

THE FALLEN OF SUTTON-IN-CRAVEN



GEORGE FREDERICK THORPE

MACHINE GUN CORPS

DIED OF WOUNDS 11TH SEPTEMBER 1917

BORN IN 1897 AT SUTTON-IN-CRAVEN, THE SON OF
CLEMISHAW AND MARY THORPE

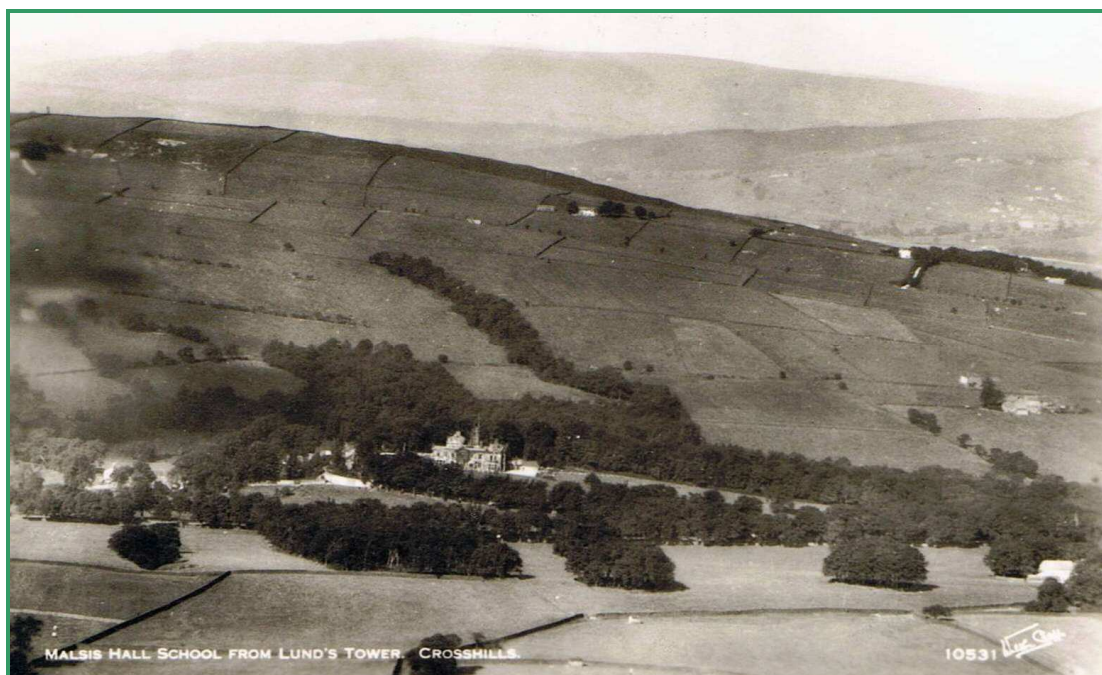
Thorpe Family History

- George Frederick Thorpe was born on the 3rd February 1897 at Higher Malsis, Sutton-in-Craven.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT				KEIGHLEY			
1897 BIRTH in the Sub-district of Keighley				in the County of York			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered
Third February 1897 Higher Malsis Sutton R.D.	George Frederick	Boy	Glemishaw Thorpe	Mary Maria Thorpe formerly Lind.	Gardener Domestic.	G. Thorpe Father Higher Malsis Sutton	Fifth March 1897

Certified copy of Birth Certificate for George Frederick Thorpe
(source: General Register Office)

Third February 1897 Higher Malsis Sutton R.D.	George Frederick
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Higher Malsis, Sutton-in-Craven
(source: Andrew Monkhouse postcard collection)

- **1901 census** shows Clemishaw, his wife Mary (nee Lund) and their 3 children living at Sun Street, Cowling as follows:

Name	Age	Work	Birth place	Birth year
Clemishaw (Head)	38	Gardener (domestic)	Hoyland, South Yorkshire	1863 - 1931
Mary Maria (wife)	32		Cowling	1869 - 1907
Amy	8		Bingley	1893
Marion	6		Bingley	1895
George Frederick	4		Sutton-in-Craven	1897 - 1917

- **1911 census** shows that Clemishaw had been married to his 2nd wife Elizabeth for 3 years having been widowed in 1907. It also shows the Thorpe family now living at 193, Keighley Rd, Cowling as follows:

Name	Age	Work	Birth place	Birth year
Clemishaw (Head)	46	Gardener (domestic)	Hoyland, South Yorkshire	1865 - 1931
Elizabeth (2 nd wife)	38	Housewife	Cowling	1873
Amy	18	Weaver	Bingley	1893
Marion	16	Weaver	Bingley	1895
George Frederick	14	Weaver	Sutton-in-Craven	1897 - 1917



Cowling
(source: Andrew Monkhouse postcard collection)

World War 1

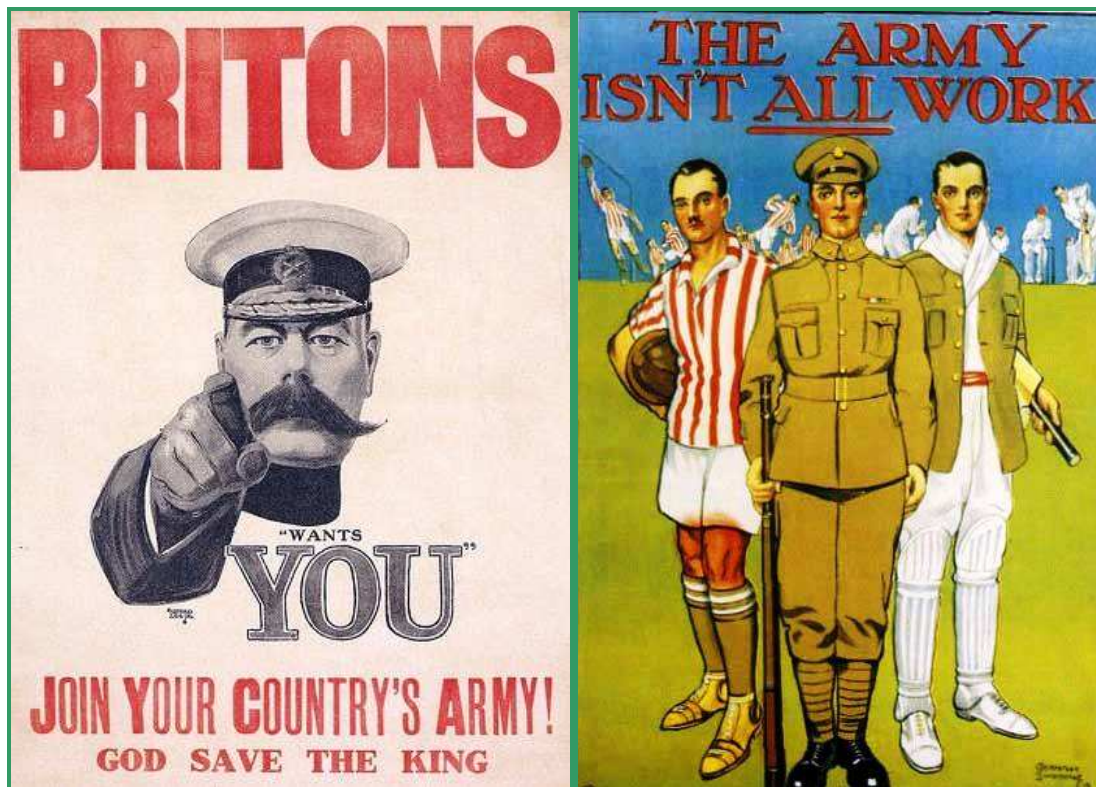


It had been **99 years** since Britain was last involved in a major European conflict following the defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815

August 4th 1914 **Britain declares war on Germany**

In the autumn of 1914, the young men of the nation came from town and village to take the King's shilling and to offer him their dedicated services in defence of their homeland. From mills and mines, from shops and farms, from office chairs and civic departments, from loom, lathe, bench, plough and counter they flooded into the recruiting centres in answer to their nation's call for young manhood. These new recruits came to be known as **'Kitchener's Volunteers'**

The New Armies: "Kitchener's Volunteers"



Earl Kitchener recruitment poster 1914

Parliamentary Recruiting Committee
London, 1915



British volunteers physical training, Manningham Park, 1914 (Kitchener's new army)
(source: *The Bradford Pals* Ralph N. Hudson 2nd Ed, 1993)

Prior to enlistment, George was employed as a shorthand clerk and typist with the Keighley Gas and Oil Engine Co. He was also a successful comedian in a well-known local group of entertainers called 'The Cowling Merrymakers'.

After repeated rejections, George was eventually accepted into the 20th (reserve) battalion of the (Prince of Wales's Own) West Yorkshire Regiment as a Private in November 1915. The 20th reserve battalion was formed at Clipstone Camp in August 1915.

Pte George Frederick Thorpe received his early training at Clipstone Camp in Nottingham, before the battalion was transferred to Blyth in Northumberland.

During the Great War, the West Yorkshire Regiment raised a total of 37 battalions, including regular army, territorial, and battalions of the 'New Armies'. 66 Battle Honours were bestowed and 4 Victoria Crosses were awarded to the West Yorkshire Regiment.



Article Date: 05 November 1915

COWLING - Enlistments

Laurie Hardy, Braeside, Cowling, principle character in the Cowling Merrymakers, and during the summer a leading character in the Waterloo Pierrots, Bridlington, and George Thorpe, Keighley Road, Cowling, comedian in the Cowling Merrymakers, have enlisted in the 20th West Yorkshire Regiment (Bradford Pals). Frank Lomax, Middleton, Cowling, has joined the Home Defence Corps.

(source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* www.cpgw.org.uk)

On 15th May 1916, George was transferred from the West Yorkshire Regiment to the Machine Gun Corps before entering the Theatre of War in France the following month on 10th June 1916.

His regimental number was 31013.

He was made Lance Corporal on 26th December 1916, promoted to Corporal on 26th July 1917 and was made Sergeant on 2nd August 1917; both these latter promotions being for special merit and bravery.

Name.		Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
THORPE		M G C	A/Sjt	31013
George. F.				
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.	
VICTORY	MGC/101522	2253		
BRITISH	do	do		
STAR				
Theatre of War first served in				
Date of entry therein				
		E/482709/3		

K. 1380

MEDAL INDEX CARD for George Frederick Thorpe (source: National Archives)

The **Machine Gun Corps** (MGC) was a corps of the British Army, formed in October 1915 in response to the need for more effective use of machine guns on the Western Front in World War I.

At the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 the tactical potential of machine guns was not appreciated by the British military. The army therefore went to war in 1914 with each infantry battalion and cavalry regiment containing a machine gun section of just two guns each.

A year of warfare on the Western Front proved that to be fully effective, machine guns must be used in larger units and crewed by specially trained men. The machine gun soon came to dominate and even to personify the battlefields of World War 1.

The MGC saw action in all the main theatres of the war and gained an enviable record for heroism as a front line fighting force. Indeed, in the latter part of the war as tactics changed to defense in depth, the MGC commonly served well in advance of the front line.

It also had a less enviable record for its casualty rate, earning the Machine Gun Corps nickname **'The Suicide Squad'**.



WW1 Machine Gun Corps
Cap badge & shoulder title



WW1 British Vickers machine gun crew wearing anti-gas helmets

There were many instances where a single well-placed and protected machine gun cut great swathes in attacking infantry. Nowhere was this demonstrated with more devastating effect than against the British army's attack on the Somme on the 1st July 1916 and against the German attack at Arras on 28 March 1918. It followed that multiple machine guns, with interlocking fields of fire, were an incredibly destructive defensive weapon.



WW1 British Vickers machine gun aiming at aircraft

In October 1916, Pte Thorpe was **Wounded in Action** in the right leg.



Article Date: 03 November 1916

COWLING MAN WOUNDED

Mr. C. Thorpe, of Keighley Road, Cowling, has received news that his son, Gunner Geo. F. Thorpe, has been wounded whilst fighting in France. Gunner Thorpe enlisted in November, 1914, in the 20th West Yorks. Infantry Regiment, P.W.O., as a private, and received his early training at Clipstone Camp, Nottingham. Afterwards the regiment was transferred to Blyth, Northumberland where Gunner Thorpe entered a machine gun corps as a volunteer, and accompanied his comrades out to France on June 10th. The corps was attached to the Dublin Fusiliers, and took part in the strenuous fighting which took place on the Somme in July. Gunner Thorpe has also seen much active service around Ypres, and again on the Somme at Le Transloy, where, during the early part of October, he received his wound. Before enlisting he was employed in the offices of the Keighley Gas and Oil Engine Company, and has obtained many successes in the studies of shorthand and book-keeping. Gunner Thorpe was wounded in the right leg, and is at present in the First Northern General Hospital, Armstrong College, Newcastle.

(source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* www.cpgw.org.uk)

Having served on the battlefields of France with the Machine Gun Corps for 15 months, Sergeant George Frederick Thorpe was severely gassed on the 9th September 1917. He never regained consciousness and **Died of Wounds** two days later on the 11th September at a clearing station from gas shell poisoning.

He was 20 years of age



Article Date: 21 September 1917

COWLING - DEATH OF SERGEANT GEORGE F. THORPE

Mr. Clem Thorpe, of Keighley Road, Cowling, has, during the week, received news of the death of his son, Sergt. George F. Thorpe, who was severely gassed on the 9th of September, and died at a casualty clearing station from gas shell poisoning on the 11th of September without regaining consciousness.

Sergt. Thorpe enlisted on the 11th of November 1915 in the West Yorkshire Regiment. On the 15th May 1916 he was transferred to the Machine Gun Corps, and went out to France on the 11th June 1916 as a Gunner. He was wounded on the Somme on October 15th 1916, and discharged from hospital in this country on December 8th 1916. He rejoined his unit at Grantham on 18th December 1916, and left Aldershot for France on the 8th of March 1917. He was made Lance Corporal on December 26th 1916, was promoted to Corporal on July 26th 1917, and was made Sergeant on August 2nd 1917, both these latter promotions being for special merit and bravery.

In his 21st year deceased was, before enlistment, employed by the Keighley Gas and Oil Engine Co. as a clerk. For a few years he acted as one of the recording secretaries in the United Methodist Sunday School, and was very much interested in both church and schoolwork. He was of a very cheery disposition, and deservedly popular amongst a wide circle of friends. His loss will be keenly felt.

(source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* www.cpgw.org.uk)

In Memory of

Serjeant

George Frederick Thorpe

31013, 219th Coy., Machine Gun Corps (Infantry) who died on 11 September 1917 Age 20

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Clemishaw Thorpe, of 195, Keighley Rd., Cowling, Yorks.

Remembered with Honour
Zuydcoote Military Cemetery



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

(source: *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* www.cwgc.org/)

ZUYDCOOTE MILITARY CEMETERY

In the autumn of 1917, the 34th and 36th Casualty Clearing Stations were posted at Zuydcoote.

The Zuydcoote Military Cemetery contains, for the most part, the graves of officers and men who died in these hospitals. There are over 300 Great War casualties commemorated at this site, including Sergeant George Frederick Thorpe.



Zuydcoote Cemetery, France

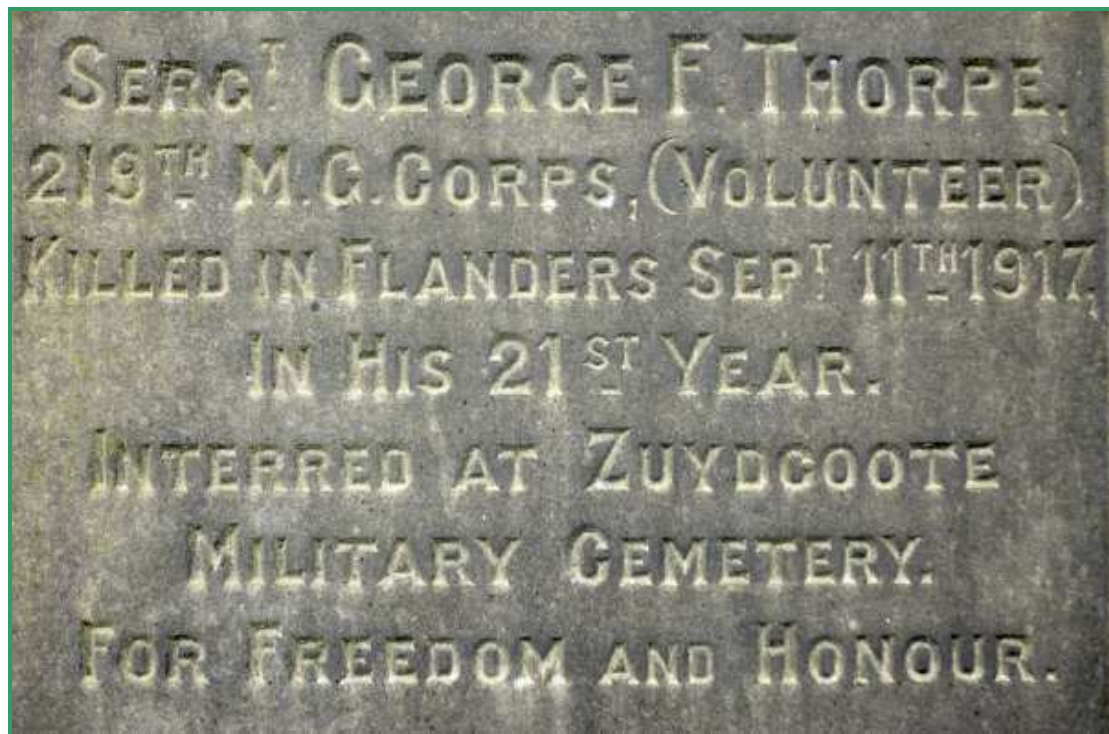
(source: *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* www.cwgc.org/)

Sergeant Thorpe is also commemorated on the Cowling Recreational Ground War Memorial and on a family tomb-stone in the Cowling United Methodist Church 'Bar Chapel' graveyard.

His name was not recorded on the Sutton-in-Craven war memorial, or the St Thomas' Church Roll of Honour recording the Great War 'Fallen' of Sutton-in-Craven.



Cowling United Methodist Church 'Bar Chapel' graveyard
 (source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* www.cpgw.org.uk)



Cowling United Methodist Church 'Bar Chapel' graveyard
(source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* www.cpgw.org.uk)

Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-1919 - soldier details

Name:	George Frederick THORPE
Rank:	SERGT.
Initials:	G F
Birthplace:	Sutton, Yorks
Residence:	Cowling
Enlisted:	Keighley
Regiment, Corps etc.:	Machine Gun Corps
Battalion etc.:	(Infantry).
Number:	31013
Date died:	11 September 1917
How died:	Died of wounds
Theatre of war:	France & Flanders
Supplementary Notes:	FORMERLY 20/80, W. YORKS REGT.

Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919
(source: www.Ancestry.co.uk)



Cowling recreational ground war memorial
(source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* www.cpgw.org.uk)



Cowling recreational ground war memorial
 (source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* www.cpgw.org.uk)

Sgt George Frederick Thorpe was posthumously awarded the
British War Medal & Victory Medal



Original pair of WW1 medals (Andrew Monkhouse war medal collection)

A Memorial Plaque inscribed with the soldiers name was also given to the family of those who were killed during WW1



Original WW1 Memorial Plaque (name digitally altered)
Also referred to as a Death Plaque or Dead Man's Penny
(source: **Andrew Monkhouse war medal collection**)

FOR THE FALLEN

*THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD, AS WE THAT ARE
LEFT GROW OLD*

*AGE SHALL NOT WEARY THEM, NOR THE YEARS
CONDEMN*

*AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN AND IN THE
MORNING*

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

LAURENCE BINYON, 1869-1943



(Information compiled by Andrew Monkhouse 2013)