

Royal High School pupils from WWI commemorated in local park



[The Edinburgh Reporter NEWS Royal High School memorial](#) from [Phyllis Stephen](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Councillor Joan Griffiths unveiled a memorial board in Baronscourt Park this morning to the memory of those Royal High School pupils who fought in the First World War.

The party who turned out included The Poppy Bike along with a few veterans and serving soldiers.

Pupils from The Royal High Primary School and The Royal High School attended the short ceremony dedicating the plaque to the memory of those former pupils, particularly Lt Col Eric Bent and Captain Marcus Strachan who were both awarded the Victoria Cross.

Lt Col Bent was born in Halifax Nova Scotia in 1891 and following an education at the Royal High School and Ashby Grammar School Ashby de la Zouch he joined HMS Conway in 1907. His citation reads:

“For most conspicuous bravery, when during a heavy hostile attack, the right of his own command and the battalion on his right were forced back. The situation was critical owing to the confusion caused by the attack and the intense artillery fire. Lt Col Bent personally collected a platoon that was in reserve, and together with men from other companies and various regimental details he organised and led them forward to the counter-attack, after issuing orders to other officers as to the further defence of the line. The counter-attack was

successful and the enemy were checked. The coolness and magnificent example shown to all ranks by Lt Col Bent resulted in the securing of a portion of the line which was of essential importance for subsequent operations. This very gallant officer was killed whilst leading a charge which he inspired with the call of "Come on the Tigers."

Captain Marcus Strachan was born in Bo'ness and then attended the Royal High School and the University of Edinburgh before emigrating to Canada. He was a lieutenant in The Fort Garry Horse when he was awarded the Victoria Cross. His citation reads:

"For most conspicuous bravery and leadership during operations.

"He took command of the squadron of his regiment when the squadron leader, approaching the enemy front line at a gallop, was killed. Lt. Strachan led the squadron through the enemy line of machine-gun posts, and then, with the surviving men, led the charge on the enemy battery, killing seven of the gunners with his sword. All the gunners having been killed and the battery silenced, he rallied his men and fought his way back at night through the enemy's line, bringing all unwounded men safely in, together with 15 prisoners.

"The operation – which resulted in the silencing of an enemy battery, the killing of the whole battery personnel and many infantry, and the cutting of three main lines of telephone communication two miles in rear of the enemy's front line – was only rendered possible by the outstanding gallantry and fearless leading of this officer."

He died in Vancouver on 1 May 1982.

