

“...Thousands of people all over England will kneel today and feel in their hearts it is their loved one they are putting to rest. And it will be their son, husband...brother...their loved one who died for England.”

130

2nd Lieutenant Walter Tull was sent to the Italian Front and became the first black officer in the British Army to command white troops.



131



132

## BRITISH ARE ACTIVE ON THE PIAVE FRONT

Patrols Cross the River and  
Artillery Shells Austro-  
German Bases.

### GUN DUELS INTENSIFIED

Italians Bombard Enemy Trans-  
ports and Moving Columns  
on the Asiago Plateau.

133

He twice led his Company across the River Piave on a raid in enemy territory and both times brought all of his troops back safely with out a single casualty.

### ITALIAN SNOWS 5 FEET DEEP.

Invaders, Hampered in Transport.  
Suffer Under Defenders' Fire.



135

“I wish to place on record my appreciation of your gallantry and coolness. You were one of the first to cross the river prior to the raid, and during the raid you took the covering party of the main body across and brought them back without a casualty, in spite of heavy fire.”

134

He was mentioned in despatches for his bravery and was recommended for a Military Cross, which he never received.



136



"I lost my brother Walter. He was a footballer you know and the first black infantry Officer in the British army. I lost him once before when we were just boys in the orphanage at Bethnal Green and then I lost him again in the German offensive of '18'."

137

After their time in Italy, Walter's Battalion was transferred to the terrible Somme Valley in France. On March 21, 1918, the Germans made one last desperate effort to win World War One.



137a

In a chat with Pte. T. Billingham, the Leicester goalkeeper the other day, he told me that Lieut. Walter Tull, of the Footballers' Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment, whose death was such a blow to his many friends, was killed by a machine gun bullet which entered his neck and came out just below his right eye. Billingham was about 30 yards from him when he was hit, and was the first to go to his assistance. He only lived two minutes, however, and Billingham carried him some distance in the hope of securing for him a decent burial, but had to leave him on account of the Germans' rapid advance. Tull, he adds, will be greatly missed. He was a thorough gentleman.

On 25 March, 1918, Walter was killed by machine gun fire near Favreuil aerodrome. Leicester goalkeeper, Private Tom Billingham, attempted to retrieve his body under heavy fire but was unsuccessful due to the enemy soldiers advance.

Having no known grave, his name is inscribed on Bay 7, Arras Memorial, Faubourg-d'Amiens Cemetery, Arras, France.



140

In 1999 Walter Tull's former club, Northampton Town, erected a memorial outside of Sixfields Stadium, naming the road to the stadium "Walter Tull Way".



# Britain's Boy

The train rumbled through Nunhead, Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill stations without a word being spoken by anyone. Then as they crossed the Thames shortly before arriving at Victoria, the grieving mother from Sidcup spoke. "I'll always believe it is my son Thomas," she said, defying the others to contradict her. The elegant lady glanced up and replied firmly but politely, "I'll always be sure it is my Francis."

141a



141



The young widow from Gillingham looked as if she was about to speak, but seemed to think better of it. Instead she reached into her clutch purse and pulled out a label which was still attached to a length of parcel string. She seemed to stare at it for a while before returning it to her bag. She remained silent.

“It will be my brother Walter,” said the man in the corner in a very certain tone.

Nobody replied this time. They all turned to the window and gazed out onto the platform as they pulled into Victoria.

Each lost in their own thoughts.

142



# Postscript

## A Widow's Grief



146



142a

Florence Margaret Tompkins was already pregnant with her son Jim when she married James Brill in 1914. She was just 16 years of age and struggling to cope as a young mother when war broke out.

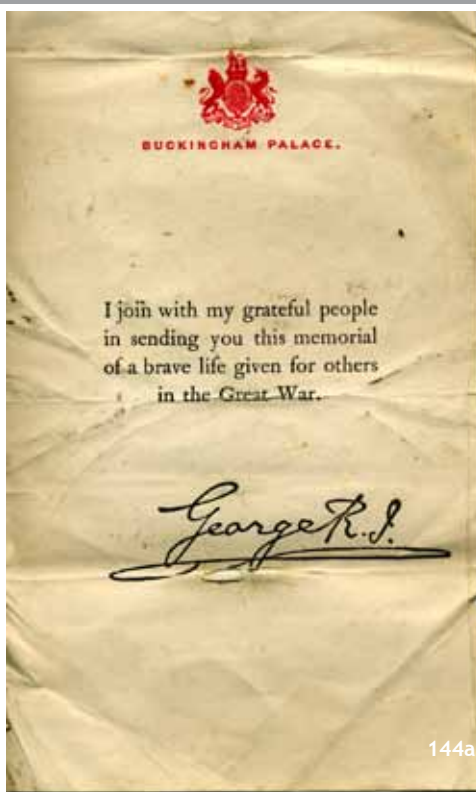


143

Her husband joined the Royal Marines in Chatham and was sent out to fight the Turks in the Dardanelles campaign in 1915. He was seriously wounded and died of his wounds aboard HMT "Mashobra" on 3 May 1915. He was buried in Alexandria, Egypt which meant that his wife could never afford to visit his grave.



144



144a

His last effects were sent back from the hospital ship to the barracks in Chatham and sent onto Florence at her home in Kensington. This was in 1915. Florence died in 1965. She kept James' tattered photo and the string that had tied up that last parcel in her purse until the day she died, nearly 60 years later. Nearly one million British lives were lost in World War One. Imagine the grief Florence felt magnified this number of times over.



145



# Rfm 2327 Charles David Waller

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1	David Waller	Head	51		Married	26	7	6
2	Anna Rice Waller	Wife	48	48	Married	.	.	
3	Alice Margaret Waller	Daughter	25	25	Single			
4	Florence Waller	Daughter	23	23	Single			
5	Dorothy Waller	Daughter	22	22	Single			
6	Charles David Waller	Son	18		Single			
7	Isabel Annie Waller	Daughter	16	16	Single			
8	Theolet Maud Waller	Daughter	14	14	Single			
9	Adelaide Mary Stanford	Servant	20	20	Single			



Page	Case	Rank	Regt. Co.
	* 16th South	Plt	23RD
			530000
WALLER.			
C.D.			
Social	Rank	Page	Remarks
15	T.P. 16/10/02	57	Search free 1/1/16
	TP 28	46	
1) France.			
1922 15.			

London & South Western Railway. (2/5)  
1-49.

**TICKET for SOLDIERS, SAILORS, &c.**  
This Ticket is issued subject to the Regulations and Conditions stated in the  
Company's Time Tables and Book.

No. R 89865 Date 1st Dec 18  
To be written in full with ink.  
From BARNES. Brighton Station.  
Route via Southampton &

30



# Postscript

## A Father's Only Son:

### Rfm 2327 Charles David Waller

Telephone No.: REGENT 6151.  
Telegrams: "NATIONALLY, CHARLES."

BRITISH RED CROSS.

—AND—

ORDER OF ST. JOHN. 16.8.17

ENQUIRY DEPARTMENT  
FOR  
WOUNDED AND MISSING,

18, Carlton House Terrace, S.W.

16th London. July 1st 1916.

Rfm C.D.Waller 2327

Dear Sir

Now that over a year has passed without news, notwithstanding our diligent enquiries at home and abroad, we fear that the soldiers of the 16th London who were missing in the attack of July 1st 1916 cannot have survived. This was, as you know, the first day of the great offensive on the Somme front and the battle was everywhere very violent.

We understand that the 16th London made an early morning attack between Hebuterne and Gommecourt H. of Albert. They took three lines, but then had to retire, as their supports could not get up to them through the enemy's barrage fire. Their losses were heavy, from bombs, and snipers' bullets as well as from shelling and machine gun fire, and in the retirement the fallen had to be left behind. On our side we hear of bayonets being used, and of a determined stand made at the first German line trench. An eye-witness says:-

"We held it till 7 p.m. when the Germans came over and bombed us out."

Finally our men returned to their own trenches about 250 yards away.

In the stress of the incessant fighting, men had little opportunity for noticing the movements of their comrades. After questioning every reliable witness whom we could find, we have reluctantly had to give up all hope of hearing anything of *Mr. Son's* fate, though we never cease to watch the Prisoners' Lists from Germany for the names of all the missing.

With much sympathy in what we feel convinced is your sad loss,

David Waller Esq.

Yours truly,

145a

Imperial War Graves Commission  
Arras.

16/8/21.

2327 Rfm C.D.Waller 1/ Queens Westminsters

1/7/16.

I have to acknowledge your letter of August 3rd. I regret that I am unable to find any record of the grave of the above mentioned Soldier but should anything definite be forthcoming you will duly notified through the Head Office, 82, Baker Street meantime if you think of visiting the spot I would suggest that you might include Gommecourt Cemetery No 2, Hebuterne, where there are buried many of the Queens Westminsters and numerous Unknown British Soldiers, killed on July 1st 1916.

(signed) A. E. Kelk  
C i/c Enquiry Bureau No 4 Arras

145a

Charles was one of the 689 men of the Queen's Westminsters who attacked the German lines at Gommecourt on 1st July 1916. 494 of these men were to be killed or wounded (72% of the Battalion). Charles was one of those killed and like Captain Francis Gibbon Swainson has no known grave. His parents initially received a telegram informing them he was missing in action. A year later his father David wrote to the Red Cross for news. Their letter confirmed the worst. Five years later David Waller was still trying to track down the final resting place of his only son through the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission.

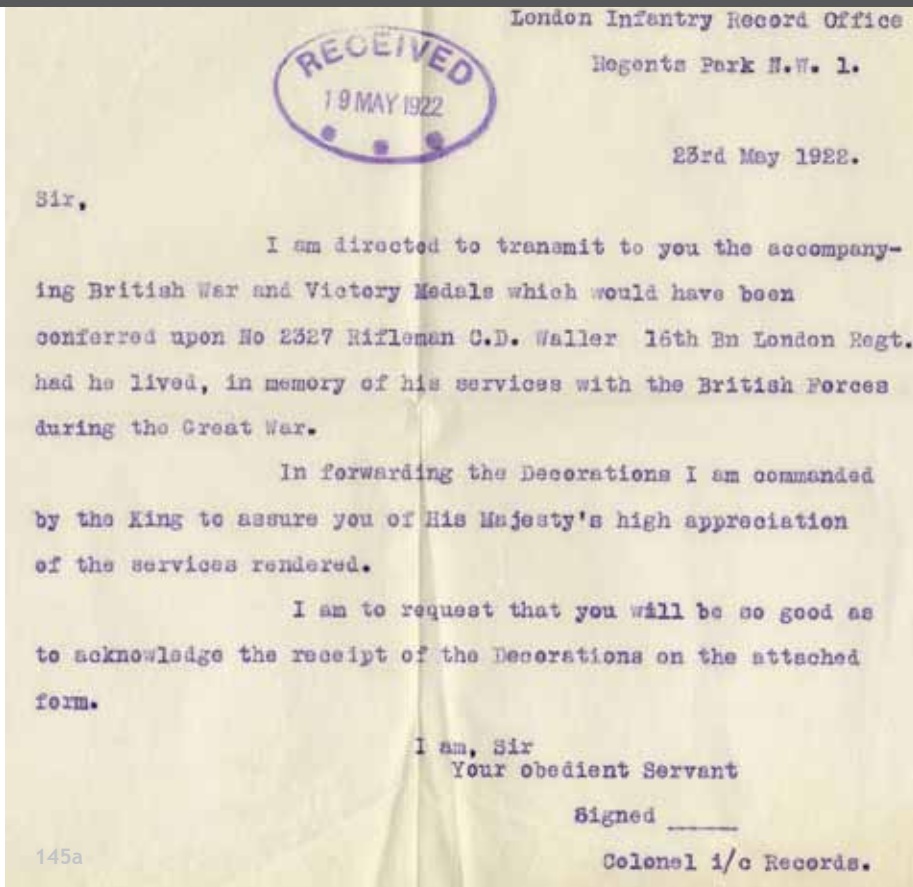




# Postscript

## A Father's Only Son:

### Rfm 2327 Charles David Waller



WALKER, A., Rfln.  
WALKER, F., Sgt.  
WALKER, F. H., A/Sgt.  
WALKER, R. W., Rfln.  
WALL, W. L. J., Rfln.  
WALLACE, D. C., Rfln.  
WALLACE, L., Rfln.  
WALLER, C. D., Rfln.  
WALLER, W., Rfln.  
WALSH, P., Rfln.  
WALTER, E. A., Rfln.  
WARD, H., Rfln.

David Waller never got over the loss of his only son. He attended two memorial services at Westminster Abbey in 1919 and 1921, the latter to dedicate a special window in memory of the fallen soldiers of the Queen's Westminsters (right). He also attended the opening of the Thiepval memorial to the missing of the Somme in 1932. Like other families he received his son's medals and death plaque but nothing could replace his only son, the lad he'd groomed from birth to take over the family business.



WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

*Dedication of a Window*  
placed in St. Benedict's Chapel

IN MEMORY OF THE  
Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers  
and Private Riflemen  
of the  
QUEEN'S WESTMINSTER RIFLES

Who gave their lives for their  
Country in the War  
1914-1918.

SATURDAY, MARCH 10th, 1921  
1.45 p.m.





145a

## IN MEMORY OF THE FALLEN OF THE QUEEN'S WESTMINSTER RIFLES.

*The New Window Erected in Westminster Abbey*

*From a drawing in colour by D. Macpherson*

Recently, in Westminster Abbey, the Prince of Wales, as Honorary Colonel of the Queen's Westminster and Civil Service Rifles, unveiled a beautiful stained glass memorial to the men of the Queen's Westminster Rifles who fell in the war. This regiment thus possesses the unique distinction of being the only Territorial regiment to be commemorated in perpetuity in the Abbey. The window is the work of the house of Powell. It contains large-sized figures of St. George, the Patron Saint of England and of the Army, and King Richard I., the great Crusader. Among a long list of service honours, the battalion specially counts its share in the battles of the Ypres Salient and in the capture and defence of Jerusalem, and these are commemorated by views of the ruins of Ypres Cathedral and of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. The figures of St. Denis of France, St. Martin of Ypres, St. Peter, the Patron Saint of the Abbey of Westminster, and St. Louis, the King of France, who was associated with the Crusades, are appropriately depicted, and at the base of the shafting are the regimental badge and coats of arms.





## To Grandad, Monty is not forgotten



*“They shall grow not  
old, as we that are  
left grow old:  
Age shall not weary  
them, nor the years  
condemn.  
At the going  
dawn of the sun  
and in the  
morning. We  
will remember them.”*

(Laurence Binyon)







# ACTIVITIES

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# A Window for the Abbey

Using the glass window template opposite, design your own stained glass window in memory of one of the soldiers below. Use their mini-biographies on this page to help remind you of their lives. Think about what sorts of images would best describe each soldier. Use the examples of stained glass to help you.



**Sgt Richard Monty Daniel** was killed by a German shell on the 26th October 1916 after only 6 days in the trenches. Monty came from a family of bargeman from Rochester in Kent. Before the war he worked as a shipwright in Chatham Dockyard and served part time in the Royal East Kent Mounted Rifles (REKMR). He transferred to the Buffs in September 1916 and when he was killed he was still wearing his REKMR uniform with his Sergeant's stripes. Despite this the army refused to pay his wife of only 3 months a Sergeant's widow's pension.



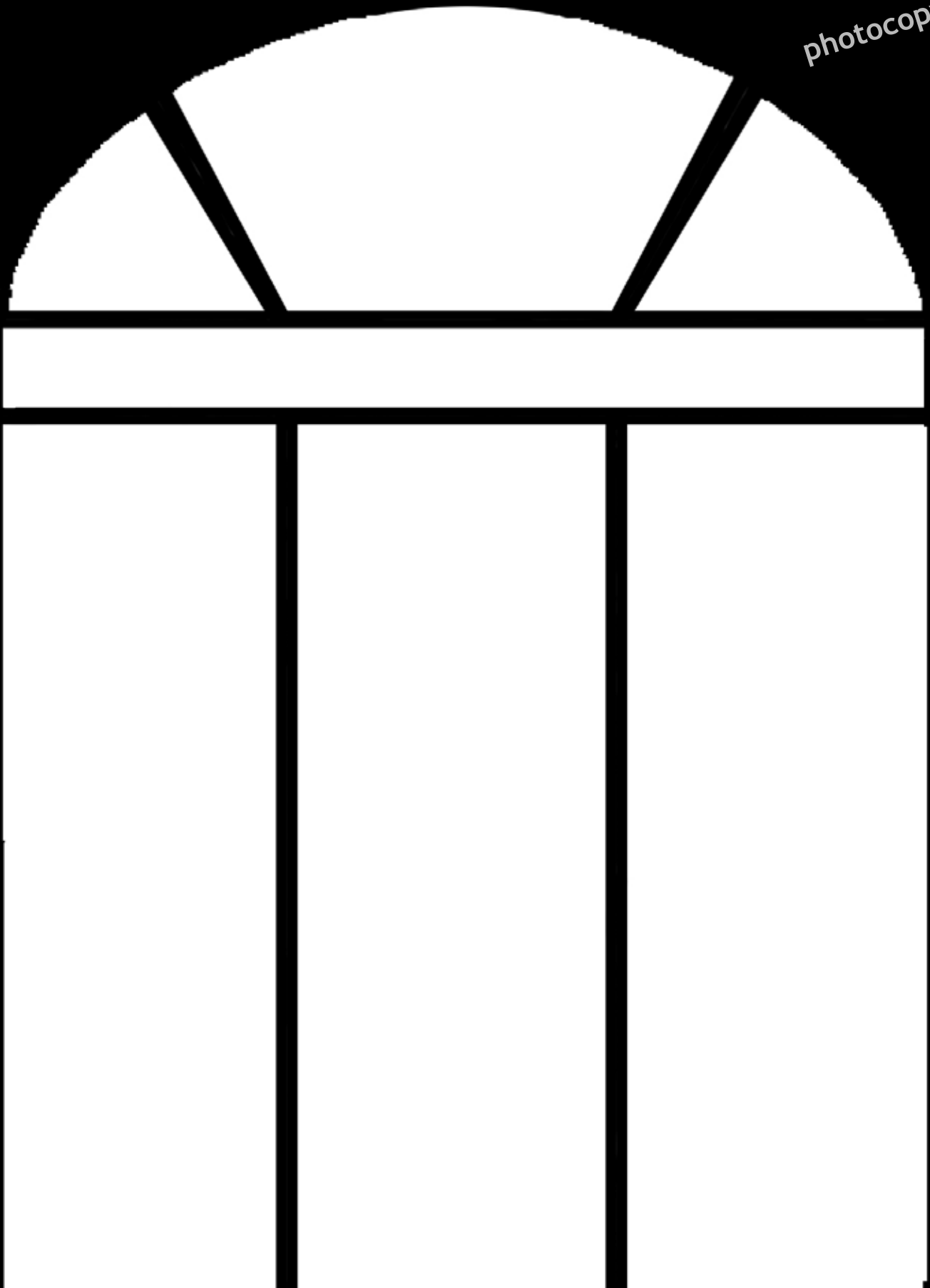
**Captain Francis Gibbon Swainson MC** was killed at Gommecourt, on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1st July 1916. Francis came from a wealthy family in Preston Lancashire and joined the Queen's Westminster Rifles as a 2nd Lieutenant at the outbreak of war in 1914. By June 1916, at the age of only 21, he was a Captain and holder of the Military Cross for bravery in battle at Ypres. Swainson was initially listed as missing, and his mother Eliza did not have confirmation of his death until nearly a year later.



**2nd Lieutenant Walter Tull** was killed on March 25th 1918. Walter grew up in Folkestone, but lost both his parents at an early age and was taken into the Bonner Road orphanage in Bethnal Green. He played football for Clapton, Tottenham Hotspurs and Northampton Town before war broke out. In December 1914, Walter enlisted in the The Football Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment and proved to be such a distinguished soldier that he was made an officer in May 1917. Later that year Walter made history by becoming the first black Briton to lead troops into battle at Piave in Italy. He was nominated for a Military Cross but never received his medal.



**Private Thomas Highgate** was the first British soldier to be shot at dawn on 8 September 1914. During the hectic retreat from the Battle of Mons, he was caught in a barn, accused of desertion, and sent into an immediate Court Martial. He was given no assistance with his trial and found guilty of desertion. The army made sure he was executed in front of other troops to deter others. In 2006, Parliament granted a Royal Pardon to Highgate, but his hometown of Shoreham, Kent refuses to recognise him on their memorial.



- WRITE your soldier's name in the centre arch at the top of the window.
- WRITE an epitaph in the oblong at the top of the stained glass window.

Epitaph: An inscription on a tombstone or monument commemorating the person buried there OR a short piece of writing celebrating the life of a deceased person An example of an epitaph is "Gone, but not forgotten"



# In Memoriam

The Thiepval memorial is the largest British war memorial in the world. The memorial contains the names of 73,357 British and South African men who have no known grave and who fell on the Somme between July 1916 and 20 March 1918. Both Monty Daniel and Francis Swainson's names are found here.



148

HERE ARE RECORDED  
NAMES OF OFFICERS  
AND MEN OF THE  
BRITISH ARMIES WHO FELL  
ON THE SOMME BATTLEFIELDS  
JULY 1915 FEBRUARY 1918  
BUT TO WHOM  
THE FORTUNE OF WAR  
DENIED THE KNOWN  
AND HONOURED BURIAL  
GIVEN TO THEIR  
COMRADES IN DEATH

On a memorial of this size there is no space for an epitaph to remember any individual. It is very easy for soldiers like Francis and Monty to become lost amongst so many names.

CRISPIN J.  
CRONIN D.  
CROUD F.  
CURNESS F. G.  
DALTON N.  
DANIEL R. M.  
DAVIES G.  
DAVIS W. R. V.  
DAWSON G.  
DENHAM W.  
DOE A.  
DUNKLEY F.



## Epitaph

An epitaph is a short inscription on a tombstone in memory of the person buried there.

## In Memoriam

Is a latin phrase meaning 'in memory.' It is often used to remember someone after they've died.

# In Memoriam

COULD you write an epitaph for Monty, Francis and Thomas? Have a look at some of these examples. The first three are by well known poets and the others were found on the CWGC website of graveyards in France and were written by ordinary people.

*“His face was a ray of sunshine  
Amongst so many dark clouds”*

*“Little cross of bronze  
The cross he won  
But never wore  
My son”*

*“Some time  
Some time  
We’ll understand”*

## In Memoriam

*The flowers left thick at nightfall in the wood  
This Eastertide call into mind the men,  
Now far from home, who, with their sweethearts, should  
Have gathered them and will never do again.*

Edward Thomas

(written a year before he died at Arras in 1917)

## The Coward

*I could not look on Death, which being known,  
Men led me to him, blindfold and alone*

Rudyard Kipling

## A Son

*My son was killed while laughing at some jest. I would  
I knew  
What it was, and it might serve me in a time when jests  
are few.*

Rudyard Kipling

(following the death of his son John in 1915)

Thomas Highgate's name can be found on the La Ferte-Sous-Jouarre memorial east of Paris. Water Tull is remembered on the Arras memorial in the Faubourg-d'Amiens Cemetery.



In 1999 a memorial was unveiled to Walter Tull outside Northampton's Sixfield stadium. Phil Vasili who had done so much to uncover Walter's story wrote an epitaph for him. Francis Swainson, Monty Daniel and Thomas Highgate have no words to remember their lives.



THROUGH HIS ACTIONS W D J TULL RIDICULED THE BARRIERS OF IGNORANCE THAT TRIED TO DENY THE PEOPLE OF COLOUR EQUALITY WITH THEIR CONTEMPORARIES. HIS LIFE STANDS TESTAMENT TO A DETERMINATION TO CONFRONT THOSE PEOPLE AND THOSE OBSTACLES THAT SOUGHT TO DIMINISH HIM AND THE WORLD IN WHICH HE LIVED. IT REVEALS A MAN, THOUGH RENDERED BREATHLESS IN HIS PRIME, WHOSE STRONG HEART STILL BEATS LOUDLY.



# In Memoriam

## The Unknown Warrior

Thousands of soldiers killed in World War One were left with no known grave. They are honoured in Westminster Abbey through the tomb of the Unknown Warrior. The remains of an unidentified soldier were brought back to England and buried amongst the Kings of England on 11th November, 1920.



SECTION 1: Can you write an epitaph for a window for Westminster Abbey dedicated to one of the four soldiers in the Not Forgotten Story.

- Read through your soldier's story in the Not Forgotten booklet and answer the questions in the box below. This will help you remember the key parts of his life.
- Use the template to put together an epitaph.
- Use your epitaph in your stained glass window.

What were the major events in your soldier's life?

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How did your soldier die and how do you think he would have felt about the circumstances of his death?

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How do you think he would like to be remembered?

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# In Memoriam

**SECTION 2:** Now try and write your epitaph for your soldier.  
Remember the epitaphs are usually quite short, four lines are normally enough.

## My list of words and phrases

Write a list of words or phrases for your epitaph

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## Sort out my list of words and phrases

Now look at all the thoughts you have jotted down.

Can you put them into some sort of order?

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---

## The final draft of my poem

Ask a partner to read through what you have written.

What works well? What isn't clear and needs improving?

**When you have done this give your epitaph a title and write your final draft in this box**

Use your answers to section 1 to help you

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# Not Forgotten

**CHOOSE** some soldiers who are featured on one of the 4 memorials featured below and see if you can find out any further information on the CWGC website.

[www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)

149



QWR Scroll Westminster Abbey



Francis G Swainson 1916



Charles D Waller 1916



Hugh F Mott 1916



Richard H Treffry 1917



Sidcup War Memorial



Thomas Highgate 1914



Percy Jones 1915



Reg Unwin 1916



Ernest Weller 1918



Chatham Dockyard



R Monty Daniel 1916



Fred Langdon 1915



Victor Marlow 1917



William J Norris 1918



Dover War Memorial



Walter Tull 1918



George T Palmer 1916



Stephen J A Palmer 1917



John T Hanson 1916

# Not Forgotten

**VISIT** your local war memorial. Write down the names of 4 soldiers and the regiment in the army that they belonged. Now fill out the rest of the table with the information you find when you search the CWGC website (see instructions below).

Name of Soldier	Age	Regiment	Date of death	Where they are buried	Other information (Next of Kin, address etc...)

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Visit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)).
- 2 Double click on the 'Search Our Records' button.
- 3 Fill in the details that you have of your soldier/s on the 'Debt of Honour Register' form.
- 4 Click 'submit' (You should now see your soldier's name come up with more information about him or her)
- 5 Click on to the name of your soldier and more information will come up, which you can use to fill in the table.
- 6 Click to see a certificate showing your soldiers name and the picture of the cemetery or memorial where they are remembered.

[www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)



# Not Forgotten



**In Memory of  
Private RICHARD MONTY DANIEL**

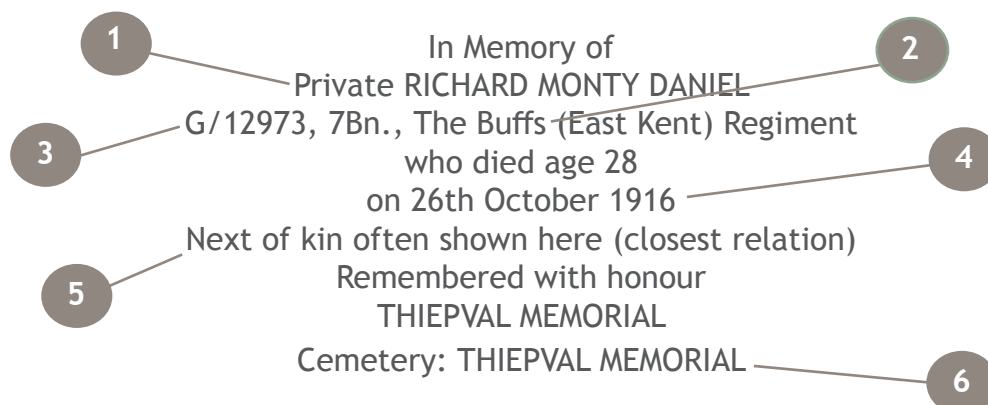
**G/12973, 7th Bn., The Buffs (East Kent Regiment)  
who died  
on 26 October 1916**

**Remembered with honour  
THIEPVAL MEMORIAL**



**Commemorated in perpetuity by  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

# Not Forgotten



Country: France  
Locality: Somme

**Location Information:** The Thiepval Memorial will be found on the D73, off the main Bapaume to Albert road (D929). Each year a major ceremony is held at the memorial on 1 July.

**Historical Information:** On 1 July 1916, supported by a French attack to the south, thirteen divisions of Commonwealth forces launched an offensive on a line from north of Gommecourt to Maricourt. Despite a preliminary bombardment lasting seven days, the German defences were barely touched and the attack met unexpectedly fierce resistance. Losses were catastrophic and with only minimal advances on the southern flank, the initial attack was a failure. In the following weeks, huge resources of manpower and equipment were deployed in an attempt to exploit the modest successes of the first day. However, the German Army resisted tenaciously and repeated attacks and counter attacks meant a major battle for every village, corpse and farmhouse gained. At the end of September, Thiepval was finally captured. The village had been an original objective of 1 July. Attacks north and east continued throughout October and into November in increasingly difficult weather conditions. The Battle of the Somme finally ended on 18 November with the onset of winter. In the spring of 1917, the German forces fell back to their newly prepared defences, the Hindenburg Line, and there were no further significant engagements in the Somme sector until the Germans mounted their major offensive in March 1918. The Thiepval Memorial, the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20 March 1918 and have no known grave. Over 90% of those commemorated died between July and November 1916. The memorial also serves as an Anglo-French Battle Memorial in recognition of the joint nature of the 1916 offensive and a small cemetery containing equal numbers of Commonwealth and French graves lies at the foot of the memorial. The memorial, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, was built between 1928 and 1932 and unveiled by the Prince of Wales, in the presence of the President of France, on 31 July 1932. The dead of other Commonwealth countries who died on the Somme and have no known graves are commemorated on national memorials elsewhere.

No. of Identified Casualties: 72107

## Interpreting CWGC Information:

- (1) Monty was a Private, the lowest rank in the army.
- (2) Monty belonged to the East Kent Regiment ("The Buffs"), and was in the 7th Battalion. A Battalion is about 800 men.
- (3) Monty's army number was G/12973. He would have known this by heart and worn it around his neck on his dog tags. When a soldier died the number on his dog tags was used to identify him.
- (4) Date of Monty's death. Monty died on the 26th October 1916, during the Battle of the Somme.
- (5) Some certificates show next of kin here. Jessie Daniel, however, is not recorded on his records at the Commonwealth War Graves website.
- (6) Location of grave or memorial. As you can see his name is on a memorial, this means that Monty has no known grave! This is true of most of the men who died on the Somme. He is found in name only on Pier and Face 5 D.



# Plenty of Rain and Mud and Other Things

**READ** the letter below right. It was written by Lance Corporal (Arthur) Victor Sharman from the Somme to his mother in Sidcup on the day that Monty Daniel died, 26th October 1916. Soldiers rarely wrote the truth when they wrote home and Victor obviously did not want to worry her but hints how things really are when he says, 'There is plenty of rain and mud and other things out here.'



**DESCRIPTIVE REPORT ON ENLISTMENT**  
(To correspond with Entries on the Medical History Sheet.)  
Applicable to all ranks.

Name Arthur Victor Sharman  
Apparent age 18 years 143 <sup>days</sup> Height 5 feet 7 1/2 inches  
Chest Measurement { Girth when fully expanded 35 inches  
Range of expansion 2 1/4 inches  
Distinctive marks Scar right side of face

**INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY RECRUIT.**  
Name and Address of next-of-kin Arthur James Sharman  
44 Clarence Street Sidcup Relationship Father  
Particulars as to Marriages.  
(a) Christian and Name of Woman to whom married, and whether opposite or widow. (b) Place and date of marriage.  
(c) Present address. (d) Initials of other surviving party.

Particulars as to Children.  
Christian Name Date and Place of Birth

**MILITARY HISTORY SHEET.**

1. Passed classes of Instruction + + This includes any authorized class of instruction, e.g., in accounting, shorthand, etc.	
2. Campaigns ... (including Actions)	<u>1914-15</u>
2. Wounded ...	<u>Wounded at Arras 11th April 1917</u>
4. Special instances of gallant conduct and meritorious service in public dispatches	
5. Medals, decorations and awards	
6. Injuries by or by the service ...	

150

3 October 26th 1916

I only hope that you are not worrying yourself about me. I know that you are anxious, and it's not nice to have no idea when I am, but I am quite well, and am jogging along in the usual way. There is plenty of rain and mud and other things out here, but we are well-fed and well-clotted, and on the whole have nothing to grouse about. You would be surprised to see how comfortable we are at night, with our overcoats and even a blanket each.

151

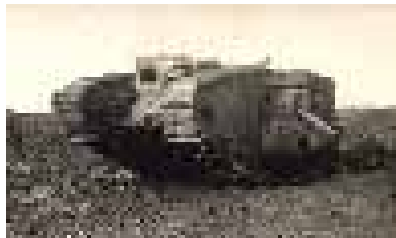
Soldiers in the trenches longed for what they called a 'Blighty.' This was a wound bad enough to get them home permanently. On the 13th August 1917 Victor Sharman got his Blighty. He was shot in the left arm at the beginning of the Battle of Passchendaele and sent home. He never went back to war and when the war was over he married his sweetheart Muriel. He died of old age on 1st June 1995, aged 97.

As Victor wrote his letter on October 26th 1916 he had nearly 80 years ahead of him. For Monty that would be his last day alive. He had only been married 3 months but his life was over at just 29.



"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn".  
(Laurence Binyon)





Dear Jessie

Six days now in this God forsaken hole,  
Haggard and hopeless in my muddy 'home,'  
Six days ago I staggered to this place,  
Sliding and slipping, sinking in my boots,  
In to the mud of Fabeck Graben trench.

My first day here I'm eager to forget,  
For now we've marched into a grey, treeless  
world,  
That's been shelled into my idea of hell.  
The rank stench of 'No Man's Land' still haunts  
me,  
And its cause hangs limply from our wire.

That first night a flare lit up the darkness,  
Revealing grinning rats, grown fat as cats,  
And when the brightness died in dark,  
The ice wind came to chill me to the bone,  
As I stood ankle deep in mud and slime.

Between fitful moments of troubled sleep,  
I think of our training camps at Ramsgate,  
Flashing sabres charging at the gallop,  
Pointless preparation for war in France,  
That's fought with bullets, shells and monstrous  
tanks.

I sit here 'chatting' with my mates from home,  
In vain hope of ridding ourselves of lice,  
For every unwanted guest we remove,  
It seems two more move in and take their place,  
To leave us just as lousy as before.

We have cans of bully beef for dinner,  
And biscuits hard enough to feed to dogs,  
It's left me dreaming dreams of Sunday roasts.  
Our tea is flavoured from a petrol can,  
But comes in handy when we need to shave.

Six days ago I staggered to this place,  
Now I long to be back in Gillingham,  
And hold you Jessie in my arms again,  
I keep our wedding picture close to me,  
To give me strength when I am feeling down.

And now darling its time for me to close.

Monty

NOW I AM A SOLDIER WITH NO KNOWN GRAVE.

They say that the one that has your name on  
Is the one shell you never get to hear.  
It's true!

All that I am, all that I was. Finished.  
Ended in an instant of blinding light.  
I was husband, brother, uncle...Sergeant?  
I died with my Sergeant's stripes still on me.  
Now I have a number (G/12973), but no rank,  
And no body 'neath a memorial stone.  
Here in my corner of a foreign field  
My story ends.

Peter Daniel



# Plenty of Rain and Mud and *Other Things*

**IMAGINE** you are Monty. You saw a young boy in the street when you were travelling out to the trenches who reminds you of your nephew Billy. When you finally arrive in the trenches you decide to write a postcard to Billy and a letter to his father, your brother William, telling them about your life as a soldier in France.



- Read the poem “Dear Jessie” on page 42 to help you think of things to write.
- Use the Postcard template below to write a postcard to your nephew, Billy.
- You will need to be careful what you tell your nephew, he’s young and you don’t want to scare him with too much detail about what life is like in the trenches.



*Master Billy Daniel  
Medway House  
Slipway Yard  
Rochester  
Kent  
England*

# Plenty of Rain and Mud and *Other Things*

- Read the poem “Dear Jessie” on page 42 to help you think of things to write.
- Use the Postcard template below to write a postcard to your brother, William.
- You are close to your brother and can tell him truthfully how awful life in the trenches and the Somme really is.



*20th October, 1916*

*Dear brother, William,*





# Shot at Dawn: The execution of Thomas Highgate



On 8 September 1914, Private Thomas Highgate became the first British soldier in World War One to be shot at dawn for cowardice.

During the retreat from the Battle of Mons, he was caught in a barn, accused of desertion, and sent for immediate trial. The speed of events forced Highgate into making his own defence. The members of his company who survived the battle were scattered amongst the retreat, making it impossible to call up character witnesses. His military conduct sheet had record of a previous desertion in February of 1914. Although the incident involved Highgate signing up for another regiment, not abandoning the military altogether, it damaged his credibility a great deal. In the end, it was his word against the civilian who found him.

## Confession

I Thomas James Highgate do hereby voluntarily confess that I am No 10060 serving in the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn Royal West Kent Regiment and that I absented myself from that Corps on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 1914 and attempted to fraudulently enlist into His Majesty's Army by making a wilfully false answer to question 10 on attestation on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 1914, at Woolwich. I am further aware and have been cautioned that this confession may be used in evidence against me.

Woolwich  
5.5.14

Witness

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Plea	Finding, and if Convicted, Sentence (b)
Not Guilty	Guilty



This document records that

Pte T J Highgate of the Royal West Kent Regiment

who was executed for desertion on 8 September 1914 is pardoned under Section 359 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.

The pardon stands as recognition that he was one of many victims of the First World War and that execution was not a fate he deserved.

*Justice*

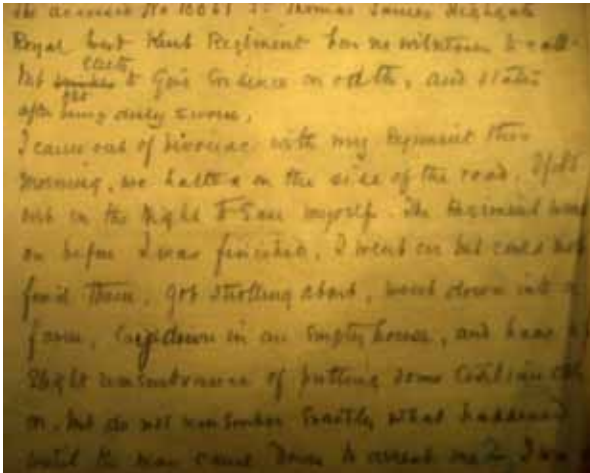
Secretary of State for Defence

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The court found him guilty as charged and sentenced him to be executed at dawn. An attempt was made to make Highgate's execution as public as possible, to deter others from deserting. In 2006, Parliament granted a Royal Pardon to Highgate and the other 345 soldiers who were shot at dawn during World War I. Even with the pardon, Highgate's hometown of Shoreham, Kent refuses to recognize him on their memorial. He is remembered at the British memorial at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, Seine-et-Marne in France and on the Sidcup War memorial in Kent.

# Shot at Dawn: The execution of Thomas Highgate

Below is Thomas's testimony.  
What is his version of what happened?



Source #1 Thomas Highgate's Testimony at his trial:

*"I came out of bivouac with my Regiment this morning, we halted on the side of the road. I fell out on the right to ease myself. The Regiment went on before I was finished. I went on but could not find them, got strolling about, went down into a farm, lay down in an empty house, and have a slight remembrance of putting some civilian clothes on, but do not remember exactly what happened until the man came down to arrest me..."*

Q Why did you say to M. Fermor you "wanted to get out of it and that was how you were doing it", or words to that effect?

A "When he came to me, I told him that I was trying to get out of it, meaning that I had lost my way, wanted to get out of the place in which I was, and wanted to rejoin my regiment. I cannot say why I was in civilian clothes."

Below is a first hand account of the Retreat from the Battle of Mons.  
What were the conditions that Thomas was surrounded by?  
Does this change the way you view his behaviour at the barn?

Source #2 Excerpts from The Retreat from Mons, August 23rd-September 5th, 1914 by Corporal Bernard John Denore:

*"We marched all day long, miles and miles it seemed, probably owing to the fact that we had had no sleep at all since Saturday the 22nd, and had had very little food to eat... The marching was getting quite disorderly; numbers of men from other regiments were mixed up with us. ...The men were discarding their equipment in a wholesale fashion, in spite of orders to the contrary; also many of them fell out, and rejoined again towards dusk. ...It was the most terrible march I have ever done. Men were falling down like nine-pins. They would fall flat on their faces on the road, while the rest of us staggered round them, as we couldn't lift our feet high enough to step over them..."*



Below is a very brief summary of the trial.  
Would you find it difficult to defend yourself without a lawyer?

Source #3 Condensed Information from military records displaying the outcome of Thomas's trial. An 'accused's friend' is a defence lawyer.

Charges	Plea	Verdict	Remarks and Particulars of character
Desertion	Not Guilty	Guilty	No accused's friend



# Shot at Dawn: The execution of Thomas Highgate

Here is the testimony of the witness who originally found Thomas in the barn. What is his version of events?



Source #1 From the testimony of Thomas Fermor at Thomas Highgate's Trial:

"...I went toward the MEDLIN and found there the accused here present before the court, dressed in civilian clothes. I asked him what he was doing, he answered "I have lost my Army, and I mean to get out of it", or words to that effect. I asked him where his clothes were and what Regiment he belonged to. He said "The West Kent" I searched him and found on him the book which I produce. I took him to the place where he thought he had left his clothes, rifle, and cartridge. We found his clothes in a woodshed. His rifle and cartridge were missing - I took him to the MAIRIE and gave him up to the French police. I also produce his uniform which is marked 10061 R.W.K.."

To the right is information on Thomas's behaviour while he was in the military. The desertion charge on 28 February 1914 is when Thomas tried to sign up for 2 regiments at the same time.

- What type of soldier does he appear to be?
- Are these major offences or minor offences?

Source #2 Condensed Information from Highgate's Squadron, Troop, Battery, and Company Conduct Sheet:

Place	Date of Offence	Offence	Punishment Awarded
Dublin	Aug 29, 1913	Exchanging duties without permission	7 days CB
Dublin	7 Sept, 1913	Absent from tattoo until 11:25 pm	5 days CB
Dublin	15 Feb, 1914	Having a rusty rifle on guard mounting parade	2 extra guards
Dublin	28 Feb 1914	Deserting his majesty's service	42 day Detention
Dublin	1 July 1914	Absent from tattoo until 10:40 pm	5 days CB

\*CB= Confined to barracks

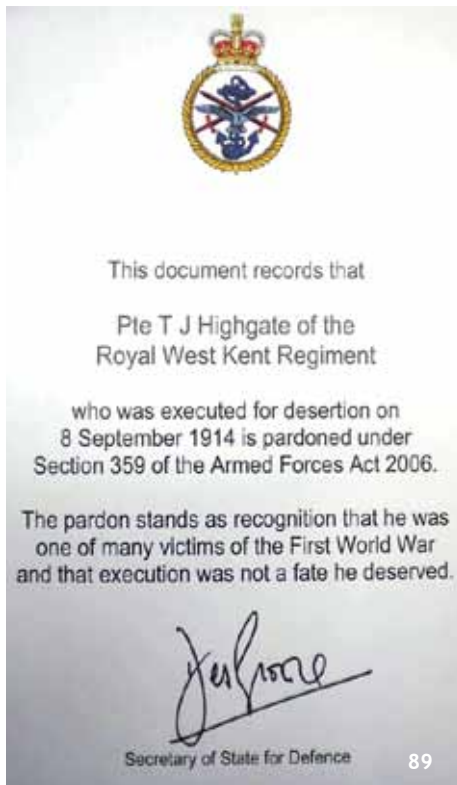
You are ordered abroad as a soldier of the King to help our French comrades against the invasion of a common Enemy. You have to perform a task which will need your courage, your energy, your patience. Remember that the honour of the British Army depends on your individual conduct. It will be your duty not only to set an example of discipline and perfect steadiness under fire but also to maintain the most friendly relations with those whom you are helping in this struggle. The operations in which you are engaged will, for the most part, take place in a friendly country, and you can do your own country no better service than in showing yourself in France and Belgium in the true character of a British soldier.

To the left is a page that would have been in Thomas's service book. It is an excerpt from a letter written by the War Secretary, Lord Kitchener, to the troops.

- What type of behaviour does Lord Kitchener expect from the soldiers?

# Shot at Dawn: The execution of Thomas Highgate

## Villagers Against Adding Deserter's Name to Memorial



*"...A proposal to add the name of the 19-year-old farm labourer, who deserted after less than two weeks of action during the Battle of Mons, was defeated by eight votes to one at a meeting of the parish council in Shoreham. Instead, councillors have agreed to leave a space for his name to be added if moves by Parliament to grant pardons to executed British soldiers succeed.*

*...George Jameson, the council chairman, said yesterday: "Many people felt strongly that he should not be on there. Local members of the British Legion said they would not want to salute a memorial bearing the name of a deserter. Others felt that, given the conditions during the First World War and the effects we now know that shell-shock can have on soldiers in the trenches, his name deserved to be added."*

*...Michael Green, of the Royal British Legion, said: "Many men fought at Mons and stood their ground. Obviously, by deserting, Highgate put his comrades at further risk. Should his name be honoured alongside those who stood and served their country bravely? I don't think so."*

Daily Telegraph, Monday 4 February, 2000

## "Honour My Dead Uncle Like You Said You Would"



*"...Earlier this month, Defence Secretary Des Browne announced he would be seeking a group pardon for all the soldiers shot for desertion, cowardice and other offences. Now Mr Highgate, 67, is calling on Shoreham's parish council and British Legion to place Pte Highgate's name on the memorial. There was a heated debate in the village in 2000 when it was discussed whether the name should go on its newly refurbished memorial. A gap was left in case Pte Highgate was ever pardoned. Now Mr Highgate, of Northumberland Park, Erith, says it is time for Shoreham to honour its pledge. The retired mechanic said: "I am pleased about the pardon. It will be welcomed, but it is obviously too late.*

*"The only thing I want is for the people of Shoreham, who said if ever he was pardoned his name would be put on the plaque, to fulfil their promise so my great-uncle can rest in peace and dignity."*

-Michael Rielly, News Shopper