

John (Jack) Hamilton Thomas



Trooper 7912387 50th Royal Tank Regiment R.A.C.

Died July 27th 1942, aged 29

Commemorated on Alamein Memorial

Son of Charles Couch Thomas and Elizabeth Thomas of Chudleigh, Devon
(formerly Port Isaac)

Jack Thomas was born in Port Isaac in 1913, the son of Charles Couch Thomas (*known as Dry Thomas*) and Elizabeth. In the 1911 census, Charles (31) and Elizabeth (28) are living on East Cliff, Port Isaac. The census form records he was a coast fisherman and they had been married just 1 year with no children. They subsequently moved to Devon, which is probably why Jack is not on our memorial.

Jack Thomas was a trooper in 50th Royal Tank Regiment, which is part of the Royal Armoured Corps. The 50th Royal Tank Regiment served in the North Africa Campaign from its inception in June 1940 right through to the defeat of axis forces in May 1943. From July 1st to 27th 1942 was the First Battle of El-Alamein in the Western Desert Campaign. On July 22nd, Australian 24th Brigade, with 50th Royal Tank Regiment in support, attacked Tel el Makh Khad. The tank unit had not been trained in close infantry support and failed to coordinate with the Australian Infantry so they both advanced independently. By the time 50 RTR had reached its objective the lack of infantry support meant they lost 23 tanks and failed to destroy Rommel's forces.

Operation Manhood was launched on July 26th, with sappers clearing and marking a gap in the minefield through which the allied forces could pass. This was the third attack in a short while, and the axis defenders were expecting it. Like previous attacks, Operation Manhood was hurriedly planned leading to confusion. On July 27th, 50th RTR, again supporting the Australians, was having difficulty locating the minefield gaps. Failing to find a way through, they were caught by heavy fire and lost another 13 tanks.

It was in this engagement that Trooper John Hamilton Thomas was lost. He has no known grave, and is commemorated on the Alamein Memorial. His father died in 1936 and is buried in St Endellion Churchyard. The headstone also commemorates his son Jack Thomas.



A Valentine tank in North Africa carrying British Infantry



The grave of Charles Couch Thomas with a memorial to his son Jack

Sources:


Royal Tank Regiment: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Tank_Regiment
First Battle of El Alamein: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Battle_of_El_Alamein
We are grateful to Warwick Provis for the information he has provided


In Memory of
Trooper
John Hamilton Thomas

7912387, 50th, Royal Tank Regiment, R.A.C. who died on 27 July 1942 Age 29

Son of Charles Couch Thomas and Elizabeth Thomas, of Chudleigh, Devon.

Remembered with Honour
Alamein Memorial





Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Those that were missed of the memorial

When searching the Commonwealth War Grave Commission database, as well as checking the graves in St Endellion churchyard, there were four casualties with Port Isaac links that are not on our memorial; John Noel Carter was the son of Frederick and Gwendoline Carter of Port Isaac, Marshall Collings a cousin of Peter Blake, Henry and Douglas Genders the sons of Major William and Gertrude Genders who lived at the top of the village, and Jack Thomas the son of Charles Couch and Elizabeth Thomas of East Cliff Port Isaac.