

Obituaries of Brasenose men who died in the First World War (mostly reprinted from the *Oxford Magazine*)

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The Brazen Nose

Brasenose Sacrifice

(The following memoirs are reprinted, by kind permission of the Editor, from the *Oxford Magazine*.)

RUPERT GEORGE RAW, Captain in the Northumberland Fusiliers, who was reported as missing in Gallipoli in August, 1915, is now believed to have been killed in action. He had been wounded in the arm on the morning of August 10, and the officer who dressed his wound begged him to return to the Beach. This, however, he refused to do, and, advancing in support of a neighbouring battalion which had been driven in by the enemy, he took a Turkish trench in company with seventeen men who were cut off from those who had gone out with them, and have not been heard of since. Captain Raw entered the Army in 1900 and served with distinction in South Africa, being mentioned in dispatches, obtaining the Queen's medal with five clasps, and the D.S.O. Though he was at Brasenose for less than two years (in 1898-1900) he gave ample promise in that short time of being the brave and gallant soldier that he proved himself to be.

JAMES HENRY VAN DEN BERGH, Lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery, who was killed at Vimy Ridge on Sunday, May 21, came to Brasenose from Clifton in January, 1913. Though he had only a year and a half with us, he used his time well. He did not find his examination work easy, but he applied himself thoroughly to it, and was reading for his degree in the Honour School of Modern Languages when the War called him away. His game was Rugby football, and he often had a place in the College team. He also rowed in the second Torpid. We remember, in College, his modest unassuming character, and the courtesy and common sense which were features of his relations with seniors and with his fellow undergraduates. In spite of the vigour which he

put into his life, he seemed to have a reserve of force which he was holding for some future use.

The way in which this power would be spent was soon to appear, and in August, 1914, Van den Bergh sought and obtained a commission in the Royal Field Artillery, Territorial Force. He saw a long service in the field, for, in July, 1915, he could already refer, in a letter, to five months' work in the fighting line. In the recent fighting at Vimy Ridge he was called upon, in an emergency, to help in an infantry regiment, many of whose officers had already been killed or wounded. The onrush of the enemy had to be stayed, and Van den Bergh was asked to take charge of a party which was to attempt the recovery of trenches. Gallantly leading a body of thirty men, he advanced to this duty and, though at first reported as missing, the news of his death was not long delayed.

He recently wrote, on receiving a list of Brasenose men serving in the War, to express his pride in being one of that band. We too are proud of the fellowship we had with him here, and of the death he met, fighting for us all.

GEOFFREY ST. JOHN JONES, who was killed on the night of June 14-15, was a Junior Hulme Scholar, coming to Brasenose from St. Edmund's School, Canterbury, in 1907. He took his degree with honours in the School of Modern History, and was called to the Bar (Lincoln's Inn) in 1913. He went out to Penang to practise, but returned to this country at the outbreak of war, and obtained a commission in the Welsh Fusiliers, exchanging later into the Special Reserve of Officers, Middlesex Regiment. In College he was a tenacious and vigorous supporter of the debates in the Sutton Society, and keenly interested in politics and all Imperial questions. The manner of his death is thus described by an officer: 'During the night of June 14-15, he went out on a patrol with a corporal and three or four men. The party was fired on by the Germans, and made their way back to our own trenches. Then it was found

that the corporal was missing. Jones went out with a couple of men to look for him, and ran straight into a big party of Germans, who fired upon them from close range. It was just the kind of thing he would do, to go out himself into No Man's Land to look for one of his men. It's a very great loss to the regiment; he was by universal consent one of the best subalterns in the whole regiment.'

No Brasenose man will read this record without a proud regard for the man who won it.

Captain ELLIOTT HAMPDEN CROOKE, of the Gloucestershire Regiment, came to Brasenose from Cheltenham in 1909. He was killed in action on the first day of the great advance, July 1. Whilst at Oxford he at first led a quiet life, due to a certain diffidence and shyness, but from the beginning he knew the men with intellectual interests, and was a keen member of the Pater Society. As time went on the circle of his friends was always widening, till at the last a large part of the athletic world in the College paid homage to him. He read History, and it was a disappointment to him and to his friends when he failed to get a First. It was characteristic of him to admit that disappointment and yet to bear it bravely and uncomplainingly. His real interests, however, were always literary. Possessed of an excellent memory, his judgement was exceptionally mature, and he was endowed with a true sympathy and real insight into the meaning of good literature. As he had also a power of lucid and lively expression he had always the making of a first-rate critic. His only printed work in that line is in the *Oxford Magazine*, but he wrote the Brasenose Ale verses in 1913. At Brasenose this literary intelligence was a great help. Many of us felt after a talk with Crooke that we could now re-read a book with a new understanding, and see with his eyes things which we had missed with our own. This sympathetic insight was accompanied by—perhaps born of—a very real quiet, dry humour in a vein of genial, whimsical cynicism, trenchant but never bitter. Many a strenuous argument

was ended by Crooke's first intervention—with a stroke of witty truth which left no more to be said. For his wit was not spoken for effect, but for truth's sake. Crooke was a delightful companion; his literary interests never made him unsociable; for he had the same sympathy and understanding of men that he had of books. There seemed a spiritual kinship between him and the people of Connemara, with whom he at once became on terms of complete ease and intimacy. He was elected to a Senior Hulme Scholarship in 1912, and during the academic year 1912-13 resided in Oxford, studying mainly Palaeography and German. He matriculated at the University of Berlin in October, 1913, and attended lectures there, continuing at the same time his study of German. When war came upon us he was in England. He at once cast aside the books which he loved so much, and without hesitation played gallantly and successfully the rôle of a soldier for which we had thought him so unsuited. His death has robbed us of a very gracious and lovable friend.

HUGH LATIMER was elected to a Classical Scholarship from Rugby in December, 1914, and in the same month he was gazetted to a commission in the Royal West Kent Regiment. He fell while leading an assault on July 3. He is said to have been the first out of his trench, calling out to his men that it was a privilege to be in the attack. He was first reported to be 'missing'; but one of his brother officers wrote that he feared the worst 'for he was too daring a fighter ever to give himself up'.

CHARLES SHUREY, Captain in the Royal Fusiliers, who died on July 21 of wounds received on July 15, came to Brasenose from Cheltenham College in 1911, but resided only for one year. He obtained his commission in September, 1914, and was promoted Captain in January, 1916. His Colonel wrote: 'I had the greatest confidence in him, and a genuine affection for him. He was always hard working, good natured, kindly, and thoroughly reliable,

a brilliant soldier, absolutely without fear, and a dear fellow whom we all loved.'

The following extracts from letters of brother officers were received too late for inclusion in the notice printed in *Oxford's Sacrifice* :—

'On the morning of the 15th we attacked a German village. Shurey's company took part, and he led them, as I knew he would, in splendid and gallant style. . . . We were struggling on, under very trying circumstances, when there was a hitch, and Shurey doubled back over the open to find out why they were not going on. Before he got back he was shot through the right side by a German machine-gun bullet. . . . Almost a week later—July 21st—he died in the field hospital, and was buried the same evening in the English cemetery at Heilly near three of his personal friends "and many other gallant Englishmen".'

'I must tell you how splendid we all thought he was and how we all loved him in the Company.'

'No man could have had a better friend, no soldier a better or more kindly leader, and his noble end was a true reflection of his life.'

LANCE WILL LEWIS came to Brasenose from Repton in 1911, and took his degree with honours in Modern History a few weeks before the War began. He joined the New Army promptly, getting his commission in the King's Royal Rifle Corps in November, 1914. He was in training for nearly a year, and wrote characteristically, in July, 1915, that it would be 'quite my turn when I do go'. Lewis may be well described in the words he applied to a Brasenose friend who was killed earlier in the War—'a real sound man'. Whatever he did he did it with his might. Those with whom he read in College knew this well. His simple, quiet manner covered a real determination to master the work which he had set himself to accomplish, which he never found easy, and from which he never swerved. It was a gain to the College to have such a man, and we heard with deep regret of his death. He was killed in action on August 9.

EDWARD WILLIAM RIGBYE JACQUES, Lieutenant in the Northamptonshire Regiment, was killed instantaneously while leading his platoon in a successful attack in the early morning of August 16. His Colonel speaks of him as one for whom he had a very high regard both as a soldier and as a personal friend. He came to Brasenose from Harrow in 1913. During his one year of residence he took his full share in College life and rowed in the first Torpid and the second Eight. His naturally bright and sunny disposition won for him many friends in College, both among his own contemporaries and among the seniors who welcomed him as the son and the grandson of Brasenose men. On the outbreak of the War, after holding a Territorial commission for a short time, he determined to enter Sandhurst for a course of training for the Regular Army. He obtained in due course a Regular commission, and from November, 1915, he was at the front on active service with the regiment of his native county. The College mourns his loss, following too closely on the deaths of his father and his grandfather within the last three years.

Captain HAROLD S. RICHMOND, who fell in action on August 24, came up from Berkhamsted School in 1909. He was elected to a small Close Scholarship thrown open for the occasion, and the College never regretted its investment. On the intellectual side he acquitted himself with great credit, always making the very best of his capacity, but this was only one of his many activities. He threw himself into everything he did—and he did nearly everything—with untiring energy. He rowed in the College Torpid and the second College Eight, played half-back with enormous energy for the College Association Eleven, and, being a born soldier, exerted himself strenuously to develop the O.T.C. element in College at a time when soldiering was not too popular, giving early promise of what he afterwards became—a fine leader of men. His sunny energy and goodness are the traits one remembers best in him. His energy was infectious, and

the College owed much to it in many directions, but it owed still more to the palpable goodness of his character—a goodness which shone out of his face, and made itself felt all over his life. He joined to this a natural piety and a strong religious sense which was influential among his contemporaries. But he was quite unbigoted and singularly tolerant of differences of feeling and opinion, so that he made warm and lasting friendships with characters the very opposite of his own. He gained a place in the Malay Civil Service, but returned to his natural destiny at the beginning of the War to take a commission. He was wounded once in the jaw, and was killed finally at the moment of achieving success in an important operation for which his company was chosen only because he was its commander.

Second Lieutenant HORACE BACK came up from Marlborough in 1899 with a Scholarship. He was of the best type of Marlburian, manly and independent, with a keen feeling for the right thing in all directions. He took part in all the College games with vigour and always showed intellectual power and interest which bore good fruit in after-life. He was a very influential man in College. A contemporary writes of him: 'He did a tremendous lot of good while he was up, when the College badly needed it.' He was always an outspoken critic of all methods which he did not approve, and had a curious vein of half-humorous cynicism which hardly disguised the real warmth and geniality of his feelings. On leaving Oxford he was articled as a solicitor to Messrs. Norton, Rose & Co., and subsequently he studied law in Paris and practised for some years in Cairo. In 1911 he returned to London and became a partner in the firm of Messrs. Surtees, Phillpotts & Co., and he was rapidly attaining, we are told, to a leading position in his profession in the City, where he leaves, as he does here, many warm friends. He joined the Army in November, 1915, went to the front in the following August, and was killed by a shell when he had only been a week in the front line.

HERBERT FRANCIS MILES, who matriculated from Harrow in January, 1913, enlisted in the Artists' Rifles at the outbreak of the War, and after serving with them in France from October, 1914, to May, 1915, was gazetted to a commission in the King's Own Scottish Borderers. He was wounded in June, 1915, but went again to the front in March, 1916, and served with his battalion till he fell in an attack on September 3. His natural bent seemed to be to a quiet life and artistic pursuits; 'he took no pleasure', it has been said of him, 'in the glories of war, but entered into it with the keenest sense of duty.' Some who were closely associated with him spoke of his wonderful cheeriness to the end.

Captain J. G. REID was killed at the front quite instantly by a shell on September 8. He came up from Cheltenham in 1909 with an Open Scholarship, and took a Second in 'Mods.' and a Third in 'Greats'. He was often a good three-quarter back, and played for Oxford on numerous occasions; and at times he was a tricky and very successful bowler. He became a master at Sedbergh, and afterwards returned to work at his old school. He was of the best type of good Public School boy—a gentleman and a sportsman in all senses of the word. He belonged to one of our best generations, and contributed greatly with Willmer and others to win for the College the high position it held at the outbreak of the War. As an athlete he would have done great things if he had been more consistent, but he was temperamental and not always at his best. But as a man and a companion and friend he was always at his best, and there was no one in College who knew 'Jacky' (and every one knew him) who did not love him.

JOSEPH WALTON HEDLEY, from Merchant Taylors' School, Crosby, was at Brasenose from 1899 to 1903. On leaving Oxford he went as an assistant master first to Sandringham School, Southport, and afterwards to Copthorne School, Sussex, where he remained until he joined

the Army. He received his commission in the Lancashire Fusiliers in December, 1914, and going to the front in the following May he was promoted Captain in January, 1916.

A man of the highest character, he inspired respect and affection both at College and as a schoolmaster. For school work he had special qualifications: he was a good teacher and a good disciplinarian, he made his mark as a cricketer, and his cheery presence and strong sense of humour made him a general favourite.

He died on September 12 of wounds received on September 7.

Captain E. C. CHRISTIAN came up in 1913 with a Scholarship from Wolverhampton School, and joined the Army as soon as possible after the outbreak of the War. He was a good scholar, very interested in his work and very intent on his own improvement. He was somewhat shy and reserved, but it was easy to discover the deep seriousness which was the basis of his character. He went to the War somewhat in the spirit of one of the old Ironsides, and his letters and diaries betray a real and active sense of religion and a lively recognition of the merits of our cause. This no doubt was in his blood. He was related by descent to Edward Christian, Governor of the Isle of Man under the Darby family, who has been immortalized—grossly misrepresented, his descendant always maintained—by Sir Walter Scott. Of this branch our Christian was the last male. He was wounded once in the Dardanelles and afterwards was killed on September 11. His steady rise in his profession is evidence in itself of his merits, and by a curious paradox the shy scholar seems to have found his vocation in the Army and to have developed in all directions. As a scholar he would undoubtedly have made his mark, but there can be no sort of question in his case that he met the destiny he would have chosen.

BRYANT WYNNE YORKE-LODGE, Second Lieutenant in

the Lancashire Fusiliers, was killed on September 14, while a position which had been stormed by his battalion was being subjected to a very severe shell-fire. His Colonel had already recommended him for gallantry, and he was awarded the Military Cross ten days after his death.

He resided in Brasenose as Hulme Exhibitioner for one Term only in the autumn of 1915. There was little left in College life to test his powers or to stimulate his efforts. But he threw himself heartily into his immediate work, and he gave evidence of quiet determination to face all that lay before him. He held his commission for less than nine months. In that short time (in his Colonel's words) 'he proved himself one of the bravest and most capable of the subaltern officers of his battalion'.

JOHN ALWORTH MEREWETHER, Captain in the Rifle Brigade, matriculated, from Beaumont College, in 1901. He was a vigorous member of the College, and rowed in the Torpids both in his first and in his second year. He left in 1904, having taken Honours in Law. In 1905 he obtained a post in the firm of Messrs. John Peel & Co., at Minieh in Upper Egypt. In February, 1915, he joined the Camel Corps on the Suez Canal. In the following month he was gazetted to a commission in the Rifle Brigade, and he went to the front in September, 1915. He is said to have done splendid work in the fighting in the great advance in August last, and it is understood that his name was sent up for distinction. But in less than a month afterwards he was killed (on September 15).

Lieutenant ARCHIBALD HALLIDAY DOUGLAS, from the Edinburgh Academy, was to have matriculated at Brasenose in October, 1914, but at the beginning of the War he applied for a commission, which, having been a Cadet Officer in the O.T.C., he obtained at once in the Royal Scots. His career at school had been remarkably distinguished. He had been 'Dux' of every class through which he passed, and finally became 'Dux' of the whole

school in his last year, and he had won numerous prizes. He played for three years in the Fifteen, of which he was captain in 1913-14, and for two years in the Cricket Eleven.

He fell on September 16, when in command of a raid on the German trenches, the success of which, as has been stated by his superior officer, was due to the way in which he had trained and led his men.

A fuller notice, from which these facts are mainly taken, will be found in the *Edinburgh Academy Chronicle* for October, 1916.

Captain ARTHUR FRANKLIN WILLMER, of the Rifle Brigade, died on September 20 of wounds received in action a few days previously. He came to Brasenose as an Open Scholar from Birkenhead in 1909 and took a First Class both in Classical Moderations and in Literae Humaniores. He was a fastidious and discriminating scholar. He was tried for the University at Rugby football as a fast three-quarter, and at cricket as a fast bowler. He also rowed in a College Torpid. It is difficult to over-estimate what the College owed to him. He belonged to a generation which was a landmark in the history of the College, and was probably the ablest and not the least influential of his contemporaries. Brasenose largely owed her success in the Athletic Cup in 1913 to Willmer's high jumping and good running in the quarter-mile, and no spectator of the memorable final of the Rugby Cup on the Iffley Road ground will forget how Willmer rose to the occasion and so brought the cup to Brasenose. Intellectually Willmer was a remarkable man; he had a singular gift of seeing both sides of a question whilst retaining an unusual clearness of view and definiteness of judgement. He was widely tolerant without sacrificing his own opinions. He had the rarest and noblest kind of courage—that which is not born of ignorance or insensibility but has conquered knowledge and imagination. Curiously self-depreciatory and reserved by disposition, those who did not know him intimately never guessed how emotional,

affectionate, and warm-hearted a man he was. His reserve indeed sometimes almost seemed to amount to self-repression, and it was usually only the twinkle in his eye, the modulation of his voice, or the firm grip of his hand that revealed what he wished to say. By conviction Willmer was an earnest lover of peace; but when the call came he gave up much to serve his country as a soldier. He sacrificed an almost certain studentship at the Inns of Court and a very good chance of a Fellowship at All Souls. He enjoyed his life in the Inns of Court O.T.C., but when first he took a commission he was not so happy. That soon passed, and his happiest letter to the present writer was his last—after his first dip (as he described it) in the great push. He proved a fine soldier, throwing himself with zest into the (at first) uncongenial work, and he took a real interest in his temporary profession. When he received a nasty wound in the face in 1915 in Ypres salient another Brasenose officer in his battalion wrote of his bearing: 'Willmer was magnificent.' His death is one of the greatest tragedies the College has had to face: his devotion to duty, high principles, and crystal-clear intellect had justified us in predicting for him a distinguished future.

Captain ALFRED KEITH CUNINGHAME came up to Brasenose from Eton in Michaelmas Term, 1909. Pleasant and kindly natured, he soon won for himself a place in the College life. A member of the riding fraternity with many interests and friends outside, he served the College loyally and coxed the second Torpid in 1910 and the first Torpid in 1911. In his last year at College he was elected a member of the Phoenix Club. Always destined for the Army, he went down in 1911, much to his own regret, and entered the service directly. He was mentioned in dispatches on November 30, 1915. He fell on Monday, September 25 last, leading his company through some German wire in a gallant attack. He was the last officer left at the front who went out with his battalion of the Grenadier Guards on August 12, 1914. It is hard

fate that after going through so much he should now have fallen; one had hoped that he would be one of the steadily diminishing band to be welcomed back. As it is, his name is added with pride and affection to the ever lengthening roll of honour of Brasenose's sons.

Captain EDWARD ALFRED SHAW, of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, is the third son of the Bishop of Buckingham to lose his life in the present war. He was killed in action on October 7. Edward Shaw came to Brasenose from Marlborough in 1911 with a big reputation as a cricketer (he had been captain of his school for three years) and the nickname of 'Old Slow'. The latter he lost; the former he soon justified. He played for Oxford as a wicket-keeper in 1912 and in 1914, and in the latter year made the highest score in the first innings on the Oxford side. Many will remember Shaw's innings that day, coming at a time when runs were badly needed, and it was typical of his confident courageous batsmanship that he should have reached his fifty with a fine hit to square leg for six. He was second in the Oxford batting averages that year. But cricket was not the only game at which he shone. He was a useful Rugby back, and was perhaps unlucky never to have played against Cambridge in the hockey match. He had a most attractive personality. He was blessed with complete *sang-froid* and confidence in himself, and took himself with a boyish seriousness which his friends refused to accept. That refusal he always bore with the most excellent good humour and with a sublime air of suffering fools gladly. Edward Shaw played the principal part in many an amusing story told in College in those happy days before the War, and even in his undergraduate days became the centre of legendary myth. His wonderful good temper and honourable, open nature—it was unthinkable that he should do anything common or mean—made him a large number of friends and many of us will feel a big hole in our lives now that he is gone. In the neighbourhood of his home the same gap will be felt;

the perfect courtesy of his manners and the unfailing rightness of his feelings made Edward one of the best liked men in his county amongst men and women, young and old, and little children.

OLIVER JOHN SYKES, Captain in the Royal Garrison Artillery, was seriously wounded on October 16 by a shell explosion while he was engaged in rescuing two of the men of his battery from a wrecked 'dug-out'. He died at the dressing station on the following day. 'A more gallant fellow never breathed,' is the testimony of his Colonel. 'He died a true soldier's death, laying down his life for his friends,' says another officer. 'Every one in the battery loved him,' says a wounded gunner. His life had been one of many interests and considerable achievements. In Brasenose he resided from January, 1894, to December, 1897, as Mathematical Scholar, coming to us from Colwyn Bay School. He was full of energy and sturdy common sense, working well and playing well. He played in both the College football teams, and was secretary in 1896 to the A.F.C. After a short period of school teaching he entered the Indian Financial Service. His home was then in India, his father being Principal of La Martinière College at Lucknow. In due course he served as Assistant Accountant-General in four Provinces of India, as Assistant Financial Adviser to the King of Siam, and as Accountant-General to the Maharaja of Kashmir. He had had four years' experience with the Madras Artillery Volunteers, and in March of this year he left India on leave and came to England to take a commission as Captain in the Royal Garrison Artillery. He spent one day in Oxford in May—a day of pleasant memories for the few friends who remained to greet him after twenty years. He deserved well of the College in his day and generation, and the College and the University may well be proud of his long record in the service of the Indian Government, and most of all in the Army, where in a very few months 'he fulfilled a long time'.