

Serjeant¹ ARTHUR HANLON

1st Gloucestershire (Cheltenham) Bn., Home Guard

who died age 47 on 19 November 1942

Son of William Luff Hanlon and Mary Ann Hanlon; husband of Lilian Gertrude Hanlon.

Remembered with honour in the TEWKESBURY CEMETERY

THE LATE SGT. A. HANLON 1ST GLOS. BN., HOME GUARD.²



Arthur Hanlon, owned the bakery premises at 112 High Street Tewkesbury, then next to *Osborn's Garage*³ and "died from injuries received whilst on duty"⁴

On the night that the incident occurred, 18th of November 1942, Sgt Hanlon was in charge of a group of eight-gun crew, composed of members of *Tewkesbury Home Guard*, practising loading and unloading, a 'Blacker Bombard' anti- tank gun. The exercise took place in office of Mr Birkitt's, the manager at the *Healings Flour Mill*. The office was of sufficient size, in which the instruction could take place, and, which was available. **Captain John Healing** commanded the platoon of *Home Guard* hence the use of the room.

It appears the practise bomb, thought to be a dummy by all concerned, had been used for over an hour that evening, without incident. In fact, the shell contained a live charge (accidentally issued to the members of the Home Guard by Mr. H. J. Page, Quartermaster Sgt, and father of Almeric.) No blame can be attached to Harold Page, as the apparently dummy shell was issued from General Headquarters, without knowledge or explanation, as to the real nature of the shell.⁵

It seemed that Sgt. Hanlon was somehow standing in front of, or to an angle in front of the gun, when the shell exploded, hitting and splattering him along the opposite wall. It also took out four feet of brickwork this side of the room, and dislodged some brickwork on the other side. The other gun crewmembers had a very lucky escape; no injuries having been sustained. The next morning, it was the task of QMS. Page, literally, to scrape parts of the unfortunate Sgt. Hanlon, off the brickwork, and to repair the damage to the one room concerned; the other damage was left unrepaired.

Sgt Hanlon's interment took place at Tewkesbury Cemetery, where the grave can be seen in the Military Section to this day. The escort of Home Guard members slow-marched with the coffin, all the way from 112 High Street, to the Cemetery and back again.

Sgt Hanlon was 47 when he died. His death and inquest were reported in the Register on 21 & 28 November 1942 respectively.

A native of Bridgenorth and educated in Birmingham, he served in the Tank Corps in World War I and was one of the first to enlist in the Home Guard. He came to Tewkesbury in 1929 and left a widow, one son (in the Navy) and two daughters.

Why is his name not featured on the War Memorial at the Cross?

He surely fulfils all the criteria.

His name was added on Armed Forces Day, 2018.



¹ Spelling used by CWGC.

² As told by **Almeric Page** (b. 1911) and transcribed by **David Page** (February 2005)

³ Now the area has been re-developed with new buildings, the shop in 2005 being "*New Beginnings*". Kathleen Hall remembers Arthur's sister, Barbara, at the Junior Council School (Barton Road).

⁴ Register, 28/11/1942 reporting the Coroner's Inquest: "*An unfortunate accident*". "*No blame*" was attached.

⁵ There is no mention of a Page at the Inquest; one witness was Sgt. William Ezra Workman, brother of Harry.