

SWIFT Thomas Pemberton

Thomas was a member of the Royal Engineers Carrier Pigeon Service (34688). He served in Mesopotamia. At the age of 36, he died in Basra, Iraq on the 5th August 1918 as a consequence of dysentery. He is buried in the Tehran War Cemetery, Iran.



Tehran War Memorial, Iran

Tehran War Cemetery is situated within the British Embassy residential compound at Gulhek, which is near Tehran. Within the cemetery is the Tehran Memorial commemorating casualties from both World Wars. The War Cemetery was built in 1962. There are now 412 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war, 13 of which are unidentified but are commemorated here. It also commemorates some of those who died in the neighbouring regions of Russia whose graves are unknown or unmaintainable.

Thomas' father, Thomas Bennett Swift, was a butcher born in Parkgate. His mother, Hannah, died 1932 in Neston. His brother, Edward, fought in the Great War but returned to run a butcher's shop at Neston Cross. The family had, also, a butcher's shop in Little Sutton.

Thomas was married to Mary Alice and they had two children. After Thomas' death his wife remarried and lived at Laburnum Farm, Willaston. The Electoral Roll of 1914 lists Thomas at The Cross, Neston while his 1915 Service Record states his address as being 5, Hadlow Terrace, Willaston. He is identified as a butcher and farmer.

The Carrier Pigeon Service performed a vital communication role. The birds carried coded messages to Headquarters while the front line was totally devastated by incessant artillery fire. Wireless had not yet become a reliable form of communication. 12,000 pigeons were deployed at the First Battle of the Somme in 1916. 100,000 were used throughout the War when 95% got home with their message. Pigeons were protected by the Defence of the Realm Act. It was an offence to shoot them.

DEFENCE OF THE REALM

Regulation 21A

SHOOTING

HOMING PIGEONS

Killing, wounding or molesting homing pigeons is punishable under the Defence of the Realm Regulations by Six Months Imprisonment or £100 Fine

The public are reminded that homing pigeons are doing valuable work for the government, and are requested to assist in the suppression of the shooting of these birds.

£5 Reward

will be paid by the National Homing Union for information leading to the conviction of any person

SHOOTING HOMING PIGEONS
the property of its members.

Information should be given to the Police, Military Post or the Secretary of the Union, C C Plackett, 14, East Parade, Leeds