

## Thomas Day – A Wounded Soldier at Gallipoli



Thomas Day was born in Tewkesbury in 1891, the fourth child of general labourer, Benjamin Day, and his wife the former Catherine Newman who had married in 1879. He was educated at the Trinity Schools and in 1911 he was a domestic gardener, aged 20 and still living at home.

Three years later, on 11 August – a week after the Declaration of War - he had volunteered for the army, his former Headmaster had included his name in a roll of honour of former pupils. He was then part of “Kitchener’s Army”, only later being allocated to the **7<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment**.



1a: ‘X’ – the new recruit with Kitchener’s ‘New Army’ – they had to wait until 1915 for uniforms



1b. Positive message from training camp to his future wife, written on the back of the card

The **7<sup>th</sup> Glousters** was a *Kitchener New Army* battalion raised mainly in Bristol and it was prepared for war on Salisbury Plain and Aldershot, before being despatched to the Gallipoli theatre on 19 June 1915 as part of the **13<sup>th</sup> (Western) Division**.



2: Pte. Day trained for War

After travelling via Alexandria in Egypt and the island of Mudros, the Divisional infantry landed temporarily on *Cape Helles*. However, it returned to Mudros at the end of the month. Having been reunited with its supporting units, the entire Division landed at *ANZAC Cove* 3-5 August 1915. It immediately took part in the **Battle of Sari Bair**, 6-10 August 1915.

Failures caused both sides to call up reinforcements and, on 8 August, the allies sent a new invasion force to *Suvla Bay*. Again it was initially successful but, by the time the Allied troops attempted to move inland, Turkish reinforcements had arrived to strengthen their defences. The **Battle of Sari Bair** then took place during which the Australian **15<sup>th</sup> Battalion** was part of a force involved in an attack on 6 August against the *Abdel Rahman Bair* heights, known to the Australians as ‘*Hill 971*’. The attack was a failure and, by 8 August, the 15th battalion alone was reduced to about 30% of its normal strength. **Pte. J. G. Coleman** [#] was one of the casualties and was the first Tewkesbury pre-War emigrant to be killed.

At the same time the **7<sup>th</sup> Glousters** were involved in this final attempt to break out of the *Anzac Cove* perimeter. The **Battle of Chunuk Bair** was one of a number of battles to this end. Although the plan was sound, previously taken aerial photographs were deceptive, as they did not reveal timber-reinforced overhead protection on the Turkish trenches. The fighting was bloody, confused and both sides suffered ‘friendly fire’ casualties. Despite that, elements of the battalion reached the crest of *Chunuk Bair* and, as Turkish reinforcements arrived, repulsed repeated attacks throughout the day. The dwindling band of survivors was relieved on the evening of 8 August by other British units but, two days later, the position was lost to a major Turkish offensive. The

battalion lost every officer and sergeant and over 350 other ranks: **L/Cpl. W. G. Prosser** [#] was killed in action on 8 August 1915; his body was never recovered.

On that same day, Pte. Day was wounded in the elbow by a sniper's bullet. It was not until 14 August that he was able to write to his parents that "*I am in Hospital at Alexandria close to the sea*". Like his leaders, he underestimated the quality of his enemy:



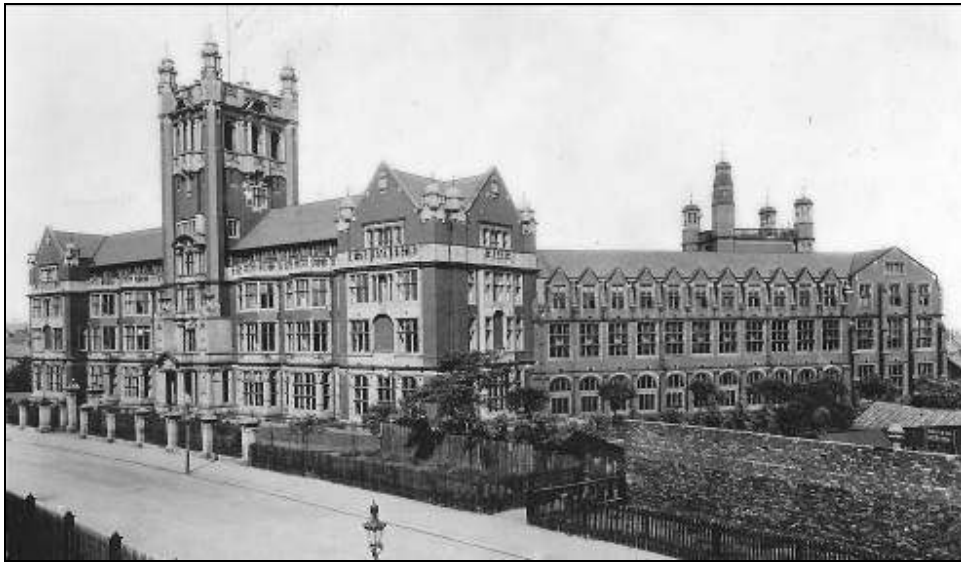
*I don't think the War will last long out here for the Turks seem to be demoralized by the way our guns and Battleships have bombarded them this last week and after every bombardment our men ..... chase the Turks with fixed bayonets and the Turks don't half run when they see the bayonets. I think they are like the Germans, frightened at the cold steel, but if they see you stop they will turn round and fire like mad at you."*<sup>1</sup>

Five days later, he was more forthcoming in detail to "*My Darling Nell*:"

3: Photograph published in the Cheltenham Graphic announcing his injury.

*I am going to try to write you a few lines with my left hand although I find it rather hard, I am glad to tell you that the wound in my right arm is going on nicely, it was terrible to see the chaps being killed we lost our Captain and other officers of our Company, I don't think it is any good of you writing to this Hospital as they keep shifting the chaps to other Hospitals."*

He had achieved he coveted "*blighty one*" and sent a post card from hospital in Newcastle.



4. Postcard of Armstrong College, VAD Hospital, Newcastle

<sup>1</sup> Cliff considers that this was a letter probably written on his behalf, especially because of his disabled arm. He considers the author might well be an ancestor of *Dad's Army's* Cpl. Jones! His father never talked about Gallipoli.

He was discharged from the Army on 24 November 1916 and was awarded a 'Silver Wound Badge 102,403' for "wounds sustained overseas".



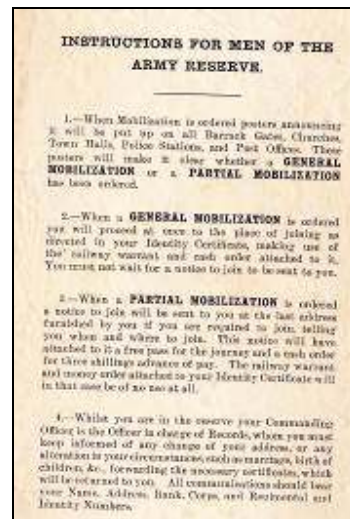
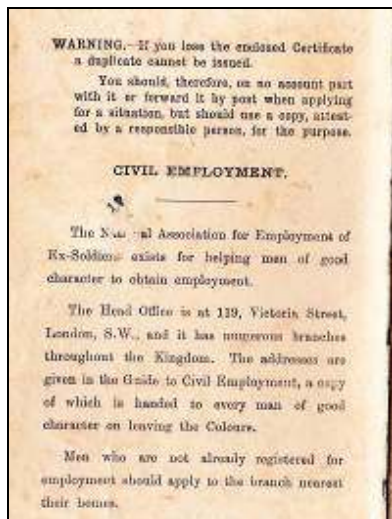
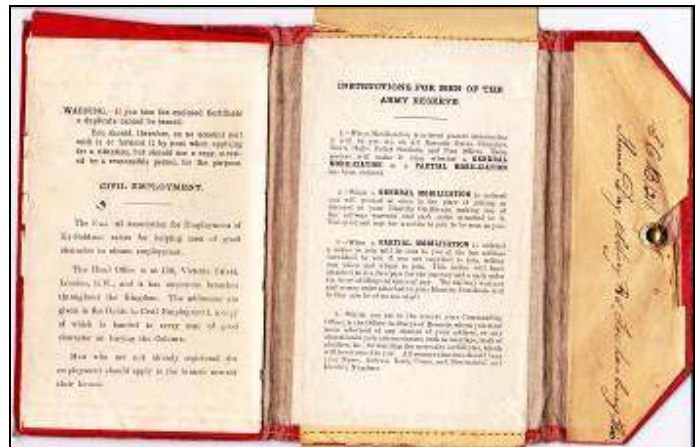
5a. Silver Wound Badge Certificate

5b. Silver Wound Badge Roll



5c. Silver Wound Badge

Cliff Day has kept all his father's papers pertaining to his discharge [6]:





**EMPLOYMENT CARD.**

**SOLDIERS DISCHARGED MEDICALLY UNFIT.**

Name and Regtl. Number } Thomas Day 10224

Name and Address of Local Committee { E. J. Gardon.  
Shire Hall,  
Gloucester

W2123-7841 50,000 6/34 HWY, P18/72 Form W 5404/1  
430 - 618 300,000 7/14

Army Form W. 5132.

You are informed that the 1st-15 Star.  
British War Medal.  
Victory Medal. awarded

to you in respect of your service as No. 10224 Rank Pte  
(Unit and Corps) GLoucestershire REBT.  
is now available for issue.

Please report on attached Reply Postcard (which needs no further stamp) your correct address and return it. The decoration will then be forwarded to you under Registered Cover.

Record Office Stamp and Date, 8-NOV.1921

**WARWICK**

The Character here given is based on confidential records of the holder's conduct and employment throughout his military career.

This is to Certify that No. 10224 Rank Pte Name Thomas Day  
has served with the Colours in the GLoucestershire REBT. in 7-1914 years.

Conduct during his service has been very good.  
Domestic duties - Rept as usual

Signed E. J. Gardon Major, Air Colonel,  
The Infantry Branch, No. 1-118971000

Date NOV 6 1921 Overseas 14

If further particulars as to his character and record of service are required within three years of date this card is issued, it may be replaced by a full employment statement by the Officer in Charge of Branch. M. J. Gardon, M.A. 10224

A.F.A. 3092  
114 Gen. No. 5248.

**FIELD SERVICE**

**POST CARD**

The address only to be written on this side. If anything else is added, the post card will be destroyed.

No. 10224  
Pte T. Day  
1st Northern General Hospital  
A 23 Ward  
Newcastle on Tyne  
England

“conduct very good”

D. H. A.T., London, E.C.2. Army Form R. 2567.  
Army Service Corps Form 104. 41.  
Person's name Thomas Day Service No. 10224

Distinction Certificate or No. 10224  
Rank Pte Name T. Day Regiment GLoucestershire REBT.

Born in the Parish of New Radnor  
near the Town of New Radnor in the County of Gloucester on the date 1.9.91

Trade as stated by him on enlistment Gardener

\* Description of Learner in Colours

Height 5 ft. 8 in. Identification Marks —  
Complexion — Light Blue  
Eyes Green Good and  
Hair Brown fair

Signature of Soldier Thomas Day

\* To prevent impersonation.  
In the event of any doubt arising as to the bona fides of the holder, the above description and signature should be carefully compared with present appearance and handwriting.

Particulars of Service.

Date of Enlistment 11th August 1914  
Proceeded on Furlough pending transfer to the Army Reserve or Discharge on —

Passed medically fit for the Army Reserve on —

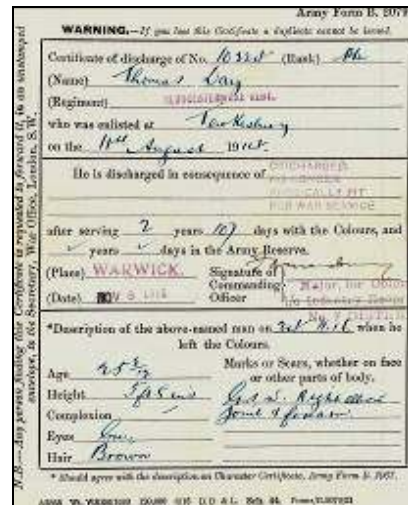
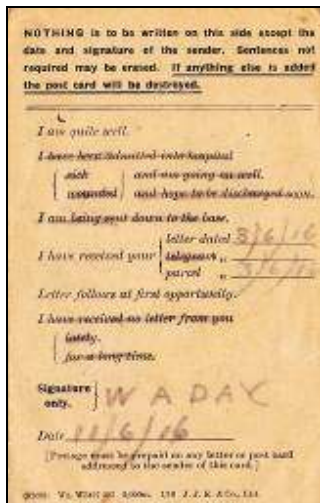
Date for Transfer to the Army Reserve on —

Date for final Exchange on 28th November 1918

Cause of Transfer or Discharge DISCHARGED  
FOR COLOUR  
MEDICAL UNFIT  
FOR WAR SERVICE

Companions, Medals and Decorations  
Exp't. Form 19.6.15.6.2198

Educational and other Certificates, and diplomas



After the war, Thomas Day duly received the three medals which he had earned:



7a. The family have preserved these relics of his Army Service They include his *Gloucesters' Cap Badge* & the *Silver Wound Badge*



7b. The *1914-15 Star Medal*



8. Pte. Day's War Souvenir – a *Pith Helmet*

Thomas lost one brother, **Gunner William Day** [#], on 15 July 1916 on the *Somme*, whilst another had



emigrated to Canada and had fought with the Canadian forces.

Thomas Day was, therefore, fortunate in that he was awarded a pension of 35s [£1.75p] a week and he lived a normal life, despite his wound, working at Healings Mill, mixing different flour varieties. He married his "Darling Nell" [Ellen Margaret Swain] in the summer of 1918 and two children ensued: **Norah** born in 1920 and **Clifford** in 1933.



**8a. Norah Day** [front 2<sup>nd</sup> left] at the High School. She subsequently enjoyed a long professional career in the General Post office.

She was also an author and Life member of *THS*; she died in 2014 aged 95



**8b. Clifford Day**, aged 12, as a pupil at the Grammar School. Subsequently he did National Service with the RAF and then enjoyed a successful career as a Tax Inspector

Both were founder members of *Tewkesbury Historical Society*. When children, their family lived in a desirable semi-detached house on the Ashchurch Road and Thomas died in *Holme Hospital* in 1970, aged 78.



*Fairfield* in World War II



*Fairfield*, Ashchurch Road today [J Dixon]

*John Dixon, T.H.S.*

*With illustrations courtesy of Cliff Day*