

IN MEMORY OF ROBERT LAMPLOUGH MANN

DIED IN ACTION 21 DECEMBER 1914

Lived at Greenhill, behind Greenhill Farm (no longer standing). Plaque is on Great Western Pub
PLAQUE No. 16

Robert was born in Leamington Spa, on 23 September 1890, and was one of the more privileged men whose name rests on Harbury's memorial stone. His father, W. R. Mann, had inherited a wine merchant business, only to retire early and embrace his passions for 'agriculture and sport', from his country residence, 'Greenhill', in Harbury.

Robert attended secondary education at Uppingham School, and went on to Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1910. During his Cambridge years, Robert lived with his Aunt and Uncle in what must have been a large house, needing thirteen servants to maintain it. His privileged existence would have been shaken by the death of his father, who died of a seizure while Robert was at Cambridge.

His time at Cambridge, though marred by his father's death, was a fulfilling one. The Jesus College annual report obituary on him, published in 1920, remembered that he was keenly involved in the Officer Training Corps, and won several prizes in the Oxford and Cambridge Military tournaments.

After graduating in 1913, Robert travelled to India with the Cavalry Unit, the 7th Dragoons Guards - only to return to Europe in 1914. The Princess Royal's Dragoon Guards (as they were also known) were stationed in France.

To lose a son would have been hard enough, but the stream of misinformation Robert's mother and sister received would have only made their suffering worse. Though he was first reported wounded and missing on 21 December 1914, a letter later arrived, sent to his mother from the Princess Royal herself, assuring her that Robert was 'safe and well in Germany'. His ecstatic

mother had this published in the Leamington Spa Courier on 5 March 1915.

Mary wrote back, asking the royal to see if she could help her get a letter to her son - a letter to which the princess replied expressing the difficulty of the situation, yet urging Mary to 'be comforted'. Yet Mary later received a letter from the Princess' secretary, chastising Mary for making 'too many enquiries'.

In a letter Mary wrote to Arthur Grey, the Master of Jesus College from 1912-1940, she remembers how after all that terror, trembling and urgency, there was never any definite news given to her from the princess - just a fragile glimmer of hope. It was a hope, but it was a bleak, brief and bitter hope. The information was later found to be false.

On 26 December 1919, the Courier wrote in contradiction to its previous hopeful statements, that Lieutenant Robert Mann was now presumed to have died on or since the date he was reported missing - 21 December 1914, just over five years before.

In the letter Mary wrote to the Master of Jesus College, she mourns with him for both their sons, 'on the threshold of their lives'. She remembered how happy her son had been at Jesus, and sent £55, a huge sum of money, towards the Jesus College memorial remembering the students who had died. She was among many of the women who wrote such tender personal letters with their money, pouring forth their grief to men they had never met, as though re-living their sons' deaths as they put money towards their memories.

Robert is remembered with honour at Le Touret Memorial, in France where he fell.



Harbury World War 1 Memorial Trail

Remembering the men of Harbury parish who fell during the first world war in service of their country.

