

Lance Sergeant 17082
Edward George Theobald
6th Battalion
South Wales Borderers (Pioneers)
1885 - 1916



Life in the Community

Edward's Grandfather moved to Llandeud from Somerset in the 1830's to work as a farm labourer. Edward's father John was born in Llandeud in 1835 and continued living there marrying Sarah Jones and by 1881 they had raised six children, four girls and three boys.

At the time of the Census in April 1891 his father John was a General Labourer aged 56 and his mother Sarah was aged 40 they lived with their six daughters and three sons John being the eldest aged 9 and Edward being the second youngest aged 6. They were living at that time in Caldicot and records show that two of the younger children were born in Magor and Caldicot so clearly the family had moved around in the area before 1891.

Edward George Theobald was born in Llandeud in January 1885

At the time of the Census in April 1901 the family had moved back to Llandeud and Edward aged 16 was working as a navy at the waterworks. His father John aged 66 was still an Agricultural Labourer and his mother Sarah was aged 50. His older brother John who had signed up in 1900 for 12 years' service with the Royal Navy was serving as a stoker on HMS Vivid.

Edward's Father John died in 1907 and left £170 in his will to Sarah his widow that would have the equivalent purchasing power of £14,000 in 2017.

At the time of the Census in April 1911 Edward was 26 years of age and employed as a Platelayer with the railway company. He was single and still lived in Llandeud with his widowed mother Sarah and his sister Ethel Agnes Lucy and his brother William. His older brother John's census return shows he was in Malta serving on HMS Vulcan.

Edward married Emma Jane Price in August 1915 and they lived at 8, Riverside, East Usk Road, Newport.

After Edward's death in September 1915 Emma Jane married Edward's brother John in February 1917 and they continued living at 8, Riverside, East Usk Road, Newport.

Edward's sister Ethel Agnes Lucy married Walter Davies in 1913 and they had a son

Walter John (Jack) Davies in 1914. Walter Davies died serving in the South Wales Borderers at Pilckem Ridge in July 1917. Walter John (Jack) Davies died serving on H M Submarine Phoenix in July 1940. Ethel Agnes Lucy lost her brother, her husband and her son.

Military Service

Edward joined the 6th Battalion South Wales Borderers (Pioneers) they had been formed at Brecon on 29th September 1914 and moved to Codford Wiltshire as part of 76th Brigade, 25th Division. In April 1915 they moved to Hursley Park before embarking for France arriving on 24th September 1915. The battalion spent the winter in the Armentieres sector doing heavy work in flooded trenches. In the spring of 1916 the Battalion was in the line at Vimy and Neuville St Vaast, where two companies did fine work consolidating the craters of mines blown under the German line. They were persistently shelled, and at times had to break off their work to repel an attack, but eventually handed over a thoroughly well-organised position to the relieving infantry.

The Battalion was continuously employed during the Battle of the Somme and on one occasion they carried out a magnificent piece of Pioneer work by digging 700yards of communication trench from one captured trench to another(the Regina trench) under heavy shell fire. Only good discipline and a fine spirit could have accomplished this task and the Battalion was deservedly complemented upon it.

Edward was fully engaged in the Battle of Albert which raged from 1st–13th July 1916 comprised the first two weeks of Anglo-French offensive operations in the Battle of the Somme. British attacks south of the Albert–Bapaume road began on 2nd July, La Boisselle near the road was captured on 4th July, Bernafay and Caterpillar woods were occupied from 3–4 July and then fighting to capture Trônes Wood, Mametz Wood and Contalmaison took place until early on 14 July when the Battle of Bazentin Ridge 14th–17th July began. There were around 60,000 British casualties on 1st July 1916 and in the fighting from 2nd–13th July the British lost another 25,000 men.

Edward was killed in action on 10th July 1916.

The following two pages from the War Diary of the South Wales Borderers for July 1916 clearly show some of the scale of the losses that occurred. Edward's death on the 10th July 1916 is recorded on the second of these two pages dated 11th July.

Medal Entitlement

Lance Sergeant 17082 Edward George Theobald's medal entitlement was the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Name	6	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
THEOBALD	S. Wales Border	L/Sgt	17082	
Edward		Cpl		
Medal	Date	Page	Remarks	
VICTORY	8/1/1916	829		
BRITISH	do do			
15 STAR	8/1/2014	317	1st in A 10.7.16	
Theatre of War first served in	111 France			
Date of entry therein	24.9.15			

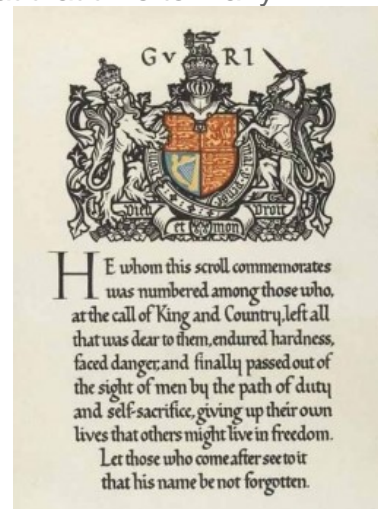


In the 1920's when the First World War medals were issued they were commonly referred to as "Pip, Squeak and Wilfred".

It coincided with a popular comic strip published by the Daily Mirror newspaper which first appeared on 12th May 1919. Pip was the dog, Squeak the penguin and Wilfred the young rabbit. For some reason the three names of the characters became associated with the three campaign medals being issued at that time to many thousands of returning servicemen, and they stuck.

The medals were issued to the fallen serviceman or woman's legatees if a Will existed. If no Will existed, they were issued to the next-of-kin in the order of precedence laid down in Army Order 256 of 1917.

This Scroll accompanied the medals of servicemen and women who fell in the War and carried the full Name, Rank and Number beneath the last line of the script.

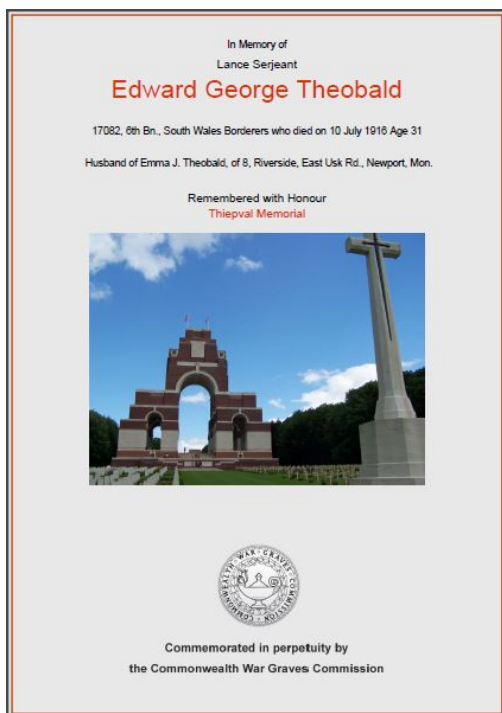


Commemoration of the Fallen

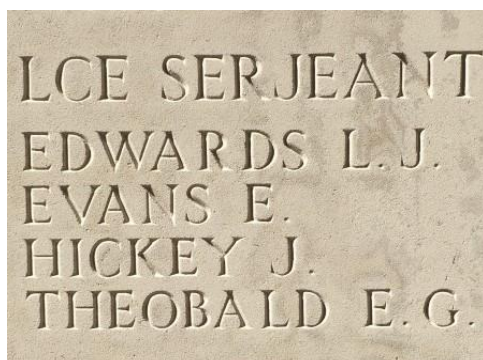
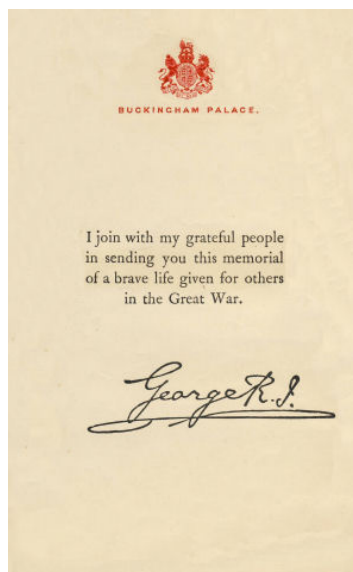


The Bronze Memorial Plaque was issued to the next of kin of servicemen or women who had fallen in the Great War. It just had the recipient's name cast in the box above the lion's head no rank was given as it was intended to show equality in their sacrifice. 1,355,000 plaques were issued, which used a total of 450 tonnes of bronze, 600 of these plaques were issued to women.

Distribution started in November 1919 and they continued to be issued into the 1930s to commemorate people who died as a consequence of the war. The circular shape and coin-like appearance soon contributed to the nickname of this memorial plaque becoming widely known as the "Dead Man's Penny", the "Death Penny", "Death Plaque" or "Widow's Penny".



Edward is commemorated at the Thiepval Memorial, Pier and Face 4 A.





The Thiepval Memorial to the missing of the Somme is a war memorial to 72,246 missing British Empire servicemen who died in the Battles of the Somme of the First World War between 1915 and 1918, with no known grave. Measuring 45 metres in height, the memorial is the largest Commonwealth war memorial in the world. Its walls are clad with 10 million bricks and its sixteen piers are faced with Portland stone on which the names of the Missing are engraved. The men commemorated here come from all social backgrounds and their ages range from 15 to 60 years old with an average age of 25.

Newspaper cutting from local newspaper

suffered is at rest. G
Theobald.—In ever loving memory of Sergt. Edward George Theobald, who was killed in action, July 10, 1916. Ever remembered by Chris. and Sim, nephews and nieces. H
Theobald.—In proud and loving memory of Sergt. Edward George Theobald, S.W.B., killed in action, battle of Albert, July 10, 1916. Tenderly loved youngest son of Sarah and the late John Theobald. Sadly missed by mother, sister, niece. G
Theobald.—In ever loving memory of Sergt. Edward George Theobald, who was killed in action, July 10, 1916. We do not forget him, we loved him too dearly, for his memory to fade from our life like a dream. Our lips need not speak, for our hearts mourn sincerely, for our grief often dwells where it seldom is seen. Fondly remembered by wife and Brother Jack. H

This entry was made in the Great Western Railway Staff Magazine following Edward's death.



EDWARD G. THEOBALD was a relaying labourer in the Engineering Department at Newport. He was 30 years of age, and had been in the Company's service a year.

Edward is also commemorated on the Magor Town War Memorial and in the Book of Remembrance held on the People's Collection Wales website.



The Newport cenotaph was unveiled by Lord Tredegar in June 1923, to commemorate the local people who died in active service in the First World War. It now also commemorates people who died in subsequent wars. There are no names on the memorial but Lance Sergeant 17082 Edward George Theobald's name appears on the listing together with the names of his brother-in-law [Private 33029 Walter Davies](#) and his nephew [Petty Officer 145335 Walter John \(Jack\) Davies](#).