

2023 RHS Remembrance Service address – text

2023 Spoken extracts

Introduction

(Spoken by Maxine Hughes, Depute Head)

This address has often been based on pupils whose names are shown on the World War 1 and World War 2 tablets behind me. These show the 182 World War One and 131 World War Two former pupils who died in the two wars.

These plaques, either side of the memorial doors, state ‘In Pium Memorium’ – In Loving Memory, and 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.**

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

This year, we would like to talk about former Pupils in whose memory Prizes have been established and are still presented today – (some of whom are on the tablets, and some of whom died while at school or soon after). We have present today the pupils who have won these prizes, and would also like to show you the trophies where they are part of the award. The first three tributes are to pupils who died whilst at or soon after leaving school

The first three tributes for pupils who died at school or a little later

The Lewis Johnson Memorial Cup (2021)

'The Lewis Johnson Prize for Outstanding Commitment to a Team Sport' - Prize created to ensure the life and spirit of Lewis Johnson, an RHS pupil who sadly passed away aged only 13, lives on within the school community. This prize celebrates commitment to a team sport, through encouragement and support of others, pushing all to achieve their potential. The Cup was most recently awarded to Callum French in 2023.

The Neil McCurrach award for participation - 2009

This trophy is instantly recognisable by the tribute stone erected just outside the school main entrance, Neil was born in 1991, and died in 2007 while still at school. The 2012 Annual Report described the award – “The Neil McCurrach Award-awarded to the student that best characterises the spirit, enthusiasm, and participative qualities exemplified by Neil”. Two of his teachers remember Neil as an academically bright pupil, always willing to volunteer and help others “a nicer boy you



The Neil McCurrach Memorial

1991 - 2007



Neil McCurrach



The memorial in the playground



The memorial Award

couldn't meet". Neil returned from a holiday with his parents, fell ill and died soon after. Senior school pupils remembered his life at services in this hall. The award was won by his sister Helen in 2010 and in 2023 by Kashish Bhatia

The Crawford Taylor Memorial Prize, Music & Drama (first awarded in 2002)

(Spoken by Alastair Allanach)

Endowed in his memory by three classmates, including Anne Richards (now Dame Anne Richards). This prize was most recently awarded at the Wider Achievement Ceremony in 2023, won by Erin Tocher. Anne sent the following tribute;

Crawford was a pupil at the Royal High School from 1976-1982. He was a wonderful actor, a superb musician but above all a dear and much-loved friend, whose kindness and sense of humour made him the heart and soul of all our endeavours, whether a music trip to Munich or a theatre production in the Fringe. He developed cancer while still a student which he fought bravely. He seemed to have beaten it but sadly it returned some ten years later and he died far, far too young. He left behind his partner, Gauri and daughter, India, and many friends from RHS days who mourn and miss him still.

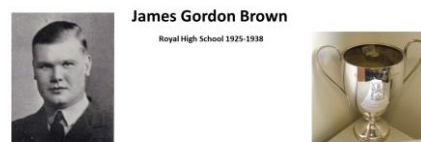


The following tributes are to pupils who died in wartime.

James Gordon Brown prize for Junior Swimming (1947)

James Gordon Brown, a flight-lieutenant (and pilot) was reported 'Missing over Tobruk in Libya, presumed killed in action in July 1942'. He was earlier reported as 'Injured in a crash in Egypt, and later seriously wounded.

This trophy was donated by his father in his memory. Now awarded at the Wider Achievement Ceremony – for 'Traditional Swimming Junior Boy'



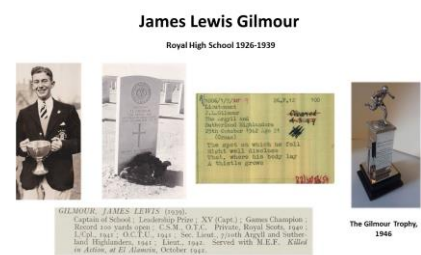
BROWN, JAMES GORDON (1938).
Swimming Champion. Flight Cadet, 1939; P.O., 1940; F/O., 1941; Fl. Lieut., 1942. Injured in crash, Egypt; later seriously wounded, 1942. Missing over Tobruk, presumed Killed in Action, July 1942.

The James Lewis Gilmour trophy (1946)

James Lewis Gilmour's name appears twice on the Memorial stage. Firstly in 1938 as School Captain, then on the World War 2 memorial tablets, as he was killed at El Alamein in 1942. His name also appears on his headstone in El Alamein military cemetery, along with the simple poem –

*"The spot on which he fell, might well disclose,
That, where his body lay, a thistle grows."*

The Gilmour Trophy, donated by his Father and Aunt was first awarded in 1946 for the 'Inter-Nation Rugby Championship'. Nowadays it is awarded for the best individual rugby performance in School - (most recently in 2023 to Jamie McCrae).



GILMOUR, JAMES LEWIS (1938).
Captain of School; Leadership Prize; XV (Capt); Games Champion; Member (see table opposite); C.S.M., C.P.L., Private, Royal Scots, 1941; Lt.Col., 1941; O.C. L.I., 1941. See: Laird, 2/10th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 1941; Laird, 1942. Served with W.R.C.F., Killed in Action, at El Alamein, October 1942.

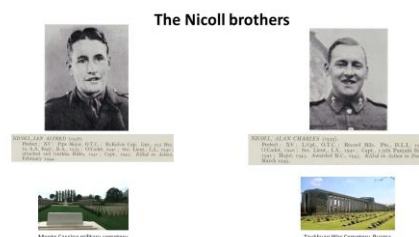
Two pairs of Brothers

The next two prizes show pairs of names which appear on the

Memorial rolls of honour, and to our shock as we researched this address, we found that there were two pairs of brothers involved. Many of you here have brothers or sisters also in school; imagine the shock for the parents in losing not just one, but two children during a period of War

Nicoll Prizes for service, (1951)

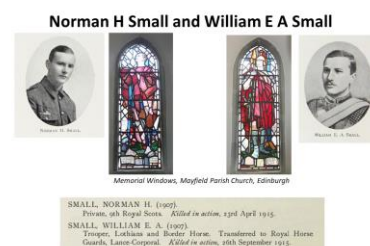
Capt. Ian Alfred Nicoll, originally of the Indian Army, died at the battle of Monte Cassino in February 1944, having been awarded the Military Cross in a previous campaign on 01 June 1943. His father died later that year, but fortunately not before he would have been aware of his son's decoration. His mother and sister presented the school pipe band with a memorial set of bagpipes. The 1949 school history records that the Nicoll prize was endowed by Mrs Nicoll in memory of her son, Alan, Major in the Punjabi Regiment, who was killed in Burma in March 1945 - he was of course the brother of Ian Alfred Nicoll. Last awarded in 2023, to four pupils including Kate McGovern



Norman H Small prizes, (1928)

(Spoken by Hollie Ure, winner of the N H Small prize in 2023)
 I am grateful to have received the N H Small award last year, and privileged to be able to describe aspects of his life, and of his death. Norman was one of two sons of David Small, and attended the RHS leaving in 1907. He joined the Ninth Battalion the Royal Scots in 1914, and as part of that unit took the place of the Canadian troops who had been taken out by German gas attacks, launched to cover the withdrawal of their troops as they were redirected to fight on the Eastern Front. The Royal Scots moved into position at Langemarck on the 22nd April, and Norman probably died the following day as a result of injuries. He is buried in the Old Military Cemetery in Poperinghe. The Royal Scots 1st/9th were later redeployed to Beaumont-Hamel on the Somme, where the 2023 Royal High School battlefields trip included a visit to - 51st Highlanders Royal Scots Memorial.

I was saddened to hear that recent investigations confirm that Norman's brother William E A Small also died in action just a few months later, in 1915 with the Royal Horse Guards. Their Father, David Small, owner at the time of one of Edinburgh's notable Princes Street clothing shops, aside creating the prizes in Norman's name, also created memorial windows (photos shown) in their name in Mayfield Parish Church in Edinburgh.



The Christopher Gray trophy (1952)

(Spoken by Alastair Allanach)
 Christopher attended School from 1946 to 1950, leaving to take up a post as a deck cadet with the Ben Line in Edinburgh. On his first working voyage in 1951, on the merchant ship Ben Loyal, he went ashore at Penang in what was then Malaya with shipmates, but while buying souvenirs encountered insurgents involved in the

Malay uprising, and was shot dead. The trophy was donated by his Father and Mother.

Christopher's name can be seen on the post-World War 2 war deaths memorial, which has just been installed on the memorial stage – it will be dedicated later this year.

The trophy was shared in 2023 by Eve McCaskell and Millie Nisbet



Conclusion

We pay tribute to the relatives and friends who endowed these trophies and prizes, enabling generations to remember.

This tribute was created with inputs from Maxine Hughes, Ian R C Cowie, Dame Anne Richards and the school historian. Many thanks to Hollie Ure for her contribution.