

Alex Cowan and Sons Limited

From the day in 1779 that Charles Cowan took up the lease of the Paper Mills and house at Valleyfield, six generations of the family were to be intimately connected with the fortunes of Penicuik.

Cowan mills produced paper of the highest quality, which was sold on a worldwide basis and the Company had a sales organization with outlets in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and many other countries throughout the world, as well as in the UK.

Eskmill paper was distributed through a London office, which opened in 1914. Alteration and improvements were constantly being made in the early part of the century and by 1914 Cowan mills had been virtually rebuilt and re-equipped, including plant for coating paper which was necessary for printing high quality books.

By 1914 about 1200 people were employed in Paper Making in Penicuik.

The Great War of 1914 to 1918 had a very adverse affect on all the mills in the country. Young men left to join the armed forces and markets contracted, especially overseas. None of the mills closed but short time working became the normal practice. At one time the mills were working for only three days every fortnight.

After the war production gradually picked up but it was not until 1924 that output was back to normal.

Between 1914 and 1918 the following members of the Cowan family were killed.

Captain Charles John Alexander Cowan, Royal Scots, was the eldest son of Alexander Cowan, Papermaker, and Alice Buchanan Comrie Thomson Cowan, of Valleyfield, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born at Moray House, Edinburgh and died on 25 March, 1918, age 25. Surviving brothers were Alexander Comrie and Robert Colqhoun, and Charles David Symington Cowan, the son born after Alexander Cowan's second marriage to Florence Symington Cowan after the death of Alice Cowan.



Second Lieutenant Robert Craig Cowan, Royal Scots, was the elder son of Robert Craig Cowan, Papermaker, and Mabel Agnes Orr Craig Cowan, of Eskhill, Inveresk, Midlothian. He was born at Craigiebiel House, Carlops Road, Penicuik and was educated at Cargliff School, Cheltenham, and Pembroke College, Cambridge. Joining the Army on the outbreak of war, he was gazetted The Royal Scots from the Officer Training Corps on 15 August, 1914 and was killed, age 20, in action at La Plinche during the Battle of Ypres on 24 October, 1914, while attached to the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Scots.

His commanding officer wrote, "We miss him not only as a comrade, but as a very gallant boy, who has set a noble example of courage and fearless execution of his duty".

His brother and the younger son, **Captain John Orr Craig Cowan**, Royal Scots, was born at Craighibield House, Carlops Road, Penicuik and died on 14 July, 1916, age 20. Surviving sisters were Mabel Marjorie, Ailsa Margaret and Viola Elizabeth.

As with other industries, Papermaking suffered from the loss of so many young men who were killed in the war. Cowan's Valleyfield Paper Mill lost the employees remembered on this Roll of Honour.



Private Walter Adkin, Royal Scots, was the younger son of William H Adkin, a Collector Saleman, and Alison Henderson Adkin, of Main Street, Lasswade, Midlothian. He was born in Liberton, Midlothian and died on 30 July, 1916, age 21. Surviving siblings were Robert, Christina, Lillie, Janet, Ellen and Catherine.

Private Joseph Richard Bailey, Royal Scots, was the elder son of Joseph Richard Bailey, a Paper Mill Worker, and Isabella Bailey, of 1 Pomathorn Road, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik and died on 23 July, 1917, age 35. Surviving siblings were Alison, David and Wilhelmina. Private Bailey was married to Catherine Bailey, of 15 Graham Street, Leith.

Private Charles Barrie, Royal Scots, was the only son of Charles Barrie, a Paper Mill Worker, and Janet Barrie, of 5 Beech Place, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik and died on 28 November, 1918, age 20. Surviving sisters were Isabella, Louisa and Jane.

Private James Thomson Blair, Royal Scots, was the youngest son of William Blair, a Painter, and Robena Blair, of 6 James Place, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik and died on 23 April, 1917, age 28. Surviving siblings were Marion, William, Isabella, John and Jane.

Private John McDonald Campbell, King's Own Scottish Borderers, was the only son of George Campbell, a Paper Press Man, and Helen Campbell, of 4 Imrie Place, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik and died on 24 April, 1917, age 27. Surviving sisters were Helen and Agnes.

Private Robert Charlton, Royal Scots, was the youngest son of Thomas Charlton, and Marion Charlton, of 14 Milton Cottages, Glencorse, Midlothian. He was born in Glencorse and died on 25 March, 1918, age 32. Surviving siblings were James, Marion and William.

Private James McNeil Clapperton, Royal Scots, was the second son of James Clapperton, a Paper Mill Machine Man, and Helen McNeil Clapperton, of 43 John Street, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik and died on 28 November, 1916, age 47. Surviving brothers were George and Alexander. Private Clapperton was married to Ann Wilson Clapperton, of 3 Valleyfield Road, Penicuik, and they had three children, James, Ann and Helen.

Lance Corporal John Dickie, MM, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, was the youngest son of Henry Dickie, a Paper Mill Dryer, and Mary Ann Dickie, of 47 John Street, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik and died on 12 October, 1917, age 28. Surviving siblings were Henry, Mary, Hume (named after his uncle), Henrietta and Jessie.

Private Adam Dickson, Royal Scots, was the son of Adam Dickson, a Paper Mill Foreman, and Agnes Dickson, of Cleckermin Cottage, Howgate Road, Lasswade, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik and died on 10 October, 1918, age 19.

Corporal Harry Hastings Dunlop, Royal Scots, was the fourth son of James Dunlop, a Baker, and Jessie Dunlop, of 27 Imrie Place, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik and died on 28 April, 1917, age 27. His younger brother, Private David Dunlop, Royal Army Medical Corps, died on 26 August, 1915, age 20. Surviving siblings were Robert, James and John, although James was blinded in April, 1918.

Private William Henderson, Royal Scots, was the younger son of William Henderson, a Paper Maker, and Mary Jane Henderson, of 33 John Street, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Lasswade, Midlothian and died on 24 May, 1918, age 18. Surviving siblings were Archibald and Nellie.

Private James Dodds Howitt, Royal Scots, was the eldest son of Thomas Howitt, a Paper Factory Worker, and Helen Howitt, of Kirkhill, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik and died on 19 May, 1917, age 26. Surviving brothers were Stephen, Thomas and John. Private Howitt was married to Jeannie Pettigrew Howitt, of 7 Atholl Crescent, Edinburgh.

Private David Kemp, Royal Scots, was the youngest son of William Kemp, a Boilerman, and Ann Kemp, of Loanstone Cottage, Lasswade, Midlothian. He was born in Lasswade and died on 1 July, 1916, age 22. His brother, and the second son, James Wright Kemp, Royal Scots, was born in Penicuik, worked as a Miner and died on 16 April, 1918, age 28. Surviving siblings were William, Jane, Janet, Margaret, Ann and Elizabeth.

Private James Kitching, Royal Scots, was the second son of Richard Kitching, a Coal Miner, who died in a mining accident in 1908, and Isabella King Munro Scott Kitching, of 12 Dalhousie Cottages, Cockpen. He was born in Cockpen and died on 15 March, 1915, age 21. Surviving siblings were William, Isabella, John and Richard. Private Kitching was married to Mary Braidwood Ruddoch Kitching (later Simpson).

Private Ferguson Mason, King's Own Scottish Borderers, was the elder son of Alexander Mason, a Plumber, and Jane Mason, of 43 John Street, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik, worked in a Paper Mill and died on 3 September, 1916, age 36. Surviving siblings were Mary and Alexander.

Private John Mauchline, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, was the elder son of George Mauchline, a Warehouseman, and Christina Allan Mauchline, of 24 Bridge Street, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Edinburgh and died on 11 October, 1918 age 22. Surviving younger brother was George.

Sergeant Edward McKay, Royal Scots, was the third son of Joseph McKay, a Paper Maker, and Mary McKay, of 24 Kirkhill Village, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik and died on 10 April, 1917, age 26. Surviving siblings were James, George, Minnie, Margaret and Charles.

Private Daniel McMillan, Cameron Highlanders, was the third son of William McMillan, a Pastry Baker, and Jane McMillan, of 26 Corporation Buildings, 168 Cowgate, Edinburgh. He was born in Edinburgh, was employed in a Paper Mill as a General Labourer and died on 9 May, 1915, age 19. Surviving siblings were Janet, Agnes, Jane, William, Robert, Helen, Mary and Alexander.

Corporal James Montague, Seaforth Highlanders, was the second son of Robert Montague, a Plumber, and Amy Montague, of 13 Walker Place, Penicuik. He was born in Penicuik and died on 4 October, 1917, age 17. Surviving brothers were John and Robert.

Sergeant Alexander Porteous, Royal Scots, was the third son of Thomas Porteous, a Furnace Stoker, and Elizabeth Porteous, of 10 Lindsay Place, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik and died on 9 April, 1917, age 26. Surviving siblings were Thomas, Robert, Agnes, Christina and George.

Private Alfred Robinson, Scots Greys, was the youngest son of James Robinson, a Coachman, and Janet Robinson, of 27 Jamaica Street, Edinburgh. He was born in Edinburgh and, having been seriously wounded, he was discharged as physically unfit on 10 December, 1914, and died on 31 May, 1915, age 24. Surviving brothers were James, William, Thomas, John and George.

Private John (Jack) Smith, Royal Scots, was the husband of Emma Smith, of 4 Dunlop Terrace, Penicuik. He was born in Glasgow and, in 1882, served in the Egyptian Campaign. Despite his age and employment as a Paper Mill Worker, he enlisted in the Royal Scots and died on 24 March, 1916, age 53, leaving a widow and six children, William, Ann, Margaret, John, Maisie and Emma. His elder son,

Private William Badger Smith, Royal Scots, was born in Penicuik and died on 23 April, 1917, age 34. His wife, Margaret, later remarried, becoming Margaret Pantzer, living at 36 Castle Street, Edinburgh.

Private Robert Page Steel, Royal Scots, was the elder son of George Steel, a Paper Mill Worker, and Catherine Page Steel, of Malleny Bower, Currie, Midlothian. He was born in Currie and died on 9 April, 1917, age 25. Surviving siblings were Wilhelmina, James and Catherine, and Helen and Elizabeth from George Steel's first marriage.

Private John Stewart, Cameron Highlanders, was the only son of Simpson Stewart, a General Labourer, and Louisa Stewart, of 28 Napier Street, Penicuik, Midlothian. After they died, he became the foster son of William Henderson, a Joiner, and Mary Henderson, of 11 Rosebery Place, Peebles Road, Penicuik. He was born in Penicuik and died on 8 August, 1917, age 26. Surviving sister was Mary.

Private Alexander Thomson, Gordon Highlanders, was the fourth son of William Thomson, a Paper Mill Worker, and Ann Thomson, of 38 Bridge Street, Penicuik. He was born in Penicuik and died on 22 August, 1918, age 37. Surviving siblings were Thomas, Janet, Robert, Alice, William, Isabella, Ann, Jane and James.

Private John H Weir, Cameron Highlanders, was the elder son of Elizabeth Weir, a Paper Mill Worker, of 4 Napier Street, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik and died on 13 February, 1917, age 26. His younger brother, Private David Weir, Royal Scots, died on 25 April, 1918, age 18. Surviving sisters were Jane and Janet.

Private Robert Wilkie, Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), was the youngest son of John Wilkie, a Coal Miner, and Martha Wilkie, of 16 Peebles Road, Penicuik, Midlothian. He was born in Penicuik and died on 12 August, 1918, age 19. Surviving siblings were William, Jessie and Thomas.

Source: Casualty research by Alistair McEwen from Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Ancestry.com and Scotland's People.