

**Private Thomas Henry Holmes<sup>©</sup>**  
**Regimental number: 241142**  
**1st/6th Battalion, North Staffordshire Regiment**

**born: 1897 - died: 20 May 1918**

Private Thomas Henry Holmes (who was known by the nickname Darky)<sup>1</sup> was one of 12 children born to Arthur Holmes and his wife, the former Fanny Phillips.<sup>2</sup> Arthur was born in Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, in about 1861 and Fanny five miles away, in Withington, Staffordshire, five years later. They married in Uttoxeter in 1885<sup>3</sup> and their 12 children were all born there.<sup>4</sup> Their first seven children were sons:

- Arthur (born in 1886, but died soon after birth),<sup>5</sup>
- John (born in 1887),<sup>6</sup>
- William Harvey (born in 1888),<sup>7</sup>
- Arthur (born in 1890),<sup>8</sup>
- Ernest Alfred 1892),<sup>9</sup>
- Edward (born in 1894),<sup>10</sup>
- Thomas (born in 1897)<sup>11</sup> and
- Richard (born in 1898).<sup>12</sup>

Then they had three daughters:

- Harriet Elizabeth (born in 1899),<sup>13</sup>
- Jeannie (born in 1901)<sup>14</sup> and
- Fanny (born in 1902).<sup>15</sup>

The identity of the twelfth child who died in childhood was not found.

In 1901, Thomas was living with his family on Pinfold Street in Uttoxeter, where Arthur senior was a carter, working in a coal mine.<sup>16</sup> Ten years later, the family was living at 3 Special Street in Uttoxeter. Thomas, at the age of 14, was already an iron foundry hand, as were three of his older brothers.

Thomas enlisted early in the war as a private in the North Staffordshire (Prince of Wales') Regiment in Uttoxeter.<sup>17</sup> (He initially served under regimental number 3944.<sup>18</sup>) He enlisted in about April 1915<sup>19</sup> and, by the first week of June, he was training in Burton.<sup>20</sup> He probably went to the Front in about October 1915.<sup>21</sup>

In July 1916, he was attached to the Lewis Gun Section of the 6th Battalion. An article in the *Uttoxeter Advertiser* reported that he had been through the battle of the Somme and come out unscathed.<sup>22</sup> A year later, the newspaper reported that Thomas was on home leave after 21 months uninterrupted service at the Front. He came home again on leave in January 1918, which was the last time his family saw him.<sup>23</sup>

In mid-May 1918, the 6th Battalion was stationed in Essars, just north of Béthune, in northern France.<sup>24</sup> It relieved the 4th Battalion of the Leicester Regiment and experienced some gas shelling on the route. The battalion had come under attack from enemy artillery fire, aerial activity and gas attacks. On 20 May, "[b]oth artilleries [were] again active; enemy paying considerable attention to

back areas. Enemy aircraft displayed great activity, several machines crossing our lines during the day. Some enemy gas shelling at night."<sup>25</sup>

It may have been during these activities that Thomas was wounded. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 20 May, with a gunshot wound to his abdomen. He died and was buried that day in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 1, Row F, Grave No. 2) with the Canadian chaplain R. K. Lambert presiding.<sup>26</sup> Thomas was a Congregationalist. His next of kin was not known to Rev. Lambert, which suggests that Thomas may have been unconscious or dead when he arrived at the station.

In June 1918, his obituary was published in the *Uttoxeter Advertiser* and it quoted an extract from a letter which Thomas' mother received from a commanding officer:

The clouds of war have again darkened your dear home, and I know that you have given another noble son in this battle for existence of the dear homeland.

Darkie, the nickname for Tom, was my faithful runner. He was always merry and bright and ever ready to carry his messages through the danger zones. Your loss is 'A' Company's loss, and on behalf of the officers and men of 'A' Company, 1st-6th North Staffs., I convey my heart-felt sympathy in the loss of your dear boy.

He came out with the Division and has served continuously in France. On the night of May 20-21 he was with me going round the posts, very near the hated foe. A hostile machine-gun fired upon us, and unfortunately your son was hit. I rushed to him and found the wound of a serious nature. Still, he was bright, and we hoped for the best. He was soon got away, and when I heard that he had died from wounds I felt that I had lost a good man.

May this letter bring a little sunshine into your home, and assure you above all that your son was a good soldier . . .

We write, "He fell"; immortals say "He rose";  
Weep not for him, but keep your tears for those  
Who slumbered on in comfort's easy bed,  
Deaf to their country's call these are the dead.  
Always think of him as a hero.<sup>27</sup>

The officer added the postscript, 'A' Company miss 'Darkie.'

Thomas' mother was living at 15 Market Street in Uttoxeter after the war. She received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death<sup>28</sup> and requested this inscription for his gravestone:

GOD'S WILL BE DONE<sup>29</sup>

Thomas was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914-15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).<sup>30</sup> He is remembered on the war memorial in Uttoxeter.<sup>31</sup>

At least four of Thomas' brothers also served in the Great War—William, Ernest, Edward and Richard—but only William lost his life.

Like his brother, **William** served with the 6th Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment (regimental number 2673).<sup>32</sup> Prior to enlisting, he worked for Messrs. Bamford and Sons & Leighton Ironworks in Uttoxeter and played for the local Territorials Football Club.<sup>33</sup> He enlisted at the very beginning of the war—probably in about August 1914<sup>34</sup>—and left Luton with other recruits for 'G' Company, 1st/6th North Staffordshire Regiment on the 29 August 1914.<sup>35</sup> He was in France by the beginning of March 1915.<sup>36</sup> He died seven months later in the charge on the Hohenzollern Redoubt at Loos<sup>37</sup>—less than 40 kilometres from where Thomas would die two and a half years later. For six days at the beginning of October 1915, the 6th Battalion was stationed in billets in Vaudricourt, just a few miles from Bethune.<sup>38</sup> On the night of 12 October, the battalion marched to the trenches to relieve the Guards Brigade. On 13 October 1915—the day William died<sup>39</sup>—the troops were heavily bombarded by enemy artillery. William has no known grave but is honoured on the Loos Memorial in Loos-en-Gohelle, about 10 miles from Bethune. He was 27 years old. Like his brother, William was awarded posthumously the British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the 1914–15 Star<sup>40</sup> and is remembered on the war memorial in Uttoxeter.<sup>41</sup>

**Ernest**, a grinder, enlisted in the Reserve of the North Staffordshire Regiment (regimental number 5752) in July 1916 at the age of 24. He was living at 15 Market Street and had already served in the North Staffordshire Regiment. From July 1916 to December of that year, he was in England. From December 1916 to April 1917 he was in France. He returned to England and was there until July 1917, when he was discharged since he was no longer physically fit for war service.<sup>42</sup>

Nothing is known about **Edward's** military service. However, a July 1916 article in the *Uttoxeter Advertiser* quoted a letter that Thomas sent home in which he says that "Teddy is wounded over the eye."<sup>43</sup>

**Richard** enlisted in the 4th South Staffordshire Regiment (regimental number 41502) in November 1916 at the age of 19. He was a moulder, living at home at 15 Market Street. He was in England until April 1917 and then had two tours in France—the first from April 1917 to January 1918 and then from June 1918 to October 1919. He was demobilized in England in November 1919.<sup>44</sup>

Thomas' father may have died in 1924.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Uttoxeter's Lost Generation* (<http://www.uttoxeterlostgeneration.co.uk/>: accessed 22 April 2018), entry for Thomas Henry Holmes

<sup>2</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 18 April 2018), entry for Thomas Holmes, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Registration district number: 364, Sub-registration district: Uttoxeter, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 13, Household schedule number: 45, Piece: 16720

<sup>3</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 19 April 2018), entry for Arthur Holmes, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Inferred county: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 440

<sup>4</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 18 April 2018), entry for Thomas Holmes

<sup>5</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 19 April 2018) entry for Holmes, Arthur, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Volume 06B, Page 347; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 19 April 2018), entry for Arthur Holmes, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Inferred county: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 231

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- <sup>6</sup> “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 19 April 2018) entry for Holmes, John, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Volume 06B, Page 355
- <sup>7</sup> “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 19 April 2018) entry for Holmes, William Harvey, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Volume 06B, Page 319
- <sup>8</sup> “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 19 April 2018) entry for Holmes, Arthur, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Volume 06B, Page 338
- <sup>9</sup> “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 19 April 2018) entry for Holmes, Ernest Alfred, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Volume 06B, Page 359
- <sup>10</sup> “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 19 April 2018) entry for Holmes, Edward, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Volume 06B, Page 362
- <sup>11</sup> “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 19 April 2018) entry for Holmes, Thomas Henry, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Volume 06B, Page 379
- <sup>12</sup> “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 19 April 2018) entry for Holmes, Richard, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Volume 06B, Page 365
- <sup>13</sup> “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 19 April 2018) entry for Holmes, Harriet Elizabeth, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Volume 06B, Page 377
- <sup>14</sup> “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 19 April 2018) entry for Holmes, Jeannie, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Volume 06B, Page 358
- <sup>15</sup> “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 19 April 2018) entry for Holmes, Fanny, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Volume 06B, Page 389
- <sup>16</sup> “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 18 April 2018), entry for Thomas Holmes, Registration district: Uttoxeter, Sub-registration district: Uttoxeter, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 15, Piece: 2633, Folio: 73, Page: 26, Household schedule number: 140
- <sup>17</sup> “UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 18 April 2018), entry for Thomas Henry Holmes
- <sup>18</sup> “British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 18 April 2018), entry for Thomas H. Holmes
- <sup>19</sup> Based on “War Gratuity Calculator” (<https://wargratiuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 18 April 2018), entry for Thomas Henry Holmes
- <sup>20</sup> *Uttoxeter's Lost Generation* (<http://www.utttoxeterlostgeneration.co.uk/>: accessed 22 April 2018), entry for Thomas Henry Holmes?
- <sup>21</sup> *Uttoxeter's Lost Generation* (<http://www.utttoxeterlostgeneration.co.uk/>: accessed 22 April 2018), entry for Thomas Henry Holmes
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> “UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 18 April 2018), Regiment or unit: Prince of Wales's (North Staffordshire) Regiment, Sub-unit: 1/6th Battalion, Division: 46th Division, Diary dates: 1915 Feb–1919 Jun.; “UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 18 April 2018), Regiment or unit: Prince of Wales's (North Staffordshire) Regiment piece description: Piece 2685/2: 1/6 Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment (1915 Feb–1919 Jun), Piece number: 2685
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 5 July 2018), entry for Holmes, T.H.
- <sup>27</sup> *Uttoxeter's Lost Generation* (<http://www.utttoxeterlostgeneration.co.uk/>: accessed 22 April 2018), entry for Thomas Henry Holmes
- <sup>28</sup> “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 18 April 2018), entry for Thomas Henry Holmes

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- <sup>29</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 3 December 2018), entry for Holmes, Thomas Henry; Service No: 241142
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- <sup>31</sup> "War Memorial - Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, England," *Lost Ancestors* (<http://www.lostancestors.eu/memwar/U/Uttoxeter.htm>; accessed 22 April 2018)
- <sup>32</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 3 December 2018), entry for Holmes, William Harvey; Service No: 2673
- <sup>33</sup> *Uttoxeter's Lost Generation* (<http://www.uttoxeterlostgeneration.co.uk/>: accessed 22 April 2018), entry for Thomas Henry Holmes
- <sup>34</sup> Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 23 April 2018), entry for William Harvey Holmes
- <sup>35</sup> *Uttoxeter's Lost Generation* (<http://www.uttoxeterlostgeneration.co.uk/>: accessed 22 April 2018), entry for Thomas Henry Holmes
- <sup>36</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 23 April 2018), entry for William H. Holmes
- <sup>37</sup> *Uttoxeter's Lost Generation* (<http://www.uttoxeterlostgeneration.co.uk/>: accessed 22 April 2018), entry for Thomas Henry Holmes
- <sup>38</sup> "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 18 April 2018), Regiment or unit: Prince of Wales's (North Staffordshire) Regiment
- <sup>39</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 3 December 2018), entry for Holmes, William Harvey
- <sup>40</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 23 April 2018), entry for William H. Holmes
- <sup>41</sup> "War Memorial - Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, England," *Lost Ancestors* (<http://www.lostancestors.eu/memwar/U/Uttoxeter.htm>; accessed 22 April 2018)
- <sup>42</sup> "British Army WWI Pension Records 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 June 2018), entry for Ernest Alfred Holmes, Regimental number: 5752, Form title: Short Service Attestation
- <sup>43</sup> *Uttoxeter's Lost Generation* (<http://www.uttoxeterlostgeneration.co.uk/>: accessed 22 April 2018), entry for Thomas Henry Holmes
- <sup>44</sup> "British Army WWI Pension Records 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 June 2018), entry for Richard Holmes, Regimental number: 41502, Form title: Short Service Attestation
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