

## NEIL WHITE, 1948 OLYMPICS, LONDON, GB CAP PRESENTATION



In November 2025, at Gullane Golf Club, Evlyn Raistrick (chair) and George Pate, of the Scottish Hockey Heritage Group, presented GB Cap, No 49, to Mairi Pollock, niece of Neil White, Olympic Games, London, 1948, one of five Scots!



Also in Mairi's collection was her uncle's Silver Medal and certificate of participation, along with other wonderful hockey memorabilia.



**William Neil White** was born on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1920 in Troon to William White a farmer and his wife Elizabeth nee Fletcher. He was the third of their six children. Neil and his brothers Fletcher, Jimmy and Matthew all attended St Mary's School in Melrose. After Melrose, Neil went as a boarder to The Leys School in Cambridge in 1933, the start of a lifelong association with the school.

At school Neil excelled. He captained The Leys 1st teams for rugby, hockey and cricket. Neil also represented the Scottish Public Schools XV in 1938 and captained the British Public Schools cricket team on a tour of Canada in 1939. He was also a prefect and an under officer in the cadets.

Neil went up to Trinity Hall, Cambridge in the autumn of 1939. But by the summer of 1940 he had volunteered to join the army. He went through basic infantry training at Strensall Barracks near York and completed officer cadet training at Dunbar, before being commissioned into the Queens Own Cameron Highlanders and posted to the 1st Battalion.



Neil served with distinction during the Second World War, rising to the rank of Major and was awarded the Military Cross for his actions on the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> February 1945. Neil was leading a landing party crossing the Irrawaddy river about 25 miles West of Mandalay.

His citation reads

*Captain White with a small party crossed in the leading flight and as the leading craft approached the South Bank, severe machine gun fire was encountered from the right flank. Captain White displayed magnificent leadership and utter disregard of danger by urging his men forward through the fire. His own craft leading those around him, until the landing was effected.*

After the Japanese surrender in August 1945, Neil became an aide de camp to Lord Louis Mountbatten, serving in Singapore. He later turned down the opportunity of a permanent army commission to return to Cambridge and finish his BA degree. While at Cambridge Neil gained blues for rugby (1939, 1947) and hockey (1948).

At the start of the 1947 international season the Scottish selectors picked seven new caps for the game against Wales at Penarth on 29th March 1947. Amongst the new caps were Neil and two other future Olympians D L S Brodie and W Vans Agnew. Sadly for the Scots, Wales ran out 3-2 winners, their first win in the fixture since 1936. The Scots luck did not improve in the remaining two fixtures of 1947.

Neil missed the first game of 1948 due to injury. He marked his recall by scoring a first half hat trick as Scotland trounced Wales 6-0, all while playing out of position at centre forward rather than his preferred inside right. Neil also scored Scotland's only goal as they came back from 1-0 down to hold England to a 1-1 draw at Inverness on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1948. The impressive second half performance is credited as being a significant factor in the naming of five Scots in the 1948 Olympic squad – DLS Brodie (Babcock and Wilcox), FR Lindsay (Army) and his brother WL Lindsay (Corinthians, Dublin), GB Sime (Steps) and WN White (Cambridge) plus non-playing reserve AH Young (Whitecraigs)



At the 1948 London Olympics, GB topped group B by drawing 0-0 with Switzerland then defeating Afghanistan 8-0 and United States 11-0. This put them into a semi-final against Pakistan who many regarded as the best team of the group stages. GB beat Pakistan 2-0 in the semifinal before losing 4-0 to India in the final. The silver medal!



GB Olympic team 1948 with Scots, back row - William Lindsay (left), David Brodie (2nd from left), Neil White (3<sup>rd</sup> from left), George Sime (far right), front row – Robin Lindsay (2nd from left)

Neil's international hockey career lasted until 17<sup>th</sup> March 1951 when he played at Myreside when Ireland beat Scotland 5-1. He was selected for the following match at Newport on 14th April but was injured. When in Scotland he played his hockey with Western.

Outwith hockey Neil had started teaching at The Leys in 1948, a position he held until 1982. He taught geography amongst other things. His roles included Housemaster of North, then Fen, President of the Games Committee, President of the Master's Common Room, President of the Old Leysian Union in 1976-77 and Secretary of the OLU for nearly 30 years.

The Leys School produced a booklet In Memoriam of Neil after he died in 1990. The articles in the booklet paint a picture of a man who not only achieved great things in his sporting and military careers. Neil has left a lasting legacy at the school and many happy memories with staff, pupils, friends and family

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