

## A POEM : WW 1 : and Family BEATON

**William BEATON**, an Aberdeenshire lad, settled in 'Forfarshire' with his wife **Ann** in the early **1870s**. Many of their years together were to be spent in **Southmuir, Kirriemuir**, firstly in **Sawmill Row** and later in a cottage in **Mill Street** where they raised their **10 children**.



Their youngest child was named **John McHardie Beaton** born on **17 July 1894** at **Sawmill Row**. The poem which is so central to this story was written by John shortly before he was killed on **9 May, 1915** when serving with the **5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Black Watch** in France.

The existence of the poem was first brought to the notice of the Westmuir Village website in the **summer of 2011** by an earlier resident, **Margaret Gray**. In **1957** **Margaret emigrated to Australia** with her husband, children and mother, **Mary Beaton**. Soon Australia became home to all the family although Margaret and her husband Ron enjoyed a visit back to Scotland in 1996 when they visited **Edinburgh Castle** to seek out **John Beaton's name in the Black Watch records**.

Margaret kindly sent a copy of the poem and the details of where Lance Corporal John Beaton (her mother's cousin) was **buried at Fleurbaix, France**. With the information now to hand it was decided to include the story of John Beaton in the village website.

At much the same time however an article appeared in the local **Courier** and Advertiser stating that a **Mr William (Bill) Beaton**, from **Ottawa in Canada** had kindly gifted part of his collection of **Rabbie Burns books to Southmuir Primary school**, where many of **Bill's ancestors** had been taught. The article also mentioned that an **uncle of Bill's** had been **killed in France during the First World War**. There had to be a family connection here and quite heart warming to find that **two distant branches** of the Beaton family should be **remembering and protecting the memory of young John Beaton**. The **commemorative scroll** as issued by King and Country came to mind.

*'Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten'*



Margaret (Australia) tells us that her mother **Mary** was the daughter of **Karl Beaton**, a **Norwegian**. There were two Beaton families in Kirriemuir in the early 1900s and **Karls** family lived in the **Knowehead** area. Mary's sister, **Karen Beaton** (and family) also moved to **Australia** whilst their three brothers **Archie, Bob** and **Jock** remained in **Kingoldrum, Kirriemuir** and **Westmuir's Roman Road / Main Road** cottages.

**Bill (Canada)** finds his **family tree** is directly traced to **Mill Street, Southmuir** as revealed in the **1891** and **1901 census**. Sadly, as was often the case in those early days, **three of the children** were to **die in infancy** prior to 1891. Bill's father **David** was born in **1887** the **8<sup>th</sup>** child of the family and he chose to emigrate to Canada some time after his marriage in **South Parish Church, Kirriemuir** on **8<sup>th</sup> October 1918** thereby following in the footsteps (in 1910) of Maggie the eldest child and Archie. Bill remembers his Aunt Maggie well as she enjoyed a good long life in Canada. **Archie** however also **fought in WW1** having returned to fight with the **29<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force**. He was **killed on 26 May, 1916** - one year after the loss of his young brother John Beaton. **Archie is buried at Poperinghe in Belgium**. The eldest brother **William emigrated to Canada in 1933**.

The **Black Watch Museum in Perth** already have records and details of **Lance Corporal John Beaton**. The copies of John's **poem, military burial details** and **family photographs** given to the **Westmuir Website** by Bill and Margaret will be presented to the **Kirriemuir Museum** for safekeeping.



Lance Corporal John BEATON

5<sup>th</sup> Battalion

Black Watch (Royal Highlanders )

Killed in action, France & Flanders, 09/05/1915

Born: Kirriemuir, Forfarshire. Enlisted: Kirriemuir.



*"He whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness faced danger and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom".*

*Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.*

Please 'click' to read the poem written by John in 1915, a few days before he was killed in action.



John, Unknown child, Maggie and Archie

Photo taken in 1910 prior to Maggie and Archie's departure to Canada.

John 16 yrs of age

Archie 19 yrs of age.



Mary

Karen

Margaret