

## George Percy Holmes: 31<sup>st</sup> October 1914

Born in Fulford near York around 1891, by 1901 George Holmes is living at the Waggon and Horses public inn, New Rd, Mistley with his father - Mr Worthy Holmes, a 'Licensed Victualler' (pub landlord). His father had been born in Mistley, whilst his mother Lillian came from Newbrough, Ireland. His two younger brothers Edward Worthy Holmes and Charles Herbert Holmes were also born locally. His father must at some stage have been in the army himself, as by 1911, whilst living at Railway Terrance, he is living off his Army Pension, his other son Edward by then working at the local Maltings.



George started his military career well before the war, having enlisting at Colchester, he joined the 10<sup>th</sup> (Prince of Wales's Own Royal) Hussars and at some stage trained to be a Trumpeter. By 1911 he was serving in India based at Rawal Pindi, now part of Pakistan. He is likely to have taken part in the famous Coronation Durbar for King George V & Queen Mary, held in Delhi during December that same year. As a Cavalry unit they would have been part of the imperial procession, having otherwise a reputation for their Officers skills at Polo.

Before the out break of war the 10<sup>th</sup> Hussars (nicknamed the Shiny 10<sup>th</sup>) had been sent for another tour in South African, based at Potchefroom in the Transvaal. They sailed for home on the 25<sup>th</sup> August aboard the RMS Balmoral Castle, arriving at Southampton on the 19<sup>th</sup> September. They formally joined the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade (3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division) at Ludgershall (near Andover, Wiltshire) a couple of days later. At that stage the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade was made up of the 10<sup>th</sup> Hussars and the 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Dragoons.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> October the two units landed at Ostend and proceeded to Ypres, by the 14<sup>th</sup> October being stationed at Wytshaete, protecting a line southeast of the town between Warneton and Gheluvelt. As part of the action known as the 'First Ypres' they moved to various positions during the time when the war was still fluid, suffering their first real losses on the 21<sup>st</sup> October at Zandvoorde. This was the time of a major enemy offensive which came

closest to a clear victory. Alongside the French the smaller British force was stretched to the limit holding a line around Ypres. The culmination was the battle of Gheluvelt where large concentrations of enemy assault troops had been assembled and pushed the British back. The main attack on the eastern edge of the village came on the 30th October overwhelming the defenders by mid day. The 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade was ordered by Allenby to head south in support of a counter attack on Gheluvelt. Elements from the 6th Cavalry Brigade arrived just in time to support a counter attack on the 31<sup>st</sup> October as part of Haig's plan to pull out of Gheluvelt and form a new line just west of the town. Trumpeter P. Holmes was wounded in fighting on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 1914 and subsequently died, age 23, along with nine other men killed and 14 wounded from the regiment. The line around Ypre held against overwhelming numbers and the last opportunity for a decisive German victory passed. For further reading see the 10<sup>th</sup> Hussars and Essex Yeomanry 1914-1918 by Lieutenant-Colonel F.H.D.C Whitmore (Colchester:1920), available online.

George's Medal Index Card shows he was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal. He is buried at Ypres Town Cemetery Extension II. A. 27. He is commemorated on both Mistlely & Manningtree War Memorials.

Son of W. W. and Lillian Holmes, of 1, Railway Terrace, Oxford Rd., Mistlely, Manningtree, Essex.

George's brother Edward had two sons, Derek Worthy Holmes, employed at Manningtree Water Works and Percy Holmes, well known postman, whose children still live locally.