

In Memory of Lieutenant Ian Lester
MacDonald of the Black Watch,
1923-1945

“Remembered with Love and Pride”

Written by his father Alexander MacDonald,
CBE

Edited by his nephew Ian Ruxton

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Lt. Ian Lester MacDonald in Black Watch uniform, late 1944. The photography session was arranged by his mother. “Remembered with Love and Pride” is the inscription on his headstone in the Commonwealth war cemetery in Rheinberg, Nordrheinwestfalen, Germany. It was chosen by his parents.



In Black Watch Uniform (close-up, originally in colour, with the regiment's red hackle visible)

“O Flower of Scotland...”



In Royal Artillery uniform. He did very well with the
gunners, but was later transferred into the infantry
(the Black Watch regiment).



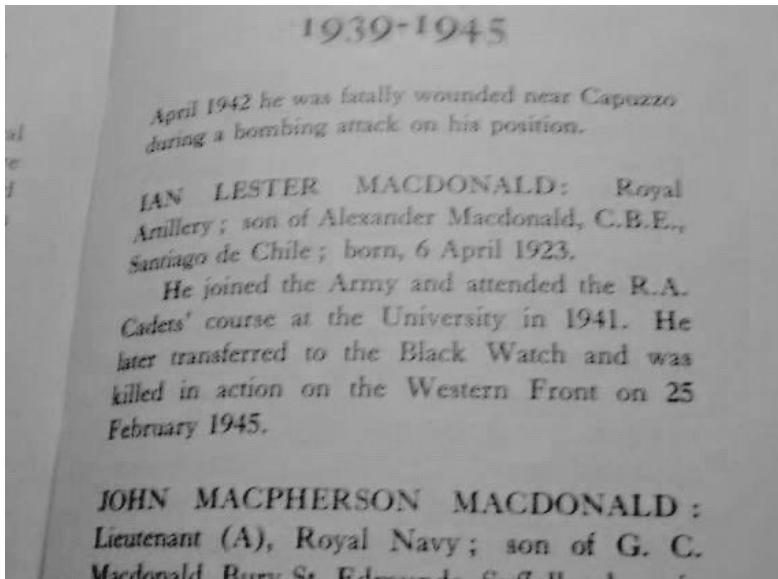
As an Officer Cadet Training Unit (O.C.T.U.) cadet.
He passed out as First Cadet, a fine achievement.



Photograph taken in school uniform while Ian was at Loretto School, which is Scotland's oldest boarding school. It was founded in 1827. He was known as "Chile MacDonald".



Aberdeen University Chapel with wood panel.
(Photographs courtesy Carlie Giddings.)



Aberdeen University's Roll of Honour

Ian's name is also recorded at the Scottish National War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle and can be found in the memorial's website.



The author, Alexander (“Mac”) MacDonald C.B.E. was born in Glasgow on 26 September 1894. After war service he qualified as an accountant with the Glasgow Institute of Accountants and Actuaries in 1919. He designed various golf courses including Santo Domingo and Pucon in Chile, and Los Incas in Lima, Peru. His portrait is at Santo Domingo Golf Club. He died on 25 July 1954. (His brief obituary is in the *Glasgow Herald*, 28 July 1954, p. 1.)



Dorothy Lester “Susan” MacDonald M.B.E. (née Northcroft) in 1921. She was born in the Bahamas on 18 July 1896. She died on 12 June 1974 in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, at the age of 77.



Alex MacDonald and his daughter Margaret (19 April 1932 – 8 June 2022), who married Allan Dey Ruxton (30 October 1925 – 19 January 2017) in Santiago, Chile on 16 July 1954 – shortly before her father's death.

Allan and Margaret Ruxton had four children, of whom the editor of this volume, born on 16 November 1956, is the eldest. My father was the eldest of four brothers who also attended Loretto School.



Dear Margaret,

I am sending you a postcard view of the river we fish in, the tollen, Lake Villarrica, and the volcano. yesterday we went down the river but did not have any luck until the last hour. We arrived at a lovely spot, but only with 2 fish, 2 kilo each. There we caught as many as we lost. I managed to get a 2 kilo fish on my rod. It was lovely the way he made his 1st run. By the speed the reel turned I imagined he was a good 3 kilo fish. we finished up with (to) 5 fish, having put back 5. We each caught 5 fish. mine was the biggest as I lost a bigger one Daddy let me play.

How are you? How is Mummy?
 Give my saludes to everyone.

Much love,
 Ian!

A post card about a fishing trip in March 1936 to Lake Villarrica, 780 kilometres south of Santiago, from Ian to his younger sister Margaret.

“Dear Margaret,

I am sending you a postcard view of the river we fish in, the Tolten, Lake Villar[r]ica, and the volcano.

Yesterday we went down the river but did not have any luck until the last hour. We arrived at a lovely spot, but only with 2 fish, 1/2 kilo each. There we caught as many as we lost.

I managed to get a 3/4 kilo fish on my rod. It was lovely the way he made his 1st run. By the speed the reel turned I imagined he was a good 3 lb. fish. We finished up with 5 fish, having put back 5. We each caught 5 fish. Mine was the biggest as I lost a bigger one Daddy let me play.

How are you?

How is Mummy?

Give my saludos [greetings] to everyone.

Much love,

Ian"¹

¹ In Chapter XIII of his *Trout Fishing in Chilean Rivers* (I. Ruxton (ed.), Amazon KDP, 2022) Alexander MacDonald comments as follows on his son's fishing:

“Some fifteen years ago my son [Ian] and I spent a very profitable holiday at Villarrica and I had the pleasure of seeing him bring in his first good-sized fish. By this time

the rod, mentioned in the previous chapter, had been pensioned off and he was the proud possessor of a hardy (no capital letter, please) if still somewhat primitive weapon, with about forty yards of line on the reel; as far as he was concerned, there was no better rod on the river and that was all that really mattered. Early on in our trolling expedition, he got a fine five-pound brown trout, which took him twenty minutes to land, and just at dusk when I was getting worried about keeping our taxi waiting, he upset the applecart completely by getting into a three-pound rainbow, which put up a splendid show and took him all over the river. Finally, to shorten the length of the battle, which looked like being endless, I had to wade in quite deep in the dark to net the fish.

What a fish and what a day! It seems to me that trolling in the south is a good way to start a boy on his fishing career, as it gives him a taste of the enjoyment in store for him and is not so tiring as casting, which is discouraging if the results are negative. The rest will come later quite automatically.”



Uncle Ian as a boy – this portrait hung in the Ruxton family home in Cheltenham for many years.



9 Grosvenor Crescent, Edinburgh where Ian Lester MacDonald was born on 6 April 1923 at about 8 p.m. The terrace is still there. (Google Street View)

IAN
1903-1948

East, 1948

Important. Duffly report report from Brian Joseph
 Buchanan I. J. MacDonald. Black Hawk killed in
 action 25th November 1948. The Army Council
 express sympathy. Letter follows.
 When history of State for Ian.

4. (Casualty) Has was all it said. I was waiting
 none to say. I was a flighty about this
 telegram which closed the door. I was ~~was~~ ^{supper}
 and dinner. He was the grim reality of war
 with a message for our little family. ~~Was~~ ^{Was} Ian!
 I had seen close friends fall by my side in the
 last war and had been deeply affected. During
 the war was forced the passing of good friends
 had moved me. But this was different. ^{One} life
 could never be the same again without him.
 His ~~since~~ ^{since} ~~when~~ ^{when} ~~we~~ ^{we} ~~went~~ ^{went} ~~overseas~~ ^{overseas} in June 1948
 shortly after the invasion started, I was terrified
 that something might happen to him. I lived
 in dread all the time when I knew he was
 in the fighting. ~~Not to pass~~ ^{Not to pass} ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~past~~ ^{past} ~~two~~ ^{two} ~~weeks~~ ^{weeks} I had been very worried
 because I knew from Susan's telegram that
 he had gone overseas again. For about a
 week the news from the B.B.C. ^{London} ~~was~~ ^{was} full of
 the magnificent work of the 51st Division and
 the Black Hawk ~~had been~~ ^{had been} mentioned specifically. I
 knew - or rather felt so strongly that it amounted
 to knowing - that Ian was in it. Then I
 assumed the telephone at 10.30 p.m. on 1st of
 March and a voice said that the Cable Company
 was speaking. I knew it was bad news.

Page 1 of the Handwritten Memorial by Alexander
 MacDonald

Contents

Preface	xx
IAN, 1923-1945	
March, 1945	1
June, 1945	17
July, 1945	28
Chile	31
July, 1946	52
APPENDICES	58
APPENDIX I: Letters about Ian MacDonald	
APPENDIX II: King George VI's Speech on VE Day (May 8, 1945)	
APPENDIX III: Entry in Loretto School Roll of Honour, 1939-1945	
APPENDIX IV: Entry in Black Watch Roll of Honour	
APPENDIX V: A Brief Biography of Alexander MacDonald, C.B.E. (1894-1954)	

Preface

The Second World War (1939-1945) claimed over 60 million lives, which was about 3% of the world's population in 1940. The suffering of humanity was intense. Total deaths in combat alone are estimated at between 21 and 25 million.

This account is a deeply personal one, of a death in action which directly affected my family. It is one which I cannot read without tears coming to my eyes: grief at the tragic waste of life, and at being deprived of the opportunity to meet my uncle. And yet this is only one young man, and one family, among so many.

Ian Lester MacDonald was a man who received high praise for his dedication to duty and courage. I have created this small book in his memory. He took part in Operation VERITABLE, the Canadian-British advance into Germany from the Netherlands, 8 February – 10 March 1945.

Operation VERITABLE tends to have been ignored by historians until recently in favour of the earlier Operation MARKET GARDEN which was a failure. (Naturally glorious and spectacular failures and the

reasons for them attract more interest from movie makers, historians and military strategists who seek to learn from the mistakes.) VERITABLE was the left side of a pincer movement, the right side being the American Operation GRENADE which was delayed by German defences along the River Rur (Dutch: Roer, French: Rour). This river should not be confused with the German rivers Ruhr or Röhr!

Operation VERITABLE presented various challenges, not the least of which was that it was very hard fighting against a foe who, albeit weakened from full strength, was for the first time in the war defending his home soil. The battlefield was narrow (some 30 km) and the weather was poor with mud from rain and the winter thaw slowing the advance of tanks, mechanized vehicles and infantry.

The northern (Canadian) flank was flooded deliberately by the enemy, the centre was the awkward-to-traverse Reichswald forest (part of what the Allies called the 'Siegfried Line', known as the 'Westwall' by the Germans) and there was urban fighting at Kleve and Goch. The Steintor, a medieval gate in Goch, was saved from demolition by a British

officer, Major Ronald E. Balfour (1904-1945), one of the so-called 'Monuments Men' and a former history lecturer at Cambridge, who persuaded commanders on the spot to clear a road round it rather than blow it up, and thanks to his intervention it survives to this day.

There was also fighting at many farmhouses, some of which were concealed pillboxes. This was the case at the Thomashof/Robbenhof farm south of Goch where my uncle and several members of his platoon (Platoon No. 18, D company, 5th Battalion Black Watch, 51st Highland Division) met their end. He is buried at plot 12.E.20 in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemetery in Rheinberg, Germany which is about 30 minutes by car southeast of Goch.

All of the Canadians who took part in Operation VERITABLE were buried at Grosbeek cemetery in the Netherlands by order of their commander, General Crerar. At Ysselsteyn which is about 50 minutes by car from Rheinberg there is a huge German war cemetery, the only one in the Netherlands, with the graves of over 31,000 men.

War is a scourge of mankind which brings death and suffering to the people of all nations and their families, both victors and vanquished. Tragically it has recently returned to the continent of Europe. President Zelensky announced a few days ago that Ukraine's casualties since the start of the war on February 24, 2022 now amount to more than 31,000 killed in action. As he said, each one is mourned.

Ian Ruxton
Professor emeritus (English)
Kyushu Institute of Technology
Kitakyushu
Japan

2 March 2024

“Lest We Forget”

IAN, 1923-1945

March, 1945²

“Important. Deeply regret report from Western Europe. Lieutenant I. L. MacDonald Black Watch killed in action 25th February 1945. The Army Council express sympathy. Letter follows.

Under Secretary of State for War.³ ”

² This document – a kind of pibroch in words – was written by Alexander MacDonald and transcribed with footnotes added by Ian C. Ruxton, his firstborn grandson, from words handwritten on “D.P.G. & Co.” (Deloitte Plender Griffiths & Co.) lined paper. My grandfather, who was awarded the C.B.E. in the New Year’s Honours List 1943 for services to the British community in Chile (see *Second Supplement to the London Gazette*, 1 January 1943, No. 35841, p. 16), was a partner in that accounting firm in Santiago. His wife Dorothy Lester MacDonald (née Northcroft) was usually called “Susan”. She was also awarded a M.B.E. for services to the British community in Chile (see *Supplement to the London Gazette*, 4 June 1934, No. 34056, p.3567.)

³ Henry Page Croft, 1st Baron Croft, CMG (1881-1947) was appointed Under-Secretary of State for War by Winston Churchill in 1940, and held the post until July 1945.

That was all it said. There was nothing more to say. There was a finality about this laconic telegram which closed the door. I was stupefied and stunned. This was the grim reality of war with a vengeance for our little family. Ian! I had seen close friends fall by my side in the last war and had been deeply affected. During the inter-war period the passing of good friends had moved me. But this was different. My Life could never be the same again without him. When he went overseas in June 1944 shortly after the invasion started, I was terrified that something might happen to him. I lived in dread all the time when I knew he was in the fighting. In the past two weeks I had been very worried because I knew from [my wife] Susan's telegrams that he had gone overseas again. For about a week the B.B.C. had been full of the magnificent work of the 51st Highland Division and the Black Watch had been mentioned specifically. I knew – or rather felt so strongly that it amounted to knowing – that Ian was in it. When I answered the telephone at 10.30 p.m. on Thursday the 1st of March and a voice

said that the Cable Company was speaking I knew it was bad news.⁴

A faint hope that it might not be the worst was rudely shattered when that voice in halting English read me the telegram. Thirty minutes later it was delivered to me. The agony of that night is something which I can never forget. It was as if I had been struck down, felled by a crushing blow from which I would never rise again. My first clear thoughts were that Susan was on the high seas and would know nothing about this tragedy. I must go and meet her boat in Buenos Aires. My first instinct was to be alone in my grief but after a while this was replaced by an overwhelming need to talk to close friends. I had been talking over the telephone to Estela Bush shortly before the Cable Company rang up. [Margin note by author: Omit names?] I decided to call her and somehow or other I blurted out the news. She and

⁴ Handwritten Page 1 ends here. There are three different page numbering systems used in this account: the typed pages of this transcript done in 2016; the actual number of handwritten pages (35 in total); and the numbering used by the author, which includes an insert (pages 6a-6d) and therefore ends on page 31.

Buxie were already in bed but they got up and came to me. She let Sandy MacDougall⁵ know and he also got up and came along. Since Susan had gone home and particularly when Margaret was away on holiday and I was alone, I had seen a lot of him and we had become good friends. To me he represented this war and he had seen the reality of it; I felt he was a sort of link between Ian and me and helped me to be more in touch with Ian's life. I told them I must go to Buenos Aires and they took over the arrangements as far as they could. After a time I went to bed but there could be no sleep. Throughout⁶ that long endless night, with that fateful telegram lying on the table, I paced the room in an agony of despair with blurred pictures – so vivid – of Ian dying on the battlefield and of Susan in a blacked-out ship on the high seas. It seemed so cruel that Ian, so full of life and promise, with an overwhelming desire to live, should die! There did not seem to be any logic [Margin: reason? justice?] in so many magnificent young lives being

⁵ Group Captain A. MacDougall was appointed Air Attaché at the British Embassy, Santiago on 27 November 1944. (*Air Force List*, April 1945, 260-289)

⁶ Handwritten Page 2 ends here.

taken while so many useless helpless people were left to go on living. The best were being taken. I must confess that my belief in God, my faith in Him, were sorely shaken that night. I had always believed in the Divine purpose guiding everything. In the last war [1914-18] I used to call myself a fatalist which was another way of saying that, if you were going to get it, you would get it. If your name was on a shell or a bullet, it was no good worrying about it or thinking you could do anything to avoid it. It would happen sooner or later. This attitude of mind was in many instances [Margin: in many cases?] a considerable help to a fighting man in enabling him to carry on his job. I still had the same feeling about things as far as Ian was concerned and, as time went on and he was kept training in England, I hoped that maybe he was destined to come through. When he returned from Normandy in August 1944 for further training on his transfer [from artillery] to infantry, it looked as if the war in Europe might be over shortly and he might escape. I clutched at any straw of hope, however faint.

But, of course, there was still Japan to deal with. And now,⁷ to think he should be killed in his first action after his return, within eleven days, seemed so cruel that my faith was completely destroyed. There was no God! There could be no God to allow this sort of thing to go on in the world! What possible Divine purpose could there be in allowing a few unscrupulous politicians – call them Nazis or Fascists or anything you like – to wreck everything there was decent in life and plunge the world into a holocaust of death and destruction! As I paced the floor, I was imbued with a spirit of revolt against God, against everybody and everything. The war was over for Ian and life was over for Susan and for me.⁸

I thought during that night of the plans we had made for Ian's future, of the castles we had built in the air, which had been so suddenly and utterly demolished. We used to write to him about his future career and Susan talked to him a lot about it. I always felt it was a great thing, whatever one's inner dreads might be, to devise plans for the future as if it were a

⁷ Handwritten Page 3 ends here.

⁸ Four lines crossed out here.

foregone conclusion that he was coming through. Ian's attitude, like that of all soldiers who know that their life is not worth a day's purchase, was that he did not see any point in thinking about the future until the war was finished. He was⁹ somewhat impatient of such planning which he felt was a waste of time under the circumstances. How right he was! One cannot but regret a little that his short time on earth was perhaps wasted even to a small extent by discussions over his future career, finance and such matters to which we are apt to attach undue importance at a time when life and death, freedom, the right to live, the alleviation of human suffering and the like, are the only things that do matter. The one plan that Ian had in his limited horizon was to return to Chile as soon as the war was over, if only for a few months' holiday. I also dreamt a lot about that. I had a plan to take a quick trip home, when Ian was to be demobilized, and to bring him back to Chile with me. I used to see the two of us returning together and being met by Susan and Margaret! I used to think of a party I would want to

⁹ Handwritten Page 4 ends here.

throw to celebrate Ian's return and to reintroduce him to his and our friends and how proud I should be of my soldier son! I used to think about a fishing holiday he and I would take together in the South of Chile when he would use that beautiful new Hardy Teviot rod¹⁰ which has been kept wrapped up in cellophane waiting for him! I used to think of him going out to the Grange School¹¹ and his astonishment at seeing

¹⁰ A cane rod made by Hardy Bros. of Alnwick, Northumberland.

¹¹ The Grange School was founded by John Andrew Stewart Jackson (1898-1958), an Anglo-Chilean born in Valparaiso, educated at Cheltenham College and Jesus College, Cambridge University. It was modelled on Cheltenham College. The school was officially opened in 1928.



John A.S. Jackson

that magnificent building as compared with the house in [Avenida] Pedro de Valdivia¹² where the Grange School operated in his time! I used to think of his¹³ return to Chile in so many other directions and my mind's eye was full of scenes and pictures which gave me great pleasure to contemplate! But now we had “had” all that – that is what Ian himself would have said – and the future looked so grim and black. There did not seem to be anything worth living for now.

Then, in the morning, Margaret was in my room, sobbing her little heart out with grief for a gallant brother whom she scarcely remembered, whom she knew from photographs and descriptions only, but of whom she was very proud. What a comfort she was to me then and has been ever since! I saw very clearly that her sweet young life must be preserved and that our small family life must be rebuilt around her. That undoubtedly was what Ian would have wished.¹⁴

¹² The house was called Villa Ángela (see *Well Done! Los 80 años del Grange*, Santiago: Origo Ediciones, 2009, for a history in Spanish of the Grange School).

¹³ Handwritten Page 5 ends here.

¹⁴ And that is what subsequently happened, fortunately. Handwritten Pages 6a-6d (Pages 7-10) are inserted at this point.

On the Sunday morning, 3rd March, I attended Holy Communion at 8.30 and Margaret came with me to Morning Service at 10.30. How I suffered at those services, especially the latter, but I had to go. I was asked if I would like a special hymn and chose “Onward Christian soldiers” but was unable to sing a word nor could I sing a single word of “God Save the King” at the end of the service.

The day or two after I received the news were taken up with hurried plans to go over to Buenos Aires & meet Susan and with seeing the many friends who so kindly wished to express their sympathy, an ordeal which was very trying for me. Panagra¹⁵ would not find a seat in a plane for Margaret and I was most anxious to take her with me. Fortunately it so happened that [Air attaché at the British Embassy] Sandy MacDougall was going over in the British Embassy plane to Buenos Aires with Curberson, his assistant and Elias, his mechanic, on the 8th of March and he very kindly offered to take Margaret and me

¹⁵ Pan American-Grace Airways, better known as Panagra, was founded in 1929. Its network stretched from Panama to Santiago, Chile and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

also. So at a very early hour on that day we left Cerrillos¹⁶ – it was still dark – and started climbing up to the Cordillera.¹⁷ When we crossed over the top we were flying at 16000 feet and the sun was just coming up on the Argentine side. It had just hit the peak of Aconcagua¹⁸ and I shall never forget the grey snowclad mountains and slopes and standing up majestically among them Aconcagua bathed in sunshine – what a magnificent sight for a writer to describe or an artist to paint! The trip was uneventful after we crossed the “hump” except that Margaret, poor child, had to sit on the floor to make room for an Argentine air force officer who had to escort us from Mendoza to Buenos Aires on account of some stupid red tape. Margaret took a very dim view of that young

¹⁶ Los Cerrillos was the main aviation facility of Santiago, Chile until 1967. Closed in 2006.

¹⁷ ‘Cordillera’ is a Spanish word meaning mountain range. Here it is the range of the Andes.

¹⁸ Aconcagua is the highest mountain outside of Asia at 6,961 metres. The summit is 15 kilometres from the international border with Chile. It is one of the Seven Summits, the highest mountains of each of the seven continents. The others are usually considered to be Mounts Denali, Vinson, Kilimanjaro, Elbrus, Puncak Jaya and Everest (Messner version).

man and would have enjoyed having him jettisoned! However, after a very pleasant trip from every other point of view we arrived at the El Palomar military aerodrome¹⁹ in Buenos Aires about 3.30 p.m. An interesting feature of the trip for me was that, in these days of passports and travel restrictions, I had gone from Chile to the Argentine without being asked for any credentials and without having my baggage examined either leaving Chile or entering the Argentine. Officially, I had neither left Chile nor arrived in the Argentine – in fact, as far as the Argentine authorities were concerned I did not exist. Margaret and I put up at the Continental Hotel²⁰ and thought that Susan’s ship would be arriving any day. We had no idea what ship she was on, nor when she would arrive. During the next week three ships arrived but she was not on any of them. Finally a telegram arrived from [my brother] Charlie²¹ from

¹⁹ This is still a military airport, 18 kilometres west of Buenos Aires.

²⁰ This hotel in downtown Buenos Aires was built in 1927. Now called “725 Continental Hotel”, it is at Av. Pte. Roque Saenz Peña, 725.

²¹ Charlie MacDonald, younger brother of the author, was an engineer. He had the unenviable task of telling Susan of

Freetown which told me what I wanted to know and after speaking to the Blue Star line officials I learned that Susan would not arrive until Easter so we had another two weeks to wait. Margaret was having rather a bad time with “litre” poisoning²² and I had to take her to the “Little Sisters of Mary” every day for treatment. I decided to return to Chile and put in a week’s work and Margaret stayed with the Maloneys who were very kind to us during our visit. Eventually on Good Friday, 30th March, Susan arrived. Owing to more red tape I was not allowed within a mile of the docks and had to wait for Susan at the Hotel. About 5 p.m. she turned up and I shall never forget my feelings when I saw her step out of the taxi. Dressed in a very smart black costume with a gold Black Watch badge on the lapel – a present from Ian – she looked so well, so brave and I have never been so proud of her. To me she exemplified British

the death of her son.

²² *Lithraea caustica* (Spanish: ‘litre’) is a species of flowering plants in the soapberry family. This plant occurs in central Chile. It is a well-known allergenic and can cause a rash of the skin, the effects of which vary greatly from person to person.

motherhood, one of the main reasons, if not the strongest reason, why we as a nation have pulled through this war, the greatest test to which any nation has ever been put in the history of the world. She was brokenhearted but proud of her gallant boy and living in his memory. For the rest of that evening and right through the night she told me about Ian and her trip. There was so much to tell me and I was hungry for firsthand news of him from her. It was a comfort to hear about him and to talk about him.

We stayed in Buenos Aires for a week and Susan's attention was diverted somewhat to Margaret, who had to get better of "litre" poisoning and needed clothes. So there was plenty to do and think about. On Friday, 6th April, Ian's twenty-second birthday, we flew over to Chile by Panagra plane and were met by Estela Bush. The next week was a horrible ordeal for Susan when her many friends called on her. It was so very hard for her and once or twice she was at breaking point. But her courage did not fail.

I have always loved Susan and there never could be anyone else in my affections. Throughout twenty-three years of married life we had had a lot of

ups and downs but had always loved each other. Often, far too often,²³ I was a trial to her and sometimes she irritated me beyond measure. I do not believe it possible for a man and woman to live happily together with never a cross word; under such circumstances one of them must be a “yes man” or a “yes woman”, a condition which can only mean a complete lack of character. In our case there was plenty of character on both sides and, I think, a great deal of genuine understanding. I often wish I had those twenty three years to live over again to make up for my many shortcomings. The ups and downs were many but principally, the birth of Ian in 1923, the death of Mary Elizabeth Florence at the age of eight months in 1925, Ian’s illness in 1927, the birth of Margaret in 1932, Susan’s M.B.E. in [left blank, 1934], Ian’s winning the Intermediate Honour Cup in 1933, my illnesses in 1930 and 1939, my C.B.E. on 1st January 1943, Margaret’s musical triumphs, and finally the awful tragedy of 1945. Never during those twenty-three years have I admired and loved Susan more than I do

²³ Page 9 (Handwritten Page 6c) ends here.

today – her courage under this terrible ordeal is something out of the ordinary which has surprised me.

As long as I live I shall always thank God for the decision which sent Susan to England in September 1944 to see Ian and I shall always regret that I was unable to go also. Those four final months of Ian's life were filled with the companionship and love of his Mother and are her most treasured memory. In a way they made the blow almost harder to endure in the first instance but as time went on they meant a great deal.²⁴

²⁴ Page 6d (inset) ends here, and page 6 continues.

June, 1945

And now over ten weeks have passed, V-E (Victory in Europe) day has been celebrated, and the pain is still there, sometimes more acute than ever. V-E day was and could only be for us a sad mixture of grief that Ian was not there to celebrate it and would never return and restrained joy that our great country had been delivered from this dreadful ordeal and had survived to take its rightful place as ever in the world and in the preservation of the cause of freedom. But that day will always stand out in my memory – and in Susan’s also – on account of the King’s broadcast speech.²⁵ What a message for the bereaved! It was as if²⁶ he had spoken to us. We had sought comfort in so many ways without avail and as the days passed felt less and less inclined to take part in anything. But, after listening to the King speak, we could not but feel that Ian’s sacrifice did mean a great deal and that we were letting him down if we did not try for the rest of

²⁵ See Appendix II below.

²⁶ Continued on page 11 (Handwritten Page 7).

our lives to do something, however humble, for our fellow men. We must be up and doing and not give way to our grief – I am sure that is what Ian would have wanted me to do.

During those ten weeks [since his death] Ian's short life has come back to me in retrospect and I have seen him at different ages and in different places. I remember the evening when he was born, about 8 o'clock on the 6th of April, 1923, in 9, Grosvenor Crescent Edinburgh²⁷ in the Parish of St. Andrew's. We named him Ian Lester MacDonald and with all that background there could be no doubt whatsoever about his nationality. When he was on the way in Peru, we had been so anxious to have him born on British soil and we certainly had achieved our object. How proud we were that our firstborn was a son, and how little did we imagine that he would reach manhood just in time for another war! Such a suggestion was unthinkable. All our hopes were centred in him and for the next twenty one years we gave him everything

²⁷ It was listed as the address of Brechin & Jackson Nursing Home (Medical and Maternity) in the *Edinburgh and Leith Post Office Directory* for 1922 on page 42.

it was in our power to give. He would carry on the family name and we would do everything possible to prepare him to become a worthy citizen of our great country. Those were our thoughts.²⁸

[Margin, top left of page: Baptized in Trinity Church, Ayr²⁹ on Trinity Sunday, 1923.]

When we returned to Peru late in 1923 and went up to live in Chosica,³⁰ Ian was beginning to sit up and take notice. He was not a beautiful child – I have realized that fact many times since – but at that time I would not have allowed anyone to say so without getting up in arms. But at least he was a healthy looking youngster. I remember how Nan, the bull terrier, used to lie beside his pen in the garden for hours on end and never leave him. When the nurse took him out in the pram and anyone approached to look at the baby, Nan would place herself between the stranger and the pram. Later when we went down to live in Miraflores³¹ Ian made the acquaintance of Tita

²⁸ Page 11 (Handwritten Page 7) ends here.

²⁹ Presumably Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Fullerton Street, Ayr, Scotland.

³⁰ An inland district of the Lima province in Peru.

³¹ A residential district south of downtown Lima.

Bush, who was three months his senior, and there is a delightful photograph of the two of them sitting on the grass fighting over an orange, a battle of wills! One of the things Ian looked forward to after the war was the renewal of his acquaintanceship with Tita whom he last saw in 1937. Tita would assuredly have liked to see Ian again but she will require to content herself now with his photograph and whatever memories she retains of him.

The next year or two, as far as Ian was concerned, provided the usual uneventful period when he cut teeth, learned to walk, learned to talk and had his full share of childish ailments. With parental pride we watched his progress and noted the different stages in a record with photographs. But at the age of four he developed whooping cough³² for the second time quite badly and this illness had far-reaching consequences. Dr. McCormack found that he had a leaky valve in the heart and that he was missing the odd beat, what is also called a “murmur”, and told me that his only chance of getting over it and becoming a

³² Page 12 (Handwritten Page 8) ends here.

fit man who could take his place in the world was four to six months of complete rest; even then, he said that the chances were that he would never be able to play games actively and would probably have to take it easy for the rest of his life. So for six months Ian spent his time either in bed being entertained or going out in a pram. At the age of four he did not take kindly to this treatment, as can be readily understood, but it was carried out strictly to the letter. How right the Doctor was in his treatment, so hard to impose! I have often thought in recent years of that small boy of four years old with the weak heart, who grew into a tough Loretto schoolboy and later a fine hardy soldier. In his first battle course in the Gunners he got a "Q", which means distinction. When he was in the Black Watch, he went through at least two more battle courses and I believe he never dropped out although as a rule the numbers thinned out every day as so many men could not take it. He was able to carry out his duties one hundred percent as an artillery subaltern first and an infantry subaltern later. And in

this war you had to be fit to do that.³³

At the Grange [School, Chile] and at Loretto [School, Musselburgh] he always took part in the games and never shirked. It was hard to believe that this big handsome tough young Black Watch officer who looked so splendid in his kilt was that small boy with the weak heart.

In the year 1927 it was decided that we should leave Peru and go to Chile after leave in England in the following year and in August 1927 Susan took Ian home ahead chiefly with the idea of having him vetted there and to give him the benefit of the change of climate. Doctors at home fully endorsed Dr. McCormack's treatment and Ian made good progress. Some features of that holiday in 1928 stand out in my memory. The little house at Deepdene, Dorking, the garden behind where Ian rode around on his fairy

³³ Page 13 (Handwritten Page 9) ends here.

cycle,³⁴ Edith the nurse, Old Tom the car, and so on. That glorious trip we made by car in June to St. Margaret's, Cornwall³⁵ with Aunt Flo and Uncle Percy – it was the most perfect of summer's days and I can remember how we all enjoyed it. The particular feature was our last stop for tea when we had Devonshire cream and buns! We were blessed with particularly good weather during that holiday and enjoyed ourselves. Afterwards we went from there by



³⁴

A Colson Fairy cycle (child's bicycle) from the 1920s.

³⁵ See <http://www.stmargaretholidays.co.uk/about/> accessed 29 August 2016. This may be the place mentioned here.

car to Lundin Links, Fifeshire, where the Durlacs were on holiday. I can remember the early morning bathing parties and how cold the sea was. There was a particular trip by car to St. Andrew's where we met John Ross and his wife. My family were there with us and George Young turned up for one week-end. Maurice Durlac³⁶ and I decided to have a day's fishing³⁷ in Loch Leven and what a day it was! It rained heavily practically all day and the fishing was extremely bad. We had two bottles of whisky with us to keep the cold out and the two ghillies and Maurice and I did full justice to them. The final result of the day was five trout, averaging one pound each, and the total cost was £5! A pound of fish per pound, in other words! An outstanding feature of that day was high tea in the Kinross hotel including an unforgettable plate of ham and eggs. After Lundin Links we went on by car to Thurso – we were indefatigable travellers! I well remember our arrival there one night at the end of August rather later than we intended and

³⁶ Maurice Durlac was one of the editor's godfathers. He lived in Edinburgh and was a Writer to the Signet (a solicitor).

³⁷ Start of page 15 (Handwritten Page 11).

all somewhat tired. During our holiday in Cornwall Uncle Percy was very amused at my descriptions of life in the extreme North of Scotland in my Mother's country. I quoted this classic story of a conversation up there between three local worthies, which went as follows:

Weel, weel!

Three minutes interval.

Boy, boy!

Five minutes interval.

Man, man!

And so on, with everyone perfectly content.

When we were travelling by car and there was a lull in the conversation, one of the three "men" (Uncle Percy, Ian and yours truly) would say "Weel, weel!". One of the others would say "Boy, boy!"³⁸ and the third would chip in with "Man, man!" When we sat down to late supper on our arrival in Thurso, Uncle Dannie was talking to me about something and finished up by saying "Boy, boy!" You can imagine my embarrassment and my uncle's great astonishment

³⁸ Start of page 16 (Handwritten Page 12).

when young Ian chipped in immediately with “Man, man!”, five years old!

My strongest recollection of those ten days in Thurso was getting up at 6 a.m., in accordance with time[-]honoured custom, and bathing with my Uncle off the rocks in the Pentland Firth. Cold was not a fitting word to describe it! There was no word in the dictionary – it was something frightful! I simply shut my eyes and flopped in off the rocks, swam around a bit and clambered back again as soon as I thought I decently could. I must confess that one did feel grand afterwards and what a breakfast it induced! I remember Susan’s great difficulty in understanding some of my relatives, particularly those who lived in the vicinity of John O’Groat’s house! Uncle “Chimmy” [Jimmy?] was quite unintelligible to her! However, we got through ten days without putting up any major blanks and then set off for London by two stages. I shall never forget our drive from Thurso to Glasgow on a most perfect day when the heather was at its very best. That part of the road between Inverness and Perth through the Highlands was incredibly beautiful. Finally, we landed up in London

again and³⁹ at the end of October, 1928, we set sail for Chile. Where did Ian fit into this picture of our holiday? Well, he was with us all the time, a small boy of five, and he took his small part in everything as far as he could. Every picture one sees in one's mind's eye of that holiday contains Ian, a happy youngster with the whole world ahead of him.

³⁹ Start of page 17.

July, 1945

Another month has passed and, if anything, the wound is deeper. The letters from his Commanding Officer and Company Commander on the field have arrived and tell us how bravely Ian died. We did not have to be told that --- we knew that, however much he hated it, he would do his duty – but it is gratifying to read it from his superior officers who write of him with the highest praise. The C.O. says that what makes it all the harder is that, although they have been in heavy fighting, their casualties have been slight. That makes it still harder for us. One feels that, apart from our very close friends, who knew Ian and can appreciate in some measure what we are suffering, or those who have had the same experience, the general mass of acquaintances have expressed their sympathy either verbally or in writing and now feel that we must be getting over it as we seem to be carrying on with our lives in a more or less normal way. It is just an incident, a tragedy if you like, which has come and gone like a ship passing in the night. But for us there

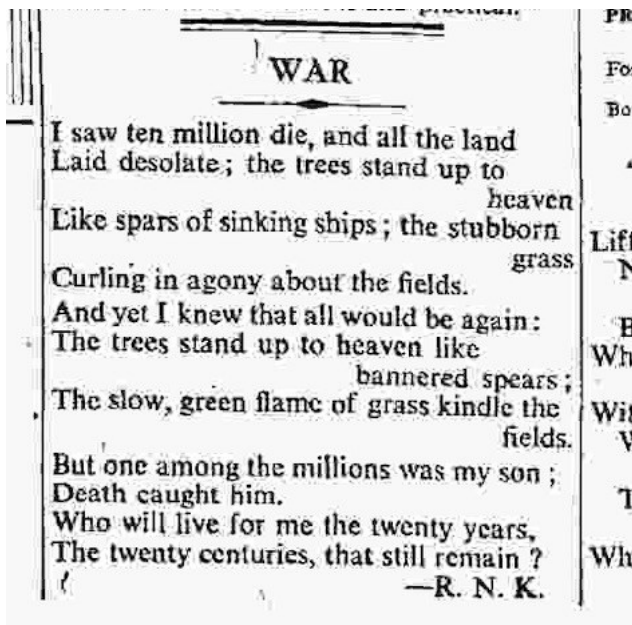
is no slackening of the pains! The following lines, which appeared in *The Times* recently, express it very well :-

“I saw ten million die, and all the land
Laid desolate; the trees stand up to heaven
Like spars of sinking ships; the stubborn grass
Curling in agony about the fields.
And yet I knew that all would be again;
The trees stand up to heaven like bannered spears
The slow, green flame of grass kindle the fields.
But one among the millions was my son;
Death caught him.
Who will live for me the twenty years
The twenty centuries, that still remain?”⁴⁰

I, who did not see Ian again after 1937, and know him as a man only from his photographs and Susan’s descriptions of him, see him everywhere and all the time. What must it be for Susan who saw so much of him during the last four months of his life! It is said

⁴⁰ This poem is headed ‘War’ and the initials R.N.K. appear below it, at the bottom of page 7 of *The Times* of 9 May 1945. (With thanks to Judith Rowbotham for this reference.)

that time is a wonderful healer but so far I feel that time can only make us realize more and more how much we have missed. The Bishop says the only help we can have is from the Holy Spirit – it must be wonderful to get that comfort and I can only assume that my faith is not strong enough yet for that as I am still floundering in a sea of doubt and grasping for a helping hand.



The poem ‘War’ in *The Times* of 9 May 1945 (with thanks to Adam K. Dean, email of 23 January 2024)

Chile

And so to Chile where Ian's life from 1929 to 1936 is irrevocably bound up with the Grange School. He started there and went right through to the Common Entrance examinations which he actually sat in Chile. He was very small for his years always – like myself he only started growing at 16 and finished up with a height of 5 feet 4 inches – and this was a great hardship to him in games. But he never shirked and had plenty of guts. His best sports were swimming and hockey and I remember so well⁴¹ his going off the second board in the school diving competition to win an extra point for his colour side. How proud I was of him then and that other day when he stood up and took his medicine in the school boxing competition. On another occasion he ran second in the cross country race which was pretty good for a small boy with an alleged dicky heart. His inseparable companions at school were John Hardy and Johnnie Sparks – John Hardy is the only one of

⁴¹ Page 19 starts here.

the three still alive and lucky at that – and I shall never forget the day they organized a hockey side and challenged the [Prince of Wales] Country Club girls. The three of them played in the three inside positions in the forward line and were the life and soul of the team, finally beating the girls 2-1. Scholastically Ian always did pretty well and was among the first each year. In 1933 he won the Intermediate Honour Cup, awarded for all round showing in work and games, and we were intensely proud of that achievement. As I write I am looking at the replica of the cup we gave him for himself and it will always be one of our most treasured possessions. Susan brought it back from England at his wish. One other incident of his life at The Grange stands out. That was the day when he came back from school and announced with great pride that he had been caned by Mr. Jackson. Apparently about a dozen of those small boys were up before the Head and were given their choice of a caning or lines. John Hardy and Ian⁴² chose the caning! Apart from the last year when he was a

⁴² Page 20 starts here.

boarder so as to be “broken in” for Loretto, Ian was a day boy and I used to take him down to the school in Pedro de Valdivia by car on my way to the office until he was old enough to go by bike. One morning in the year 1930, just as we were leaving the house – at that time we lived in Avenida Lota – some workmen turned up on the open space in front with a colossal stone, spades, etc. and started digging. I was just as curious as Ian and had to ask what it was all about. When I got into the car, Ian asked “What are they doing, Daddy?” I told him that in the afternoon President Ibañez⁴³ was coming along to lay the foundation stone of the new Santiago College. We had just recently acquired some poultry and Ian was all intrigued over the laying of eggs which rather mystified him. He was very thoughtful and said nothing for several minutes; finally, he looked at me and said “How can any man lay a great big stone like that?” I never see President Ibañez without thinking

⁴³ General Carlos Ibañez del Campo (1877-1960) was President of Chile twice, the first occasion being from 1927 to 1931.

of the prodigious feat he performed that day.⁴⁴

So much for his life at the Grange School, and now for the highlights of his life at home. The first notable event was on the 18th of December, 1929 when Jean and Norman Chambers, Susan, Ian and I set off in the Chambers' Ford car at 5 a.m. for Pucon,⁴⁵ a distance of about 1000 kilometres over the most shocking roads. It was quite an adventure, in fact, more of an adventure than we realized then. Before we were well out of Santiago it started to rain and the long and the short of it was that it took us four days to reach Pucon after being pulled out of various streams by oxen. At one point we were crossing a stream of unknown depth and came to a standstill in the middle. Before we realized what was happening, the car started to subside in the mud and the water commenced to come into the car until it looked as if we should be sitting in it before long. The car was a

⁴⁴ Seven lines about taking Ian fishing are crossed out here, at the end of page 20.

⁴⁵ Pucón is a Chilean city in the Province of Cautin, Araucania Region, 100 kilometres to the southeast of Temuco and 780 kilometres south of Santiago. It is located by Lake Villarrica and the volcano of the same name.

closed one and I suppose the whole situation was somewhat alarming to a small boy of six; anyway, I still recall how agitated Ian was but it was not very long before the oxen arrived and pulled us over to the opposite bank where we were held up for a couple of hours getting the water out of the engine. Later we had to put the car on a train from one station to another as a bridge had been washed away. Anyway, we finally reached Pucon and had some good fishing there.

Whenever possible I liked to take Ian out fishing with me and I well remember taking him down to camp with Norman Chambers and Doc Stansby[?] on the banks of the Chehguan [Chequen river?] in the summer of 1933.⁴⁶

That was a wonderful and unforgettable holiday and we had lots of fun one way or another. Ian was nine years old and it was a great experience for him. He learned to ride a horse and caught a fine one pound rainbow trout casting from the bank to my intense satisfaction. I remember one day he and I had

⁴⁶ Page 17 ends here.

arranged to ride over to a farm about ten kilometres away to spend the day while the others went off for the day to fish the Laja.⁴⁷ Ian had sat on a horse's back before then but that was about all. Well, we started off at a walk and everything was fine until I suggested cantering. Ian said firmly that he liked walking and had no intention of cantering whereupon I told him that under those conditions we would not even reach the farm by lunchtime and had better wash out the whole expedition. Ian saw the point and I gave him a few ideas about cantering. By the time we reached the farm he was getting along fine and was thrilled; on the way home the canter developed into a gallop and I finally had to call him to order or have a race. That day started Ian off on a horse and by the time he left Chile he rode very well. In his last year in Chile he had jumping lessons and it was grand to see the ease and grace with which he took the hurdles on a white jumper called "Princesa". He had good hands and managed a horse without difficulty. "Peter Pan",

⁴⁷ Laja River (Spanish: Rio De La Laja) has its source at Laguna del Laja (Laja Lake) in the Andes, and is an important tributary of the Bio Bio River.

for instance, was a bit of a devil and sometimes⁴⁸ ran away with people but Ian mastered him completely and he would do anything he wanted. For his tenth birthday I gave him a pony called “Dick”, a small piebald with no vices which could be relied upon to behave decently. Before very long Ian had “Dick” under complete control and was complaining about his laziness. One winter’s day Ward⁴⁹ came to lunch and asked Ian how often he had fallen off his horse. Ian said not at all whereupon Ward said that, until a horseman had come off twice, he was no horseman.

⁴⁸ End of page 22.

⁴⁹ Probably Noel G. Ward, a colleague of my grandfather and a partner at Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths & Co., 1925-1941. (Sir Russell Kettle, *Deloitte & Co. 1845-1956*, privately printed for Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths & Co. at Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 156) My grandfather is listed as a partner from 1925 to 1948 on the same page. Other partners were John Dixon (1925-32), Thomas C. White, M.B.E. (1925-37), Thomas M. Bury (1925-37) and Alexander Rodger (1925-29). The West Coast of South America had offices in Chile (Santiago, opened 1921, Valparaiso 1925) and Peru (Lima, 1925). From 1948 separate firms were established in Peru and Chile. After 1948 my grandfather worked at Industrias Electricas y Musicales Odeon S.A. (a record label company, later part of EMI) in Santiago which was his last place of employment (email from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, May 9, 2017).

This impressed Ian a great deal and there was a look of determination on his face when he set out in the afternoon to ride. He came back for tea covered with mud and proud of the fact that he had come off twice; I have often wondered what he did to the unfortunate “Dick” to produce such a result as that pony really seemed incapable of working up sufficient enthusiasm to throw anybody. In February 1934 we had a month’s holiday in George Reid’s house in Tejas Verdes (then called La Boca) and well do I remember the wonderful early morning rides I had with Ian along the beach to San Antonio.⁵⁰ He and I rode a lot together particularly in the early mornings when he had school holidays and it gave me the utmost pleasure to see him ride so well and with such obvious enjoyment. The third member of the early morning riding team was “Jock” a really fine dog. He would ⁵¹ follow anywhere and handled yapping piedogs in the most masterly fashion. If we came near

⁵⁰ San Antonio city is the capital of the San Antonio province in the Valparaiso region. It is the hub of the fishing area between Rocas de Santo Domingo and Cartagena.

⁵¹ End of page 23.

a shack with several big dogs, where “Jock” knew he was outweighed, he would leave the road and make a long detour joining us farther along. After “Jock” was poisoned we missed him a lot on the mornings. Later on we were joined sometimes by a Scotch terrier by the name of “Rikitikitavi”⁵² but he was no good on the open road and only came along when we stayed within the confines of the Country Club.

In March 1936, a few months before Ian left for Loretto, he and I had a farewell fishing trip in the South of Chile. We went first to Villarrica and had several days on the [River] Tolten.⁵³ I had given Ian a rod for Christmas and had the idea that it would be a good thing for his fishing education to give him the experience of catching and handling fish before going on to casting from the bank which is apt to try a small

⁵² “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi” is a short story in *The Jungle Book* (pub. 1894) by Rudyard Kipling about the adventures of a young mongoose, named Rikki-Tikki-Tavi for his chattering vocalisations, who fights cobras named Nag and Nagaina.

⁵³ Toltén River rises at Villarrica Lake, close to the city of that name. After flowing for about 123 km. the river reaches the Pacific Ocean near Punta Nihue, where it is about 500 metres wide.

boy's patience and discourage him. So we trolled the Tolten and on our first day Ian got a 4½ pound brown trout and a 3½ pound rainbow. How thrilled he was and what a kick his Dad got out of it! I remember the 4½ pound brown was taking rather a long time to bring in and Ian was getting tired. He suggested that I should finish off the job but, when I said that the fish could only be called his if he brought it in unaided, he set his teeth and stuck it out. The 3½ pound⁵⁴ rainbow gave him a grand run for his money just at dusk and how we both enjoyed it! After five glorious days at Villarrica we went off to Antuco⁵⁵ and stayed at a very primitive hotel there (\$18 bed and breakfast). There were no windows, merely newspapers, but the beds were clean chiefly because it was said that bugs, etc. could not live at that altitude. Anyway Ian and I spent the whole day in the open air, bathed in the river, and always arrived at the hotel physically tired and

⁵⁴ End of page 24.

⁵⁵ Antuco is a Chilean commune and town in Bio Bio Province, Bio Bio region. The commune had only about 4,000 inhabitants in 2002. It is almost due North of Villarrica, and 348 kilometres from there by the Via Panamericana Sur/Ruta 5 which has tolls. (See Google Maps).

ready to sleep. We brought a rickety old Ford car with us from Los Angeles (\$50 a day plus petrol and the chauffeur's living expenses) and he took us all over the countryside, even up to a short distance from the Antuco volcano.⁵⁶ We had some excellent fishing in the Laja, took a lot of photographs and generally enjoyed ourselves. I have the most pleasant recollection of that fishing holiday together. Ian and I had a lot in common, the same things appealed to us, we had a similar sense of humour, and he was a fine companion for me. I used to get a lot of fun out of playing golf with him and teaching him the first essentials but he could only play golf during the winter school holidays so that opportunities were few and far between.

As regard the more delicate pursuits, I spent two or three years trying to teach Ian – and young John Hardy – the piano. They both showed some interest at

⁵⁶ Antuco volcano is a stratovolcano near Sierra Velluda and on the shore of Laguna del Laja. It last erupted in 1869, and was first climbed in 1829 by German botanist, zoologist and explorer Eduard Friedrich Poeppig (1798-1868).

first and made progress but later on⁵⁷ I had to drop it as they simply would not practise. While Ian was at Loretto he got keen on the piano again and started taking lessons, with what success I never really knew.

I have already mentioned the holiday in February 1944⁵⁸ in Tejas Verdes. First of all Billy Lee came down and stayed with Ian and later on he was joined by Johnnie Sparks. It was at that time that Stella and Tita turned up from Lima and came down to Tejas Verdes to spend a week with us. I shall never forget Tita, Johnnie Sparks and Ian. What fun they had! They spent most of their time on the mate⁵⁹ or in a boat on the river and had the most marvellous way of disappearing when the baby (Margaret) was brought out to the garden to be looked after. In the evenings the three of them ran a show for our entertainment and produced their various parlour tricks. It seems incredible to think that those two boys have both gone, two such fine and promising youngsters in every way.

⁵⁷ End of page 25.

⁵⁸ This should be 1934. See above.

⁵⁹ 'mate' is a traditional South American caffeine-rich infused tea drink. It is consumed in South America and also Syria, the largest importer in the world.

What a tragic waste!

Well, that's about all there is to say about Chile as far as Ian is concerned. There is no doubt he loved Chile and had a grand time in those eight years. It is little wonder that he wanted to come back after the war!

The next episode in this short story is our leave in England in 1937. Susan had gone⁶⁰ home with Margaret and Ian in August 1936 and I followed in April 1937, getting to England just in time for the Coronation. This holiday was a big disappointment to me as I caught cold within a few days of arriving home and had a miserable time with asthma throughout the five months I was there. In the mid-summer break we took Ian & John Hardy up to St. Fillans⁶¹ on Loch Earn for a long week-end. We

⁶⁰ End of page 26.

⁶¹ St. Fillans is a village in the central highlands of Scotland, in the district of Perth and Kinross. It lies at the eastern end of Loch Earn.

attended the church service at Loretto one Sunday morning and what a fine sight it was to see all those boys in the kilt. When one looks back upon that service, it is hard to realize that all or nearly all of those boys were destined to fight in a world war in a few years and that many of them have passed over to the other side.

Later on in the month of August we went to SeaHouses⁶² in Northumberland where we had taken



St Fillans

⁶² Spelt here with a capital H, Seahouses is a large village on the North Northumberland coast, about 20 kilometres north of Alnwick. It is within the Northumberland Coast

a house. The water was pretty cold but Ian seemed to enjoy the bathing. His holiday, however, was somewhat upset when he suddenly developed appendicitis pains and had to go easy. When we returned to London at the end of the month we went to see a specialist immediately with the result that Ian had his appendix out in September at the Middlesex Hospital. He hated the idea of an operation and made a bit of a fuss; nothing would persuade him that there was really little to worry about.⁶³ At the end of September we saw him off to Edinburgh at Euston Station, he on his way to Loretto and we leaving the

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Seahouses

⁶³ Page 27 ends here.

next day for Chile via New York. My last recollection of Ian is a painful one – a small boy with his eyes filled with tears saying goodbye. Little did I realise what that goodbye was to mean for us!

I often wonder, in the light of subsequent events, if we had known then what the future held in store for us, would we have sent Ian to Loretto? We did what we felt was best for the boy, and if it was wrong in that it may have deprived him and us of a few years of happiness together, I should be eternally sorry. We should, in fact we must have faith and believe that everything we did for Ian was guided by the Divine hand and that his allotted span on earth was a short one. But, if that were the case, why were we not given those last few years of happiness on earth with him? Why? It is so difficult to see things clearly.

As far as we know, his life at Loretto (1936-1941) was happy – in any event he loved his old school, that we do know and surely that is the answer. He had his ups and downs at Loretto and showed a lot of pluck in overcoming the difficulties which handicapped him. There was that unfortunate physical weakness which must have been very embarrassing for him and was

undoubtedly the main reason why he was rather quiet and shy⁶⁴ by nature. This handicapped him at games, particularly rugger, which is very important at Loretto. He was never much good at cricket and the game he liked best was hockey, at which he was quite successful. He got into the first eleven and, after he left school, played for Aberdeen University. Scholastically he did well, passing his School Certificate quite young and also the first half of his Intermediate C.A. examination. The choice of a career was entirely his and not directly influenced by me in any way, but had he come through the war, I doubt very much if he would have followed it. I remember when he wrote out to us on one occasion – his letters were few and far between and he was a thoroughly bad correspondent – to say that he did not think he had the brains to be a Chartered Accountant and thought he had better be a diplomat. I told that to one or two members of the British Embassy in Santiago, who took rather a dim view of it! It must be tough to go through life entirely devoid of a sense of humour!

⁶⁴ Page 28 ends here.

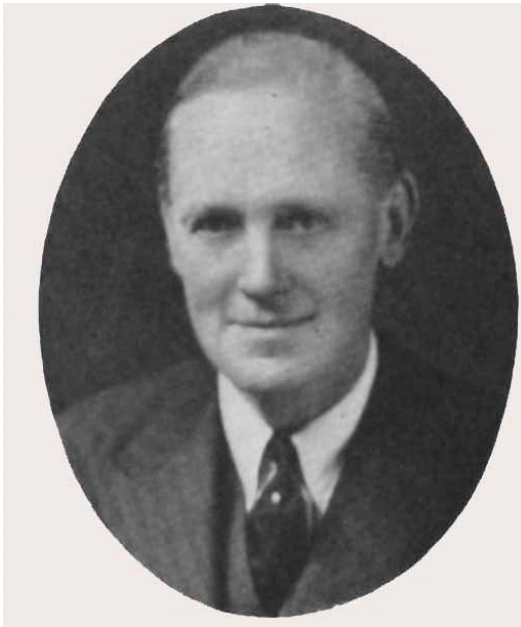
At the age of 18 (July 1941) Ian left Loretto and immediately joined the Army, having been selected for a special course as an Artillery officer. After two months in the ranks, he was sent to Aberdeen University for six months on a course, and later joined his O.C.T.U. [Officer Cadet Training Unit] at Llandridnod Wells.⁶⁵ Here he did extremely well, passing out as First⁶⁶ Cadet and Parade Commander in October, 1942. He evidently showed ability and leadership of a high order and we were naturally very proud of him. Ian was a late starter and, as Dr. Greenlees⁶⁷ told us, only really began to develop

⁶⁵ Llandrindod Wells (“Trinity Parish”) as correctly spelt, is a town and community in Powys, within the historic boundaries of Radnorshire, Wales.

⁶⁶ Page 29 ends here.

⁶⁷ Dr. James Robertson Campbell Greenlees (1878-1951) was a Scottish rugby union footballer, physician and teacher. He played for Cambridge University, Kelvinside Academicals and Scotland. Led Scotland to Triple Crown, Championship and Calcutta Cup win in 1903. President, Scottish Rugby Union 1913-14. Physician, 1906-1926. Served in World War One in the Royal Army Medical Corps. Mentioned four times in despatches for “great gallantry” at Neuve Chapelle etc. D.S.O. 1915 and bar 1917. Chevalier, Légion d’Honneur, 1918. Headmaster of Loretto School, 1926-1945.

fully in his final year at Loretto. After his O.C.T.U. he was in different parts of England, training for active service, and went over a few days after D day with his battery. He saw fighting at Caen [in Normandy], hard fighting, and then, just when the whole front began to move and become fluid and interesting, his troop was disbanded and he was sent home to be transferred to infantry. According to Ian, his troop commander did not get on with the battery commander and that is



Dr. Greenlees

why his troop was chosen. Whatever the explanation was, it was a bitter blow to Ian! He had given of his very best in the Gunners and had done extremely well. His heart was in it and it was little wonder that he took not at all kindly to the transfer to infantry. He asked to be sent to the Seaforth Highlanders or the Black Watch, and was posted to the latter. Then followed months of further training, battle courses, etc.; during which he had the good fortune to have Susan somewhere not far away, always ready to listen to his troubles and to give him the advice and encouragement he so much required. They had many good times together and he finally said goodbye to her⁶⁸ on Saturday, 11th February 1945, to go back to that hell on the continent [of Europe]. Susan says he was strangely quiet on that day of parting and it would seem that he had a presentiment that he would not come back. He flew over to Germany on 14th February, having been delayed by bad weather, and must have gone into action almost immediately. After six days of fighting, during which the Black Watch

⁶⁸ Page 30 ends here.

did well and Ian gave a good account of himself, he was ordered to make a night attack on a strongpoint on the Siegfried Line at Goch, Germany on Sunday, 25th February. Just as he was reaching his objective at the head of his men, he and his section leader were killed by a burst of machine gun fire. His company commander reports that Ian had done his work so well that the strongpoint was taken easily. Just an incident in this bloody war but it meant the breaking of two hearts. With that incident Ian's short career on earth came to an end. He had done nobody any harm and was a fine clean decent boy. I believe, if he had lived, he would have led a useful life and played his part as a good citizen. Maybe with the world as it is today, he is better off. The ways of the Almighty [God] are exceeding strange and, if one believes in anything at all, one must accept Ian's early death as part of the Divine plan. Say what you like, it is hard to believe that!⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Page 31 ends here.

July, 1946

And now another year has passed – time goes so quickly, I did not realize it was so long – and I have not put pen to paper to complete this poor attempt to record Ian's short career and to analyse my feelings. I do not know why I am doing this other than that I have the urge to do it, just one of those things one does without knowing why. It has been such a hard year for my poor Susan. After all she had suffered it did not seem right that she should be stricken by that dreaded disease, the very name of which one hates to mention. I do not know how she was given the strength to endure that second operation. Life is so cruel. Now, thank God, she is better and looks well and I firmly believe we have seen the end of that trouble. She is obviously nervous of a recurrence – who would not be? – but I am sure it has been arrested in time. Anyway, I pray hard that she will never be troubled again.

Shortly after our return from Buenos Aires we realized that we had to get out of the old house with all its associations and now we are in our own little

house, not much of a place but our own, even if not yet paid for. Sometimes I wish I had more money, enough to be able to retire and not worry, and yet I know that money is not everything by a long way.⁷⁰

The things that matter most in life are health and happiness in the home.

How do I feel about everything now?

“If ye break faith with us who died, we shall not sleep though poppies grow on Flander’s fields.”⁷¹

Have I broken faith with Ian?

I often feel that he is around, helping me to carry on. Most of all I feel that he wants me to devote the rest of my poor life to looking after Susan and Margaret, in the first instance, and to doing as much good as I can for my fellow men. His inspiration is

⁷⁰ End of page 32.

⁷¹ This is a quotation from the poem *In Flanders Fields* by Canadian military doctor and artillery commander Major John McCrae, written during the Second Battle of Ypres in May 1915. He wrote it while mourning the death of his friend Lieutenant Alexis Helmer, who was killed at the age of 22 by a shell on 2 May 1915. The poem was first published in *Punch* magazine on 8 December 1915. (See <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/poems/john-mccrae-in-flanders-fields-inspiration.htm> accessed 13 September 2016.)

with me to help me along the road. My physical contact with him is the wristwatch I wear which he was wearing when he was killed. Among the few belongings returned from the battlefield was the watch which we had sent him from Chile in the year 1942. Susan's contact is the beautiful gold Black Watch brooch which he gave her and which she always wears. But there is also the spiritual contact and I often feel his presence near me.

Margaret is a wonderful consolation to us both. She is such a sweet girl, so full of life, so intelligent and so devoted to us and her home. She may be untidy and has her faults like everybody else, but her good qualities far exceed her shortcomings. My one great desire now is to see that her life is a happy one, as⁷² far as it lies within my power to do so. It is hard to know what is the best course to follow for her benefit. There is a lot in life in Chile which is unsuitable for a young girl, and yet, with conditions at home as they are one cannot think of breaking away and settling there. Possibly it is better not to try to

⁷² End of page 33.

make plans – after all, we made so many plans for Ian which were shot away that I think it better to take things as they come.

Ian's estate has now been settled and amounted to nearly £1900, more than we thought. He was so interested in Santo Domingo⁷³ and so keen about going there for a holiday after the war, that we have decided to put that money into a house there. It has now been started and we hope it will be ready by the end of the year. I shall always regard it as our personal memorial for Ian.

I am not the man I was. My work is not what it was and sometimes I feel afraid of the future. I suppose two wars and Ian's death have been too much for me, apart from other lesser troubles. When I analyse my situation, I feel that I have been a failure in life. What have I achieved? In the material sense, little or nothing – in the cultural and spiritual fields, nothing. I am often bad-tempered, petty and unreasonable. The best thing I ever did was to marry

⁷³ Santo Domingo ('Saint Dominic') is a small coastal city and commune in San Antonio province, Valparaiso region. The population was 7,418 in the 2002 national census.

Susan.⁷⁴ She has been such a help to me, bracing me up when I feel depressed and encouraging me to greater efforts. I hope that I shall be given the health and strength to go on working successfully for a few years more so that she and Margaret will enjoy freedom from want⁷⁵ in the future.

At the beginning of this year I had a week of glorious fishing in the River Tolten at Villarrica. As I went down that river my thoughts reverted constantly to the year 1936 when Ian and I fished the same stretches together. What a beautiful river that is! How peaceful! That was the sort of thing Ian loved and how he hated war. And when I think of what is happening in the world today, of the difficulties with Russia, of all the troubles, it makes me wonder if the sacrifice of so many magnificent young lives was to any purpose. When I think of the atomic bomb, I shudder! What is going to be the end of it all?

⁷⁴ End of page 34.

⁷⁵ Freedom from want was one of the Four Freedoms (including also freedom of speech, freedom of worship and freedom from fear) proposed in a speech by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt on 6 January 1941, eleven months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the war.

“They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old
Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn:
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.”⁷⁶

Yes, we will always remember Ian, with great pride even if our hearts are broken.

⁷⁶ From Robert Laurence Binyon’s poem ‘For the Fallen’ composed in 1914 in honour of the casualties of the British Expeditionary Force at the Battle of Mons and the first Battle of Marne. It was first published in *The Times* in September 1914, and these lines are read every year at Remembrance Sunday services.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Letters about Ian MacDonald

1) From Dr. Greenlees, Headmaster, Loretto School⁷⁷
to Mr. Young⁷⁸

LORETTO

MUSSELBURGH [Printed letterhead]

30th Sept. 1942

Dear Mr. Young

Your letter about Ian arrived this afternoon, and I am writing tonight to say how much I appreciate your sending the news to me.

As you say Ian is not a great correspondent even

⁷⁷ A memorial service was held at Loretto School Chapel “for those Members of the School who died in the Service of their King and Country 1939-1945” on 28th July, 1946. Dr. Greenlees, by then retired, read the names on the Roll of Honour.

(The Order of Service is contained in the Loretto Roll of Honour, see <http://lib.militaryarchive.co.uk/library/WWII/librarian/Loretto-Roll-of-Honour-1939-1945/HTML/index.asp#/1/> accessed 17 September 2016.)

⁷⁸ In the third letter below, “Mr. Young” is called Major Farquhar Young, and is described as his guardian.

when not overburdened with work as he must have been in the past few months. At the present moment his hands must be full of his duties as Chief Cadet, so that one could not in reason expect him to write.

The news of his success which you sent me is just the thing I wish to tell the School about. It is good for them to have something to live up to, which has been done by someone whom many of them remember.

Ian must have developed very rapidly. He came on enormously in his last term and must have made great strides since leaving. The details you sent me of his position seem very much to the point as they vary in different O.C.T.U.'s and now I can quote chapter & verse.

I am

Yrs. Sincerely

James R. C. Greenlees

2) From Dr. James Greenlees to Ian Lester
MacDonald

LORETTO

MUSSELBURGH

29th Sept. 1942.

My dear Ian

I have just received a letter from Mr. Young telling me of your success at the O.C.T.U.

Head Cadet is a bigger position than Head of the School, and is a really good effort on which I congratulate you most heartily.

Do let me know whether you get into the R.A.C.⁷⁹ I know that you have been recommended for it. I had Tony Rankin here only yesterday. He has got his R.A.C. Commission and is waiting to join his unit.

We have just started in on the October term and I am hard at it straightening out the work of the VI [Form] and trying to get the 1st [XV] Forwards to scrum properly.⁸⁰ We had a terribly good year, last year, with three Open Schols [scholarships to universities] and very good results in the H. Cert. & Sc. Cert. [Higher and School Certificate exams].

⁷⁹ The Royal Armoured Corps, created on 4 April 1939. Broadly this was a loose association of armoured (mainly tank) regiments.

⁸⁰ By an odd coincidence, my father Allan Dey Ruxton (1925-2017) was one of the forwards in the Loretto School 1st XV for 1942-43! He subsequently played for London Scottish, and once for Chile against an Irish touring team in Santiago on 9 August 1952.

Come and see us when you can. You will be such a swell that I don't suppose we shall know you; but will be glad to see you any time here.

Y[ou]rs

James R.C. Greenlees

P.S. You must at least send me your address when you are posted so that I can push on any news to you.

I quite realise that there has been no time to write – things have been far too hard going; but it won't always be like that, and I hope to hear of your doings some time. So far Loretto has been too lucky for words. We certainly do a great many things which you never did here but we really are very well off. The orchard as I look out of my window is as green as ever, the trees turning and yellow leaves beginning to fall but this place is as beautiful and simple as ever, and I hope you will find it so when you come back.

You will certainly find us glad to see you.

3. Undated Letter from Ian's Superior to his Guardian, Major Farquhar Young, on Black Watch headed notepaper

Major W.B. Johnstone

5th BN. [BATALLION] THE BLACK WATCH

(R. H. R.) [Royal Highland Regiment]

B. L. A. [British Liberation Army]

Dear Major Farquhar Young,

The C.O. [Commanding Officer] has asked me to reply to your letter regarding Iain's [sic.]⁸¹ death. I knew Iain had a guardian and had made enquiries, without avail, as to your address. Both the C.O. and I have written to his people in Chile telling them about his death, but we did desire contact with some one nearer home.

I only took over this company a few days before Iain died but in those few days I learned what a grand officer and leader he was. I was truly sorry to lose him, as you know, it is always the best officers who go.

He was commanding 18 platoon which was at one time commanded by his friend John Hardy who is now a prisoner. I had in fact just written Irene[?], John's wife, to say how glad I was to have Iain as one

⁸¹ "Iain" is the normal Scottish spelling of Ian (John), and is an understandable error, especially given that the writer had only just taken command over my uncle.

of my officers. I little knew that within twenty four hours he would be with us no longer.

We were attacking a position in the Siegfried line South of Goch [at Robbenhof] on the night of Sunday the 25th when he was killed. His platoon objective was a farm building and just as he reached it he and his leading section commander were killed. They had however by that time put the Boche into such a state of commotion that the rest of us managed to take the place without much difficulty. The twenty odd prisoners taken showed little inclination to fight which was as well for the “farmhouse” turned out to be a carefully disguised concrete “Pill-box”.

When I reached Iain, about five minutes after he was hit, he was quite dead. He had been shot by a burst of “Spandau” fire from one of the loopholes and could have felt no pain.

His actions up till then had won high praise from everyone who saw him in the fighting in and around Goch. His previous Company Commander Major

Brodie⁸² who was wounded in one of these actions

⁸² Alexander Clare Cunningham Brodie, DSO, OBE, MC. Served briefly in the short-lived Middle East Commando before returning to his unit. 11 July 1944 (Captain, 5th Battalion The Black Watch) awarded the Military Cross in recognition of gallant and distinguished service whilst commanding 'A' Company at Colombelles, North West France. 20 February 1945 (Major, 5th Battalion The Black Watch) awarded the Distinguished Service Order for gallantry and leadership while commanding 'D' Company during operations South of Goch (Reichswald) to capture three strongly held positions on the enemy line of communications. Although wounded four times he continued to attack until his objective had been captured. 31 May 1956 (Lieutenant Colonel, Temporary Local Colonel) appointed O.B.E. (Military Division) whilst Military Attaché to the British Embassy in Seoul, a post he had held since 1953.

Sources: London Gazette, National Archives file WO373
as cited in

https://www.commandoveterans.org/AlexanderBrodie_ME_Commando accessed 1 March 2024.

said how well Iain had done in a letter to the C.O.

His men thought him a grand officer and many were the hard words and deeds poured on the Boche, when they found out that he was dead. I cannot hope to replace him, as officers of his calibre are few and far between in the sixth year of war.

He is buried with the other officer and the men who died with him in that action, in a quiet little orchard near to the scene of their gallant fight. The territory is firmly in our hands and his grave will be carefully tended until it is removed to an official War Cemetery in the area.⁸³

The Padre has, I think, written his people about the Burial Service and given them the location of his grave.

I hope that some day when this rotten business is over I will meet you or his people and be able to tell you personally how gallantly Iain died.

⁸³ He is buried in the Commonwealth war cemetery administered by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) in Rheinberg, Nordrheinwestfalen, Germany at plot 12.E.20. His service number was 249062. The inscription on the headstone reads “Remembered with Love and Pride”, chosen by his parents.

Yours sincerely
W.B. Johnstone

4. Letter from Capt. J. Vincent Ross of the Church of
Scotland to my grandfather

Capt. J.V. Ross,
B.L.A. [British Liberation Army]
Tel. Rutherglen 1322.

Church of Scotland

GREENHILL CHURCH [45 Jedburgh Avenue,
Rutherglen crossed out]

Minister: Revd. J. Vincent Ross, M.A., B.D.

5 March 1945.

Dear Mr. MacDonald,

You will by this time have received the sad news of your son's death and I would like to express my deepest sympathy with you in this irreparable loss. I had not known Ian very long for I was wounded in two or three places before he joined our battalion and I was only back a week when he was killed. But in the few pow-wows we had together I had come to value him a great deal. Ian was a little nervous on the Sunday of his death and I noticed it in our little chat

after the 'D' co[mpan]y service. The AA. [artillery] officer transferred to the infantry has always had my sympathy for it is a different life altogether.

Probably you will have heard that Ian was killed outside Goch with his C.S.M. [Company Sergeant Major Leslie Delves] and a L/Cpl [Lance Corporal Maurice Lett] while making a very gallant attack on a couple of spandaus. Unfortunately they were housed in a concrete pill-box which appeared to be a mere farm.

He was killed outright and we brought his body back at dawn when I prepared it for burial. On the same afternoon we buried him with ten comrades in Thomasof S/W of Goch in a field behind a farm. The service was according to the simple, dignified rite of the Church of Scotland. At the head of Ian's grave – no. 5 – we place[d] a little white cross with his name, rank, battalion and the date of his death – and his personal effects⁸⁴ I have handed over to the Q.M. [Quarter Master] for onward transmission to you through Army channels.

⁸⁴ Among Uncle Ian's personal effects was his wristwatch, which my grandfather wore thereafter (see main account).

We deeply regret Ian's unfortunate passing but I feel sure you will be proud of a son who gave his life in the ranks of the men of our British infantry – every one of whom is worth many decorations.

We shall see him anon. I pray the consolation of the great Father for you.

If I can help please do not hesitate to write. I send this to you because I presume from Ian's words that Mrs. MacDonald has left for home.

Yours very sincerely

J. Vincent Ross

C.F. C/S.

APPENDIX II: King George VI's Speech broadcast on VE Day (May 8, 1945)

“Today we give thanks to Almighty God for a great deliverance. Speaking from our Empire's oldest capital city, war-battered but never for one moment daunted or dismayed - speaking from London, I ask you to join with me in that act of thanksgiving.

Germany, the enemy who drove all Europe into war, has been finally overcome. In the Far East we have yet to deal with the Japanese, a determined and cruel foe. To this we shall turn with the utmost resolve and with all our resources. But at this hour, when the dreadful shadow of war has passed far from our hearths and homes in these islands, we may at last make one pause for thanksgiving and then turn our thoughts to the tasks all over the world which peace in Europe brings with it.

Let us remember those who will not come back: their constancy and courage in battle, their sacrifice and endurance in the face of a merciless enemy; let us

remember the men in all the services, and the women in all the services, who have laid down their lives. We have come to the end of our tribulation and they are not with us at the moment of our rejoicing.

Then let us salute in proud gratitude the great host of the living who have brought us to victory. I cannot praise them to the measure of each one's service, for in a total war, the efforts of all rise to the same noble height, and all are devoted to the common purpose.

Armed or unarmed, men and women, you have fought and striven and endured to your utmost. No-one knows that better than I do, and as your King, I thank with a full heart those who bore arms so valiantly on land and sea, or in the air, and all civilians who, shouldering their many burdens, have carried them unflinchingly without complaint.

With those memories in our minds, let us think what it was that has upheld us through nearly six years of suffering and peril. The knowledge that everything was at stake: our freedom, our independence, our very

existence as a people; but the knowledge also that in defending ourselves we were defending the liberties of the whole world; that our cause was the cause not of this nation only, not of this Empire and Commonwealth only, but of every land where freedom is cherished and law and liberty go hand in hand.

In the darkest hours we knew that the enslaved and isolated peoples of Europe looked to us, their hopes were our hopes, their confidence confirmed our faith. We knew that, if we failed, the last remaining barrier against a worldwide tyranny would have fallen in ruins.

But we did not fail. We kept faith with ourselves and with one another, we kept faith and unity with our great allies. That faith, that unity have carried us to victory through dangers which at times seemed overwhelming.

So let us resolve to bring to the tasks which lie ahead the same high confidence in our mission. Much hard

work awaits us both in the restoration of our own country after the ravages of war, and in helping to restore peace and sanity to a shattered world.

This comes upon us at a time when we have all given of our best. For five long years and more, heart and brain, nerve and muscle, have been directed upon the overthrow of Nazi tyranny. Now we turn, fortified by success, to deal with our last remaining foe. The Queen and I know the ordeals which you have endured throughout the Commonwealth and Empire. We are proud to have shared some of these ordeals with you and we know also that we together shall all face the future with stern resolve and prove that our reserves of will-power and vitality are inexhaustible.

There is great comfort in the thought that the years of darkness and danger in which the children of our country have grown up are over and, please God, forever. We shall have failed and the blood of our dearest will have flowed in vain if the victory which they died to win does not lead to a lasting peace, founded on justice and good will.

To that, then, let us turn our thoughts on this day of just triumph and proud sorrow, and then take up our work again, resolved as a people to do nothing unworthy of those who died for us, and to make the world such a world as they would have desired for their children and for ours.

This is the task to which now honour binds us. In the hour of danger we humbly committed our cause into the hand of God and he has been our strength and shield. Let us thank him for his mercies and in this hour of victory commit ourselves and our new task to the guidance of that same strong hand.”

APPENDIX III: Entry in Loretto School Roll of Honour, 1939-1945, pp. 29-30.

LIEUTENANT IAN LESTER MACDONALD, 5th Battalion, The Black Watch, was born on the 6th April 1923, and at Loretto from September 1936 to July 1941. He was a House Prefect, in the VI Form, Hockey and Swimming teams, and a Sergeant in the J.T.C. After joining the Royal Artillery in 1941, he passed out first cadet at his O.C.T.U., and was commissioned in October 1942. From June to August 1944 he took part in the invasion of France, and, on the breakup of his unit shortly afterwards, returned to this country for infantry training and was transferred to the Black Watch. In February 1945 he went again to the Continent as a Lieutenant in the 5th Battalion of the Black Watch, which formed part of the 51st Division. He was killed in action on the night of the 25th of the same month, while leading his men in an attack on a strong point of the Siegfried Line, at Goch in Germany.

“Though he had been with the Battalion only a very short time, he had made friends at once with everyone, and had also shown himself a first-class officer and leader in battle.”

“I was truly sorry to lose him. As you know, it is always the best officers who go.”

See also John McGregor, *The Spirit of Angus* (Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 1988) in which Lt. Ian MacDonald is mentioned by name.

APPENDIX IV: Entry in Black Watch Roll of Honour

Fifth Battalion Black Watch - Roll of Honour 1942-45 - Extract

Killed in action on 25 February 1945.

Place: Thomashof/Robbenhof near Goch

Rank	1st name	Surname	Service Number	Date
CSM	Leslie	DELVES	2930998	25/02/1945
L/CPL	Maurice	LETT	14426088	25/02/1945
LT	Ian	MACDONALD	249062	25/02/1945
PTE	Bernard	MCGOWAN	1568710	25/02/1945
PTE	William	MCINNES	2983222	25/02/1945
L/SGT	Thomas	MCNIVEN	2757977	25/02/1945
PTE	Walter	REYNOLDS	5834766	25/02/1945
PTE	Kenneth	ROBERTS	14440647	25/02/1945
LT	Richard	STEWART	CAN/656	25/02/1945
PTE	Alfred	VERNON	14703002	25/02/1945
PTE	Alexander	WARDLAW	14768911	25/02/1945

Source: <http://www.blackwatch.50megs.com/5thbtn.html>
accessed 13 March 2017

APPENDIX V

A Brief Biography of Alexander MacDonald C.B.E. (1894-1954)⁸⁵

Alexander MacDonald was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1894 and educated at Hutchesons' Boys' Grammar School in Glasgow. He served in the 6th Battalion The Seaforth Highlanders during the First World War and was invalided out, having been wounded and fallen victim to poisoned gas which led to chronic asthma. The treatment in those days was to seek a dry climate in which to live.

From 1919 onwards he worked on the west coast of South America, firstly in Lima, Peru for eight years and subsequently in Santiago, Chile where the climate was much kinder to his health. He led an active business life as Senior Partner of the then firm of Deloitte Plender Griffiths & Co for many years and then as Managing Director of Odeon, a subsidiary company of Electrical & Musical Industries (E.M.I.)

⁸⁵ The author of this tribute is unknown.

in Santiago, a job he much enjoyed because of his great love of music. He was a much respected member of the British community and served it in many capacities, not least as Chairman of the War Effort for which he received a C.B.E. in 1943. Two years later his son was killed in action in Germany, the son who had been his fishing companion as a small boy in the 1930s.

Chile had much to offer a man of his talents in the 1930s and 40s and he was able to use his mathematical skills and practical experience as a golfer to design golf courses, a hobby which interested him almost as much as fishing. The first course was at Pucon, followed by the Los Leones course in Santiago in collaboration with Agustin Edwards,⁸⁶ the author of the foreword of [the unpublished manuscript] “Trout in Chilean Rivers”.

⁸⁶ The Edwards family of Chile is of Welsh origin. They became financially and politically influential in the 19th century, and still own its most influential newspaper chain, El Mercurio, S.A.P. Probably Agustin Edwards Budge (1899-1957) is mentioned here.

He expended a great deal of time and effort on the course at Santo Domingo, designing it and supervising the planting. The course opened in 1946 and is now a beautiful and renowned championship course, a great legacy indeed for which many Chilean golfers are grateful. Not surprisingly, in 1947 he was appointed President of the Asociación de Golf de Chile. The last course he designed was Los Inkas in Lima which opened in 1949, though there were others on the drawing board at the time of his premature death in 1954 at the age of 59.

It was in Chile, a fisherman's paradise, that he was able to enjoy to the full the great sport of fly fishing in some of the most beautiful and unspoilt countryside in the world. He was persuaded by friends to write an account of his experiences in this field when he had a few months of enforced idleness in 1938 owing to illness. He had an enviable knowledge of many of the best fishing rivers and applied painstaking attention to detail to the excellent maps of the areas he knew.

"Trout in Chilean Rivers" was written in a more

peaceful age before the advent of intensive commercial air travel, sophisticated hotels, mobile phones and all our modern aids. Even colour photography was in its infancy. It was intended as a guide to fly fishermen visiting Chile and the author's wish to share his enthusiasm for the sport with others is obvious. He revised the book in 1952 and his widow returned to England bringing the manuscript and accompanying photographs and maps to hand on to their daughter and family.

Alexander MacDonald had an abiding love for his native Scotland and for his adopted country, Chile, and its people, among whom he had many friends. They regarded him as the epitome of a gentleman, which he was. Moreover, he was a gentle man with a delightful sense of humour and a great record of public service. He and his contemporaries did much to foster Anglo-Chilean relations in their day.