

IN MEMORY OF

ALFRED ANDERSON

25th June 1896 - 21st November 2005

Alfred's Family

THE FAMILY of the late Alfred Anderson would like to express their deep gratitude and thanks to all neighbours, friends and the townspeople of Alyth and the wider community for their cards, letters, flowers and show of kindness and sympathy during their recent sad bereavement.

Thanks are due to the local Doctors, the staff of Mundamalla Nursing Home and Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital.

Thanks also to Billy MacKay and Fergie Alexander of David Scott Ltd for their dignified manner and professionalism, and to Professor John MacKenzie for his tribute at the funeral service, which was extremely moving.

A very special thanks to the Reverend Neil Gardner for his support, comfort and acts of kindness far beyond his call of duty; it is all deeply appreciated.

'ALFRED'

by Professor John M. MacKenzie
author of 'A Life in Three Centuries'

"FEW PEOPLE have the extraordinary opportunity to form a close and stimulating new friendship with someone past the age of 105. But that has been my great privilege since my arrival in Alyth. For four years Alfred has been a gracious, fascinating, and much-loved friend. He represented a remarkable personal connection with what seems for most people to be a truly distant past. To hear him exercising his wonderfully clear memory, reminiscing about the return of Boer War troops over 100 years ago, life in Newtyle and Strathmore in Edwardian times, his experiences in the Territorial Army, and of course his terrifying time in France in the First World War, was truly inspirational. His dignity, his old-fashioned charm and courtesy, his modesty, and above all his great good humour were the attributes of a man who demonstrated a coolness under fire and an immense courage that should leave us all in awe.

But Alfred's courage did not end when his injuries brought him back from France in 1916. In 1919 he wanted to stay in the army, as a regimental sergeant-major, but he answered a parent's summons to return to Angus to take charge of the family business. At the height of the depression, he courageously returned to Yorkshire. Duty always took precedence over



inclination. Back in Newtyle, he faced down the local minister in a dispute over charging for lairs in the churchyard. He courageously dealt with the formidable Misses Cox who ran the Boy Scouts. And of course he exercised his courage again in running the Newtyle Home Guard where, if he had met them, he would have stood for no nonsense from Captain Mainwaring, Corporal Jones or any of the rest.

But for me, Alfred's courage was never greater than in recent years. A widower since 1979, he missed his dear wife and mother of his children, Susie, until his last days. The death of his daughter Betty was yet another penalty of longevity, and he felt it keenly. Yet he had to be fearless once more when he discovered that he had to cope with some of the pains as well as the pleasures of fame. We have to realise that Fred was an explorer. He was on an expedition, without guides or companions, into physiological and psychological realms that very few others have entered. Many of us knew him on that journey of exploration to the very ends of the human life-span. He had to plumb the depths of his courage to survive as well as he did.

I shall retain many memories of Fred for the rest of my days: our sneak whiskies in the middle of the afternoon, his obvious enjoyment of champagne and birthday cake at little parties at my home, his characteristic gesture of throwing

Tribute to Alfred by the Reverend Neil Gardner

"IT IS no exaggeration to suggest that the death of Alfred Anderson on Monday 21st November 2005 represents the end of an era, not just for his family for whom the loss is of course greatest, nor just for the local community which was justifiably proud of its oldest citizen, but for the whole country.

Born on 25th June 1896, Alfred had been for some time Scotland's oldest man and was latterly the last Scottish survivor of the Great War. He was the last survivor anywhere of action on the Western Front in 1914, where his battalion, the 5th Black Watch, first engaged with the enemy on 13th November, amazingly just over 91 years ago. The determined survival instinct that he displayed in those dark and difficult days stood him in good stead throughout his long life, which comfortably spanned three centuries, and he retained his old-fashioned sense of courtesy and dignity to the very end.

A gentle, gracious and unassuming man, I consider it an incredible privilege to have been both his minister and his friend these last seven years."

his head back in loud laughter responding to a joke, his utter fascination and amused pleasure with his other self when Tony Morrow modelled him in clay for the magnificent bronze bust. 'Do you think he would like a drink too' he said. And he was delighted when we dubbed it the 'Fred Head'.

But I shall also remember his seriousness. He was always deeply reflective on the matter of war and confided his anxieties for the troops going to fight. And let me finish with another and I think moving example of his thoughtfulness. Some months before he died we were sitting together in his living room and he said "You know: I am often depressed and lonely, and I wonder what it is all for that I should have been here so long. And I thought that my purpose has been to bring people together." You can all imagine how fervently I agreed with him. Fred brought us all together, as we are today, and it was a great and noble service, not the least of the many he had performed for the country, his generation, his regiment, his locality, and his family."

Memories of Alfred in the Alyth Voice

7th Edition November 1997 'Alyth's Oldest Citizen'

On a dreich October night, two correspondents from the Alyth Voice turned up at the door of Alyth's oldest citizen, Mr Alfred Anderson. Billy Gordon and Sandy McCurdy were given a very warm welcome by Mr Anderson and his son-in-law Graeme Maxwell.

Over a dram, Mr Anderson discussed many aspects of his 101 years. Born while Queen Victoria was still on the throne, Mr Anderson first went to school at the Hilltown, Dundee. Not long after, he and his family moved to Newtyle where his father had a joinery business. He attended North Street and at 14 progressed to Harris Academy in Tay Square, Dundee.

He remembers playing football at Alyth, as a schoolboy with a pitch which had no side lines and the ball could be kicked against a wall and the game continued!!!

In 1907-08, Kinpurnie Castle was built by the Cayzer family. Mr Anderson well remembers looking round the work with his father on Sundays. His father was obviously interested to see how the joiners were doing. There were no security precautions on the site, as it never occurred to anyone that anything would be taken.

At 16, he left school and became an apprentice in his father's business. In 1914 when war was declared, he went to a camp near Crieff

with the 5th Black Watch territorial regiment. After a time he was entrained to Dundee and in billets at Hawkhill School before embarking for France. Mr Anderson was wounded once, and after the war he returned to work with his father, eventually taking over the business.

Whilst working on the Alexandra Street houses, Mr Anderson had a load of wood delivered by rail to the town. The wood was so long it took up three goods wagons. After the load arrived at the station it was due to be delivered to the site by the railway's horse and lorry. After a couple of days waiting, Mr Anderson discovered that the station master, Mr Willie Lyle (ex Newlands) had been delivering to the shops and had not bothered to deliver the wood. After some heated words with Mr Lyle, Mr Anderson used his influence with the wood suppliers and the wood was delivered the next day.

One of the jobs of the joiner in those days was to act as the undertaker. Prior to the First World War, the hearse was horse-drawn, but once he returned the motor-hearse took over. One of his jobs was to walk alongside the hearse to pace the procession, as the people would walk behind from the church to the cemetery. He well remembers making coffins, whilst his father also bought in coffins.

8th Edition December 1997 'Alyth's Oldest Citizen'

This piece picks up the interview with Mr Alfred Anderson, the first part of which appeared in the November edition.

He is a keen Dundee FC fan and was present at some of the great European matches of the 60s (Dundee 8 : Cologne 1 is remembered fondly). However, Mr Anderson started going to Dens Park as a schoolboy. The train from Newtyle to Downfield cost one shilling (5p). At Downfield station trams waited to take the fans to Dens. The schoolboys always tried to get upstairs on the trams as the crowds on the stairs prevented the conductor – always a man – from getting upstairs to collect fares. Mr Anderson stood in the same spot at Dens for many years. Close by, six blind supporters turned up for each match and a man gave a running commentary of the game, hardly missing a kick – all this in a broad Dundee accent. For a time Mr Anderson ran a football team in Newtyle. Newtyle FC played in the Dundee and District Amateur League. Their greatest triumph was winning the Cup, with the final being played at Dens Park. Only one Alyth man played in the team – Willie McKiddie. Much later, Willie was killed when a fire gutted the hut he lived in. The hut was in the grounds of the sawmill situated at Barony Park, where Mr & Mrs Hart's house is now. Willie's sister, Mabel Keel, is now living in Belmont. Over his long career with his own joinery business, Mr Anderson

was involved in many projects around Alyth. His proudest moment was receiving recognition for his work in the building of Alexandra Street. The houses were commissioned by Alyth Town Council and were built in 1939. We can still see the plaque erected by the Saltire Society recognising the quality of the design and workmanship. He was also involved in work on some of the blocks at Springbank before the Second World War.

Away from Alyth, Mr Anderson worked on projects at Callander, Battleby and Morrison's Academy, Crieff. He was persuaded to return to work to act as clerk of works for the new Queen's Barracks in Dunkeld Road, Perth.

With a large family in the area, Mr Anderson celebrated his 100th birthday at the Rosemount Golf Hotel. As a surprise, the pipes, drums and dancers of the Black Watch performed in front of the hotel. Their next assignment was to be the celebrations to mark the ending of British rule in Hong Kong. Mr Anderson is getting used to being grilled by the media. Recently Dorothy Parker, a producer, Jane Franchi, the presenter and a TV crew interviewed him for a 'Frontline Scotland' programme about British soldiers shot for cowardice in the First World War.

The Alyth Voice would like to thank Mr Anderson and Mr Maxwell for their time and patience – not to mention the dram!

20th Edition December 1998
'War Veteran Honoured'

102 year old Mr Alfred Anderson, Alyth's Senior Citizen is one of four Scottish veterans to receive France's highest award for bravery in recognition of the part they played in the Great War.

Alfred received the Légion d'Honneur from the Consul General, Anita Limido, at a ceremony in Edinburgh.

He served with the 5th (Angus) Battalion, The Black Watch when war broke out in 1914. They were amongst the first to be sent to France and he served on the front line until injured and sent back to the UK. He eventually returned to duty as a training instructor in Ripon, Yorks.

WE'LL ALL DRINK TO THAT!

50th Edition July 2001
'Special Congratulations
Alfred Anderson
105 years young!'

Born on June 25th 1896. Alfred is a well known figure in Alyth, present at most official functions these days as a guest of honour, being interviewed regularly on TV and having received the highest honour France awards, he has lived in three centuries and for the Voice to share it's front page with his own personal celebrations is indeed an honour.

The Voice interviewed Mr Anderson in it's November & December 97 issues when he was a mere 101yrs and that to us seems a long time ago.

**Congratulations Mr Anderson
from all the people of Alyth**

64th Edition October 2002
'A Special Visitor'

Mr Alfred Anderson, our oldest resident and now officially Scotland's oldest man, had a very special visitor recently when Prince Charles called in at his home in Isla Road for a cup of tea and a chat.

Now 106 years old, Mr Anderson served in the 5th Battalion The Black Watch during the First World War alongside two of the late Queen Mother's brothers – Patrick, Lord Glamis, and Fergus Bowes-Lyon. The very private visit was co-ordinated and hosted by the Rev Neil Gardner, himself a former chaplain to the Black Watch. "The Prince of Wales was fascinated by Mr Anderson's memories of the First World War in general and of two of his Great Uncles in particular" commented Mr Gardner. "He stayed for 45 minutes, much longer than I had expected, but Mr Anderson coped brilliantly and seemed quite unfazed by the heir to the throne sitting on his settee!"

71st Edition June 2003
'Happy Birthday
Alfred Anderson
107
This Month'

Many readers of the *Alyth Voice* know of the amazing Alfred Anderson. He came to live in Alyth in 1982, when he was 86 years of age. Twenty-one years on, he is still very much alive and, as Scotland's oldest man, probably Alyth's most famous citizen.

Now his biography has been written by John MacKenzie. It is available in Lunans, the Post Office, and Margaret Ferguson's shop. You can also find it at the Newtyle PO, the Blair Tourist Information Centre, the bookshop in Blair and at Peel Farm.

On May 1st, Alfred was seen at the Town Hall, casting his votes, and doing his democratic duty as he has done for over eighty years!

On May 7th, he opened the new First World War room at The Black Watch Museum, Balhousie Castle in Perth. He was in great spirits and was featured on both the BBC and Grampian news that evening. He will be 107 this month (June) and no doubt all of Alyth will celebrate with him, at least in spirit!

Read all about his remarkable life in *A Life in Three Centuries*. All proceeds go to The Black Watch Association.

NEWS of Alfred's death has been covered worldwide by many notable newspapers, television stations & websites.

