Thomas Foley



Photo courtesy of Jane Roberts

Rank: - Private

Number: - 7114

Regiment: - Cheshire Regiment 1st Battalion

Killed in Action: - 11 March 1915

Cemetery: - Poperinghe Old Military Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium

Thomas Foley was born on 10 December 1881 n Batley, the son of Batley born John Foley and his Charlestown born wife Bridget (nee Cafferty).

John and Bridget married in 1878 and Michael was born in November 1879 and died in 1908 followed by Catherine in 1884, John (1886), James (1888), Mary Elizabeth (1890) and Patrick (1890).

From 1881-1915 the family lived in New Street, Batley and John had a number of different occupations. Thomas's civilian occupation was a coal miner. However just short of his 18th birthday

in November 1899 he enlisted in the Militia for a period of 6 years. He was 5'4 ½", weighed 112lbs, and described as fresh complexioned with blue eyes and red hair. He served with the West Riding Regiment. He was called up on 22February 1900 and served in South African in the 2nd Boer War, being awarded the King's South African Medal with 1901 and 1902 clasps. Newspaper reports also reported he served in India after South Africa. He was disembodied on 10 May 1902. In March 1903 he enlisted in Leeds with the Cheshire Regiment, this was for three years with the Regulars and nine years with the Army Reserve. His religion was given as Church of England whereas previously it had been Roman Catholic. He was now 5'6", weighed 130lbs. and had tattoos, which included a heart and the letters A.M.L. on his left forearm. During this spell he achieved a 1st Class musketry classification and passed instruction classes in swimming. He also had infractions recorded against him as follows:

Chester: 31 March 1903 – Drunk in town about 11.30 pm. Resisting the escort.

Chester: 19 June 1903- Creating a disturbance in town about 11.10 pm.

Aldershot: 30 July 1903- Breaking out of barracks after tattoo until found in his barrack room at 530 am the following day.

Location and date not legible: 9 March 1904-- Breaking out of barracks after tattoo. Apprehended by Regimental Police on the Maiden Road about 10.30 pm drunk.

Aldershot: 9 March 1904 – Late falling in for Rouse Parade at 7 am.

Aldershot: 17 March 1904 (St. Patrick's Day)- Absent from tattoo until found drunk and creating a disturbance in Barracks about 10.45 pm.

Southampton: 5 April 1904 – Drunk in barracks, 3.30 pm; attempting to damage Government property: using improper language to a N.C.O. and violently resisting the escort.

Wellington: 20 October 1904- Quitting the rank without permission.

On 25 April 1906 he transferred to the Army Reserve and returned to Batley. He resumed his mining work in the employment of Messrs Crawshaw and Warburton at their Shaw Cross Colliery. He was a member of the St. Mary's branch of the National Catholic Benefit and Thrift Society.

Towards the end of April 1913, he set sail 3rd Class from Liverpool on the *Arabic,* bound for Halifax, Canada with the intention of seeking better wages there than he would earn as a miner in England. His stated destination was Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. However according to newspapers, before arriving back in England he had been working in St. John's, Canada. He was recalled as a Reservist after the outbreak of war and set sail from Montreal on the *Corinthian,* arriving in London on 4 September 1914. He sent his South African medals home to his parents for safe keeping.

He was given an unexpected four days leave at the end of September 191 but this may have been because of the sudden death of his brother James in Batley Hospital whilst having anaesthetic, chloroform, administered on 23 September for an operation to have cartilage removed from his knee. His funeral took place on the 26that Batley Cemetery.

He re-joined his Regiment and docked in France on 7 October 1914 being posted to the 1st Cheshire. October 1914 was based in France before moving to Belgium in November 1914. Thomas took part in severe fighting during the five months with them. His last letter home, written on 2 March 1915, was described as "*cheerful*" and intimidated that he was in the best of health. It was on 7 March 1915 that Thomas suffered fatal injuries. His *Casualty Form-Active Service* notes that he was treated initially by the 94th Field Ambulance for what was described as a " *bullet wound left shoulder, right of neck and lung injured."* From here he was transferred down the line, on 7 March, to Number 3 Casualty Clearing Station (CCS). He died here of his wounds on 11 March 1915.

He was buried in the military cemetery at Poperinghe and it later transpired that, whilst incurring his fatal injuries Thomas performed repeated acts of heroism and courage. For the actions he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. According to the Batley News he was the first Batley man to win this coveted distinction.



Researched by Jane Roberts for further details see pasttopresentgenealogy.co.uk