

Richard M Henderson remembers his parents T Alex Henderson & Hester S E Henderson

Both my paternal and maternal grand-fathers were too old for service in WWI. Grandfather Henderson was born in 1870 and he was the youngest of six children. Elsewhere in the exhibition however there are some fragments of letters from Paris and London dating from 1914,¹ when my Grandfather was involved with the Soldiers help society of Glasgow.

Grandfather Mitchell was born in 1857 so by 1914 he was 57. In a sense then they were lucky, but one wonders also about how they would have viewed a conflict which seemed almost intent on consuming an entire generation.



My father, Thomas Alex Henderson, known as Alex, was born in 1910 and I think he joined the RAMC (TA) in about 1938. He was called up in 1939 and spent some time in training before he was taken ill with pneumonia resulting in the loss of a lung and being invalided out in 1940 or thereabouts.

My mother spent some time during the war before my sister was born, in 1943, driving lorries delivering to and from the docks in Glasgow.

My father spent the rest of the war in civvies and I have often thought how difficult that must have been for him when almost everyone else of his age was in military service. Certainly neither my father nor my mother spoke about the war. Nor indeed did my aunts – my mother was one of four sisters and the younger of twins. The eldest aunt was born in 1900 and therefore would have been well aware of what was going on. Whether the slaughter of '14 - '18 had anything to do with the fact that my mother was the only one of the four to marry, I cannot say.

There was the odd story such as my father admitting that while on guard duty at night at Polmont and armed only with a billy-club he had thought the rustling in a bush must be a paratrooper and so he jumped into the hedge; it was in fact simply an old horse doing some late grazing. But one can easily understand how easy it would be, with all the stories of imminent invasion, for the imagination to take off and run riot.

August 2018

¹ Appended with this record.