

Biog 14 Mrs Isabella Lilburn

Morag Cross 22 Jan 2014

*****14.1**

In August, September and October 1914, the *Glasgow Herald* carried many appeals for 'comforts for the troops', the term used for welfare parcels of clothing, food and toiletries to supplement those issued by the army. At the start of the war, much of the official kit was either difficult to obtain, or non-existent. The very khaki dye for army uniforms, some of which was made by Glasgow's British Dyewood Company, of Carntyne Dyewood Mills, Parkhead (and Lacovia, Jamaica), was in short supply. [Source: 'British Dyewood Co Ltd', *Scottish Archive Network Online Catalogue*, at www.scan.org.uk/; Angus McLean 1901, *Local Industries of Glasgow and the West of Scotland*, Glasgow, p191; *Glasgow Herald*, 11 Feb 1915, p10; 12 Feb 1915, p12].

*****14.2**

Khaki, originally an Indian invention, had been supplied by various natural plant dyes and had become the standard field uniforms due to its camouflage properties, for the British Army around the time of the Boer War. Germany had led the world in the production of artificial or inorganic dyes due to its advanced chemical industry, but as the enemy its products could now no longer be imported. [Sources: *Glasgow Post Office Directories 1900-1920*; Colin A Russell, 2000, *Chemistry, Society and Environment*, Cambridge, pp228-35, 243; 'When did the British Army adopt Khaki?', The Great War Forum, Discussion thread, begun Jul 28 2011, at <http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/>; Angus McLean 1901, *Local Industries of Glasgow and the West of Scotland*, Glasgow, p191].

*****14.3**

Even the most basic necessities had to mass-manufactured be within the British Isles, and produced at great speed. Improvisation became the watchword, and in many cases, the public became impromptu quartermasters, sending in their own stores to supplement the military. It was almost as the female counterpart to the men's rush to 'join the colours.' Shirts and socks were desperately needed, although commercial tailors objected to 'competition' from the home-based seamstresses.

*****14.4**

Female volunteers '*giving out materials ... [should] have them made by paid workers instead. There is serious danger [they] deprive their poorer sisters of a livelihood.*' More practical responses followed, 'MJ' wrote: *The Government cannot keep pace with the demand, and it is now appealing for help to the citizens. ... As to unemployment, our women have been fitting themselves to do men's work ... if our help were limited to giving money to pay others to work ... the interest ... would soon fall away.* ' [Sources: *Glasgow Herald*, 26 Sept 1914, p4; 28 Sept 1914, p3].

*****14.5a and b**

Isabella Watson's letter: *The War Office ... now appeals urgently ... for blankets ... the necessary khaki uniforms cannot be given to the men until they are ... sent abroad. ... [Regarding] shirts and knitted comforts ... the utmost ... done by paid and voluntary workers is not likely to be enough ... many*

middle-class and working women ...could do much by their own exertions but ... have very little command of money. [Source: *Glasgow Herald*, 24 Sept 1914, p3].

***14.6

The emotional need to 'do something' was intense. 'MJ' again: *'Merely to give money to pay other people to do the work does not satisfy our sentiment ... unless actively involved in helping, some would give way under the strain [of worry] ... a great many cannot give money but will gladly give their time and work.'* [Source: *Glasgow Herald*, 26 Sept 1914, p3].

***14.7

In an era when the women of the great Glasgow business dynasties were not expected to run the family companies, they now had the opportunity to use their talents. One of them, Isabella Lilburn (1855-1920), was as 'well-connected' as possible, being related to numerous prominent citizens. Her father David Binnie's family developed Abbotsford Place, Gorbals and Monteith Row, on Glasgow Green, originally middle-class townhouses, and her uncle Prof William Binnie was a famous clergyman. [Sources: Testaments, Thomas Binnie Senior and Junior, 1867, 1912, David Binnie 1882, James Lilburn 1914, 1915, Isabella Lilburn 1920; Statutory Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths, at www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk; P Hillis 2007, *The Barony of Glasgow*, Edinburgh, pp199, 217; James MacLehose, 1886, *Memoirs ... of One Hundred Glasgow Men*, Glasgow, pp33-5].

***14.8 a and b use both

Isabella's sisters certainly married 'well'. Her brothers-in-law included the co-founder of Fraser's department store, the professor of surgery at Anderson's College, the vice-president of Pittsburgh's Apollo Iron & Steel Co, one of Glasgow University's solicitors, and Sir John Wilson, MP for Airdrie. [Sources: Testaments, Thomas Binnie Senior and Junior, 1867, 1912, David Binnie 1882, James Lilburn 1914, 1915, Isabella Lilburn 1920; Statutory Register of Marriages, Deaths at www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk; 'Fraser & McLaren', 'Arthur & Fraser', *Company Histories*, Online Resource, at www.housefraserarchive.ac.uk; 'Records of Fraser, Sons & Co Ltd', *Archives Hub, Online Catalogue*, at <http://archiveshub.ac.uk/>; *Glasgow Post Office Directories 1860-1930*; *Glasgow Herald*, 1 Feb 1921, p9; *Glasgow Contemporaries at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century*, Glasgow, p206; US Federal Census W Boyd 1900, 1910, at www.ancestry.co.uk; R L Polk, *Pittsburgh and Allegheny Directory 1900-1906*, Historic Pittsburgh City Directories, at <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/p/pitttextall/>].

***14.9

Isabella's husband was James Lilburn, partner in Aitken and Lilburn of the Loch Shipping Line who sailed between Glasgow and Australia. Author Joseph Conrad was briefly third mate of their ship, 'Loch Etive'. However, their old-fashioned business practices meant that they concentrated on brokerage and agency work after 1911. The Lilburns lived in Dowanhill, moved to Glenlora, their Renfrewshire estate around 1907. [Sources: 'Glasgow Post Office Directories 1860-1930'; Census 1891, 1901 at www.ancestry.co.uk; Census 1911 at www.scotlandsepeople.gov.uk; J Strachan, 'The Loch Long of Glasgow', at www.thelochlong.info/index.htm; 'The Fleets: Aitken, Lilburn & Co', *The Ships List* [Online Resource], at www.theshipslist.com; 'The Loch Etive', *Ship Modelers Association* [US Website], at www.shipmodelersassociation.org].

***14.10

Of the four children, Edwin probably had health problems, and lived privately. The eldest, James (1880-1946) ran the business, and was an officer in the part-time Territorial Force on the outbreak of war. Her youngest son, William (1885-1958) had joined The Highland Light Infantry (HLI) in 1905, and was a keen sportsman, and humorous singer at Regimental concerts. [Sources: *Glasgow Herald*, 31 Aug 1914, p6; *Highland Light Infantry Chronicle*, April 1911, pp54-7; April 1921, p37; Statutory Registers of Births, Marriages, Deaths at www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk].

***14.11 a and / or b use either or both

In 1908 their sister, Jean married James Clark Campbell, whose family owned Tullichewan Castle and J & W Campbell's drapery warehouse in Ingram Street. His cousins included the wife of William H Anderson, VC (see separate story), and the Prime Minister, Henry Campbell-Bannerman. [Sources: *Glasgow and its Environs*, 1891, Stratten: London, pp74-5; 'J & W Campbell', *Glasgow Today*, 1888, pp 98; Statutory Registers of Marriages, Deaths at www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk; 'James Campbell' and 'Sir James Campbell', *The Glasgow Story*, at www.theglasgowstory.com; W Scobie, 'Tullichewan Castle and Estate', *The Vale of Leven* [Historical Resource], at www.valeofleven.org.uk].

***14.12 a AND use both ***14.12b

James Lilburn died on 30 August, but despite her recent widowhood, Isabella soon set up a formidable organisation. She concentrated on the HLI, her son's regiment. On 25 September 1914, a notice in the *Glasgow Herald* announced 'Highland Light Infantry: A Depot is now open daily ... in the Grand Hotel ... comforts for the men going on active service ... will be gratefully received ... addressed to ... Mrs James Lilburn.' Numerous similar adverts appealed for 'comforts' for other regiments (8th Scottish Rifles, Royal Army Medical Corps, Cameron Highlanders), almost entirely organised by women. [Source: *Glasgow Herald*, 31 Aug 1914, p6; 17 Sept 1914, p3; 21 Sept 1914, p1; 22 Sept 1914, p1; 25 Sept 1914, p1].

***14.13 a and b

Lt William Lilburn 'took the first reinforcements for the 2nd Battalion [from Hamilton] to France on 26 August 1914'. He arrived at Rebaix during the Battle of the Aisne, on Sept 8, amid torrential rain, which had inevitable effects on troops' health. Adjutant Keith-MacDonald wrote 'My feet are troubling me now a little', not having removed his boots for six days. Keith-MacDonald, who died here, writes: 'Sept 17 ... Dreadfully wet ... under perpetual shell-fire ... Sept 18 ... rain ... without cessation ... We had no cover the ground being rocky, the most miserable night'. Lilburn's commanding officer wrote: '11 Sept ... At every step .. about 12lbs of earth came up ... leaving a hole like a miniature grave behind'. [Source: *Highland Light Infantry Chronicle*, Oct 1914, pp141, 143-4, 147; April 1921, p37].

***14.14

Lt Lilburn's serious injuries received at the Aisne are noted in the HLI Chronicle, beside Mrs Lilburn's organisation. 'A depot for comfots ... is run by a committee of ladies ... thousands of garments have been sent to the men ... pipes, tobacco and sweets, and postcards from ... the front show [they are] appreciated'. [Source: *Highland Light Infantry Chronicle*, Jan 1915, p29; April 1921, p37].

***14.15a or b Statue pic – use a or b and in addition use one or more of c, d and/or e

***14.15 c, d and/ or e use at least one – important to the story

In 1915, Capt W Lilburn married M C 'Maud' Reid, daughter of Hugh Reid, Director of the North British Locomotive Co, Springburn, the largest steam train-engine builders in Europe. During the war they produced munitions, 'trench Howitzer carriages, tanks, military bridges, [and] artificial limbs'. In complete contrast, they also gave part of the head office as a Red Cross hospital with 400 beds, and were major benefactors to Springburn, donating parks and public halls. [Source: 'Records of North British Locomotive Co Ltd', *University of Glasgow Archives Hub*, at <http://archiveshub.ac.uk/>; *Highland Light Infantry Chronicle*, Jan 1915, p32; Statutory Register of Marriages, at www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk].

***14.16

In November 1915, Mrs Lilburn, requested that 'mittens, soap, handkerchiefs, indelible pencils, tobacco, plum puddings', for special 'New Year' parcels, be sent to the Grand Hotel comforts depot. The City Council also had its own collecting station for public donations (for all Scottish units) at 121 St Vincent St. [Source: *The Scotsman*, 13 Nov 1915, p11; *Glasgow Herald*, 13 Oct 1917, p1].

***14.17

Each soldier 'leaving France for fresh fields of action' received a package in 1916, while similar items were sent to HLI prisoners of war. There were 125 such men at Wittenberg, Germany, captured in December 1914 who were not being treated in accordance with the Hague Convention. During a typhus epidemic several soldiers died, and 'but for [the parcels] the men would starve'. The parcels were 'A Godsend ... food ... The [thing] we prized more than any other was the soap'. In January 1917, Mrs Lilburn, honorary secretary of the Prisoners of War Fund appealed for 'adopters', who would sponsor some of the six parcels each man received monthly. 'We find that £3 a month barely covers the outlay for each man'. [Source: *The Scotsman*, 22 Jan 1917, p7; *Highland Light Infantry Chronicle*, Jan 1916, pp15, 40; Jan 1918, p21; Oct 1918, 125].

***14.18

The prodigious organisation behind this effort is revealed in the HLI's 'Chronicle'. The collecting depot moved from the Grand Hotel to a flat at 272 Bath Street, in December 1917, while holding fundraising bazaars.

***14.19

For the last New Year of the war, 1917-18, the 2nd Battalion's Comforts Fund despatched 830 parcels, with a 'souvenir pocket knife with Regimental crest engraved on [the] blade'. 'There are 170 prisoners [including 9 in Turkey] cared for at 272 Bath St, and three splendid parcels, each weighing eleven pounds, are sent to each man per fortnight'. Their preferences were noted on index cards, and recorded in ledgers so that donors could purchase their favourite supplies. Sample parcels were suggested, including porridge oats, dripping, sardines, oxo, corned beef and even haggis! [Source: *Highland Light Infantry Chronicle*, Jan 1916, pp15, 40; Jan 1918, pp20-1; Oct 1918, p127].

***14.20

Mrs Isabella Lilburn died at Fairholm, Larkhall in 1920, but William Lilburn never fully recovered from his wounds, and reluctantly left the army in 1921, retiring to Coull House, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire. The Lilburns were more unfortunate in the Second World War, when both William and James Lilburn each lost a son on active service. The cousins appear beside each other in the official death returns: 'Lilburn, William, 2nd Lt The Highland Light Infantry', son of James, was killed in Greece in 1944, and 'Lilburn, Hugh Neilson, MC, 2nd Lt The Highland Light Infantry', son of William, died from 'wounds received in action', in 1945. [Sources: Isabella Lilburn, Testament, Hamilton Sheriff Court, C37/43/17; Register of Deaths at www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk; *Highland Light Infantry Chronicle*, April 1921, p37; *England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966*, at www.ancestry.co.uk].

***14.21