

193206 Gunner James Taylor Sutherland, RFA



James was born in St. Mary's, Holm on 13th October 1890, the second son of John Sutherland, a tailor and journeyman, and Maggie Sutherland (née Taylor), who were both born and married on Flotta. A third son, Daniel, and a daughter, Maria, were born while the family lived in the old St. Andrews school house. The Sutherland family moved to Flotta before the 1901 census, when they were living at Whanclett. James completed his schooling on the island, then found employment there as a postman. His older brother, John, trained as a tailor at D H Gorn's shop in Kirkwall and served six years in the Orkney Territorial RGA, before he left the islands and emigrated out to Melbourne, Australia. John sailed from London on the steamship *Orsova* on 24th October 1913.

Gunner James Sutherland was a driver in 84th Battery, Royal Field Artillery and was the second Flotta soldier to die in the German Lys Offensive in April 1918. His battery, part of the independent 11th Army Brigade, was supporting 154th French Division, which had just taken over part of the Lys front between Bailleul and Wytschaete from British troops when it was heavily attacked on 25th April. James Sutherland was killed in action there that day, aged 27. James is buried in Grave III.G.159 in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, France, one of three Orcadians buried in that cemetery.



James T. Sutherland's grave

The Orcadian of Saturday, 1st June 1918 reported in its "OUR ROLL OF HONOUR" section: "Mr. and Mrs. John Sutherland, Goldhall, Flotta, have been notified of the death on the 25th ult. of their son Private James T. Sutherland, R.F.A. Presumably killed in action, Private Sutherland, who was about 26, and one of three soldier brothers, was previous to his enlistment in the local postal service, and was held in such esteem that on the eve of his joining up, he was presented with a watch and other gifts subscribed for by all the inhabitants. In addition to a fine appearance he had the kindest of dispositions, and was never happier than when obliging somebody. With the bereaved parents and the family, to whom he can return no more, we deeply sympathise – as indeed, most all who knew him".



Sapper Daniel Sutherland, son of Mr. John Sutherland, tailor, Goldhall, Flotta, serving in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Photographs of James Sutherland's two brothers were shown in *The Orcadian's* "OUR ROLL OF HONOUR" section. It reported that younger brother Daniel was a sapper in the Royal Engineers and he was serving in the Eastern Mediterranean. Daniel volunteered in February 1915. He served in 127th Field Company, RE in Salonika, where contracted malaria and suffered from its effects after the war.

The oldest Sutherland brother, John, also served as a sapper, in the Australian 5th Field Company Engineers. John joined up on 21st July 1915 and sailed on 24th November with his company from Melbourne on HMAT A40 *Ceramic*.



John Sutherland, Australian Expeditionary Force, serving in France, son of Mr. John Sutherland, tailor, Goldhall, Flotta.

John and 5th Field Company Engineers joined 2nd Australian Division in Egypt in early 1916, while it was reorganising after service in the Gallipoli campaign. The new 5th Field Company replaced its original engineer unit, also 5th Company but renumbered 8th and transferred to 5th Australian Division in February 1916. John served through 2nd Australian Division's exceptional combat record in France and Flanders during the Great War. He spent the summer of 1916 in hospital, recovering from a gun shot wound to his chest and back. John had several spells in hospital in 1919, suffering from eczema. He was given leave to work three months as a tailor in London, then returned home to Flotta for two months in the summer. John Sutherland left the UK to return to Australia in January 1920.