

## The Man behind the Medal

### Sapper William Wallace Suttie

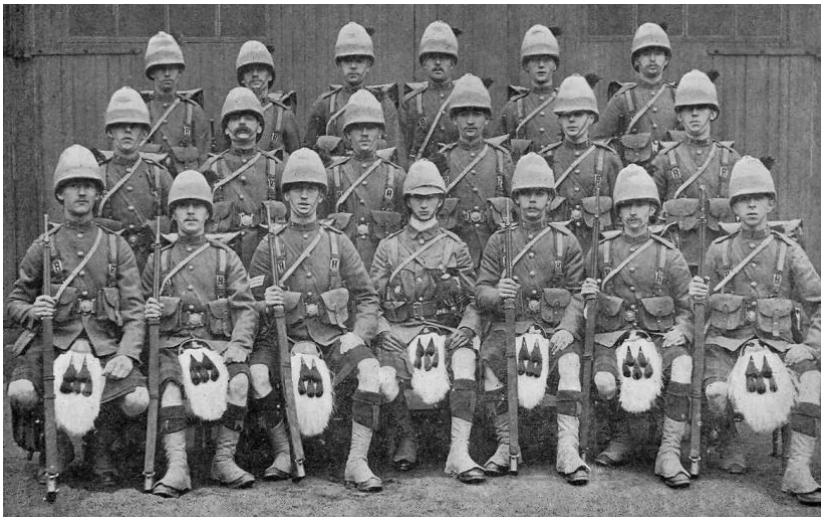
#### World War 2 – Group of 6

**(1939-45 Star, Africa Star, Italy Star, Defence Medal, War Medal, Africa Service Medal)**

In 2003 I bought the above group of medals on an auction. It was a family lot but unfortunately I didn't bid high enough for the medals awarded to Suttie's father – David Suttie.

#### **Sergeant David Suttie – the father**

David Suttie's lot included a DCM (Distinguished Conduct Medal), a QSA (Queen's South Africa Medal); a King's South Africa Medal; and the WW2 pair of a War Medal and a bi-lingual Victory Medal – with an MiD 'Oak Leaf'.



*2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highlanders – Black Watch*

Sergeant David Suttie was born in Forfashire, Scotland, on 1 August 1869.

He served with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highlanders during the South African War (1899-1902) and at the end of the war immigrated to South Africa.

He died in Johannesburg on 18 June 1941.

During World War 1 he served as Company Sergeant-Major with the 7<sup>th</sup> S.A.I. in East Africa and was MiD (Mentioned in Dispatches) on 26 November 1916. He was subsequently awarded the DCM, the citation, recorded in the London Gazette of 25 May 1917, states:

*'This Warrant Officer, by his untiring energy and devotion to duty, has set an excellent example to the NCO's and men of the Regiment.'*

He was commissioned on 28 March 1917.

Included in David Suttie's lot were: a Black Watch diary for 1931; various badges and prize medals, mainly unnamed, including a 9ct. gold prize medal engraved 'DS'; another 9ct. gold medallion engraved 'Presented by Mr. James Urquart, convener Police Committee 1896-97', and on the reverse, '23 Mile Bike Race – confirmed to City Police, July 1897'; a medallion – 2<sup>nd</sup> prize – Tug of War – 1897 for Aberdeen Sports Institute; and a Helmet Plate Badge mounted on the Black



Watch tartan. Encompassing the lot was a note which read – *'David Suttie was obviously a very proud member of the Black Watch.'*

Included in the group of medals that I bought to William Wallace Suttie was an article from the 'Dundee Evening News' – unfortunately undated – **'A Dundee ex-Policeman's Honesty' – Story of the War**

*"A communication received by Sergeant R. Crawford, of the Western Section of Dundee Police Force, brings into notice an interesting story of a Dundee ex-policeman's honesty on the battlefield. The policeman referred to is Mr. D. Suttie, who joined his regiment in South Africa some time ago."*

(Reading between the lines, this article must have been written some-time after the South African War (1899-1902) when David Suttie had emigrated to South Africa. He obviously relocated to Dundee and joined the local Police Force in the town.)

Carrying on –

*"A few months ago he was offered, and accepted a sergeantship in the Johannesburg foot police."*

We now revert to the South African War –

*"While in command of a section of the Black Watch at the battle of Retief's Nek, one of his men got hit on the forearm. The soldier, a Dundee man named William Wallace, residing at 7 Bernard Street, happened to be close beside Sergeant Suttie, and the Sergeant set about getting the wound bandaged, using a bandage from Wallace's bag. While engaged, ten shillings dropped out of the small bandage case, and the wounded man, having been carried away to the Hospital, Sergeant Suttie was unable to give him his money. He however made an endeavour to find out the man's relatives in Dundee, and being successful in this, he wrote to Sergeant Crawford (who must have been with the Dundee Police – and one must assume that this is why, when Suttie decided to migrate to South Africa, he made his way to Dundee – knowing someone there), and enclosed the money. The 10 shillings were duly delivered to Private Wallace, who had since been invalided home after receiving the wound in his arm, of which he had now lost all use, and no doubt the long lost sum was very welcome. Sergeant Suttie states that he has come across several of his comrades in South Africa."*

The battle of Retief's Nek, 25 km south of Bethlehem in the Free State, was fought on 23 July 1900. Most of Boer General de Wet's commando was in the surrounding mountains, and Lieutenant-General Hunter's composite regiment engaged them. Hunter's force consisted of, amongst others, the Black Watch and the Highland Light Infantry. This battle was part of the 'Brandwater Campaign'.

### **Sapper William Wallace Suttie – the son**

The Group that I purchased, as indicated, was a World War 2 group of six medals to William Wallace Suttie of the South African Engineering Corp, regimental number 189809, who was



awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Africa Star, the Italy Star, the Defence Medal, the War Medal and the Africa Service Medal.



*Sapper William Wallace Suttie's Medals*

On his attestation form, he gave his date of birth as being 16 July 1914, one week before the battle of Retief's Nek, and his place of birth as being the Transvaal. Did David Suttie bring his wife out with him from Scotland? I doubt it. Did he have time to get married in South Africa as the Royal Highlanders only arrived in Cape Town on 13 November 1899 and were in action in battles relating to the Relief of Kimberley? No ways. So, a little more research is needed into the date and place of birth of William Wallace Suttie, as I suspect that herein lie a few discrepancies. I suppose this is why we collect medals.

At the time of attestation, in June 1940, William Wallace Suttie worked on the Gold Mines in Johannesburg as a fitter. He was single and gave his mother as his next of kin. He saw service in East Africa, the Middle East and Italy and was discharged in September 1945.

So, after all that, the incident in the Boer War involving William Wallace must have made such an impression on David Suttie that he named his son after him – William Wallace Suttie. If you are not named with a family Christian/First name, do you know the history relating to the origins of your name?

**REMEMBER** to keep an eye on our website ([www.battletoursza.com](http://www.battletoursza.com)) - our blog has regular posts on Anniversaries / Battles / Activities / Births & Deaths / etc.

**Allan Gordon**