

SERJEANT TOM HARRINGTON

17285, 13th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 34 on 30 June 1916

Remembered with honour on *Loos Memorial*; Panel 60 to 64
Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



*Loos Memorial,
Dud Corner Cemetery*



*Tom with Father, 1891
[P. Raggatt]*



*Gloucestershire
Regiment*

TOM HARRINGTON was born in 1882 to Thomas and Elizabeth (formerly Ashley) from Tewkesbury; of their 13 children 11 were still alive in 1911. Thomas senior, a bricklayer, died in 1899 aged 50. Tom was not at the family home in East Street in the 1891 Census but in 1901 he was living with them in Alexander Court, Barton Street. He was a bricklayer like his father and was a member of the Operative Bricklayers' Society. In 1911 he was boarding in Llantilio Pertholey, Monmouthshire, but by 1915 he had returned to Tewkesbury and was living as a single man in Oldbury Road.

Tom enlisted in Tewkesbury, probably in December 1914 judging by his army number. Using his trade skills, he joined the 13th Battalion (Forest of Dean) Pioneers, formed in December 1914 as part of Kitchener's New Army by the local MP, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Webb. The battalion landed 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 Royal Engineers in the construction of emplacements and other field works; they were also equally capable of fighting as infantry. The battalion was initially assigned to a quiet sector to serve their apprenticeship in the trenches – but it was involved in an attack on 30 June 1916. This was an unsuccessful diversionary attack, a large-scale raid launched by 39th Division at a position called the Boar's Head, near Richebourg l'Avoué, 24 hours before the much better known *First Day of the Somme*. Just under 1,100 casualties were sustained, mainly Sussex men.

The role of the battalion was to dig a trench

communication between the original British front line and newly captured trenches to allow the passage of reinforcements. The battalion suffered some 86 casualties, of which 21 were killed or died of wounds. Tom's fate was unknown until 15 July when the *Register* reported that he '*has been wounded and missing since the night of 29th-30th June. He was one of a party of men of this battalion who were detailed to co-operate in an attack on the enemy's trenches. It was whilst directing the work that your son was wounded. Unfortunately, under severe pressure of the enemy, the captured position had to be evacuated, and it was impossible to bring your son in. Each night since the attack men have been out to bring in the killed and wounded, and up to the time of writing nothing further has been heard of your son. The Corps Commander was so pleased with the work the men did that he personally congratulated them*'. Corporal Tom Bassett wrote home that Sgt. Harrington was '*badly wounded in the back ... under the conditions of a perfect hell*'.

Sergeant Tom Harrington was killed in action on 30 June 1916 but it was not until May 1917 that the War Office confirmed his death. His body was never recovered and his name is commemorated instead on the *Loos Memorial*. His mother was granted a War Gratuity of £9.10s. Two of Tom's brothers also served and survived the war: **Alfred Denis** in the Royal Artillery and **Christopher** in the Canadian forces. Christopher had '*emigrated to the colonies, and there joined up soon after war broke out*'. He benefited from compassionate leave in Tewkesbury after his brother's death.