

**Cpl. Thomas Abraham**  
5<sup>th</sup> South Wales Borderers

## Cpl. Thomas Abraham - 5<sup>th</sup> South Wales Borderers

*Commemorated on Newbridge War Memorial as T. Abraham SWB*

*Commemorated on Nelson War Memorial*

*Commemorated on Celynen Collieries Roll of Honour*



### **Family**

Thomas Abraham was born in Nelson, Glamorgan in 1896 to William and Alice Abraham. In 1901 the family was living at 20 Shingrig Road in Nelson, Thomas had two older sisters, Emily and Winifred and two younger sisters, Clarice and Lilian.

William Abraham was a coal miner (hewer) who was bi-lingual (English/Welsh) as were all of the children, William's wife Alice was the only one not to speak Welsh.

William Abraham died in 1901 and by the time of the 1911 Census Alice was married to George Hughes who was 10 years her junior. Together with George, Alice had three further children - Theresa Ethel, Frederick George and Florence Nelly.

In 1911 the family was living at 18 Torlais Street Newbridge, Mon. and the fifteen year old Thomas was working as a Collier Boy.

### **Military**

Thomas enlisted in the army and served as a Private (13882) with the 5<sup>th</sup> (Service) Bn. South Wales Borderers.

After training, the Battalion arrived at Le Havre in France on 16/07/1915 as part of the 38<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 19<sup>th</sup> Division. It soon became the Divisional Pioneer Battalion, and as such combined the duties of trench digging and mining with bombing and fighting.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Bn. fought at Loos in September 1915 and spent the winter repairing roads, constructing tramways, improving trenches, and in mining in close proximity to the enemy.

In 1916 the battalion saw numerous actions on the Somme, losing 220 men in the last ten days of July.

March 1917 saw the 5<sup>th</sup> Bn. moved up to Ypres to prepare for the attack on the Messines Ridge, their duties were to consolidate any captured positions and assist in preparing passage for the guns following the infantry, both of which resulted in the battalion engaging in fierce fighting. For their

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part in the successful Battle of Messines Ridge the battalion gained two MCs, two DCMs and two MM which shows the value of their work as both Pioneers and Infantrymen.

The battalion was heavily employed in the summer and autumn of 1917 during the third Battle of Ypres and at Passchendael.

In the great German attack of March 1918 the battalion fought a memorable action inflicting heavy losses on the enemy by determined counter-attacks and withdrawing steadily to positions which it had dug on previous days but at the cost of 150 casualties.

Thomas was fatally wounded on 29<sup>th</sup> April, his evacuation to hospital was recorded in the Battalion War Diary which also revealed that he had been promoted to Corporal:

29th April 1918 'B' Coy continued wiring from H.33.C.5.7 to H.27.C.6.4

'C' Coy rested.

'D' Coy improved and continued trench for 200 yards in H.27.b.

### WOUNDED TO HOSPITAL

5/13882 Cpl. Abraham T. 39387 L/Cpl. Taylor G. 41586 Pte.  
Motler E. 22902 Pte. Mumford J. 37717 Pte. Clarke A.W. 45872  
L/Cpl. Favell L. 42522 Pte. Collins E.

### WOUNDED (AT DUTY)

41654 Pte. Wincup A. Captain E Bence-Trower M.C.



Two days later, on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1918, Cpl. Thomas Abraham died as a result of his wounds aged 24.

He is buried in the Arneke British Cemetery approximately 50 Km south-east of Calais and about 8 Km north-west of the town of Cassel.

The cemetery was begun by the 13th Casualty Clearing Station which moved to Arneke from the Proven area in October 1917. It was joined by the 10th and 44th Clearing Stations in April 1918.

The cemetery was used by these hospitals until the end of May 1918.

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The following was published by the Merthyr Express on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May 1918

*"Official news received on Wed week of the death in action of Corporal Tom Abraham 13882, South Wales Borderers, son of the late Mr & Mrs William Abraham.*

*Corporal Abraham enlisted early in the war and had seen much service in France. He was well known locally and he was born in this village.*

*He had been employed at Penallta Colliery and resided with his uncle and aunt, Mr & Mrs John Barnes, Wern Crescent."*

### Sources

[nelson-ww1-memorial.org.uk](http://nelson-ww1-memorial.org.uk)

[wm.shawnmcguire.co.uk](http://wm.shawnmcguire.co.uk)

Merthyr Express

CWGC.org

Fact Sheet 5th South Wales Borderers (from SWM Museum)

War Diary 5th South Wales Borderers

1901, 1911 Census

Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-1919

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920