

Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch
of
The Western Front Association

Remembering one of Gloucestershire's Fallen



Private Thomas Smith (17510)
C Company, 10th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment

Thomas Smith was baptised at St James's Church, Campden, on 24 March 1895 and was the third son of George and Eliza Smith of Paul's Pike. After leaving school he was employed as a farm labourer on Mr Keyte's farm at Kingcombe, Campden.

In January 1915 Tom and his cousin, William Hedges, enlisted in Campden in the Gloucestershire Regiment and they were posted to the 10th Battalion for final training on Salisbury Plain before they were sent to France. At 7am on 8 August 1915 the battalion left Number 6 Camp at

Sutton Veny and three trains carried them to Southampton. At 5pm they left Southampton and arrived at Le Havre the next day, where they disembarked at 7am. After waiting on the quayside for an hour they marched to a rest camp. The day was very hot and the roads were very difficult to march on with heavily loaded packs and new boots. At 12.30am on 11 August they boarded a train at Le Havre *Gare des Marchandises* and arrived at Saint Omer at 7.30am. There was a shortage of water on the journey and the men were

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travelling forty to a covered truck. On 19 August they went into the trenches for the first time and the next few days were spent gaining experience of life in the front line.

The battalion was very soon in serious action at the Battle of Loos which started on 25 September. Loos-en-Gohelle was a small mining village just to the north-west of Lens and seven British divisions were to attack across terrain that was in general flat, offering little cover and exposed to German fire from slightly higher positions. The attack began at 6.30am and was preceded by the release of gas forty minutes earlier. The 10th Glosters were in the centre of the British line, leading the attack in three lines on a long, low ridge towards the village of Hulloch. Gas was being used by the British for the first time and initially caused panic in the German trenches, but the wind changed direction and it was blown back towards the British lines. The battalion fought their way forward and were exposed to continuous machine

gun fire but they found gaps in the German wire and entered their trenches. Heavy resistance was met but they managed to advance to the German third defensive line. By now the casualties to the battalion were horrendous and when they regrouped at night only 60 men from it had not become casualties. Tom was reported missing at the end of the day and the Evesham Journal reported that *'no news has been received of him by his father since September 14'*. Another report in the same edition stated that *'Willie Hedges from the Pike got killed and Tom Smith wounded'*.

Thomas Smith was killed, in fact, on the first day of the battle. He was 20 years old. As his body could not be identified at the end of the battle he has no known grave and his name is recorded on the Loos Memorial at Dud Corner Cemetery, near Loos-en-Gohelle. It is also recorded on memorials in Campden (in St James's Church and in the High Street), Aston-sub-Edge and Mickleton.



Loos Memorial