Percy Thewlis (2)







Rank: - Driver

Number: - 203637

Regiment: - Royal Field Artillery 217th Brigade

Died of Pneumonia: - 7th -November 1919 aged 31

Buried: - Deolali Government Cemetery (Devlali) Plot C E Row M Grave 13.

Batley News, 22 Nov 1919 (photo)

Family Details

Percy was born in Liversedge on 30th April 1888 the son of George Willie and Annie Thewlis (nee Morland). The couple had married in 1885 and Harry was born in 1885 but died in December 1886 followed by Percy, Nellie (1892), May 1897 and the family had moved to Hanging Heaton before the birth of John on 1st May 1900. Ruth Ann 1904-1905 and Doris 1906 were also born in Hanging Heaton.

Percy lived at 25, Mill Lane, Hanging Heaton, he attended Mill Lane School and was associated with Ebenezer Chapel. He was employed as grocer's assistant maybe at first working for his aunt Ann Thewlis who kept the grocers shop at the corner of Bromley Street and Mill Lane where his cousins Tedbar, Ada and Sarah Hannah Thewlis worked. He did work at one time work for grocer Mr. Pearson of Church Street, Dewsbury.

Percy married Elizabeth (Lizzie) Lodge at Ebenezer Chapel on 24th November 1915. He moved to Scarborough as a grocer's assistant before he enlisted on 15th January 1917. His service records have survived and they state he was living at 49, Nelson Street, Scarborough and was five feet two and a half inches tall. His wife went to live with her parents at 56, Bromley Street, Hanging Heaton.

Service Details

He enlisted in Scarborough on January 19th 1916 and was mobilized on 9th January 1917 being posted to No.1 Depot on the 10th January. He was posted to 3R. Battery on the 20th January and was posted again on the 26th February to the 73rd Division Artillery. Moving to HQ and 26Res Brigade RFA on the 30th June 1917. He left Devonport for India October 7th 1917 arriving at Bombay on the 26th November. He was posted to 1091st Battery 217th Brigade on 28th November 1917 at Lahore. They were in 43rd (Wessex) Division. This Division had been sent to relieve the regular troops in late 1914 being sent throughout the country including, Lahore, Peshawar, Ambala, Bareilly, Delhi, Allahabad, Dinapore, Bombay, Ferozepore, Multan, Jullundur, Rawalpindi, Agra, Mhow and Meerut.

His records show he was present with his unit at Lahore on the 15th December 1917.

Percy was in hospital for a week with influenza 20/28th October 1918.

From his service records he appears to have been a casualty at Risalpur on 15th June 1919 and taken to hospital at Rawalpindi. It also appears he was transferred to

Casualty Clearing Station 18 before joining his unit (1091st Bty) on the 4th August 1919.

From his Medal Index Cards he was awarded the Indian General Service Medal and the Afghanistan North West Frontier Medal which suggests he served in India and the Third Anglo-Afghan War which began on 6 May 1919 and ended with an armistice on 8 August 1919 resulting in the Afghans winning independence from the British Empire. According to the British author Michael Barthorp it was a minor strategic victory for the British because the Durand Line was reaffirmed as the political boundary between the Emirate of Afghanistan and British India and the Afghans agreed not to foment trouble on the British side.

He had reached his demobilization depot when he died of pneumonia on November 7th 1919. The family received news of his death on the 17th November1919. At this time his brother, John, was still with the Forces.

Deolali was a British Army camp 100 miles north east of Bombay (Mumbai). It was the original location of the Army Staff College.

It is also the source of the British slang noun doolally tap, which means “camp fever” and referring to the apparent madness of men waiting for ships back to Britain after finishing their tour of duty. By the 1940’s this had been shortened to “doolally” and adjective meaning “mad (insane) or eccentric”

Percy was awarded the Indian General Service Medal and Clasp, Afghanistan North West Frontier Medal and British War Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Ebenezer Chapel, Hanging Heaton and Batley War Memorial Addenda 2019.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group