

Robert John Anderson, Seaman 3717C, R.N.R., HMS Dundee. Son of Mrs Janet Anderson, 86 Commercial Street, Lerwick. Killed in action in the North Sea on March 16th, 1917, aged 35.

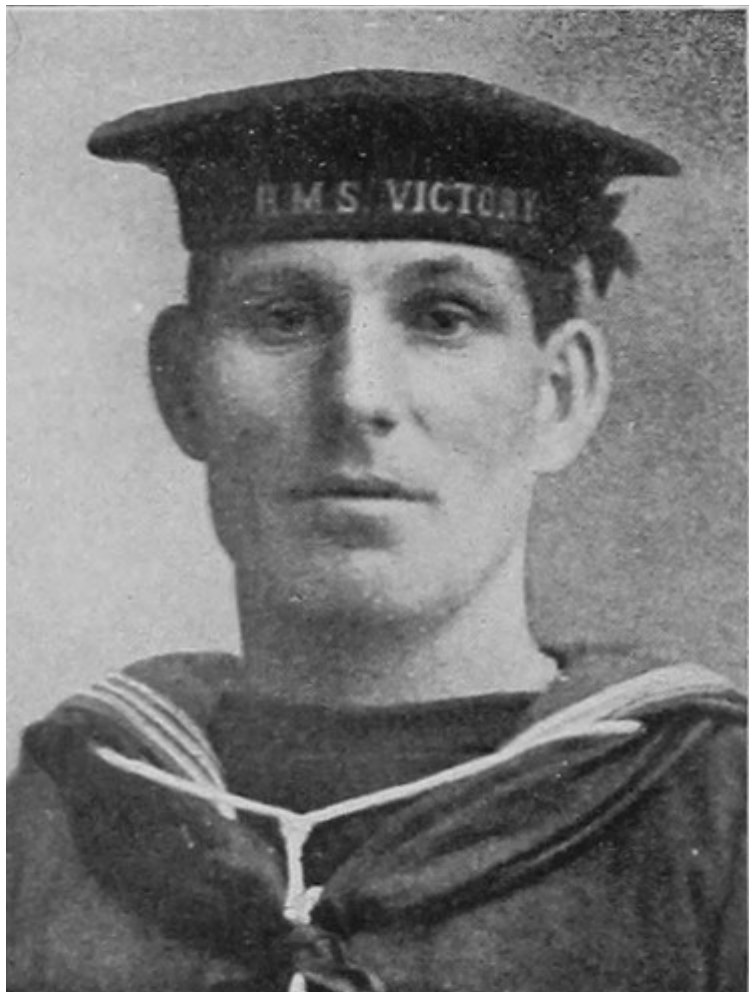
Awarded the 1915 Star; British War Medal and Victory Medal

Part of a boarding party lost while trying to take the German raider *SMS Leopard* near the Faeroes (64° 53' 696N 0° 18' 950 E)

Four Shetland men all bearing the surname Anderson were among the 6 men lost.

His parents were Samuel Anderson and Janet Laurensen Robertson, both from Dourie, North Nesting.

He had an older brother **Magnus Anderson**, who served in WWI as a Master Mariner.



Robert John Anderson

SS Dundee

SS Dundee was a steam passenger and cargo ship of the British Merchant Navy. She served during the First World War and was lost in September 1917.

Early career:

Dundee was built by Caledon shipbuilders at their Dundee yards and was launched on 24 August 1911. She was completed in November 1911 and entered service with the Dundee, Perth & London Shipping Company and sailed for them until the outbreak of World War I in 1914, when she was requisitioned for use as an armed boarding steamer; as such, she was not a fully commissioned warship of the Royal Navy and did not carry the "HMS" prefix.

SMS Leopard (1912)

SMS Leopard was an auxiliary cruiser of the Imperial German Navy intended for use as a commerce raider. She was intercepted attempting to break out into the Atlantic and was sunk with all hands in a fierce gun battle with British warships in March 1917.

Early career:

Leopard was built as the British freighter *Yarrowdale* by W Dobson & Co Newcastle in 1912. She was operated by R MacKill & Co of Glasgow.

On 11 December 1916 *Yarrowdale* was captured by the German commerce raider *Möwe* in the Atlantic. *Möwe's* captain, KK Graf zu Dohna-Schlodien was impressed by *Yarrowdale's* potential as a raider, and on 12 December dispatched her back to Germany with a prize crew, after loading her with the 400 prisoners he held on *Möwe*. After successfully running the British blockade *Yarrowdale* reached Germany and was taken in hand for conversion as an auxiliary cruiser.

The conversion work was carried out at Kaiserliche Werft shipyard at Kiel. The ship was fitted with five 150mm and four 88mm guns and two torpedo tubes. On 9 January 1917 she was commissioned as the auxiliary cruiser *Leopard*, under the command of KK Hans v. Laffert.

Service histories and conflict:

In March 1917 the disguised Imperial German Navy auxiliary cruiser *SMS Leopard* set out on her first and only raiding voyage. For this she was disguised as the Norwegian freighter *Rena*, an unlucky choice as this was the same disguise adopted by the raider *Greif* on her unsuccessful attempt to break out the previous year.

On 7 March 1917 the *Leopard* passed through the Little Belt, and by 16 March she was in the Norwegian Sea midway between Norway and Scotland, north of Shetland. There she was intercepted and stopped by the Armed Boarding Vessel *Dundee* and the Royal Navy armoured cruiser *HMS Achilles* which was on patrol. The *Leopard* heaved to when commanded and the *Dundee* sent out a boat and boarding party to inspect the *Leopard* as she was suspicious of the German freighter. The *Dundee* manoeuvred throughout the confrontation to stay astern of the vessel and out of gunshot, while the *Leopard* tried to prevent the *Dundee* from boarding her and surreptitiously tried to turn broadside on her, to bring the concealed guns into action, thus forcing the *Dundee* to move away.

When she could no longer maintain the subterfuge, *Leopard* attempted to fight, firing two torpedoes at the *Dundee* which missed. The *Dundee* retaliated, opening fire and raking the *Leopard's* stern, backed up by the *Achilles*, badly damaging the German ship. Then the *Achilles* opened fire herself and after a fierce exchange of fire, *Leopard* sank an hour later with all hands. There were no survivors.

On 2 September 1917, the German submarine *UC-49* torpedoed and damaged *Dundee* in the Atlantic Ocean south-west of the Isles of Scilly (48°50'N 9°20'W / 48.833°N 9.333°W) with the loss of nine members of *Dundee's* crew. *Dundee* sank the next day.

Aftermath and significance:

Leopard was the last attempt by the Germans to mount a commerce raiding expedition. After this failure they relied solely on the U-boat campaign, in which they had re-commenced unrestricted submarine warfare. Ironically, whilst *Leopard* was fighting her battle, her captor, *Möwe*, was returning to port, slipping through the British blockade.

A short time after the action a bottle was retrieved containing a message from the *Leopard's* crew, and thrown overboard during the battle. It bore the time and place and read "In action with British cruiser. Fighting for the glory and honour of Germany. A last greeting to our relatives."