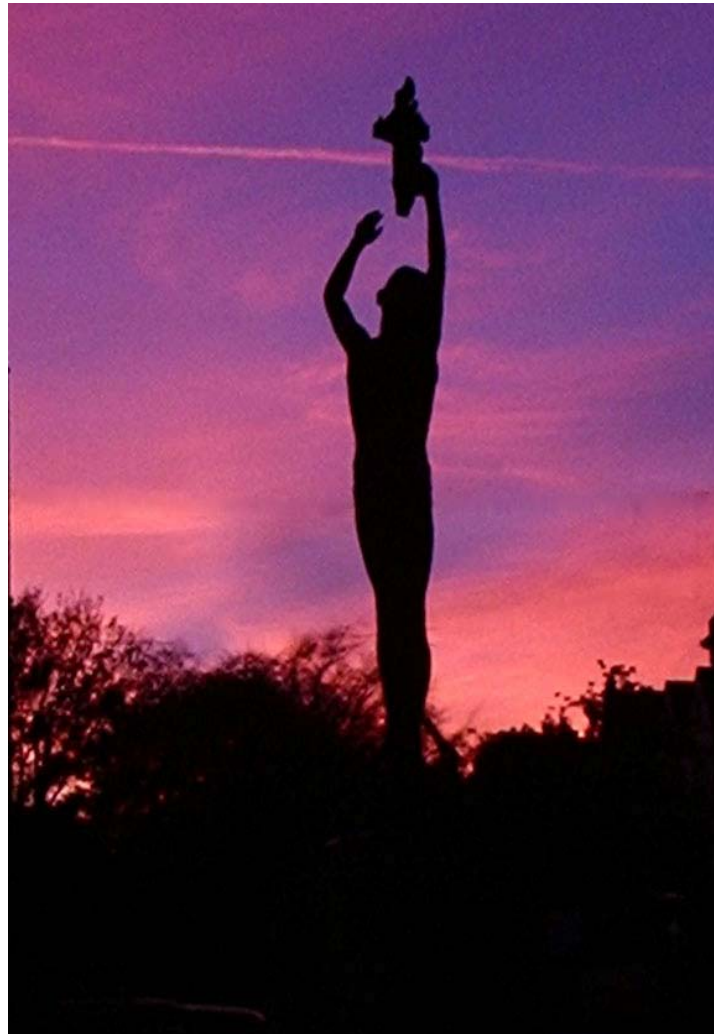


“REMEMBER”

Commemorating Our Fallen



**The story of “Wee Willie”, the figure of Youth on
Dover Town Memorial**

display by

The Dover War Memorial Project

www.doverwarmemorialproject.org.uk tel: 07876 240701

The figure on Dover Town War Memorial was originally created in 1908. The model was a lad in Dunfermline named William Galbraith.

Called “Let Noble Ambition Be the Thirst of Youth Always”, it depicts a young man trying to reach the laurel wreath hovering over his head. Laurels were a classic symbol of status and victory.

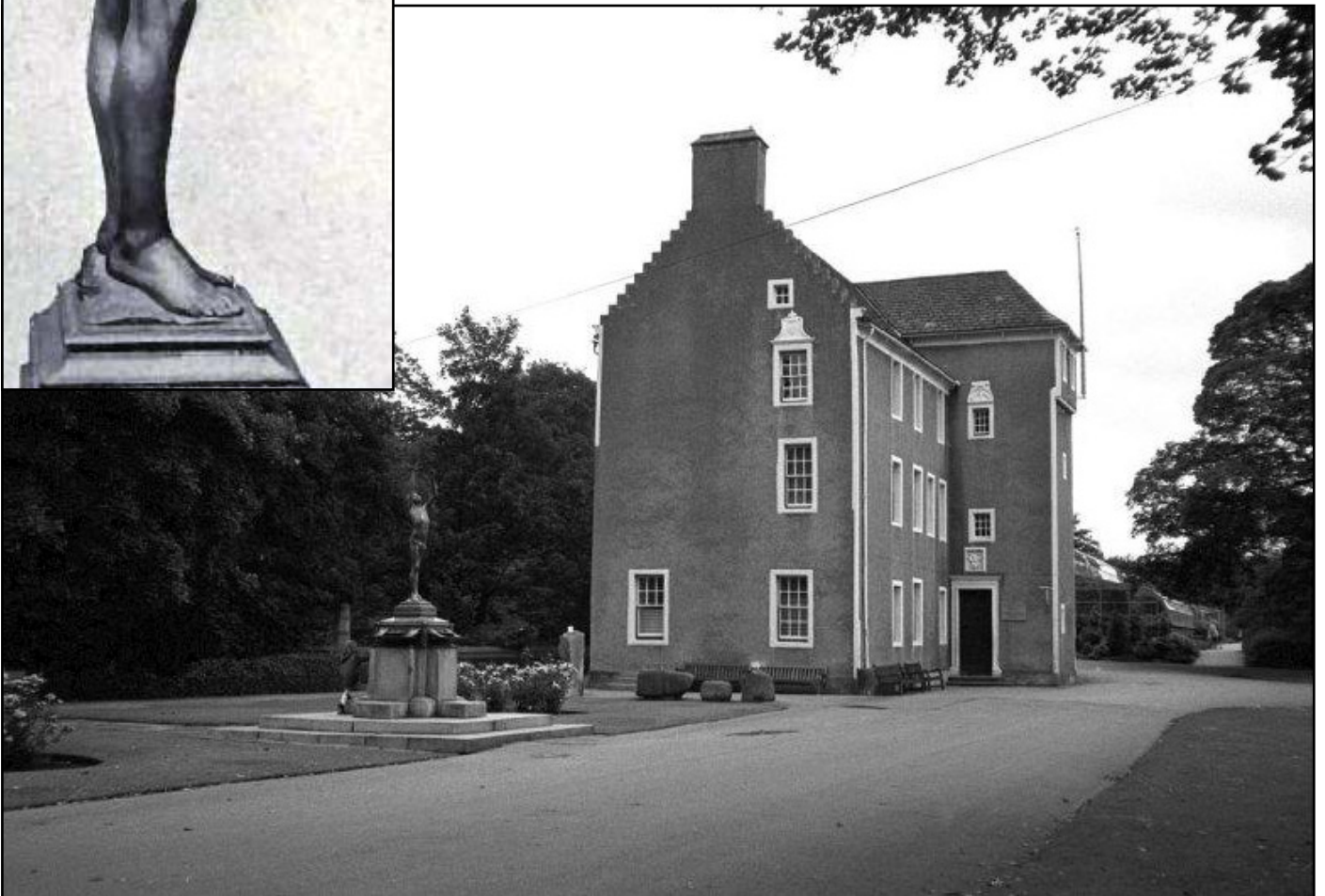
The figure was the centrepiece of a fountain outside Pittencrieff House, standing in the park given to Dunfermline by industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. It now stands in the foyer of the Carnegie Conference Centre.

The figure is the work of Richard Reginald Goulden, a Dovorian, who at that time was art adviser for the Carnegie Trust.



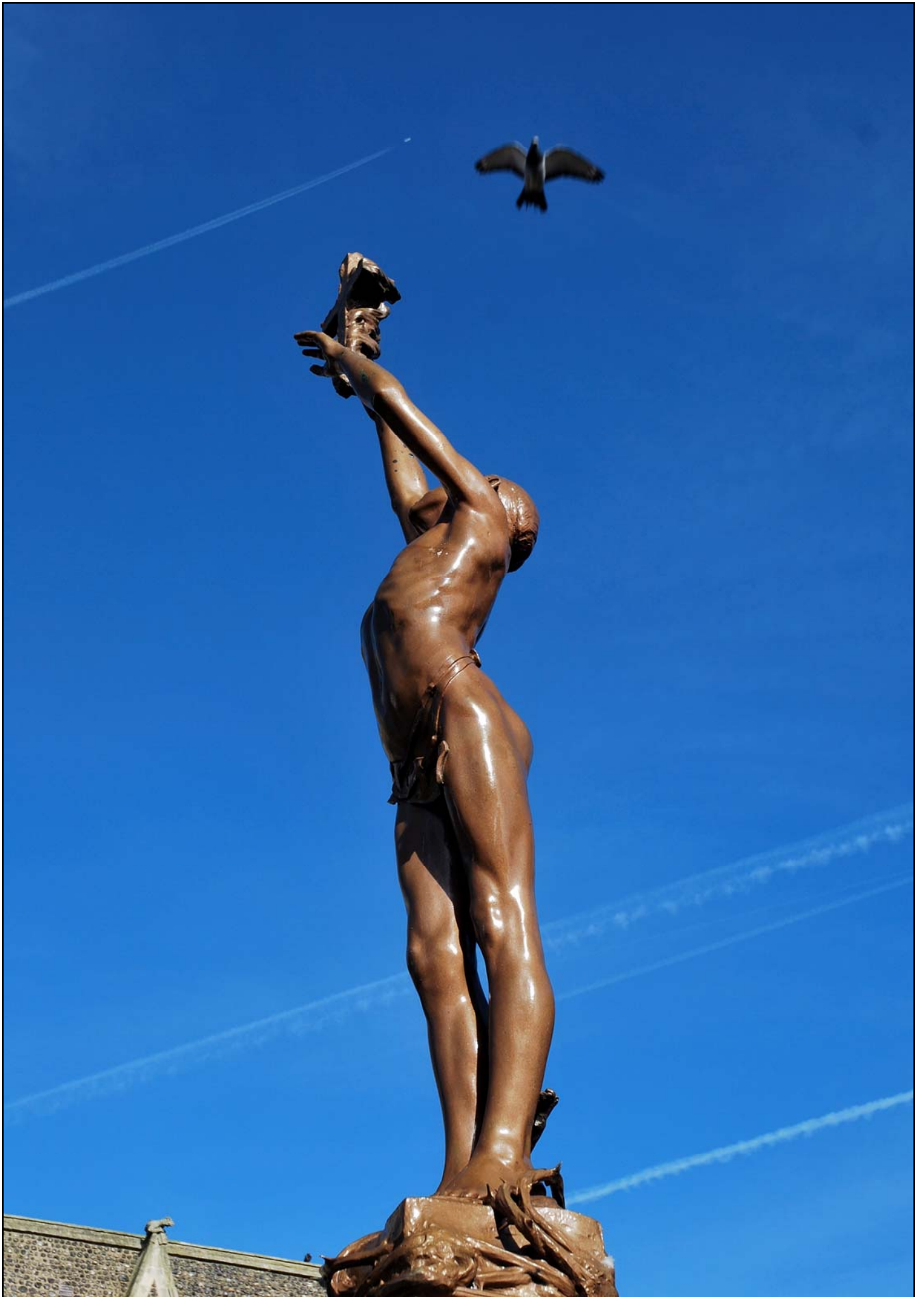
Left: “Let Noble Ambition be the Thirst of Youth Always”

Below: Pittencrieff House, Dunfermline. The figure is on the left of the house



The Dover War Memorial was unveiled on 5 November 1924. The figure was cast in bronze from the mould created by Richard Goulden in 1908. A flaming cross has replaced the laurel wreath and thorns have grown about the feet of “Youth”.

The figure was originally protected by beeswax. This rapidly turns black; many Dovorians will remember our memorial with black figure and scrolls. After vandalism in 1993 the figure was repaired and strengthened. Grit-blasting restored the bronze, now protected by epoxy lacquer.



Edward Beckwith was the first headmaster of the Imperial Services College. He died in 1935. The Gouldens' son Michael was a student at the College; his mother presented a copy of the figure for Mr Beckwith's memorial. With the figure again reaching for laurel leaves, but retaining the thorns about its feet, the memorial is now called "The Statue of Ambition".

A copy of the figure is also in the foyer of the Alhambra Theatre, Dunfermline, reopened in 2008. Again seeking its laurels, and now called simply "Ambition", the base of the figure has shell-shaped fountains like the original created a century before.

Right – memorial to Edward Beckwith, Windsor



Left – the figure at the Alhambra Theatre, Dunfermline

Earlier war memorials by Richard Goulden have symbolism similar to ours. The figures at Kingston-upon-Thames and Redhill and Reigate both hold a flaming cross, and both are threatened by thorns growing up around their bodies. Mr Goulden often featured young people in his work; these memorials have children protected by adult males. Both memorials were unveiled in 1923.

A plaque on the base of the Redhill and Reigate memorial explains that the cross symbolises self-sacrifice. The flames are the suffering of the Great War, which destroyed bodies but cannot destroy the spirit. Thorns represent the difficulties of life. The programme when our memorial in Dover was unveiled refers to exactly the same ideas.

right - Kingston-upon-Thames War Memorial



**left –
Redhill and Reigate War Memorial**



The memorial includes the space around it, a place of calm in the busy street. The laurel leaves still appear, this time on the plinth. Now honouring the Fallen, they are also a symbol of resurrection.

This image is pre-1930. Railings have since been removed, and the six receptacles for flowers filled in. The dedication now reads:

**To the glorious memory of the people of Dover
who gave their lives for their country in the Great Wars
1914-1919 - 1939-1945**



THE WAR MEMORIAL, DOVER.

Richard Goulden served with the Royal Engineers during the Great War, and was Mentioned in Dispatches. He designed many memorials.

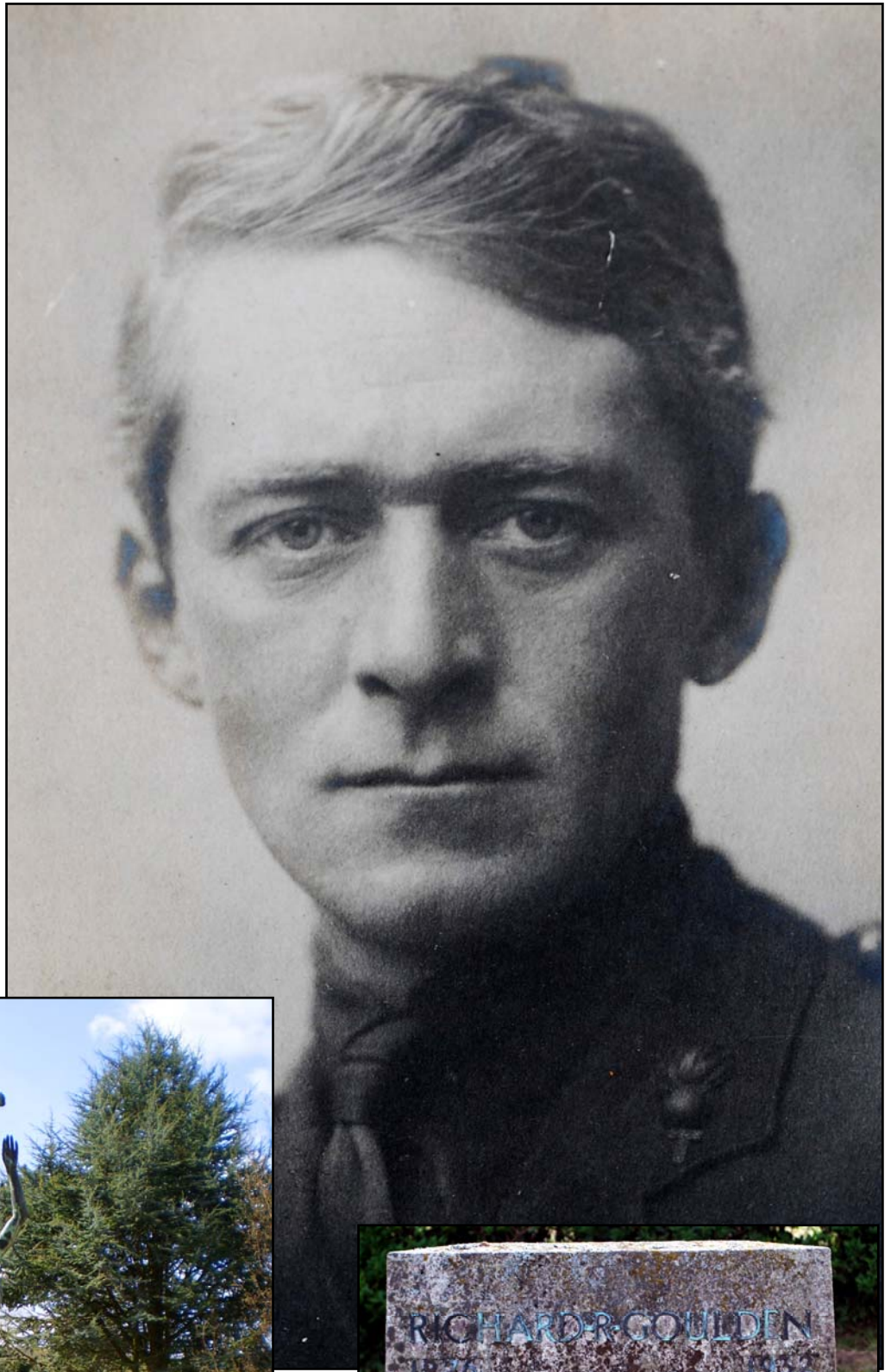
When he died in 1932, our memorial became his. He is buried in Newhaven cemetery; the figure stands at the entrance. Now called “The Sacrifice of Youth to a Higher Cause” it has fewer thorns about its feet but still bears the flaming cross.

Mr Goulden’s wife, Muriel, also an artist, said the figure was his best work. She is buried with him, and the laurel leaves adorn their grave.

**right -
Richard
Reginald
Goulden**

**below - the
figure at
Newhaven
cemetery**

**below right
- the
Gouldens'
grave**



“Remember” – Commemorating our Fallen

The story of “Wee Willie”, the figure of Youth on Dover Town Memorial

Photo Credits

“Noble Ambition” – Royal Academy Catalogue, 1908

Pittencrieff House – Scotland’s Places

Newhaven figure and grave - Richard Stanley

Edward Beckwith memorial – Thamesweb

Alhambra – The Alhambra Theatre, Dunfermline

The War Memorial, Dover - postcard

Richard Goulden – collection of R. J. Goulden

All others – Simon John Chambers, The Dover War Memorial Project

Research Credits

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