

Jean. James John Irvine's service record notes that he was reported missing and "presumed to have died on or since April 25th, 1915".

The story of James's loss is intriguing in itself. A record of what is assumed to be James is contained in *Canada in Flanders* by Sir Max Aitken, who was also known as Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Aircraft Production in Churchill's Cabinet in World War Two.

A copy of the book was sent back to his family in Nesting. On the front of the book, it read: "To William Irvine of Gletness, Nesting. The author sends this little volume of great deeds by brave men. The story of Private Irvine shines brightly and in Canada his name will live long after this book is forgotten."

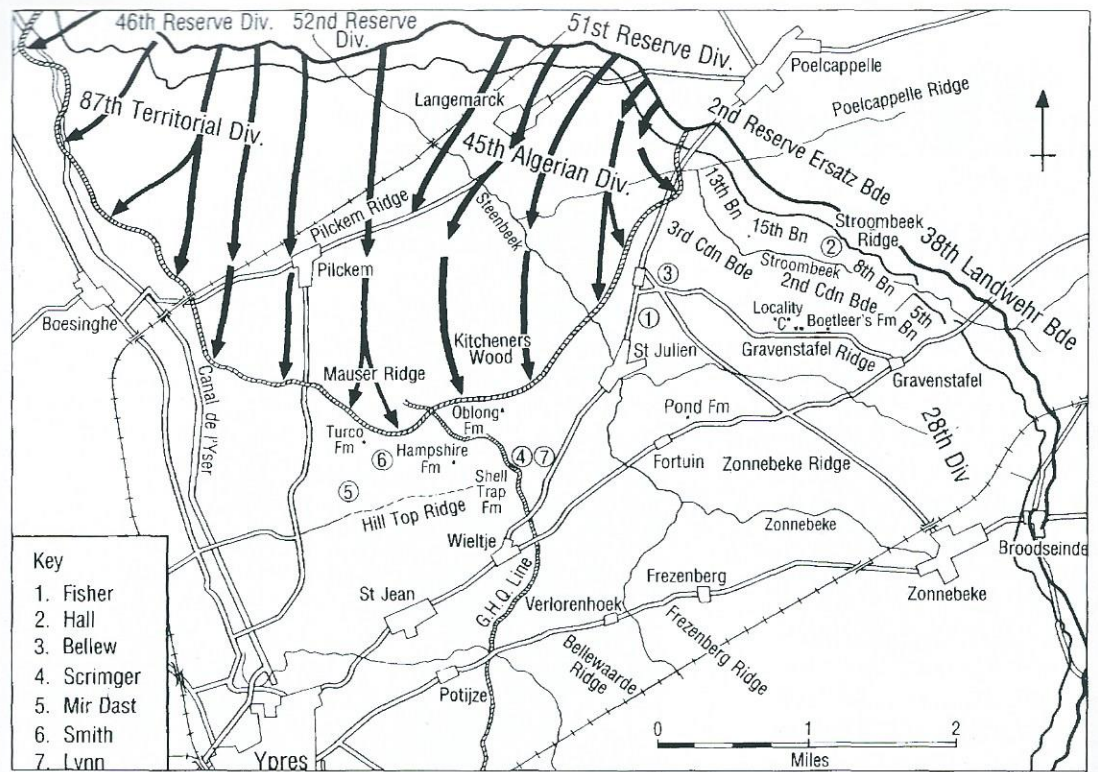
News filtered back that he was in fact one of General Turner's subordinate staff at Brigade headquarters.

A piece in *The Shetland Times* noted that: "It is inspiring to think how nobly our isles-men have responded to the call for the defence of our country in this terrible crisis through which we are passing. Particularly do we admire the patriotism of the many sons of the 'Old Rock' who had migrated to our colonial possessions and who have voluntarily given up their prospects in order to do their bit in the great struggle in which we are engaged.

"Our hearts bleed to think of the toil, the hardships, the discomfort, and the perils in which our noble men are placed, the men whose duty lies in the danger zone; but who can measure the unheard anguish, the longing and the waiting, the hoping against hope, of wives and mothers, sisters and loved ones at home?"

"The writer visited such a home the other day, the home of the mother of Private James Irvine, whose picture I herewith send you. Here in the old days, I found the bright, smiling face, the cheery laugh, and the happy joyous mood. These had all given place to sorrow and sadness as a result of a prolonged season of anxious waiting."

Private Irvine and his two



Above: Battle map 2nd Ypres

brothers, William and Frank, the only sons of Mr and Mrs William Irvine, Gletness, and grandsons of the late James Pottinger, pastor of the Congregational Church at Nesting, had settled down in Canada some years before the outbreak of war. As soon as it was known in the Dominion that the homeland needed help, our Canadian brethren loyally rallied round the flag, and James Irvine sailed to France with the First Expeditionary Force from Canada.

He remained on active service at the front for a considerable time, and last of all he was reported missing. Oh, that sad, that terrible word "missing" What it means to a mother!

The first and only reliable information regarding the fate of Irvine was found in the book written by Sir Max Aitken, MP, entitled *Canada in Flanders*. The author of this work, after describing the heroic deeds of Canadian troops says: "Now we come to the story of Private Irving, one of General Turner's subordinate staff, who went out to do as brave a deed as a man might endeavour, but never returned. Irvine had been up for 48 hours helping to feed the wounded as they were brought in to brigade headquarters, which had been turned into a temporary dressing station, when he heard that a huge poplar tree had fallen across

the road and was holding up the ambulance wagon.

"Irving, set forth with the ambulance wagon, but, on nearing the place of which we was in search, left it, and went forward on foot along the road, which was being swept by heavy artillery fire and a cross rifle fire. And then, even as axe in hand, he tramped up this road, with shells bursting all around him and bullets whistling past him, he disappeared as completely as though the night had swallowed him up! General Turner, who appreciated the gallant work Irving, had set out to do, himself had all the lists of the Field Force checked over to see if he had been brought in wounded. But Irving, was never traced. He is missing to this day - a strange and brave little mystery of this great war."¹ (Quoted from)²

Despite the different spelling, the family story is maintained that this was a direct reference to James.

A memorial to James was placed in *The Shetland Times*, Saturday, April 28th, 1917: "When our hearts are bowed with woe, When our bitter tears o'erflow, When we mourn the lost, the dear, Jesus, Man or Sorrows, hear. Inserted by his sorrowing parents, Mr and Mrs William Irvine, Gletness, Nesting."

James's brother William was