

Private Alexander Watson Barker[©]

Regimental number: 43335

5/6th Royal Scots

born: about October 1890 – died: 29 August 1917

Private Alexander Watson Barker was born in about October 1890 in Carnwath, Lanarkshire, Scotland.¹ He was the eldest son of Alexander and Jane Baker.² Alexander Sr. was born in South Leith, Midlothian, in April 1856, the son of Watson and Jessy Barker.³ Jane (nee Bissett)⁴ Barker was born in about 1862,⁵ in Carnwath.⁶ Alexander and Jane married in about 1889.⁷ In 1911, his mother was still recorded as being married, but her husband was not with the family at the time of the census. Jane and her husband had four sons, three of whom survived to 1911:⁸ Alexander, Thomas (born on 26 August 1893)⁹ and John (born in about 1896).¹⁰

In 1901, Alexander and his two brothers were living with their mother at 9 Viewforth in Edinburgh, where his mother took in boarders.¹¹ Ten years later, they were at the same address.¹² By then Alexander was a house painter (like his father before him¹³) and his two younger brothers were a grocery salesman and a picture frame maker. By the end of the war, he only had one brother, Thomas. It is not known what became of John, but perhaps he died in the Great War.

Alexander enlisted as a private in the 9th Battalion of the Royal Scots on 28 February 1916.¹⁴ He was 5' 6¾" tall and living at 15 Barclay Place in Edinburgh. He signed his Imperial Service Obligation on 8 June 1916. Two months later, he transferred to the 12th Battalion; five days after that he left Folkestone to join the Western Front.

Less than a month later, he was wounded in his left leg, neck and arm. He was admitted to the 17th Field Ambulance on 6 September. He was later transferred to the 22nd Casualty Clearing Station and then the hospital in Etaples before embarking for England on 22 September. He was admitted to the East Leeds War Hospital on 23 September and discharged six weeks later. He appears to have rejoined the British Expeditionary Force in France on 2 February 1917 and transferred to the 5/6th Battalion a month later.

He was wounded again—this time fatally. The day that Alexander was injured, the enemy was fairly active with shells and trench mortars.¹⁵ Alexander was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, probably on 29 August 1917,¹⁶ with gunshot wounds. His right leg had been blown off below the knee and he had a fractured left tibia. He died at the station on 29 August¹⁷ and was buried at Adinkerke Military Cemetery (Grave Reference: B. 34).¹⁸

Adinkerke Military Cemetery is 20 kilometres east of Dunkirk, in the community of De Panne, just across the border into Belgium. There are 168 Commonwealth soldiers from the Great War buried in the cemetery.¹⁹

His mother was identified as his next of kin and received the monies owing to Alexander from the army upon his death.²⁰ She also received his personal effects: "Letters, Photos, Diary, English and French Dictionary, Titles, Mirror in Case, Coins."²¹

Alexander was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²²

Immediately after the Great War, his mother was still living in Edinburgh at 71 Morningside Park. His brother Thomas had immigrated to the United States before the war. He had sailed from Liverpool on 1 April 1914 and travelled to the US through St John's, New Brunswick, Canada,²³ arriving in Chicago on 12 April 1915.²⁴ Three years after arriving in the US, he married Agnes Ekstrom in Salt Lake City, Utah. Agnes was born on 15 March 1895 in Morgan, Utah.²⁵ Agnes and Thomas probably had four children: Jeannette, Jane, Lucille and Ronald.²⁶

Thomas served in the American Expeditionary Force during the Great War and, at one point, was in the 159 Field Hospital.²⁷ Before enlisting, he had been a warehouse salesman in the Utah Oil Refinery. After the war, he was living at 350 West 6th North Street in Salt Lake City, Utah and was working as a still man at the Utah Oil Company.²⁸

Alexander's mother Jane had lost three sons and her remaining son had immigrated to the US. So Jane joined Thomas and his family in the US after the war. She sailed from Glasgow to New York City on 19 August 1922.²⁹ In 1930, Jane was living with Thomas, his wife Agnes and three of his children in Reno, Nevada.³⁰ Thomas was then a vacuum salesman.

Thomas died on 29 August 1947 in California. Alexander's mother had now outlived her husband and four sons. She died in September 1951 in Sparks, Nevada.³¹ In addition to family in Scotland, she was survived by three grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

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¹ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 1 July 2016), entry for Alexander Watson Barker

² *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 1 July 2016), entry for Barker, Alexander Watson, Service No: 43335

³ "Scotland, Select Births and Baptisms, 1564–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 July 2016), entry for Alexander Barker, FHL film number: 6035516

⁴ "U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 July 2016), entry for Thomas Barker

⁵ "Nevada State Journal (Reno, Nevada)," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 July 2016), entry for Jane Barker, 12 September 1951

⁶ "1911 Scotland Census," *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>: accessed 5 July 2016), entry for Barker, John, District: Morningside, City/County: Edinburgh City/Midlothian, GROS Data: 685/06 047/00 002

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ "Utah, Naturalization and Citizenship Records, 1858–1959," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 1 July 2016), entry for Thomas Barker

¹⁰ "1911 Scotland Census," *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>: accessed 5 July 2016), entry for Barker, John

¹¹ "1901 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 July 2016), entry for Alexander W. Barker, Enumeration district: 138, Household schedule number: 14, Line: 15, Roll: CSSCT1901_391

¹² "1911 Scotland Census," *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>: accessed 5 July 2016), entry for Barker, John

¹³ "1891 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 July 2016), entry for Alexr Barker, Enumeration district: 132, Household schedule number: 22, Line: 12, Roll: CSSCT1891_358

¹⁴ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 1 July 2016), entry for Alexander Watson Barker. Unless otherwise noted, all information about his military career comes from this source.

¹⁵ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 3 July 2016), Regiment or Unit: Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment), Sub-unit: 5/6th Battalion, Division: 32nd Division, Diary entry start date: Mar 1917, Diary entry end date: 8 Mar 1917, Diary dates: 1916 Jun - 1919 Feb, Diary entry location: In the Line, Piece description: Piece 2392/3: 5/6 Battalion The Royal Scots (1916 Jun - 1919 Feb), Piece number: 2392

¹⁶ The 1st CCCS chaplains' journal suggests that he was admitted on 30 August and died the same day. However, all his other army records indicate that he died on 29 August, so he was probably also admitted on 29 August.

¹⁷ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 1 July 2016), entry for Alexander Watson Barker.

¹⁸ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org; accessed 1 July 2016), entry for Barker, Alexander Watson

¹⁹ "Adinkerke Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>; accessed 30 April 2016)

²⁰ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 1 July 2016), entry for Alex Watson Barker

²¹ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 1 July 2016), entry for Alexander Watson Barker

²² "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 1 July 2016), entry for Alexander W. Barker

²³ "U.S., Border Crossings from Canada to U.S., 1895–1956," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 3 July 2016), entry for Thomas Barker, Record type: Manifests, Line number: 14

²⁴ "U.S., Naturalization Records - Original Documents, 1795–1972 (World Archives Project)," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 3 July 2016), entry for Thomas Barker, Record type: Petition for naturalization

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ "U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 5 July 2016), entry for Thomas Barker

²⁷ "Utah, Military Records, 1861–1970," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 3 July 2016), entry for Thomas Barker

²⁸ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 1 July 2016), entry for Alexander Watson Barker

²⁹ "New York, Passenger Lists, 1820–1957," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 2 July 2016), entry for Jane Barker

³⁰ "1930 United States Federal Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 2 July 2016), entry for Jane Barker

³¹ "Nevada State Journal (Reno, Nevada)," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 21 July 2016), entry for Jane Barker, 12 September 1951