



Townfolk pay their respects to the dead of two world wars and other conflicts at Sunday's Remembrance Day service in Dornoch.

## *On fame's eternal camping ground, their silent tents are spread*

As townsfolk gathered around Dornoch's war memorial on Sunday for the annual Remembrance Day service, many will have been unaware of the poignant lines of verse inscribed on the base of the monument.

*On fame's eternal camping ground their silent tents are spread.*

*And glory guards, with solemn round, the bivouac of the dead.*

Now, thanks to local historian Jim Bell of "Rhian", Evelix Road, the story behind the inscription has come to light.

Recently Mr Bell received a letter from Mr Robert Wickham of Esher, Surrey, explaining that it was his grandmother, Margaret Christian Munro, who suggested the verse in response to an appeal for ideas for a suitable inscription – and hers was picked.

Miss Munro later married Dornoch chemist Robert R Johnstone, whose name remained above his High Street

shop until very recently. As the years went by, however, the source from which she chose her winning entry was soon forgotten.

Wrote Mr Wickham: "Neither my mother nor her brothers knew where the verse originated. But some years ago my brother was browsing in a bookshop and came across it in an anthology of American poetry."

He was able to tell Mr Bell that the writer was Theodore O'Hara (1820-1867), a Confederate soldier who rose to high rank during the American Civil War, and whose claim to fame rests largely on this poem.

One wonders if this soldier poet ever imagined that, so many years later and so many miles away, his words would become part of a Highland community's annual act of remembrance.

Fergus Robertson

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