

COMMEMORATING THE DEATH OF

Thomas Norman Lewis

Act/Corporal Royal Garrison Artillery



Who died on 8th August 1917, aged 20
in action in Flanders



Dawlish World War One Project 1914-18 /2014-18

Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and
Dawlish Town Council

www.dawlishww1.org.uk



Welcome to this Act of Commemoration.

Dawlish Town Council and Churches Together in Dawlish and District are commemorating the death in the service of the nation of every Dawlish person who was killed as a result of enemy action during the First World War.

Today we remember the death of Thomas Norman Lewis who volunteered for action but died on 8th August 1917.

After the First World War, it was decided in Dawlish that a single town War Memorial would be erected close to the parish church, and no church would have its own War Memorial. In keeping with this decision, these Acts of Commemoration take place in the town centre churches without regard to the denomination of the person they commemorate and they are led by a minister or pastor of the host church. The same Order of Service is used at each service. When we remember men listed on the War Memorials in St. Mary's Cofton or St. George's Holcombe, the service is held in the appropriate village church.

There will be opportunity to talk to the leader of the service afterwards when light refreshments will be served. You are invited to take a reproduction of St John's Gospel which was given to every service person during the First World War.

Please join in the words which are in **heavy type**.

Churches Together in Dawlish & District
28 High Street,
Dawlish, EX7 9HP

THE ORDER OF SERVICE

Introduction

We have gathered today as part of our commemoration of those Dawlish people who were caught up in the courageous but tragic events of the First World War.

We remember those who were killed in action,
those who were maimed and those whose minds were disfigured
by conflict.
the bereaved and the lost and those who lived in darkness,
the families which were shattered,
and all who held in silence the unspeakable memories of warfare.

In particular today on the 100th anniversary of his death we remember Thomas Norman Lewis who died in action while in the service of his country.

Prayer

Almighty God, the Lord of all,
today we pause to remember with gratitude
the life and death of Thomas Norman Lewis
knowing that he was, is and always will be
known and loved by you.

We thank you for his willingness to fight for our country
even if necessary to the point of death.

And today we remember his family and friends
who grieved at his death
and whose lives were never the same.

Amen.

We hear about the life and death of Thomas Norman Lewis

Reading Romans 8:31-39

What, then, shall we say? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord

please stand

A prayer of Commemoration

We remember before God Thomas Norman Lewis
Lord, have mercy

Today we commit Thomas Norman Lewis to the love of God

We give thanks for his life, and grieve at his death

May he rest in peace

and rise in glory.

He shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;

age shall not weary him, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning,

we will remember him.

We will remember him.

A candle may be lit or a bouquet may be placed before the pieta.

A time of silence

We remain standing

The Commitment to all those who died in the service of the nation.

Lord God, Father of all,
in thankfulness for Thomas Norman Lewis
and in his memory
we pledge ourselves
to bring comfort to the sad, the lonely and the distressed;
to bring relief to all who are in need
and to serve you and to work for peace.
Keep us ever mindful of the struggles
and achievements of former generations
and so make us grateful
now and in the days to come.
Amen

O Lord, our maker and our strength,
from whose love in Christ we can never be parted
either by death or life:
Look in mercy on those for whom we pray this day,
and grant us your protection and peace,
that we may be saved in body and soul,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

As we ask for deliverance from the forces of destruction
and for peace in our time and In our lives
we pray together:

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
AMEN.

The Blessing

God grant to the living grace,
to the departed rest,
to the Church, the Queen,
the Commonwealth and all the world
peace and concord:

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.

Amen.

Thomas Norman Lewis

Born Courtown, Wexford, 2 December 1890

died 8 August 1917, aged 26

Act/Corporal 56682

Royal Garrison Artillery

Thomas Norman Lewis came from a North Devon family although he and his siblings were born in Ireland. His grandparents were Thomas Lewis (1829-1913), an agricultural labourer and Elizabeth Staddon (1828-), both born in Ilfracombe.

Their son, Thomas, born in Ilfracombe on 1st February 1855 was one of five children at the time of the 1861 census. Young Thomas joined the Royal Navy on 1st January 1873, and one month later at age 18 he started a 10 year engagement. He became an Able Seaman in April 1875 and transferred to the Coastguard Service as a Boatman in March 1881.

Thomas married Mary Bray (1853-1924) in 1881 and in that year's census she is living with her parents, William and Ann Bray at Berry Village, Berrynarbor where she was born. She is listed as a Coastguard's wife. Mary followed Thomas to Ireland and was at Crosshaven when the first three children were born, Lucy, Annie Elizabeth and Constance Mary.

Thomas was moved to Courtown, Wexford, on 19th January 1887, in command of boats. It was while he was there that they had Emily Francis, **Thomas Norman (1890-1917)**, William Bray and Rosina May.

Thomas was promoted to Chief Boatman at Rosslare on 31 May 1897 and to Chief Boatman in Charge in August 1900. In 1901 the family were at Mossyglen, Greencastle, Donegal. From 7th July 1903 until retirement on 3rd February 1910 he was based at Dawlish.

In 1911 the family was at Iddesleigh Terrace, Exeter Road, Dawlish and most were employed: Lucy was a dressmaker, Annie Elizabeth did housework, Constance Mary was a dressmaker, Emily Francis was a shop assistant in a drapery, **Thomas Norman** was an assistant clerk in Dawlish Brewery, William Bray was an assistant golf professional at Warren Links and Rosina Mary was at home.

Thomas Norman Lewis was medically examined on 16th January 1915 and measured at 5' 8 3/4" and weighing 143 lbs (fraction under 10 stone), having fair complexion and blue eyes. He enlisted in the Royal Garrison Artillery at Shepherd's Bush, Middlesex on 19th January. He is unusual in being documented in a service record that survived the fires in the blitz of WW2.

He joined the RGA at Newhaven on the 20th January and was posted as a Gunner for training on the 27th. He was rated 3rd class at Dover on 1st May 1915 and served as a Gunner at Malta from 18th June 1915. He became a Qualified Gun Layer on 1st August 1916.

He returned to Britain and joined the 321st Siege Battery on 31st December 1916 and was promoted to Acting Bombardier on 6th April 1917. He embarked at Southampton on 11th May for Le Havre, arriving next day. He was promoted to Bombardier on 29th May 1917 and was promoted to 'Acting Corporal vice 337638 Hardy, performing duties from 17th June 1917.'

He was killed in action on 8th August 1917 during the Third Battle of Ypres.

The war diary for 321 Siege Battery survives at Kew under their reference WO95/217. The actual entry in the War Diary for August 8th.

"Battery and billets heavily shelled. 6 NCOs and men killed in battery position .. Men still continued on the operation targets. Fire 400 rounds."

This appears to be a direct hit on one of the 6in Howitzers which were manned by 10 men. One common factor is that the buried bodies were later dug up and reburied at Voormezelle.

His brother William was shown as serving with the 5th Battalion, Devonshire Regiment.

Thomas Norman Lewis is recorded on the Devon Roll of Honour and the Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour.