



Lynne Joyce Robertson

the Cunningham family were told by a mate of Samuel's that he died by a bullet in the back of the head. it was then assumed by his father that he had been shot for cowardice, when i think that the young man was only trying to spare Sam's mother the horrific truth about how he died. the circumstances surrounding Sam's enlistment into the army were tragic in themselves. he was one of 9 children, 4 daughters and five sons. legend has it that his father Tom had no time for him, and was known to go into drunken rages and beat his wife and possibly sons. i can understand the young lad wanting to escape this violent home and he lied about his age to get into the army, enlisting when he was only 15. i believe that the association can arrange for poppies to be placed on graves and memorials at the family's request. i would be most grateful if you could do this for us. his memorial reference is on Thiepval Memorial, Pier and Face 3C.

the saddest thing about Samuel's death is that for 90 years, no one in the family has ever enquired about or visited his memorial.

the ardrossan and saltcoats herald 1916

Surname CUNNINGHAM

Firstname Samuel

Service Number 17814

Date Death 23/07/1916

Decoration

Place of birth Monkton Ayrshire

Other 1st Bn.

SNWM roll THE ROYAL SCOTS FUSILIERS

Rank Pte

## PRESTWICK.

Pte. SAMUEL CUNNINGHAM, R.S.F.

(Killed).

Official intimation has been received by Mr Thomas Cunningham, Kirk Street, Prestwick, that his son, Pte. Samuel Cunningham, R.S.F., was killed in action in France on 23rd July. Pte. Cunningham, who was the third son of Mr and Mrs Cunningham, was 17 years of age, and enlisted in March of last year. He had been in France since June of 1915, and was home on a brief leave from the trenches in April of the present year. During the period he was at



the front he had taken part in a great deal of the fighting, and when he was home in April he had many interesting incidents to relate. Before enlisting he was employed by Messrs Kennedy Brothers at Powbank Mills. In the North U.F. Church on Sabbath the Rev. Geo. F. Forbes made touching reference to the death of Pte. Cunningham, who was the most youthful soldier on the Church's roll of honour.

Philippe et Dawn se sont rendus au Memorial de Thiepval et ont déposé une croix au pied de la colonne où se trouve son nom.

les photos ont été envoyées à la famille qui vit en Nouvelle Zélande



my mother Joyce, Sam's niece, and i would like to give our utmost thanks for your kindness in

honouring Sam's grave. the photographs are so moving and lovely to see yourself and your wife, so far away, doing such a wonderful kindness for our family.

Sam apparently had wanted to come home, but his father refused to buy him out of the army. the family were told by a regimental mate of Samuel's (who had come home on leave) that Sam died by a bullet in the back of the head. i think this was a "mother's tale" that the young man told, trying to spare Sam's mother the horrific truth about how he died, and because there was no more information given about how he died, the family made their assumption that he was shot by an officer in the back of the head for refusing to "go over the top". in my opinion, this can only be a reflection of how brutal and uncaring Sam's father was - a cruel embellishment of facts without proof.

now that we know he is buried in a mass grave, we can only assume that he was in fact killed in action and was buried along with his comrades. it is a great comfort to my mother to know that he has a final resting place, and wherever Sam is now, i hope he knows he is loved and cared for by his descendants and all the wonderful people like yourself and your wife, who commemorate their sacrifice so selflessly.

our deepest thanks again,  
Lynne and Joyce