



3143 Captain James Bliss M.C. and Bar, 6<sup>th</sup> Bt. Seaforth Highlanders.

James Bliss was born on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1887 at 120 North Back Street, Forres to Mr John Bliss Cabinet Maker and Flesher and Christina Bliss (nee Kerr). He had a brother Thomas who also served in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War.

In his early life James worked for the West Coast Railway at Elgin and subsequently he worked for several years on the East Coast railway in Edinburgh before being sent to Aberdeen to work for the railway there prior to his enlisting in the army.

He enlisted at Elgin as a Private several months after the outbreak of war and quickly gained his Commission. The Forres News of 31<sup>st</sup> January 1917 carried the official statement of the bestowal of the Military Cross which stated "For conspicuous gallantry in action. He led his men to their objective with great courage and initiative. Later he rallied men of several units and led them forward setting a splendid example to his men." His Company was in action at Beaumont Hamel when he was awarded the Military Cross.

Six months later on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 1917 the Forres News carried an article and the official statement of the award of the Bar to his Military Cross which he gained during severe fighting at Arras. The citation read "For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in continuing to command his company, though wounded, at a critical moment when the enemy had broken through our front. With great skill and gallantry he first held up the enemy and then drove them back. He subsequently led a bombing attack, and whilst directing a counter attack was wounded for a second time."

James died on the 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917 at St Julien, Ypres, Belgium aged 29 years. He is buried in Gwalia Cemetery, Ypres, Ref 1.G.32.

A Junior Officer of his company wrote the following; "While leading his company forward to the attack he was mortally wounded. I spoke to him after he was wounded, and bound his wound. How noble he was, with not a thought of anything but his duty. I asked how he was and his reply was "I'm quite all right; you go on with the Company." Captain Bliss died half an hour later."

His brother 049627 Second Lieutenant Thomas Bliss was a Territorial with the Seaforth Highlanders and discharged in 1912. He served an apprenticeship with Reid, Engineers, Forres. He joined the regular army on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 1915 as a Private. He served with the Army Service Corps and was discharged from that unit in October 1916 when he was appointed to a commission in the Seaforth Highlanders. He died as a result of his wounds on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1916 and is buried in Aveluy Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France.

Both brothers were commemorated on the War Memorial of Castlehill United Free Church, Forres and are remembered on the family stone in Clunyhill Cemetery, Forres.

Sources;

Moray Burial Ground Research Group

CWGC

Elgin Heritage Centre Reference Section;

Forres News 31-01-1917

Forres News 28-07-1917

Forres Gazette 08-08-1917



2871 Lieutenant Colonel & Quartermaster Alexander Preston Yeadon MC., Queens Own Cameron Highlanders.

Alexander was born in Elgin on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1861 to Alfred Yeadon and Jessie Grant. He served an apprenticeship as a Compositor and worked with The Courant newspaper prior to joining the Army. His brother was JD Yeadon the Elgin Bookseller and Stationer whose shop still trades under JD Yeadon name to this day. Prior to enlisting he served for two years with the Morayshire Rifle Volunteers.

He signed up on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1881 at Ayr joining the Royal Scots Fusiliers. He was transferred to the Queens Own Cameron Highlanders on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1881. He first saw active service in Egypt in 1882 then the Sudan Campaign, the Nile Expedition fighting at the battles of Atbara and Khartoum where he was mentioned in Despatches and granted the Honorary rank of Captain.

In the 1891 Census he was stationed at Edinburgh Castle. He married his wife in Edinburgh on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1891 when he was 30 years old.

Captain Yeadon next saw service in the South Africa Campaign 1900-02. He was mentioned in despatches for distinguished conduct and granted the Honorary rank of Major and received the Queens medal with four clasps and the Kings medal with two clasps.

He served in WW1 from 1914 to 1918 and was awarded the Military Cross in 1916. He was wounded in 1918 and retired on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1919 after serving 38 years 11 months in the British Army much of it fighting for his country.

He died on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1938 and is buried in Elgin East Cemetery.

#### References –

Forres Gazette 1915 & 1917  
Moray Burial Ground Research Group  
Ancestry (Enlistment Papers)  
Libindx Elgin Heritage Centre.  
1891 Scotland Census

## Letter Home

An Elgin 1/6<sup>th</sup> Seaforth Highlanders (Morayshire T F ) letter to his parents about the engagement of 15th June 1916.

Taken from Forres Gazette January 1917.

I have just got back from the trenches, having been seven days in them. I have passed through the most trying time that anyone has ever experienced. On Tuesday we were told that our right were to advance, and that we had to keep the Huns under rifle fire during the bombardment.

We hurriedly made a cup of tea, and at 6pm we lined the trenches amid the bursting of shells from hundreds of guns and kept up a steady fire on the German trench, which was about 150 yards distant.

No one who has not been through something similar can realise the strain which one undergoes, and only one word – Hell – can describe it.

How I escaped God alone knows, as the boys were falling all around me. Dick Royan and J. Hay both fell near me, and I managed to dress them both, but poor Davie Catto and John Harrold – it was almost impossible to do anything for them. They were both conscious up to the end, and they died as one who knew them expected them to die.

All the boys behaved splendidly and Louis Dunbar, North College Street, Elgin although slightly wounded in the leg remained with his platoon, although he suffered some pain.

On Wednesday there was another bombardment, but Thursday was very quiet, and when we were relieved this morning nobody was sorry.

For seven days we have not had a wash, so you can picture how we looked coming out of the trench this morning. Before we left the trenches Davie Catto and John Harrold were buried where they fell, and a cross bearing their names was placed over their graves. When we reached our resting place some three miles back we were issued rum and it has done a lot of us good, as quite a few were a bit nerve-shaken after such a trying ordeal.