

Flight Sergeant Thomas Frederick Boyd Carlisle©

Regimental number: 351

1st Squadron, Royal Flying Corps

born: 26 December 1893 – died: 8 July 1916

Thomas Frederick Boyd Carlisle was born in Hebburn-on-Tyne, 26 December 1893.¹ At the time, his father, John Carlisle (born in about 1852 in Morton, Durham)², was the station master at the Hebburn railway station.³

As a railway employee, Thomas' father John moved around a lot. He had married Jane Ann Ranson (born in Castle Eden in about 1858)⁴ in 1882 in Houghton-le-Spring, Durham.⁵ His first wife, Ann Todd, whom he had married in Stokesley, Yorkshire in 1874⁶ had died, possibly in childbirth, in 1875.⁷ She left John with an infant son, also John, who was born in 1875 in West Hartlepool.⁸ After John remarried, he and Jane Ann had eight more children:⁹ William Ernest (Easington, 1884),¹⁰ Robert Henry (Houghton-le-Spring, 1885),¹¹ Edith Annie (Houghton-le-Spring,, 1889),¹² Emma Ethel May (South Shields, 1892),¹³ Thomas, Jane Ann (South Shields, 1895),¹⁴ Minnie Boyd (South Shields, 1897)¹⁵ and Harold Archibald (South Shields, 1901).¹⁶

By 1911, Thomas was also working with the railway. He was a locomotive draughtsman and boarding with a family in Darlington, Durham.¹⁷ But by the second half of 1912, Thomas had joined the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) (Number 351).¹⁸ He served in the RFC in France from August 1914.¹⁹ At first he was an air mechanic²⁰ but in August 1915, when he was awarded his Royal Aero Club Aviator's Certificate (Number: 1619), he became a pilot with 1 Squadron, RFC, with the rank of sergeant.²¹ He certified at the Northolt Aerodrome near Ruislip, Middlesex on a Maurice Farman biplane.



Flight Sergeant Thomas Frederick Boyd Carlisle

Source: "Great Britain, Royal Aero Club Aviators' Certificates, 1910–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 9 August 2016)

Thomas had some early successes in air combat:

Flight Sergeant Thomas Frederick Boyd Carlisle from 1 Squadron RFC was up in his Nieuport 16 (Al16) when he got into two separate combats with enemy Aviatiks near Houthem. He managed to hit both aircraft, but ran out of ammunition. Carlisle noted that the 47 round drum on his Lewis gun was too small and with a larger drum he believed he could have shot them down.²²

However, his luck did not continue. He was injured on either 4 July²³ or on 6 July²⁴ and died on 8 July 1916 at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station. The No. 1 CCCS war diary notes that there was "[g]reat aerial activity" on 4 July.²⁵ Perhaps he died after a crash in poor flying conditions. On 5 July, it was noted that "[y]esterday and today have been plagued by poor weather on the western front. Low clouds, rain and thunderstorms have made flying all but impossible, though a few aircraft were able to get up this evening."²⁶

Accounts of Thomas' life and death are given on the website maintained by Amble and District Local History:

Alnwick aviator's death in France. Promising career cut short.

The very sad news was conveyed to Mr J. Carlisle, Alnwick stationmaster on Wednesday, that his fourth son, Flight-Sergeant Thomas Carlisle, had died in France on Friday last week, his death been the result of an accident. The young man had a very promising career before him. As a boy and a scholar of the Duke School, he displayed considerable intelligence and ability in his studies, being under the tuition of Mr Shelford, the headmaster, when he left school. As a schoolboy he distinguished himself in athleticism by winning the silver challenge cup given by the Duke of Northumberland for running, and his name as a winner is twice inscribed upon the trophy. He was a choir boy in St Paul's Church. He was apprenticed for an engineer in the firm of Mr Stevenson, locomotive engineers, Darlington. He passed through both shops and part of the drawing office. Four years ago he entered into the Royal Flying Corps and his term of service would have expired in August of the present year. He went to France where he sustained an accident to his right hand. He underwent treatment for his injury at the convalescent camp Alnwick, and on Tuesday, 4 July he returned to his depot in France and resumed duty. The story of the accident and Flight-Sergeant Carlisle's death is pathetically told in letters of sympathy, which were sent to his father.

Major G.F. Pretyman, Major commanding his squadron says: "it is with the deepest regret that I have to inform you of your son's death, which occurred yesterday (Friday). He was going up for a flight on Thursday, and having got up to slight distance the machine lost some of its speed, and fell. He passed away, having suffered no pain. His loss is a very severe one both to the squadron and to the Royal Flying Corps as a whole, and particularly to myself. I had a very high regard for him both as a man and as a pilot. He was recommended for distinction."²⁷

While the previous paragraph was likely the official account of his death from his commanding officer, one of Flight Sergeant Carlisle's comrades also described his death and provided insights into life in No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station:

10th July, 1916.

Dear Mr and Mrs Carlisle,

it is with sincere regret and deepest sympathy that I have to write to you concerning Tommy's death. You will have heard how the accident occurred.

The smash took place at 11-15 on Thursday, 6th inst., just about three hours after returning from sick leave. From that time till 12:50 p.m. on Saturday, 8th, I visited him three times each day and once each night. I had several little conversations with him. I asked him once if I could write home for him, and he said yes, adding that I was to say he was quite well. I spoke to the doctors and sisters there and up till about 9:30 am on Saturday they had, so far as I could gather, every hope of his recovery.

Everything that could be done by the doctors was done. After the first day, he was moved from the big ward into a little room and given a sister to look after him alone, as he could not get much sleep. Being by himself he would perhaps have a better chance.

Of course the dislocated left ankle was accompanied by very severe shock, which was what he died from, and his heart had been moved four inches from its normal position and was very much dilated so the doctor said.

At about 11:30 am., Saturday, the hospital people sent over to me saying that Tommy had asked for me, and was in a very bad condition. I went immediately but found that I was too late and that he had lost consciousness. I and Sergt. Harding, another friend, sat by his bed to the last. His was a lovely death the sister said. He was unconscious, but his fine face still wore that fearlessness and boldness.

I did not realise till then what a friend I had lost. I had up till then flown and lived with him for three months. I first knew him in the corps in June, 1914. Every man in the squadron mourned his death. He was liked more than any other man or officer here, and the mechanics who looked after his machines almost worshipped him. He accepted every commission but was given him with true enthusiasm, and carried it out with utter fearlessness. On one occasion he was known to have tackled five German machines single-handed. Two German machines he had at least to his name.

The Major here took more interest in him than the majority of the pilots, and realised the valuableness to the extent of recommending him for a commission. That in itself shows with what esteem and appreciation he was regarded. His funeral took place yesterday (Sunday) morning. Everyone who was not actually wanted for work attended. The bearer party consisted of five Flight Sergeants of the squadron. He was laid to rest in the military part of the Bailleul cemetery. It was a very impressive ceremony. Every officer, led by the Major, and man walked singly into the grave and saluted.²⁸

* * *

Flight Sergeant Carlisle was in his 23rd year and was well liked, being always of a bright and cheerful disposition, and deep sympathy is felt for the bereaved family. Mr and Mrs Carlisle have another soldier son, Robert Henry, who is a sergeant-artificer in the Australian force. 15/7/1916²⁹

Thomas is buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension (Nord) (Section II, Row E, Plot 65).³⁰ Bailleul is in France, but near the Belgian border, about 15 kilometres southwest of Ypres.³¹ It was occupied in October 1914 and became an important hospital centre for not just No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station but also for No. 1 Australian and five British Army casualty clearing stations.

Thomas was awarded the Military Medal, which was given to Other Ranks (non-officers) for gallantry and devotion to duty when under fire in battle on land.³² The medal was initially awarded in the field by the Commander-in-Chief, but confirmed posthumously by King George V.³³ Like other soldiers from the Great War, Thomas also received the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914–15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).³⁴

Thomas' brother, Robert Henry, also served in the Great War, but in the Australian Imperial Force.³⁵ Like his brother, Robert had a remarkable military career. He was serving as a warrant officer in the Australian Army Ordnance Corps when he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (Army No: VP1202) on 21 March 1917. He had been serving in the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery for over two years. At the time he enlisted, he was living in Melbourne. He and his wife, Jane Dawson (née Middlemiss), whom he had married in Durham in 1909,³⁶ had probably immigrated to Australia in

1912.³⁷ Robert sailed from Australia on 5 May 1918 and, by 24 September, he was in France. He served on the Front for the last few months of the war and then became an instructor. He returned to Australia and was discharged from the AIF on 12 December 1919. However, he continued with a military career between the two World Wars and during World War II. He reenlisted in 1927 and served until the end of World War II. In 1945, at the age of 60, he was discharged with the substantive rank of major, but also as an honorary colonel. Like his brother, he was awarded British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the 1914–15 Star for his service in the Great War. However, in 1941, he was also appointed, by King George VI, to the Order of the British Empire – Military Division for distinguished services.

Thomas' father died in 1923 and his mother three years later. They are both buried in the West Cemetery, Darlington, Durham, England.³⁸

© 2017 BIFHSGO

¹ "Great Britain, Royal Aero Club Aviators' Certificates, 1910–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 August 2016), entry for Thomas Frederick Boyd Carlisle

² "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 February 2017), entry for John Carlisle, Registration district: South Shields, Sub-registration district: Jarrow, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 44, Piece: 4745, Folio: 133, Page: 42, Household schedule number: 210

³ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 August 2016), entry for John Carlisle, Registration district: South Shields, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 43, Piece: 4170, Folio: 125, Page: 1

⁴ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 February 2017), entry for John Carlisle

⁵ "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 6 February 2017), entry for John Carlisle, District: Houghton Le Spring, County: Durham, Volume: 10A, Page: 644

⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 February 2017), entry for John Carlisle, Registration district: Stokesley, Inferred county: Yorkshire North Riding, Volume: 9d, Page: 889

⁷ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 February 2017), entry for Ann Carlisle, Registration district: Stokesley, Inferred county: Yorkshire North Riding, Volume: 9d, Page: 3841

⁸ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 February 2017) entry for Carlisle, William Ernest, Volume 10A, Page 466

⁹ The birth locations of the children are taken from the 1901 and 1911 census records.

¹⁰ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 February 2017) entry for Carlisle, John, Volume 10A, Page 228

¹¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 February 2017) entry for Carlisle, Robert Henry, Volume 10A, Page 454

¹² "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 February 2017) entry for Carlisle, Edith Annie, Volume 10A, Page 504

¹³ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 February 2017) entry for Carlisle, Emma Ethel May, Volume 10A, Page 878

¹⁴ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 February 2017) entry for Carlisle, Jane Ann, Volume 10A, Page 887

¹⁵ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 February 2017) entry for Carlisle, Minnie Boyd, Volume 10A, Page 869

-
- ¹⁶ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 February 2017) entry for Carlisle, Harold Archibald, Volume 10A, Page 973
- ¹⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 February 2017), entry for Thomas Carlisle, Registration district: Alnwick, Registration district number: 565, Sub-registration district: Alnwick, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 8, Piece: 31084
- ¹⁸ *Grace's Guide to British Industrial History* ([http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Royal Flying Corps: 1912 Roll](http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Royal_Flying_Corps:_1912_Roll;): accessed 6 February 2017)
- ¹⁹ North East War Memorials Project (<http://www.newmp.org.uk/article.php?categoryid=99&articleid=1432&displayorder=118>: accessed 6 February 2017)
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ "Great Britain, Royal Aero Club Aviators' Certificates, 1910–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 August 2016), entry for Thomas Frederick Boyd Carlisle
- ²² *The British At War in the Air 1914–1918* (<https://airwar19141918.wordpress.com/page/24/>: accessed 6 February 2017)
- ²³ "Royal Air Force Museum Story Vault" (<http://www.rafmuseumstoryvault.org.uk/archive/7000290636-carlisle-t.f.b.-thomas-frederick-boyd>: accessed 6 February 2017), entry for Thomas Frederick Boyd Carlisle
- ²⁴ "Men from North Northumberland Killed, Wounded and taken Prisoner in the Great War" *Amble and District Local History* (http://www.fusilier.co.uk/north_east_northumberland_ww1_great_war_casualties/ww1_index_1916.html : accessed 1 October 2016), entry for Thomas Carlisle
- ²⁵ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FIND&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 7 September 2014)
- ²⁶ *The British At War in the Air 1914–1918* (<https://airwar19141918.wordpress.com/page/24/>: accessed 6 February 2017)
- ²⁷ "Men from North Northumberland Killed, Wounded and taken Prisoner in the Great War" *Amble and District Local History* (http://www.fusilier.co.uk/north_east_northumberland_ww1_great_war_casualties/ww1_index_1916.html : accessed 1 October 2016), entry for Thomas Carlisle
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 9 August 2016), entry for Carlisle, T., Service No: 351
- ³¹ "Bailleul Community Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 17 January 2017)
- ³² "A Guide to British Awards for Gallantry or Meritorious Service in WW1," *The Great War* (<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/medals/ww1-gallantry-awards.htm#MM>: accessed 5 February 2017)
- ³³ "The London Gazette, Supplements August 1914 - January 1920," *Findmypast* ([http://search.findmypast.com/record?id=gbor%2flon%2fvol17%2f0569&parentid=gbor%2flon%2fvol17%2f0569&highlights=%22%22-this link didn't work for me](http://search.findmypast.com/record?id=gbor%2flon%2fvol17%2f0569&parentid=gbor%2flon%2fvol17%2f0569&highlights=%22%22-this%20link%20didn%27t%20work%20for%20me) : accessed 11 February 2017) entry for T.F.B. Carlisle, Image number: 569
- ³⁴ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 February 2017), entry for Thomas F P Carlisle [sic]
- ³⁵ "Carlisle, Robert Henry, VP1201, QP20028," *National Archives of Australia* accessed 30 March 2017), Citation: NAA: B4717, Carlisle/Robert Henry, Item barcode: 11981780. Unless otherwise indicated, all information about Robert's military career comes from this source.

³⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 March 2017), entry for Robert Henry Carlisle, Registration district: South Shields, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 1212

³⁷ "UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890–1960," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 March 2017), entry for Robert Carlisle; "UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890–1960," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 March 2017), entry for Mrs Jane Carlisle

³⁸ "Web: Darlington, England, West Cemetery Index, 1770–2012," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 August 2016), entry for Jane Anne Carlisle