

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

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Brasenose Sacrifice

(By kind permission from the *Oxford Magazine*.)

KILLED in action, on Tuesday, October 13, 1914, at the battle of the Aisne, near Béthune, WILLIAM LEWIS CAMPBELL ALLAN, Major in the King's Own Scottish Borderers; Commoner of the College 1890-2, and previously at Wellington College. Aged 43.

Major (then Captain) Allan served in the South African War in 1899-1902 as Station Staff Officer on lines of communication, and took part in operations in Cape Colony (medal with clasp).

A Brasenose contemporary writes of him:—'He was the kindest of men, and I never heard him say an unkind word of any one.'

Lieutenant F. C. VERNER, of the Shropshire Light Infantry, was killed on October 22, 1914, while acting in a responsible position on outpost duty. A member of the Phoenix C. R., he had taken a third class in the Honour School of Jurisprudence in the previous July, and was almost immediately gazetted to his regiment as a University candidate. He came to Brasenose from Harrow in the Michaelmas Term of 1911, and was immediately seen to be a man of rare independence of character. As time went on we learnt that he was much more than that; fearless, even reckless, he was yet possessed of a very sound judgement; so determined that he succeeded in whatever he set his hands to, he was yet always interested in the pursuits and doings of his friends. As honest as he was chivalrous, he saw clearly the right and the wrong; and he always did the right. He had set his heart on becoming an officer in the Royal Flying Corps. *Dis aliter visum*. For him a soldier's death seemed the only possible end; for in him we have lost an old-fashioned gentleman, and a very gallant officer.

The following is an extract from a letter from the Captain of Verner's Company:—

'On Sunday, Oct. 25, some Germans broke our line on the left of Verner's knoll, and he, by a message he sent to me, realized the possible danger of it, and from thence during the whole day his platoon was subjected to a very heavy shell fire. He had some casualties amongst his men all day, and about 5.30 p.m. a shell from the big gun struck close in front of his own trench and he was hit straight on the head and killed. A message came down to me to that effect. The men had to leave the trench shortly after, owing to shell fire. I may say that Verner during the whole time behaved in the most gallant manner. All his men speak in the most extraordinary terms of his conduct and say they would have gone anywhere with him, and are unanimous in saying that he stuck to a practically untenable position with extraordinary pluck. I may also say that I have recommended him to my commanding officer for some award, which I trust he may get, as I know he fully deserved it. Had he lived another two hours he would have been out of it. The men of his platoon came and asked me for even pennies from his money as souvenirs, which they thought I had, as "he was the bravest man they ever saw".'

The news of the death, on October 24, from wounds received in action on the 23rd, of Lieutenant CYRIL M. POPE of the 1st Worcestershire Regiment, and Senior Hulme Scholar of Brasenose, came as a great shock to the College. He came to Brasenose from Winchester in 1907 as an Exhibitioner, and then proceeded steadily to take Second Classes in Honour Moderations, in 'Greats', in Law, and finally, in 1913, in the B.C.L. His was a strenuous life on the intellectual side; but that did not seem to interfere with his participation in the other side of College life. He stroked the first Torpid in 1912, and, though he was never a polished oar, his pluck and determination saved the College's position on the river. He also played Association Football for the College. Though his profession was law, he was always an enthusiastic soldier: he joined the 5th Battalion of the Oxford and Bucks. Light Infantry as a Second Lieutenant in 1910,

and was gazetted as First Lieutenant to the Special Reserve of the Worcestershire Regiment in March 1914. On the outbreak of war he went out with the 1st Battalion, and went through the retreat from Mons. An interesting letter from him at the front appeared in the *Wykehamist* in October. It was largely owing to him that Brasenose advanced so steadily during the years he was in residence. His influence was great and always a good influence. You could always be sure that Cyril Pope would get the best out of himself and out of his friends, but for all his seriousness and deep sense of responsibility he remained a boy to the end—the very best type of the English public-school boy. His laughter was infectious, and his wit as ready as it was nimble. He never judged others by the standard he set for himself. He had so many virtues that it is hard to convey the wonderful loveliness of the man.

The death of L. E. P. GRUBB has robbed both Brasenose and the world of a very vivid and effective personality. A Rugby boy, he was a candidate for a Heath Harrison Exhibition at B.N.C., and, though unsuccessful in that, a small Exhibition was offered him and he came into residence in October 1911.

During his three years he developed as few men do, and became a striking force in the life around him. Very human, he loved every bit of life and was loved by it all. His special love was the river, and it is difficult to say how much B.N.C. rowing has owed to his enthusiasm. One likes to remember that last summer he enjoyed Henley as a member of a B.N.C. four. His host at Henley writes of him: 'He struck both my wife and myself as the most lovable boy we had ever met.' Nothing but the best ever contented him either in himself or others.

Last summer his future perplexed him, and in discussing it one felt that no easy second-best life was possible for him; he must be left to find the best and the hardest. That has now been given him by other hands than man's, and he will not regret the solution, however

deeply his friends do. An enthusiastic soldier, he had attended the army manœuvres the last two summers as a motor cyclist, and on the outbreak of the War went out with the first troops. As a motor cyclist he served all through the retreat from Mons and the first portion of the War. In November he was given a commission, and was killed in action some three weeks later. He fell leading a charge on a house full of snipers. He was the first to reach the door, and was shot through the head at point-blank range. Death was instantaneous.

ESMÉ FAIRFAX CHINNERY came to Brasenose from Eton in 1906. Though reserved in manner and of a sensitive nature, he had many friends both in and outside College. A capital cricketer and a stylish bat, he also ran against Cambridge in the hurdles, 1907. On leaving Oxford in 1908 he joined the Guards on probation, and at once found his *métier*, soon becoming a very efficient officer. But he quickly sought more exciting work in the Flying Corps, and in the manœuvres of 1913 he was the first B.N.C. man to fly to Oxford. An accident at that time led to a broken arm, sufficient to destroy a man's nerve, but Chinnery characteristically refused to give up the new work. He was one of the first English airmen to land in France last August, and continued the arduous and hazardous work of observing for both the French and the English armies. His sudden death from an accident in Paris on Monday, January 18, while testing a Voisin aeroplane is a great loss to the Royal Flying Corps. His friends in College knew him as a delightful companion, and those who waited on him in College and in lodgings respected him as a true gentleman. Though he gave up his work as Captain in the Coldstream Guards to serve his commanders in the air, he was essentially a soldier, full of the joys of a soldier's life and a soldier's sacrifice.

Lieutenant SIDNEY EUSTACE LAING GORDON, of the 4th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, who was killed in

action at St. Eloi on March 13, came to Brasenose as Harrow Scholar in 1911. Never of robust health, his unconquerable spirit refused to be overcome by physical disabilities; and, after taking Honour Moderations in 1913, four terms later he took an Honours degree in Jurisprudence—the reward of steady perseverance in the face of difficulties. To whatever he turned he gave himself unstintingly—to the river and the O.T.C. no less than to his studies. In 1912 he coxed the first Torpid and the second Eight: in 1913 he rowed 3 in the first Torpid and 7 in the second Eight. In 1914 he unselfishly coxed the second Torpid to help the College out of a difficulty. He was always a keen member of the O.U.O.T.C. and soon gained in it a reputation as an excellent organizer, with the gift of conveying some of his own enthusiasm to others. On the outbreak of war he was amongst the first to offer himself, and insisted, in spite of some remonstrances, that as for foreign service he was wanted on foreign service he must go. Brasenose deeply regrets the loss of one who will always be remembered for the modesty of his disposition and for his deep sense of public service.

Second Lieutenant ROWLAND GEORGE PRICHARD (accepted for matriculation October 1914), 1st Batt. Suffolk Regiment, who was killed in action on April 27, was the youngest son of the Rev. C. C. Prichard, M.A. (B.N.C. 1864-9), rector of Alresford, Essex, and was born at Thornton-le-Moors, Cheshire, in 1895. He was educated at Mr. Lea's (Lindley Lodge, Nuneaton) and at Hereford Cathedral School. He served three years in the O.T.C. and joined the Special Reserve, serving in the Suffolk Regiment at Felixstowe since last August until he went with the Expeditionary Force to France in February. When Sir H. Smith-Dorrien inspected the regiment a few weeks ago Prichard was temporarily in command of a company and his men were highly commended.

Second Lieutenant CHARLES ROBERT BLACKETT, Shropshire Light Infantry, was killed on April 28. His

Colonel writes: 'He was gallantly charging a trench which the Germans had taken and which we were trying to recover.' 'He was doing very well, and was a most promising young officer. His loss is felt much by us all.' His loss will be felt no less keenly in Brasenose, to which he came up as a Somerset Scholar. He had only been up a year, but those who came into contact with him were impressed by his frankness and simple manliness. It was only to be expected that he would make a popular and gallant officer.

