

PRIVATE THOMAS JAMES SMITH

13371, 1st Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 22 on 18 June 1918

Buried with honour at *Sailly-Labourse Communal Cemetery, France*; H 8

Commemorated in Tewkesbury on the Grammar School Memorial



Saily-Labourse Communal Cemetery



T. J. Smith [Kemerton H.S.]



Gloucestershire Regiment

THOMAS JAMES SMITH was born in Beckford in 1896, the son of William Smith and Emily Elizabeth (formerly Martin). He was the youngest of three children, having two older sisters. William was originally from Bredon and Emily was born in Kemerton. In 1901 the family were living at The Post Office in Beckford where Emily was the Post Mistress, whilst William ran his own bakery and was also a Corn Dealer. However, Emily died in 1909 and by 1911 William had remarried; his second wife, Elizabeth, originally came from Cockerham in Lancashire. In 1911 the family were living at The Cross, Beckford, and they were still there in June 1918. Thomas was a pupil at Tewkesbury Grammar School from 1911 to 1912 and then assisted his father.

In August 1914, at the age of 18, Thomas enlisted in the Gloucestershire Regiment in Cheltenham as a volunteer. Recruits could not be sent overseas until they reached the age of 19; for this reason and probably also the need for training, Thomas was not sent to France until the following year, arriving on 3 October 1915. He was then posted to the 1st Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, one of the regiment's two regular battalions. The battalion was part of the

3rd Infantry Brigade, 1st Division, and was among the first British troops to be sent to France, disembarking at Le Havre on 13 August 1914. As such Thomas qualified for the '1914-15 Star' medal. Thomas fought with the battalion for two and a half years on the Western Front where the 1st Division took part in most of the major actions.

Private Thomas James Smith was '*killed instantaneously whilst in action*' in France on 18 June 1918. According to their War Diary the battalion was in the front line in the Annequin area between Bethune and Loos on that day, having relieved the 2nd Battalion, The Welch Regiment, the previous day. The War Diary entry for 18 June comments that '*Enemy artillery was inactive and did not respond to the activity of our own. There were occasional Trench Mortar duels at dawn and dusk. Two OR (Other Ranks) were killed and one OR was wounded (at duty) this day.*'

It would seem that Thomas was one of the casualties referred to in the War Diary (Other Ranks are not usually referred to by name). He is buried in *Saily-Labourse Communal Cemetery* which is south-east of Bethune and some two miles behind the front line where he was killed.