

Alan Ladd Age 25

Alan Ladd was born at Knowl Hill, near Cookham in Berkshire in 1893. His parents were George, originally from Exeter, and Mary Anne who had been born in Wootton Courtney. George was a plumber and gas fitter and the family moved several times, presumably because of work opportunities.

Alan had a twin brother Arthur and they joined Alice (13), Lawrence (10), Millicent (8), George (6) and Richard (2). The 1901 Census shows the family living in Water Street, Dunster, but by the time Alan enlisted, they had moved to Park Street.

Alan Ladd's service record survived the bombing in WW2 and his enlistment papers show that he took the Oath before a JP at Minehead on 9th November 1915. He was 5'5" in height and weighed 130 lbs. His chest measurement was 35". Before enlistment he had worked as a tailor and he joined the Army Service Corps (later the Royal Army Service Corps). His record documents suggest that he served only in England.

His connection with Long Sutton came in 1916 when he married Ada Westlake, the daughter of Joseph and Elizabeth Westlake who lived in Shute Lane. Alan and Ada were married in the Wesleyan Church in Somerton and an account of the wedding appeared in the Langport and Somerton Herald the following week. The bride wore a navy blue costume with champagne silk hat and carried a sheaf of lilies. Her sister Mary was bridesmaid.

THE Langport & Somerton Herald

Saturday, April 22nd, 1916

LONG SUTTON

WEDDING.—A quiet wedding was solemnised at the Wesleyan Church, Somerton, on Sunday morning. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. R. Rosell of Glastonbury. The parties were Pte. Alan Ladd, of the A.S.C. formerly of Dunster, and Miss Ada Westlake youngest daughter of Mr. Joseph Westlake of Long Sutton. The bride who was given away by her father, was attired in a navy blue costume, with champagne silk hat. She carried a lovely sheaf of lilies. The bridesmaid was her sister Miss May Westlake, who was also dressed in navy blue and wore a saxe blue hat with pink roses. She carried a bouquet of carnations. The duties of best man were discharged by Mr. Charles Haines, Sandford, Bristol. The bridegroom's present to the bride was a gold bangle and the bride's gift to the bridegroom consisted of a gold signet ring.

By 1918, Alan was with the RASC Remounts at Swaythling near Southampton. The ASC Remounts Service was responsible for the provisioning of horses and mules to all army units. It is ironic that Alan Ladd, one of only two men listed on the Long Sutton war memorial who did not have an agricultural background, should be destined to work in a unit responsible for the supply of horses to the military.

The influenza epidemic spread around the world, reaching the Western Front in the spring of 1918 and was rife in Britain by the summer. About a fifth of the victims developed bronchial pneumonia or septicaemia, resulting in high mortality.

Alan Ladd reported with general weakness, shivering, sore throat, cough and vomiting on the 8th October. He was admitted to the Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley and became steadily worse over several days as pneumonia progressed. His wife was informed that he was dangerously ill. Her address at the time is shown as Hamble. Possibly she was lodging nearby or she had travelled down when he became ill. Alan died on the 14th.

THE Langport & Somerton Herald

Saturday, October 26th 1918

LONG SUTTON

Funeral.—Great interest and sympathy has been awakened in the village by the sudden death, in hospital at Southampton of Pte. Alan Ladd, of the A.S.C., who succumbed to pneumonia following influenza on October 14th. The remains were interred here on Saturday last, amid every token of sorrow and respect, the greatest sympathy being felt for his young widow and for his bereaved parents. The coffin was covered with a profusion of beautiful flowers sent by sorrowing relatives and friends. He was laid to rest in the quiet old-fashioned graveyard of the Society of Friends. A large company gathered around the open grave, which was prettily lined with moss and trimmed with white and purple flowers. After uniting in prayer suitable to the occasion, all present adjourned to the Meeting House, where a meeting for worship was held, commencing with the singing of "For ever with the Lord." Several short and comforting addresses and prayers were offered and the hymn, "Not now, but in the coming years," was sung. The meeting concluded with that solemn hymn of Dr. Watts, which has brought consolation to thousands of aching hearts. "O, God our help in ages past, Our hope for years to come." The mourners were: Mr. and Mrs. Ladd, father and mother; Pte. L. Ladd, brother; Mrs. H. Gill, sister; Mr. J. Westlake, father-in-law; Mrs. F. Squire, sister-in-law; Pte. H. Gill, brother-in-law; Miss M. Westlake, sister-in-law; Mr. C. Tucker and Miss I. Westlake, cousins.

His body was brought back to Long Sutton and he was buried in the graveyard of the Friends Meeting House on 19th October. The newspaper printed a full account of the funeral which was attended by his parents, brother and sister and his in-laws. The coffin was covered with flowers and the grave lined with moss and trimmed with white and purple flowers.



A son, Philip Ladd was born in the spring of 1919.