

Serjeant Thomas Blackwood Bold Belch[©]
Regimental number: 55658
29th Battery, 42nd Brigade, Royal Field Artillery

born: about 1892–died: 7 May 1918

Serjeant Thomas Blackwood Bold Belch and his wife, the former Mary Hannah O’Neil, had not been married long when he left Scotland to serve in the Great War. They married on 5 August 1914 in Glasgow, Scotland. Thomas, aged 22 and an engineer’s labourer, was the son of Samuel and Jessie (nee Grier) Belch. His wife Mary, aged 25 and a millworker, was the daughter of William and Annie O’Neil.¹ Thomas and Mary had one child, Anne Hamilton, born on 22 December 1914 when the family was living at 8 Marquis Street in Glasgow.²

When his daughter was born, Thomas was already a reservist and driver in the 42nd Battery of the Royal Field Artillery.³ He had enlisted in about August 1914,⁴ as soon as war broke out, and by 19 August he was heading to the Western Front. He probably was not at home when his daughter was born.

Although he survived for a long time, Thomas died a few months before the end of the war. He had already died when he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 7 May 1918 in Pernes, 20 kilometres west of Béthune in northern France. He had suffered shrapnel wounds to his thigh and a fractured femur. He was buried the same day in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row B, Grave No. 5) with the Canadian chaplain R. K. Lambert presiding.⁵ Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCSs came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.⁶

His wife, who was then living at 12 Strathclyde Street in Bridgeton, Glasgow, was notified by letter of his death⁷ and she received the monies owing to Thomas from the army upon his death.⁸

Shortly after the war, Mary remarried, marrying James Henderson Moreland in 1919.⁹ About that time she requested the following inscription for Thomas’ gravestone:

NOT DEAD TO US
WHO LOVED HIM DEAR
NOT LOST BUT GONE BEFORE¹⁰

Those who loved Thomas certainly included his parents Samuel and Jessie and his siblings, of which he had at least five (but likely more):

- Mary (born in about 1896),¹¹
- William (born in about 1898),¹²
- Jessie (born in about 1900),¹³
- Abigail Greer (born in about 1903)¹⁴ and
- Jeannie (born in about 1915).¹⁵

In 1901, the family was living at 44 Wellington Street in Glasgow, where Thomas’ father was a French polisher.¹⁶

Thomas was awarded posthumously 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).¹⁷

¹ “Statutory Registers–Marriages,” *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>: accessed 16 April 2019) entry for Belch, Thomas B B, District: Blythswood, City/County: Glasgow, GROS data: 644/10 1306

² “Statutory Registers–Births,” *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>: accessed 16 April 2019) entry for Belch, Annie Hamilton, City/County: Glasgow, GROS data 644/1 22

³ Ibid.

⁴ Based on “War Gratuity Calculator” (<https://wargratuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 April 2019), entry for Thomas Belch

⁵ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 16 April 2019), entry for Belch, T.

⁶ “Pernes British Military Cemetery,” *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 13 January 2015)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 April 2019), entry for Thomas Belch

⁹ “Statutory Registers–Marriages,” *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>: accessed 16 April 2019) entry for Belch, Mary Hannah, District: Calton, City/County: Glasgow, GROS data: 644/3 650

¹⁰ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 3 December 2019), entry for Belch, Thomas Blackwood Bold, Service No: 55658

¹¹ “1901 Scotland Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 April 2019), entry for Thomas Belch, Enumeration district: 20, Household schedule number: 73, Line: 6, Roll: CSSCT1901_260

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “Statutory Registers–Births,” *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>: accessed 16 April 2019) entry for Belch, Abigail Greer, District: Bridgeton, GROS data: 644/1 2087

¹⁵ “Statutory Registers–Births,” *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>: accessed 16 April 2019) entry for Belch, Jeannie, District: Bridgeton, City/County: Glasgow, GROS data 644/1 1569

¹⁶ “1901 Scotland Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 April 2019), entry for Samuel Belch, Enumeration district: 20, Household schedule number: 73, Line: 6, Roll: CSSCT1901_260

¹⁷ “British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 April 2019), entry for Thomas Belch