

## WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION, LANCASHIRE NORTH BRANCH

DESPATCH: May 2014 - Supplementary Information

### WW1 MEDALS – THE SILVER WAR MEDAL, CASE STUDY - Thomas Cherry ECCLES, Private 3805 King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment: Bill Myers

AMONG the many First World War medal groups which have been split up over the decades is



Pte. T C Eccles  
Silver War Medal



Eccles Name on edge of Silver War Medal



J.G. and T. C. Eccles on Millom War Memorial

that of Thomas Cherry Eccles. His British War Medal is named to T. C. Eccles number 3805 of the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment and he was also entitled to the Victory Medal. He is named immediately below his brother John on the Millom war memorial.

He was one of the eight children of John and Martha Eccles. Thomas is shown on the 1911 census as living with his family at 194 Holborn Hill and working as a postman at Bootle before the First World War. A decade earlier he had been with the family at Underhill Station, near Millom.

In December 1915 Thomas joined the King's Own Royal (Lancaster) Regiment and began training for the First World War. He was able to get time off from the army to marry Laura Maria at Bootle parish church on January 22 in 1916 and change his address to Holmlea at Bootle Station. His army attestation papers show him to have been just over 5ft 5in and to have had a 36in chest.

He left to join the regiment from the port of Folkestone on July 5, in 1916, landing at Boulogne. He reached the major army base at Etaples the next day. He is officially stated to have been killed in action on August 15 in 1916 and was buried on the Somme at Serre Road Cemetery No 2.

His wife received a widow's pension of 10 shillings (50p) a week starting from February 26 in 1917. At that time she was living at Range Villas, Eskmeals, and later moved to Latona Street on Walney Island.

This death on August 15 must rate as unlucky after what he had survived a few days earlier. His battalion (1/4th) had been relieved at 3.55am on August 9 by the Liverpool Regiment and moved to south west of Carnoy. Despite being a place of relative safety they were still called on for trench-digging. On the 11th the war diary noted: "They were heavily shelled by enemy artillery but only two casualties." From the 14th they were in billets at Horicourt - bathing and bayonet fighting.

A few days earlier, on August 8 the battalion had been holding the line in a sector south of the Trones-Guillemont Road. The war diary notes that at 3.45am two platoons from each of four

companies crept out of the advanced trench. At 4.10 they advanced with a second line of troops following. As they all attempted to follow behind their own barrage at 4,15am the Germans "placed a very violent barrage of artillery fire (shrapnel) on the fire trench." It got worse.

Five minutes later the first line came under unexpected attack from bombs. "This was absolutely unexpected and caused heavy casualties and the attack was arrested." As the second line sought to support the lead group it came under machine gun and rifle fire. This and un-cut barbed wire made further attempts to advance impossible.

The attack had struggled to get just 50 yards from the original start point. Stokes mortars arrived to support the advance - but not ammunition. The battalion rapidly became short of officers and communications broke down so badly that the King's Own completely lost touch with the battalion on its left.

"Our artillery in the meantime kept up an intermittent bombardment. For a long period they were shooting very short and our front line had to be cleared. It was with the greatest difficulty that the artillery were informed of this, during which time the battalion had suffered casualties from this fire." The result was a total casualty count of 271 officers and men of which 53 were dead and 54 missing.