

# Courier Press Report of Beaton Relatives visit to Kirriemuir War Memorial.

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## Emotional pilgrimage traces history

by Richard Watt

THE DESCENDANT of two Angus soldiers who perished in the First World War has made an emotional pilgrimage to Scotland.

Lance Corporal John Beaton of 5th Battalion, The Black Watch was born in 1894 in Kirriemuir, the youngest of 10 children, and died in France aged 20 on May 9 1915.

His brother Archie also died during the conflict in service to the Canadian Expeditionary Force, while a third brother in the same regiment, David, survived.

Three generations on, Douglas Beaton and his wife Louise returned to Angus for a "special day" retracing his family history.

The Beatons visited Kirriemuir to see the museum and war memorial, on which John and Archie Beaton's names are engraved.

They were also given a tour by local historian Helen Humphreys and her husband Brian, who organised their visit to see where the family lived 100 years ago.

Mr Beaton said: "In essence, we have been planning this trip for about two years. It was a very special day that Louise and I, plus our family back in Canada will cherish always.

"One cannot but be impressed by the high importance and honours that are allotted to those that fought and died in the many conflicts of our history.

"We are still at a lack of words to thank Helen, Brian and all those involved in our visit to Kirriemuir enough."

Before coming to Scotland, the Beatons disembarked from the Queen Mary II in Bruges and visited the graves of antecedents near the France and Belgium border.

Mr Beaton said: "Although the graves and headstones were in perfectly maintained condition, we planted some more flowers at the foot of their markers."

The couple also visited the Black Watch Museum in Perth.

"Helen arranged for us to be picked up right at our hotel and transported to the Black Watch Museum where we had a personal tour by Major Ronnie Proctor," Mr Beaton added.

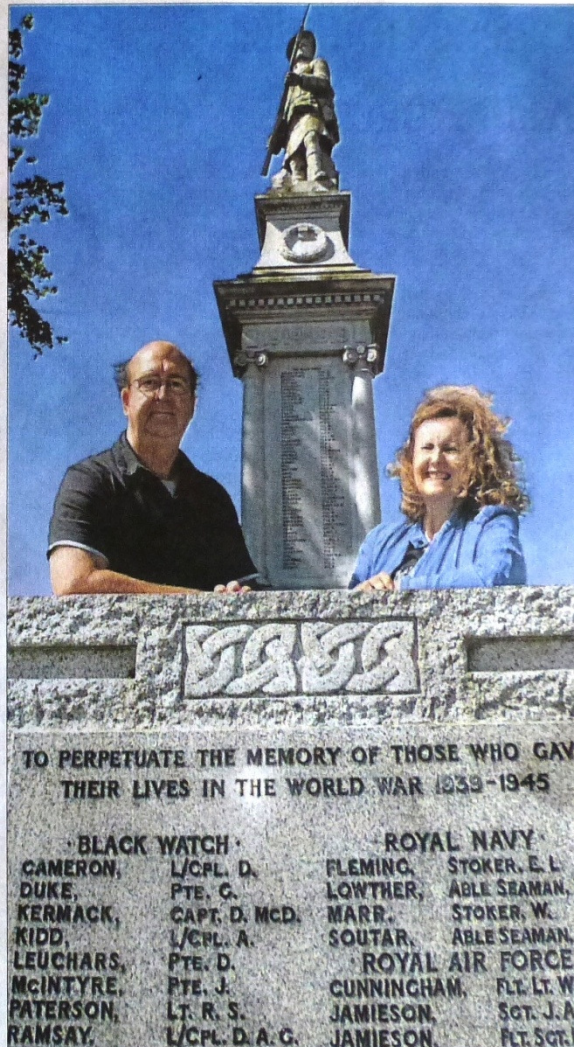
"Ronnie has to be one of the leading experts on the history of The Black Watch and it was amazing to speak to him at length."

Mr Beaton's 94-year-old father Bill, David's son, is waiting to hear about the trip back home.

Bill recently donated his collection of Robert Burns poetry books and ephemera to the Burns Federation, which handed the books to institutions across Scotland.

The story of the Beaton brothers can be viewed on the Westmuir village website at [www.westmuir.org.uk](http://www.westmuir.org.uk).

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Douglas and Louise Beaton, from Canada, at the Kirriemuir Cemetery war memorial. Picture: Dougie Nicholson.

### WAR POEM

John Beaton is known to have sent at least two poems just before his death on the second day of one of the British Army's greatest tragedies.

Here are extracts of his second poem, which is entitled *We're in the Trenches Noo*:

Dear Bill,  
We're in the trenches noo, Wi the weather just a treat, There's nae mair shiverin wi the cauld, An nae mair soakin feet.

The nicht I got your box, we left for three days' spell up here; The mune's just bonnie ilka nicht, And the weather fine an clear.

An if old Fritz and Wilhelm tae, Wad come upon the scene, I think we'd mair than smash them up, An open Billy's een.

There's ae thing I've tae tell ye now, A sad an waeft tale, O a the "comforts" that I lack, I miss my "ginger ale".

The water here, ye want tae pree, It fairly mairks us shiver; It's nae enouch tae send us home, Wi some kind o the fiver.

But never mind, the time will come, When we'll be back tae see ye, An that will be a happy time, The first nicht we are wi ye.

I ken ye'd a be gled tae see's, Back in dear auld Kirrie; I tell auld Fritz we wantit hame, But it seems he's no tae hurry.



Douglas and Louise also took time to visit the grave of the author ... J M Barrie ... famous for writing the children's story ... 'Peter Pan.'