



**A Burial Service for
Private David Valentine Gemmell
1st Battalion, Black Watch (Royal Highlanders)
and
An Unknown Scottish Soldier**

**10:30 hours on Wednesday 15 May 2024
CWGC Woburn Abbey Cemetery, France**

**Service conducted by Reverend (Major) Geoffrey Berry CF
Chaplain to The Black Watch
3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland**

In the early winter of 2019, in the late afternoon when a farmer was ploughing his fields on the eastern side of a small village named Cuinchy, two sets of human remains were recovered.

Artefacts found alongside the casualties indicated they were Scottish and further research, along with previous recoveries from this location, suggested the casualties were killed during January 1915.

Whilst efforts have been made to identify both casualties, so far only one has been positively identified as Private David Valentine Gemmell.

During the winter operations 1914-15, just days before Christmas 1914, the 1st Battalion Black Watch, along with others of the Division, received orders to deploy from Ypres to the then southernmost part of the line held by the British Army at Cuinchy to counter an anticipated attack by the enemy. On the morning of 25 January, four enemy mines were detonated in the brick stacks sector in front of the line (held by the Coldstream and Scots Guards). The line was then overwhelmed by a concerted attack. The Battalion were thrown into action in a desperate attack to stabilise the position. Hours of bitter fighting followed with the battalion suffering fifty-nine fatalities that day, the majority having no known graves.

3800 Private David Valentine Gemmell was born on 13 April 1877 in St Andrew in the Burgh of Dundee to George Gamble & Betsy Valentine (the name of Gamble & Gemmell are often used interchangeably so different names are found on various documents). David's parents married in Dundee in 1876.

David married Elizabeth (Lizzie) Lindsay on 24 June 1898 aged 21 years in St Andrew, Dundee. They had eleven children (six daughters and five sons). Sadly three of their sons and one daughter died as babies and two daughters died in their teens. Only three daughters and two sons lived to adulthood. David first joined the army when he was 17 years and 10 months old and served 6 years, he re-enlisted in 1901 and again following the outbreak of war he re-enlisted on 10 September 1914 aged 37.

Welcome by Padre and call to Worship.

Prière Appel à Adoration

We are gathered in fellowship today before God to remember those who have made the supreme sacrifice by the giving of their lives in the service of their country. Let us remember them in joy, sadness, and gratitude, and commend them to God's sure keeping. We remember and pray for all those who have suffered, and who still suffer, as a consequence of war. Finally, we pray for peace and reconciliation – especially remembering those with the responsibility for the leadership of nations – that conflict may be avoided.

We remember with thanksgiving these two soldiers; Private David Gemmell of the 1st Battalion Black Watch and another soldier whose name is known only to God, killed in action on 25 January 1915. They alongside so many others, answered the call of their country, served with honour, and gave their lives in the service of their nation, counting service to others greater than service of self.

We will shortly commit their bodies to be buried. In doing so let us commit ourselves anew to remember them. For by doing so we honour, and we reflect upon their sacrifice. Their sacrifice is summed up in Jesus' words to his disciples:

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

John 15, 12-13

Reading

Lecture

Before the Summer – by Ewart Alan Mackintosh (1916)

Read by Major Patrick Marshall, The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion
The Royal Regiment of Scotland

When our men are marching lightly up and down,
When the pipes are playing through the little town,
I see a thin line swaying through wind and mud and rain
And the broken regiments come back to rest again.

Now the pipes are playing, now the drums are beat,
Now the strong battalions are marching up the street.
But the pipes will not be playing and the bayonets will not shine.
When the regiments I dream of come stumbling down the line.

Between the battered trenches their silent dead will lie
Quiet with grave eyes staring at the summer sky,
There is a mist upon them so that I cannot see
The faces of my friends that walk the little town with me.

Lest we see a worse thing than it is to die.
Live ourselves and see our friends cold beneath the sky,
God grant we too be lying there in wind and mud and rain
Before the broken regiments come stumbling back again.

*Ewart Alan Mackintosh was killed in Action
on 21st November 1917 aged twenty-four.*

Address - Padre

Allocution

Prayer

Prière

Merciful Father,
Hear our prayers and comfort us;
Renew our trust in your Son
Whom you raised from the dead;
Strengthen our faith
That all who have died in the love of Christ
Will share in his resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God now and forever.

Amen

Scripture Reading

Lecture des Écritures Saintes

Read by Colonel Sean Cunniff, Military Attaché, British Embassy, Paris

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills –
 where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
 the Maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot slip –
 he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
 will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord watches over you –
 the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
 nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all harm –
 he will watch over your life;
the Lord will watch over your coming and going
 both now and for evermore.

Blessing of the Grave

O God, by whose mercy the faithful departed find rest, bless this grave, and send your holy angel to watch over it. As we bury here the bodies of our brother Private David Gemmell and one known only to you, deliver their souls from every bond of sin, that they may rejoice in you with your saints for ever. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Committal

L'Enterrement

Our days are like the grass.
We flourish like a flower of the field.
When the wind goes over it, it is gone,
and its place will know it no more.
But the merciful goodness of the Lord endures.
For ever and ever.

We have entrusted these two soldiers to God's eternal keeping; Private David Gemmell and our brother whose name is known only to God. They rest safely in His arms at peace eternally.

We now commit their earthly remains to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. May they rest in peace and rise in glory. In the earth we give them a final resting place. They will not be forgotten.

All **Amen.**

Reading

Lecture

Epitaph by Black Watch poet Joseph Johnston Lee

Read by Colour Serjeant John Gray
Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland

Where the long trench twines snake-like
To keep the foe at bay,
There be the place to lay me,
And this be what you say:
Here lieth the one who loved all life,
Sunshine and song, and sword and strife;
Sea and storm, and wind and rain,
Breaking bud, and bursting grain,
Pulsing pleasure, and stabbing pain -
Who would, and he could, live all over again!

The Exhortation

L'Exhortation

Read by Warrant Officer Class Two Andrew Reid
The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.

We will remember them.

The Last Post

Sonnerie aux Morts

Played by Private Archie Keith
The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland

Silence

Flowers of the Forest

Played by Corporal Jake Noble

The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland

Reveille

Kohima Epitaph

L'Épitaphe de Kohima

Read by Private James Jones

The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

When you go home tell them of us and say:

'For your tomorrow, we gave our today.'

Laying of Wreaths

Dépôts des Gerbes

The Collect of The Black Watch (Royal Highlanders)

Récitation de The Black Watch

Read by Major Patrick Marshall, The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

O God whose strength setteth fast the mountains, Lord of the hills to whom we lift our eyes; grant us grace that we of the Black Watch, once chosen to watch the mountains of an earthly kingdom, may stand fast in the faith and be strong, until we come to the heavenly Kingdom of Him who has bidden us to watch and pray, thy Son, our Saviour and Lord. Amen

Prayer*Prière*

Almighty God, Stretch forth your mighty arm to strengthen and protect the armed forces: Grant that meeting danger with courage and all occasions with discipline and loyalty, they may truly serve the cause of justice and peace; To honour your holy name,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,

All **Amen.**

Prayer*Prière*

God of truth and justice, we hold before you those whose memory we cherish, and those whose names we will never know. Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world and grant us the grace to pray for these we pray for today. And together we say the words our Lord and Saviour taught us:

The Lord's Prayer (all)*Prière du Seigneur*

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever.

All **Amen.**

The Blessing

Séparation et Dernière Bénédiction

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you his peace this day, and always.

And the blessing of God Almighty; the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you, and those whom you love, wherever they may be, this day and always.

All **Amen.**

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Woburn Abbey Cemetery was named from a house on the cemetery's eastern side which, during the war, had been used as Battalion Headquarters and as a Dressing Station. Created in June 1915 and in operation until January 1916, the size of the cemetery greatly increased following the Armistice with the concentration of graves from the battlefields East of Bethune and from a few smaller cemeteries. It is from this same area that the two casualties being buried today were found.



The Ministry of Defence, through the Joint Casualty & Compassionate Centre, is responsible for the research, identification, and burial of all British casualties worldwide.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for the graves, memorials, records and memory of the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two world wars.

© Crown Copyright/JCCC – 2024