Thomas William Hepworth





Rank: - Lance Corporal (Bugler)

Number: - 2584 (formerly 15251 K.O.Y.L.I.)

Regiment: - Royal Munster Fusiliers 7th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 15th August 1915 aged 24

Memorial: - Helles Memorial Panels 185 -190, Turkey

Batley News, 4 Sep 1915 (photo), 5 Feb 1916, 11Mar 1916

Family Details:

Thomas William Hepworth was born in January 1891 to Batley born Samuel Hepworth and his wife Mary Ellen (Nee Roberts) born in Holmfirth. The couple had married at Batley Parish Church on 11th September 1886. Samuel was a power loom tuner living in Bankfoot Place in 1891 with his wife and family Norman (1885), Arthur (b 1887), Matilda Ann (b 1889) and Thomas William.

In the next 10 years the family moved to 16, Cobden Street and Laura (1893) and Samuel (1896) had been born. By 1911 the family were living at 23, Bond Street, Batley and the census shows that 3 children of this marriage had died. Thomas was working as a piecer at a woollen mill. He was a member of Batley Parish Church Lads' Brigade and assisted as one of the buglers. He also attended Batley Parish Day School.

He moved with his family in 1913 to White House, Raikes Lane, and Birstall and was employed at College Mills, as a piecer, before the war broke out.

His father, Samuel, was in the Batley Volunteers and had over 22 years of continuous service and was in the National Reserve during WW1. He worked at Queen Street Mill, Bradford Road as a tuner. His brother Arthur lived at Knowle Post Office, Mirfield whilst brothers Norman and Samuel joined the Forces early in the war. The Batley News reports that he enjoyed a well-deserved popularity amongst his friends and associates having a pleasant disposition.

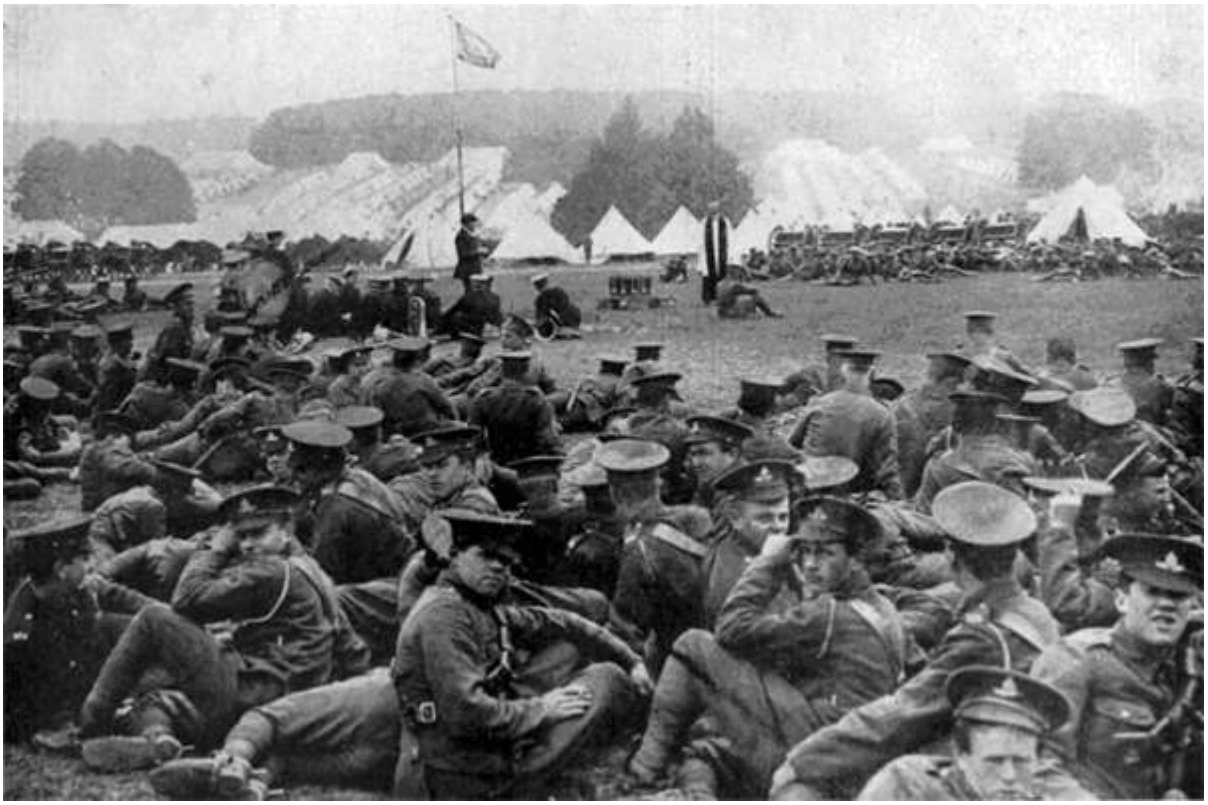
Service Details:



Thomas William was a bugler in the 4th Battalion Kings' Own Yorkshire Light Infantry until he left the Territorial's in 1913 only to re-join soon after the outbreak of war.

On the 5th August 1915 Field Marshall Earl Kitchener took over as Minister for War and immediately issued orders for the extension of the army. On 11th August 1914 "Your King and Country need you a call to arms "was published. It explained new terms of service and asked for the first 100.000 men to enlist. This was achieved within two weeks. There were six new Divisions created from these volunteers and were collectively known as Kitchener's Army or K1.

The 7th (Service) Battalion was formed in Tralee in August 1914 as part of K1 and came under the orders of 30 Brigade in 10 (Irish) Division. He spent most of his time in training at Curragh, Ireland and then at Basingstoke, in May, before leaving for the Front.



At camp in Basingstoke.

It was reported in the Batley News on 5th May 1915 from a "Cheery Batley Bugler" to his brother Arthur Hepworth the well-known carrier of Blakeridge Lane: -

"We are now in our second stage of preparation for our share in upholding the British Empire against the dirtiest monarch that ever reigned. We are in a pretty place now. Owing to the ground being mostly enclosed, we cannot do much skirmishing. We left here on Wednesday on a billeting scheme. The first day, we marched to ----------and the Brigades were billeted in all kinds of corners from cottages to mansions. Hay lofts, empty shops, and stables alike were utilised.

It was our lot to be in a hay loft belonging to a genial country doctor. The first day was warm, so he placed at our disposal his pretty lawn, and most of us decided to sleep there, under the large chestnut trees. We retired to roost about

10p.m. but after being in "bed" about an hour, rain started and increased in volume. At the first downpour, some of our fellows of the hot –house variety sought shelter, but most of us stuck it until morning.

We left at 7.15 a.m. rain still coming down in torrents, and we marched about five miles into the country where we engaged ourselves in a battle royal with some of the K.O.Y.L.I. and York and Lancaster's. Owing to the shocking state of the weather operations ceased a day earlier than intended and we returned to the camp after 10 hours in the rain. Next morning dawned dull and cheerless. Wet clothes were drying and rain was falling. A cheer went up about 9 a.m. when the sun appeared, and it shone at intervals during the day. Every available spot was used as a drying ground. In spite of our damp exterior, the spirit of the troops was at the highest. "

Thomas left for the Dardanelles on 9th July from Liverpool via Mudros landing in Sulva Bay on 7th August 1915. The main body of the Division made an attack on Chocolate Hill on 7th / 8th August.

On the nights of the 4th, 5th, and 6th August the reinforcing troops were shipped into Anzac very silently at the darkest hours. Then, still silently, they were tucked away from enemy aeroplanes or observatories in their prepared hiding places. The whole sea route lay open to the view of the Turks upon Achi Baba's summit and Battleship Hill. Aeroplanes could count every tent and every ship at Mudros or at Imbros. Within rifle fire of Anzac's open beach hostile riflemen were looking out across the Aegean no more than twenty feet from our opposing lines. Every modern appliance of telescope, telegraph, wireless was at the disposal of the enemy. Yet the instructions worked out at General Headquarters in the minutest detail (the result of conferences with the Royal Navy, which were attended by Brigadier-General Skeen, of General Birdwood's Staff) were such that the scheme was carried through without a hitch. The preparation of the ambush was treated as a simple matter by the services therein engaged, and yet I much doubt whether any more pregnant enterprise than this of landing so large a force under the very eyes of the enemy, and of keeping them concealed there three days, is recorded in the annals of war. The troops now at the disposal of General Birdwood amounted in round numbers to 37,000 rifles and 72 guns, with naval support from two cruisers, four monitors and two destroyers. Under the scheme these troops were to be

divided into two main portions. The task of holding the existing Anzac position, and of making frontal assaults there from, was assigned to the Australian Division (plus the 1st and 3rd Light Horse Brigades and two battalions of the 40th Brigade); that of assaulting the Chunuk Bair ridge was entrusted to the New Zealand and Australian Division (less the 1st and 3rd Light Horse Brigades), to the 13th Division (less five battalions), and to the 29th Indian Infantry Brigade and to the Indian Mountain Artillery Brigade. The 29th Brigade of the 10th Division (less one battalion) and the 38th Brigade were held in reserve.

Sulva Bay was wide, flat and open in contrast to Anzac Cove where the Australians landed. By the morning of the 7th August 1915 around 20,000 men were ashore. If Sulva Bay was to be secured the surrounding Anafarta Hills had to be taken, but little progress was made at first because the men were tired and short of water and the weather was hot. At first no there seemed no life or movement in the men but around 4.30 p.m. a violent storm swept the bay, which lasted around 20 minutes. It was a great relief of the men who had found no water ashore and once the storm and stopped them were galvanised into action. They went around the north side of the lake thereby doubling the distance they had to cover. Just before sunset the hill was stormed and taken but had been an early morning objective. On Sunday 8th August it appeared as if it really was a day of rest a war correspondent Ashmead –Bartlett reported that there was an uncanny peace and calm reigned over the battlefield. There was no sign of advance, no guns were fired by either the Turks or the warships and only an occasional rifle shot broke the stillness of this hot autumn day.

The failure to press forward meant that Lt. Gen. Sir Frederick Stopford was relieved of the command of the 9th Corps on the evening of 15th August. He later wrote

" The units of the 10th and 11th Divisions had shown their mettle when they leaped into the water to get more quickly to close quarters, or when they stormed Lala Baba in the darkness. They had shown their resolution later when they tackled the Chocolate Hills and drove the enemy from the Hill to right back out of rifle range from the beaches. Then had come hesitation. The advantage had not been pressed the senior Commanders at Sulva Bay had had no personal experience of the new trench warfare of the Turkish methods, or of the

paramount importance of time. Strong clear leadership had not been promptly enough applied"

Able Seaman Walter Jackson wrote home to his wife in Batley

"I read a piece in the paper about this place being full of vines and fruit trees, waterfalls etc. It is all bosh. What you do see is plenty of dust and all the land is honeycombed with dugouts. We had a lively hour last time in the firing line. The Turks attacked us. You could see them climb out of their trenches and make a dash for it, and you could see them go back a sight sharpener than they came. They must have plenty of men here. All the prisoners I have seen are big likely fellas. They have the advantage of the high ground, but they are losing trench after trench .I can tell you that when you read about a trench being taken there has been some stiff fighting When you are on the Peninsula you are never out of danger . One of our young men got killed with a shell whilst he was making breakfast. He would be five miles from the enemy line at the time, so you can see we are never safe All things considered we have nothing to grumble at."

He also wrote to his sister in Ravensthorpe about Gallipoli

"It is very hot here. You do nothing but sweat all day long --- we go out at night and dig new trenches and the bullets go whizzing over. It is an experience which has to be tried before you can realise what it is like. No one can comprehend what a country is like when a war is on unless they see for themselves. Villagers are destroyed, and the country all cut up with trenches the people want to thank God it is not happening in England. It is a big task the Allies have here on account of the nature of the ground but they are winning bit by bit. I read in the papers every 20 yards won here was equal to 500 in the Western seat of the war I know it is more exacting here than in France , where when you get out of the trenches , you can go to base out of danger and have a game of football, but here you are always under fire. But I have a lot to be thankful for I am still alive and well."

The first sad news of Thomas William's death arrived from the Company Quartermaster Sergeant Brooke, Munster Fusiliers, who writing to his wife at 33, Primrose Hill, Batley on August 15th wrote: -

"I am very sorry to have to tell you that poor Tommy Hepworth got killed yesterday. The fight started at dinner time, and I was told last night that he had been shot through the body."

Conditions in Gallipoli defy description. The terrain and close fighting did not allow the dead to be buried. Flies and other vermin flourished in the heat, which caused epidemic sickness.

The eight-month campaign in Gallipoli was fought with Commonwealth and French forces in an attempt to force Turkey out of the war, to relieve the deadlock on the Western Front in France and Belgium and to open a supply route to Russia through the Dardanelles and the Black Sea. The Allies landed on the peninsula on 25th -26th April 1915. On 6th August further landings were made at Sulva, north of Anzac, and the climax of the campaign came in early August when simultaneous assaults were launched on three fronts The difficult terrain and stiff opposition by the Turks soon led to stalemate of trench warfare From the end of August no serious further serious action was fought and the lines remained unchanged. The peninsula was safely evacuated in December and early January 1916.

Thomas is commemorated on Batley War Memorial, Batley Parish Church, Batley Working Men's Club and Helles Memorial, Turkey Panel 185 to 190, (there are 375 men commemorated on this memorial from the same day).

He was awarded 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group