

Thomas Lovereign OLDHAM



Born: 1898, Padstow, Cornwall
Occupation: Horseman
Enlisted: Bodmin: 5th May 1915 (Volunteer)
Unit: 1st Duke of Cornwall's LI
Rank/number: Private: No.21210
Death: Killed in action, 29th September 1918
Detail: Thomas died during the last stages of the Great War as the Allies pushed for victory on the Western Front. His Battalion was ordered to carry out an early-morning attack on a village near Cambrai during the Battle of the Canal du Nord. The assault was a success, but German machine-gunners exacted an horrific toll. Thomas was one of 75 casualties.

Age at death: 20

Military info: On 5th May 1915 the DCLI Recruiting March, touring the county drumming up recruits, arrived in Padstow. The brass band and rousing speeches stirred 17-year-old Thomas Oldham's blood and he enlisted on the spot - one year under-age. Early in 1916 he was posted to the 1st DCLI in France, part of 95th Brigade, 5th Division. The Cornwalls were soon on the Somme, where they fought at High Wood, Guillemont, Flers-Courcelette, Morval and Le Transloy. At Arras in April-May 1917 the battalion saw action at Vimy and the third Battle of the Scarpe, and by September they were in the muddy hell at the 3rd Battle of Ypres, fighting at Polygon Wood, Broodseinde, Poelcappelle and 2nd Passchendaele. The 5th Division were sent to Italy, but were hurriedly recalled when Germany launched its huge offensive in March 1918. It was flung into the Battle of the Lys. From then until the end of the war the Cornwalls, and Thomas, were in the thick of the fighting. By September the British were nearing Cambrai, and before them stood the Hindenburg Line. To breach these formidable defences a series of allied attacks were planned, the first being launched on the 27th. Good progress was made and on the 28th the 1st DCLI were ordered to push south of La Vacquerie. They attacked at 3.30am, but a poorly-timed barrage left the enemy free to rake the oncoming Dukes with fire. Undaunted, they pressed home the attack - but Thomas paid with his life.

Grave/memorial: Thomas's body was never found. He is commemorated at the Vis-en-Artois Memorial, France, St Petroc's Church, Padstow and on Padstow War Memorial.

Family info: Father: Edward Kestle Oldham, born Padstow, Cornwall in 1860. Coxwain of Padstow lifeboat. Mother: Jane Deacon, born Tintagel, Cornwall in 1861. The couple wed in 1885 and had 5 sons. Two Oldhams on the memorial are cousins.



This information was researched by Peter Smith, who is currently writing a book about Padstow's part in the Great War. Anyone wishing to correct errors or supply additional information can write to him at 24 Mallard Drive, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5PW. Also phone 01825 762226 or email smithpeter24@gmail.com

+Lest we forget+