



## Battlefield Trip Confirmed

Having almost filled the coach we are able to confirm the details for the

### Battlefield Tour 29 Oct to 2 Nov 2015

We will be leaving Thame on Thursday morning for a lunch time ferry from Dover, arriving at our hotel in the north Lille area for dinner, having paused en route to lay a Thame Remembers cross at the grave of Gunner Charles Alder Allen at Wimereux.

Friday we visit Ypres, scene of many battles in WW1. We will be touring the battlefields and memorials, delivering crosses and wreaths where we are able. We will visit Tyne Cot memorial and cemetery, before lunch in Passchendaele. The afternoon will be free to visit Ypres and its museums. You will not want to miss the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate that evening for our wreath laying.

Saturday is planned for a visit to Arras and the acclaimed Canadian Memorial and trenches at Vimy Ridge. (We have three Canadian forces casualties on our list) There

will be time to explore Arras or make your own special visit to a local CWGC cemetery.

Sunday we go to the Somme and see where eighteen of our casualties are

commemorated. Among the memorable places we visit will be the Lochnagar crater and Thiepval Memorial. You



will be able to enjoy lunch in the friendly town of Albert with visits to cemeteries and trenches in the afternoon.

Our return trip is on Monday, again for a lunch time ferry, but there will be time for the obligatory shopping.

The cost includes the services of our guides and all admission fees. We have been able to heavily subsidise this trip and so the individual cost is just £275. Hotel accommodation is on a B & B basis. The price is based on two people sharing a room with a £99 supplement for single occupancy.

If you have already registered your interest we now need your deposit of £100 to be paid by 8 Feb 2015, with the balance by 15 August. Please pay at the Spear Travels office in Greyhound Walk and make cheques payable to "Spear Travels".

You may also pay by credit or debit card but there is an additional charge to use a credit card.

If you have not already reserved your place there are a few seats remaining but in the first instance please call David Bretherton on 01844 215178.

## Furthest afield delivered

Our furthest challenge has been fulfilled. On a December summer morning in far-flung New Zealand, a Thame Remembers cross was delivered to the grave of George Bertie Parker in Karori Cemetery, Wellington. Sergeant Parker, born in Oxford in 1866, a pupil at Lord Williams's School in Thame, and an athletics blue at Oxford, left the UK to serve with the British South Africa Company. His career spanned the telegraph industry, gold mining, and organising the Matabele Police under Mr Cecil Rhodes, before venturing to New Zealand in 1909. He enlisted with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in 1915, serving on the home front in a training unit, before dying from an unknown illness in 1917.

## Researching “Bates T”

The name “Bates T” appears on Thame War Memorial, but the details behind the name eluded researchers of the Thame Remembers project for many months. Tantalisingly he is listed on the St Mary’s Church War Memorial as “Private T Bates Cameron Highlanders”, but there is no T Bates shown in the Cameron Highlanders records. A quick check for T Bates with the Commonwealth War Graves shows over 1000 records; clearly a more shrewd approach is therefore needed.

He is listed in Thame so a search for him in the census records for Thame should reveal someone. Trying the most obvious Christian name first - “Thomas”, the 1901 census has one possible candidate; Thomas Bates age 13, born in Thame and living in Bridge Terrace with his father George and mother Elizabeth. The 1911 census however shows him, now age 23, living in Waddesdon, Bucks with his sister Maud Gurney. (she



was not recorded with the family on the 1901 census). Often names are recorded on more than one war memorial so its worth a check with the Waddesdon

Memorial records on BuckinghamshireRemembers.org.uk to see if he is listed there. There is a Thomas Bates on the war memorial and their research shows Private Thomas Bates, age 27, died 2 June 1916 when serving with the Canadian Infantry (Manitoba Regt) and recorded on the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres. This could be him, right name and age but two problems; it gives his parents as George and Jane and what about the Cameron Highlanders.

Back to the Census records for Thame. In 1891, Thomas, age 3 is with his father George who is now shown as a widower. The parish registers have a burial record for Jane Bates, age 35 yrs on 15 Dec 1890 and the marriage of George to Elizabeth Crowdy on 12 Sept 1891. So the Elizabeth of the 1901 census was his step-mother. Wonder if they got on? but one problem solved.

A search of the many war records web sites now confirms all the information gathered so far and his service number 421123, but little further information. Like many young men from England it looks like he had sought a better life in Canada and then answered the call to serve his country and joined the Canadian Infantry. He chose the Manitoba Regiment, 43rd Battalion, which is also known as; the Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada.

So how/when did he go to Canada? There were a number of Thomas Bates recorded in UK emigration/Canadian immigration records, but none really seemed to fit the bill, with different ages, birthplaces or occupations.



Fortunately the Canadians have recently introduced a project to put online the service records of all Canadian soldiers in the first world war, and although only 110,000 of the 640,000 service men have so far been completed, the record of 421123 Private Thomas Bates of the 43rd Battalion, Cameron Highlanders of Canada is amongst them. These records provide a wealth of information including physical description (5 ft 10 ins tall, 38 ins girth, 165 lbs, fair complexion, grey eyes, brown hair, scar on thumb of right hand) farm labourer, his next of kin is his sister in Waddesdon. However they also reveal other interesting facts. Firstly he never went to Canada - he signed up at Shorncliffe, Kent on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1916, the major Canadian Expeditionary Force training base prior to embarkation to France being situated in nearby East and West Sandlings. Also, his attestation papers wrongly give his place of birth as Inverness in Scotland. The most likely explanation for this is to allow his recruitment into a regiment with Scottish links.

So why did he join a Canadian regiment? Is it because the Canadian soldiers pay was considerably more - C\$1 per day compared the English soldiers pay of 1s 2d per day? The records also show how short was the training for a new recruit - recruitment date 11<sup>th</sup> January, embarkation to France 20<sup>th</sup> February, i.e. just under 6 weeks. He is recorded as being transferred to the 177<sup>th</sup> Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers shortly before he was posted missing. This was quite common practice, often for local guard/support duties.

He was not officially declared “presumed dead” until 1917, by which time his pay records had accumulated to a considerable sum (which with allowances amounted to over C\$700). However, it is not clear whether this balance was passed over to his next of kin or not.

Jan 2015 - A. Hickman

**Thame**  
museum

*This newsletter is printed and published by Thame Museum Trust and distributed free to all.*

This paper is intended as a digest of news items about the Thame Remembers project to keep the people of Thame up to date with what is happening.

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### Crosses Recently Delivered

**26 January 2015**

Pte Albert George Thomlinson

Iain & Alison Biddle  
Dunkirk Memorial  
Nord, France.

*Thame Remembers is a project of Thame, Oxfordshire to commemorate the centenary of World War One by researching those from Thame who fell in all conflicts worldwide, and remembering them by placing a Thame Cross on their grave or memorial wherever in the world that may be. If you feel that you can help please contact Dave on 01844 21 5178.*