



**JAMES WHITE TAIT**, Carlton, caps 3, cap number 51

James White Tait was born on 14th November 1883 at 17 Bread Street, Edinburgh. He was the second child of Robert Tait, a corn merchant, and his wife Jane (nee White). James's mother Jane died in 1888 and he was brought up with his sister Cecilia by his father Robert. The family home was at 9 Graham Street, Edinburgh

In 1911 he was living at home and working as an ironmonger for his uncle William K White who had a wholesale ironmongers at 117,121,123,125 and 129 High Street. This would now be the area between The Scottish Experience and The Royal Mile Tavern. By 1913 James had moved from home and was lodging with the Beveridge family at 34 Lauriston Place.

James was a goalkeeper and gained his Scottish caps while playing for the Edinburgh Carlton club. The Scottish Referee's preview of October 1907 mentions Tait's arrival from Western among a "plethora of new members". Carlton were the dominant team in domestic hockey towards the end of the first decade of the 20th century, culminating in an undefeated season in 1910-1911. They played 19 games, won 18 and drew 1, scored 109 goals and only conceded 9. It was suggested in the press that Tait missed out on cap opportunities as he played behind such a dominant team and had few chances to shine.

James White Tait was the 51st man to receive a Scottish Hockey cap. His first cap was on 13th February 1909 against Wales at Llandudno, in a "new look" Scottish team with three new caps in defence. Despite a victory in Wales, Tait was one of two changes in the team for the following international. Tait gained his second cap against Ireland in 1910 when Cowan was unable to travel. His performance in Dublin kept him in the team for the final international of the season against England. Five of the team that played against England that day were to lose their lives in WW1. They were J.W. Tait, J.D. Black and three forwards R. H. Robertson, J. G. Anderson and L A MacKenzie. The game was played at Aberdeen in front of a sell out 2,000 crowd. Match reports suggest that Tait may have been responsible for the first goal in a 3-0 loss but otherwise had a good and very busy game. That was his last appearance for Scotland and he appears very rarely in domestic hockey either, turning out for Edinburgh H.C. on the left wing occasionally in 1911

Tait volunteered for the army and attested on 25th November 1915 at 27 Frederick Street, Edinburgh. He is noted as 32 years old, an ironmonger and 5ft 6in tall. He joined the 4th Battalion Royal Scots and served at home until 19th October 1916. He

joined the battalion as they and the rest of the 52nd (Lowland) Division were preparing to invade Palestine. On the 19th April 1917, the 156th Brigade were ordered to attack toward Green Hill and Ali Muntar as part of the 2nd Battle of Gaza. 155th Brigade on their left were held up and the 4th Royal Scots were trapped in the open for 5 hours before falling back to their start line. They suffered casualties of 1 officer and 13 ORs killed, 6 officers and 110 ORs wounded, and 4 ORs missing. Private 201316 J.W. Tait was one of the men who died that day. His body was not recovered and he is commemorated on the Jerusalem Memorial to the missing.

James's father had died in March 1916 and his only surviving close relative was his sister Cecilia. She, like many grieving families, struggled with the fact that her brother had no known grave. In James's service record there is a letter from the Infantry Record office dated 21st October 1921 stating that they believed that he was buried in Gaza but no grave had been found.

Sources:

Scotland's People

British Newspaper Archive

Ancestry

Scottish Hockey Records

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Long Long Trail website

National Archive