

Pte. George Henry THOMPSON (1885 – 1914)
(Coldstream Guards)



George Henry Thompson was "an exceedingly popular" policeman stationed at Hanging Heaton. He was described as "a capable officer, affable and well conducted who had a host of friends."

George was the son of William and Honour Thompson of 39, Whalley Road, Sabden. He was born in 1885 in Benthams, North Yorkshire but his family later moved to Sabden, near Colne. He had previously served 3 years in the 1st Coldstream Guards whose history dates back to the time of Cromwell. In May 1913 he married Eleanor Busfield from Linton, Skipton and they set up home at 144 Bromley Street, Hanging Heaton.

When war was declared on Tuesday 4th August, George Henry was enjoying the entertainment at Dewsbury Empire. A slide was shown on the screen announcing mobilisation and the desire of the authorities that all Reservists should at once report themselves to their respective depots. As a Reservist he promptly left the Empire, made a brief visit home and by ten o'clock was on the train to Chatham that also carried the Batley Ambulance Volunteers. He was wished a safe return at the station by Inspector Ripley. The Ambulance Volunteers were given an enthusiastic send off by the crowd but Thompson and another policeman Constable Allcock left quietly and travelled in the guards van. His departure was as he would have wished it, "the quiet goodbye of a man of action."

Thompson re-joined his regiment at Chelsea and was then sent to Aldershot before his departure for France. On the morning of his departure he is quoted as saying, "I am in the pink but have lost a lot of flesh since I joined the regiment. It has brought me down to my proper fighting weight. We will give the Germans what for when we get at them. I don't mind fighting but it is those whom I left behind at home that I think of the most." On arrival in France he was not permitted to disclose his movements or whereabouts, but on September 4th he wrote a postcard to Inspector Ripley telling of hot days, cold nights and protracted marches.

He lost his life in the early days of September 1914 when the Coldstream Guards suffered serious losses when driving the Germans back from the Marne.

Eleanor received news of his death in a brief message from the War Office. She had moved back to her family in Linton when George went to war but made a brief visit to Bromley Street before returning to Linton. She gave birth to a daughter, Georgina, later that year. Eleanor re-married in 1920 and lived in Linton for the rest of her life. Georgina continued to grow up with the name Georgina Thompson.

George Henry Thompson, 4953 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, is Remembered with Honour at Montreuil-Aux-Lions Cemetery.

Researcher

Susan White, Batley History Group, May 2014