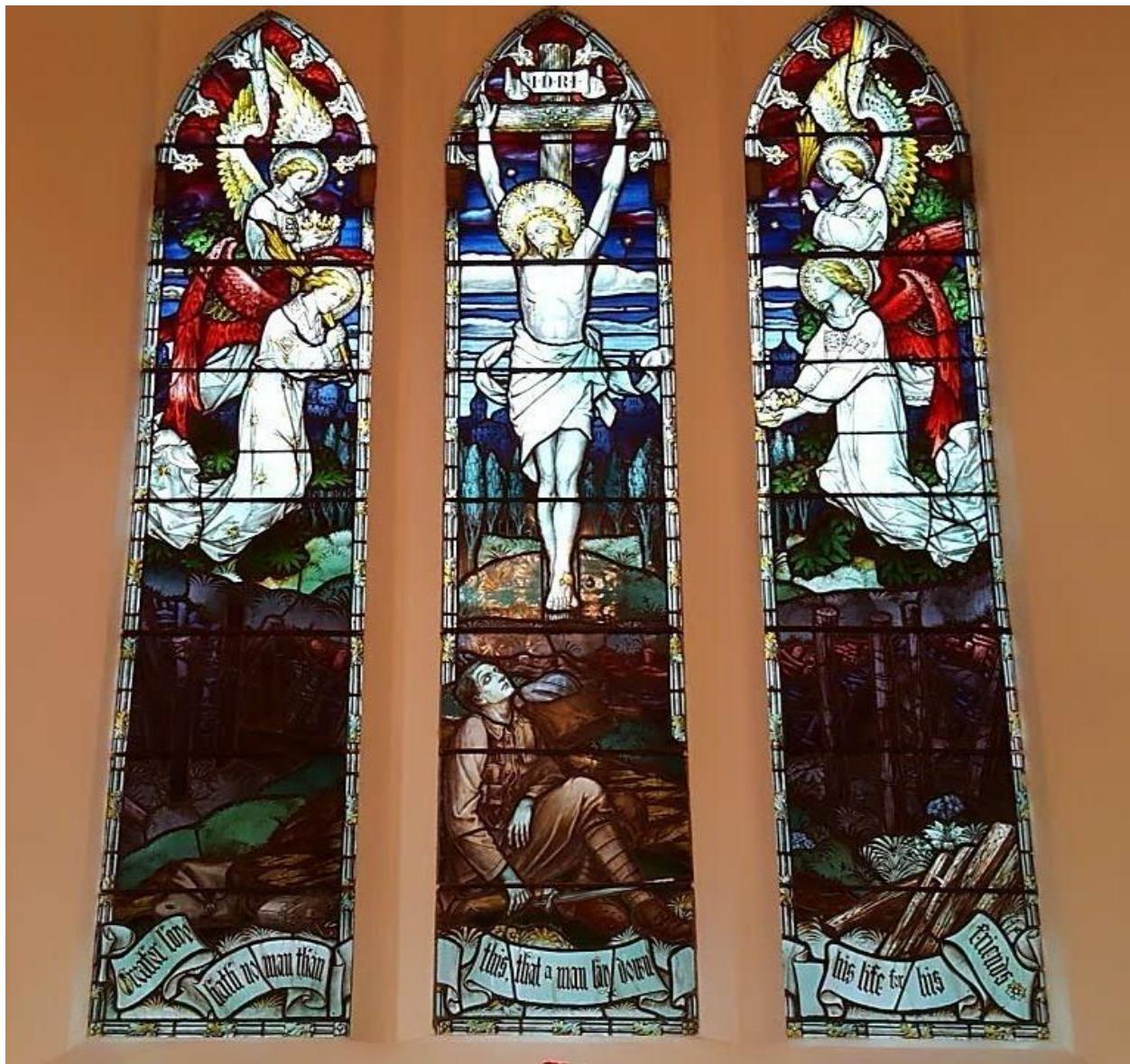


SALTOUN WAR MEMORIAL



A Lament

We who are left, how shall we look again
Happily on the sun, or feel the rain,
Without remembering how they who went
Ungrudgingly, and spent
Their all for us, loved too, the sun and rain?

A bird among the rain—wet lilac sings -
But we, how shall we turn to little things
And listen to the birds and winds and streams
Made holy by their dream,
Nor feel the heartbreak in the heart of things?

Wilfred Wilson Gibson

INTRODUCTION

This research into the Saltoun War Memorial was undertaken in order to mark the passing of 100 years since the armistice of the First World War and to commemorate the men listed on the war memorial by giving an insight into their lives—where they lived, where they worked and who they loved.

Many of these men are listed on multiple war memorials—to mark the town in which they were born, the town where they went to school or to mark a family association for example. Several of the men are listed on the Tranent Public School War Memorial. Tranent Public School (also known as the Junior Secondary School) was largely destroyed by fire in 1958.

Research into the lives of the men was challenging in several different ways. An official census takes place in Scotland every 10 years and due to the fact that census records are sealed for 100 years, the most relevant census details available are from 1911. In order to protect the privacy of individuals, birth records are only publicly available out-with a period of 100 years, marriage records out-with a period of 75 years and death records out-with a period of 50 years. Additionally, prior to the War, some farmworkers moved as frequently as every six months. This means that in many cases, it is difficult to ascertain where the men lived or worked in the period between 1911 and their deaths and so, an educated guess occasionally had to be made, taking into account the information available. Therefore, any errors in this document are my own—any further information, corrections or amendments would be gratefully received at rhonahyslop@hotmail.com.

I give grateful thanks to the East Lothian Archive & Local History Project, in particular Dr Hanita Ritchie of the Archive Department at the John Gray Centre, which has taken on the enormous job of developing a database of all the War Memorials in East Lothian and the names which are listed on these, as well as gathering together all photographs and documents pertaining to those who fell. It would not have been able to produce this work without the previous research undertaken.

Rhona Elizabeth Wilson November 2018
Edited October 2024

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SALTOUN WAR MEMORIAL

The War Memorial in Saltoun Parish Church was inaugurated on 18th September 1921. An article regarding the inauguration which was published in the Haddingtonshire Courier reads as follows –

'The unveiling and dedication of a handsome war memorial, erected by public subscription, in Saltoun Parish Church on Sunday afternoon, attracted a large congregation. The service was attended by the relatives and friends of the heroes, and upwards of thirty local ex-servicemen, headed by a piper, marched in procession to the Church, where seats had been reserved for them. The service was conducted by the Rev. Dr Thos. E.S. Clarke, minister of the parish, assisted by the Rev. J.B. Service, Bolton and the Rev. Wm. J Forbes, Haddington. The preliminary prayer was offered by Mr Forbes, while the lessons from the Old and New Testaments were read by Mr Service. An intercessory prayer by Dr Clarke followed, and subsequently the names of the fallen men were read by Dr Clarke, the congregation remaining standing. This was followed by an impressive dedicatory prayer offered by Dr Clarke and the sounding of the 'Last Post' by a kilted bugler.

The unveiling of the memorial was performed by Major General W. Hunter Blair C.B., C.M.G., who afterwards delivered a short address. He said they were met there that afternoon to honour with all reverence the memory of those who had gone out from this Parish and laid down their lives in helping to save our country in the greatest crisis and the greatest danger which ever confronted it. It was difficult, if not impossible, to find words adequate to express the honour due and the pride they felt in the deeds done by these men, and the thousands who shared their fate – men who had little experience of a soldier's life, and still less of the conditions of a great and terrible war, and who left their peaceful homes and peaceful avocations, and plunged out into the great unknown, facing untold hardships, perils, and privations with a great heart and, finally, met death itself. Surely no memorial was necessary for them to keep such memories ever deep in their hearts, but let them not think on that account that a memorial such as this beautiful window was simply an ornament. These men in dying left us a great legacy – they died to save this country from a terrible fate. And so let them remember and this memorial window would help to remind them, that they must do all in their power to uphold, as they did, the honour of our country and its homes, and to do nothing which would in any way impair or dishonour the memory of those who had made so great a sacrifice. To those present and to succeeding generations, this beautiful window would serve as a reminder of the patriotism of the men in whose memory it was placed there. It would surely act as an incentive to all to follow as far as is in them lay the great example, the example of men who placed their country and country's interest above everything else and were faithful to an ideal, even unto death. There was one thing more he wanted to say. If we looked with pride on the glorious death of these gallant men, we also must deeply sympathise with those near and dear to them who mourned their loss. It would be presumptive on his part, almost a stranger to say much on this subject, but he could say for himself, and he believed also speaking for the large assembly of their friends and neighbours gathered there that afternoon, that they did most sincerely and wholeheartedly feel with the bereaved, and sympathised with them in their great and irreplaceable loss.

The solemn proceedings were brought to a close by the singing of the first four verses of the 66th Paraphrase, the rendering of the National Anthem, and the pronouncement of the benediction. Among those present in the Church were Capt. And Mrs A.M. Talbot Fletcher of Saltoun Hall and family, Mrs Hunter Blair, Capt. A.T. and Miss McLaren, Capt. A.N. Bruce Ramsay, MC; Mr R.D. Sinclair Main and Mr Warren.

The memorial is a three light window, the lower part of which is a scene from the Field of War – a trench with barbed wire entanglements. The solitary figure in this part is a soldier in khaki, lying dead. His rifle

has just slipped from his nerveless grasp, his equipment is lying around in disorder, while on his brow is a ghastly wound. Just above him is the most commanding feature of the whole work – a representation of Christ on the Cross. Above His head are the letters I.N.R.I. (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews). The thorn-crowned Saviour looks down with infinite pity, seeming to claim the dead warrior as His own, with the words (inscribed on this window) “Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends” while on each of the two side windows are two angels with crowns and palms in their hands, waiting to welcome one whose earthly strife is o'er. The colours are very finely blended, while the whole window is a very beautiful and impressive war memorial. On a brass at the foot of the window is the following inscription, with the names of those in honour of whom the memorial has been created:

IN MEMORIAM

To the Honour and Glory of God and in
Memory of the Men of this Parish who
Fell in the Great War, 1914 – 1919

G. DODDS	J. SCOTT
J. FRISKEN	J. STITT
W. LAING	L. TAIT
J. McCULLOCH	G. THOMSON
T. MONTEITH	H. TURNER

“Greater love hath no man than this than
a man lay down his life for his friends”
St John xv., 13

The window and brass are the work of Messrs Hardman, London and Birmingham. The considerable alterations in the Church, which were necessary for the insertion of the window, have been most tastefully executed by Mr Richard Baillie, Pencaitland. The whole expense of those alterations has been entirely borne by Captain Fletcher of Saltoun, who, by his advice and generosity, has done much for the success of the memorial.’

Private George Minto Dodds

George Minto Dodds was born in Southdean in the Scottish Borders on 6th September 1890. His family comprised of his father Thomas Dodds, his mother Helen Minto and siblings Lizzie, Agnes, Anthony and Helen. George was the second youngest child. In 1911, the family were living at Herdmanston House where his father was Estate Caretaker and George was working as a Gamekeeper.

George had enlisted in January 1915 in the Private King's Own Scottish Borderers 7th / 8th Battalion (Service Number 17720) and was sent to the Dardanelles, afterwards to Egypt and then to France where he was twice wounded. Before enlisting, he was in the employment of Mr John Deans Hope of Haddington, Liberal Minister of Parliament for East Lothian.

In 23rd April 1915, George married Mary Laughlin in Edinburgh. Mary is listed on their marriage certificate as being a domestic servant, then living at Herdmanston House so this may be where the two met. George was serving at that point and his usual residence was listed as Verne Fort, Portland. This was an infantry barracks and the Headquarters of Coast Artillery, located in Dorset.

George was killed in action in France on 17th September 1918 aged 27 years old. In his will, he left all his effects to his wife, then residing at Pollock Castle, Renfrewshire. His death was mentioned in the Courier on 11th October 1918 and he is named on both the Loos Memorial, France and on a family gravestone in Saltoun Parish Church Graveyard.

Corporal James Frisken

James Frisken was born in Houndslow, Westruther on 19th November 1896. His family comprised of his father Peter Frisken, his mother Joan Rutherford Laing and ten siblings John, Helen, Christopher, Mary, Peter, Walter, Richard (who died young), Agnes, Alexander (who died young) and Christina (who died young). James was the youngest of all the siblings.

In 1901, the family were living at Leaston in Humbie (James' grandfather was from Humbie). In 1911, James lived with his mother at Middlemains where both were Outworkers on the farm. His sister Agnes married George Scott, the brother of Private James Scott, in 1910 and they lived next door to the Friskens and the Scotts at Middlemains with their sons, Thomas and Peter, who were named after their Grandfathers.

James enlisted with the Royal Scots Fusiliers 6th / 7th Battalion (Service Number 29953). He was killed in action in France on 11th April 1917 aged 21 years old. His death was mentioned in the Courier on 1st June 1917 and he is named on the Arras Memorial, France. In his will, he left all his effects to his Mother, first at Castlemains, Gifford then at Upper Bolton. In 1918, she was at Eaglescairne Home Farm.

A year after James' death, the Courier reported that Private Walter Frisken, Signal Section of Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, was reported wounded by a bullet in the thigh in France. His brothers Peter and Christopher also served, with Christopher being wounded.

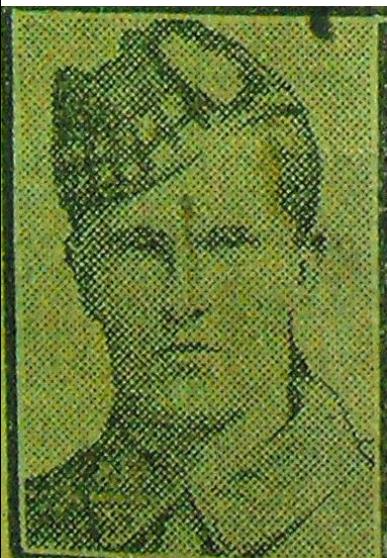
Private William Hill Laing

William Hill Laing was born in Cambusnethan, Lanark on 19th September 1895. His family comprised of his father John Watson Laing, his mother Elizabeth Fender Hill and siblings John, Agnes, Jessie (died young), Elspeth and Thomas (died young). William was the second youngest sibling.

In 1901, the family were living in Edinburgh where his father was working as a Railway Passenger Guard. In 1911, the family were living in Humbie at Humbie Station House. His father was the Station Master, employed by the North British Railway Company. The station was around two miles from the village but the opening of the station made a dramatic difference to the previously isolated village. During the period of 1910—1911, nearly 6,700 passengers travelled from Humbie. William was at that point working as a Bank Apprentice.

William enlisted in the Royal Scots 9th Battalion (Service Number—2105) and was killed in action in France on 23rd April 1915 aged 19 years old. His death was mentioned in Courier on 7th May 1915. He is named on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, France and is also named on a family gravestone in Saltoun Parish Church Graveyard, the Humbie War Memorial and on the Tranent Public School Memorial.

Private James (Jim) Cairns McCulloch



James (Jim) Cairns McCulloch was born in Penninghame, Wigtown on 5th July 1896. His family comprised of his father John McCulloch, his mother Helen McNally and siblings William, John and George. Jim was the youngest of the brothers.

In 1911, the family was living at Saltoun Hall North Lodge where his father was as a Gasman and James was working as a Grocer's Apprentice. Prior to enlistment, he was working as a grocer at the Tranent Co-operative Society.

James married Agnes Denholm on 25th February 1916 in Edinburgh and they had a daughter, Agnes Wilson McCulloch, born that same year.

He enlisted in Ormiston in the Royal Scots 12th Battalion (Service Number 43065), later became attached to the 8th Battalion and was reported wounded on 13th October 1916. James died of wounds on 19th January 1917 aged 20 years old. His death was mentioned in the Courier on 2nd February 1917. He is named on the Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension Memorial, France and is also named on the Pencaitland War Memorial and the Tranent Parish Church War Memorial.

His brother Private John McCulloch of the Royal Scots was reported missing in 1918 but survived.

For years after his death, James' family inserted poems in the 'In Memoriam' section of the Courier on the anniversary of his death. The poems on the 1st anniversary read—

'Too far away your grave to see,
But not too far to think of thee;
If the grave were to open, what a change you would see;
But eternal rest is better for thee.
Sleep on, dear Jim, we would not wake you,
For pain and sorrow would darken your brow;
Sweet be thy rest, where the birds warble o'er thee,
No earthly snares can trap you now.'

(Inserted by his brother Willie, Transvaal, South Africa)

My grief the world will never know,
Nor thoughts of sadness that are mine.

As with the years I older grow.

My heart for him will ever pine.

(inserted by his sorrowing Mother, Saltoun Lodge)

There was a James Cairns McCulloch born in 1923 at Gladsmuir who was James' nephew by his brother John. In a strange coincidence, John's wife's maiden name was Cairns.

Private Thomas Mahon Monteith

Thomas Mahon Monteith was born in Haddington on 6th February 1890. His family comprised of his father William Monteith, his mother Mary Hill and siblings Mary Anne, John, William, Jane, Robert, Ellen and Margaret. Thomas was the youngest of the siblings.

In 1911, the family were living at Saltoun East Mains where his father was a ploughman in charge of horses. In April 1916, it was reported that a Mr Wm. Monteith, farm labourer, East Saltoun, had applied for a public house certificate for a premises in East Saltoun. He intended to continue as a farm labourer while his wife attended to the public house. It is unclear if the application was ever allowed.

Thomas enlisted in the Private Army Motor Transport Corps where he served for 14 months and was invalided home. Thomas died 16th April 1918 at 28 years old at Saltoun East Mains due to cancer of the lungs. His death is mentioned in the Courier on 19th April 1918 and he is named on a family headstone in Saltoun Parish Church Graveyard.

Private James Scott

James Scott was born in Humbie, East Lothian on 27th September 1895. His family comprised of his father Thomas Scott, his mother Henrietta Eleanor Scott (who was from Saltoun) and siblings William, George, Thomas, Elizabeth, Andrew and Peter. James was the fourth son.

In 1901, the family were living at West Saltoun where his father was a farm servant in charge of horses. In 1911, the family were living at Middlemains. James's brother George married Agnes Frisken, the sister of Corporal James Frisken, in 1910 and they lived next door to the Friskens and the Scotts at Middlemains with their sons, Thomas and Peter, who were named after their grandfathers.

James enlisted in the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders "B" Company 11th Battalion (Service Number - S/6341). He was killed in action in France on 6th May 1916 aged 20 years old. His death was mentioned in the Courier on 19th May 1916. He is named on the Vermelles British Cemetery Memorial, France and is also named on the Pencaitland War Memorial. In his will, he left all his effects to his Mother, then residing at Winton Toll (also known as Toll House, Pencaitland).

Lance Corporal Joseph Roderick Stitt

Joseph Roderick Stitt was born in Newcastle, Roxburgh on 20th September 1887. The family comprised of his father William Stitt, his mother Mary Pearson and siblings William, John, Janet, Robert, James, George, Thomas and Sarah (died young). Joseph was the third youngest of the siblings.

In 1901, the family were living at Nether Row, Castleton where his father was a Gameskeeper. It is not possible to find him in the 1911 census records but there is a William Stitt living at Muirpark, Humbie who is from Castleton—this may be his older brother. It is unclear what Joseph's connection to Saltoun was—he may have been employed in the area.

Joseph enlisted in Haddington and joined the Royal Scots 8th Battalion (Service Number - 325491). He was killed in action in France on 12th April 1918 at 30 years old. He is named on the Ploegsteert Memorial, Belgium and on the Liddesdale War Memorial, Newcastle. A William Stitt is named on the Humbie War Memorial as a World War Two casualty. This may be Joseph's nephew.

Leading Aircraftsman Leonard Henderson Tait

Leonard Henderson Tait was born in Edinburgh on 21st September 1900 in Edinburgh. His family comprised of his father William Henderson Tait, his mother Eliza Helen Munro and siblings including Alexander, William, John, George and Jessie. Leonard was the third eldest child. In 1911, Leonard was living in West Saltoun with his Uncle Alexander and Martha, a cousin. The rest of his family lived a few doors away where his father was a grocer.

Leonard joined the 47th Squadron of the Royal Air Force (Service Number—261765). Post—armistice operations meant that the squadron was sent to Southern Russia. Leonard died as the result of accidental injuries at Csaritsin (Tsaritsyn), South Russia on 12th October 1919 aged 19 years old. His death was mentioned in the Courier on 7th November 1919. He is named on the Haidar Pasha Memorial, Turkey and on a family gravestone in Saltoun Parish Church Graveyard.

Private George Edward Thomson

George Edward Thomson was born in North Berwick on 17th June 1893. His family comprised of his father George Thomson, his mother Catherine Polwarth Stewart and siblings John, Catherine, Helen and Agnes. George was the eldest of the children. In 1911, the family were living at Tynemount Farm Cottages, Ormiston where his father was a Groom Gardener and George was working as a Ploughman. George married Rosetta Murray in 19th April 1912 and they lived in East Saltoun.

George enlisted in the Royal Scots (Service Number—30571) and was later transferred to the Labour Corps where he is listed as Gardener, Private Agricultural Corps. Formed in January 1917, the Labour Corps was made up of men who were unfit for front line service or were returned wounded. George died at the Haddington Voluntary Aid Detachment (V.A.D) Hospital on 7th January 1919 of pneumonia. He was 25 years old. His death was mentioned in the Courier on 17th January 1919 and he has a Commonwealth War Grave in Saltoun Parish Church Graveyard.

Private Archibald (Henry) Turner

Henry Turner was born in Standingstone, Morham on 9th July 1896 together with his twin, Charles Spence Turner. His family comprised of his father James Turner, Mary Ann Spence (who was from Saltoun) and his siblings James, Alexander, John, William, George, Darling, his twin Charles (who died young), Andrew and Peter. In 1911, the family was living at Farm Cottages, Whitekirk where Henry was working as a farm labourer.

Henry enlisted in Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders 11th Battalion (Service Number – S/22499). A 1917 article in the Courier states that 'the parents of Private Darling Turner (15750) of the Cameron Highlanders had been informed that he had been admitted to hospital at the front suffering from shrapnel wounds in the right side. Of three brothers serving their country, two have been wounded and one killed.' William had been killed on 13th October 1915. Henry was killed in action in France on 28th March 1918 at 21 years old. The letter from his Officer to his parents informing them of his death states that 'he was looked upon as one of the best men of the company during the recent fighting. He was exceptionally cool under fire and was really a splendid example to the other men'.

His death was mentioned in Courier on 12th April 1918 and 24th May 1918. Henry is listed on the Arras Memorial, France and also on the Whitekirk War Memorial, along with his brother William. Following William and Henry's deaths, their brother Andrew, then a ploughman at East Saltoun, submitted an appeal to the Service Appeals Tribunal. Notes in the appeal include – 'Application for exemption for agricultural worker. The papers state that two of his brothers had been killed in action and two had been injured'

There are two men (Private Peter Cameron and Lance Corporal John Turner Stirling) who are not listed on the Saltoun War Memorial but who are included in the list of names which are read out during Lammermuir Parish Church's Service of Remembrance on each Remembrance Day. It is unclear why they were not originally included on the memorial or when the decision was made to include them on the list. Their links to Saltoun are detailed below—

Private Peter Cameron



Peter Cameron was born in East Saltoun on 21st January 1893. His family comprised of his father Daniel Cameron, his mother Helen Dods and his siblings including Alexander, Robert, Margaret (who had died during an outbreak of scarlet fever in 1885), Jane, Helen, Daniel, John, Janet and Alex. Peter was the youngest of the siblings.

In 1911, the family were living at East Saltoun where his father was a Grocer and Peter was working as a joiner. His mother had died in 1905.

Peter enlisted in the Seaforth Highlanders 1st/4th Battalion (Service Number—200262). Peter died of wounds received during the Battle of Arras on the 9th April 1917 aged 24 years old. His death was mentioned in the Courier on 27th April 1917. He has a headstone in Roclincourt Military Cemetery, France, he is named on a family headstone in Saltoun Parish Church Graveyard and also on the Tranent Public School Memorial.

Lance Corporal John Turner Stirling

John Turner Stirling was born in Drem on 17th October 1897. His family comprised of his father Crawford Leslie Stirling, his mother Elizabeth Laurie Turner and siblings including Thomas, Elizabeth, Crawford and Andrew (twins), Christina and Agnes (Nannie). John was the second eldest son.

His parents were originally from Buttersdean, Grantshouse, Borders. In 1911, the family were living at Samuelston East Mains where his father was a Groom Gardener. Prior to the war, John was employed by Mr Watson, Samuelston.

John enlisted in the Royal Scots 5th/6th Battalion (Service Number—376161) and was killed in action in France on 11th August 1918 at 20 years old. He is buried at the Bouchoir New British Cemetery, France and is named on a family gravestone at Saltoun Parish Church Graveyard.

In addition, there are two curious omissions who are neither on the memorial or the list read out on Remembrance Day but who are mentioned on gravestones in Saltoun Churchyard or in other sources -

Private Matthew Boyle

Matthew Boyle, spelled Mathew in some sources, was born in East Linton, Prestonkirk on 13th December 1890. His family comprised of his father John Boyle, his mother Catherine Lyons (who was from Saltoun) and siblings including Thomas and Michael. The family was living in North Berwick in 1911 where Matthew was listed as a Ploughman on farm.

Matthew joined the Royal Scots Regiment (Service Number 43003) and is named on several occasions in the Courier as an 'East Saltoun Soldier'. Matthew was killed in action (after initially being reported missing) in France on 12th April 1917 at 27 years old. He was buried in the Brown's Copse Cemetery and is listed on a memorial at Pas de Calais.

Private James Fordyce

James Fordyce was born in Rathven in Bamff on 1st March 1874. Only his mother, Jane Fordyce, is listed on his birth certificate although a John Milne is listed as his reputed father on his marriage certificate. It is unclear whether James had siblings. James married Agnes Aitken on 20th February 1916 in Ormiston. At that point he was enlisted in the 1/5th Black Watch although his usual residence is listed as Glen Coull Distillery, Justinhaugh, Forfarshire.

James further joined the Royal Highlanders (Service Number – 2624) and then the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (Service Number – 47410). James was killed in action in France on 27th August 1918 at 43 years old. He is mentioned on the Aitken Family headstone in Saltoun Parish Church Graveyard. In his will, he left everything to his wife, then residing at Glenkinchie, Pencaitland.

