

Whitekirk War Memorial

A search to identify the men named
on the war memorial
in St Mary's Churchyard
Whitekirk

Whitekirk History Group
February 2014

Introduction

In September 1920, an unveiling and dedication ceremony was held in the graveyard of St Mary's Church, Whitekirk, for the newly erected war memorial. Designed by the architect Sir Robert Lorimer, and built of stone from the Doddington Quarry, the memorial listed the names of men from the parish of Whitekirk and Tynninghame who had fallen in service of their country during the First World War.

Two years earlier, Mr James Dow Stewart, headmaster of the village school, had prepared a hand drawn Roll of Honour listing the one hundred and thirty-seven men of the parish who had served their country during the war. With twenty-nine men named on the war memorial and a further three missing in action named on gravestones in the churchyard, the parish had lost nearly a quarter of those who had served.

In recognition of the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, the Whitekirk History Group decided to try to identify the connection between these soldiers and their parish. Research was carried out using online registers of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and archives of the New Zealand, Canadian and Australian forces. Useful background information was gathered on family connections and further details of military service by viewing obituaries and articles that had been published in the local newspaper, the Haddingtonshire Courier.

All sectors of society suffered losses in the war, from Lord George Binning, heir to the Earl of Haddington, to ploughmen, labourers and foresters. Nearly half of those who lost their lives were aged 20 or younger.

All of the fallen had enlisted in the army, although one later transferred to the Royal Flying Corps. Two served in overseas regiments, having emigrated to Canada and to New Zealand prior to the outbreak of war, where they enlisted in the forces of those countries. Four families lost two sons, while the Thomson family from Lochhouses was celebrated in the local press for having six sons serving at the same time.

The longest serving was James Nelson, who enlisted in September 1914. During his four years of service, he was wounded twice and was also gassed. He had been sent home suffering from shell shock, but returned to the front to be killed in action just nine days before the armistice. In contrast, William Myles, aged 53, never made it to the battlefield, taking ill and dying from meningitis contracted whilst travelling on the boat out. His widow suffered a second bereavement when their son David was killed three years later.

The Whitekirk History Group would welcome any additional information to help complete our research. We can be contacted at history@whitekirkvillage.com or by leaving a message in the church visitors' book.

Whitekirk War Memorial

John Ainslie

George Anderson

Lord George Binning

Alexander Borthwick

Rodger Buglass

William Combe

William Dickman

George Downie

William Hall

William Hood

Andrew Main

Charles Morrison

William Morrison

David Myles

William Myles

James Nelson

James Paton

Richard Ponton

John Puntton

Alexander Taylor

Frederick Thomson

James Thomson

Robert Thomson

Henry Turner

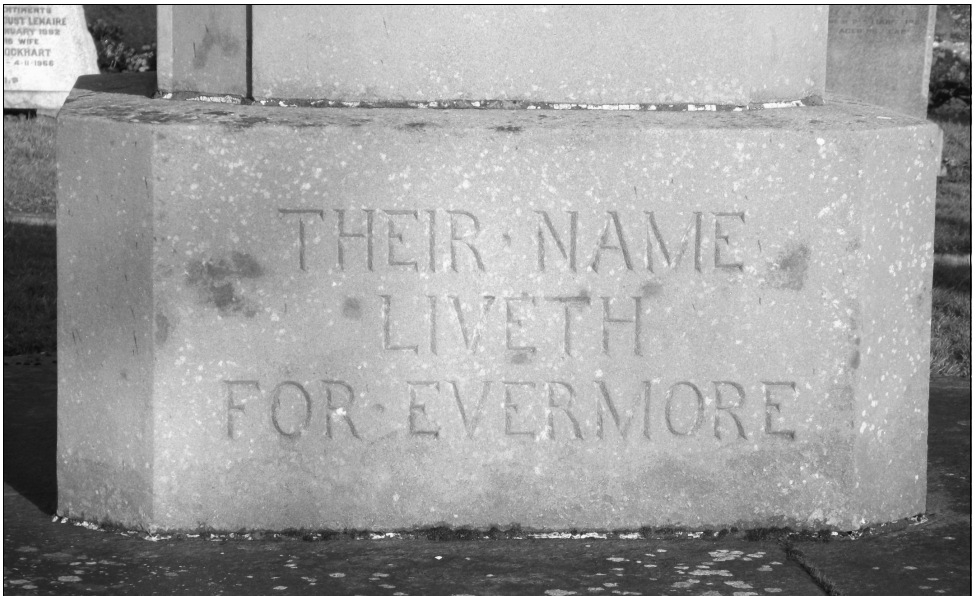
William Turner

Archibald Watt

James Watt

Andrew White

George White



Ainslie, John

Private

Cameron Highlanders, 1st btn S/15744

d. 16.4.15 aged 18

Buried Longuenesse, (St Omer) Cemetery, France

Son of John and Mary Ainslie, Brickworks, Newbyth

Enlisted in Inverness on 23.11.14, giving his occupation as ploughman. Died from cerebro-meningitis one month after arriving in France.

Anderson, George Henry

Private

Canadian Infantry, 102 btn 1010064

d. 11.5.17 aged 25

Buried La Chaudiere Military Cemetery, Vimy

(The Canadians were heavily involved in the battle of Vimy Ridge, April 1917)

Gravestone in Whitekirk graveyard. Son of Andrew and Isabella Anderson, Lochhouses
1911 census lists George Anderson as a ploughman, aged 19.

He enlisted on 26th April 1916 at Manor, Saskatchewan, Canada, giving his occupation as farmer and date of birth as 16th Dec. 1891.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 1.6.1917:

Intimation has been received that Private George Henry Anderson (1010064) Canadians, was killed in action on 11th May. He was the only son of Mr and Mrs Andrew Anderson, Lochhouses, Prestonkirk and was twenty five years of age.

Binning, Lord George Baillie Hamilton

Brigadier general

Royal Horse Guards

d. 12.1.17 aged 60

'Brigadier General Lord Binning, George Baillie Hamilton C.B., M.V.O. Seconded from the Royal Horse Guards to Lothian and Borders Horse. He died at Home during a visit to Tynninghame. He was the son of 11th Earl of Haddington of Tynninghame and is buried at Tynninghame Burial Ground. He had fought in the Egyptian campaign at Tel-El-Kebir in 1882, the Sudan Expedition of 1884 and took part in the Hazara campaign of 1888. He had commanded the Royal Horse Guards from 1899 to 1903 and had then commanded Lothian and Border Horse (part of the Territorial Force) from 1905. In 1915 he was given command of the 41st Brigade in the 14th Light Division in Belgium but returned home in April 1916 to command the 11th Mounted Brigade. In a letter to The Times an old comrade described him as " a bold and admirable horseman, a fine polo player, a cricketer, a clever musician and composer and the most charming of companions ".

Borthwick, Alexander

Private

Auckland Infantry Battalion, 6th Coy. NZEF Force. 12/1561
d. 8.8.1915 aged 25

Chunuk Bair (New Zealand) Memorial, Turkey

1911 census lists Alexander Borthwick as a joiner, aged 22,
born in Whitekirk, living at no. 5 Long Row, Tynninghame
with his older sister Jessie. His date of birth was 23rd July 1890.

His New Zealand Regiment War Record shows that he enlisted
aged 24 years and 4 months on 14th Dec. 1914 in Auckland.

He gave his occupation as joiner, employed by the NZ Govt.
at Government Farm, Te Kauwhata, Auckland.

He embarked at Wellington on 14th Feb. 1915 to sail to Gallipoli,
and was wounded, missing and believed dead
on or about 8th August 1915.



Buglass, Rodger S.

Private

Highland Light Infantry, 10th/11th btn, formerly 1059 Royal Scots 40094
d. 27.8.17

Buried Dochy Farm New British Cemetery, Belgium
Born Ayton, Berwickshire

From the Haddingtonshire Courier 2.11.17:

Private R. Buglass (killed) enlisted in the Royal Scots but was subsequently attached to the Highland Light Infantry. His parents reside at Auldham, Whitekirk.

Haddingtonshire Courier 30.8.1918 In Memoriam mentions that he had a brother, Jim, on active service.

Combe, William

Private

Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), 10th btn 17046
d. 3.3.16

Loos memorial, France

1911 census lists William Combe at Newmains, aged 17, a cattleman born in Haddington, son of John and Annie Combe.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 17.3.1916:

Information has been received by the friends of Private William Combe of the Scottish Rifles that he has been killed in action. Deceased was a son of John Combe, formerly a fisherman in Dunbar, and now engaged as a farm servant in the neighbourhood of Scoughall.

Dickman, William

Lance Corporal

Gordon Highlanders, 2nd btn S/2681

d. 10.11.15 aged 19

Buried Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, Kent

Gravestone in Whitekirk graveyard. Son of Robert and Margaret Dickman of Newbyth.

1911 census lists William Dickman aged 14 at Camehill, Newbyth, a farm labourer, born in Duns.

Died of wounds received in action whilst in hospital at Beachborough Park, Shorncliffe.

Downie, George Smith

Corporal

Royal Scots, 12th btn, D Coy. 43790

d. 20.7.18

Buried Le Peuplier Military Cemetery, Caestre, France

Born in Tranent. Enlisted in Peebles in 3/8th btn, Royal Scots on 12.7.15 aged 19 giving his occupation as ploughman. Promoted to Corporal on 20.4.18, then posted to 12th

Royal Scots.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 23.8.1918:

Intimation has been received by Mr and Mrs Downie, Sunnyside, that their son, Private George Downie, Royal Scots, has been killed in action. Private Downie enlisted in 1915 and has been in France for over three years. Previous to enlisting he was engaged in farming work.

Hall, William

Private

Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) 5th btn 1913

d. 29.10.1916 aged 27

Thiepval Memorial, France

Son of Andrew and Jane Halll, High Street, Greenlaw, Berwickshire

From Haddingtonshire Courier 1.12.1916:

Tynninghame Gamekeeper Killed

Mr Andrew Hall, High Street, Greenlaw, has received information that his son, Private William Hall, Scottish Rifles, has been killed in action. Before enlisting in February this year, he was an underkeeper to the Earl of Haddington at Tynninghame, Prestonkirk. He had only been a few weeks at the front.

Hood, William

Corporal

Royal Scots, 11th btn, then 13th btn. 26276

d. 10.7.17 aged 20

Buried Brandhoek Military Cemetery, Belgium. Died of wounds.

Son of Agnes Hood, Scoughall. Born in Garvald.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 11.8.1916:

Pvte W Hood, Royal Scots – Wounded

Information has been received that Private William Hood, Royal Scots, has been wounded in the right hand. He is the eldest son of Mrs Hood, Preston, Prestonkirk.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 20.7.1917:

Corporal William Hood, Royal Scots – killed

News has been received that Corporal William Hood (26276) Royal Scots, was killed by the bursting of a shell on the 10th of July. Before enlisting, he was employed by Mr Dale, Scoughall, and was previously wounded. His widowed mother resides at Preston, Prestonkirk.

Main, Andrew

Private

Royal Scots, "B" Coy, 15th btn. 31325

d. 4.4.17 aged 19

Buried Ste Catherine British Cemetery, France

From Haddingtonshire Courier 27.4.1917:

Private Andrew Main, Royal Scots, died of wounds

Private Andrew Main (31325) Royal Scots, son of Mr and Mrs Main, Barneymains, has died of wounds received in action. Deceased was within two months of twenty years of age.

Morrison, Charles

Lance Corporal

Machine Gun Corps (Infantry) 19th bde. Formerly 964

Royal Scots. 36879

d. 24.8.16 aged 21

Buried Flatiron Copse Cemetery, Mametz, France

Son of James and Margaret Morrison, Lochhouses

James is listed as a Forester in 1911 census. Charles is listed as a Postboy (domestic servant) aged 15, born in Whitekirk.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 12.3.1915:

Private Charles Morrison, 8th Royal Scots, son of Mr James Morrison, Tynninghame, has been slightly wounded about the head. Pte Morrison was attached to the machine gun section, and was on his way up country for instruction when a shell burst among the gun team.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 22.9.1916:

Lance Corporal Charles Morrison, Machine Gun Corps, eldest son of Mr and Mrs James Morrison, Tynninghame, was killed in action by a shell on 24th August 1916. He was a member of the 8th Royal Scots and answered the call at mobilisation. He went with his regiment to France in November 1914 and was wounded. Recovering, he was promoted to the machine gun section and was made a Lance Corporal. He returned to France and was killed in the battle of High Wood. His officers speak of him as "one of the best and most trusted NCO's in the section and was liked by all. He showed himself to be an excellent and fearless soldier" Another brother, William is serving in France, with the Gordons.



Morrison, William

Private

Gordon Highlanders, 1st/7th btn. 6309

d. 13.11.16 aged 19

Buried Y Ravine Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel, France

Brother of Charles above

From Haddingtonshire Courier 8.12.1916:

Mr and Mrs James Morrison, Tynninghame, have suffered their second sad bereavement, they having received information that their son, Private William Morrison, Gordon Highlanders, was killed in action on the 13th November. Deceased enlisted in October 1915 when 18 years of age, and went to the front on March of this year. His officer writes:- He died gallantly with many more of his company in an attack on the enemy trenches.

Myles, William

Sergeant

Royal Scots, 8th btn. 1293

d. 2.3.15 aged 53

Buried St Sever Cemetery, Rouen

1911 census lists William Myles aged 49, forester, living in South side Tynninghame.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 12.3.1915:

The death is announced in an hospital at Rouen, France, of Sgt Wm. Myles, 8th Royal Scots, from cerebro-meningitis. Deceased belongs to Tynninghame and is survived by a widow and family. Sergeant Myles left Haddington with the last draft of the 8th Royal Scots and is supposed to have contracted the disease on board ship. He was extremely popular with the men, and an excellent soldier. Much sympathy is felt in the Tynninghame district for his widow and family.

Myles, David

Private

Royal Scots, 9th btn. 370117

d. 12.4.18

Ploegsteert Memorial

Son of Janet and William above. Listed in 1911 census as apprentice joiner.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 29.8.19:

MYLES – Reported missing on 12th April 1918, now presumed died on that date or since. 370117, Private David Myles, 9th Royal Scots, in his 22nd year, the only surviving son of the late Sergeant W. Myles and Mrs Myles, Tynninghame, Prestonkirk.

Nelson, James

Corporal

Seaforth Highlanders, 'D' Coy, 2nd btn. S/3486

d. 2.11.18 aged 24

Buried Preseau Cemetery, France

Son of Thomas and Janet Nelson, Tynninghame. 1911 census lists James Nelson aged 16, gardener, living north side Tynninghame, born Whitekirk.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 11.5.1917:

Private James Nelson, Seaforth Highlanders, is reported wounded for the second time, suffering from shell shock.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 22.11.18: *Mr and Mrs Thomas Nelson, Tynninghame, Prestonkirk, have received a sympathetic letter from the Lieutenant Colonel of the Seaforth Highlanders, intimating that their eldest son, Corporal James Nelson, was killed on the 2nd inst. Corporal Nelson was killed instantaneously. Previous to enlistment, Corporal Nelson was employed as a gardener at Tullieallan Castle, Fifeshire. He enlisted in September 1914, and has been in France since 1915. He has twice been wounded and on one occasion gassed. His last visit home was in June.*

Paton, James

Private

Machine Gun Corps 133581

d. 20.10.18

Whitekirk graveyard shows a James Paton, died of wounds in France 20.10.18 aged 19

From Haddingtonshire Courier 1.11.18:

PATON – Died of wounds on 20th October, at 5 Casualty Clearing Station France, Jim, Machine Gun Corps, aged 19 years and 8 months, dearly beloved third eldest son of James and Mary Paton, Tynninghame Links, Prestonkirk.

Ponton, Richard Aitken

Private

Royal Scots, 11th btn 40800

d. 6.4.17 aged 19

Buried Aubigny Cemetery, France

Son of Richard and Isabella Ponton, Tynninghame (Estate joiner). 1911 lists Richard Ponton aged 13, born Duns.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 20.4.1917:

Private Richard Aitken Ponton, the Royal Scots, has died of wounds received in action in the recent 'push'. He was a young man of much promise, and before enlisting at the age of eighteen, was serving at Tynninghame gardens. His elder brother is also serving at the front. Deceased is a son of Mr and Mrs Ponton, Tynninghame.

Punton, John

Private

Royal Scots fusiliers. 41393

d. 17.8.18 aged 19

Buried Le Peuplier Military Cemetery, Caestre, France

Son of Henry and Joan Punton, Lochhouses, Whitekirk

From Haddingtonshire Courier 6.9.1918:

Private John Punton, (41393) Royal Scots Fusiliers, eldest son of Mr Henry Punton and Mrs Punton, Lochhouses, Prestonkirk, fell in action on August 17th. Private Punton who was in his 19th year, enlisted when he was 16 years of age. Subsequently he was sent home by the military authorities for nine months. Before he was 18, he re-joined the colours and was drafted to France several months ago.

Taylor, Alexander

No record found.

Thomson, Frederick

Corporal

Royal Scots, 13th btn. 221716

d. 15.9.16 aged 20

Thiepval Memorial, France

Enlisted 2.5.15 aged 19 giving his occupation as farm labourer. Promoted to Corporal on 29.6.16. One of seven brothers. His brother James, a stretcher bearer won a military medal for conspicuous bravery on the field.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 27.10.1916:

Intimation has been received of the death in action on September 15th of Corporal Frederick Thomson, Royal Scots, third son of Mr and Mrs Alexander Thomson, Lochhouses, Prestonkirk. Other three brothers are on active service, one in ASC, one (married) in the RFA and one in the Australian contingent.

Thomson, James

Frederick Thomson above had a brother named James, who served in 51st Btn, Australian Imperial Forces. However, he survived the war, was awarded a Military Medal, and returned to live in Australia where he died in 1945.

Robert Thomson, below, also had a brother named James who served in 22nd Btn, Australian Imperial Forces. He too survived the war and returned to Australia in December of 1918. However he had been badly wounded. If he died shortly after the war, would his name have been added to the War Memorial?

It is possible that the James Thomson named on the War Memorial was not related to either of these two families.

Thomson, Robert

Private

2/8th Royal Scots, later Highland Light Infantry, 16th btn 40073

d. 2.12.17 aged 20

Tyne Cot Memorial

Son of John and Christina Thomson, Tynninghame

1911 census lists Robert Thomson age 13 living south side Tynninghame, born Whitekirk.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 4.10.18:

Private Robert Thomson, 2/8th Royal Scots (attached H.L.I.) reported missing on 2nd December 1917 is now officially reported killed on that date. He was 20 years of age, and the youngest son of Mr John Thomson, and the late Mrs Thomson, Tynninghame.



Turner, Henry

Private

Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 11th btn. S/22499

d. 28.3.18 aged 21

Arras memorial

1911 census lists Henry Turner aged 15, farm labourer, Whitekirk Farm cottages, son of James and Mary Ann Turner. One of a family of 10 boys and 1 girl, and brother of William, below.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 12.4.18:

It is notified that Private Henry Turner, A & SH, was killed in France on March 28th. Private Turner was a son of Mr and Mrs James Turner, East Saltoun, where Mr Turner is a shepherd. Mr and Mrs Turner have five sons serving, of whom two have now fallen. Two others have been wounded, of whom one is now discharged owing to wounds. With regard to the death of Private Henry Turner, a letter from his officer says 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 a really splendid example to other men'.

Turner, William

Private

Cameron Highlanders, 1st btn, D coy. S/14487

d. 13.10.15 aged 26

Loos memorial

Enlisted in Inverness on 10.11.14. Stated that he was a shepherd living at Dalmeny Park, West Lothian. Brother of Henry above.

Watt, Archibald

Private

Seaforth Highlanders, 7th btn. S/25490

d. 15.4.18 aged 18

Tyne Cot memorial, Belgium

From Haddingtonshire Courier 7.6. 1918: *Intimation has been received that Private Archie Watt was killed in France on the 15th April. He was the fifth son of Mr and Mrs Watt, Schoolhouse, Tynninghame, and was almost 19 years of age. He was an apprentice at the Commercial Bank at Dunbar, and before enlisting, was engaged in the Chirnside branch. He is the second son to make the supreme sacrifice, and much sympathy has been expressed with Mr and Mrs Watt and family in their heavy bereavement. Another son, Private Robert Watt, 9th Royal Scots, has been wounded for the second time, and is now in hospital in England.*

Archibald Watt enlisted with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, but was killed in action near Kemmel whilst attached to the Seaforth Highlanders. Private R McFadyean wrote to his parents that:

'He was killed by an enemy shell..... Your son was well liked by everyone with whom he came in contact and was always one of the best. We came out of the line on 13th April, and had been resting in huts a few miles back. Early on the morning of the 15th, the enemy shelled our camp and got a direct hit on the hut in which Archie was. It killed Archie and another man and wounded several others. Archie was buried the same afternoon in a military cemetery nearby'.

Watt, James

Second Lieutenant

Royal Flying Corps and Royal Scots 4th btn

d. 2.5.17 aged 22

Saigol Military Cemetery, Kriston, Greece Gravestone in Whitekirk graveyard.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 11.5.1917:

Intimation has been received that Second Lieutenant James Watt, Royal Scots, attached to Royal Flying Corps, was killed in action on May 2nd. Deceased was the third son of Mr Robert A Watt, J.P., schoolmaster, Tynningame. He was gazetted in August 1915.

James Watt joined the Lothian and Borders Horse Yeomanry on 18th Nov. 1911 and was mobilised at the outbreak of war in August 1914. Gazetted 2nd Lieutenant to the Royal Scots on 21st August 1915, he served with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in Egypt and Palestine. He transferred to the Royal Flying Corps in November 1916 and proceeded to Salonika in March 1917. His Commanding Officer wrote:

'The day the accident happened, he had taken to the air with Lieut. Gaskell, in pursuit of a hostile machine. They had crossed the enemy's lines and had been fired on by anti-aircraft guns, and the machine may have been hit. When returning to the aerodrome, Gaskell started to glide down at a rather steep angle, when the wings folded back and the machine dived to earth. Both pilot and observer were killed at once. Lieut. Watt was a great favourite with us all, and was a very gallant fellow in the air. He had several good flights before his unfortunate mishap, and was always a great credit to himself. All the pilots were keen to have him as a gunner'.

White, Andrew John

Private

Machine Gun Corps, 26th btn. 20533

d.1.8.16 aged 21

Etaples Military Cemetery, France

Son of late Andrew and Margaret White, New Mains, Whitekirk

Enlisted 18.11.14 in Inverness. On 27.1.16 was admitted to hospital with a gunshot wound to the head which was thought to have been self-inflicted. However two witnesses testified that he had been shot accidentally while a gun was being cleaned.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 11.8.1916:

Whitekirk Soldier dies of wounds

Mrs Andrew White, Whitekirk, received a wire from the War Office on Tuesday evening to the effect that her youngest son, Andrew, had died of his wounds on August 1st. Private White enlisted in the Seaforth Highlanders at the outbreak of the war, and was latterly transferred to the machine gun section. He was wounded in both legs, one of which had to be amputated. He was twenty-one years of age. He officiated as secretary for the Whitekirk branch of the Ploughmen's Union previous to enlistment and was held in much respect by all with whom he came in contact. Mrs White's eldest son, George, enlisted in the 8th Royal Scots in November 1914. Recently he was seized with trench fever, and sent home to an hospital in England. He is making favourable progress. The family resided for a number of years at Monument Cottage, Prestonpans.

From Haddingtonshire Courier 18.8.1916:

Private Andrew John White, Machine Gun Corps – Dies of Wounds

Official intimation has been received of the death from wounds, at No 6 British Red Cross Hospital, Etaples, on August 1, of Private Andrew John White (20533) Machine Gun Corps. Deceased was twenty – one years of age, and was a son of Mrs White, Whitekirk, and the late Mr Andrew White, Prestonpans.

White, George

Lance Corporal

Royal Scots, 8th btn. 325076

d. 4.12.17

Bancourt British Cemetery, France

Brother of Andrew above

From Haddingtonshire Courier 28.12.17:

George White – Killed in action on 4th December 1917. Lance Corporal George Inglis White, 8th Royal Scots, aged 24 years, second dearly beloved son of the late Andrew White of East Linton and of Mrs White, Whitekirk, New Mains. Deeply mourned.

Other names on headstones in St Mary's Graveyard not listed on the War Memorial (missing in action).

Cowe, Robert

Lance Corporal
Royal Scots, 13th btn. 16466
d.26.9.15 aged 19
Loos Memorial, France
Missing at the battle of Loos.
Son of Henry and Annie Cowe, Auldhame

Hunter, Alexander

Private
Gordon Highlanders, 1st btn. 241635
d. 26.9.17 aged 21
Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium
Missing at Zonnebeke
Son of James and Janet Hunter, Tynninghame

Leadbetter, George

Private
Kings Own Scottish Borderers, 7/8th btn. 40339
d. 15.9.16 aged 23
Thiepval Memorial, France
Son of George and Jane Leadbetter, Thurston Mains, Innerwick
(Also named on Innerwick War Memorial)