

Sergeant Thomas Jennings[©]

Regimental number: 1006

26th (Tyneside Irish) Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers

born: 1892 - died: 9 April 1916

Sergeant Thomas Jennings, born in 1892¹ in Browney, County Durham,² was the son of Thomas and Mary Ann Jennings of Littleburn, Durham. His father, Thomas, was born in about 1862 in Coxhoe, Durham and his mother, the former Mary Ann Brady, was born in about 1865 in Brandon, also in Durham. Thomas and Mary Ann were married in 1883 near Durham.³ They had sixteen children, including two sets of twins, but only eight children survived until 1911.⁴ Thirteen of the children have been identified: Mary (born in 1884),⁵ Catherine (born in 1886),⁶ twins John Joseph and Patrick (born in 1888, but both died a few months later),⁷ another set of twins Julia and Ann (born in 1891, but Julia died a few months later and Ann a few years later),⁸ Thomas, Joseph (born in 1894 but probably died in 1896),⁹ Veronica (born in 1897, but died the following year),¹⁰ Godric (born in about 1897),¹¹ Joseph (born in about 1898),¹² Margaret Mary Alacoque (born in 1901),¹³ Francis (born in about 1903)¹⁴ and Gerard (born in about 1906).¹⁵

In 1911, the family was living in Littleburn Colliery, just north of Durham, where Thomas' father was a coal miner, as he had been for at least two decades. By 1911, Thomas was also a coal miner, as was his younger brother, Godric. While Thomas was a labourer underground, Godric was a pony driver.

Thomas tried to enlist as a Private in the Durham Light Infantry in the autumn of 1914, at the age of 21.¹⁶ He attested on 23 September 1914 (Regimental number 20197). His character was good. He was 5' 7½" tall and weighed 140 pounds. He had a fresh complexion, grey eyes and dark hair. His physical development was considered to be "fair" and he was considered fit for the army. But less than two months later, on 15 November, he was discharged as "having been found physically unfit for further service." No explanation is provided in his army service record.

He later enlisted as a sergeant in the Northumberland Fusiliers. He served in the 26th Battalion—referred to as the 3rd Tyneside Irish Battalion.¹⁷ The battalion was one of four battalions in the Tyneside Irish Brigade, which was made up of men of Irish extraction.¹⁸ However, there is no evidence of Thomas having Irish ancestors – both his parents were born in Durham. The 26th Battalion sailed from Folkestone England to Boulogne France on 10 January 1916. From there it went to St. Omer, to the village of Blendeques and then to billets in Wizernes.¹⁹

Just three months after landing in France, Thomas died of wounds to his thigh at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station.²⁰ The day that he died, one soldier was reported as having died at the 1st CCCS²¹—perhaps it was Thomas. He was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot II, Row D, Grave 208). He was a Roman Catholic.

Bailleul is located close to the Belgian border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several Casualty Clearing Stations, including No. 1 Canadian, were quartered there for considerable periods. The earliest Commonwealth burials at Bailleul were made in April 1915. An extension was built and burials continued until April 1918, and occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when graves were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.²²

Thomas' mother, who was living at 30 Railway Street in Littleburn, was notified of his death²³ and received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.²⁴

Thomas was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁵ His is also honoured among Ireland's casualties of the Great War,²⁶ in spite of the fact that the only obvious connection to Ireland was that he served in the 3rd Tyneside Irish Battalion.

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¹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 20 June 2015), entry for Thomas Jennings, Registration district: Durham, Inferred County: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 374

² "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 20 June 2015), entry for Thomas Jennings, Registration district: Durham, Registration District Number: 551, Sub-registration district: Brandon, ED, institution, or vessel: 8, Piece: 29930

³ "England & Wales, Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 5 January 2015), entry for Thomas Jennings, Registration district: Durham, Inferred County: Durham, Volume Number: 10a, Page Number: 584

⁴ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 20 June 2015), entry for Thomas Jennings

⁵ "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 16 November 2016) entry for Jennings, Mary, Volume 10A, Page 405

⁶ "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 16 November 2016) entry for Jennings, Catherine, Volume 10A, Page 372

⁷ "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 16 November 2016) entry for Jennings, John Joseph, Volume 10A, Page 342; "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 16 November 2016) entry for Jennings, Patrick, Volume 10A, Page 342; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 17 November 2016), entry for John Jennings, Registration district: Durham, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 186; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 17 November 2016), entry for Patrick Jennings, Registration district: Durham, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 184

⁸ "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 16 November 2016) entry for Jennings, Julia, Volume 10A, Page 374; "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 16 November 2016) entry for Jennings, Ann, Volume 10A, Page 374; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 17 November 2016), entry for Julia Jennings, Registration district: Durham, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 244a; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 17 November 2016), entry for Ann Jennings, Registration district: Durham, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 243

⁹ "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 16 November 2016) entry for Jennings, Joseph, Volume 10A, Page 399; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 17 November 2016), entry for Joseph Jennings, Registration district: Durham, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 214

¹⁰ "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 16 November 2016) entry for Jennings, Veronica, Volume 10A, Page 362; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 17 November 2016), entry for Veronica Jennings, Registration district: Durham, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 210

¹¹ "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 16 November 2016) entry for Jennings, Godric, Volume 10A, Page 362

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- ¹² "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 16 November 2016) entry for Jennings, Joseph, Volume 10A, Page 399
- ¹³ "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 16 November 2016) entry for Jennings, Margaret Mary Alacoque, Volume 10A, Page 405
- ¹⁴ "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 16 November 2016) entry for Jennings, Francis, Volume 10A, Page 456
- ¹⁵ "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 16 November 2016) entry for Jennings, Gerard, Volume 10A, Page 465
- ¹⁶ "British Army Service Records 1914–1920," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 20 June 2015), entry for Thomas Jennings. Unless otherwise stated, all information about his military career comes from the army service record.
- ¹⁷ "The Northumberland Fusiliers," *The Long, Long Trail* (<http://www.1914-1918.net/northfus.htm>; accessed 21 June 2015)
- ¹⁸ "The Tyneside Irish Brigade Association." (<http://www.tynesideirishbrigade.com/about.html>; accessed 21 June 2015)
- ¹⁹ "26th Northumberland Fusiliers - George Van Wyck Laughton, M.C.," <http://laughton.ca/mirror/military/ww1/gvlaughton/tyneside/26th.htm>; accessed 21 June 2015
- ²⁰ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916–10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 and 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 52
- ²¹ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 17 June 2015)
- ²² "Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000047/Bailleul%20Communal%20Cemetery,%20Nord>; accessed 17 June 2015)
- ²³ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916–10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 and 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 52
- ²⁴ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 19 June 2016), entry for Thomas Jennings
- ²⁵ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 19 June 2015), entry for Thomas Jennings
- ²⁶ "Ireland, Casualties of World War I, 1914–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 20 June 2015), entry for Thomas Jennings