Thomas Hirst





Rank: - Private

Number: - 26530

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 9th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 1st July 1916 aged 24

Memorial: - Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France Pier and Face 11C and 12A

Batley News, 21 Jul 1916, 9 Sep 1916, Batley Reporter, 1 Sep 1916 (photo). Dewsbury Reporter, 20 Sep 1916 (photo) BGS?

Family Details

Thomas was born on 7th May 1892 in Dewsbury the son of Henry and Clara Hirst nee Nicholson. He was baptised at Primitive Methodist Church, Batley Carr.

The couple had married in 1883 and Alice was born in 1883 followed by William Henry in 1885, Florence 1888, Sarah 1889, Thomas, Margaret Ellen 1894 and Arthur in 1897. Dewsbury born Henry was living with his family in Hirst Road, Batley Carr in 1891 when he was described as a flock merchants assistant. By 1901 the family had moved to 5, Longlands Road, Staincliffe and Henry was a flock and wool merchant employing William to help him with his work.

It is reported Thomas attended Batley Grammar School but no confirmation in the school archives have so far been found.

Henry died of heart failure on the 14th January 1904 when he was living at 62, Willans Road, Dewsbury and Clara with five of her seven children went to live at 18, Gathorne Avenue, Roundhay Road, Leeds in an eight roomed home before the 1911 census was taken. Thomas was then described as a clerk to wholesale grocers. Sometime between 1911 and 1915 he returned to Dewsbury because he married Elsie Lumb, daughter of Ernest Lumb of King Street, Batley, on 8th May 1915 at Upper Road Primitive Methodist Chapel, Batley Carr. He was described as rag auctioneers' clerk, living at 7, Hope Street, Dewsbury. The couple went to live at 13, King Street, Batley but sadly Elsie died at the end of October 1915 and he enlisted the following month.

He was reported to have worked for Mr. Harry Carter of King Street as a foreman warehouseman and later for Messrs. Eastwood and Nephew, rag auctioneers. As a child he attended Springfield Congregational Church and Sunday school and subsequently Batley Carr Primitive Methodist Chapel.

Service Details

Tom enlisted in November 1915 after the death of his wife and went to the Front in May 1916. The 9th Battalion was in 64th Brigade in 21st Division.

The Battalion was at Meaulte at the beginning of May 1916 moving to La Neville on the 13th and back to Meaulte on the 22nd May. On the 1st June they were in trenches until they were relieved on the 11th by the York and Lancaster Battalion.

On the 24th when they were at Ville the battalion was given as much opportunity to rest as possible for the forthcoming attack which was imminent. They moved to Buire on the 27th and went into the trenches near Meaulte an attack was planned for the 29th but late in the evening of the 28th news came that it was postponed for 48 hours.

They put up an intense heavy bombardment on the enemy for eight minutes before zero hour which was at 7.30 am on the 1st July 1916. The idea was that some of the men would crawl forwards into No Man's Land and when the barrage lifted at 7:30, they were to go as quickly as possible. When the platoons had crawled about 25 yards, they were greeted with machine gun and rifle fire. The enemy, despite the barrage, brought their machine guns out of their dugouts and placed them on their parapet and opened fire. The battalion suffered heavily in No Man's Land and the waves in the rear were soon with the leading platoons. Despite heavy losses they continued and the 15th Durham Light Infantry reinforced them when they passed the front trench. Only five officers out of 24 were still with them at this point.

No 19970 Private Kearford performed a risky and invaluable piece of work by proceeding down the Sunken Road towards Fricourt not knowing what he might find. He found 4th Middlesex Regt 63rd Brigade who informed him that others from his Brigade were in Crucifix Trench. Fighting continued into the evening and between 9pm-10pm Crucifix Trench was heavily shelled with 5.9s and on the flanks of the battalion's front in the Sunken Road but no counter attacks was made. The night passed quietly and the opportunity to reorganise and collect the battalion was taken.

Thomas was missing during these attacks.

He was reported in a Leeds casualty list as missing.

It was reported in the Dewsbury Reporter of 12th August 1916 that Lieut. Wilfred F. King, Adjutant to the Battalion of K.O.Y.L.I. to which Tom was attached wrote to his mother at Harehills, Leeds saying that he had been missing since July 1st

"Every *effort is being made to trace him and any information of him will be forwarded to you."*

In October 1916 it was officially announced that Tom had lost his life.

His mother had gone to reside at 224, Harehills Lane, Leeds.

He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Thomas is remembered with Honour at Batley Carr Primitive Methodist Chapel and Batley and Dewsbury War Memorials.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group