

Mistley Memorial: Thomas Flurrie 4th November 1914.

Part of the Lay-Flurrie family from the Manningtree Quay area, Thomas John Edward was born in Mistley (probably Mill Lane), working at the turn of the century as a Mate on a Colchester/Mistley coastal sailing barge named the 'Echo'.

He later married Ellen Maud Green from Belstead, known to him as Nell.

By 1911 the couple were living at 4 Rose Lane, Ipswich, with their three young children, Thomas Green Flurrie (aged 4), Ethel Green Flurrie (aged 2) and Ellen (9 ½ months) Thomas by then 27 years old, employed by Great Eastern Railways, at the Ipswich station as a Goods Porter.

Thomas may well have already spent time in the army and as a reservist, was one of the first to be called up. He served as a sapper in the 3rd Signal Company, Royal Engineers and was at Bulford Camp, within a few days. From there he wrote a poignant

letter to his wife on the 9th August 1914.



*15738 Sapper T Flurrie
3rd Signals Coy R E, Bulford
Camp, Salisbury Plain.*

*My Dear Wife just a few lines
to let you know we are quite
well at present. Dear Nell we
have got our war kit out of
stores and I have sent my suit
home. We shall not be away
from here for a few days yet.
It is all sort of rumours as yet.
Some say it will be next week
before we go. I am feeling*

*more myself now. Dear Nell you will have nothing to worry about
as they asked me if they should send a pound and I signed a
paper so you will get it in a day or so and after that you will get
about 18 shillings a week but I cannot say whether you will get it
weekly or monthly but you will get it so you will have nothing to
worry about. It will leave me about 2s 6d a week for myself. We
are doing nothing but sleep as yet but the rumour is the first move
will be Belgium. We are all to have horses. In our Coy we have got
breeches and spurs and rifles and everybody seems happy. I shall
be happy enough if I only know you and children are alright. It
cannot last long so cheer up my old girl. I see in the papers that*

there is hundreds of firms are going to allow half pay to reservists all time the war last so you must not let no one know what you will get. You must make out as if you are hard up. Give Tommy and Nellie and Ethel a kiss for me. You can write back if you write at once. Love from your loving husband Tom.

Thomas was right about where they were destined and he landed at Le Havre on the 16th August with the first part of the British Expeditionary Force of one cavalry and four infantry divisions. By the 23rd August they were deployed on a 20 mile front at Mons-Conde Canal, facing a much larger force and had to retreat after a fierce battle in which they inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. The retreat with the French stopped just outside Paris on the Rive Marne where the two allied armies beat off another determined attack. The Germans were forced to retreat back the way they had come and the British Army followed them taking up a new position that included the Belgium town of Ypres.

Thomas was killed as part of the battle around the town on 4th November 1914. The Ipswich Evening Star of the 20th of November details the event.

DIED LIKE A GALLANT SOLDIER

Mrs. Flurrie, of Rose Lane, Ipswich, has received from the Rev. Arthur H. Boyd, one of the chaplains serving with the British Expeditionary Force in France, a letter describing the death of her husband. The letter states that the Germans shelled the town in which Flurrie was engaged, and that one of the shells burst, causing injuries which proved fatal – he was killed instantly. The Chaplain, on coming up, took charge of the body, and made arrangements for the funeral; he afterwards conducted the burial service at the internment in the cemetery at Ypres. The deceased, says the Chaplain, died like a gallant soldier in the performance of his duty, and in the service of his King and country.

Thomas' sister, Grace, moved from Manningtree to live with Nell in Ipswich, where she could both help with the care of her young nephew and nieces and help the war effort, through work in a local munitions factory.

Thomas's younger brother Reggie died at Arras in 1918. Information provided by John Lay-Flurrie, with help from Dave Clark and fellow members of the Lay-Flurrie family network.