



Helensburgh World War One Memorial Plaque

The Great War for 'Christian Civilisation' had come to an end and out of the seventeen individuals from Helensburgh Baptist Church that served in His Majesty's Forces; five would go on to lose their lives in that service. This loss was keenly felt and the idea of a permanent war memorial inside the church sanctuary was first mooted at the church meeting on the 6th April 1921. This initiative was supported and on the 5th of October 1921, a 'committee' was formed to look into the possibility and what such a project would cost. It was the next month that collections started to be taken to cover its cost, and the former pastor, AC Dixon returned to take a 'Line Light Lecture' on the 7th December 1921. He was, now, the pastor of the Kelvinside Baptist Church in Glasgow. Finally, in April 1922, the war memorial, with the names of George Allan; William Dempster; Alexander Milne; Norman Pirret and John Stables, was unveiled and pastor Dixon preached at this service. It is important to remember that these names were people with families and friends and a little needs to be documented about them.

George Meikeljohn Allan (1896 – 1915) was born in Stirling and was the son of Robert Allan, an upholsterer and Helen (Nelly) Allan of 2 James St then 10 West Clyde St, both originally from Helensburgh. He joined up on 16 October 1914 and served as a Private in the 9th Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders Regiment and was sent to the trenches in France on 3rd May 1915. Seven days later he received a gunshot wound in the abdomen, 'most likely in the Battle of Frezenberg, the third engagement of the second

Battle of Ypres'. He soon died of his wounds on 13th May 1915, aged only 19.

He is buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, France, grave 1.A.140. He was awarded the 1914-1915 Star, British War Medal & Victory and was mentioned as a casualty in 'The Scotsman', 14th June 1915.

William Dempster (1895 – 1917) was born at Row in Dumbarton and was a butcher by trade and employed with W Duncan & Co in Helensburgh town. He was a son of Alexander Dempster, Marine Engineer, and Janet B Dempster of Lilybank, Bonhill, Alexandria and Argyle Buildings, Inellan, Argyle. By the time of the war, Private Dempster was already willing to serve with the army, having already signed up on the 10th March 1913 at Helensburgh. He would also serve with the 9th Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders Regiment. He was mobilised for war service on the 5th August 1914 and entered the trenches in France on 19th February 1915. Within ten days of arriving in France he received a gunshot wound to the right thigh and knee and then was gassed the next day, all while taking part in the Second Battle of Ypres. He was then finally admitted to the 10th General Hospital at Rouen and returned to the UK on 1st June 1915. He made a full recovery and on 25th July 1916 he was transferred and now served as a private in the 9th Company, Machine Gun Corps, returning to France on 19th August 1916. Finally, he could no longer dodge death and on 3rd May 1917, aged 22, he was killed in action during the Battle Of Arras.

He is remembered on the Arras Memorial, Pas-De- Calais, France, Bay 10. He was awarded the 1914-1915 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal and was mentioned in casualty lists in 'The Scotsman' 23rd June 1915, & 18th June 1917.

Alexander Anderson Milne (1878 – 1918) was born at Monifieth, Forfarshire but was better known as a Helensburgh postman. He was a son of George Rose Milne and Elizabeth Chalmer Milne of Monifieth, Dundee and was the husband of Joan Milne of 38 James St, Helensburgh. He was a committed nonconformist and was called ' to the office of Deacon in April 1914. On 26 April 1915 he enlisted at Glasgow and served as a Private in the 3rd/1st (Lowland) Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps. He first served in the Balkans, later in Egypt with the same Hospital. Sadly, he died of malaria or possibly dysentery on the 6th November 1918, aged 40, at No 17 general Hospital, Alexandria, Egypt. He was buried in Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt, (Grave A.187). He left a young family and sister and the church prayerfully interceded on their behalf.

He was awarded the 1914-1915 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal.

Norman McLeod Pirret (1888 – 1917) was born at St Giles in Edinburgh. He was son of Joseph Pirret, Stone Mason, and Isabella Pirret of West Nicolson Street the 2 Balcarres Street, both in Edinburgh. Husband of Christina [Tina] Henderson Pirret [nee Scott] of 35 Kildonan Street, Coatbridge. Mrs Pirret transferred her membership from Coatbridge Baptist Church to Helensburgh Baptist Church receiving the right hand of fellowship on 9th May 1915 and Norman Pirret came into membership on the 3rd February 1916, though absent on duty, during Holy Communion.

He enlisted at Edinburgh and initially, served as a corporal in the 11th General Hospital, Royal Army medical Corps and served in France from the 25th August 1914. During his service he was promoted to Staff Sergeant and served in the 1st Field

Ambulance, Royal Army medical Corps and was awarded the Military Medal for Bravery. The folk of Helensburgh Baptist Church were proud and decided to send a 'congratulating letter'. Sadly his successful career was cut short and he died of wounds received in action on 10th July 1917, aged just 29 years.

He is buried in Coxyde Military Cemetery, West vaanderen, Belgium, Grave id 47. He was awarded the 1914 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal.

John Cruickshank Stables (1888 – 1915) was born at Keith in Banffshire. He was a son of John Stables, Agricultural Labourer then Coachman and Gardener, and Margaret Stables of Moss Street, Keith, Banffshire. Stables enlisted into the 6th Highland Light Infantry at Glasgow as a Private and was sent to the Balkans on the 2nd July 1915. During this service, he was swiftly promoted to Sergeant, On Christmas Day 1915, aged 26, he was killed in action during the Gallipoli campaign.

His name appears in Pink Farm Cemetery, Helles, Turkey, Special Memorial 96. He was awarded the 1914-1915 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal.