

A Rededication Service for

25/1818 Sergeant Thomas Smith

2nd New Zealand Machine Gun Company

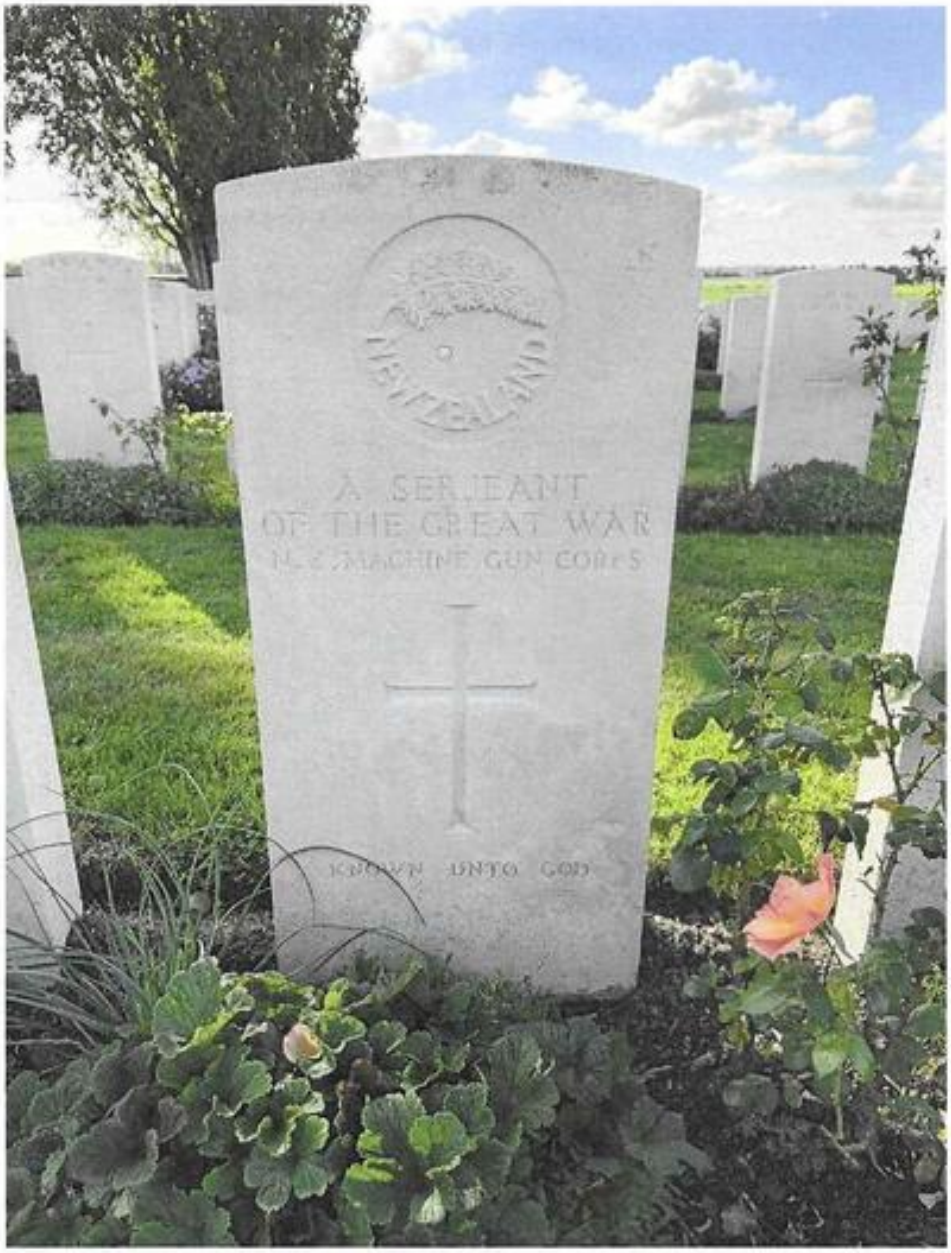
Attached to 2nd New Zealand Infantry Brigade

1400 Friday 6 November 2026

Grave 28.D.6, Tyne Cot Cemetery,

Vijfwegestraat 4, 8980 Zonnebeke, Belgium

Sergeant Thomas Nigel Smith



Killed in action during the Battle of Passchendaele on 12 October 1917,

New Zealand's Darkest Day

1355: Pipes - Field Marshal Haig's Own Pipes and Drums. Official party enter the cemetery from the car park, past the Great Cross and War Stone to the grave.

1400: Welcome – Captain James Barnes, MA, RNZN; New Zealand Defence Attache to Belgium.

Opening Prayer – Reverend Richard Clement

As we gather this afternoon to remember the sacrifice of so many during the First World War, we give thanks to Almighty God especially for the life, service and sacrifice of Sgt Thomas Smith. We remember that he gave his life for the cause of freedom and liberty, and so we pray that we would have the courage and determination to honour his legacy by working for peace, justice and freedom in our present day. We ask these things in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**.

Remembrance Day

Read by Sam McLay, DoYRMS, Chief School Prefect

In fields where silence speaks the loudest sound,
Where poppies bloom upon the hallowed ground,
We stand, remembering those who gave their all,
Who heard the war-torn bugle's final call.

The skies once echoed with the roar of planes,
The earth was scarred by trenches, blood and pain.
In Flanders' fields, the fallen soldiers lie
Beneath a weeping, endless autumn sky.

We wear the crimson flower on our chest,
A symbol of the brave laid down to rest.
For every name inscribed on marble cold
There's a story of a heart, both fierce and bold.

We honour them with silence, bow our heads,
And keep their memory burning bright instead.
For though the years may slowly slip away,
We hold them in our hearts this sacred day.

Lest we forget, their courage, sacrifice –
The price they paid to guard our future's light.
In peace we walk because they bore the fight,
And in their memory we find our might.

Sergeant Thomas Smith – an insight into his Service and loss

Read by Captain James Barnes, MA, RNZN

Thomas Smith – the Serviceman.

Serjeant, 25/1818, New Zealand Machine Gun Corps, No. 2 Coy., who died on 12 October 1917, aged 31, has long been commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. Today we rededicate his grave.

Born on 15 October 1885 in Alverstoke, Gosport, Hampshire, the only son of John Smyth and Catherine née O'Donovan. His father had been a Private in the 9th Regiment of Foot (the East Norfolk Regiment) who served for 22 years and 5 months, including the Jowaki Expedition in India in 1877, before being discharged on 11 May 1880. He worked as a Magazine Labourer in Alverstoke before he died on 9 December 1893. His mother had previously been widowed in 1879, with three children of her own from that marriage and his half-brother Edward Cotter who was later killed on 10 January 1941, whilst at home in Portsmouth during in an air raid aged 72, being commemorated as a WW2 Civilian War Death by CWGC.

Thomas was admitted to the Duke of York Royal Military School on 30 August 1895 (Petition No. 10794) and recorded "Withdrawn" on 12 August 1899, having been "Detained off pass". His school record was chequered and included regular punishments for neglecting his duty, as well as for "Letting off fireworks in the playroom", "Shouting in the dining room" and "Breaking a broom".

The 1901 Census recorded a man with his name and place of birth serving in the Royal Navy as a Domestic 3rd Class aboard HMS Majestic, a pre-dreadnought battleship, in Gibraltar, with his stated age being 19. It is very likely this was Thomas and he had falsified his age to enlist as an adult, despite only being 15 at the time of the Census.

On 28 February 1902, he enlisted as a Private in the Militia with the 3rd Battalion, Hampshire Regiment claiming to be 19 years and 2 months and working as a Servant, with reference made on his service record at having left Royal Navy 'Domestic' service at his own request. However, his Army career was to be short, attending the annual camp from 9 June to 5 July 1902, then being struck off strength when he failed to attend the annual camp in 1903.

The reason for missing that camp was that he subsequently re-enlisted in the Royal Navy as a Boy 2nd Class on 31 October 1902 and was an Able Seaman when he was dismissed on 2 October 1910 following 90 days' Hard Labour for theft and receiving stolen money. His record in the Royal Navy Registers of Seamen's Services, 1848-1939 gave his date of birth of 17 January 1885 but with his later New Zealand service record referring to "8 Years Seaman

Torpedoman" we can be sure it is the same Thomas Smith, likely needing to change his date of birth because of his prior, undeclared service in the Militia.

The 1911 Census recorded him as a Seaman boarding in the Sailors' Home on Oxford Street, Southampton but by 1914 he was living in Lyttleton, Canterbury, New Zealand, at Hill's Boarding House and still working as a Seaman according to Electoral Rolls.

He subsequently was working as a Merchant Seaman for the Canterbury Steam Ship Company when he enlisted in the New Zealand Army in Christchurch, New Zealand on 29 November 1915 and served first with G Company, 11th Reinforcements and then C Company, 4th Battalion, New Zealand Rifle Brigade. He embarked for Suez, Egypt on 1 April 1916 by which time he was a Corporal and later served in France, being admitted to hospital on 16 September 1916 with a gunshot wound to his right arm. He reverted to Lance Corporal and joined the New Zealand Machine Gun Corps on his return from hospital, being promoted to Serjeant by January 1917 and going overseas with the 5th Company on 21 May 1917 (CWGC incorrect states 2nd Company).

By 12 October 1917 he was serving in Flanders, Belgium and his unit took part in the attack on Bellevue Spur by the New Zealand Division, against what was seen as the last obstacle in capturing the village from which the Battle of Passchendaele later took its name. The day was to become the bloodiest in New Zealand's history, with over 843 killed in action which included Thomas, now known to have been killed in the vicinity of YETTA HOUSES when the advance had been held up. His body was thought not to have been recovered, common with many who fell in the deep mud at Passchendaele and he was subsequently commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial.

The Public Trust Office, New Zealand, identified three nominated next of kin; Mrs C Smith (mother) and Mr E Cotter (probable half-brother), both of 60 Havant Street, Portsea and Mrs S K Hobbins (perhaps his sister) of Charing Cross, London. Unfortunately subsequent investigations have not been able to identify further descendants. However, we are delighted to have both senior representatives and current pupils of his school with us here today.

A total of 1796 New Zealand soldiers died during the Passchendaele offensive in 1917. The vast majority were killed on 12 October 1917, during the Battle of Passchendaele, a day remembered as New Zealand's "Darkest Day" when up to 846 young men were killed in a matter of hours.

Sergeant Thomas Smith was one of these men.

For the Duke of York's Military School, he is also a "Lost Boy" whose name had been omitted from the memorial tablets in the school chapel.

Reading - Her Excellency Jennifer Troup

"Have you news of my boy Jack?" – A poem by Rudyard Kipling

Not this tide.
"When d'you think that he'll come back?"
Not with this wind blowing, and this tide.

"Has anyone else had word of him?"
Not this tide.
For what is sunk will hardly swim,
Not with this wind blowing, and this tide.

"Oh, dear, what comfort can I find?"
None this tide,
Nor any tide,
Except he did not shame his kind -
Not even with that wind blowing, and that tide.

Then hold your head up all the more,
This tide,
And every tide;
Because he was the son you bore,
And gave to that wind blowing and that tide!

Rudyard Kipling's only son John, was killed in the Battle of Loos on 27 September 1915, aged 18. After the war Kipling visited the battlefields and war graves in Flanders, but he never saw his son's John's grave. The body of his son was eventually found in 1992. It lay in the grave of an 'unknown Irish lieutenant'.

Remove headstone covering – Ambassador Troup and Principal Foreman

Prayer and Blessing of the Headstone – Reverend Richard Clement

We now rededicate this grave as the final resting place of Sergeant Thomas Smith, in the name of Christ who died and rose again+

This headstone stands as a sign of our remembrance, our thanksgiving and our love.

Lord, grant that your servant Thomas may rest in peace, in the sure knowledge that he now abides in your glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Laying of Wreaths at the Headstone ("Hills of New Zealand" by Stefaan Demoen)

(1) Ambassador Jennifer Troup and Captain James Barnes RNZN for the government of New Zealand and the New Zealand Defence Force.
(2) Mayor Koen Meersseman for the town of Zonnebeke.
(3) Mr Alex Foreman – Principal, The Duke of York Royal Military School.
(4) Colonel Nick Thom, UK DA to Belgium.
(5) West Flanders Provincial Commander for the Belgian Defence Force.
(6) The Duke of York Royal Military School for the British Torch of Remembrance.
(7) Mr Xavier Puppinck for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
(8) Dolores Cross placed by Mr Freddy Declerck MNZM.

The Exhortation – Mr Alex Foreman; Principal of DoYRMS

They shall grow not 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
All: We will remember them

The Last Post (The Last Post Association)

One Minute Silence followed by **The Reveille**

Kohima Epitaph – Archie Scarcliff, student and JUO at DoYRMS

'When you go home tell them of us and say: For your tomorrow, we gave our today.'

New Zealand, United Kingdom & Belgium National Anthems – (Loudspeaker)

The Lord's Prayer - All

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. **Amen**

Closing Blessing – Reverend Richard Clement

Go out into the world in peace;
be brave and strong;
hold fast to that which is good;
do not repay evil with evil;
encourage the discouraged;
support the weak; help those who suffer;
honour all people;
love & serve the Lord with joy,
trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit:
And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and remain with always.
Amen.



25/1818 Sergeant Thomas Smith

5th New Zealand Machine Gun Company

KIA 12 October 1917

Lest we Forget – Kei Wareware Tātou



NEW ZEALAND
EMBASSY
Te Aka Aorere

TE OPE KĀTUA O AOTEAROA
DEFENCE FORCE