

Medal Speaking

In and between 1761 and 1792 medals for composition and elocution were given by Thomas, Earl of Ailesbury. He appears as a Commoner (Brudenell) on the School Long Rolls of 1737-46. By 1770 he had increased the number to three, one gold medal awarded for Latin verse and for Latin essay alternately, and two silver medals, awarded in every year for Latin and English speeches.

In the spring of 1793 there was a serious disturbance at the College – in effect a rebellion – one of the consequences of which was the resignation of the Head Master and the cessation of medal giving. In 1796 the Prince of Wales intimated that he would present medals and so in 1797 the practice began again. The Prince continued to give the medals upon his accession to the throne as George IV and since January 1820 these prizes have always been in the gracious gift of the Sovereign. Four are awarded. In Latin the silver is always for speech, the gold always for prose; in English the gold is awarded in alternate years for speech and verse, and similarly the silver. These individually engraved medals come to us directly from the Royal Household and are of course unique.

This ceremony – in effect a Prize Giving – takes place in the late afternoon at the very end of the year on Domum day. It is attended by those who have won prizes for subjects or who have won one or more of the four Queen's Medals, all the formally attired academic staff and parents of the boys concerned. The term "medal speaking" derives from the practice of Queen's medal winners reciting their winning pieces at the ceremony.

The Head Porter leads the Warden, Headmaster and Second Master into School and once the Warden and Second Master are seated the Headmaster says the following:

Domine Custos, secundum praecepta Fundatoris nostri beatae memoriae, Gulielmi de Wykeham, discipulos nostros hic ad pietatem et ad studia literarum aluimus. Hodie tibi praesentamus illos qui in studiis suis singulariter inter aequales praestiterunt, rogantes ut numismatibus praemiisque rite decorentur.

Warden, in accordance with the precepts of our Founder, William of Wykeham of blessed memory, we have brought up our pupils in the studies of godliness and good learning. Today we present to you those who have distinguished themselves in their several studies, and we beg you to present them with their prizes and medals.

Those who have won a prize move forward and are generally introduced to the Warden by the Head of Department concerned. When all have been presented, the Queen's Medals are announced. It is customary for the boys who have won these medals to recite their prize-winning entries.

When all is complete the Headmaster says the following:

Sollemnia sunt summata. Benedicat Omnipotens Deus omnes qui docent et qui discunt in hoc Collegio Beatae Mariae Wintoniensis; et salvam faciat Reginam!

Our ceremony is concluded. May God bless all who teach and learn in this College of St Mary Winchester. God save the Queen!

The Head Porter then leads the Warden, Headmaster, Second Master and staff from the room.





The illustrations show the gold and silver medals. On the obverse is the Sovereign's (youthful) profile with the inscription *Elizabeth II honorem proponit* and the reverse illustrates William of Wykeham's tomb in Winchester Cathedral. Beneath are the words *Etiam sepulti vivit fama Wykehami Ob. MCCCIV*: *The fame of Wykeham, even now that he is buried, is still alive Ob. 1404*. Or more jauntily:

*Wykeham's fame still lives on,
Even though he's dead and gone*