

John Thomas Horn(e)

Rank: Private 7721, 1st Bn., Lincolnshire Regiment.

Died: Monday, 15/5/1916, aged 37.

<https://dgydj.com/day-of-the-year-calculator/>

Commemorated: Not currently recorded in CWGC records

Awarded: 1914 Star, British War and Victory medals

Born Tetford, lived in xx, enlisted in xx.

A Tetford connection?

John Thomas Horn is not listed on the Tetford War memorial. He was found almost by accident, while researching his brothers Edmund and Harry, who are also not listed on the memorial. Like them he too was born in Tetford and this is corroborated by his entries in the censuses of 1881, 1891 and 1911 and his Army service record. So, his direct connection to Tetford is not in doubt, and the only question is whether his death was a result of the war.

Additional Notes:

- *At various times and for different members of the family the spelling of the surname appears as either Horn or Horne, most records seem to be Horn, so we have used that for consistency.*
- *Obviously all three brothers share a similar pre-war history and therefore you will find duplication between their biographies.*
- *Edmund and John share a similar war experience, albeit for a short period, and therefore you will find some duplication between their biographies.*

John was born in Tetford on February 23rd, 1879 to Thomas (b c1854) and Emily (née Wood, b c1854) and they were married in Lincoln on November 10th, 1873. They were both born in Lincolnshire, in Tetford and Belchford (or Horncastle - records vary) respectively. His older siblings were Alfred (b 3/3/1875) born in Tetford, Rose Annie (b 11/6/1878) born in Halton le Fen, then there were five younger siblings Emily (b 1880), Harry (b 1882), Edmund (b c1885), Sidney (b 1888) – all born in Tetford, and finally Florence May (b 1894) born in Lincoln.

So from the birth locations and census it seems that following Thomas and Emily's marriage they lived in Tetford, where Thomas had been born and was already living. They were here in 1891, but as their first daughter was born in Halton le Fen, perhaps they had a period around 1878 living there before returning. The family was living in Tetford up to 1888, but sometime after that, and before 1894, they moved to Lincoln. After that the locations become more difficult to establish as the children left home and other events, described below, occurred.

In 1881, before John's birth, but after their marriage, his parents were living in East Road, Tetford and Thomas was an agricultural labourer, but by 1891 they had moved to Lincoln and were living at 409 High Street, in the parish of St Peter at Gowts, with Thomas listed as a general labourer. They seem to have remained in Lincoln and by 1901 were living at 3 Beehive Court, Sparrow Lane in the parish of St Swithins and Thomas was working as a road labourer. John was absent and he was serving as Private 4683 in the 3rd Bn. of the Lincolnshire Regiment in the Boer War. His brother Edmund was present, but Harry was also absent - he had enlisted on January 3rd, 1901, as Private 4934 and was serving in the 3rd Bn. of the Lincolnshire Regiment, although it is not clear if he served overseas

John married Annie Mary Rollinson (b 23/12/1881) on April 15th, 1901 at St Swithin's Church, Lincoln. She was born in the city and in the 1901 census she was 19, unmarried, and living with her parents in 15 Flaxengate, Lincoln. So, the wedding took place after the census recording and obviously before John went to South Africa.

His father died in 1905 and, although alive, his mother has not been found in the 1911 census, however we know that she died on January 4th, 1914. By 1911 John had left the Army and was living with Annie at 27 Chanterlands Avenue in Hull and working as an iron moulder for the Nation Radiator Company – he may have left their employment before August 1914 as he is not listed on their war memorial, but that seems unlikely because when he reenlisted he was still recording 'iron moulder' as his profession.

So, when war was declared on August 4th, 1914, John was not in the Army, but he may well have been in the Army Reserve – this may also have been true of either or both of his brothers, Harry and Edmund – certainly it seems likely for John and Harry as they were allocated consecutive service numbers, 7721 and 7720 respectively, and both were initially allocated to the 3rd Lincolnshires Special Reserve

All three brothers, John, Harry and Edmund, rejoined the Lincolnshires very soon after the outbreak of war and, as experienced soldiers, did not require an extensive period of training and they went to France very early in the war. John and Edmund were allocated to the 3rd Lincolnshires, and much of their war experience was shared, but Harry was allocated to the 2nd Bn. Lincolnshire and so his experience was different.

Two service records¹ have been found for John and, for his reenlistment for the First World War, it shows that that happened on August 12th, 1914. It confirms his birth location, marriage, work and previous service. It describes him as 33 years and 272 days old, 5' 3" tall, weighing 115lbs with brown eyes and hair and a chest measurement of only 35" (expanded) but with a healthy 2" of expansion. His distinguishing marks were recorded as '*Two of Spades tattooed R Forearm. A. R. L. Forearm & True Love*' - presumably Annie Rollinson, his wife. At that time he gave his home address as, what looks like; Telford (or Tetford) House, Doddington Road, Strallxxx(?), Lincoln. It also reveals that he went to France on October 21st, 1914 – 21 days before Edmund and 15 days before Harry.

August to December 31st, 1914:

Very shortly after the declaration of war on August 4th, 1914, the Regulars of the 1st Bn. Lincolnshires were mobilized, sent to Portsmouth and landed in Le Harve, France on the August 14th but as they were not currently serving, neither John nor Edmund were with them. Before they joined their Battalion it had fought in the British Army's retreat from Mons, the Battle of Le Cateau, the Battle of The Marne, the Battle of The Aisne, and had experienced the stagnation of gains and the beginning of the stalemate of trench warfare. During the first five months of fighting the 1st Lincolnshire had suffered around 1,336 casualties, the 3rd Lincolnshires provided the men to replace them and John and Edmund were two of those.

It is worth explaining a little about the early stages of the war before trying to establish John and Edmund's experience. The British Army was tiny, about 250,000 regular soldiers, of which about a third of those were stationed far from Europe, in India or other British colonies. To that could be added about 480,000 Reservists and Territorials, who in theory could be mobilized quickly – although of course during the war, numbers increased dramatically. So, in August 1914 - the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) - the name given to the force sent to Europe – was around 120,000 men, in comparison the Germans committed 975,000 to the invasion of Belgium and France; the French committed about 1,000,000 and even Belgium had 117,000 men and quickly mobilised to over 220,000 – dwarfing the British. So the British input was very small, although arguably critical, but nevertheless there was little the British could do other than slow the Germans down in the areas they fought. It is therefore understandable that in the early stages of the war, when the fighting was mobile, apart from some heroic exceptions, the British were generally falling back, often in a very chaotic manner.

During the period to late October there was 'The race to the sea' as armies tried to outflank each other, with the Germans trying to cut off the ports that supplied the British, and which, in order to survive, the British had to stop, and they succeeded. Towards the end of the month the stalemate of over 460 miles of trenches spanning from the North Sea to the Swiss border was more or less established.

We know that John landed in France on October 22nd, 1914, but he only saw 48 days of service in France and was back in England on December 9th, 1914. Something that John experienced during this time, led to his return, his discharge and, I will argue, ultimately his death. It is difficult to establish what exactly it was but to try, it helps to first look at his death.

John never went back to France and was discharged from the Army on June 18th, 1915. Normally, when a man was discharged from service he was issued with a Silver War Badge or 'Services Rendered Badge', to show that he had served, but this did not start until September 1916, although I believe many were issued retrospectively - the purpose being to acknowledge that a man had '*done his bit*' and to stop the practice, which was becoming fairly commonplace, of women presenting white feathers to men who appeared of service age, but not serving. No record has been found for the issue of a badge to John. However, his pension card bears the following words against the line 'Date and cause of death': "*discharged 18.6.15 (1) shell shock. (2) Cardiac failure contd. on active service.*" and '*died 15.5.16.*' It is important to acknowledge how rare this was, certainly later in the war shell shock was rarely

acknowledged. In fact in 1917 medical officers were instructed to stop using the term and replace it with "*Not yet Diagnosed (Nervous)*". It was ignored if possible, if not men who had it were treated and then, in most cases, returned to fight. Some of those 'shot at dawn' would include men with shell shock. The worst cases that could not be returned to fight after a period of rest and treatment, often ended up in asylums or psychiatric hospitals such as Napsbury Mental Hospital.

Back to John; firstly I have found no medical records and therefore no evidence of any treatment or hospital admissions, however he was definitely service at 'Home' in February 1915, so after 2 and ½ months, probably less.

We know that something happened between October 22nd and December 8th, 1914. Around John's arrival in France his Battalion were moving positions and being shelled. It is probably unlikely that John joined them until they were relieved. The War Diary suggests that they did not return to billets until the 26th and even then they only managed a few hours rest. The period was fraught, chaotic and there were many casualties, and if John joined them then or even soon after, he would be fighting almost immediately. This was the Battle of La Bassee.

Phrases from the History of the Lincolnshires seem appropriate to sum up this period: "*For days and nights on end they had been fighting and marching amidst conditions which can only be described as appalling.*" "*Officers and men were by now thoroughly exhausted by continual fighting and want of sleep. Great difficulty was experienced in keeping them sufficiently awake, even to repel counterattacks; if a man sat down he was instantly fast asleep and it took almost rough treatment to awaken him.*"

On October 31st they moved to Belgium and the area of Wytschaete (White Sheets to the British soldiers) and on November 1st, during the night, they were ordered to attack. They were deployed on the right of the Kemmell-Wytschaete road and advanced in two lines. They were fired on but thought it was the British Indian troops. Lance Corporal King volunteered to go and reconnoitre the position, he was met with someone shouting we are Indians who are you? When he answered we are Lincolns and moved forward, he was shot dead. Another NCO shared the same fate. By this point many men had been killed or wounded and the Battalion withdrew about 100 yards. They made another attack, now few in numbers they only reached about 100 yards from the Germans and had to take cover in a small fold in the ground. At 6:45am it became lighter and they could be seen, the Germans rained down artillery fire as well as rifle fire from their flanks. They had to withdraw but at great risk, it was recorded that upon Colonel Smith giving the word "*we got up and ran for our lives*". In the evening of November 1st they were withdrawn to reorganise with the Battalion, normally 1000 men - recorded as numbering about 175 and the losses in this period described as "*terrible*". For the officers, 5 were killed, three wounded and in the other ranks (ORs) 293 were killed wounded or missing. They remained on high alert and on the 6th were marched out to relieve the cavalry east of Ypres but could not reach them due to heavy shelling and had to halt in Dickebusch.

This and the following period continued with almost constant shelling, fighting and casualties. The History of the Lincolnshires describes the period between the 12th and 20th of November as days of "*almost indescribable misery when only the inherent cheerful disposition of the British soldier kept his soul alive amidst desperate conditions.*" It cannot have helped when snow and sleet fell heavily on the 19th. They were relieved on the 20th and remained so until the 27th, when they went back to the trenches before being relieved again on the 30th and in billets at Westoutre.

John's brother Edmund arrived with a draft of replacements, either late in this period of fighting or, and perhaps more likely, as one of the 170 ORs arriving on December 2nd. John would perhaps have told him about the frantic period of fighting they had just gone through or perhaps by then he was already away from the line and if so Edmund must have been worried by his brother's absence.

Perhaps one or both of the brothers lined the roadside on the 3rd to cheer His Majesty King George V, as he passed by. The King later wrote expressing his pleasure at the appearance of the troops, so with such recent fighting it is probably the new draft that were lined up, but I think by now, John was elsewhere.

It seems that John had suffered some catastrophic event in the period described above. It must have been very serious because he was transported to England and never returned to fight. To try and give an explanation, I am clutching at straws; perhaps the dual diagnosis of shell shock and cardiac failure given for his discharge suggests that his experience was such that it caused his heart problems? Perhaps something like a prolonged burial by shell fire, before rescue might explain - we do not know.

He did return to 'Home' service because his service record shows that he left France on December 8th, 1914, and was later posted to the 3rd Lincolnshires on February 5th, 1915 – perhaps after some sort of treatment? He was then disciplined on February 10th with 10-days' detention for "*Quitting his post*" – perhaps still experiencing problems relating to shell shock? – but again we do not know.

He was however subsequently discharged from the Army on June 18th, 1915, and that really confirms that he was unfit for further service, either for reasons of a physical disability (heart?) or, for another reason (mental?), otherwise he would surely have been hospitalised, disciplined further or imprisoned or simply sent back to France.

So, unfit for further service, he returned to his wife at 23 Flaxengate, Lincoln. Whether he returned to any normality of life we don't know, but he died on May 15th, 1916. He was 37, recorded as an '*Army pensioner (iron moulder)*' and his wife was with him when he died. His death certificate records the cause of death, identically to the reasons for his discharge. *(1) shell shock. (2) cardiac failure.*

The basic premise for men we include here is that they died as a result of the war, so we must now ask '*was his death related to his war service?*' Currently the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), who officially commemorate such deaths, do not list him, and therefore it is assumed not. However, with sufficient evidence they will amend their records. So, what is the evidence, for his death being war related? I think it was for these reasons:

1. His pension card notes: "*discharged 18.6.15 (1) Shell shock. (2) Cardiac failure contd. on active service.*" – if 'contd.' is the abbreviation for used for 'contracted', which I believe it is, then definitely.
2. He first received a disability pension and the above card records that it ceased on June 19th, 1916 – the day after his death and then confirms that his disability pension was later converted to an Army pension for his wife, which I do not think would have been the case otherwise.
3. Although his death certificate does not confirm that the cause was contracted while in service, it matches exactly the reasons given for his discharge.
4. His name appears on war memorials, specifically the City of Lincoln War Memorial as J Horn, alongside his brothers, E and H Horn, and I believe he is the J Horn appearing on the St Swithin's Church War Memorial, Lincoln.

I therefore suggest he is entitled to have his death recorded as due to his service and I am seeking for his records to be amended by the CWGC. I also suggest that he has as much entitlement as any of the other men to be recognised by the people of Tetford, and others.

His brothers', Edmund and Harry both died after John, as did his sister Rose's husband, William Clayton, who was also killed in the war.

Post War:

After his death Annie received an Army pension of 18s 6d a week from December 12th, 1918 – before then his disability pension was 10s a week. When first received she was living at 23 Flaxengate, Lincoln and then sometime later at 15 Grantham Street, Lincoln.

She never remarried, but did work for a living and in 1921 was recorded living at 7 Flaxengate, Lincoln and working on her own account as a paperhanger (wallpaper hanger) and then in 1939 lived at Glengowen, Stocking Lane, Cherry Willingham, not far from Lincoln. She died in 1966.

Notes:

**1 One for his First World War Service as Private 7721 and another which I believe applies to his service as Private 4683 around the time of the Boer War. Unfortunately, although I have a single image from the latter, try as I might, I cannot find it again in any database.*

**2 This is a highly controversial subject, most of those who were shot at dawn have been posthumously pardoned. It is certainly true that many did not deserve to be shot, however it is also true that those shot included murderers, rapists etc. whose offences, if committed in civilian life, would have led to them being hung. There is also still a grey area for debate between the two extremes.*

**3 History of The Lincolnshire Regiment 1914-1918 – Compiled from official documents and officers' notes etc. and edited by Major-General C. R. Simpson, C.B. For simplicity I have shortened this to 'The History of the Lincolnshires'.*

**4 NCOs: Non-commissioned officers, i.e. Lance Corporals to Sergeant Majors.*