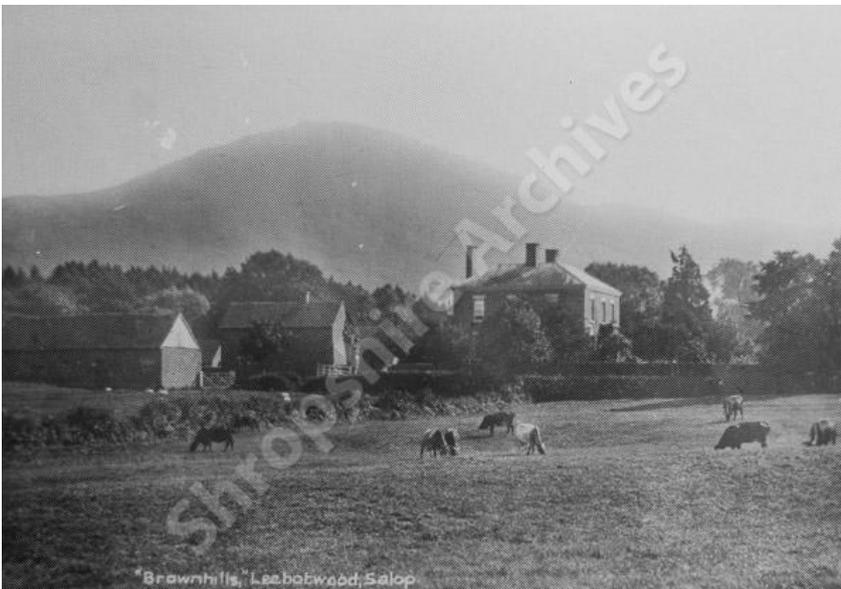


## 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Thomas Russell Bland of Brownhills, Leebotwood

died 20 July 1917 in France, aged 20.

Thomas Russell Bland was born on 9 December 1896 at Acton Reynald farm, Shawbury, the son of William Livesey and Alice Ann Bland nee Ravenshaw. William Livesey Bland was a farmer, and Alice's family were also farmers. Her father James farmed 500 acres at Bridle gate farm in Preston Brockhurst, where it appears William stayed to learn farming, and thereafter married Alice in 1895.

Thomas was their eldest son born in 1896. In the 1901 census the Bland family were living at Acton Reynald farm with a governess and two other indoor servants. In the 1911 census Thomas and his younger brother William were boarding at Old Hall school in Wellington, while his parent remained at Acton Reynald. By 1915 the family had moved to Brownhills, Leebotwood, a substantial farm just over the parish boundary from All Stretton.



Photograph of Brownhills, c 1900 courtesy of Shropshire Archives

On enlistment with the Inns of Court embodied Territorial force, Thomas' occupation is given as bank clerk and his address as Brownhills, Leebotwood. The Inns of Court was recognised as an officer training corps. Thomas was appointed to a commission as 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant in the North Staffordshire Regiment and posted to the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion in July 1916. His service number was No 6546. Sadly his service records have not survived.

Thomas was later attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the York and Lancaster regiment. By summer 1917 they were based in the Loos salient in northern France near the town of Lens.

The incident in which he was killed is recorded in the war diary (shown here). On the night of the 20 July 3 fighting patrols were sent out from the British lines, one was led by Thomas. The patrols aimed to identify the German troops facing them, as well as to simulate an attack. However, they were obviously expected and met with heavy fire. Thomas and one of the other Lieutenants leading the patrols Arthur Ellis Johnson were both killed, one other man was missing believed killed, and several others were wounded.

Arthur Johnson was aged 23, just a few years older than Thomas and was from Liverpool. His father was an importer of bottles and, by coincidence, they lived in a house called 'Caradoc' in the Waterloo area of the city.

WAR DIARY  
or  
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY. *2 York & Lancaster Regt.*

Army Form C. 2118.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
HULLUCH. SECTOR.	1917 July 19 <sup>a</sup>		special points. A + D Coy relieved 2 Cops 8/ Bedford in the RESERVE LINE. Relief complete 3 a.m.	M.W.
	20 <sup>a</sup>		but artillery very active with cutting. Hostile artillery and trench mortars negligible. At 10.30 p.m. 3 fighting patrols consisting of (1) 1 Officer (2 Lt. Beach) 25 O.R. (2) 1 Officer (2 Lt. Beach) 15 O.R. (3) 1 Officer (2 Lt. Johnson) 15 O.R. left our trenches to enter the German trenches in order to secure identifications, inflict casualties & simulate a strong attack. As soon as our patrols left their trenches the enemy put down a heavy barrage with aerial bombs, trench mortars and machine guns. Some men of the left patrol entered the German trenches & killed some of the enemy but were unable to obtain any identifications. 2 Officers were killed and 1 wounded & several other ranks wounded. 1 man missing believed killed. The enemy evidently expected a raid as our patrols on reaching the enemy were heavily bombed.	M.W.

T2134. Wt. W708-776. 500000. 4/16. Sir J. C. & S.

2<sup>nd</sup> battalion, York and Lancaster regiment, War diary, 20 July 1917 courtesy of the National Archives.



Leebotwood War Memorial

Thomas and Arthur are both commemorated on the Loos Memorial. However, their names are on different panels reflecting the fact that Thomas is listed with the North Staffordshire regiment and Arthur with the York and Lancasters.

The Loos Memorial, part of the Dud Corner Cemetery, commemorates over 20,000 officers and men who have no known grave, who fell in the area from 1915-1918. It is situated a few miles north west of Lens. The name "Dud Corner" is believed to be due to the large number of unexploded enemy shells found in the neighbourhood after the Armistice.

Thomas is also remembered on the Leebotwood War Memorial in St Mary's churchyard.