

Thomas Parker

Thomas Parker was born in Dorset but grew up in Thurrock.

In his youth he had several labouring jobs, the most unusual was that he drove sheep from the local countryside to Romford market, a trip that took 2 days as the sheep could not be hurried.

As he grew older he decided to join the army and went to India where he served caring for the horses. When his term of service came to an end he returned home got married and had a child.

As an ex serving soldier his name was held on the army reserve list. When war was declared in 1914 he was called up immediately and joined the Dorset Regiment and his wife went to work at the Kynoch factory. His life at the front was short lived as he was taken prisoner of war at the retreat after the battle of Mons. He spent the remainder of the war in Germany.

For the rest of his life he joked that during his time in Germany he had more women friends than at any other time of his life!

Thomas had been a father of a child at the time he was called up, but when he returned he was a father of 'two'. People wondered what his response would be to the situation, but his attitude was that he had not been an angel, so how could he criticise.

One of the first jobs Thomas had after demob was at Inde Coope Brewery in Romford. He would get up early every day and walk to work, unfortunately he was often too drunk to work by midday so he was sacked.

He later got a job at Shellmax where he worked as a security officer. He went on to have four boys and four girls. They all lived in a small terraced house in Belmont Road, Grays along with some cousins - 13 people in total. Despite the crowded conditions it was kept spotlessly clean.

Thomas died in 1951 aged about 75.

Story provided by Thomas's grandson Keith Parker.