



**WILLIAM KERR**, Oxford University, caps 2, cap number 83

William Ker, was the 3rd child of Charles Ker, accountant of Easterton, Mugdock and his wife Florence (nee Higginbotham. William was born in 1892 and was educated at Cargilfield School, then Rugby. At school he was known as a rugby player and a runner. William went up to Balliol College, Oxford in 1911, where he took up hockey. He was awarded a half Blue in 1914 when he was also selected for Scotland in the games against England and Ireland. He is listed as cap No 83 by Scottish Hockey Heritage.

He was selected for the Varsity match of 1914 where Cambridge were firm favourites. Ker won much praise for his "skillful and dashing work for the Dark Blues". His "electric sprints and his accurate shooting were largely responsible for Oxford's success".

When war broke out in August 1914, William volunteered for the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. Initially he spent some time in the boat reserve in Scotland. By January 1915 he had volunteered for active service with the Royal Naval Division (RND) and in May 1915 he arrived in Gallipoli. William served through the Gallipoli campaign until the evacuation in January 1916.

He spent some time at home in February 1916 but by the April he was in France with the RND. On the 13th November 1916 William and the rest of the Hawke Battalion of the RND were part of the attack on Beaucourt sur Ancre. The Battalion went over the top at 5.45am. Unfortunately a redoubt in front of their attack had been missed by the artillery barrage and was undamaged. The battalion war diary notes that within minutes the battalion "no longer exists as a unit".

There is some confusion about the number of casualties suffered by the battalion. But around 426 men left the trenches and only 20 men answered the roll call when they were withdrawn. The battalion diary of 16th September 1916 quotes casualties of 25 officers and 396 other ranks, dead, wounded or missing.

William's body was never identified but he is commemorated on:  
The Thiepval Memorial  
Strathblane War Memorial.  
Cargilfield School Roll of Honour.  
Balliol Boat House Roll of honour

Balliol College War Memorial Book.  
Milngavie Golf Club Memorial.  
His family headstone in Glasgow Necropolis.

He is also remembered in two poems by A.P.H. Herbert, "Return to Beaucort" and "The bathe"

William's younger brother Charles Paton Ker (1896-1981) was also a hockey player, playing for Western H.C. Charles won one cap, in 1923 in a historic win in Ireland. He was the 11th cap from Western H. C. and No. 128 to represent Scotland's men. Charles also served as Treasurer of the Scottish Hockey Association from 1922 until 1928.

Sources:

The Long Long Trail  
Scotland's People  
Ancestry  
British Newspaper Archive  
Scottish Hockey Records  
Commonwealth War Graves Commission  
National Archive