

Corporal Thomas Veitch©
Regimental number: 2900
1/6th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers

born: 1888–died: 20 July 1916

Thomas Chubb Veitch was born in Newcastle upon Tyne in the fourth quarter of 1888¹ and baptized there in St Anne's Church on 14 November 1888.² He was the oldest of seven children born to William and Elizabeth Carr Chubb Veitch, all of whom were living at home at 80 Pont Street, Newcastle, at the time of the 1911 Census.³ The others were Eleanor (b. 1890),⁴ Sarah (b. 1893),⁵ William (b. 1896),⁶ Joseph (b. 1898),⁷ John (b. 1901),⁸ and Matthew (b. 1904).⁹

Thomas' father William was born in Newcastle in 1868,¹⁰ the son of William and Ellen,¹¹ née Storey. In 1888 he married Elizabeth Chubb,¹² born in 1866 as the daughter of Thomas and Ann Chubb.¹³ Thomas Chubb was a fireman on a steam ship.¹⁴

William was a carter in the local brewery in 1911 and son Thomas was working as a cellarman in a brewery,¹⁵ likely the same establishment. Two of Thomas' sisters, Eleanor and Sarah, were working as bottle washers in the brewery. His brother William, 15, was an errand boy in an ironmonger's. The younger boys were in school.

By 1913 the family had moved to 8 Breamish Street in Newcastle,¹⁶ and this property would remain in their possession until at least 1970 (see below). Thomas' mother Elizabeth died shortly afterwards, in 1914.¹⁷

According to the War Gratuity Calculator,¹⁸ soon after the start of the war, in about November 1914, Thomas enlisted in the 1/6th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers.¹⁹ He was working at the Carville Power Station prior to enlisting, according to a newspaper article that reported his later death.²⁰ This was a coal-fired power station built in 1904, about 5 miles downstream on the River Tyne from Newcastle.²¹

The 1/6th Battalion was part of the Territorial Force, formed in St George's Drill Hall, Newcastle, in August 1914.²² The battalion travelled from Southampton to Boulogne on the SS *Onward* on 20 April 1915.²³ Thomas Veitch was clearly with the battalion, as he is recorded as having disembarked in France on that day.²⁴

By 24 April the battalion had arrived in the area of Ypres in Belgium, on the front line, and settled in the village of Wielte.²⁵ It was not long before the battalion had its baptism of fire. On 26 April, less than a week after landing in France, it was ordered to attack the village of St Julien. As the war diary records:²⁶

Heavy casualties occurred in moving from the trenches south of the village into the attack formation. The battalion advanced about a mile in this formation suffering heavy losses from machine gun, shrapnel and heavy howitzer fire until about 500 yards from the village where



T. Veitch - 6th NF - Newcastle (wounded)

Source: *Illustrated Chronicle*, 1 May 1915

the attack was held up. No reinforcements were available so the line remained there until dusk when it was withdrawn to the trenches held by the 4th Division.

On that one day, 6 officers and 41 other ranks were killed, 7 officers and 413 other ranks were wounded, and 1 officer and 29 other ranks went missing.²⁷ Among those wounded was Lance Corporal T. Veitch. According to a report in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* on 3 May 1915, "Lance-Corporal Thomas Veitch, whose home is at 8, Breamish Street, Newcastle, has been wounded in the right hip, and is in the Canadian Station Hospital."²⁸ It is not known when he returned to his unit.

Not long afterwards, the battalion was involved in the Battle of Frezenburg Ridge and the Battle of Bellewaarde Ridge.²⁹ These were part of the Second Battle of Ypres in May 1915.³⁰ It was not involved in any other major battles in 1915.

A year later, in July 1916, the battalion was in the same area just South of Ypres, near Kemmel village.³¹ It was a relatively quiet period. However, on 18 July Corporal (as he now was) Veitch was wounded,³² perhaps injured during the heavy trench mortar fire received on that day.³³ He was transferred to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station in Bailleul, where he died of his wounds on 20 July.³⁴

A casualty clearing station was a military medical unit behind the front lines, usually located near transportation. Casualties who did not soon die or could not be adequately treated in the CCS were stabilized before being transported to a field or military hospital.³⁵

Corporal Veitch was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, Reference II. F. 13.³⁶ There was no personal inscription added to his headstone. The cemetery lies in the east end of the town of Bailleul, in the Nord department of the Hauts-de-France region, and contains the remains of 4,344 soldiers from the two world wars.

Corporal Veitch was awarded posthumously the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918). He also received the 1914–15 Star, (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).³⁷

Thomas' younger brother William enlisted in the Royal Garrison Artillery on 13 November 1915.³⁸ His occupation was given as machine man, and he had been working for Sir W.G. Armstrong Whitworth & Co. Ltd., a major British manufacturing company headquartered in Newcastle, making armaments, ships, locomotives, automobiles and aircraft.³⁹ He left for France on 29 September 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force; shortly before he left, he got married, on 10 September, to Hannah Dowse, the daughter of Thomas William Dowse, a labourer.⁴⁰ He was discharged as an acting bombardier in 1919, having also served in India and South Africa. However, he re-enlisted in the Royal Garrison Artillery for another year on 1 February 1919, to be part of the Armies of Occupation as a driver.

Back in Newcastle, William and Hannah had two children, William (b. 1920)⁴¹ and Margaret (b. 1923).⁴² In 1939 the four of them were living on Pitt Street, Newcastle.⁴³ William was a builder's labourer, Hannah an office cleaner, son William a drilling machinist on tanks, and Margaret a stillroom maid.

Joseph Veitch enlisted in the 6th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers (the same as his brother Thomas, and likely on the same day) on 14 November 1914.⁴⁴ However, he was discharged less

than 6 months later, on 7 May 1915, under paragraph 392 of King's Regulations, probably because he had lied about his age, stating that he was 18 when he was only 16. From 1920 to 1922 Joseph was living back home with his father at 8 Breamish Street.⁴⁵ No further information was found for him.

John Chubb Veitch was only 13 when the war began, too young to even lie about his age. He married Florence M. Crabtree in 1921⁴⁶ and they had two children, Nellie (b. 1922)⁴⁷ and William (b. 1928).⁴⁸ In 1939 he was a general labourer (heavy work),⁴⁹ and he died in 1967.⁵⁰

The youngest brother, Matthew, married Mary Ann Temperley in 1929.⁵¹ They had a daughter, June, in 1930,⁵² and possibly other children, but the evidence was inconclusive. Matthew died in 1949.⁵³

Thomas' sister Eleanor married Thomas M. Finley in 1912⁵⁴ and they had a son, William, in 1913.⁵⁵ However, no further record can be found for her husband, and by 1922 Eleanor Finley was back living with her father at 8 Breamish Street.⁵⁶ She was also listed in 1917 as a dependant of her deceased brother Thomas in a pension record, as Eleanor Veitch, rather than with her married name, though she used that name later.⁵⁷ Eleanor remained living with her father until his death in 1933.⁵⁸ After his death, she continued living at 8 Breamish Street with her son William until her death in 1954.⁵⁹

In 1939 William was a deck hand on a steam tug boat.⁶⁰ He continued to reside at 8 Breamish Street, and in 1955 he was living there with Jessie Ida West,⁶¹ whom he married in 1956.⁶² They were still living there in 1970,⁶³ and William died in 1971.⁶⁴

The younger sister, Sarah, got married in 1915 to Ralph Hall Calvert, a machinist.⁶⁵ They had two children in quick succession, Ralph Hall Jr. in 1916,⁶⁶ and William Alexander in 1917.⁶⁷ Sarah died in 1918, at age 24.⁶⁸ Son Ralph Hall went on to fight for his country in WW II with the 721 Artisan Works Company of the Royal Engineers, losing his life in Italy in 1944.⁶⁹

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