

Educator was a shining light to all

A FORMER rector of The Gordon Schools, described as the epitome of all that is best in Scottish education, died last Thursday.

John Swan (71) came to The Gordon Schools in 1991 from a deputy headteacher post at Victoria Drive secondary school in his native Glasgow.

An honours graduate in geology and maths from Glasgow University, his teaching career began on an uncertified basis.

After two years he came north to Aberdeen where he completed the post graduate diploma in education and a diploma in secondary remedial education.

At The Gordon Schools he said his challenge was to make a good school even better and over the 15-and-a-half years as rector he immersed himself in every aspect of the life of the school and community.

He built an excellent school that was based on strong positive relationships within the school and across the community. He knew each of the 800 pupils as an individual.

At a surprise retirement send-off in 2006, school captain Laura Smith said it was a wonderful school and much credit for its reputation was down to Mr Swan.

Former pupils took to social media to express their condolences at his passing and described him as a great rector.

They spoke fondly of their years at The Gordon Schools and of his contribution to their achievements in later life. Long after his retirement, he continued to send letters and cards of congratulation to former pupils.

He took great pride in the school's history and heritage and

By Pat Scott

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promoted links that built on its fine traditions.

He was proud when pupils played a key role in the official opening of the Gordon Highlanders Museum.

He was hugely impressed by the work done by the Former Pupils' Association.

He nurtured links with past scholars around the world, including an elderly former pupil who lived in Canada.

Their memory of school days in Huntly were rekindled and led to a bequest in excess of £250,000 that enabled annual prizes and scholarships in the name of Ronald Ironside.

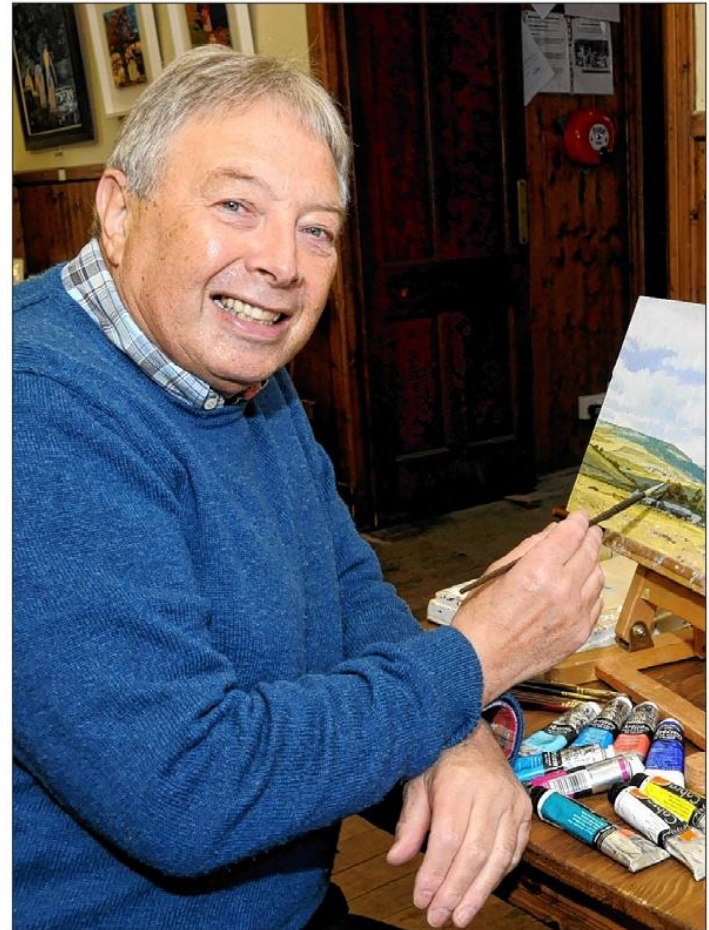
During Mr Swan's tenure, the range of extra curricular activities for which The Gordon Schools is recognised across Aberdeenshire and beyond expanded.

He took a particular interest in public speaking and debating and accompanied teams to competitions. However, he followed pupil activities at all levels and across multiple disciplines, celebrating national team selections success with a wall carrying portrait photographs of those involved.

He revived the annual school magazine, overseeing its production and inspiring the staff-and-pupil journalism team to collect and produce material that demonstrated the breadth of activity in the school.

Retired teacher Mary McTavish described Mr Swan as a very popular headmaster and strong a leader.

She said: "He was highly professional and always respected.



In his retirement, John Swan was able to pursue his hobby of painting.

"He was firm but fair and proved to be a very difficult act to follow when he retired."

Following his retirement, Mr Swan returned to painting with water colours, proving himself to be a talented artist. He also found more time for his love of hill walking and was treasurer of Huntly Minibus Committee.

He is survived by his wife, Maureen, daughters Morven and Correen, son Moray and his grandchildren Ailsa, Alasdair, Rory and Niamh.