

ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON

WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT

Ernest William Thorne



Name: Ernest William Thorne

Rank: Private

Service Number: 10601

Regiment: Coldstream Guards

Battalion/Unit number: 3rd Battalion

Date/year of Birth: c. 1897

Place of Birth: ?

Place of Residence: 26 St Augustine Street, Taunton

Date of Death: 9th November 1914

Place of Death: 1st Eastern Hospital, Cambridge

Burial/Memorial: Cambridge City Cemetery

Ernest Thorne was the son of William and Emma Thorne. Ernest had a younger sister, Lilian and there had been another sibling who had died in infancy. In 1901 the family were living at 14 Noble Street, but by the time of the 1911 census they had moved to 26 St. Augustine's street. His father, William was a dairyman and had a shop. At 14 Ernest was helping him in the business. The family were members of the congregation at St James church, and William had been a bell-ringer.

Williams's father was probably a reasonably well to do Dairyman who in 1881 was based in Obridge Gardens, which may be where William junior learned his trade. If this is the case then there is a definite connection with the Marks Family who had the diary business at Obridge (see [Percy Marks](#)) in 1911. Kate Thorne had married Ernest Marks and had presumably taken on the business from Kate and William Thorne's father.

Ernest Thorne (like his cousin Percy) sought to join the army and both joined Guards Regiments. Ernest must have enlisted at the very outbreak of war, joining the elite Coldstream Guards. At the outbreak of war they were based at Chelsea and mobilised on 4/5th August, being brought up to strength with an influx of reservists. By 13th August they landed at Le Havre as part of the 4th (Guards Division) of the British Expeditionary Force and were involved in the first engagements of the war. The Division were involved in the Battle of Mons and the subsequent retreat, the Battle of the Marne, the Battle of the Aisne, the First Battle of Ypres which is where Ernest was wounded. We know that he had been in France for a month before this happened, so probably did not go out until after the August embarkation. (It may have been as late as 7th October as this was the qualifying date on his medal card). If he was a new recruit, as opposed to a reservist, he would have had little training for the fierce fighting that ensued.

On October the 4th (Guard) Division (Grenadier, Coldstream, and Irish Guards) were en-trained for 'an unknown destination'. They subsequently arrived in Flanders, their long journey ending at Ypres on the 20th October 1914. The Battalions were then been moved forward to the Wielje sector and bivouacked north west of the village of Zonnebeke, from where they had taken part on the 21st of October in an attack on enemy positions on the Zonnebeke-Langemarck road. This marked the beginnings of the First Battle of Ypres.

Ernest was wounded on 21st October and it would appear to have been a "blighty one" as he was brought back to England and sent to the 1st Eastern Hospital in Cambridge. Established in 1908, it had its headquarters in Trinity College during the first world war.

Ernest died from his wounds and was buried at the city cemetery in Cambridge. (His friend [William Dade](#) had been reported missing earlier on 7th October and was presumed to have died in mid-September).

The following report was printed in the Taunton Courier, along with the picture above:

"The photograph re-produced herewith is that of the late Private Ernest Thorn of the Coldstream Guards, the son of Mr and Mrs Thorn , of the St Augustine Street Dairy, Priory, Taunton. Private Thorn, but eighteen years of age, though of fine physique like his father, only joined the Guards in February. He sailed for France at the end of the first week in October, and by the 28th of that same month was wounded in the ankle. He had the bad luck to contract blood poisoning, and to have had his leg amputated above the knee. When interviewed his parents understood that he was in hospital in Cambridge and that he was doing as well as could be expected. They did not anticipate that he would be out of hospital for several weeks, and when his mother wrote and expressed her intention of going up to see him he replied not to worry as she could not do him any good if she came, and that he was going on all right. However, they were deeply grieved on Monday on receiving a telegram informing them that their son had died suddenly. Mr and Mrs W. Thorn and their family are members of St James's congregation, at which church Mr Thorn was a ringer for some considerable time, and much sympathy will be extended to them by that congregation and by their numerous friends."





These two pictures of the 1st Eastern Hospital in Cambridge have been taken from the Roll of Honour website, who holds the copyright for them. Other images can be found on their website. <http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Medical/CambridgeEasternNo1Hospital.html>