

Fleur Lombard - Queens Gallantry Medal (1974 - 1996)



Fleur Lombard was born in Derbyshire. And was the first female firefighter to die on duty in peacetime Britain.

Fleur Lombard was one of only eight women among Avon's 700 firefighters. On graduating in 1994, she received the Silver Axe Award, for the most outstanding recruit on her training school.

The funeral service was held on 14th February 1996, at Derby Cathedral, her ashes are interred at St. Enodoc's Church, where her memorial stone records her parents Roger and Jane Lombard and that she had a sister Rebecca.

On Sunday 4 February 1996 Avon Fire & Rescue Service was called to a fire at Leo's supermarket in Staple Hill, Bristol. Fleur, who was serving at Speedwell Fire Station at the time, was inside the building when she lost her life while tackling the inferno. She and her partner, Robert Seaman, were caught in a flashover. She was killed as a direct result of the intense heat and her body was found just a few yards from the exit. She was posthumously awarded the Queen's Gallantry Medal. Robert Seaman was awarded the George Medal for bravery for returning to the burning building when he realized his partner had not followed him out.

The fire was started deliberately by security guard Martin Cody, then aged 21, on his first day at work at the supermarket. Cody was said to live in a fantasy world started the fire to relieve his boredom and was seen punching the air with glee before the firefighters arrived on the scene. Cody was later jailed for seven and a half years for manslaughter and arson.

The memories of Fleur remain close to the hearts of those in Avon and a memorial stands to commemorate her life near the site of the fire in Staple Hill. It is situated on Broad Street, Staple Hill, Bristol. BS16 5NJ, next to the Staple Hill Library and opposite Tesco's.

A memorial plaque stands close to where she died, and her name is written on the UK National Firefighters Memorial located near St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

In her memory, Avon Fire & Rescue Service have set up the Fleur Lombard Bursary Fund. This provides travel grants so that a junior UK firefighter may visit the fire service of another country.

