

The Story of Andrew Patterson

By Eddie Pullen

Andrew Paterson

Andrew Paterson was born in 1880 in Edinburgh, the youngest child of James and Susan Paterson.¹ Andrew was a Baker when on 12th July 1897 he joined the 1st Battalion Scots Guards², probably some of the scars given as distinctive marks at his attestation were a result of this trade.

The Boer War saw Andrew serving in South Africa from 1899-1902, he was in Africa three days short of three years and saw action at Paardeburg, Belmont, Modder river, Dreifonteim, Johannesburg, Diamond Hill, Belfast and earned all the resulting campaign medals and clasps. Andrew served eight years with the colours and joined the Sussex constabulary in 1905 whilst on reserve², he served in Horsham and Bognor.³ During his service in Bognor he met Fanny Walls-Yeates of Scot Street, Bognor, she was 25 when they were married at St John's church, Bognor on the 25th June 1908.⁴ Andrew was now serving in Southwick, in October 1909 was in Lancing and was still there at the time of the 1911 census.⁵ On the 20th May 1913, Andrew resigned from the force³, he worked as a Brewers cellerman and cask washer at the time of the declaration of war in August 1914.² Fanny and Andrew were by now living back at 19 Scot Street, Bognor with Fanny's parents.

The war was supposed to be over by Christmas 1914 and this may have influenced Andrew's decision to re-enlist in January 1915 when it became clear that this was going to be a longer haul. Andrew was now 34 but he must have been welcomed back into the folds of the Scot's Guards, an experienced Ex-soldier who had seen plenty of overseas action. The Scots Guards had already seen action with the B.E.F. and he would be used to fill the ever widening gaps in the ranks. Andrew signed his attestation papers on the 22nd January 1915, this time to join the 2nd battalion, 62 days later on the 25th March, Andrew landed in France.² The Scots Guards had just fought at Neuve Chapelle, the first attempt at trying to break through the German defensive lines. Andrew was one of 170 reinforcements sent to replace the casualties.⁶ The weather was very cold and frosty at the end of March, the new month saw a great deal of route marching and fatigue parties were used with the R.E. Mining company. On the 20th April a route march was arranged where the 2nd Battalion now some 700 strong met up with the 1st Battalion in a meadow East of Nueve Chapelle. This was believed to be the first time the two had met while on active service. After this the 2nd Battalion was back in trenches until May, then in billets at Leventie.⁷ On the 6th May Andrew was appointed Lance Corporal.²

On the 9th there was an attack by the 8th Division of which the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards was a part of, this attack in most places was a failure. During this time the Battalion remained in dugouts near the Rue De Bois to which they had moved in the small hours. The battle of this day was officially known at the Battle of Aubers Reach and was one of terrible losses for the 8th division. That night the Battalion was ordered to relieve part of the 8th division and attack at dawn but it was impossible to reach them through the heavy shelling. The orders were cancelled and the Battalion was returned to Leventie.⁷ It makes you wonder how these men coped with little sleep, high adrenaline rushes and drops and then returning to billets. On the 12th the Battalion marched 4 miles to Hinges and went into billets a mile beyond the village. The 15th was to be the first

day of the Battle of Festubert. As at Nueve Chapelle, the brunt of the fighting at Festubert fell upon the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards. In the early evening on the 15th May the Battalion marched 6 miles before heavy shelling forbid further progress above ground, the Battalion continued via communication trenches until their attack positions were reached at 11pm. The Scots Guards were to be supported by the Gordon Highlanders, half an hour's bombardment of the enemy was to be followed by an attack at 3am. Ladders were placed to facilitate getting over the breastwork.⁷ Imagine waiting 4.5 hours in the trenches having little or no sleep, what thoughts would have passed through their minds. The noise of the bombardment passing overhead, crashing into the enemy lines, or so they hoped. Then the orders "fix bayonets" and the clatter of steel as this was done in unison, the whistle was blown and every man went over the top to discover his own fate. Andrew's thoughts probably had fallen to his now sick wife in Bognor, his parents in Edinburgh and the determination to keep it all together and do his duty. The first lines were held up momentarily by British shells bursting on the German parapet, then rushing forwards the first enemy trench was captured, the few German's left were bayoneted or captured, the trench was consolidated and the Scots Guards moved on to capture an orchard, heavy casualties occurred from a cross-fire of machine guns. The Battalion moved on and were met by Enfilading fire from their exposed left flank. They were counter-attacked from this direction and from their rear, the time was still only about 5:30, about 40 men of F company fought their way out to the right to join the Royal Welsh but the rest of F company was cut off and surrounded.⁷ How gallantly they fought was shown by the state of the ground where German and Scots Guards dead lay mingled together where they had fought to the bitter end. Having destroyed F company the German counter attack moved against the second and third lines of Scot's guards.⁸ The return fire from the Scots Guards machine guns inflicted terrific losses on the enemy and brought their counter-attack to a standstill, both sides brought up reinforcements, it was now about 5pm and little changed until nightfall. At 8:30 the Scot's Guards were relieved from the front line, only 6 of the 16 officers who had gone forward in the morning were present, the night was spent getting in the wounded, rations were brought up and every man had a meal. At 12:45 a further bombardment is ordered and at 2:45 this intensifies, at 3:10 the 20th Brigade leave their front lines, led by the Scots Guards but are held up as they advance too far into the British shells. They are further held up by a deep ditch and enemy fire untouched from the bombardment, despite casualties they reach the German front and move along the trenchlines using bombs. Fighting continues, probably hand to hand but by 6:30 they have advanced too far and have to withdraw a little having been hit by British artillery fire unaware of their position. They repulse a counter-attack and at 9 o'clock the attack has come to a halt, the most advanced positions are pounded by intense German artillery fire but more trench positions are captured with heavy fighting, yard by yard, 190 prisoners are taken. The British are unable to advance across enemy ground and are subject to heavy shelling, thus ends the second day of the Battle of Festubert. During this day of exhausting fighting and perilous shelling on both sides, Andrew is wounded by a gunshot wound to his left cheek but during this bloody day he manages to perform a task and it is noted as

Good Conduct in the Field and is rewarded with promotion to Lance Sergeant . He visits three hospitals in as many days and then on the 29th is discharged to a convalescent camp, on 2nd June he is sent to Horn Fleur before rejoining his Battalion on 30th July.²

In August the Scot's Guards joined the newly formed Guards Brigade at Helfaut, near St Omer, it was inspected by Kitchener himself on the 18th, it stayed in this area for some time, far from the front but training. An inter-battalion football match was played on 7th September , won by the 2nd Battalion 1-0. On the 22nd September it marched back to familiar areas, on the 25th September, rumours began to reach them of the 1st day of the Battle of Loos. The bombardment preceding this had been distinctly audible the day before as they marched through Marles Les Mines. The British cavalry passed the column on its way to the front, they finally reached their billets after heavy rain had churned the road into deep mud, at 11:30 dog tired and wet, having been on their feet since 8am. On 6th October Andrew was promoted to Sergeant.²

The Battle of Loos was an ill advised campaign, the attack was over flat terrain but urged by the French and it would be another costly enterprise merely to please their allies. The Scots Guards were brought up on 27th October to attack the enemy, they stood to arms at 5:30am but were not ordered to advance until 2pm on Loos by the Vermelles to Lens road. They had been warned that after they reached a spur they would be fully exposed to enemy fire from hill 70, they passed the remains of the 21st Division transport destroyed by shell-fire the day before, the air was thick with the odour of dead horses, the London times of the 8th November describes it thus "the men on reaching the ridge were met by a tornado of shrapnel fire, nevertheless the brigade advanced with the steadiness of men on parade and men of other battalions who could see the manoeuvre from other trenches have spoken again and again of their most wonderful advance as being one of the glorious and impressive sights of the war and how they were thrilled to see those large silhouettes pressing silently and inexorably forward against the skyline".⁶ Loos when it was reached was under heavy shell fire and Lt McDonald was hit on the head by a flying brick though that does not appear to have been counted as a wound. The men had to don gas masks amid the confusion and one regimental historian records it as very unpleasant. Andrew's battalion was ordered to relieve the troops who had retaken hill 70 but they had to entrench on the British side of the crest as any man who stood upon it was certain to be shot ⁸, it was now midnight. The 28th was spent strengthening and getting in the wounded but the men had to watch a failed attack by the Coldstream Guards, the gallant advance and the painful sight of groups of men dribbling back to the starting point. During the 30th the German shelling did not cease, it had poured with rain the last 3 days and the men were miserably cold and wet, they had had no sleep for three nights, when at 1:30am they were relieved by the 22nd London Regiment.⁸ The Battalion marched back through Loos, now a regular Shell trap to billets at La Bourse. Matters remained fairly quiet but the Scots Guards were used in bringing up gas cylinders of which 120 were to be used by each Brigade in any projected attack. Andrew's battalion took part in an attack on the Hohenzollern redoubt on the 17th. There was little gain and they were relieved on the 26th to 27th October.⁷ After being involved in two major battles, injured in the first, Andrew was

hit by the news that Fanny, his wife of 7 years had died of TB back home in Bognor. How long Andrew had known of her illness isn't known² but TB is a long exhausting disease. On the 18th November Andrew had to change his will, hand written on page 13 of his pay book, he named his mother-in-law, Mrs Harriet Yeates his sole heir, this was to have tragic consequences as will be revealed later.⁹ Christmas eve 1915, found the battalion trenches East of Leventie, a lot of talking was heard from the German trenches and the enemy calling in English to our men. At dawn a German sniper shot dead the C.S.M. with a bullet through the head but within ten minutes, soldiers of both sides were out of their trenches and fraternising in no-man's-land. When news of this reached HQ, the CO himself set off to the trenches to put a stop to this but by the time he reached the front it was all over and the men had returned to the trenches. This cease fire does not appear to have rivalled the previous year's Christmas truce. The men finally got their Christmas dinner on 2nd January.⁶

The Battalion spent some time in the Merville/Leventie area, taking its turn in the trenches. The 10th February was an unlucky day as a dug out received a direct hit from a shell, killing 5 and wounding 2 men. A house was set on fire by another and although no casualties occurred a huge loss of materials took place, including 18000 rounds of S.A.A. The Guards' Brigade was taken out of line for a short period of recuperation on the 16th.⁷ Andrew's Battalion arrived at a camp 3 miles from Calais where a heavy gale was blowing and had flattened most of the camp, the tents had to be re-erected in severe cold before the men could rest. The country was covered in snow on the 24/25th, the Battalion returned to the front. After a 7 hour journey the men reached Casel 3 hours overdue, after breakfast they marched to billets at Wormhauudt. On the 6th the 2nd Battalion moved 2 miles West of Poperinghe in a snow storm, on the 15th, whilst entraining at Poperinghe for Ypres another train ran into them, severely injuring a sergeant and shaking others. After spending most of the day in the besieged city they took over front line trenches near the Ypres-Zonnebeke road.⁷ On the 23rd March Andrew was admitted to hospital suffering from Scabies, this is a nasty illness caused by a microscopic bug which burrows under the skin causing an intense itching and red lesions. This is caused by close skin contact with someone already infected or from infected bedding and clothing. Andrew's case was probably a severe one as he was admitted to 4 different hospitals before being discharged on 17th April 1916. He was attached to the divisional billet equipment department before rejoining the 2nd Scots Guards in the field on 20th May 1916.² Andrew was granted leave to the UK for 7 days, 15-22 June.² I presume he spent some time at 19 Scot Street, I have stood outside this address and imagined Andrew leaving here with full kit to walk the short distance to the railway station, beginning his journey back to the front. Would his heart have been heavy at leaving his adopted town and in-laws or would he have wanted to return and start a new chapter in his life, I like to think it was the former.

Andrew rejoined his Battalion in trenches North of Ypres and 3 days later he was dead.² He was killed, along with 3 others by a Minnenwerfer bomb fired a short distance from the German lines, these shells were fired from trench mortars and were much feared amongst the men, the missile was about the size of a 5 gallon oil drum. This incident is reported in two

histories of the Scots Guards, in one the author states "A chap with me got knocked clean over by the concussion from a Minnenwerfer bomb which killed 4 men".⁶ The other reports "The trenches opposite Von Kluck Farm were very heavily trench mortared, the German's had a light railway which brought up supplies and occasionally a big Minnie" (Tommy's nickname for the mortar bomb). It appears this bombardment was in retaliation for a successful trench raid.⁸ I have visited this site and standing at what was Von Kluck Farm you can see the clear advantage the German's had, they overlooked the British lines and could see almost every movement from them. Today you can clearly see the rebuilt spires of Ypres and the end of the motorway. Standing where the Scot's Guards were entrenched you get the feeling of entrapment, being hemmed in as they were by the 3 sides of the Ypres Salient. Andrew was buried in the new military cemetery, Poperinghe along with his 3 other fallen comrades.² They lie proudly in the front row facing the road, in this now very pleasant Belgian town. The dreaded telegram arrived at Scot Street and the delivery boy was possibly seen before he knocked on the door. Number 19 is at the far end of this quiet Cul de Sac, it's still quiet today but in 1916 most people coming or going would have been noticed. The news must have shocked Mrs Harriet Yeates (my Great Grandmother), she was not unused to sadness, her own husband had lain upstairs bedridden for many years before dying in 1910. She had nursed her daughter Fanny, Andrew's wife until the end came and now this, Andrew had been at No. 19 a few days previous. If anything could have been worse then it is probably this, Andrew's father in Edinburgh was reading the Daily Scotsman on the 13th July, almost two weeks after Andrew's death when he noticed his own son in the casualty list, he clung to the belief that maybe there had been a mistake. That day he wrote to the regimental paymaster asking for any news of his youngest son. I can't begin to understand the grief and anxiety this must have caused to read of your own son's death in the local daily newspaper. The reply was sent on the 17th and confirmed James' worst fears and explained why the notice had been sent to Bognor, if James confirmed that this was his son then the official notification of death would be forwarded to him. This was signed by the Colonel commanding the Scots Guards.² Tragic, sad, no words could sum up that scenario. Andrew's medals were sent to Bognor and even up to 1922 his father repeatedly wrote to the Scots Guards asking for them. The medals were eventually forwarded to Edinburgh but I have no way of knowing if they were a small consolation², Harriet Yeates was a good woman and would have had no part in the confusion. Her grief continued, she had lost her husband in 1910 and then later in 1928, another daughter (my grandmother) and her granddaughter (my Aunt) to TB within two weeks of each other. She died at Scot Street in 1932.¹⁰ James died in Edinburgh on the 12th July 1928.¹¹

There's a further episode to tell in this story, whilst researching Andrew's family on Ancestry.com, I noticed another researcher possibly tracing the same line. After contacting Judy Guthrie over several emails we confirmed we were related but she lived near Castlemaine, Australia. We corresponded and exchanged information etc but this was going to come to temporary halt whilst she was on holiday in Paris, I suggested maybe we could meet in Poperinghe, Belgium to visit Andrew's grave but this wasn't possible. But to our great delight we caught a Eurostar service to

Paris and Judy and Walter met myself and Val (my wife) at the Garre de Norde station. This would have been the first time our 2 branches of the family had met since 1916 when Andrew walked out of 19 Scot Street to begin his fateful journey back to Flanders.

The will of Andrew Paterson⁹

13
WILL.

In the event of my Death
I give the whole of my
property and effects to my
mother-in-law Mrs H Yeates
19 Scott Street Bognor
Sussex

Signature Andrew Paterson

Rank and Regt. Serjt 2nd Scots Guards

Date 18-11-15

Letter from James Paterson to Scots Guards, Birdcage Walk.²

To Regimental Postmaster
 19 Canongate
 Edinburgh
 July 13/16

Sir
 Having noticed in to days Scotsman in
 the Casualties list of one Serjt A Paterson 13292
 Scots Guards stated to belong to Bognor I wish to
 know if he is my youngest son. Serjt Andrew Paterson
 13292 Scots Guards belonging to Edinburgh
 where he was born. Educated & where he enlisted
 from I his Father will be grateful for any
 information you can give me

James Paterson
 19 Canongate
 Edinburgh

Letter from Scots Guards to James Paterson.²

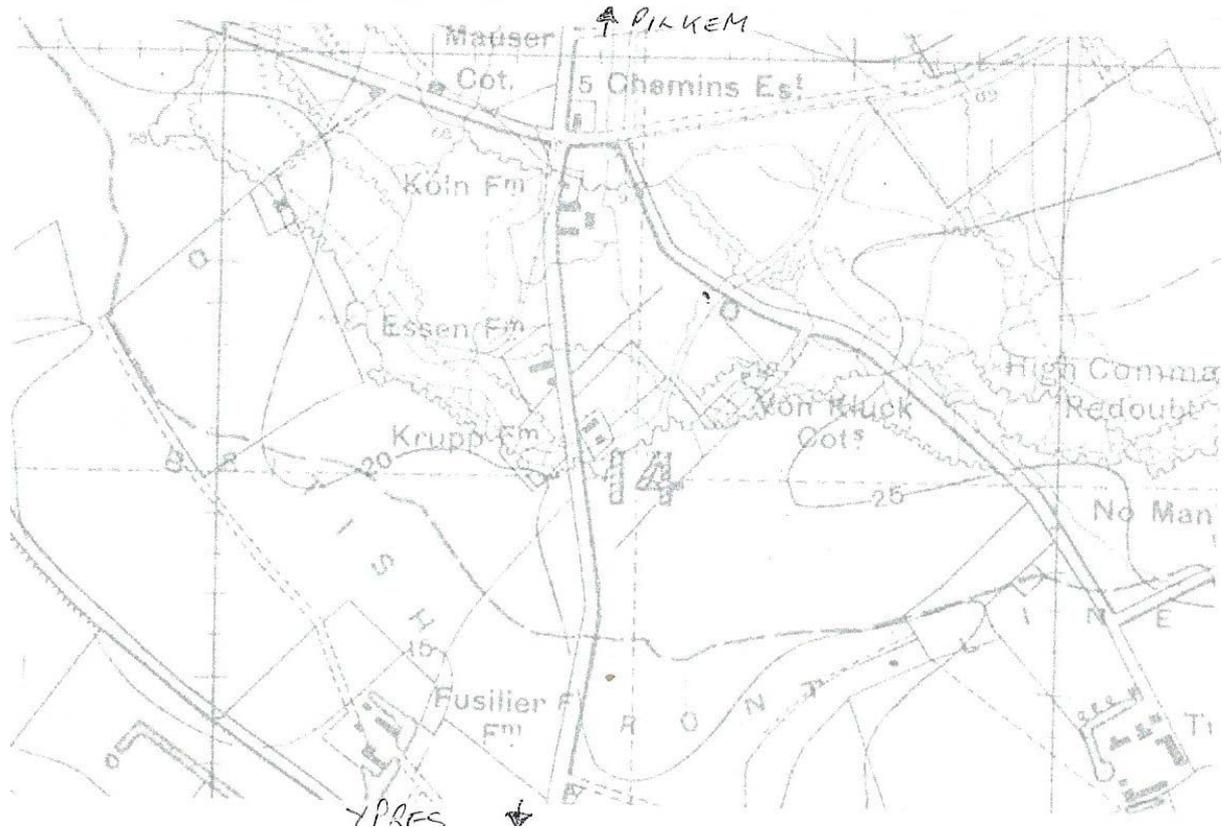
Mr. J. Paterson,
 19, Canongate,
 Edinburgh.

Dear Sir,
 Your letter of 13th instant has been forwarded to me from the War Office for reply. No. 13292, Serjeant Andrew Paterson, 2nd Battalion Scots Guards, killed in action on 28th June, 1916, enlisted at Edinburgh on 22nd January, 1916. On enlistment he gave his address as 19, Scott Street, Bognor: Next-of-kin his wife Fanny who died on 8th November, 1915; stated his age to be 34 years 282 days: Calling Cask Washer and that he had formerly served in the Scots Guards for 12 years. The address of the next-of-kin is inserted in the casualty columns of the Press after the soldier's name and as your name and address was unknown here Bognor was given in this case. If the deceased soldier above referred to is your son I should be glad if you will inform me per return of post in order that the official form of notification of death may be forwarded to you.

Yours faithfully,
 A. Smith-Reid
 Colonel,
 Commanding Scots Guards.

SCOTS GUARDS, RECORD OFFICE,
 17 JUL. 1916,
 BUCKINGHAM GATE, W.

Trench map showing position of Von Klucks farm and British lines (notice how close together they are).¹²



Funeral of a soldier of the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards, place unknown.
Imperial War museum Q57393.¹³



Endnotes

1. 1881 Census for Scotland, Ancestry.com
2. Andrew Patterson's Service Record, part of the Scots Guards Service Records, Guards Museum, Birdcage Walk, London
3. West Sussex Constabulary Records, West Sussex County Record Office
4. St John's Bognor marriage index, West Sussex County Record Office
5. 1911 Census for England, Ancestry.com
6. W. Ewart, *Scots Guard: On the Western Front*, (Strong Oak Press Ltd, 2001)
7. Second Battalion Scots Guards War diaries, General Record Office, Kew, London
8. L. Petre, W. Ewart & C. Lowther, *The Scots Guards in the Great War*, (Naval and Military Press, 2002)
9. The will of Andrew Patterson from The National Archives of Scotland, Princes Street, Edinburgh
10. South Bersted parish burials, West Sussex County Record Office
11. Death certificate of James Paterson, General Record Office of Scotland, Edinburgh
12. YpresBattlefieldForum.com
13. Q57393, Imperial War Museum