**THE LETTER**

Malcolm J Doolin

Great-nephew

To Private Ernest Sharp, 38201, 2nd Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers

Born Dover, Kent, 3 January 1898. Died near Rietz du Vinage, France, 22 April 1918.

4 August 2014

Dear Ernest,

My grandmother, your sister Edith, received your last letter posted on 13 April 1918 but was never able to reply to it because by then she knew that you had been killed. “Blown to bits” she used to tell us when we were children, killed on 22 April 1918 with other soldiers of The Lancashire Fusiliers near Rietz du Vinage. We have been to the village – such a small place but, according to the records, an important German strong point that had to be taken. Fighting went on around the village for a week and on 22 April the Lancashire Fusiliers crossed the nearby La Bassee Canal under heavy shellfire aiming to take the far bank. It was here that you and over 50 comrades were killed. My grandmother said you had no grave and your name was inscribed on the memorial wall at Dud Corner Cemetery by the Loos battlefield. That isn’t close to where you died – some of your comrades are near Rietz in Mont-Bernanchon Cemetery – but it is the nearest cemetery with a memorial wall.

She would want you to know that she never forgot you: she treasured your letter and your photograph, the one of you in your hospital uniform when you were sent home injured, blinded by gas, taken before that last time you were sent back to the front. It was always in a frame on her sideboard and I grew up knowing your face. I know you didn’t want to be in France fighting. I expect it was all right when you first joined up. You probably went with some mates, you’d never been anywhere much and I expect it was quite exciting to begin with. By the time you wrote that letter, though, you’d been hurt, you’d seen terrible things and you’d been afraid. All you wanted was to get back to the safety of your home, to see your mum and dad, your sisters and your new nephew and never have to go away again.

You were very young, Ernest, only twenty. You had no time to do all the things you wanted to do or to find out what you might have become. You won no medals and even your records are lost so we will never know when you joined up or where else you served. Perhaps you think your life made no difference to the world but you were loved and missed. My grandmother’s stories made me want to find out more about you and having done that to find out more about the war in which you died. We have visited the Loos memorial many times and seen your name on the wall with hundreds of other young men who have no known grave and we have travelled to Rietz du Vinage to try to comprehend the battle in which you died. My desire to understand led to me studying for a Masters degree in British First World War Studies which I completed in 2013. Despite this, I still find it hard to grasp the scale of a conflict that claimed so many young lives and I come back over and over again to your photograph and your letter which I now treasure as my grandmother did and which reminds me that behind all those gravestones and names on walls are stories like yours, Ernest, of ordinary young men lost and missed for the whole lifetimes of the people who loved them.

You are remembered.

Your great-nephew,

Malcolm Doolin

**ANALYZES OF THE LETTER**

This letter is one of the 21439 letters written by all sorts of people school-children, pensioners, nurses and also the prime Minister for a project.

The people had to write a letter to an unknown soldier, who died in WWI. The project was direct by Neil Barlett and Kate Pallinger. The letters arrived from all the United Kingdom and also beyond.

This letters are conserved in a website opened on 28th June 2014, the centenary of the Sarajevo assassination; the site will be closed in 2018.

The letter that I chose is written by Malcolm Doolin; Doolin’s life is signed by his granmother’s story about his great-uncle and also for this reason he studied for a master degree in British World War. He wrote this letter to his great-uncle, Ernest Sharp, who died in France at Rietz du Vinage, on 22th April 1918, when he was only 20.

I chose this letter because I was impressed and fascinated by Malcolm, a great man who studied to try to understand if there were a reason for all the deaths that the War caused. Doolin, in the last part of the letter said that after finishing his studies he didn’t find an answer to his question.

I was impressed by Doolin because he took in consideration the facts of the first World War that were very far from him that lots of young man as him didn’t took in consideration.

By this letter we can understand that Doolin is very shaken by the dead of the War.

The letter is divided into three sections; in the first section, the author tells that Ernest was his great-mother’s brother and he belonged to the 2nd Battalion Lancshire fusiliers.

Ernest was a warrior who hadn’t had a grave; his name is written on the Loss War Memorial, that isn’t near the place where he died. Doolin and his great-mother went many times to France, to saw the place were his great-uncle died.

In the second paragraph the author uses these sentences: “I know you didn’t want to be in France fighting” and “All you wanted was to get back to the safety of your home”; the reader can understand that Ernest didn’t want to be in France to fight: the war wasn’t the war of the soldiers, but the war of governments.

Ernest was really loved by his family, that wanted for him only a grave where they could cry.

The writer, in the last part of the letter, tells that he and his family wanted that Ernest was remembered; for Doolin and his family the War Memorials are useful and they weren’t only a political tool.

This letter has a very simple direct style. The author uses an informal register, because he imagines to write the letter to his relative.

Even if the author uses a simple language and an informal register the letter has lots of important thoughts; by this letter we also can understand the situation of others families who had lost a relative in war and he didn’t find grave.

People are still shaken by the deaths caused by war and also for this reason the War Memorials are very important.