

## LANCE SERGEANT HENEAGE NORMAN BLOXHAM

S/25869, 8th Battalion, Rifle Brigade

Died aged 31 on 3 May 1917

Remembered with honour on *Arras Memorial, Faubourg d'Amiens Cemetery*; Bay 9

Commemorated in Tewkesbury on the Cross and in the Abbey



*Arras Memorial, France*



*H. N. Bloxham [C. Burd]*



*Rifle Brigade*

**HENEAGE NORMAN BLOXHAM** was born on 10 December 1885, the fourth son of William Bloxham and Elizabeth (formerly Carter), of 18 Church Street. William ran a successful family firm of butchers and had eight children. On leaving Abbey House School (a Grammar School), Heneage was employed at Haywards, 125-126 High Street, as an ironmonger until 1914. He served in the Territorials in 1909-10. He was an enthusiastic angler, bowler and one-time captain of the Tewkesbury Early Closers Football Club. His epitaph described him as having a '*manly, gentle disposition and straightforward character ... a general favourite, both in business and his social surroundings*'.

Heneage re-enlisted in September 1914 in the 8th Glosters, with some 21 others at a recruiting meeting. Three of his brothers also enlisted elsewhere, and his sister Nellie was a nurse in the Mitton Red Cross Hospital. He was soon promoted to Corporal. On 18 July 1915 the battalion sailed to France; in late September it was in reserve during the *Battle of Loos* – and had the job of burying those who fell. A friend wrote: '*We had a rough time in the trenches last week, for it was pouring with rain and we were up to our knees in mud and water ... Sorry to say Heneage Bloxham is ill and hope he will soon be well; all the other Tewkesbury boys are well.*' Heneage was evacuated to hospital in Torquay suffering from typhoid. In April 1916 he went home on sick leave but was back in France by that autumn. He was transferred to the 8th Rifle Brigade, a battalion of Londoners, as one of the replacements for Somme casualties.

Heneage was promoted to Sergeant and put in charge of a Lewis Gun section; these light

machine-guns provided much of the infantry battalion's firepower, and demanded much maintenance. On 15 November his team won the inter-company Lewis Gun competition.

On 3 May 1917 the battalion took part in a 14-mile-wide offensive, the *Third Battle of the Scarpe*. In a pre-dawn attack, surprise was lost as men advanced over the ridges with the setting moon behind them. They successfully captured the German trenches but failures on their flanks and German counter-attacks meant they had to withdraw. Heneage disappeared. As one senior battalion officer noted: '*We had a rough time all the morning.*' Of 194 men lost, a third, 69, were from his company; none of the bodies were ever found. On 11 May the *Tewkesbury Register* announced: '*we regret to learn that a letter from a comrade was received by Mrs. Bloxham, informing her that her son was missing.*' There were no further details.

Heneage's mother, a devout worshipper at the Abbey, asked the Rev. Ernest Smith to enquire. In April 1918 a fuller account arrived: '*an officer wrote ... saw Sergt. Bloxham during the withdrawal. ... He must have been hit ... whether it was fatal or not the writer could not say. ... no news of the gallant sergeant has been gleaned.*'

**Sergeant Heneage Norman Bloxham** died on 3 May 1917 and his name is commemorated on the *Arras Memorial*.

His sister, Daisy, until her death in 1981, would often talk of her 'favourite' brother: he was '*a fine type of Englishman*'. His brothers, **Harry** and **Raymond**, had emigrated to Australia but enlisted in the army; the latter was reported wounded and missing in Palestine but won the *Military Medal*. Both survived the war.