

***Alexander Frazer Calder MC, died 19 July 1916, aged 27;
Harold Joseph Calder, died 18 September 1916, aged 25;
Kenneth Campbell Calder, died 22 July 1942, aged 30***

Alexander Calder was born in November 1888 in Battersea, the eldest of (at least) 13 children of Alexander and Sarah Calder. Alexander senior was a native of Newcastle and worked as a tailor. The family moved around North London, and in 1909 they moved from Barnsbury to 58 Leicester Road in East Finchley. This was a large house with 10 rooms, but there were 12 people living there: Alexander and Sarah, Alexander (22) an accountant, Harold (21) an accountant, Evelyn (19) a typist, Cyril (17) a commercial clerk, Margaret (15), Dorothy (13), Leonard (10) and William (6) were all at school. Edith (4) and Donald (3) were still at home, and we know that Mrs Calder had at least one other child after this – Kenneth was born in 1912, and was baptised at All Saints' Church. Two other children had died in infancy.

Alexander and Harold enlisted in 1/9th Battalion of the London Regiment (London Scottish) in Westminster on the outbreak of war, and embarked for le Havre in September 1914. They saw action almost immediately, and after the battle of Mons Alexander was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, and therefore may have taken part in the famous Christmas Truce. They continued to serve on the Western Front, and Alexander was awarded the Military Cross for action in April 1916.

The book [A Miners Pals Battalion at War: Volume 1](#) by Mike Hall describes the events:

15 April (1916) At 11.15 am the 98th Infantry Brigade in the Auchy left section of the front line gave notice that they were going to blow two mines in the evening and then launch a raid on the German trenches. This made activity above ground inadvisable.

A, B and D companies were sent out about 1.30 pm to continue work inside the Village Line Trench until it turned dark. C company worked during the day on a diversion of Lewis Alley. The machine gun section employed north of La Bassee Road was unaffected by operations and was able to carry on.

Lt-Col Alec Sprott commanding 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Battalion wrote: 'In conjunction with the explosion of two mines, and with artillery and Trench Mortar support, the battalion (2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders) carried out an enterprise against the enemy's positions. Immediately after the explosion of the mines at 8.30 pm two parties of approximately 20 men each under 2nd Lieut A F Calder and 2nd Lieut R McKay left the British lines through the 1/4th King's Regiment. The party under 2nd Lieut A F Calder entered the German trenches as ordered, though unable to bring back an uninjured prisoner, killed several Germans and brought back useful information and some



equipment. The party under 2nd Lieut R McKay investigated enemy craters and saps as ordered and returned with a large amount of enemy equipment, materials and correspondence but did not see any German troops or bodies.

The reports and materials recovered were the means in definitely locating a Corps, the position of which at that point was in doubt. The result earned the congratulations and commendations of GOC 1st Army—GOC 11th Corps—GOC 33rd Division and GOC 98th Infantry Brigade.

3 men were slightly wounded during the enterprise but all returned safely to our lines. The initiative and gallantry of all ranks who took part in this enterprise were most marked.'

A slightly different version of events is given in the 33rd War Diary which states 'One officer and 30 men killed seven Germans in the raid west of the Mine Point Crater. They captured a large amount of German kit: letters, shoulder straps and an identity disc. These confirmed that the 244th Reserve Regiment (Saxons) was holding the line.'

2nd Lieut Alexander Frazer Calder 3rd Battalion (attached to 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Battalion) was awarded the Military Cross. His citation reads 'For conspicuous gallantry during a raid on the enemy's trenches. Several of the enemy were killed, and his coolness and good leading went a long way to towards the successful results of the raid.'

Lance Sgt A Miller and Pte D O'Neill were awarded the DCM for conspicuous gallantry, and Sgt John Munnery DCM was awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the field.

16 April C Company worked by day in Lewis Alley. There was a church parade at 11.30 am.'

In July 1916 the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were one of the many regiments to take part in the Battle of the Somme, including the unsuccessful attack on High Wood on 15 July and then on 18 July the attack on nearby Bazentin-le-Grand Wood. Alexander was killed on 19 July. He has no known grave, but his name is recorded on the Thiepval Memorial near Albert.





Harold was also commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant. but remained in the London Scottish, and he fought at Mons and Ypres. He was mentioned in dispatches, and then in the summer of 1916 his battalion moved to the Somme. At the start of the campaign the London Scottish were asked to create a diversion near Gommecourt to take German attention away from the major offensive. However the preparations for the attack were so obvious (and as the London Scottish were not expected to advance they were therefore not given adequate resources) that the allied losses were heavy. Later they joined other battalions at High Wood and then Longueval. Harold Calder was killed in action on 18 September, 1916, scarcely two months after his brother Alexander's death. The grief of their family is unimaginable.

Their younger brother Cyril followed them by enlisting in the London Scottish in November 1915, and was deployed to France after training. He was promoted to Acting Corporal on 27 November 1916, but on 17 August 1917 he was discharged from the army as 'no longer fit for service'. He married in 1922 and became a bank manager in Essex, and lived until he was 81.

However Mrs Calder had more suffering to come. Her husband died in June 1918 when he was only 54, and she later moved to Golders Green. At the outbreak of World War II her youngest son Harold was working for the Imperial Tobacco Company in Bombay, and he enlisted in the 1st Punjab Regiment, one of the senior regiments in the British Indian Army.

He was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in October 1940, and later promoted to Lieutenant. The regiment was sent to North Africa, and it was there near the end of the first Battle of El Alamein that Kenneth was killed on 22 July 1942. He has no known grave, but his name is recorded on the Alamein Memorial. His name is included on the All Saints' war memorial with the World War I names, possibly at the request of his sister Evelyn who stayed in the parish for the rest of her life. She married James Weeks at All Saints' Church in 1920, and when she died in 1992 her address was 7 Durham Road.

The other siblings lived to a good age. Margaret married Leonard Hawkins of 105 Durham Road at All Saints' Church in 1917, and died in 1993 in Littlehampton. Dorothy married Douglas Lavington and died in 1989 in Newton Abbott. Leonard, who was too young to serve in the first war and too old for the second, married Mary Wadham in Lewisham in 1930 and died in Totnes in 1973. William married Gwynneth Manley in Battersea in 1938 and died in 1996 in Deben in Suffolk. Edith married in 1961 and was 95 when she died in Sefton in 2003. Donald married in 1938 and moved to Whetstone, but while he was serving in the Royal Navy his wife Joan died in 1943. He may have moved to Canada a

