

## SERJEANT THOMAS NEW

8376, 1st Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

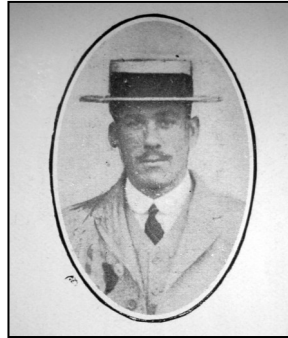
Died aged 25 on 9 October 1915

Remembered with honour on *Loos Memorial*; Panel 60 to 64

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



*Loos Memorial, France*



*Sgt. T. New* [Graphic 6/11/1915]



*Gloucestershire Regiment*

**THOMAS NEW** was born in Wolverhampton to John and Mary New in 1890. John died in 1894 aged 41 and the 1901 Census lists Thomas and his brothers, Ernest and William, as ‘paupers’ in Cottage Homes, a Wolverhampton orphanage. Mary re-married in 1901 in Tewkesbury to William Hawker, a waterman. In 1911 William and Mary were living at 2 Waldron’s Court, High Street – Thomas’s address when he enlisted in Bristol in 1906 in the Gloucestershire Regiment. He signed up for six years as a part-time militiaman in the 3rd Battalion. When the Territorial Force was formed in 1908 it became the 3rd (Special Reserve) Battalion, its new role being to train soldiers for front-line service with the regular battalions in war-time. Thomas may have become a regular soldier around that time, given that, according to his obituary, he served for three years in India.

At the outbreak of war Thomas, either a serving soldier or a Reservist, was recalled immediately. He and his brother Ernest served in the Regiment’s 1st Battalion, part of the 1st Division and one of the original formations in the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). The brothers landed at Le Havre on 13 August 1914 and the Division was involved in most major actions of 1914-1915. Thomas was described as an ‘*intelligent young man and a splendid soldier*’ and was promoted progressively to the rank of Sergeant. He was mentioned twice in despatches, which was only revealed in 1915 when Ernest wrote to their mother. The *Register* reported, with some pride, that the then Corporal Thomas New ‘*makes no mention of the deed*’.

Autumn 1915 saw the battalion involved in the *Battle of Loos* (25 September-18 October),

the largest 1915 British offensive, undertaken in support of major French offensives. The *Register* reported: ‘*Despite heavy casualties, there was considerable success on the first day ... but the opportunities could not be exploited, resulting in a costly stalemate.*’ After the failure, a second attempt was planned but it was disrupted by a German counter-attack on 8 October. The 1st Battalion felt the brunt of the attack, the War Diary noting that: ‘*Heavy bombardment ... continued increasing in intensity until about 4pm. Trenches considerably damaged.*’ Despite heavy casualties, British machine-guns destroyed the ensuing advance, repulsing it with 3,000 casualties. The Diary records 22 killed, 96 wounded.

**Sergeant Thomas New** was one of the wounded and died the next day. In November, the *Register* reported: ‘*fighting side by side were two Tewkesbury brothers, Sgt. Tom New and L/Cpl. Ernest New were caught up in the thick of the fighting*’. Ernest wrote to their parents: ‘*he was shot with a bullet through the lungs; he got excited ... on top of the trench so that he could play more havoc ... and that is how he was hit, having exposed himself too much*’. The newspaper also had a report sent by fellow Sergeant Hanson about Thomas’s ‘*Heroic Death*’: it tells a slightly different story of his being ‘*hit by shrapnel*’, dying ‘*instantaneously*’ and being buried ‘*side by side, 10 in number in a quiet place*’. However, Sgt. New’s body was never recovered and he is commemorated on the *Loos Memorial*. It is likely that the original grave-markers were destroyed in later fighting. Thomas was awarded the ‘1914 Star’ medal.

Thomas’s brother, Ernest New, was repatriated after being wounded and survived the war.