

Dr Alfred Jasper Anderson
MA., MB (Oxon), MRCS., DPH (Cantab), FRS (S.Afr)
(1858-1924)
Medical Officer of Health for Cape Town, 1901-1923.



Alfred Jasper Anderson (AJA) was born in Manchester in 1858ⁱ. Educated at Manchester Grammar School, he entered Magdalen College, Oxford, where he gained the M.A. degreeⁱⁱ. He studied medicine at Oxford and at St. Bartholomew's and obtained the M.R.C.S. in 1882, graduating M.B. (Oxon.) in the following year. He took the Cambridge D.P.H. in 1888.

He was a Radcliffe Traveling Fellow of his University and spent much time in Leipzig and Vienna. He was a general practitioner for some time in Salford, but then decided to devote himself entirely to public health work. He held several appointments in England, the last being the important one of Medical Officer of Health to Blackpoolⁱⁱⁱ.

In 1901, selected from amongst a large number of applicants, AJA was appointed to the post of first full-time Medical Officer of Health (M.O.H.) in Cape Town. During the next two decades, he worked tirelessly in

putting the Health Department in Cape Town on a sound foundation.

He began work on 1st October 1901 and found himself faced *inter alia* with the smallpox, tuberculosis and bubonic plague epidemics, and a maternal and infant mortality rate of staggering proportions. An extremely competent and far-sighted man, he tackled the problems piecemeal and head on.

Facilities for the isolation and treatment of smallpox cases had been provided at Rentzkie's Farm (later known as the Brooklyn Chest Hospital) since 1882. However, the provision of beds was to remain inadequate for many years.

The Annual Report for 1900 referred to the existence of bubonic plague in the city. This was attributed to the influx of Black Africans to the city and the ever deteriorating slum conditions in the "city bowl" (District Six and the Bo-Kaap Malay Quarter). The first step decided upon was to remove all Blacks from the city precincts and to house them in a location at "Uitvlugt" farm (the site being the present day N'Dabeni Industrial Township).

In 1899, the first buildings of the City Hospital for Infectious Diseases ("City Hospital") were erected adjacent to the New Somerset Hospital, Greenpoint. The project was delayed, first by disputes between the city and the Colonial Government around the matter of paying for the erection thereof followed by it being commandeered at the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War by the British military authorities for the duration of the war. In 1902, the site was handed back to the City Council and the hospital was opened for the admission of patients.

In 1903, following the advice of his predecessor, Dr Barnard Fuller, he made tuberculosis a notifiable disease. This was years ahead of northern hemisphere healthcare norms. Sadly, of necessity, the practice remains in force to this day.

In 1906, he requested of the City Council that additional beds be provided for infectious diseases and in 1910, through his efforts, the first tuberculosis health visitor was appointed.



Administration Block, City Hospital for Infectious Diseases, Portsworld Road, Green Point, Cape Town

The first voluntary efforts to combat tuberculosis in South Africa originated in Cape Town in 1904 under the chairmanship of the then Prime Minister, Dr. Leander Starr Jameson. However, despite patronage by many of the luminaries of the day, progress was slow. It took AJA until 1909 to induce the city fathers to allow him to open a diagnostic-treatment clinic at the City Hospital. A steadily expanding service positively influenced the local control of tuberculosis leading to a declining death rate from the disease within the metropolitan boundaries. The Society for the Prevention of Consumption was established in 1911 under the Chairmanship of AJA. This and the Jameson Committee are considered by some to represent the beginning of the South African National Tuberculosis Association (SANTA).

It had long been held that Karroo air had healing qualities for patients suffering from lung complaints. In 1911, John Garlick, a prominent entrepreneur and philanthropist, joined the Society for the Prevention of Consumption. Appalled at the profound morbidity and mortality of tuberculosis amongst the citizens of Cape Town, he determined to positively influence the management of what he saw as a catastrophic public health threat. In 1918, he donated £25,000 to Dr Anderson's cause on condition that

the Cape Municipal Association donated a similar amount and that the funds be used to establish an institution for consumptive patients.

Prominent citizens such as Josiah Robert Finch O.B.E. (town clerk of Cape Town), Sir Frederick de Waal (the Administrator of the Cape Colony), Sir Thomas Watt (Union Government Minister of Health,) Dr Mathew Hewat (Chairman of the Cape Hospital Board), Dr H Shawe (Union Government Secretary for the Interior), Bishop Welch and Bishop Lavis lent their patronage to the project. The Union Parliament voted £50,000; and various Cape municipalities and mining houses contributed as well. Finally, over £108,000 was raised for the first state-run tuberculosis hospital.

A suitable location was found by a delegation led by Dr. James Alexander Mitchell (First Secretary of Public Health and Chief Medical Officer of the Union) on a farm near the railway station of Nelspoort, north of Beaufort West. Here water was plentiful, the land was fertile with orchards and vegetable gardens already extant and lucerne production sufficient for grazing herds of sheep and cattle.

Dr Peter Allan of Birmingham, England, was appointed as the first resident medical superintendent, taking up his position on 15 January 1924. The Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII and Duke of Windsor) performed the official opening of the 460-bed Nelspoort Sanatorium on 24 July 1925^{iv}. Though AJA was not to live to see opening of the sanatorium, the critical role played by him and John Garlick in the conceptualization and creation of the facility is without question^v.

In 1899, Dr. Barnard Fuller^{vi}, then part-time MOH, had recommended the appointment of female sanitary inspectors with the view to minimizing the infantile mortality and to assist in control of epidemics, an ever-present problem at the time. Conceived by ever-energetic AJA, the Society for the Protection of Child Life was established in 1908. The persistently appalling mortality rate in mothers and babies in the city had prompted him to call a public meeting in the City Hall with the Mayor in the chair. In 1910, under the auspices of the Society, it was decided to establish an emergency home for children, The Lady Buxton Home^{vii}, and the first nurse-investigator was appointed.

When in September 1913, seven municipalities within the Cape Peninsula were unified under the City of Cape Town, AJA became responsible to the public health of the whole population ^{viii}.

As previously mentioned, the City of Cape Town Health Department resolved to tackle the slum problem ^{ix} first by relocating unassimilated Blacks into a location on "Uitvlugt" farm. In 1917 the first attempt was made to clear the central slum area by the establishment of a housing scheme in Maitland (later known as the Maitland Garden Village) established in a juxtaposition to the Pinelands Garden Village ^x.

The infectious diseases of childhood (measles, mumps, rubella, scarlet fever), tuberculosis and venereal disease remained (and remain) ubiquitous problems. Early in October, 1918, Cape Town was laid low by the global influenza pandemic. It was to last about five weeks. Out of a total population of 172,000 (90,000 whites, 82,000 non-whites), more than 4,000 (approximately 1,000 Whites and 3,000 non-Whites) died from the disease during this period. AJA led the initiative to check the spread of the contagion and his staff was assisted by volunteers from many quarters.

Dr Alfred Jasper Anderson was responsible for raising the status of the office of Medical Officer of Health. His consummate professionalism and care for his fellow man was beyond dispute. In 1905, symbolic of its improved status, the Health Department moved from the old Town House building in Greenmarket Square to the City Hall in Darling Street.

In 1919, AJA was appointed as the first part-time lecturer in public health to the then fledgling Medical School of the University of Cape Town. As from 1920, the Medical Officer of Health of Cape Town became *ex officio* the head of the University's department of public health ^{xi}. AJA was made part-time professor in September, 1920 but resigned in March 1923 ^{xii}. In his own right, he was responsible for introducing a chapter of the Royal Sanitary Institute ^{xiii} to South Africa, and for orchestrating the training of health inspectors within the Cape Town City Council Health Department.

Toward the end of 1922, he requested to retire "on the grounds of advancing years and failing health". Permission was granted by the City Council and the Honorable the Administrator of the Cape Province on 28 December 1922. He retired ^{xiv} on 31 March, 1923 to Sea Point ^{xv} on superannuation ^{xvi}. He died in "his hospital", the City Infectious Diseases Hospital, from complications of influenza on 2 October 1924 ^{xvii}. He was buried in Woltamade Cemetery on 3 October 1924 ^{xviii}, his family ^{xix} supported by a vast gathering of the citizens of Cape Town.

Few tokens in recognition of this fine man remain to this day. There is his grave and the memorial tablet at the City Hospital for Infectious Diseases unveiled on 1 September 1926 ^{xx} though the whereabouts of a plaque unveiled at Lady Buxton Home 9 June 1929 - his birth anniversary - is unknown ^{xxi}.

REFERENCES :

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6. In the Shadow of Table Mountain. Louw, J.H. A.A. Balkema. 1969.
7. Men of the Times: Old Colonists of the Cape Colony and Orange River Colony. The Transvaal Publishing Company. 1906
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11. South African Archives Repository, Roeland Street, Cape Town^{xxiii}.
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13. The Cape Times and Cape Argus^{xxiv}
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Saturday, 27 May, 2006

END NOTES:

ⁱ His Employment Record with the City of Cape Town provides the following dates:

Born 9 June 1858

Died 2 October 1924



The date in his employment record and on the gravestone differs. This may be significant.

I am informed of the following by a descendant:

Robert Anderson, a cabinet maker, had (at least) two sons

- I. Alfred Anderson b.1 January 1836
- II. A N Other
- III. Alfred Jasper Anderson b. 9 June 1858

These two sons were both doctors. In the 1881 Household Census of England and Wales the presence of a nephew "Harry Anderson" suggests a third brother. Given note (ii) below, one wonders if their father died circa 1872.

I am unable to find a record of an A Jasper Anderson born in Manchester in 1858.

His daughter, refers to her father as Joseph Anderson (Evening Standard, Blackpool 18 November 1954)

His reputed brother Alfred Anderson had a son called Alfred Theodore Anderson, who was head surgeon at the Bradford Hospital. His grandson was my correspondent.

The following entry referring to AJA's reputed nephew appears in the Birth Register for July-September, 1867 (see image):

Anderson, Alfred Manchester (vol) 8d (page) 180

— William. Prescott	3 a.	276
ANDERSON, Agnes. Royston	11 b.	197
— Agnes. Machynlleth	3 b.	576
— Agnes Rosa. Wisbeach	9 c.	286
— Albert. Ecclesall B.	2 a.	367
— Albert Robert. W. Ham.....	4 a.	31
— Alexander. Marylebone	1 a.	530
— Alfred. S. Shields	10 a.	617
— Alfred. Manchester.....	8 d.	180
— Alice. Pontefract	9 c.	83
— Alice. Bradford Yk	9 b.	54

Birth Register Index for July-September, 1867

A scrutiny of the 1881 Household Census of England and Wales as presented by the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints discloses the following:

Name	Relation	Marital Status	Gender	Age	Birthplace	Occupation
Alfred ANDERSON	Head	M	Male	46	Manchester, Lancashire, England	Physician & Surgeon
Eliza ANDERSON	Wife	M	Female	40	Ireland	Physician & Surgeon's Wife
Alfred T. ANDERSON	Son		Male	12	Manchester, Lancashire, England	Scholar
Bertha ANDERSON	Daughter		Female	10	Manchester	Scholar
Lillian A. ANDERSON	Daughter		Female	6	Blackpool, Lancashire, England	Scholar
Edward ANDERSON	Son		Male	4	Blackpool, Lancashire, England	Scholar
Harry ANDERSON	Nephew	U	Male	18	Cheadle, Cheshire, England	Apprentice Medical Assistant
Sophia COOKE	Niece	U	Female	22	Glasgow	
Mary PRITCHARD	Servant	U	Female	28	Wellington, Shropshire, England	Domestic Servant

At this time, the Anderson Family were living at 5 Crystal Terrace, Layton With Warbreck, Lancashire

I am unable to find a Death Notice for AJA in the Cape Archives Repository. Periodically, in the case of eminent people, the issuing of a Death Notice was overlooked.

The queries regarding the origin of AJA should be resolved in the Public Records Office, Kew.

His wife was Mrs. Sophia Rose Anderson née COOKE, born Glasgow, Scotland circa 1859. She died very frail, aged 88 years, in Coghill's Hotel, Wynberg on 8 April 1947. A good deal of confusion surrounded settling her meager estate. [MOOC 6/9/13835.1646/47](#). Her daughter was her executrix. The estate was left in its entirety to her son in India. Sadly, there is no indication of his address in the estate files, and only oblique references to him.

It should be noted that in the 1881 Census of England and Wales (above), she is listed as being a niece of Alfred Anderson, AJA's reputed eldest brother.

ii AJA was fond of reflecting "without appearing bombastic" that he had managed to support himself from the age of 14 years and had had the best medical education gained entirely through his own efforts. Indeed, he carried out his academic career entirely by bursaries which he won in open competition, and first qualified at Oxford too young for his degree to be conferred. Whilst there, he obtained a

First Class at the Natural Science School; and was a double Queen's Gold Medalist in Chemistry in the Science and Arts Department. [Retirement Speech 28 March 1923; Tribute when Unveiling Memorial Plaque, City Hospital]

iii He was in the Borough of Blackpool for 10 years, responsible for the infectious diseases hospital, the superintendence of the slaughterhouses and other institutions connected with public health. Here, he regularly undertook the chemical analysis and bacteriological culture of foodstuffs and water in the laboratories of the corporation, and published his opinions thereon [see Bulletin of the History of Medicine. 2003; 77 (3): 636-661. The Johns Hopkins University Press].

iv Nelspoort to-day (May 2006) is a deeply impoverished, drought-ridden *dorp*, set in an environment showing little sign of the once beautiful fertile valley described when first Nelspoort Farm Sanatorium was established. Of the 82 patients admitted for care currently, only 6% are tuberculotic, the remainder being of a chronic psychiatric nature.

v There is no tribute at Nelspoort Sanatorium to Dr. Alfred Jasper Anderson. The entrance foyer to Ward 1 (currently the Hospital Administration Block) houses an impressive bronze memorial raised to John Garlick, and a replica of the gold key used by the Prince of Wales when opening the establishment. The original was given to the Prince Edward. The ward corridor carries photographs of various medical luminaries associated with the facility over the years. Another ward (currently housing offices of the local municipality) is named after John Garlick Ward. But, of AJA there is no sign nor was there any knowledge.

vi The administrative block which houses the Deanery of the Faculty of Health Sciences (formerly the Faculty of Medicine), University of Cape Town, is named after Dr Barnard Fuller.

vii Historical documents relating to the Lady Buxton Home, Claremont are housed at the University of Cape Town.

viii The municipalities stretched from Camps Bay to Kalk Bay, creating an administrative region four times the extent previously managed and doubling the number of

citizens in the care of the Health Department of the corporation.

^{ix} Curiously, in her publication "Creating Racial Privilege: The Origins of South African Public Health and Town Planning Legislation", Susan Parnell attributes this act, together with many similar in South Africa at that time, as being part of a planned strategy created by Dr Charles Porter, the first full-time Medical Officer of Health for Johannesburg and "segregationist", calling it "a metaphor which colonialists first invoked to justify the establishment of segregated locations that facilitated the control of urbanized African workers" for *inter alia* urban slums "demanded urban reform if racial unity was to be achieved".

^x See www.pelteret.co.za / bric-a-brac/ "The Garden City of Pinelands, The First Garden Village in South Africa"

^{xi} As has been the case with many people over the years, AJA was constantly amazed at the ignorance of medical students in fields outside of their own focus of study. Their ignorance of Greek is said particularly to have irked him.

^{xii} Until recent times, the Medical Officer of Health for Cape Town continued to be extended a courtesy title of Professor of Public Health at the University of Cape Town. The chair is currently a full-time appointment with a title of Professor of Public Health and Family Medicine.

^{xiii} Royal Society for the Promotion of Health, known as Royal Society of Health, previously Royal Sanitary Institute (1904-55) and Sanitary Institute (1876-1904).

^{xiv} A Farewell Evening "at a smoking concert in the Banqueting Hall of the City Hall' was held on 28 March, 1923. Here, a Certificate of Service crafted by the Town Clerk, R J Finch OBE and refined by Councillor Dr A Abdurahman was presented to him. His wife received a solid silver cheese dish; he a gold mounted walking stick and inkstand in the form of an oxidized silver model motor-car.

A Testimonial under the Common Seal of the City "recording his long and faithful service" was presented to him by the Mayor, R J Verster, in Council on 14 May 1923. The outpouring of affection for the man was quite discernible

to the author when reading the council documentation and newspaper articles.

^{xv} Up until that time, he had lived at "The Residency", Portswood Road, Greenpoint - currently the Cape Medical Museum . He moved to "Terenure", Queens Road, Sea Point.



"The Residency", Portswood Road, Green Point

^{xvi} He was awarded an allowance of £507/10/0 per annum

^{xvii} See endnote (i) above

^{xviii} Grave of the Andersons, Gate 1, Woltemade Cemetery, Voortrekker Rd. Cape Town Episcopal. Plot chosen by the then Anglican Archbishop Gauls of Cape Town. Old No. 622B. New No. 15563. The plot lies in close proximity to those of some of the South African greats of his day: Goold-Adams, John X Merriman and the severely desecrated tomb of his patron John Garlick amongst many others.

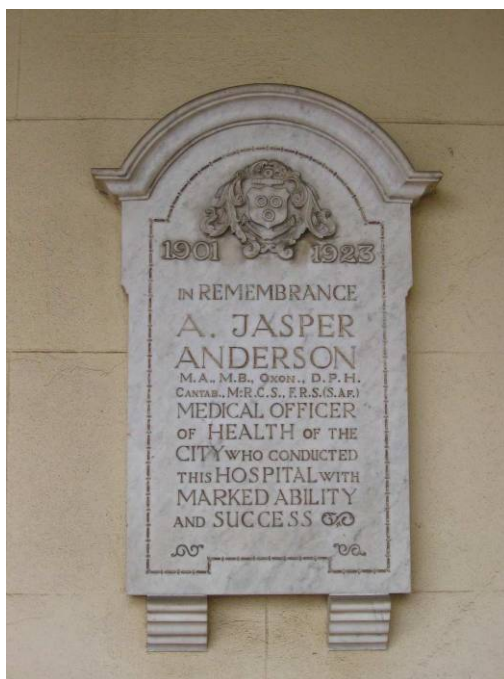
^{xix} The A J Anderson couple had two children:

- Mrs. Wilhelmina de Villiers ^{xix}, daughter. Born 26 January 1884 d. 17 July 1974 [MOOC 6/9/.....] She was the wife of Stanley Yorke DE VILLIERS, an attorney-at-law, and founder of VANDER BIJL & DE VILLIERS. Judicial separation followed in 1924. He died 17 September 1958 [MOOC 6/9/24587]. His

substantial estate was settled finally 24 November 1962, three of the four offspring meeting to sign the papers in Nairobi, Kenya. I suspect that only one (Andrews) was resident in Nairobi. They had the following off-spring:

- o Dorothea Sophia Jasper HERRON d. 3 January 1981
m. Clifford Milburn HERRON d. 27 August 1962
 - o Marguerite Gardiol DALE m/div 1969 Eric Johnstone
Hay DALE
 - o H el ene Eugenie CRAWFORD m. Samuel Neville
Alexander CRAWFORD d. 29 September 1989
 - o Elisabeth Taillefer ANDREWS m. Douglas Alfred
ALEXANDER
- Maj. Frederick Jasper Anderson MC., RIMS, son,
resident in India (not listed in "Commissioned
Officers of the Medical Services of the British Army
1660-1960. Vol. II. Sir Robert Drew. Publ. The
Wellcome Historical Library, London. 1968").

^{xx} A subcommittee of the City Council (members: Councillors Rev. A.J.S. Lewis, C.G. Sydow, Miriam S Walsh) was voted power to spend up to £60 on 27 April 1926. J. Preswich, Monumental Mason & Engraver of Maitland, supplied and fixed a fine marble tablet for £25. The unveiling of the memorial on the Administration Block of the City Infectious Diseases Hospital was performed by Mayor Councillor W.F. Fish in the presence of many eminent citizens and staff.



Memorial Tablet to A Jasper Anderson, City Hospital for Infectious Diseases

The tablet reads: "In remembrance A. Jasper Anderson MA., MB (Oxon)., D.P.H (Cantab)., M.R.C.S, F.R.S (S. Afr.), Medical Officer of Health of the City of Cape Town who conducted this hospital with marked ability and success".

xxi Unveiling of a tablet at the Lady Buxton Home, recording AJA's service to children and his establishment of the Society for the Protection of Child Life, was performed by the Dean of Cape Town in the present of the Mayor Councillor A B Reid. Lady Buxton Home exists to this day as the Lady Buxton Educare Centre and Lady Buxton Mother & Child Clinic.

xxii A copy of this document is in the possession of the author.

xxiii Depot KAB, Source 3/Ct: Volume No 4/1/4/239 Ref. E138/4; Volume No 4/1/4/346 Ref. G205/4; Volume No 4/1/4/349 Ref. G255/4; Volume No 4/1/5/456 Ref. E273/5

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- 2/ Cape Times. 29 March 1923. "First Medical Officer of Cape Town. Farewell Tributes to DR. Jasper Anderson. Presentation of Gifts".
- 3/ Cape Times. 3 October 1924. "The Little Doctor. Dr. Jasper Anderson's Death. First Medical Officer of Health of Cape Town".
- 4/ Cape Argus. 3 October 1924 "Death of Former City M.O.H. Dr Jasper Anderson's Career. His Fight against Epidemics".
- 5/ Cape Argus. 6 October 1924. "Former City Medical Officer of Health. Funeral of Dr. Jasper Anderson. Bishop Gaul's Eloquent Tribute".
- 6/ Cape Times. 10 June 1929. "In Memory of the Late Dr. Jasper Anderson. Unveiling of Tablet at the Lady Buxton Home".