

THE BLEASDALE FALLEN OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

CORPORAL
HENRY MALLEY

1894 - 1918

50TH BATTALION MACHINE GUN CORPS (INFANTRY)

ARMY NUMBER: 12175

(FORMERLY 21514 LOYAL NORTH LANCASHIRE REGIMENT

ARMY NUMBER 21514)



KILLED IN ACTION 22ND MARCH 1918



REMEMBERED WITH HONOUR

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Harry Malley was born into a farm worker's family. After his father's early death in 1899, his mother brought up the family of 8 children in Oakenclough. Most of family worked on the factory floor at Jacksons' paper mill, but Harry became a clerk. He joined up, sometime after February 1915. He was posted to the Machine Gun Corps, became a corporal and was killed in action on 22nd March 1918. He was 24 years old.

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND UPBRINGING

Henry (Harry) Malley was born in 1894 in Bleasdale, the son of William and Jane Malley (nee Holmes). His father William, who was employed as a 'horse teams man' in 1891, died in 1899 at the age of 41. He is buried, alongside his wife in Calder Vale Church yard.

The couple had eight children, all of whom were still alive in 1911. In 1891 the family were living at New Row, Calder Vale, but they moved to Oakenclough between 1892 and 1894. In 1901, Jane Malley, now widowed, lived at one of the cottages at Mill Yard, in the Jacksons' paperworks with seven of her eight children, including 7 year old Harry. At least five of her children worked at the Mill. In 1911, Margery and Jane, two of Harry's sisters were paper finishers. Two of the boys, William and Russell, by then married, were described as being in 'papermaking', while Harry was a clerk. Mrs. Malley later moved to 'Sunny View', Oakenclough, one of a pair of semi-detached cottages next to the Moorcock Inn, where she died in 1936.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL LIFE

Harry seems to have had the determination to succeed in his work life. By 1911 he was employed as a clerk in his brother-in-law's (Harold Jackson's) paperworks.. In the Army, he was promoted to the rank of Corporal. He was not the only member of Harold Jackson's office staff to show leadership potential. His brother-in-law, William Henry Wilkinson, who married Margery, and Herman Fletcher, who had come to Oakenclough to learn the papermaking business, and lodged with Harry's brother, Russell, were also clerks, and both were promoted to officer rank during the War. Herman was killed in action in 1916 and William Henry was injured in 1918.

The Malley family were involved with the social life of Bleasdale Parish and joined in activities based around the Church and School some two miles away from Oakenclough. On 13th February 1915, a report in the Preston Guardian shows that Harry and his sister Jane (Jennie) took part in a concert held at Bleasdale School in aid of the National Relief Fund. Jennie (who married the new Vicar, Rev. William Chick Haines in 1919) is remembered by her family for her beautiful voice, sang three solos for which she was 'enthusiastically recalled'. In 1918, she sang again at the opening ceremony of the Recreation Room, also held

at the School. Harry also belonged to a Friendly Society, the Bleasdale Court of the Ancient Order of Foresters. Several of his fellow workers at the Paper-works, together with others from the various workplaces, including the new Reservoir site and the Calder Vale Mills were also members.

ENLISTMENT AND ARMY LIFE IN THE MACHINE GUN CORPS

Harry did not rush to join the Army like Herman Fletcher and William Henry Wilkinson who left Oakenclough almost immediately war was declared, as he was still in Bleasdale in February, 1915. Nor did he receive the '15 Star' which suggests he was not in France until the following year. Once at the Front, however, he made his mark. He had risen to the rank of Corporal by 1918, and the report of his death described him as 'a very brave soldier'.

Karen Macaulay writes:

'Soldier's documents have not survived for Henry Malley, but we do know that he enlisted at Garstang, into the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. At some point he was transferred to the Machine Gun Corps.'

'Initially, each battalion had a machine gun section, but in 1915 the Machine Gun Corps was formed. The pay was more for the MGC than it was for the infantry so there was no shortage of volunteers to transfer. The MGC was feared by the enemy, obviously because of the damage they could do with their fire power, and they were therefore targeted by the Germans, and this fact gave the MGC the nickname 'The Suicide Squad.'

DEATH

Harry was killed in action at Coulaincourt St. Quentin on 22nd March 1918, at the beginning of the German Spring Offensive. Unfortunately, Karen Macaulay has not been able to locate a war diary for 50th Battalion Machine Gun Corps for this period, but there is a moving article about the circumstances of his death in the Preston Guardian.

The report is headed 'Bleasdale Soldier's Heroism' and describes how Harry and another man, being the survivors of his machine gun team, continued to fire on the advancing Germans, allowing the British infantry men to withdraw and reorganise. Harry himself was eventually hit by a bullet, and was, so his commanding officer wrote, 'killed instantly'. He continued:

'Such bravery was worthy of the oldest tried veteran.'

AFTERMATH

Harry's body was not recovered and he is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial in France. His death was commemorated at home by two specific memorials, unlike the other 13 on the Bleasdale Roll of Honour. Alone of all the Bleasdale men killed in the War a tombstone was erected, dedicated to his memory in Calder Vale Churchyard, and a pair of candlesticks presented to St. Eadmer's Church, Bleasdale, which stand on the altar, inscribed:

'In loving memory of Harry Malley of Oakenclough killed in action at Coulaincourt St. Quentin March 22nd 1918.'

His name is also inscribed on the Bleasdale and Calder Vale War Memorials, and on a plaque erected by the Bleasdale Court of the Ancient Order of Foresters, alongside the Memorial window in St. John's Church, Calder Vale.

His mother received £16 10s. from the War Office, money owing to him at his death, and a war pension.

Harry received the Victory and British Medals.



The Victory and British medals.

References:

The Preston Guardian: 13th February 1915 and 18th May 1918 (microfilm, Community History Library, Harris Library, Preston).

For other references etc., see the Acknowledgement Page.

