiment conducting the ceremony, faced with a gathering of highly

decorated and high ranking military men (including many Victoria Cross winners), all wearing rows of medals, decreed that all would salute the Cenotaph as they marched past by placing their hand over their medals, signifying that “No matter what honours we may have been awarded they are nothing compared with the honour due to those who paid the supreme sacrifice”.

