

**In Commemoration of the Ultimate Sacrifice of David Blyth Blair
World War I Centennial
By His Distant Cousin, Michael T. Tracy**

“His Duty Done” are the immortal words inscribed on the gravestone of Private David Blyth Blair of the 14th Battalion, Black Watch Royal Highlanders. He was just 20 years of age when he fell at Moislains in the Somme region of France. The young Private of the dreaded Scottish Black Watch followed the sound of the pipes on that summer’s day in September of 1918 into immortality of those who lost their lives during the Great War. This then is the story of Private David Blyth Blair on the Centennial of World War I.

Early years

David Blyth Blair was born on Wednesday, 4 May 1898 at Carnbee Parish, Fife, Scotland.¹

12	David Blyth Blair	1898	M	Alexander Blair Ploughman	Alexander Blair Father	1898
		Mary Forreth 6th. 15m. 4. 20.		Margaret Blair Mrs. Blyth	Present	At Carnbee
		Carnbee Cethanassa Carnbee		1891 August 1st	Ceres	J. Pentland Smith Registrar.

J. Pentland Smith Registrar.

Fig.1. Birth Record of David Blyth Blair, 4 May 1898, Carnbee Parish Records, Crown Copyright

He was the fourth child of Alexander Blair, a ploughman, and Margaret Blyth. David was listed in the 1901 Scotland Census for St. Andrews and St. Leonards Parish, Fife as being 3 years of age.²



Fig.2. Carnbee Parish, Fife, Photograph Courtesy of Geograph.org.uk

¹ Birth Record of David Blyth Blair, 4 May 1898, Carnbee Parish Records, Statutory Births 413/00 0012

² 1901 Scotland Census for St. Andrews and St. Leonards Parish, Fife, Scotland; Enumeration District Number 9, Page 5, Line 28

In 1911 Blyth was still residing at St. Andrews and St. Leonards Parish, Fife, aged 12 and attending school.³

02/04/1911 BLAIR, ALEXANDER (Census 1911 453/00 010/00 004)

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The image displays two pages from the 1911 Scotland Census. The left page is the household schedule for the Blair family at 29 Brouhills, St. Andrews. It lists Alexander Blair as the head of the household, aged 40, and other family members including Mary Blair, Alexander Blair, William Blair, Mary Blair, James Blair, Alexander Blair, and David Blair. The right page is the profession or occupation schedule for the Blair family, listing Alexander Blair as a school teacher, Mary Blair as a domestic worker, and other family members as workers or laborers.

Fig.3. 1911 Scotland Census for St. Andrews and St. Leonards Parish, Fife, Scotland listing the Blair Family, Crown Copyright

Enlistment

It is unclear as to exactly when Blair enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force during World War I. It was however sometime during the year of 1917. According to the *East Fife Observer Newspaper* of Thursday, 19 September 1918: "It was just over a year ago [1917] since Pte. Blair enlisted, previous to which he was a ploughman at Thirdpart Farm."⁴ He enlisted with the 14th Battalion of the Black Watch Royal Highlanders and his service number was S/22250.⁵

³ 1911 Scotland Census for St. Andrews and St. Leonards Parish, Fife, Scotland; Enumeration District Number 10, Page 4, Line 31

⁴ *East Fife Observer Newspaper*, 19 September 1918 p. 2

⁵ British Army World War I Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920. Ancestry.com. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2008

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regal. No.
BLAIR	R. Highls	Pte	5/22250
David			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	9/102814	944	
BARRIEN	- ds	do	
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

K. 1390

Fig.4. British Army World War I Medal Roll of Private David B. Blair, Photograph Courtesy of Ancestry.com.

Accordingly it is also not known if Private Blair served with the Black Watch in Egypt and Palestine in 1917.

France 1918

The Black Watch Royal Highlanders arrived by troop carrier at Marseilles, France on Tuesday, 7 May 1918.⁶ The Battalion would arrive by troop train at Noyelles two days later.⁷ They were assigned to the Hebuterne sector north of Albert.⁸ On Saturday, 11 May 1918 the 14th Battalion arrived at St. Firmin where they trained which included physical training, specialist training and gas [attack] training.⁹ By Sunday, 26 May 1918 the 14th Battalion moved to Grand Rullecourt which is a farming village situated 15 miles southwest of Arras where they continued training until Thursday, 27 June 1918.¹⁰

On Thursday, 27 June 1918 Private Blair and the rest of the 14th Battalion were moved to Fontes for additional training until Thursday, 11 July 1918 when they moved to Ham-En-Artois for final training before moving to the front lines at La Pierrière.¹¹ According to Major Ogilvie: "On the night of 31 July/1st August, we took over the right sub-sector of the line from the Somersets, and were lucky in having to keep only one company in the line. This front line consisted of a series of posts, each held by a section and built up as a breastwork, trenches being impossible. The Nor and Clarence Rivers sluggishly

⁶ Ogilvie, D.D. The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. Yeo.) Battalion Royal Highlanders, 1914-1919. London: John Murray, 1921 p. 119

⁷ Ogilvie, D.D. The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. Yeo.) Battalion Royal Highlanders, 1914-1919. London: John Murray, 1921 p. 119

⁸ Ogilvie, D.D. The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. Yeo.) Battalion Royal Highlanders, 1914-1919. London: John Murray, 1921 p. 120

⁹ War Diary of the 14th Black Watch Royal Highlanders (Fife & Forfar Yeoman) May 1918, National Archives, Kew, WO95/3152/4

¹⁰ War Diary of the 14th Black Watch Royal Highlanders (Fife & Forfar Yeoman) May-June 1918, National Archives, Kew, WO95/3152/4

¹¹ War Diary of the 14th Black Watch Royal Highlanders (Fife & Forfar Yeoman) June-July 1918, National Archives, Kew, WO95/3152/4

meandered through our line, and even in the summer the water level was only about nine inches below the surface. Behind these posts was a semi-continuous support line, and half a mile farther back a continuous main line, fairly well complete as to wire and parapet..."¹²

On Friday, 9 August 1918 German artillery opened fire on the front lines followed by gas shells. The Battalion War Diary noted that there were 5 casualties and other ranks wounded.¹³

The National Archives' reference WO-95-3152-4_11.jpg

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WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Erase heading not required.)

Army Form G. 2118

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages will be prepared in manuscript.

Place	Date AUG.	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	8	6 30 9 -	An enemy party of about 30 approached one of the advanced posts but on being fired upon quickly withdrew leaving 5 killed, the number wounded is uncertain. Enemy artillery was more active during the day and shelled with H.E. Shrapnel Gas on the bag lines. The front line was again pushed forward to a line along the TUBERCAUTE stream meeting with very little opposition. Prisoners - 6. Casualties KILLED 4 Other Ranks WOUNDED 6	
	9	9 15 p	Enemy artillery again active Bn HQ heavily bombarded with Green X N.T. Gas shells Casualties 5 Other Ranks wounded	
	10	5 40 a 6 a 7 a	Enemy trench mortars bombarded front line. About 30 enemy attacked forward posts but were repulsed at the point of the bayonet. Enemy casualties observed - 1 killed & 5 wounded. Front line again bombarded, our artillery replied and the situation became quiet. Casualties KILLED 1 Other Ranks WOUNDED 6	
	11		During night 10/11 Bn was relieved by 15 Bn The SUPPLY Regt. Relief completed by 2 a.m. Bn took up positions in the Reserve line of the AMUSOINES - HAVERKERQUE System.	

1875 W. W. 933/865 1,000,000 2/15 I. B. C. & A. A. D. S. S. Form G. 2118

Fig.5. War Diary of the 14th Battalion, Black Watch Royal Highlanders, 9 August 1918, Photograph Courtesy of the National Archives, Kew (WO95/3152/4)

These gas attacks had a profound psychological impact on the soldiers because it literally terrified them and this was the first gas attack on the 14th Battalion. By the next day the Germans unleashed trench mortars on the front lines which killed 1 soldier and wounded 6 others.¹⁴ The 14th Battalion was then relieved on Sunday, 11 August 1918.¹⁵

¹² Ogilvie, D.D. The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. Yeo.) Battalion Royal Highlanders, 1914-1919. London: John Murray, 1921 p.p. 123-24

¹³ War Diary of the 14th Black Watch Royal Highlanders (Fife & Forfar Yeoman) August 1918, National Archives, Kew, WO95/3152/4

¹⁴ War Diary of the 14th Black Watch Royal Highlanders (Fife & Forfar Yeoman) August 1918, National Archives, Kew, WO95/3152/4

¹⁵ War Diary of the 14th Black Watch Royal Highlanders (Fife & Forfar Yeoman) August 1918, National Archives, Kew, WO95/3152/4

The soldiers of the 14th Battalion went back into support at Robecq manning the Amusoires trenches. Robecq is situated about 7 miles northwest of Bethune.



Fig.6. Robecq, Nord-Pas-De-Calais, France, Photograph Courtesy of Google Maps

Major Ogilvie noted: “Only very short parade hours and daily bathes in the Lys or La Bassee Canals made this a delightful week. We were asked for no digging parties, and the only fatigue which the men thoroughly enjoyed was harvesting under Mr. H. Adamson’s supervision.”¹⁶

On Friday, 16 August 1918 the Battalion was moved to the billets at La Miquellerie.¹⁷ A billet was a place to lodge troops. Here the 14th Battalion settled into a rather normal routine of platoon and specialist training. Major Ogilvie noted: “Up to now we had received a few kilts of large size only, so we had only a few of the biggest men fitted out, and drill order was always trousers.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Ogilvie, D.D. *The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. Yeo.) Battalion Royal Highlanders, 1914-1919*. London: John Murray, 1921 p. 126

¹⁷ *War Diary of the 14th Black Watch Royal Highlanders (Fife & Forfar Yeoman) August 1918*, National Archives, Kew, WO95/3152/4

¹⁸ Ogilvie, D.D. *The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. Yeo.) Battalion Royal Highlanders, 1914-1919*. London: John Murray, 1921 p. 126

By Saturday, 24 August 1918 the Battalion was moved up into support relieving the 25th R.W.F. for the next three days and encountered a very quiet period along the front.¹⁹ They were relieved from duty and marched back to Molinghem where they were transported for the Somme.

A Place Called Moislains

Moislains is in the Picardie region of Northern France and is a small farming community. The 14th Battalion of the Black Watch Royal Highlanders arrived at La Houssoye on Friday, 30 August 1918.²⁰ The Battalion remained ready to move and was awaiting orders. The War Diary of the Battalion stated: "Battalion march to road junction at Franvillers proceeding thence to Bronfay Farm then marched to Maricourt where packs were dumped. Battalion then proceeded to a site near the cross roads and bivouacked for the night."²¹

The National Archives' reference WO-95-3152-4_13.jpg

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WAR DIARY
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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
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Army Form C. 2118

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages will be prepared in manuscript.

Place	1918 Date AUGT	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Q3c89	26		The day was again quiet.	
	27		Battn was relieved by 2 nd DURHAM L.I. Relief completed by 2.30 a.m. on 28 th .	
MOLINGHEM	28	11 p.m.	Battn went into Billets at MOLINGHEM. B Team rejoined. 1 boy entrained as Brigade Advance Party	
	29	1.30 a.m. 9 p.m.	Battn (less 1 boy) entrained Arrived at CORBIE and marched to Billets at LA HOUSOYE	
LA HOUSOYE	30		Battn remained ready to move - awaiting Orders	
	31	2 p.m.	Battn marched to Road Junction at FRAN VILLERS proceeding thence by La BRONFAY FARM then marched to MARICOURT where packs were dumped. Bn then proceeded to a site near the cross roads in B 16 b 8015 (Sheet 62cNW) and bivouacked for the night.	
			On 14 th Chaplain P Barry Doyle (CF) admitted Hospital 27 Chaplain T L WILLIAMS (CF) attached 2 nd Lieut. E J STEVENSON 3 rd RH joined on posting --- H MAIR 2 nd RH --- 30 --- WOGILCHRIST 7 th RH ---	Map References 36 a SE 1 20.000

A. Ogilvie
Commandant, 14th Battalion Black Watch
ROYAL HIGHLANDERS

1875 Wt. W 593/26 1,000,000 4/15 J.R.C. & A. A.D.S.S./Forms/C. 2118

Fig.7. War Diary of the 14th Battalion, Black Watch Royal Highlanders, 31 August 1918, Photograph Courtesy of the National Archives, Kew (WO95/3152/4)

¹⁹ Ogilvie, D.D. The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. Yeo.) Battalion Royal Highlanders, 1914-1919. London: John Murray, 1921 p. 127

²⁰ War Diary of the 14th Black Watch Royal Highlanders (Fife & Forfar Yeoman) August 1918, National Archives, Kew, WO95/3152/4

²¹ War Diary of the 14th Black Watch Royal Highlanders (Fife & Forfar Yeoman) August 1918, National Archives, Kew, WO95/3152/4

For Private Blair and the rest of the 14th Black Watch Royal Highlanders, Sunday, 1 September 1918 was spent in reconnaissance. The Battalion received orders to attack the next day. Major Ogilvie wrote: "At 7:30 P.M. [1 September 1918] we set out for the position of deployment east of Bouchavesnes, and were met by guides who conducted us by the longest possible route over the worst country they could find, and it was at 3 A.M. before the relief of the 2/4 London Regiment was complete and our men in the assembly trenches."²² The War Diary of the Battalion recorded the events of the day as follows: "Battalion moved from B.16.d.80.as (Sheet 62B N.W.0 at 4:30 P.M.) and proceeded to trench at C 15. d.2.2.6 where Battalion N. Qrs. were established. Relieved the London Regiment during the night. Coys [Companies] occupying assembly trenches preparatory to the attack the following morning."²³

The last night of Private Blair's life was spent in an assembly trench preparing for an offensive assault on the German lines the next morning. Aside from the usual rigors of combat the thoughts of going into battle must have been nightmarish.

Major Ogilvie recalled the events of the early morning hours of Monday, 2 September 1918: "Zero hour was 5:30 A.M., at which time it was barely light and rather misty. The first objective was the system of trenches Opera and Monastir trenches on the far side of the Canal Du Nord, the second objective the strong system of trenches half way up the slope, and the final objective the crest of the ridge south of Nurlu village, a good four miles away. We were to advance across the Canal and then swing northeast and push on to high ground. This meant squeezing through a narrow neck between Moislains and Allaines and then after we were through the neck, changing direction and extending our front to almost double."²⁴

At 5:30 A.M. on Monday, 2 September 1918 Private David Blyth Blair rose from his assault trench and advanced. The hell of war would now be in front of him. Major Ogilvie wrote: "After the preliminary bombardment and the creeping barrage the Brigade moved forward, the Somersets leading on the right with ourselves following. The Devons were to mop up the village of Moislains, and once clear of the village we were to come up on the left of the Somersets and take the first objective. The barrage fell a long way ahead of us and left untouched a party of the enemy holding the trench immediately in front of us. This delayed us but for a moment, but the Somersets were having a good deal of trouble from the direction of Allaines which had to be dealt with and this took them and us more to our right than we should have been. The advance was again momentarily held up by heavy machine-gun fire on the Canal, but pushing on in most gallant style the leading companies got across all right and up the slope, driving the Bosche [Germans] out of the wooden huts at the point of the bayonet and accounting for a great many at the same time. So far the advance had gone splendidly. The first objective had been taken, and the advance begun towards the second when murderous machine gun fire was opened upon us from the left and left rear. The battalion of Londoners on our left north of Moislains had withdrawn, the village of Moislains itself was never mopped up, and the eight Bosche machine guns holding Moislains seeing this moved quickly to the south of the village and opened on our backs. In addition to this we were being subjected to very heavy fire on our left flank, which was now

²² Ogilvie, D.D. *The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. Yeo.) Battalion Royal Highlanders, 1914-1919*. London: John Murray, 1921 p. 127

²³ War Diary of the 14th Black Watch Royal Highlanders (Fife & Forfar Yeoman) September 1918, National Archives, Kew, WO95/3152/4

²⁴ Ogilvie, D.D. *The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. Yeo.) Battalion Royal Highlanders, 1914-1919*. London: John Murray, 1921 p.p. 127-28

completely in the air, and we could actually see their gun teams working the 77's on the crest of the hill."²⁵

Death of Private David Blyth Blair

It is apparent at this point in Major Ogilvie's narrative that Private David Blair had his rendezvous with death. According to the *East Fife Observer Newspaper* dated Thursday, 19 September 1918: "Pte. David Blair, Black Watch... was killed by shrapnel in action in France on 2 September, death being instantaneous."²⁶

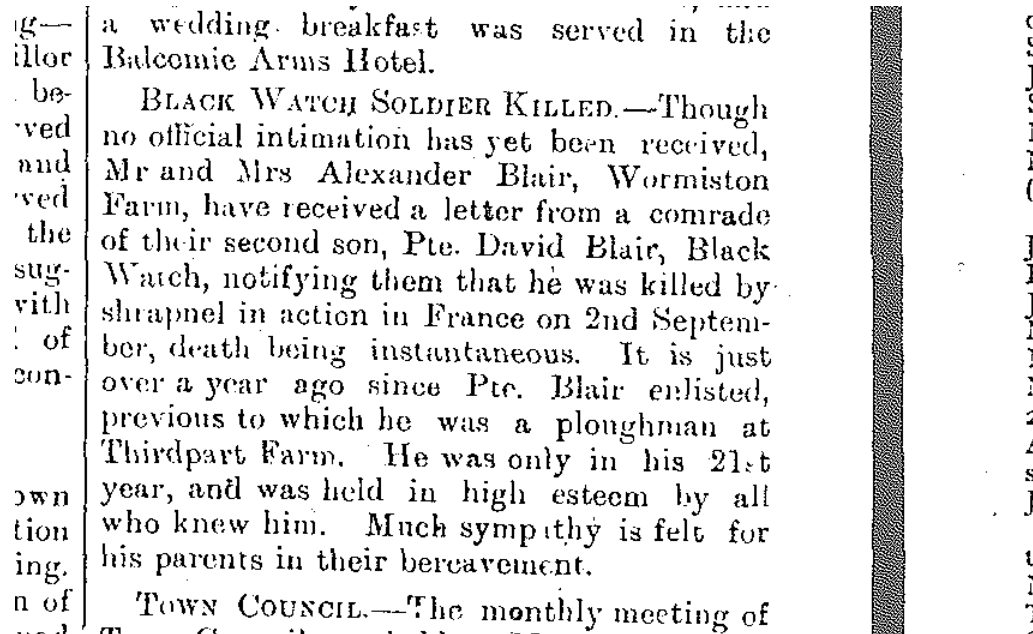


Fig.8. Private David Blair Death Notice, 19 September 1918, *East Fife Observer Newspaper*

Major Ogilvie recalled: "The Bosche had paid us the compliment of rushing up his best troops to meet our Division, and certainly the Alpini Corps were most gallant fighters. To advance unsupported was out of the question, and our casualties were by now very heavy, so there was nothing left but to withdraw to the west side of the Canal again and reorganize the remains of the companies."²⁷

²⁵ Ogilvie, D.D. *The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. Yeo.) Battalion Royal Highlanders, 1914-1919*. London: John Murray, 1921 p.p. 128-29

²⁶ *East Fife Observer Newspaper*, 19 September 1918 p. 2

²⁷ Ogilvie, D.D. *The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. Yeo.) Battalion Royal Highlanders, 1914-1919*. London: John Murray, 1921 p. 129

The War Diary of the Battalion stated: "The first objective was gained and Battalion was pressing onto 2nd objective when heavy M.G. [machine gun] fire was opened on left flank from Moislains. Battalion of London Regt. On left withdrew, leaving flank exposed to M.G. [machine gun] fire and Battalion was compelled to withdraw. Village of Moislains was inadequately mopped up and machine gun fire was opened from south of village. Casualties: Killed 3 officers and 36 men, Wounded 11 officers and 154 men."²⁸

The National Archives' reference WO-95-3152-4_15.jpg

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Erase heading not required.)

Army Form C. 2118
14th Bn. Royal Highlanders

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Part 11 and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages will be prepared in manuscript.

Place	1918 Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	1		Battalion moved from B 16 d. 2012 (Sheet 628 NW) at 4.30 pm and proceeded to trench at C 15 d. 26 where 600 men were established. Relieved the London Regt during the night. Coy occupying assembly trenches preparatory to the attack the following morning.	
	2		After preliminary bombardment, Brigade moved forward to the attack. Immediately the village of MOISLAIS (Sheet 628 NW 120,000 C 12712) was passed. The Battalion moved to left to take 1st objective MONASTIR TRENCH, thence along Canal to along OPERA TRENCH. The 2nd objective being oblique line running through D.C. 26 and 10116. The first objective was gained and Battalion was pressing on to 2nd objective when heavy M.G. fire was opened on left flank from MOISLAIS. Battalion of London Regt. on left withdrew, leaving flank exposed to M.G. fire and Battalion was compelled to withdraw. Village of MOISLAIS was inadequately mopped up. M.G. fire was opened from south of village. Battalion assembled in trench in C 22 d. and SEUTARY TRENCH C 28 a. Casualties: Killed 3 Officers 36 men Wounded 11 " 154 "	
	3		Battalion assembled in ANORA TRENCH, C 16, where it was formed into a Composite Coy under Lieut J.W. ARNOTT. Patrols pushed out during the day and posts were established at dusk on SHAB HEAP C 24 a. 92 and in trench C 17 d. 92. Night was quiet.	
	4		Composite Coy gradually moved forward and took up new line in trench along Canal Bank in C 18 a. 7 d. At dusk the Battalion was relieved by 19 th Bn. London Regt. and when relief was complete Battalion moved to N. edge of wood in C 25 a. 1 b.	
	5		Organisation of Battalion and burial of our dead.	
	6		Battalion marched to AIZECOURT and bivouaced for the night at J.I.C. 40 40.	

1875 Wt. W593/826 1,000,000 4/15 J.B.C. & A. A.D.S.S./Forms/C. 2118.

Fig.9. War Diary of the 14th Battalion, Black Watch Royal Highlanders, 2 September 1918, Photograph Courtesy of the National Archives, Kew (WO95/3152/4)

²⁸ War Diary of the 14th Black Watch Royal Highlanders (Fife & Forfar Yeoman) September 1918, National Archives, Kew, WO95/3152/4

Private Blair was just 20 years old when he died near Moislains.



Fig.10. View of Moislains, Photograph Courtesy of Mapcarta and Jojolebon

Burial of Private Blair

Private David Blair was buried on or about Wednesday, 4 September 1918 in a temporary grave in the Somme. He was later re-buried in the Peronne Communal Cemetery Extension at Peronne, Somme, France.

Plot	Row	Grave	Map Reference where body found.	Was Cross on Grave?	Regimental particulars.		Means of Identification.	Were any effects forwarded to Base?
5	B	8		Yes	3875. Pte. J. Tomson.	14/R.Hdrs. ✓	2-9-18	No
		9		"	20371. Pte. A. Shanks.	" ✓	"	"
		10		"	373715. Pte. H. Leach.	12/Somerset L.I. ✓	"	"
		11		"	20875. Pte. R. Reid.	14/R.Hdrs. ✓	"	"
		12		"	37527. Pte. W. E. Ashton	12/S.L.I. ✓	"	"
		13		"	40074. Pte. E. Hearn,	12/S.L.I. ✓	"	" 1/32E
		14	62.c.C22.d.7.8.	"	34167. Pte. S. Jones	12/S.L.I. ✓	"	"
		15		"	37503. Pte. F. Thorne.	12/S.L.I. ✓	"	"
		16		"	37232 L/Cpl. Holden.	12/S.L.I. ✓	"	"
		17		"	37466 L/Cpl. T. W. Davis.	12/S.L.I. ✓	"	"
		18		"	22250. Pte. D. B. Blair	14/R.Hdrs. ✓	"	"
		19		"	2/Lt. C. E. Darney	14/R.Hdrs. ✓	"	"
		20.		"	345028. Sgt. W. McKensie	14/R.Hdrs. ✓	"	"
	D	1		"	Pte. UNKNOWN.	12/Som.L.I.	"	" 1/33E

Fig.11. Burial Return of Private David Blair, Courtesy of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Blairs' Burial Register reads: "Blair, Pte. D., S/22250. 14th (Fife and Forfar Yeomanry) Bn. Black Watch. 2nd Sept., 1918. Age 21. Son of Mrs. A. Blair, of Kilrenny, Anstruther, Crail, Fife."²⁹

²⁹ Commonwealth War Grave Commission Records of Private David B. Blair

BLAIR, Pte. D., S/22250. 14th (Fife and Forfar Yeomanry) Bn. Black Watch. 2nd Sept., 1918. Age 21. Son of Mrs. A. Blair, of Kilrenny, Anstruther, Crail, Fife. V. B. 18.
BLAKE, Pte. Charles Arthur, 315492. 16th

Fig.12. Burial Register of Private David Blair, Courtesy of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Private Blair was buried in Plot 5, Row B, Grave 18 in the Peronne Communal Cemetery Extension. His headstone simply reads: "His Duty Done."

As mentioned previously David Blyth Blair's death notice appeared in the *East Fife Observer Newspaper*: "Black Watch Soldier Killed. Though no official intimation has yet been received, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Blair, Wormiston Farm, have received a letter from a comrade of their second son, Pte. David Blair, Black Watch, notifying them that he was killed by shrapnel in action in France on 2nd September, death being instantaneous. It is just over a year ago since Pte. Blair enlisted, previous to which he was a ploughman at Thirdpart Farm. He was only in his 21st year, and was held in high esteem by all who knew him. Much sympathy is felt for his parents in their bereavement."³⁰



Fig.13. Peronne Communal Cemetery Extension, Peronne, Somme, France, Photograph Courtesy of the Commonwealth War Grave Commission

³⁰ *East Fife Observer Newspaper*, 19 September 1918 p. 2

“His Duty Done”

The epitaph of Private Blair reads: “His Duty Done.” David Blyth Blair enlisted in the Black Watch Royal Highlanders when he turned of age to fight. Blair a ploughman of Crail, Fife undertook his obligation to serve his King and country most likely with great affection and commitment for both. Like all soldiers who served in the Great War he had a job to do and just did it. Blair and others of the 14th Battalion of the Black Watch Royal Highlanders heard the call of duty and ultimately paid the sacrifice of death.

This is just one biography of a soldier from the east of Fife who fought and perished in the War to end all Wars. He was with one of the finest Scottish Divisions the world up to that time has ever known. The motto of the Black Watch is: “No One Provokes Me With Impunity,” and David Blair most certainly lived up to that motto with this life.

There is a plaque at Crail Parish Church where Blair resided before he left for overseas. It is dedicated to the men of the parish who laid down their lives in the Great War of 1914-1918. At the end of the long list of men who died during those years of war and suffering are these words: “Greater Love Hath No Man Than This.”



Fig.14. World War I Memorial Plaque at Crail Parish Church, Fife, Scotland, Photograph Courtesy of Michael T. Tracy © 2010 Michael T. Tracy

“His Duty Done.” David Blyth Blair is warmly commemorated in this Centennial year of World War I in grateful esteem and recognition by his distant fifth cousin, Michael T. Tracy. This work is dedicated to the Memory of David Blyth Blair.

Memoratus in aeternum (Forever Remembered)

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