



#### **40153 Pte Tom Cuthbert, 16th Royal Scots**

Born: 80 Dalry Road, Edinburgh 8 March, 1894

Father: Thomas Cuthbert, joiner (born Edinburgh); mother: Ellen Cuthbert (born Glenmuick, Aberdeenshire). Tom had one sibling, a younger sister called Isabella.

In 1914 Tom and Isabella were living at 206 Dalry Road with their widowed mother, who'd taken in a lodger to make ends meet. Tom was working as a grocer's assistant in Edinburgh – employer unknown. Tom was a peacetime member of the Territorial Force – Trooper 2497 in 'A' Squadron of the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry, based at Cupar, across in Fife. He was therefore also a horseman.

In August 1914 the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry were mobilised as part of the Highland Mounted Brigade. In August 1915 the Brigade was dismounted and dispatched to Gallipoli via Egypt. Tom arrived on the peninsula on 2 October.

His service file was destroyed in the London Blitz in 1940, so detail is scarce. However we know he was wounded and sent back to the UK before Gallipoli was evacuated in December/January 1915.

He recovered in hospital in Scotland during the early part of 1916 and was passed fit to return to his unit in December. By now the surviving members of the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry were still in Egypt and on the point of being transferred as infantry to a new battalion of the Black Watch. Tom found himself in a mixed group of soldiers – some recovered wounded, some untried conscripts – who were posted off the 7th/8th King's Own Scottish Borderers, a New Army 'Service' battalion made up of two units that had suffered heavy casualties.

He arrived in France in the late spring of 1917 as Pte 26747 KOSB and he and his mates were sent for processing to the KOSB Infantry Base Detachment, near Boulogne. The IBDs were like sorting offices for soldiers. Each regiment had its own dedicated IBD and the IBD clerks worked co-operatively to reinforce battalions of different regiments that happened to need replacements urgently or otherwise. Experienced men were at a premium and there seems to have been a certain amount of evaluation. Men were often sent briefly to Entrenching Battalions for observation and to harden them up for their move into the line.

At some point, requests came into the Royal Scots IBD from 11RS, 15RS and 16RS for drafts. The Royal Scots IBD was short of personnel at that moment, so they asked the KOSB for assistance. Tom and several of the lads he'd come out with were renumbered (again!) and re-badged (again!) as Royal Scots and sent up the line to the 16th – McCrae's Battalion.

We don't know exactly how long Pte 40153 Thomas Cuthbert was with McCrae's but it was probably only a few weeks. The battalion was preparing to take part in a carefully planned forward movement near the village of Hargicourt on the Somme. McCrae's had suffered heavy losses towards the end of April during an attack east of Arras and the battalion hadn't really recovered. There was a shortage of seasoned officers and NCOs and the proposed attack involved innovative co-ordination with aircraft from the Royal Flying Corps. It was a big ask.

In the event the attack went well. Losses were relatively light. But Tom was one of them – killed on 26th August, aged 23 years. He's buried in Hargicourt British Cemetery, not far from where he fell. A total of 33 McCrae's comrades lie nearby. A further 21 officers and men have no known grave and are commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing.

Tom's name appears on the wall of the St Cuthbert's WW1 Memorial Chapel. He and his family were members of the congregation.

## **Soul Space - God be in my thinking**

### **Listen to the Prayer**

#### **Welcome**

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." (Mark 1:35)

It is often in the silence that we find ourselves thinking about God - sometimes we can find ourselves doing this by praying.

Silence and thinking go together well during this season of Remembrance and it is in the silence that the Nations pays its respects.

Who will you think of in the silence of this sacred space today? Will it be God or a loved one , will you pray in the silence.

In our Sunday prayers I often say:

"We bring before you those closest to our own hearts"

It's interesting to note that our theme for Soul Space this season is based around the prayer you heard at the start of this short reflection. In this prayer God being in our hearts and in our thinking are placed together.

As we think of those we miss at this time, particularly those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom we enjoy today and hold them in prayer in the silence of our own hearts we can turn to the words of the hauntingly poignant hymn:

O valiant hearts who to your glory came  
Through dust of conflict and through battle flame;  
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,  
Your memory hallowed in the land you loved.

Proudly you gathered, rank on rank, to war  
As who had heard God's message from afar;  
All you had hoped for, all you had, you gave,  
To save mankind—yourselves you scorned to save.

Splendid you passed, the great surrender made;  
Into the light that nevermore shall fade;  
Deep your contentment in that blest abode,  
Who wait the last clear trumpet call of God.

Long years ago, as earth lay dark and still,  
Rose a loud cry upon a lonely hill,  
While in the frailty of our human clay,  
Christ, our Redeemer, passed the self same way.

Still stands His Cross from that dread hour to this,  
Like some bright star above the dark abyss;  
Still, through the veil, the Victor's pitying eyes  
Look down to bless our lesser Calvaries.

These were His servants, in His steps they trod,  
Following through death the martyred Son of God:  
Victor, He rose; victorious too shall rise  
They who have drunk His cup of sacrifice.

O risen Lord, O Shepherd of our dead,  
Whose cross has bought them and Whose staff has led,  
In glorious hope their proud and sorrowing land  
Commits her children to Thy gracious hand.

On the screens is a former member of this Church - Thomas Cuthbert who was killed serving with the Royal Scots in the first world War as part of Macraes battalion with whom we have such a strong Association.

In your own time, do you head into the Memorial Chapel and in the silence of that sacred space find the name of Thomas Cuthbert both on the wall and in the role of honour book and if you so choose light a candle for him and think of those you miss the most.