Gresham’s raises £8,000 for new WWI memorial to feature names of 15 students and staff discovered during four year centenary project

in 1919 Gresham’s headmaster, George Hinman announced that the newly built school Chapel would be furnished with a memorial to the students and staff who died fighting in WWI. A stained glass window designed by Reginald Otto Belt and the names of the fallen carved and gilded onto a six-panel memorial board. 100 years later, Gresham’s has raised £8,000 for a new memorial stone, which includes the names of 15 students and staff who were omitted from the original memorial.

Rames Kline, Gresham’s Head of History who has been involved in the project, explains: “The names were omitted either as a result of having only been discovered more recently, thanks to further research, or as a result of the students and staff members having moved away to other schools and institutions and therefore being included on memorials elsewhere. Some of the missing names were initially discovered by our former Deputy Head, Sue Smart, who published a poignant book about the fallen, ‘When Heroes Die’ in 2005. The book, which was republished in 2014, gives Gresham’s a connection with our past that few other schools are likely to have, and for that we are incredibly grateful to Sue.

“Building on Sue’s findings, I undertook further research, comparing our original school records with the CWGC database, newspaper archives and family history and military online resources, stolen by our school archivist Liz Latty. Committed to the philosophy that archives need to be educationally relevant, Liz has supported every aspect of our wider centenary project since 2014, including leading a group of student researchers every Friday afternoon in the task of creating profiles of the fallen men, all of which can be found in the roll of honour section of our dedicated WWI memorial website.”

The combination of staff and student efforts has resulted in the school discovering 15 names – the original memorial board depicted 99 students and one member of staff and the school now knows the names of 115 students and three members of staff – which will be included on the new memorial board.

The largest donation towards the £8,000 needed for the new stone was given by the Gresham’s Foundation, with further support received from the Old Greshamians Club and wider school community. An additional effort was made by former Director of Music at Gresham’s, Angela Dougall, for organizing a WWII concert in 1944-1948 Stavros (Buckingham) Stavros’ at War in Works and Music. Proceeds from the concert, alongside £30 sales of a CD recorded in the school’s Fitzrogersi Recital Room by Robert FitzGerald, with tenor Christopher Barnes and pianist, Philip Adams, were donated to the memorial stone fund.

Gresham’s Headmaster, Douglas Hobb, said: “In a service held to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Chapel, in 2016, we remembered that the building stands as a memorial to those from the school community whose lives began here but were tragically cut short by war. The Roll of Honour of the 115 fallen students and staff was read out and, for each name, a member of the school’s current Combined Cadet Force silently left the building. The empty seats portrayed a haunting image to those present. Just part of our four year focus on the centenary, we have planned and remember everyone who or our fallen, as close as we can to the centenary of their deaths, with specially commissioned paper banners, a symbol of Hope and Peace, and 115 stories told since the project began in 2014.

“Yesterday, the City of Ipswich stained glass window bears the inscription, ‘They whom this window commemorates were numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardship, faced danger and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and sacrifice, giving up their lives that others may live in freedom. Let those who come after us know that their names are not forgotten.’ I am so thankful to our students, to Ibbon and Liz, to Sue, and everyone else who has supported this project, it gives us all such a tangible way to mark the centenary of the end of the Great War, as well as a renewed determination to play our part in maintaining peace.”