

## 22: Thomas Davies

### Basic Information [as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC]

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Thomas Davies

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: 2nd (Garr.) Bn. The King's (Liverpool Regiment)

Service Number: 93068 Date of Death: 27 November 1918 Age at Death: ?

Buried / Commemorated at: Mikra British Cemetery, Kalamaria, Thessaloniki, Central Macedonia, Greece

Additional information given by CWGC: The husband of M. Davies of Rodney Row, Little Neston

Although the *Cheshire Observer's* notification of his death states that Thomas Davies lived at Rodney Row, Little Neston, and left a widow and four children, it has not been possible to trace him with certainty especially as his Service Record has not been located. It is most probable, however, that he was a son, and youngest child, of agricultural labourer William and Sarah Davies and that, at the time of the 1891 census, the family was living on Liverpool Road, Neston:

William Davies	Head	50	50	Agricultural Labourer	x	Neston
Sarah	Wife	48	48			Neston
John	Son	26	26	Agricultural Labourer	x	Neston
Joseph	Do.	24	24	Do.	x	Neston
William	Do.	21	21	Do.	x	Neston
Betsy	Daughter	19	19	Laundress	x	Radcliffe, Lancashire
Samuel	Son	15	15	Agricultural Labourer	x	Neston
Thomas	Do.	11	11	Scholar		Neston

1891 census (extract) – Liverpool Road, Neston (near Poplar Weint)

William Davies	50	agricultural labourer	born Neston
Sarah	48		born Neston
John	26	agricultural labourer	born Neston
Joseph	24	agricultural labourer	born Neston
William	21	agricultural labourer	born Neston
Betsy	19	laundress	born Radcliffe, Lancashire
Samuel	15	agricultural labourer	born Neston
Thomas	11		born Neston

Although Betsy is recorded here as having been born in Radcliffe, near Bury, other census returns note that she was born in Neston.

William Davies, Thomas' father, appears to have died before the 1901 census (it is difficult to identify his death as his age, recorded in several census returns, varies significantly) and Sarah probably died in Neston in early January 1897 aged 55, or 56. No family grave is known in Neston Parish Churchyard.

By the time of the 1901 census Thomas and some of his unmarried siblings were living on Neston High Street. Betsy [Elizabeth], Thomas' sister, had baptised an illegitimate son, George Henry Davies, at the Parish Church on 22 March 1895 and he was also in the household.



As Thomas Davies died two weeks after the Armistice (11 November 1918) the reason for his death is unclear from the small amount of information on him. However, it is known that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Garrison Battalion was formed at Pembroke Dock in November 1915 and moved to Egypt in March 1916. After moving to Salonika (now known as Thessaloniki, or Thessalonica, the second-largest city in Greece) the battalion was attached on 28 August 1917 to the 228<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, 28<sup>th</sup> Division. Anglo-French forces had been sent to Salonika in October 1915 at the request of the Greek Prime Minister, the objective being to help the Serbs in their fight against Bulgarian aggression. But the expedition arrived too late, the Serbs having been beaten before they landed. It was decided to keep the force in place for future operations, even against Greek opposition, as Greek factions, including King Constantine, were pro-German. The outcome of the Gallipoli campaign was in the balance and most shipping in the area was involved so they really had no choice and there was little action except for occasional air-raids on Salonika.

After preparing the port of Salonika for defence, the troops moved up country. During 1916, further Allied contingents of Serbian, Italian and Russian troops arrived and offensive operations began. These culminated in the fall of Monastir to Franco-Serb forces during November. A second offensive during the spring of 1917, the British part of which was The First Battle of Doiran (24 - 25 April and 8 - 9 May 1917), made little impression on the Bulgarian defences.

The front line remained more or less static until September 1918, when a third offensive was launched. During this the British attacked at Doiran for a second time (18 - 19 September 1918). With a breakthrough by Serbian forces west of the river Vardar the Bulgarian army was forced into a general retreat.

The campaign concluded with the surrender of Bulgaria on 30 September 1918 with the 28<sup>th</sup> Division by then in the area of Trnovo.

The Division was ordered in early November to move to Gallipoli to occupy the Dardanelles Forts. The 228<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade came under the command of the Greek Crete Division from 30 September 1918 and was broken up on 4 October 1918.

Malaria proved to be a serious drain on manpower during the campaign. In total the British forces suffered 162,517 cases of the disease and, in total 505,024 non-battle casualties. It is possible, although by no means certain, that Thomas Davies was a casualty of malaria - the Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects notes that he died of 'sickness'.

Thomas Davies was buried in Greece at the British cemetery at Mikra which was opened in April 1917, remaining in use until 1920. The cemetery was greatly enlarged after the Armistice when graves were brought in from a number of burial grounds in the area.

