

Poppyscotland news release

8 October 2009

HEROES AND HEROINES - SOLDIERS AND SCHOOL PUPILS MARK NATIONAL POETRY DAY

Soldiers from Edinburgh today (8 October) joined pupils at Tynecastle High School, to create poetry in remembrance of one of the school's most famous former teachers, Wilfred Owen, the First World War poet.

Owen, widely regarded as one of the nation's finest war poets, taught English literature at the school as part of his rehabilitation from shell shock at Craiglockart War Hospital, and the pupils from S5 and S6 learnt about his work as part of a series of activities to mark National Poetry Day.

This year's theme is Heroes and Heroines and fittingly the class was joined by three serving soldiers, two from the Royal Regiment of Scotland and one from the 40th Artillery Regiment. The pupils had the opportunity to interview the soldiers about their recent experiences of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, in order to inspire modern day war poetry.

Neil McLennan, Principal Teacher of History at Tynecastle, explained why the school was keen to hold an event: "It seemed appropriate that we marked National Poetry Day here at Tynecastle High School, given the strong links with one of the greatest war poets, Wilfred Owen. It is important too that the pupils learn about modern day conflict and having the soldiers here today will hopefully inspire them to create their own contemporary war poetry. The students have been studying appeasement politics of the 1930s and how war poetry and literature influenced politicians during that era. It is important they learn the lessons of past conflicts. After all, they are the decision makers of the future."

Work produced will be entered into the Poppy Poetry competition, which is being run by veterans' charity, Poppyscotland, and closes on 30 November 2009.

Poppyscotland Chief Executive, Ian McGregor, added: "We are delighted to be involved in the school's activities today. We have introduced a Scotland-wide poetry competition as part of our education project this year, which we believe will give pupils the opportunity to learn about conflict, remembrance and veterans in a way that engages them. Today's event is an

example of pupils learning in a different way, by interacting with inspirational individuals and expressing their creativity.”

Other activities included a session with historian Colin Campbell, who wrote the biography of the lesser known Scottish war poet, Alan Ewart Mackintosh, and a discussion with the School Link Police Officer, PC Karl Cleghorn, who previously served in the Royal Navy in the Falklands War.

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Notes to Editors:

To find out more about Poppyscotland’s poetry competition and education project visit

www.poppyscotland.org.uk/education