

Driver Thomas Dawson

Army Service Corps



Driver Thomas Dawson ASC died on 19th September 1918 in England, at the Park Hospital, Hither Green, Lewisham, after being evacuated from France suffering from the effects of poisoned gas and TB of the larynx.

He had served his country in the Boer War and the Great War, was 39 years of age and his family lived in Church Cottage, Greywell.

He was buried in Greywell Churchyard with all military honours and flag draped coffin. Silent villagers watched the gun carriage bring him to St Mary's Church, the only Greywell soldier of the Great War to be returned for burial.

Tom Dawson was born in Hartley Row, Yately in 1878, one of 6 children to a traveller family. He probably did not attend school but seems to have had a natural way with horses. At the age of 19 when he joined the Hampshire Regiment Territorials he was a 'carter' by occupation, single, working for a Mr Cobden and living at Cliddesden, Nr Basingstoke.



Tom joined the 2nd Battalion Hampshire Regiment as a regular Private Soldier in June 1899 and served through the Boer War, being slightly wounded in the hand. He returned to England at the end of the war in 1902. He was awarded the Queen's South Africa and King's South Africa Medals. He also served in Malta and Bermuda before returning to UK in December 1906. He finally took his discharge on 2 June 1911 after 12 years' service including his 4 year reserve commitment.

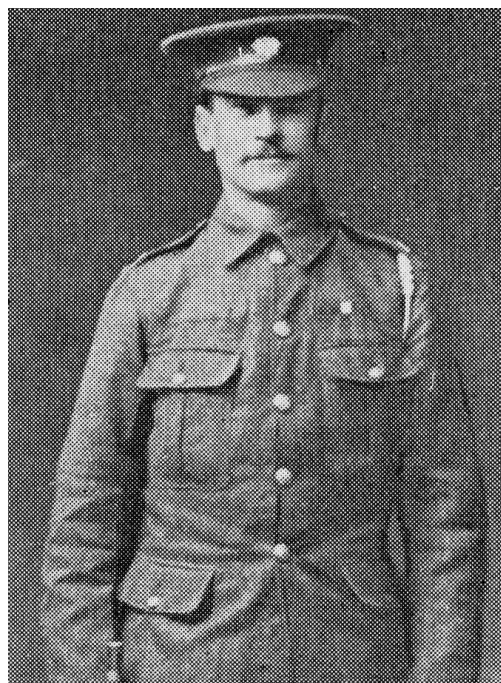


On 8th Feb 1908 he married Amelia Perry at St Luke's Church, Portsea, Hampshire. The couple settled in Ellisfield, had two children, Doris Amelia and Thomas William James and at the census of 1911, the family were living at Widmore Farm with Tom's occupation at age 31 a 'Cowman'. He became a man of some local standing and was well know in the area.



In February 1915, now in Greywell and aged 36, he again volunteered, attesting at Hartley Wintney on a short service war only engagement in the Army Service Corps specifically for the horse drawn transport section of Kitchener's 2nd New Army.

He departed for France in July 1915.



During the next three year he proudly drove the same pair of horses on active service, being stationed firstly at the Main Base Supply Depots around Boulogne and Le Havre until October 1917, delivering provisions and supplies to the Army in France and Belgium.

He was then transferred to the Divisional Supply Train of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division. This would have involved supplying troops in the forward area of battle, with food, clothing, ammunition and supplies. Much of the resupply would have been done at night and under artillery fire, on badly damaged and congested roads – dangerous work in an open horse drawn wagon.

50th Division was involved in some of the most ferocious battles of the war in late 1917 at Passchendaele, followed by the three major German offensives of Spring 1918 when they were at St Quentin, Somme, Rosieres, Estaires, Hazebrouk and finally at the Aisne.

According to his medical record Tom was 'slightly gassed' on 25 May 1918 at Poperinghe near Ypres and this is when his health began to break down.

He finally reported sick and was sent to the military hospital at Rouen where he was diagnosed with TB, aggravated by poison gas and was evacuated to the Canadian Red Cross Hospital at Taplow. He was visited there by his family before being transferred to Lewisham where he died.

Driver Thomas Dawson ASC was awarded the 1914/15 Star, The British War Medal and the Victory Medal in addition to his South Africa Medals.

