

Stephen Leaman

Born Dawlish 1887
Private 21134

Died 6 October 1918, France, aged 31
Royal Welsh Fusiliers, 14th Bn

Stephen's grandfather Edward Leaman (1831-1916) was born in South Brent and was employed as a stoker at a Gas Works in Plymouth in 1861, where his first two children had been born. They were William, 3, born in Stonehouse (GRO ref 1858, Apr-Jun, Plymouth, vol 5b, p268) and Alice, 1, born in Plymouth.

The census spells the surname as 'Layman' and it may indicate that Edward could not read or write. In other returns the name is spelled Leamer/Leamon.

By 1871 they were settled at 2 Church Street, Torquay and Edward was working as a shop porter. His wife Mary Elizabeth (formerly Ward)(1836-) had seven children:

William Thomas Leaman	(1858-1933)	born in Stonehouse
Alice	"	(1860-) Plymouth
Sarah	"	(1865-) "
Edward Henry	"	(1868-1920) Torquay
Robert	"	(1870-) "
Anne	"	(1874-) "
Louisa	"	(1875-) "

(Information drawn from Cox family tree- Ancestry)

William Thomas Leaman was an errand boy in 1871 but he married Ellen Allford (1855-1910) in the June quarter of 1876. Ellen was one of seven children of Job and Susan Allford living at Hele Cottage, St Marychurch in 1861. Job was a brick maker, born in East Budleigh, and his wife Susan was a lacemaker, also from East Budleigh. In 1871, Ellen Allford was shown working as a domestic servant to John Hatcher, a confectioner, trading from 6 Vaughan Parade, Torquay. Ellen was then 15, and she married in Dawlish at age 20.

William and Ellen moved to Dawlish and William followed his father, becoming a stoker at the Gas Works in Dawlish by 1881, where he appears to have lived with his wife and first children:

William Edwin	son	(1878-1960)	born in London
Louisa	dau	(1881-)	St Marychurch

In 1891 they were still at the Gas Works in Dawlish with more children, all born in Dawlish:

Charles Edward	son	(1882-)
Mary E	dau	(1884-)
Henry L	son	(1885-1916)
Stephen	son	(1887-1918)
Alfred T	son	(1889-)
Evelyn Maud	dau	(1890-1916)

Stephen Leaman's birth was registered in Newton Abbot district in the March quarter of 1887 (GRO ref 1887, Mar, N.A., vol 5b, p114).

In the following 10 years William's fortunes improved with his appointment as Manager of the Gas Works. At some point later, William Thomas Leaman was elected onto the Urban District Council and was vice-chairman and later, Chairman. He became a magistrate (Kelly's Directory, 1930) and sat on the Dawlish Urban Tribunal.

By 1901 William and Ellen had four more children:

Floria	dau	(1893-)
Edith	dau	(1895-)
Frederick Allford	son	(1896-)
Herbert John	son	(1898- 1960)

By the 1911 census William T Leaman was a widower as his wife died on 15 March 1910, aged 55 (GRO ref 1910, Mar, St Thomas, vol 5b, p 51). The record shows that they had 14 children of which three died by the census date. Only 12 names are shown in the lists above, drawn from census returns. As a manager, the Leaman household had moved to 4 Alexandra Terrace, Dawlish.

There are WW1 Army records for four of the sons:

- Charles Edward Leaman was a Sapper with the Royal Engineers (no. 266357). He was born in Q3, 1882 and married Susan Jane Elliott in Q4, 1903. In 1911 he was boarding with the Elliott family at West Alvington, Kingsbridge and is shown as a 'Gas stoker'. He died in Q3, 1940.
- Henry Leaman was a Sapper with the Royal Engineers and died of wounds on 21 December 1916 (q.v.)
- Frederick Allford Leaman was an act/Corporal with the Royal Army Service Corps (no. M/34956)
- Herbert John served as a Sapper with the Royal Engineers (no 145549). He was born in Q2, 1898 and married Doris Jane Ferris in Q4, 1926 and died in Q3, 1960, aged 62 (The surname Leaman is quite common and the allocation to this family can not be guaranteed in the absence of Army service records.)

The oldest child, William Edwin Leaman (1878-1960) was not listed at home. He, later, was the partial beneficiary of William Thomas Leaman's death on 11 April 1933 (GRO ref 1933, June, N.A., vol 5b, p 114) aged 75, when William Edwin Leaman was described as a 'railway engine driver'.

It appears, from the report in the *Dawlish Gazette*, that **Stephen** had taken work in the coal mines in South Wales soon after the death of his mother. Porth was a centre for mining in the late 19th century and produced steam coal. It lies at the entrance to the Rhondda valleys, about 3 ¼ miles from Pontypridd.

Stephen Leaman was working as a collier in Ynysboeth when he married Elizabeth Owen in The English Congregational Church, Ynysmeurig Road, Abercynon on 6 August 1910 (GRO ref 1910, July-Sept, Pontypridd, vol 11a, p1228). Abercynon lies between Pontypridd and Merthyr Tydfil and was largely dependant on mining. **Stephen** and Elizabeth lived in the same road, Nos 79 and 88 Hennard Street, Ynysboeth. Her father, William Owen, was a colliery foreman. They had a daughter in March 1915, Edith M Leaman (GRO ref Pontypridd, 1915, Jan-Mar, vol 11a, p 1341). There is no apparent census entry for the couple in 1911.

Stephen Leaman enlisted in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, 14th Battalion, at Porth, Glamorgan, and is said to have been trained as a sniper in the signalling section.

The 14th (Service) Battalion was part of the New Army. It was formed at Llandudno on 2 November 1914 by the Welsh National Executive Committee; came under orders of 128th Brigade, 43rd Division at Llandudno. On 28 April 1915, formation became the 113th Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division.

Moved to Winchester in August 1915 and landed in France in December 1915.

The Medal Rolls Index Card shows that Stephen Leaman arrived in France on 12 December 1915 and was thus awarded the 1915 Star, as well as the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. The *Western Times* of 20 July 1916 recorded that he was wounded slightly in the Battle of the Somme. He was twice wounded before being killed in action.

Stephen Leaman is inscribed on the Devon Roll of Honour and on the Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour.

Dawlish War memorial inscription: LEAMAN S. SNIPER R.W.F.

Devon Heritage site info: 21134 Private Stephen Leaman of the 14th Battalion, The Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Son of William and Ellen Leaman of the Gas Works House, Dawlish; brother of Henry (above). Born in Dawlish in 1887. Died 6 October 1918 aged 31.

Commonwealth War Graves Entry: LEAMAN, STEPHEN Private, 21134, 06/10/1918
Royal Welsh Fusiliers, 14th Bn. Panel Reference: Panel 6. [Vis-En-Artois Memorial](#), France

Last known address: 79 Hennard Street, Ynysboeth, Glamorgan (1910)

Next of kin: Elizabeth Leaman, widow

A Death Grant of £18. 14s. 2d. Was paid to his widow. The War Gratuity of £26. 8s. 0d. Was paid to his daughter, Edith in 1921.

References:

The Long, long trail.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porth>

Free Birth, Marriage Death refs

Copy of Entry of Marriage

The Dawlish Gazette (see Documents)

from subscription sites:

Census data

UK, Army Register of Soldiers' Effects

Family trees (Ancestry) – Cox and Leaman trees

Probate register – William T Leaman

British Army, WW1 Medal Rolls Index Cards

UK, Soldiers died in the Great War