

From the book “Without Fear - WW1 Stories of the Men on the Bo’ness War Memorial”

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A Lost Generation



A familiar image of the Bo’ness Fair main characters from 1906 - only a few years later three of these boys would be killed during World War One. James Williamson, Yeoman of the Guard (first left) who died at Gallipoli; David Grant, Lord in Waiting (3rd from the right) who died from wounds at Arras in 1916 and Andrew Watters, Sword Bearer (2nd from right) who fell at Passchendaele.



James Williamson



David Grant



Andrew Watters

James Williamson - Yeoman of the Guard (first left)

Private James Williamson, aged 22, enlisted with Royal Scots, 5th Battalion, at Bo'ness on 6th December 1914. He was given service number 2941.

Prior to enlisting he worked at Messrs James Calder & Co. Ltd, at Bo'ness Distillery. He was the son of George and Mary Williamson and had two brothers, Thomas and George, and two sisters, Lizzie and Dora Williamson. He was unmarried and lived with the family at 10 School Brae, Bo'ness.

James arrived with his Royal Scots comrades at Gallipoli on 24th May 1915. He was killed in action during the Battle of Gully Ravine (Achi Baba) on 28th June 1915. Also killed on the same date were Bo'ness comrades in the 5th Royal Scots, Privates John Corbett, William M. Finlay, Herbert Fradley, Robert Hempstead, and Adam Neill.

James is commemorated on the Helles Memorial, panel 26 to 30. Like many others back in Scotland, his family had to wait until March 1916 before receiving official notification of his death.

He is also commemorated on the large family headstone in Bo'ness Cemetery.



David Grant - Lord in Waiting (third from right)

Private David Grant, service no: S/7971, Gordon Highlanders, 8th Battalion, was 24 years old when he died of wounds at Arras in 1916.

David was the son of David and Mary Grant, of Wallacelea, Church Wynd, Bo'ness and the brother of Private William Clark Grant who is also named on the Bo'ness War Memorial.

David Grant, Gordon Highlanders, 8th Bn, was serving with the 15th (Scottish) Division, 44th Brigade, near Bethune, north of Arras when he was severely wounded. David was part of a working party in the trenches when he was badly hit about the legs and chest by a trench mortar. He died of his wounds on 16th May 1916.



After receiving official notification of his death, his parents also received the following sympathetic letter from his Bo'ness comrades:

“We very much regret to say that we got word this morning that Davie had died of his wounds. The funeral took place at two o'clock this afternoon. About a hundred of his comrades of his company were there and we gave him a good burial. The hospital where he died is about ten miles or so behind the firing line and he is buried in the town cemetery. The news was an unexpected and sad blow to us all. He died a good soldier, giving his life for King and country and we unite in sending our deep and heartfelt sympathy to you and all the family in your sad bereavement. He was well liked by all and we will miss him greatly.

From J. Martin, C. Cameron and D. Baikie, his best pals.”

Private David Grant is buried in Bethune Town Cemetery, grave V.C.67, France, and is also remembered on the family headstone in Bo'ness Cemetery.

Andrew Watters, Sword Bearer (second from right).

Andrew Smith Watters hailed from Fife, being born in Burntisland in 1893. He was the son of Mr Alexander Watters, a grocer from Hill of Beath, and Mrs Isabella Watters (ms. Smith) who were married at Kirkcaldy in 1887. He had two brothers, James and Thomas, and one sister Helen (Nellie).

His family moved to Bo'ness, staying at Helen Villa, Braehead. As a young man Andrew had been employed at Bo'ness Distillery, and from there he went to the Victoria Sawmills of Messrs Robert Mickel & Company where he was employed as a woodworking machine man.

At the outbreak of war he enlisted with one of the Royal Scots

Territorials, service no: 980, but was later sent to France in early 1916, joining the Highland Light Infantry, 12th Battalion, service no: 43495, coming under the orders of 15th (Scottish) Division, 46th Brigade.

Andrew Watters survived the Battles of the Somme and Arras, but was killed during the 15th (Scottish Division)'s participation in the Battle of Pilckem Ridge, on 31st July 1917, the opening attack of the main part of the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). His mother received the news unofficially early in August, in a letter from a comrade who fought with Andrew at the Front.

He is commemorated with other Bo'ness men from the 15th (Scottish) Division on the Menin Gate Memorial, panel 38.

