

For County, For Country

The Battle of the Somme lasted from July to November 1916 and as summer turned to autumn and then winter so the casualties mounted. Across County Durham every community was affected as news arrived of husbands, brothers, friends and neighbours killed in action hundreds of miles from home. It is impossible today to appreciate the impact of these deaths on local communities. Durham City lost 150 men on the Somme, Gateshead 340, Sunderland 520, Seaham 60, Consett 50, Bishop Auckland 80 and Stanley 45. Even small communities like Tow Law suffered, losing 26 men, the youngest only 19 years old, in the battle.

Tow Law is a small town in the west of County Durham about 10 miles from Durham City. In 1914, when the First World War began, Tow Law had a population of about 4300. Most of the men worked in local collieries or iron foundries and most, except for a few who had joined their local DLI Territorial Company at Crook, had no experience of Army life. That was soon to change as hundreds of men from the town and surrounding small communities volunteered to "Fight for King and Country".

By the end of the war in 1918, 100 men from Tow Law had died; 26 during the Battle of Somme in 1916. Of these Somme deaths, 11 of the soldiers had been serving with The Durham Light Infantry. Most have no known graves and are commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial in France.



Grave of an unknown DLI soldier This soldier died on 1st July 1916. [Ref No:D/DLI 2/18/81]

DLI SOLDIERS FROM TOW LAW, COUNTY DURHAM WHO DIED DURING THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

Date of Death	First Name	Surname	Number	Rank	DLI Battalion	How Died	Age	Memorial or Cemetery	Family	Born	Home	Enlisted
1 July 1916	Frank	Hendon	14560	Private	15 th Battalion DLI	Killed in action	26	Thiepval Memorial (no known grave)		Tow Law	Tow Law	Bishop Auckland
1 July 1916	John Anderson	Hutchinson	161084	Private	16 th Battalion DLI	Killed in action	26	Thiepval Memorial (no known grave)	Son of John Hutchinson, of Thornley Tow Law	Thornley	Tow Law	Durham
17 July 1916	John Robert	Agar	2646	Private	6 th Battalion DLI	Killed in action	19	Faliron Copse Cemetery, Metz	Son of William & Jane Agar, 5 Victoria Avenue, Crook		Tow Law	Crook
15 September 1916	James	Peckett	2897	Private	6 th Battalion DLI	Killed in action		Thiepval Memorial (no known grave)			Tow Law	Tow Law
16 September 1916	Oliver	Robinson	45448	Private	10 th Battalion DLI	Killed in action		Thiepval Memorial (no known grave)		Tow Law	Tow Law	Bishop Auckland
5 October 1916	William	Barker	33026	Private	11 th Battalion DLI	Killed in action		Thiepval Memorial (no known grave)		Calterick	Tow Law	Tow Law
23 October 1916	Ralph	Stephenson	22941	Private	22 nd Battalion DLI	Killed in action	26	Thiepval Memorial (no known grave)	Husband of Emily Stephenson, 39 Bridge Street, Tow Law	Wolsingham	Tow Law	Bishop Auckland
5 November 1916	James Haswell	Harfe	2813	Corporal	6 th Battalion DLI	Killed in action	23	Warfencourt British Cemetery	Son of William Harfe, 16 Arthur Terrace, Stanley, Crook		Sunniside	Bishop Auckland
5 November 1916	John	Vitty	3185	Private	6 th Battalion DLI	Killed in action	34	Thiepval Memorial (no known grave)	Son of John & Dorothy Vitty, 19 Barning Street, Tow Law		Tow Law	Bishop Auckland
11 November 1916	John Thomas	Baerbridge	2282	Private	22 nd Battalion DLI	Killed in action	21	Thiepval Memorial (no known grave)	Son of Mrs Elizabeth Baerbridge, 50 High Street, Tow Law	Tow Law	Tow Law	Bishop Auckland
11 November 1916	Thomas	Ward	2294	Private	22 nd Battalion DLI	Killed in action	23	Guards Cemetery, Lesboufs	Son of Francis & Mary Ward, 24 Wolsingham Road, Tow Law	Tow Law	Tow Law	Bishop Auckland

This list has been put together with information from the North East War Memorials Project, Tow Law War Memorial, 'Soldiers Died part 62 The DLI' & the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Memorial Card and Certificate
In memory of William Harrington who was killed in action, aged 22, on 16th September 1916 whilst serving with the 10th Battalion DLI. His name is on the Thiepval Memorial in France. [Ref No: D/DLI 7/293/1]

War Memorials

With the end of the First World War, local communities across County Durham looked for a permanent way to remember the dead and for somewhere where the bereaved could mourn their loss.

Soon War Memorials were set up across the County in every village and town. Some in churches, schools or mines were simple brass plaques, but others made of stone and metal were placed at the heart of the community.

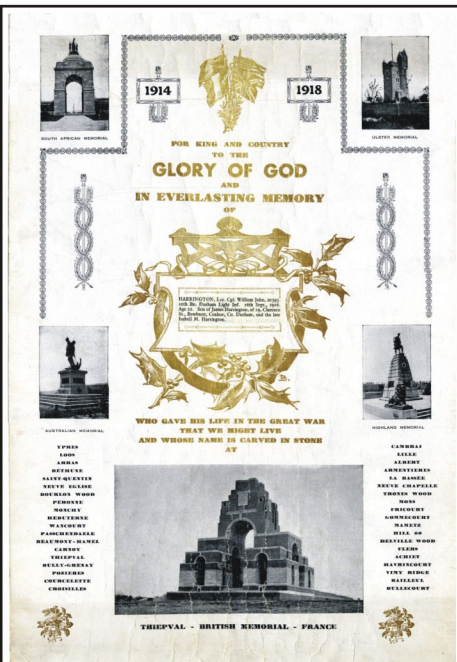


Tow Law War Memorial [Photos: North East War Memorials Project]

In Memoriam

When a soldier was killed in action on the Western Front, he was either buried in a hastily dug grave, often a shell hole, or he received no burial at all. A soldier who died of wounds behind the front line in casualty clearing station or hospital on the French coast was buried in a cemetery but no members of his family could attend.

Many grieving families, therefore, held memorial services in local churches for their lost sons or husbands. Often special cards were printed, which were then given to family and friends in memory (In Memoriam) of the dead soldier.



[Ref No: D/DLI 7/293/4]

Tow Law War Memorial

Tow Law's War Memorial lies at the junction of High Street, Bridge Street and Wolsingham Road. It was unveiled in September 1921 and lists the names of 100 men from Tow Law and the villages of Thornley, Sunniside, Hedley Hope, East Hedley Hope and Satley who died "For County, For Country" in the First World War.

At the unveiling, the Vicar of Thornley, Henry Humphreys, spoke to the silent crowd. He too had suffered, losing three of his sons in the War. Their names are on the Memorial.



North East War Memorials Project

The North East War Memorials Project was set up by a group of enthusiasts to create a database of information and photographs of War Memorials across the North East. This database will then be used to assist members of the public and schools to research their local War Memorials and record the results. The Project is also feeding information to the National Inventory of War Memorials based at the Imperial War Museum in London.

If you are interested in the work of the North East War Memorials Project, please, contact the Secretary, Dorothy Hall, on 0191 3883667.

