

THE BLEASDALE FALLEN OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

**SECOND LIEUTENANT
HERMAN FLETCHER**

1891 - 1916

**7TH BATTALION LOYAL NORTH LANCASHIRE REGIMENT
FORMERLY 4828 PRIVATE HERMAN FLETCHER,
20TH BATTALION ROYAL FUSILIERS (PUBLIC SCHOOLS BATTALION)**



KILLED IN ACTION 13TH NOVEMBER 1916



REMEMBERED WITH HONOUR

SECOND LIEUTENANT HERMAN FLETCHER 1891 - 1916 **7th Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment**

**Formerly 4828 Private Herman Fletcher, 20th
Battalion Royal Fusiliers (Public Schools
Battalion)**

Herman Fletcher, the grandson of a successful paper mill owner in the Bolton area, moved from Eccles, Manchester to Bleasdale in order to work at Messrs. Jacksons' paper-making business at Oakenclough sometime after 1911. He enlisted in September 1914 and after fighting in France as a Private in the Royal Fusiliers, he trained as an officer. Shortly after his return to France as a Second Lieutenant, he was killed on 13th November 1916. He was 25 years old.

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND UPBRINGING

Herman Fletcher was born in Eccles, Manchester in 1891, the son of Richard and Mary Fletcher of 10 The Polygon, Eccles. His father was a corn-miller who had married Mary Fletcher of Kearsley, Bolton, who may have been a relative. Mary's father was James Fletcher, senior partner of Stoneclough Paper Mill, Kearsley, Bolton, a successful paper-making business, and prominent in local government.

The Polygon, Eccles



Herman had an older sister Mary and a younger one, Kathleen. The family were relatively well-to-do. Richard had his own corn milling business, and Mary may have had her own income from the paper-making business. They could afford to have two live-in servants at the time of the 1901 and 1911 Censuses and to send their only son, Herman, to Manchester Grammar School. Herman had money of his own, as shown in his Probate.

In 1911, Herman had left school and was working as an 'articled student' in papermaking.

WORKING AT OAKENCLOUGH PAPER MILL

Herman was employed at Harold Jackson's paperworks at Oakenclough for two years, until he joined up in September 1914. Despite its somewhat isolated position, the business supplied paper and paper bags over a wide area of Lancashire and would probably have had links with the Fletchers of Stoneclough Mill, Bolton. No doubt Herman had gone to work in Oakenclough to learn more about the business either on the managerial or the technical side. He worked first in the Paper Bag factory, near Garstang and Catterall Station and then in the main mill at Oakenclough. His wages increased steadily over the period he was at the firm. His last pay packet was issued on 25th September, 1914. He joined a local Friendly Society, the Bleasdale Court of the Ancient Order of Foresters. Members included his fellow employee, Harry Malley and Thomas Longworth, who worked on the Grizedale Lea Reservoir site.

AT WAR

Karen Macaulay writes:

'Herman enlisted on 15th September 1914 into 20th Battalion Royal Fusiliers (Public Schools Battalion) as 4842 Private Herman Fletcher. On his medical documents he was shown to be 5ft 9½ inches, weighed 152lbs had a fresh complexion, grey eyes and light brown hair. He was sent to the Western Front with 10th Royal Fusiliers on 14th November 1915.

'On 21st February 1916 he was admitted to 19 FA (Field Ambulance) with a gunshot wound to the neck. Between 12th and 22nd February, 1916, the battalion was holding trenches at Annequin Fosse [near Loos] and on 21st February the war diary reported casualties of 1 officer and one other rank killed, 3 other ranks wounded. One of the 'other ranks' must have been Herman Fletcher. This injury cannot have been too serious as he was back with the battalion by early March. On 28th March he was appointed unpaid Lance Corporal.

'On 16th August 1916 he was sent to the Officer Cadet School at St. Omer. He was commissioned Second Lieutenant on 1st October 1916 and posted to 7th Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

'The 7th Loyals had been in action on the Somme from early July 1916 and had suffered heavy casualties during an attack on High Wood on 20th July. The battalion was withdrawn for a few weeks but in October returned to the Somme. At the beginning of November the 56th Brigade was holding the front line in a sector around Aveluy. The Division was to take part in the closing action of the year – what became known as the Battle of the Ancre.

'The war diary reported that on 9th November clean socks were distributed to the whole battalion, but no clean underclothing! Everyone was able to have a bath – something which did not happen too often for the army on the Western Front. The next few days the battalion provided working parties carrying trench boards for the front line.

'On the night of 12th/13th November 'A' Company took over the front line in a position known as Stuff Trench. At 1 a.m. on the 13th, 'B' 'C' and 'D' Companies had hot Oxo and then moved forward to positions in front of Stuff Trench, where they would remain until zero hour. At 5.45 a.m. on 13th November these three Companies advanced in two waves. The attack went well, and the objective was gained in about ten minutes, the men keeping close behind the British Artillery barrage and helped by a thick mist which persisted throughout the day giving the battalion some cover. The Germans were taken completely by surprise and about 200 prisoners were taken. Throughout the day the new line was consolidated. The war diary referred to the casualties as 'slight' in this action – 5 officers and 81 men killed, wounded or missing.

'Second Lieutenant Herman Fletcher was killed in this action on 13th November 1916, about six weeks after receiving his commission. His body was not recovered and he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Pier and Face 11A.'

AFTERMATH

Herman had made a Will which was proved by his executors, his sister Marian Fletcher and his father on 21st February 1917. His effects amounted to £6764 4s 4d (22p.)

As well as at Thiepval, he is commemorated on the Bleasdale and Calder Vale Memorials, on the memorial plaque to the Fallen erected by the Bleasdale Court of the Ancient Order of Foresters in St. John's Church, Calder Vale and at St. Mary's Parish Church, Eccles, where the War Memorial is placed in the Memorial Porch.



The Victory and British War Medals and the 15 Star.

The War Office sent a total of £54 18s 7d the money owing to him at his death, to his father and sister, as his executors.

Herman received the Victory and British War Medals and the 15 Star.

References and acknowledgements:

Please see the Acknowledgement Page.