

PRIVATE THOMAS BISHOP

19493, 13th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 19 on 5 June 1916

Buried with honour at **Brown's Road Military Cemetery, Festubert**; II D 17

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Brown's Road Military Cemetery



Gloucestershire Regiment

THOMAS BISHOP was born in 1896 to George Bishop from Aston-on-Carrant and Ann Gannaway (formerly Sallis) of Tewkesbury. They had a total of 19 children of whom 16 were still alive in 1911. George worked as a labourer but he died in 1907 at the age of 54. In 1901 the family was living at 38 High Street; by 1911 Ann had moved to Lock Court, High Street, with four of her children, including Thomas. His occupation was described on the census return as a bus conductor and he was known to have been a boy attendant for some time on the Swan Hotel bus. The *Register* recalled: *'In this capacity he was well known, and his cheery, obliging manner made him a general favourite with the public. He left the bus for South Wales, where he was a stoker on the railway.'* Thomas was a former pupil of Holy Trinity Schools.

Thomas Bishop enlisted in Barry, South Wales, although the circumstances are not clear. The *Register* claimed that he had volunteered into the county regiment by 10 October 1914, despite a subsequent claim that he enlisted in the Devonshire Regiment. In addition, other sources indicate that he had previously served in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry! Nevertheless, his regimental number suggests that Thomas was eventually drafted into the Gloucestershire Regiment, where he joined his brother, Joseph, in the 13th (Service) Battalion (Forest of Dean) Pioneers on 15 February 1915.

This battalion had been formed at Cinderford in December 1914 as part of Kitchener's New Army by the local MP, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Webb. The battalion was attached as

Divisional Pioneers to 39th Division and landed at Le Havre in France on 3 March 1916. The role of the pioneer battalions was to use their mining, building and agricultural skills to supplement the work of the sappers of the Royal Engineers in the construction of redoubts, emplacements and other field works; they were also equally capable of fighting as infantry. The battalion was assigned to a quiet sector in northern France to serve their apprenticeship in the trenches. Trench repairs were never-ending; wear and tear, enemy bombardments and the weather all took their toll and after some bombardments they could be damaged out of all recognition.

Private Thomas Bishop died on 5 June 1916. The Battalion War Diary suggests that Thomas was in the battalion's B Company at the time he was killed. On that date the four companies were allocated to work on various sections of the line and B Company was operating near Festubert. The only clue to Thomas's fate was an entry in another soldier's diary. Corporal Roberts (Battalion HQ) wrote on 6 June 1916 that: *'one of our chaps was killed last night.'* Private Thomas Bishop's body was recovered and he was buried in **Brown's Road Military Cemetery, Festubert, France.**

Ann Bishop was granted a War Gratuity of £10 in October 1919. Two of Thomas's older brothers also served and survived the war: **James** was a corporal in the 1st Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, and won both the *Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM)* and the *Military Medal (MM)*, whilst **Joseph** served in the same unit as Thomas, 13th Battalion.