

A blood-soaked kilt; extracted from A Stranger On The Bars by Christian Watt Marshall– p103

**My mother came home again from Fife, once more in a broken state. We were all stunned. Even after 60 years it's still painful. In the first week we tried to tell ourselves it wasn't true but, when a large parcel arrived from the military hospital in France where James had died, we were forced to accept the grim reality. My sister opened it and screamed at the pitch of her voice. It was the possessions of the late Private James Sim – a Gordon kilt and a tunic drenched in blood with two of my mother's letters in the pocket. My mother wanted to know why Margaret had screamed, but we never told her. I said it was the green coat she had sent to Perth to be dyed black. I showed my mother the coat which had arrived with the same post.**

**We dug a hole on the brae head under the clothes poles, and when our neighbour Gamrie Donald realised what we were doing, he dug it deeper for us. He was a kind man. We buried the kilt and tunic and most of the small trifles in the parcel. We kept James' watch, but hid it away from my mother. At least some of his blood had returned to his birth place.**

A Stranger On The Bars; the recollections of Christian Watt Marshall about her life in the Fraserburgh area in the early 1900s

*Read the extract by Christian Watt Marshall and discuss the following questions:*

- How did receiving the parcel change the women's experience of James' death ?
- Why do you think they never told their mother about the kilt and tunic ?
- Why might they have chosen the brae head under the clothes poles to bury the kilt and tunic ?
- Why was it important to Christian Marshall that James' blood 'returned to his birthplace' ?
- Why do you think they chose his watch to keep ?

*Further research*

*What mementoes of the war dead did people tend to keep ? Why ?*