



Woodford Remembers



L / Sergeant Thomas Headland

10 March 1912 – 27 August 1941

Family

Thomas was registered as Herbert Thomas following his birth in 1912. His father, John Robert Headland was born in Denford in 1868 and married Eliza Elizabeth Colson at Woodford on 4 July 1892. In 1901 the family lived in cottages opposite where "The Moorings" has a junction with Church Street. By 1911 the family had moved to Newtown (Long Row) and the family had eight living children and three had died, Charles (Colson), Arthur William, Wilfred Sidney, Ernest James, Agnes Ethel, Herbert Thomas, Ada May and Edith May. Three further children had also died. The 1921 census reveals two further children Alfred and Winifred. John worked with the locomotives at the Islip Furnaces employed as an engine cleaner and then a stoker/fireman. He was also the caretaker of the Wesleyan Chapel in Newtown. John died suddenly in his sleep in June 1930.

Thomas had started at the Infant School on 3 May 1915, transferring to the Junior School on 13 September 1920. He left school on 31 March 1926

Army Service

Thomas was a Grenadier Guard service number 2613699 who also operated within No. 8 Commando. No 8 Commando had been formed on 23 June 1940 training in Largs and the Isle of Arran. They along with Nos. 7 and 11 Commando became part of "B" Battalion Layforce, a special ops group operating in the middle east with some involved in the Tobruk area during July 1941. The Vichy French had held Syria until 14 July when free French and empire forces gained control and whilst no reference to 8 Commando being active in this conflict No 11 Commando were active in advance of the main assault before returning to garrison duties on Cyprus. At the end of July 1941 Layforce was disbanded and steps were taken to form what later became known as the SAS. How and why, Thomas Headland was still in Syria in August is not recorded. He died as a result of an accident in Syria and is buried in Damascus War cemetery.

Burial / grave

Damascus Commonwealth War Cemetery Section L Grave 3

Dependants

None

Commemoration

Woodford Village Memorial

Woodford St Mary's Church Memorial

