

THOMAS RICHARD WATTS

1886 – 1914

1st Battalion, The Queens (Royal West Surrey) Regiment)



Surname/Christian name: Watts, Thomas Richard.

Rank/Service No: Private L/7693.

Regiment/Unit: 1st Battalion (Royal West Surrey) Regiment.



Date of Death: 3rd October 1914, Age: 28

Type of Casualty: Dangerously wounded and died in Hospital.

Theatre of War: France & Flanders - Battle of the Aisne.

Born/Year/Location: 1886 in West Farleigh, Kent.

Enlisted/Attestation: London 5th January 1903.

Son of/Address: William and Phyllis (nee Styles) Watts of Petteridge, Brenchley and the family moved to The Heath, Horsmonden around 1892.

Thomas's parents Phyllis and William



Additional personal and family information:

In 1901 the family were living at the Heath in Horsmonden.

The 1911 census states that Phyllis had been married for 25 full years, had given birth to 12 children of which, two had died. In both the 1901 and 1911 censuses 8 brothers and sisters were recorded.

Siblings: Frederick, Louisa, Daisy, Arthur, Florence, Dorothy, Percy, and Phyllis.

Two of his sisters emigrated to Michigan America and after WW1 his mother managed to visit them twice. His other siblings lived in London, Lincoln, Hampshire and Kent one of his brothers Frank lived in Horsmonden all his life.

Prior Occupation: Thomas was an apprentice plumber to his father, William. Thomas never married.

Family History: Thomas's father William died in 1910 of pulmonary related disease contracted through his plumbing and painting work where there was a high lead content in the pipes and paint. As well as a plumber and painter he was also an Army Reservist with the Queens (Royal West Surrey) Regiment.

Following the death of her husband William, Phyllis went through great financial hardship to raise her large family working as a charwoman and in the fields after giving birth to 12 children. She was a very respectable, hardworking lady.

The 1911 census showed that Thomas was living with his widowed mother and five brothers and sisters at 'Botany Bay', Lamberhurst Road, Horsmonden.

Buried/Memorial: Pte. L/7693 Watts was buried at Toutes-Aides Cemetery St. Nazaire, France.

Relevant Military Record/Diary of Events: Thomas enlisted in London 5th January 1903 for 3 years with the Royal West Surrey Regiment.

On 7th April 1903 he was posted to Kroonstad, South Africa, one year after the end of the Boer Wars. After 14 months in South Africa, he was posted back to England to the Home Depot on board His Majesty's Transport Ship H.M.T SOUDAN which docked (probably Portsmouth) on 31st May 1904.

After 3 months at home, he was posted to North East India at Sailkot on 20 Sept 1904 and was there until April 1906 at the expiry of his service.

Thomas was transferred to the Reserves and came home to resume his civilian occupation.

1st Bn RWS Regt. British Expeditionary Force (BEF) movements: -

On the 5th Aug 1914, he was called up from the Reserves and transferred to the 1st Battalion.

He embarked on the "Mombassa" from Southampton for France on the 21st Aug 1914.

"After disembarking at Le Havre, the 1st Bn Royal West Surrey Regt, were sent to the front and fought at Mons to halt the German advance towards Paris, but were forced to retreat.

A counter-attack at the river Marne drove the German Army back to a stronghold on the far side of the river Aisne.

On the 3rd Sept. the BEF crossed the Aisne by pontoons and by partly demolished bridges, and with the French 5th and 6th Divisions attacked the German stronghold at Chivres-Val, east of Venizal.

The action resulted in a stalemate and the opposing armies entrenched marking the beginning of four years of trench warfare.

The Germans bombarded the British and French trenches with batteries of Howitzers, lobbing huge shells into the trenches. It was during this action that Thomas was mortally wounded on the 17th September.

From the field ambulance station, he was put on a hospital train at railhead no. 20, a light gauge trench railway that connected to the main line, and made the 370 mile, 4-day journey to St. Nazaire, east of Nantes, where he was hospitalised.

Thomas died from the shrapnel wounds he received to his face and head on the 3rd October 1914 and was buried at the St. Nazaire Military Cemetery."

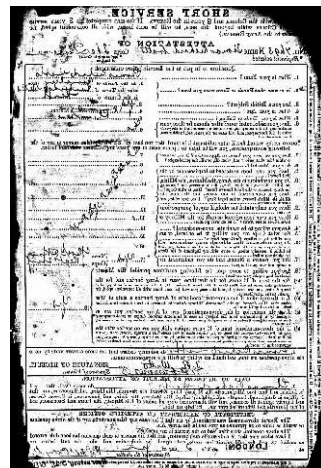
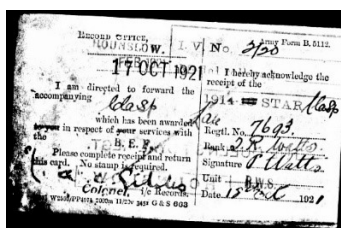
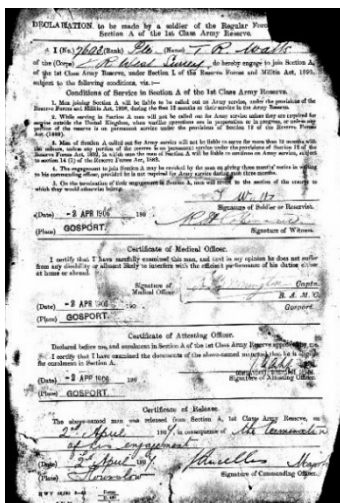
Pte. L/7693 Watts received the Victory, British War and 1914 Star medals – these, in addition to Thomas's personal effects, a charm and disc, were sent to his mother, Phyllis.

Thomas was also awarded the 1914 Clasp for his 1914 Star – the Clasp was added to the Star for soldiers who served under fire, or were within range of the enemy mobile artillery in Belgium or France.



Service Records: Approximately two thirds of the WW1 service records were destroyed in 1940 by an incendiary bomb that hit the War Office Record store. Some were water damaged by the Fire Brigade. The records that remained, or what was left of them, were painstakingly microfilmed in 1996 by the Genealogical Society of Utah, digitised, and made available online. Hence the charred edges seen on many of the records. They're known as the "WW1 Burnt Records."

A sample of Pte Watts's damaged War Office Documents:



De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour Text:

WATTS, THOMAS RICHARD, Private, No. 7693, Royal West Surrey Regt., s. of William Watts, of Horsmonden, co. Kent; served with the Expeditionary Force; died of wounds at St. Nazaire 3 Oct. 1914.

Other Relevant Documents:

Medals Received: Victory and British War Medals

Name	Corps	Rank	Regtl. No.
WATTS	1 st The Queen's R.	Private	47693
Thomas R.			
Medal	Roll	Page	Remarks
VICTORY	E/1/10/16	1002	Dead.
BRITISH	do	do	
14 STAR	E/1/14	124	
E.L. 2/190.			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			
12. 8. 14.			

SOLDIERS EFFECTS:

Documents/Images that relate to pension and personal effects

135459	8/53062	Watts Thomas Richard	1st Bn 3-10-14 R.W.S.R. No 3 Private 7693 St Nazaire Plumber France	Breachley Kent William	12/14	1 19 3	1 15 4	M.O. 2/15	10-2-15	Mo Phyllis Er Arthur Hy Er Louisa Rose Er Daisy Maude 10. 6. 19 30. 7. 19	1 3 - 3 11 - 3 11 - 3 11 5 3	Self and deceased brother and sister deceased, Rev. Thomas Dorothy and Phyllis Er contribution Lff.
A.F.W. 50/10 sent 20 FEB 1919		War Gratuity transfer No. 3580 Postal Paper 3/6 No. 6 Serial 413 off's 2d										

Pension Ledger Card showing dependant's pension to Thomas's mother and three younger siblings

Region 11 S. Eastern
DEPENDANT'S PENSION: D.D.O 3875 D. 1
14/10/1902 5-1-20

Name: Watts Thomas Regimental No. 7693
 Regiment of Ship: 2 R.W. Surrey Rank: Pte
 Documents received from Paymaster: P.W.P. Co. S.P. 11 P. 4 - Bones 5-1-20
 Date and cause of death: 3-10-14 Wounds

Dependant: Mrs Phyllis Watts
 Address: The Green Horsmonden Kent
 Relationship: Mother

Pension: a week from
 Date awarded: If refused
 Papers: reason

F12293 47401/2553 100m (22) 8/19 J.P. up 188
 13241 7479/2407 200m (22) 6/19

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Entry:

CWGC CERTIFICATE

In Memory Of

Private

T R WATTS

Service Number: 7693

1st Bn., The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment) who died on 03 October 1914 Age 28

Son of William and Phyllis Watts, of The Green, Horsmonden, Kent.

Remembered with Honour

ST. NAZAIRE (TOUTES-AIDES) CEMETERY

D. 61.



|||||
COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES
|||||

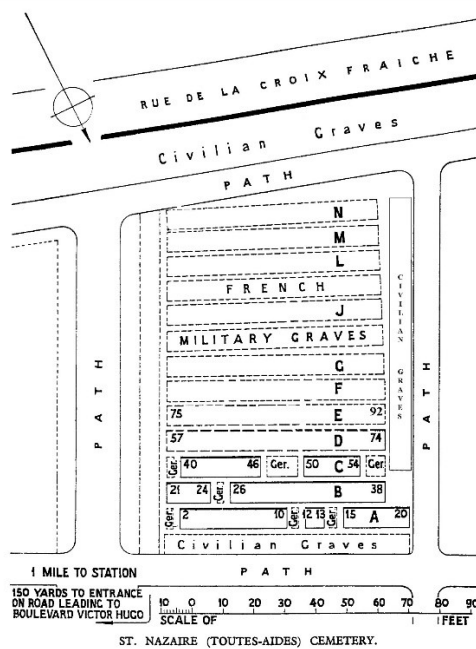
COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

MILITARY CEMETRY:

ST. NAZAIRE (TOUTES-AIDES) CEMETERY ST NAZAIRE, FRANCE



CEMETRY PLAN



Pte Watts is buried in Row D, Grave 61



We are grateful to the Great Niece of Private Thomas Watts, Mrs Glenda Fox, for her help with information about her Great Uncle Thomas.