

IN MEMORY OF MALCOLM GORDON BLAND

DIED IN ACTION 23 MARCH 1918

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

Malcolm's father, Gordon Lyon Bland, was born in Liverpool in 1868. Though he was the son of a successful grocer, Gordon did not embrace his family's profession - instead, he revealed an academic bent, and his father's financial success meant that Gordon was able to go to Caius College, Cambridge, to study for a BA. His family were affluent and successful, and Gordon himself grew into a well educated and hardworking man.

After marrying Marion Evelyn Garrard, he moved to Ince House, 58 Kenilworth Road in Leamington, a house currently named 'The Birches'. Gordon was a freemason and a member of the Henley and Warwick lodges, fostering connections that may very well have helped him succeed so spectacularly. He also became Partner/Director of the Brewers Lucas & Co. of New Milverton, served as Magistrate and Alderman, and twice served as Mayor of Leamington Spa.

Marion Bland was noted for her elegance, charm, and hostess skills. More impressively, she founded the Harbury Women's Institute. She was apparently an avid traveller, exploring far off and exotic locations and sat on the council for the Leamington High School for Girls.

Malcolm was born to this ambitious father and adventurous mother in 1899. He had two brothers, Arthur and Richard, and one sister, Olga. In 1906, Malcolm, aged seven, was photographed performing as 'William Shakespeare as a Boy' in the Warwickshire pageant, solemn and somewhat awkward looking, somewhat resentful of his parents for forcing him to wear tights!

Though the children were born, and spent their early years, in Leamington, Gordon Bland's early death in 1913 prompted the family to move to Greenhill, Harbury, the house where the Manns had previously lived.

It was a large house, and would doubtlessly have been exquisitely furnished by the elegant Mrs Bland. However, there have been some issues in pinpointing where exactly it was. One option is a building that at the time was colloquially known as Greenhill - a town style house in the middle of the countryside, built in the early 20th century on the top of the hill, where the family may have lived. A more recent photograph of its dilapidated state shows a grey, commanding building, squatting amongst weeds and winter trees, its windows boarded over, now owned by the nearby quarry; it was demolished soon after.

Though Malcolm would have spent his holidays in Harbury, however, he would not have stayed at the village all the year. He had been a boarder since the family lived in Leamington. When his father died, he was at Charterhouse School in Surrey - a heart wrenching distance from his family when the first pangs of grief struck. Despite the difficulties of boarding school, Malcolm received a far finer education than was available to most, and went on to Sandhurst in 1916, as an Army Officer Cadet.

He was eighteen when he joined the King's Royal Rifle Corps on 4 August 1917, commissioned as second Lieutenant, the lowest rank of officer. He died on active service during the Battle of St Quentin on 23 March 1918, aged only 19.

He has no grave but is listed on the Arras memorial.



Harbury World War 1 Memorial Trail

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

