

Missing Soldiers of Fromelles Discussion Group

Expressing concern that Pheasant Wood is fully excavated and bodies identified, Jill Byrnes tells us that 2560 Sergeant David Samuel Anderson left Australia on the 9th August 1915 and was reported KIA on 19/20 July 1916 after serving in Egypt and Gallipoli, and undertaking preparatory training prior to the Battle of Fromelles. Aged 24, the son of Joseph Clarke Anderson and Kissock Rae Anderson of "Lake View", Bergalia and later Randwick, New South Wales, David Samuel was subsequently commemorated at VC Corner Australian Cemetery Memorial. According to information posted by the Australian War Memorial, David Anderson spent two years with the Scottish Rifles before serving with the 2nd Infantry Battalion—8 Reinforcements with the rank of Private, before departing Australia aboard HMAT Runic [A54] from Sydney. He later gained promotion and joined the 54th Battalion AIF.

2560 SGT. DAVID SAMUEL ANDERSON

(Background provided by Jill Byrnes to supplement her Guest Book entry.)

Initially considered MIA, an Australian Red Cross and Missing Enquiry Bureau file [0080806M] was created on Sgt. David Samuel Anderson, which at first provides a confusing account of his whereabouts and fate after the 54th was thrown senselessly against the entrenched positions of the Germans.

Sgt. Armstrong of the 56th who was placed in the Royal Infirmary Hospital in Leicester, gave details of David's death to the Red Cross Society as did 4321 Private J. Thorpe convalescing in No. 26 General Hospital, Etaples in France and 4503 L/Cpl. George Archie Guthrie who was an eyewitness to the event and attested to this fact while recovering in 1st London General Hospital, Camberwell. However, another document contained in the file gives a contrary view, by asserting that Anderson was a L/Sgt. in "C" Company and taken as a POW. This report derived from a member of XII Platoon, "C" Company, 54th Battalion AIF, who said he was with Anderson when they got into the German trenches while on a bombing stunt.



Group photograph showing the children of Kissock Rae Anderson née McPhail, [L to R] son Walter, Ethel, Elsie standing, David, Charlotte (seated), Phyllis standing in front. Taken at 'The Glebe' Sydney approx. 1895. [Reproduced from an original owned by a family member, Mrs Rae Walker].

Thus, even though L/Cpl. Guthrie stated Anderson was killed in a charge on the Fromelles La Basse front on July 19th at 7:30 p.m., the Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing Bureau continued to collect field reports and investigate the whereabouts of this missing soldier, and it was this that gave hope to his relations back here in Australia eagerly awaiting news, as was suggested by Jill Byrnes who wrote to the Fromelles Discussion Group on behalf of her extended family.

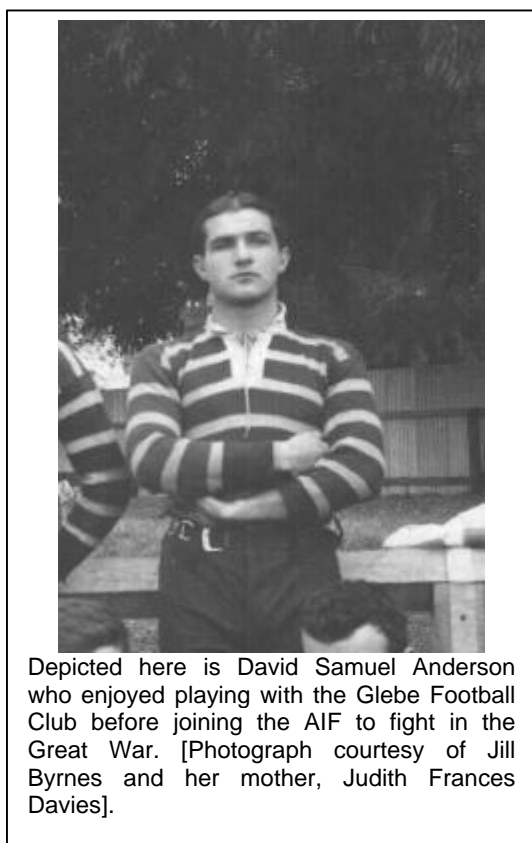
Further evidence was provided on 24 January 1917 by 3365 Private Reginald Hurst Miles, who was also a member of the same company as Anderson. Miles indicated that he knew Sgt. Anderson and said that he went missing at Fromelles on

the 19th July after he got into the German front line and from what was recorded by this Informant, "His disc was sent back to Divisional Headquarters by the Germans with a number of discs belonging to other men in the same Company, with a message to the effect that all these men, including Anderson, were prisoners." From a rest camp in Havre Miles said, his company officer informed the troops that Anderson's name was included on a list provided by the Germans.

The Sydney Bureau also noted other documents which alluded to him as being missing before London officially pronounced him as KIA—a fact certified by AIF H/Q on the 15th September 1917 as a result of a formal court of enquiry held on 4 August 1917. 2554 Sgt. G. F. Burnside, who provided his testimony while at No. 4 Australian General Hospital in Randwick, described Anderson as being about 5ft. 10 ins., dark, thickset, weighted about 15 stone. He also recollected Anderson had been a Corporal in the 8th Reinforcements, 2nd Infantry Battalion, and that Armstrong was indeed, a pal of Anderson.

Apparently David Samuel Anderson was very popular within the unit and although every effort was made to find him after the attack, this proved unsuccessful. In a report compiled in 1919 by 3026 Sgt. Charles Clark, the firing was terrific on the evening of 19 July 1916 and it was impossible to recover Anderson, as he went missing in front of Fromelles. Later records also show that no trace was found of him in Germany.

Indeed Lieut. Myles Frederick Carrick of the 54th had been requested to help clear the matter up in a communication dated 16 August 1917. This exchange refers to unofficial reports from men who believed Anderson was killed and concluded that although a year had passed, the authorities had not as yet been able to obtain any definite verification or news.



Depicted here is David Samuel Anderson who enjoyed playing with the Glebe Football Club before joining the AIF to fight in the Great War. [Photograph courtesy of Jill Byrnes and her mother, Judith Frances Davies].

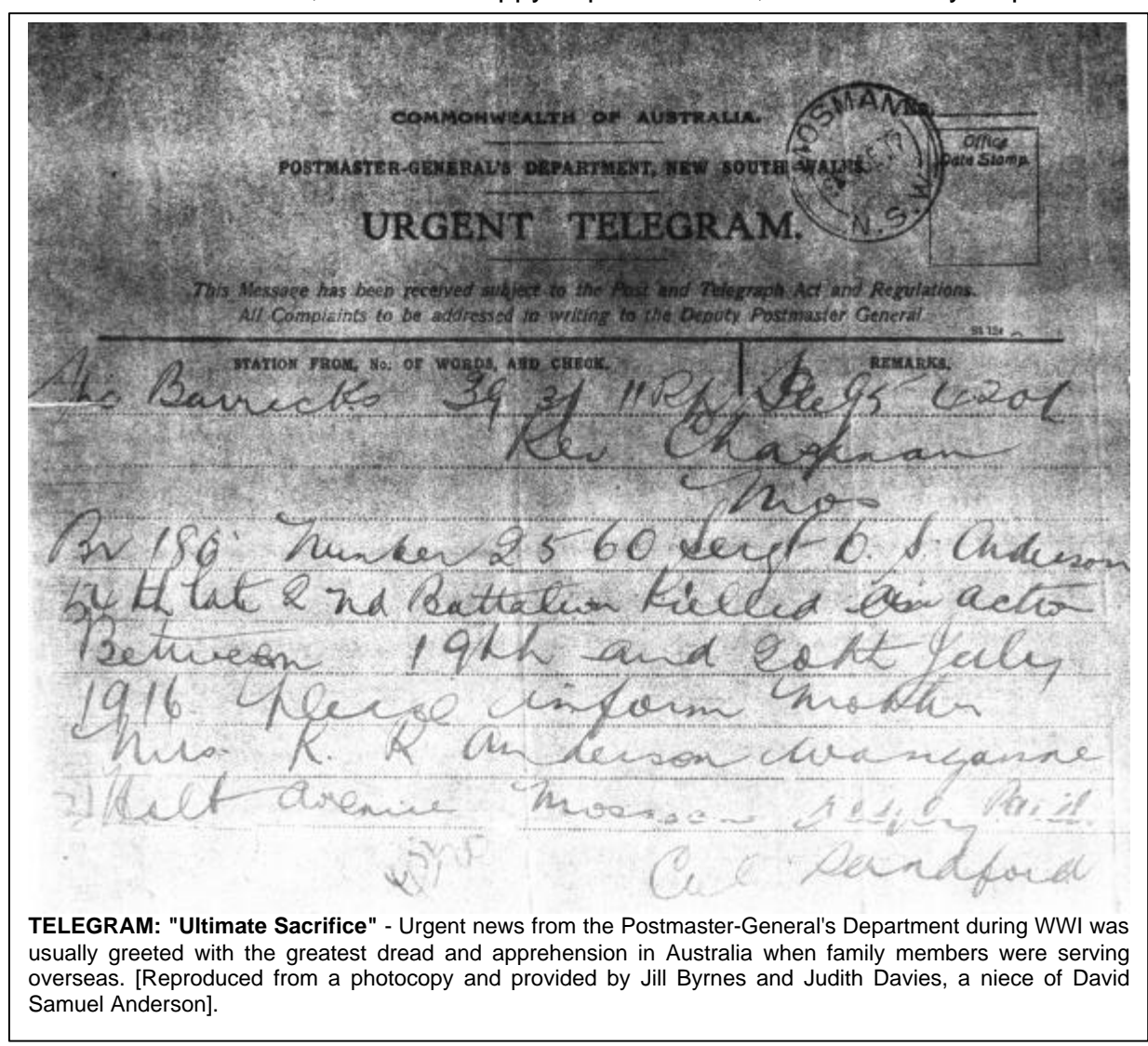
The Bank of New South Wales in London though made enquiries about Anderson to the Australian Red Cross Society in early 1919, as this organization had received contact from its Head Office in Sydney, writing on behalf of Sergeant Anderson's relatives, specifically his mother and sisters as one sister was a member of staff. Thus, on a more personal level, we turn our attention to the background provided by Jill Byrnes on her Great Uncle.

Prior to enlistment David Anderson was a manufacturing jeweller by trade and had played with Glebe Football Club. He had been employed by H. Grout & Co for a period of five years prior to joining the army on 29 May 1915. Like other relatives and descendants, Jill believes that if her forebear is interred in the recently discovered pits at Pheasant Wood, he would appreciate a decent burial. Certainly Jill suggests, her great grandmother (the mother of Sergeant Anderson) would have, because she

suffered for years not knowing what happened to him; whether he had been severely wounded, traumatized through shock or had been taken prisoner and suffered from loss of memory.

2560 Sergeant David Samuel Anderson was a hero like his comrades and if there is any possibility of identifying him, then the Australian Government should make every effort to do so. His sacrifice should not be in vain and even though this event occurred 94 years ago according to Jill, he is still very much alive in the memory of his family. When contacting the Fromelles Discussion Group Jill said she was very excited to learn the grave at Fromelles had been found and was to be excavated. "Naturally I hold out some hope that some of the Australians may be identifiable, and that David might be among them", she explained.

Jill's family support identification and reburial on the basis that if he were among those found in the pits, "Then we would know where he died, and he could finally receive a proper burial and not just a name on a wall. I, and other family members" she advised, "would be happy to provide DNA, if that was any help."



Jill, who is a Lecturer at the University of Southern Queensland, was handed down and still wears a ring her Great Uncle made out of a cufflink. It was given to Jill by her mother, Judith Davies, because she was interested in the story. It was inherited

by Judith from Jill's great grandmother, Kissock Rae Anderson, together with a medallion he was posthumously awarded after the war by King George V. David Samuel's sister Phyllis received the Telegram that informed the family David was missing, as she lived with her mother at the time



George V Medal posthumously awarded to 2560 Sgt. David Samuel Anderson, 54th Battalion, AIF.

Jill Byrnes wants to go to France one day and see the area where the battles took place and to look at the memorials. “It would be wonderful if there was a burial plot for David Anderson to visit, also” Jill said in an Email.

“It is strange how emotional I feel about this. I didn't know the man of course, but when I went to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and saw his name on the Wall of Remembrance, I felt like crying. Poor David, dying so far from home: somebody has to remember him, and remember his sacrifice. I guess “Lest we Forget”, says it all.”

“Incidentally, I also have another Great Uncle who died in France in the First World War. His name was Albert George Robinson and he died in May 1918 at Morlancourt”, Jill continued while providing this background.

“2125 Corporal Albert George Robinson has no known grave, although I don't feel as emotional about him—probably because I don't have any memorabilia from him. He was also older than David when he went. His age at time of death was 36 I think, and he had a wife and child.

“KIA on 6 May 1918, Albert embarked as a reinforcement with the 36th Infantry Battalion 24 August 1916 at Sydney per A68 “Anchises”, and later served with the 35th. Documentation shows he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

Albert was born in Darlington, Sydney in 1880 and went to Arncliffe School. According to Jill, he was a storekeeper in George Street, Sydney. His wife Ethel was pregnant when he went to war. Albert never saw his son, Basil. Robinson was wounded by a shell while billeted in Blangy Wood, near Villers Bretonneux and died shortly thereafter.”

Jill concluded: “As a mother you think of your son . . . of all the years raising him, and all the years of love and care that went into making him a healthy, well rounded young man, and then you think of some callous commander sending him into battle like so much cannon fodder. It doesn’t bear thinking about.”

“Maybe that’s why I remember both David and Albert and want them properly commemorated. It is our belief the authorities should continue with the excavation of the burial site.”

Joseph Clarke Anderson died of Typhoid fever in Bergalia, near Moruya, New South Wales, in 1896, aged 39 leaving Kissock with six children to look after the family property. After Joseph’s death, Kissock took the children - David, as well as Charlotte, Ethel, Elsie, Walter and Phyllis - to Sydney, where she set up a boarding house in Ultimo for “gentlemen studying for the church”. The original property was sold to other members of the family.
