

Alexander Vaughan

Private

M2/191161

76th Auxiliary MT Company, Royal Army Service Corps



In 1889 St Mary's church in Kington was the venue of a marriage between Henry Albert Vaughan and Mary Alice Whitaker. Henry was Kington born and bred while Mary hailed from Pickering in Yorkshire, her reasons for being in Herefordshire unknown. Their matrimonial content was confirmed by the birth of their first son Charles in the spring of 1891. At the time the fledgling family were living at Pembridge railway station where Henry worked as a porter for Great Western Railways. Charles was followed by four siblings, Alexander (Alec), the focus of this biography, born in 1893, James 1895, Linda 1898 and the youngest, Thomas in 1902. The first four children were born at the Pembridge railway station but the 1901 census suggests sometime between the birth of Linda in 1898 and the 31st March 1901, the date of that year's census, Henry had moved his family to 19 Sunset, Kington. Sunset was adjacent to Kington railway station where Henry had taken a step up the employment ladder and was then employed as the station signalman. By 1911 the family had moved again, this time just up the road to 23 Victoria Road, and just as Henry's employment prospects had improved, so too had the families housing circumstances. However, Alec was no longer



Lt. Colonel Walter Howarth Greenly

in the family unit, but is found in very different surroundings far from Kington. At the age of eighteen, he was employed as chauffeur to Lt. Colonel Walter Howarth Greenly and was billeted at the Staff College, Bath Road, Camberley in Surrey. The Greenly family of Titley Court have a long and prestigious Herefordshire history and it is highly likely Alec attained a position as chauffeur to the family, in Titley. However, his undoubted skills as a driver, of what was a relatively new form of transport, were clearly utilized by the Colonel for his military duties in Camberley. Walter Greenly had served with honour during the Boer War attaining the rank of Major General by the end of WW1 and was head of the British Mission to Romania between 1918 and 1920.

Sadly, very few of Alexander Vaughan's military records survive, but from those which do, plus other local resources, a picture of his life can be built. Alec was one of the first to enlist, in September 1914. Unsurprisingly he joined the Army Service Corps (ASC) as a Motor Transport driver. Private, M2/191161 Vaughan served in the 76th Auxiliary MT Company, which was designated an Ammunition Park for 3rd Cavalry Division. Ammunition Parks were responsible for operating ammunition dumps and for transporting munitions around the battlefields. Their cargo ranged from large calibre artillery shells and associated specialist handling equipment, to smaller shells, mortar rounds, grenades and the vast quantities of small arms ammunition demanded by frontline troops. The war diary of the 76th is a relatively bland document which details transport activity and very little else. The diary ends on 31st October 1917 and it is thought this is when the unit was reassigned as 7th GHQ Reserve MT Company. As a point of interest, only after the armistice in November 1918 did the ASC received the "Royal" prefix, in recognition of its service throughout the First World War, becoming the Royal Army Service Corps.

The circumstances of Alexander Vaughan's death are alluded to in Pension Ledger's which record he died on 27th November 1918, 'of disease'. It is highly probable Alec died of influenza, another casualty of the pandemic which ravaged to globe and became known as Spanish Flu. A report of his death was included in the 7th December 1918 edition of the Kington Times, this reveals invaluable detail about his time in the army, the circumstances of his death and burial. Below is a transcript of that report.

DEATH OF PRIVATE A. VAUGHAN

We regret to record the death of Private Alexander Vaughan, second son of Mr and Mrs H.A. Vaughan, of Bridge Street, Kington, which occurred at Suffolk Hall Hospital on the 27th November after a short illness. The deceased, who was a chauffeur previous to the outbreak of war, joined the ASC MT in September 1914 and had been in France 15 months. He was coming home on his first leave to see his parents at Kington and intended breaking his journey at Cheltenham to see his sister who was living there. He was taken ill in the train not far from Cheltenham and

as soon as he arrived at the latter place was taken to Suffolk Hall Hospital where he passed away in a few days. The body was brought to Kington for interment on Saturday, the funeral taking place at Kington Cemetery on Monday last. The funeral was semi-military, the coffin being covered by the Union Jack and there was a firing party present under Captain E A Mahir.

The mourners included: Mr and Mrs Vaughan (father and mother), Miss Linda Vaughan (sister), Private James Vaughan (brother). Service was conducted by Rev Probyn and at the conclusion the firing party fired three volleys over the grave. The deceased, who was single, was 26 years old and was formerly in the employ of Major General Greenly, 19th Hussars, as chauffeur, with whom he went on several foreign tours. His eldest brother Lieut. Vaughan was killed in action in November 1917, in Palestine with the Herefordshire Regiment.



Photo by G. E. Martin & Sons, Cheltenham.

SUFFOLK HALL V.A. HOSPITAL, CHELTENHAM.

Suffolk Hall was a large 19th century residential house in Lypiatt Road Cheltenham. Prior to the war the house was being used as a boy's school but in December 1914 it was repurposed as a VAD Hospital by the Red Cross. The large

gymnasium and schoolrooms made ideal wards for injured servicemen. An outdoor recreation room and open-air shelter for eight beds were provided by private subscription. The hospital had its own operating theatre where two surgeons undertook surgical procedures until they were reallocated to service abroad. From June 1917 all surgical cases were moved to the better resourced General Hospital. Injured soldiers were transferred straight from the fighting and in the winters of 1915 and 1916 the facility was used as the garrison hospital for troops stationed in Cheltenham. The Commandant of the hospital reported that from January 1919 the hospital was overflowing with influenza pandemic cases, and the staff endured 'a very trying time'. Inmates convalesced by making carved objects, painting and general carpentry tasks which were sold at local bazaars, the proceeds of which went to various causes and the cost of running the facility. Suffolk Hall VAD Hospital closed to patients in March 1919.

Alec's body was entrained back to Kington on Saturday 30th and interred in Kington Cemetery on Monday 2nd December 1918. A Commonwealth War Graves

Commission headstone identifies the burial, plot 2234. Both Alec and his older brother Charles had attended Kington Boys' School and are remembered on the schools Roll of Honour. Charles and his younger brother James, had been present at the Gallipoli landings and later the Herefordshire Regiments actions in Egypt. His leadership abilities were recognised when he was 'commissioned in the field'. Tragically, as the Herefords assaulted the Khuweilfe Heights east of Gaza during the Third Battle of Gaza, Charles was 'killed in action' on 6th November 1917. He was buried where he fell, many miles from Kington, in Beersheba War Cemetery, Israel. But his parents, Henry and Mary, wanted his sacrifice remembered closer to home, hence Charles's death is also respectfully recorded on Alec's headstone in Kington Cemetery.



Following his death Alec's military account was 'made up' resulting in £24 0s 0d being forwarded to his father Henry A Vaughan. This sum wholly consisted of a War Gratuity, issued to the next of kin of the deceased at the end of the war. Henry applied for a pension for Alec which was granted at a rate of 5/- per week from 27th January 1920. Shortly after Alec's burial the family relocated to Cheltenham where their daughter Linda lived, the sister Alec had intended visiting while on leave. For a short while Henry and Mary lived at Carlton Place, Hewlett Road, Cheltenham but subsequently moved to 4 Windsor Street. Electoral registers show they lived there between 1922 -1928. Henry Alfred Vaughan died in Cheltenham on the 8th August 1930, he was 67. In the 1936 register Mary and Linda had moved to The Old Manor, Chester Walk, Cheltenham. The pair next appear in the 1939 Register living at 11 Ambrose Street, where they settled until 1957. It is here, towards the end of that year, that Mary Alice Vaughan died at the very advanced age of 95.

So, what of Alec's younger brothers? The 1911 census reveals his brother James followed in his father's footsteps and joined the Great Western Railway Company and was working at Kington station as a porter. He enlisted into the Herefordshire Regiment early in the war and accompanied his brother Charles to Gallipoli. Little more is known of his military exploits but we do know he survived the conflict and attended Alec's funeral. As for Thomas, Alec's youngest sibling, he was too young for military service during World War One. He moved to Cheltenham with his parents and it is here in 1936 he married Elsie Violet Doris Bryan. Thomas died at 71 Carlton Avenue, East Wembley, at the age of 56, on 26th December 1958. When probate was resolved in April the following year, he left his wife Elsie, £641 8s 0d.

On 6th July 1919 Alexander Vaughan's name was read out at the Kington Peace Service held at St. Mary's Church, Kington, along with sixty of his deceased comrades, one of which was his brother Charles Vaughan. For his commitment to his country Alec was awarded the Victory and British War Medals. Alexander Vaughan survived the war only to succumb to the ravages of Spanish Flu right at the end. He may have died of an invisible killer but his family could be proud of the service he gave to his country and the sacrifices that entailed.

May he forever rest in peace



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