

Biog No 1 The Four Anderson Brothers, Mrs Nora and Mr W J Anderson

Morag Cross 9 December 2013

The Anderson family suffered an appalling loss with the deaths of all four of their sons on active service, but they had already suffered the death of their fifth son, Harry, as an infant in 1887.

Eleanora Kay (known as 'Nora') was the daughter of a wealthy East India merchant, whose family home, Cornhill House at Biggar, was designed by William Leiper, architect of the 'Doge's Palace' carpet factory beside Glasgow Green. [Source: 'William Leiper: Biography Report', *Dictionary of Scottish Architects*, at www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=200002]. ***1.1 In 1881, she married Glasgow accountant and stockbroker William James Anderson, who worked in his father's accountancy firm of Kerr, Anderson, Muir and Main. Anderson's father was a liquidator of the notorious City of Glasgow Bank from 1878-80. [Source: *Edinburgh Gazette*, 25 October 1878, 811; 'Ledcameroch: William Anderson', by C McKellar, Bearsden Local History Website, at www.ledcameroch.co.uk].

The first of their five sons, William Herbert Anderson, or 'Bertie', was born in December, 1881. Alexander Ronald ('Ronnie') followed in 1884, Harry in 1887 (died of an obstructed bowel, aged only one week), Charles Hamilton ('Charlie'), in 1888, and the last, Edward Kerr Anderson ('Teddie'), in 1896. [Source: *Statutory Register of Births, Deaths*, at www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk]. The family moved from Woodlands Terrace, near Park Circus, to St James (now Ruskin) Terrace, Great Western Road, in the mid-1880s, and then to Woodside Terrace, overlooking Kelvingrove Park around 1900. ***1.2

The boys all attended Fettes College in Edinburgh, but only Bertie followed his father as an accountant. He joined the Volunteers (The Territorial Force, later The Territorial Army) in 1900, and married Gertrude Gilmour, daughter of a 'Turkey Red' dye-manufacturer, in 1908. [Source: *Glasgow Herald*, 8 April 1918, p6]. He settled in Cardross with his wife and two sons, from where he commuted to his father's firm, Kerr, Anderson and MacLeod (the partners had changed), in West George Street, Glasgow. [Source: *Glasgow Post Office Directories 1908-1920*]. The 'MacLeod' partner was the father of the future Lord MacLeod of Fuinary, whose own traumatic experiences in the Great War inspired him to found the socially-active Iona Community.

***1.3 'Charlie' joined the 1st Battalion, The Highland Light Infantry (HLI) in Lucknow, India in 1908, perhaps inspired by his older cousin, John A Buttery, former partner in Govan marine engineers Hall-Brown & Buttery, who left business to join The Royal Engineers. [Source: Royal Engineers, Chatham, Records of Officers, WO76/18/14, at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk>; *London Gazette*, 6 May 1902, 3016; 4 July 1905, 4632; 14 July 1908, 5135]. Charlie impressed his colleagues as 'a keen sportsman', 'a debonaire young soldier', nicknamed 'The Babe', who arrived in the trenches near Givenchy on 12 December 1914, and a week later, was dead. [Source: *Highland Light Infantry Chronicle*, Jan 1915, p11; Jan 1916, p39; April 1916, p58; *Glasgow Herald*, 23 January 1920, p11].

Fellow officers described the action in which Charlie was officially listed as 'missing' on 19 December. 'We had a rather bad time ... [after] a night march over ground we did not know ... our first line was left isolated and lost very heavily with [German] bombs and machine guns', when the Germans recaptured their own trenches back again, and retaliated by 'blowing in our front trench in six

places'. [Source: *Highland Light Infantry Chronicle*, Jan 1915, p13]. Charlie's promotion was announced in April 1915, but by that time he was, unbeknown to his family, long dead. [Source: *Highland Light Infantry Chronicle*, April (published July) 1915, p56]. ***1.4

Ronnie Anderson had 'been farming in Rhodesia', but 'enlisted in Lovat's Scouts' as a private soldier in August 1914, thus joining up as soon as possible. He was eventually commissioned into the HLI, reaching France in May 1915, for 'no sooner had he heard of his [brother Charlie's] death, than he was determined to ... fill his place, only to meet a similar fate'. He was 'shot in the trenches' on October 8, 1915 at Vieille Chapelle, while with the 1st Bn. [Source: *Highland Light Infantry Chronicle*, Jan 1916, pp18, 39; April 1916, p58; *Glasgow Herald*, 23 January 1920, p11].

***1.5 'Teddie' was the youngest and third casualty, who died from injuries sustained in a flying accident at Winchester on 16th March, 1918. He too had joined the HLI in 1914, but transferred in 1915 to the nascent Royal Flying Corps and proved himself, while still a teenager, as 'one of the most intrepid and skilful of that daring band'. He saw action at the Somme, but 'as the result of his outstanding abilities' was promoted to be a flight instructor in Winchester. 'His skill perhaps proved his undoing ... in an aeroplane which had given trouble ... the engine stopped ... his sun set weeping'. [Source: *Glasgow Herald*, 21 March 1918, p6; 23 January 1920, p11; *Highland Light Infantry Chronicle*, April 1918, p69]. He was buried in Bearsden, his father's childhood home, and was the only one of the four sons to 'come home'.

***1.6

The last death was that of the eldest brother, Lieutenant Colonel William 'Bertie' Anderson, Commanding Officer of the 12th Battalion, The Highland Light Infantry, whose award of the Victoria Cross is more fully described in the VC recipients section of the website. He was killed on 25 March, 1918, at Maricourt, France, in the second of two counter-attacks he personally led that day, a 'genial and cultured gentleman' who yet died 'fighting within the enemy's lines'. [Source: *Seventh Supplement to the London Gazette of 30 April*, published 3 May 1918, 5359-60; *The Outpost* (Journal of 17th HLI), Apr-May 1918, p182]. ***1.7

Even before they lost any of their sons in the war, Mr and Mrs Anderson were heavily involved in supporting Regimental charities and welfare provision for servicemen. 'A depot for comforts for the ... 1st and 10th HLI has been open in the Grand Hotel, Glasgow since September', 1914, the joint-convenors being Mrs Nora Anderson and Mrs Isabella Lilburn. ***1.8 [Source: *Highland Light Infantry Chronicle* Jan 1914, p33, April 1914, p94; April 1915 (published July), p85; *The Scotsman*, 15 July 1936, p9]. Warm clothing, supplementary rations, toiletries, bandages and blankets, necessary to existence in freezing temperatures, were dispatched, along with aid parcels to prisoners of war.

Their father, W J Anderson, was an honorary official of the Scottish Branch of the Red Cross, tirelessly fundraising for ambulances and medical supplies for the wounded and veterans both at home, and in the front line. For this, he was awarded the CBE, although he had to apply for all his sons' medals himself in 1919, by which time he had retired to Strathairly, near Largo in Fife. [Source: *The Scotsman*, 9 April 1915, p6; *Glasgow Herald*, 13 October 1917, p1; 14 January 1922, p8; *British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920* [database on-line], at www.ancestry.co.uk].

*****1.9** A bronze plaque to their sons' memory was unveiled in Glasgow Cathedral in 1920, 'a band of brothers ...[this monument] ... would long after this recall their memory and tell the citizens of Glasgow ... of a very great and perfect sacrifice'. [Source: *Glasgow Herald*, 23 January 1920, p11].

*****1.10** , *****1.11** Charles Hamilton Anderson has no known grave, and his name is listed on the Memorial at Le Touret Military Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France

Alexander Ronald Anderson is buried at Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery, Souchez, France

*****1.12** Edward Kerr Anderson is buried in Old Kilpatrick Graveyard, Bearsden, where the headstone also names his brother Harry (died in infancy, 1887) and his father, William James Anderson (d 1922)

Lt Col W H Anderson, VC, is buried at the Peronne Road Cemetery, Maricourt, on the Somme, France

One or more of the Anderson brothers are commemorated on the following memorials:

Glasgow Academy War Memorial

Fettes College War Memorial, Edinburgh

Royal Military Academy Sandhurst Chapel (Charles H Anderson was a regular army officer who trained there)

Glasgow Cathedral, Anderson Brothers Memorial (plaque unveiled in 1920)

Prestwick Golf Club War Memorial (where their father W J Anderson was club captain)

Cardross War Memorial (W H Anderson lived in Cardross with his wife and two sons)

*****1.13** Sandyford (now Sandyford Henderson) Church War Memorial, Glasgow (near their childhood homes in Woodlands and Woodside Terraces; Edward K Anderson's funeral service was held here)

*****1.14** Upper Largo Parish Church War Memorial, Fife (where their parents had a country house and where they retired)

*****1.15 a and 1.15b** Lundin Links War Memorial, Largo, Fife (near Strathairly, their Fife home)

Chamber of Commerce Roll of Honour, now in The Royal Highland Fusiliers Museum, 518 Sauchiehall St, Glasgow

Scottish National War Memorial, Edinburgh Castle

Their story formed the basis of the novel, 'The Way Home', by descendant Robin Scott-Elliot