

MORTON, THOMAS WILLIAM**Rank: Private****1st/4th Bn. Royal Berkshire Regiment****Service No: 5422****Died 23/07/1916. Killed in Action, aged 21**

Thomas William Morton, the son of Peter and Louisa Morton (nee Johnson) was born in Beenham in 1894 his birth being registered in the last quarter of that year at Bradfield. The 1901 census shows him aged 6 living in Beenham with his parents, Peter 37 an agricultural labourer from Bucklebury and Louisa 37, together with siblings James 13 an odd job boy, Bertha M. 12, Albert E. 10, Mary M. 9, Leonard 4, Kathleen 2 and Norman J. 1. All the children were born in Beenham save for Mary who was born in Brimpton. At some point the family were living in Brimpton for in 1891 they were living in Mill Cottage, part of the Wasing Estate, Peter being a Mill Carter at this time. By 1911, Thomas now aged 16 is described as a shepherd, still at home with his parents, siblings Leonard, Kathleen, Norman and two new sisters, Lydia 7 and Annie 4.

There are no records of when Thomas joined the Princess Charlotte of Wales's (Royal Berkshire) Regiment but it is believed he attested in Reading and joined the Territorial 1st/4th Battalion.

In Spring 1916 the Btn. were working on preparations for the Somme offensive and took part in major attack at La Boisselle, near Pozieres on the 23 July.

The Berkshire Chronicle of 4 August 1916 reported the affair and the Reading Mercury the following day carried a shortened version of the same account. "C Company was deputed to take the first line with the ANZACS and it was arranged that B Company was to occupy the second. The first line was found crowded with Germans and fully half an hour elapsed before we captured it. The fighting was of a most severe character and we inflicted great loss on the enemy. When the Germans were ultimately driven out B Company advanced to take the next line. Here the fighting was more severe than ever. It took about an hour and a half to take the line. The Machine-gun fire of the enemy was most deadly, whilst they fought with great desperation, but for all that our men stuck to them most pluckily, and attained their object. A and B Companies of the Berks, who had been supplying us with ammunition, the same night went into the village, where, I am told, the fighting was again very severe. Although I suppose we must have advanced fully half a mile. The enemy showed our wounded no mercy, many being killed as they lay on the ground. The relief was begun at 10.30 p.m., and the weary men were able to get a short rest by sleeping in the old German line south of Ovillers". Casualties that day were Officers 2/Lts Killed 2, Other Ranks Killed 23, 103 wounded, including 16 Shell Shock.

Thomas William Morton has no known grave and is commemorated at the Thiepval Memorial Pier and Face 11 D. He was awarded the British War Medal & Victory Medal. His mother, Louisa received £6 8s 11d back pay on 29 Sep 1916.