

William Fletcher d 30 January 1941 in a train crash

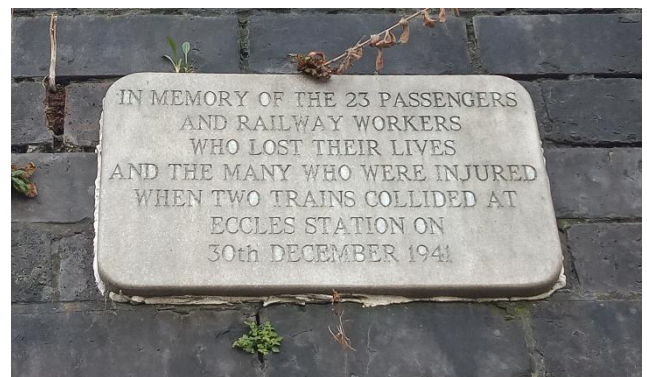


In
Loving Memory of
DAVID L. FLETCHER
DIED 24TH DEC. 1955, AGED 76 YEARS
AND **ALICE G.** HIS WIFE
DIED 26TH OCT. 1971, AGED 88 YEARS
ALSO **WILLIAM**, THEIR SON
DIED 30TH DEC. 1941. AGED 26 YEARS
AND **THOMAS JACKSON** SON-IN-LAW
DIED 19TH NOV 1964, AGED 54 YEARS

A modest grave with no mention of the cause. In the Eccles rail crash of 1941, twenty three people died and over a hundred were injured. It was caused by fog, plus signaller and driver error. The Accident Report can be seen at

https://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/documents/MoT_Eccles1941.pdf

A brief explanation from the *Liverpool Daily Post* 3 December 1941 reads "The disaster occurred as the 6.53 a.m. train from Kenyon to Manchester, which had only a minute before left Eccles station, was crossing on to the fast line. A workers' special – the 6.30 a.m. Rochdale to Pennington – travelling in the opposite direction, tore through the middle of the Manchester train, and the engine overturned and crashed into a steep embankment." There is a plaque near Eccles station commemorating the dead.



The account below is from the *Barrow News* 3 January 1942, as is the photo of William Fletcher.

BARROW VICTIM OF RAIL CRASH COST ACCOUNTANT AT VICKERS-ARMSTRONGS FIANCÉE WITH HIM?

William Fletcher, one of the victims of the Eccles train crash, was the only son of Mr. and Mrs. David Lancaster Fletcher, of 189, Marsh-street, Barrow, and was the chief support of his invalid father and mother.

His parents had just received the tragic news by telegram from the Leigh police when a "News" reporter called at his home, and particularly poignant was the blow, because it was only on Sunday afternoon that their son had returned to Leigh after spending Christmas at home.

Twenty-six years of age, the deceased was a cost-accountant working at the Vickers-Armstrong works, Openshaw, Manchester, and had worked at Manchester about eight years, after leaving Messrs. Vickers-Armstrongs, Barrow.

He had been living at Leigh for some months, following the raids on Manchester, and travelled daily to the city.

He was a former troop leader in St. Matthew's Church Scout Group, and also played football for St. Matthew's and prior to that the Rawlinson-street Boys' School team. He also won a number of trophies as a runner.

NO NEWS OF FIANCEE

No news had been received in Barrow on Wednesday as to the fate of his fiancée, Miss Elizabeth Hirst, of Leigh, who, his parents believed, would be travelling on the train with him.

"Betty also worked in Manchester, and they travelled together every morning," his father told a reporter. "We are anxiously awaiting news of her.

They were planning to get married in June."

The *Barrow News* of the following week, 10 January 1942, had news of the funeral:

MR. W. FLETCHER, BARROW

The funeral of Mr. W. Fletcher, the Barrow Victim of the Eccles train disaster, took place on Monday. Following a service at St. Matthew's Church conducted by the Rev. G. Smith (vicar) who also officiated at the graveside, the body was laid to rest in the Borough Cemetery. Many friends and former work associates attended to pay their respects to the deceased, who was held in high esteem over a wide area.

The mourners were Mr. and Mrs. D. Fletcher, father and mother; Mr. and Mrs. T. Jackson, sister and brother-in-law; Mrs. W. Fletcher, aunt; Mr. A. Foster, uncle; Miss C. Hems, cousin; Mrs. A. Round, cousin; Mr. and Mrs. J. Bull, Mrs. N. Bull. Mr. H. Jackson, Mr. E. Jackson, Mrs. E. Braithwaite, Mr. Eric Fallows, Mr. J. Daly, Mr. A. Crichton, Mr. T. Bowker, Mr. J. Houghton, Mr. E. Wilkinson, Mr. J. Duffus and Mr. W. N. Williams, representing the Scouts, representatives from Openshaw, Mr. Killiner, Mr. Gresham, Mr. Craven, and Mr. J. Fallows.

The bearers were Messrs. J. Geldart, M. Wallace, G. Parnham, H. Fisher, W. Crawford, C. Spry.

There were many beautiful floral tributes including those from Vickers-Armstrongs Commercial staff, Barrow; Messrs. Grasham and Craven, Salford; Mothers of the Boy Scouts; and Messrs. Vickers-Armstrongs, Openshaw.

The undertakers were Mr. J. M. Unsworth, Leigh, and Messrs. J. Tickle and Son, Barrow.

From Ancestry we know that in the **1911 Census** living at 157 Marsh Street, Barrow, were David Fletcher (34) Shipyard Labourer, Gun Shop, born Whitehaven, Cumberland; and Alice Fletcher (28) born Bolton, Lancs. They had been married for four years, but not had any children at that point. However, though this was stated on the Census return, David and Alice Fletcher, of Bolton, arrived in the US on the RMS Teutonic, 23 May 1907 bound for McKeesport. A document from McKeesport, Pennsylvania, dated 9 April 1908, naming David L. Fletcher and Alice Gertrude Fletcher as parents of a stillborn girl, buried in Versailles Cemetery in the town. Another document states that the girl was a fetus (sic) of 5½ months, and that David Fletcher's occupation was pipefitter.

In the **1921 Census** the Fletchers were still living at 157 Marsh Street, Barrow. The household comprised David Lancaster Fletcher (44) Fitter's Labourer, Engine Dock Dept, Messrs. Vickers Ltd., born Whitehaven, Cumberland; Alice G. Fletcher (38) Home Duties, born Bolton, Lancs; William Fletcher (5) Scholar, born Barrow, Lancs; Gertrude E. Fletcher (8) Scholar, born Barrow; and Eleanor Moffat (68) Widow, Mother-in-Law, Retired School Teacher, Lincolnshire (*sic – should be Lancashire, though in 1901 she was teaching in Northamptonshire*) County Council Schools, born Barrow, Lancs.

They had moved to 189 Marsh Street for the **1939 Register**. Residents are David L. Fletcher (DoB 3 July 1876) Pattern maker's labourer; and Alice G. Fletcher (DoB 6 January 1882) Unpaid Domestic duties.

I have been unable to find William Fletcher, or definitively Elizabeth Hirst or Hurst, in the **1939 Register**. It is possible that his record would be redacted given his occupation. However, the *Liverpool Daily Post* 31 December 1941, in its account of the crash, names among the injured Elizabeth Hurst, Chapel Street, Leigh. In the **1939 Register** living at 118 Chapel Street, Leigh, (Shop and Dwelling House) are Elizabeth Hurst (DoB 16 May 1883) Widow, Grocer; Marjorie Hurst (*crossed out* Rowland) (DoB 2 November 1912) Collieries Comptometer Operator; Elizabeth Hurst (*crossed out* Wilkinson) (DoB 15 September 1917) Engineers Comptometer Operator; Jean M. Hurst (*crossed out* Fairclough) (DoB 5 February 1920) Clerical Assistant Grade One, Government Office; Margaret Hurst (*crossed out* Leigh, and Boardman) (DoB 3 June 1922) Warehousehand – Textile. Next door at 116, a Fish & Chip Shop, are Thomas Hurst (DoB 12 April 1884) Fish & Chip Fryer; and his wife Elizabeth Hurst (DoB 2 September 1884) Unpaid Domestic Duties. Each of the names crossed out were replaced with their name on marriage, so William's fiancée Elizabeth Hurst was not killed, and did not remain single.

The **National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1942** has:

FLETCHER William of 481 Holden-road Leigh Lancashire died 30 December 1941 at Eccles and Patricroft Hospital Eccles Lancashire Administration **Llandudno** 28 April to Alice Gertrude Fletcher (wife of David Lancaster Fletcher). Effects £530 8s 7d.

The **National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1971** has:

FLETCHER Alice Gertrude otherwise **Alice** of 189 Marsh St Barrow-in-Furness died 26 October 1971 Administration Liverpool 22 December. £1212.