

2022 Royal High School Remembrance Service address

The first part of the address was delivered by Depute Rector Maxine Hughes.

This address is usually based on pupils whose names are shown on the World War 1 and World War 2 tablets behind me. These show the 182 WW1 and 131 WW2 former pupils who died in the two wars. These plaques state In Pium Memorium – In Loving Memory, either side of the memorial doors, which bears the Greek inscription above which translates as They Died but are not Dead. JC Stewart reminds us to Enter the porch and open wide the portal... **Mortal they passed it, they return immortal.**

This year, I would like to talk about the five former Pupils who died as a result of conflicts since the end of WW2.

History tells us that wars will take place on a continuous basis, we acknowledge the current conflicts around the world taking place, including Ukraine, Syria and elsewhere. We acknowledge that war has far reaching effects on individuals across the globe and the consequences of war create a lasting legacy for all of us.

Post WW2 Britain, as a colonial power, was regularly involved in independence struggles with its colonies, and more recently, United Nations and coalition led conflicts across the globe have involved British personnel.



The five former pupils died in the ten years following WW2, two in Malaya (now Malaysia), one in Cyprus, and two here in the UK as a result of accidents, sadly a cause which also featured in WW1 and WW2. The two who died in accidents were 19 year old Private Eric Nish in 1949, as a result of a fire, and 28 year old Flight Lieutenant Alan Flowers who died piloting an aircraft. 33 year old captain Robert Duff was killed in

Malaya in 1955 by what in modern parlance is described as friendly fire, a dreadful description for an accident.

Lance Corporal Angus Milne of the Royal Scots left school in 1952, and was just 19 years of age when he died on active service in an ambush in October 1955, just north of Paphos in Cyprus, nowadays a popular holiday destination. The Cyprus emergency of 1955 to 1959 claimed 457 British military lives, with Angus being one of the first. Cyprus achieved its independence in 1960.

I will now ask Alastair Allanach to talk about former Pupil Christopher Gray who died in service aged only 17, the age that many of you sitting here are now.

CHRISTOPHER STUART GRAY (nickname Kit to his family) was born in Tadcaster on the 17th February 1934, and started at the Royal High in 1946, studying in class 1X – ‘X’ signifying the top academic level in what in those days was a streamed education system. He left school after his third form in 1950, still in the top ‘stream’, entering Leith Nautical College as a trainee cadet. The Gray family was already well known in RHS circles, as his father, R Stuart Gray, had been a pupil from 1919 until 1923, becoming Dux of German, returning to the school as a teacher of modern languages in 1943, following teaching service in Tadcaster (where Christopher was born). He remained until 1945, transferring to head of modern languages at Portobello, the post he held at the time of his son Christopher’s death.



Christopher was on his first voyage, on the Edinburgh-based Ben Line 7000 ton steamer ‘Benloyal’. The newspapers of the day reported the incident leading to his death as follows: "Penang police today made several arrests in connection with the murder last night of a British seaman, Christopher Gray of the Ben Loyal, and the wounding of Graham Crombie, and a Chinese man, his shipmates. The seamen were shot in town while making purchases from an Indian roadside stall. The master of the Ben Loyal, Captain Ewart, with 60 men from several ships in port, along with the harbour authorities, attended Gray's funeral today."

He is buried in the Western Road cemetery in Penang, the funeral taking place the day after Christopher was killed.

Christopher was one of 519 British Commonwealth servicemen or merchant seamen killed in what was known as the Malay Emergency, brought to an end in 1960 following the granting of independence in 1957.



It is with thanks to the family that we have been able to access the memories of Christopher including those of him proudly wearing the Royal High School uniform.

The 1952 Annual report announced that the Christopher Gray trophy for Life-Saving was presented by Mrs R S Gray (Christopher’s Mother) in his memory. The trophy has been presented at the Prize giving every year since then. Christopher’s brother **John** recently told me that his mother had never really recovered from the shock of Christopher’s death.

We are very pleased that **John** (a Royal High pupil from 1945 to 1957) is here today, along with his wife Mary, and daughters Jennifer and Kathryn, two ladies who of course never got to meet their uncle. John, five years younger than Christopher, was just 12 when his elder brother was killed.



We plan to install a memorial plaque on this stage to the five men whose story we have told today, and the image above shows the form of the tribute.