

**In Memory of
Private JOHN HENRY HANNA
23938, 8th Bn., Gloucestershire Regiment
Born in Little Coxwell, resided in Faringdon,
Who died, age 20, on 20 September 1917
Remembered with honour
Faringdon and Little Coxwell War Memorials and
TYNE COT MEMORIAL**



Commemorated in perpetuity by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The Tyne Cot Memorial is one of four memorials to the missing in Belgian Flanders which cover the area known as the Ypres Salient.

Broadly speaking, the Salient stretched from Langemarck in the north to the northern edge in Ploegsteert Wood in the south, but it varied in area and shape throughout the war.

The Salient was formed during the First Battle of Ypres in October and November 1914, when a small British Expeditionary Force succeeded in securing the town before the onset of winter, pushing the German forces back to the Passchendaele Ridge.

The Second Battle of Ypres began in April 1915 when the Germans released poison gas into the Allied lines north of Ypres. This was the first time gas had been used by either side and the violence of the attack forced an Allied withdrawal and a shortening of the line of defence.

There was little more significant activity on this front until 1917, when in the Third Battle of Ypres an offensive was mounted by Commonwealth forces to

divert German attention from a weakened French front further south. The initial attempt in June to dislodge the Germans from the Messines Ridge was a complete success, but the main assault north-eastward, which began at the end of July, quickly became a dogged struggle against determined opposition and the rapidly deteriorating weather. The campaign finally came to a close in November with the capture of Passchendaele. The German offensive of March 1918 met with some initial success, but was eventually checked and repulsed in a combined effort by the Allies in September.

The battles of the Ypres Salient claimed many lives on both sides and it quickly became clear that the commemoration of members of the Commonwealth forces with no known grave would have to be divided between several different sites. Those United Kingdom and New Zealand servicemen who died after 16 August 1917 are named on the memorial at Tyne Cot, a site which marks the furthest point reached by Commonwealth forces in Belgium until nearly the end of the war.

War Diary

On that day the Bn attacked enemy positions near St. Eloi at 5.40 am: reached first objective and consolidated line. Reached final objective at 7 am, strong points and snipers dealt with. Heavy enemy artillery barrage on original front and support lines. Casualties: 2nd Lts R.E. Kimber and J.H. Humphrey killed. Lt. F.J. Nicholls and 2nd Lt. T.M. Colcutt wounded. 160 OR's killed, missing, wounded.

Extracts from the Faringdon Advertiser and Vale of White Horse Gazette

27 October 1917

WOUNDED

A letter has been received by Colour Sergeant James Hanna from the Record Office stating that his son, Pvt. J H Hanna, 8th Glosters was wounded on the 20th Sept. last but to what hospital he has been sent is not known, and no information as to what became of him after being taken away by the ambulance has since been received. A letter from the Captain of his Company, received on the 21st inst., stated that Pvt. Hanna was seen to walk to the ambulance from the line, not seriously wounded apparently. He was commended for bravery the night before he was wounded.

8 December 1917

MISSING: BELIEVED KILLED

Colour-Sergt. J. Hanna has received the following letter from the Platoon Sergeant of the Company in which his son was serving in France, and who, after being wounded, was afterwards missed, and nothing further has been heard of him: -

Sir, Re news regarding your son, Pte J. H. Hanna, No. 23938 of my platoon. I can only say that we know for a certainty that he was wounded in the advance

on the 20/9/17, and since then we can find no trace of him. As we know for a fact that the Boches did not come back over that part of the ground over which we advanced, I fear there is no doubt that he must have been caught by a shell while making his way to the first aid post. It is with sincere sympathy that I write these few lines, but I do not see any possible chance of his being alive now or he would most certainly have been traced ere now. It will be some consolation to you in your loss to know that only the evening before he performed one of the most heroic acts a man can possibly do. He was in an advanced post with some of his comrades, when the 'Jerries' attempted to rush it. They threw several of their grenades, one of which your son threw out of the trench before it had time to explode thus saving some of his comrades from serious injury, if not death. For this he was recommended for the D.C.M. and would have received it at the last presentation had he been with us, but no doubt you will hear more of this through other channels. I can only add that for the short time I had the pleasure of knowing your son I found him a most willing, obedient, and clean soldier.

I have the honour, Sir, to remain, with sincere regards, yours faithfully,

C. ARTER, Sergt.

John Henry Hanna was born in August 1897 at Little Coxwell and this was where he grew up and lived for his short life.

His father James Hanna, born in Ireland, had served with the Royal Marine Light Infantry, retiring as colour-sergeant.

John's mother Sarah (born at Knighton) died when he was three years old. John started school the day after his mother's funeral, on the 19th September 1900.

John served with the Gloucestershire Regiment. He died on the 20th September 1917, aged 20, having fought in the Third Battle of Ypres.

John has no known grave: he is commemorated at the Tyne Cot Memorial in Belgium.