

2731 Private William Irvine Dyce



William was born at 25 Catherine Place, Kirkwall on 7th December 1896, the second son of James Irvine, a merchant seaman, and Mary Irvine (née Johnston). William's father died when he was still very young. William attended the Burgh School in Kirkwall, but when he was seven years old his mother married again. She married in Leith a widower, John Dyce, who worked as a stone mason. William and his brother, James, took on the new family name. On leaving school William found employment in Edinburgh with a florist, John Downie, training as an apprentice seedsman.

In November 1914 William volunteered to join his older brother, James, in the Royal Scots. After completing his training William travelled out to the Mediterranean and on 10th May 1915 landed on Gallipoli, to join 1/5th Royal Scots, the only Territorial battalion in 29th Division, the

last Regular Army infantry division formed in the Great War.

The Orcadian showed a photo of William in its "Our Roll of Honour" section, with the following report of his death: 'An officer conveying the sad news to his mother writes: – "I feel that I have a concern in your son's career that is different from that of the usual relationship between officer and man. Willie had won the esteem of all in the company, and his death is deeply deplored. He was hit by a sniper this morning as he was fetching water for his comrades in the trenches, and died instantly. We buried him this afternoon. Mr Ross, the Presbyterian chaplain, conducted the ceremony, and his funeral was attended by the Colonel, and all his company officers. A small cross was erected to his loving memory. Willie died, as all soldiers would choose to die, in a just struggle for freedom, and with a clean record behind him."



William Irvine Dyce died on 18th June 1915, when he was only 19 years old. He is now buried in Grave I.E.3 in Twelve Tree Copse Cemetery, Gallipoli. His body was moved there after the Armistice, to join its 1,133 other identified burials. The impressive cemetery contains special memorials to commemorate many of its 2,226 unidentified burials, also a New Zealand Memorial on which are inscribed the names of 177 soldiers from that country who died fighting at Helles in May 1915 and have no known grave there.

William's brother James stayed in Edinburgh with 2/5th Royal Scots, was promoted Lance Corporal on 26th May 1915 and Corporal on 10th June 1915. James suffered from abdominal pain after nearly every meal, also constipation. After several medical examinations, James was eventually discharged sick from the Army on 13th June 1916 on List T D/55. On 19th February 1918 in Edinburgh, James married a widow, Eleanor Shaw (or Henderson). James returned to his trade as a sculptor, but his health never really recovered and he died of heart failure at their home in 27 Albany Street, Edinburgh on 7th December 1919, aged 27.



Corporal J. D. Irvine Dyce, 2/5th Royal Scots, grandson of Mr David Irvine.