William was born at Pow, Sandwick on 24th March 1880, the first son and third child of farm servant Andrew Linklater and Barbara Linklater (née Copland). The family moved to Eday, where William had much of his schooling. He returned to the Orkney Mainland to take up work as a farm servant, at Gutterpool Farm in Holm. William was working as the horse man on James Corrigall’s farm at Northbigging in Harray when the 1911 Census was taken. On 20th November 1913 William married Jamesina Harvey at her parent’s farm, Banks Greeny in Birsay. The new couple set up home at Millquoy in Firth.

When William was called up under the Military Service Act in the summer of 1916, he travelled to Fort George to join the Seaforth Highlanders. After a few months training at Cromarty, William was one of a group of Orcadians in a large draft which made the long journey to the Persian Gulf.

1st Battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders had taken crippling losses during early 1916 in desperate attempts to break through strong Turkish defences on the River Tigris and lift the siege of the British/Indian force besieged in the town of Kut. When it surrendered at the end of April, 1st Seaforths slowly rebuilt their strength with drafts from Scotland while active campaigning was suspended by both sides during the brutally hot summer weather.

When William joined 1st Seaforths at the end of 1916, preparations were in hand to renew the offensive and re-take the town of Kut. The Turks had proved to be determined and hardy fighters, so William and his Orcadian friends knew they faced difficult fighting. 1st Seaforths was the British battalion grouped with three Indian battalions in 19th Indian Brigade of 7th (Meerut) Indian Division.

The role of 7th Indian Division in the offensive launched by General Maude in February 1917 was to pin down Turkish forces in the defence lines at Sannaiyat on the north bank of the Tigris, while the main force crossed the Tigris well upstream to outflank the Kut defences. Spoiling attacks by the other two brigades of 7th Division on the Sannaiyat trenches on 7th January and 16th February made no significant impression for heavy losses sustained.

19th Brigade was scheduled to deliver another attack at Sannaiyat at dawn on 22nd February. Delays in deploying the flank attack units forced postponement at Sannaiyat for four hours, during which the Seaforths and 92nd Punjabis waited nervously in their front trenches while artillery fire continued. When the attack went in at 10am, the few Turks still holding their first trench line were quickly overcome. The attack pressed on through smoke and haze to reach the second Turkish trench line, found almost deserted.

The Seaforths and Punjabis were consolidating the captured trenches when in early afternoon the Turks counter-attacked strongly from their third trench line. The Punjabis were driven out of the captured trenches, but while the Seaforths held firm the Punjabis were rallied to return and retake their lodgement. The diversionary attack served its purpose in distracting the Turks from the main attack and pulling in some reserves, but at heavy cost to the Seaforths and to Orkney. The British/Indian offensive pressed on to retake Kut and then to capture Baghdad less than three weeks later.

William Dass of South Ronaldsay and Peter Fotheringham of Sanday were killed in action with 1st Seaforths on 22nd February. William Linklater was seriously wounded, also James Holland of St Andrews. They both endured the journey to the hospital complex at Amara. James died there of his wounds on 9th March and William a day later on the 10th. They were buried in Amara War Cemetery, which has continued to be maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission during the difficult years of the Second World War and the fighting during the early 21st Century. In Orkney William Linklater is commemorated on both the Sandwick and Firth War Memorials.