

## Richard Christian Dark

1913-1940



*DARK, RICHARD CHRISTIAN (1931).*

*Inches Prize ; Small Memorial Prize ; XV ; O.T.C. Assistant Civil Engineer, H.M. Dockyard, Rosyth 1939. Died, following an Accident, 1939.*

*The image and citation for Richard Christian Dark in the Royal High School WW2 Roll of Honour*

This account of the life of Royal high school former pupil Richard Christian Dark, has been compiled by his niece Hilda Hesling.

Richard Christian Dark, known to his family as Christie, was born in January 1913 to Richard Dark and Hilda Mary Dark, nee Carter, their first son.

Both his parents were teachers: his father - an Oxford graduate in English - taught at the Royal Naval College at Osborne, and subsequently at Loretto; his mother was an early female graduate of Liverpool University in modern languages. The children, Christie and his younger sister Katharine Jeanne, had an idyllic early childhood on the Isle of Wight, home-schooled by their mother, spending afternoons on the beach and swimming in Freshwater Bay. Having seen at close hand the ravages of the First World War, it had been early decided that the children would be sent to Europe for part of their formal secondary education, in order that young people in Europe would learn to live together in harmony. The family moved to Edinburgh when their father was appointed English master at Loretto, and Christie did two years at the Junior School there - the Nippers - from 1923-1925. Sadly Hilda did not live to see her children go to France - she died in childbirth in 1921 - but go they did, in the care of her sister, their beloved aunt Grace.

Christie went to the Institution Haffreinge in Boulogne-sur-Mer for two years, returning to Edinburgh and attending the Royal High School until 1931. There he played rugby (1st XV) and was a member of the Officer Training Corps. He was awarded the Inches Prize for Physics and the Small Memorial Prize for French. He went on to Edinburgh University to study civil engineering, graduating with second class honours in 1935. He was commissioned into the army (Royal Army Service Corps) and spent time in Nigeria with the War Department, as a civil engineer working on roads and bridges. Invalided home, he then worked on the West Coast roads programme, spending his happiest years, fishing and hill-walking in his spare time. With war looming in 1939 he applied to the Royal Air Force, but to his great disappointment he was turned down when, to his surprise, it was discovered he was mildly colour blind. So he returned to the army, though it was decided that with his engineering expertise he would be more valuably employed serving under the Admiralty at the Royal Naval Dockyard at Rosyth as Assistant Civil Engineer. It was there that he was killed in an accident in August 1940. Letters received by the family from his colleagues included: ' He will be greatly missed in the Dockyard' 'His was a generous and friendly nature, and his whole heart was in his job'.

His death left his family bereft. Two months afterwards his sister (my mother) went to Bletchley Park as a codebreaker, leaving a few months later to spend the rest of the war working at the Admiralty in London. His father, who had published a number of books in the 1930s, did no more writing and died himself in 1952. I never knew my Uncle Christie - I was born seven years after he died. But I have listened to family stories, replete with love and fun; and I have read his childhood notebooks - filled with humorous anecdotes and meticulous drawings. I am sure he would have approved of the direction the Royal High School has taken - inclusion, achievement, respect, creativity, courage, aspiration, resilience and individuality - these were all his values too. *Vivas schola regia!*

### References:

Women students at the University of Liverpool, their academic careers and postgraduate lives, PhD thesis, 1999, Lynn Patricia Edwards.

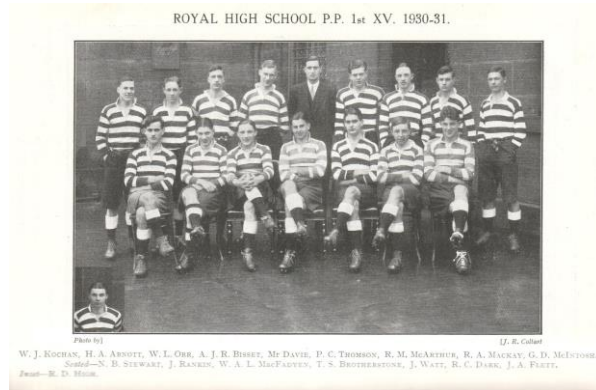
Royal High School, Roll of Honour 1939-1945

Loretto School Roll of Honour, 1939-1945

Loretto Register, 3rd edition (editor Richard Dark) 1949

Please note the RHS Roll of Honour incorrectly states that Christie died in 1939. Just in case there was any doubt I thought I should double-check and downloaded his Death Certificate from the Scotland's People website and it confirms his date of death as August 12th, 1940, in Dunfermline Hospital.

The images below show Christie Dark in the Royal High School pupils 1<sup>st</sup> XV in both 1929-1930 and 1930-1931 seasons. He is good company, many fine players, including a future Scottish international.



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