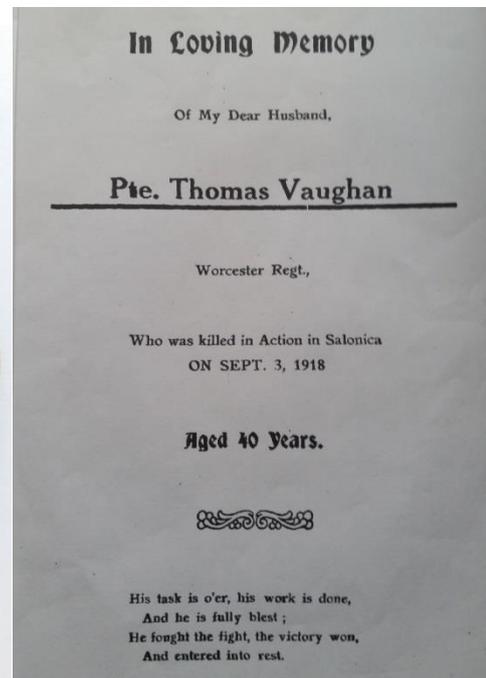


A Memorial Plaque, the Worcestershire Regiment and Salonika:

By Jeff Taylor.

This summary and photos prepared by C Davies 28.9.18

Tonight's talk focused on research following purchase of a Memorial Plaque to Private Thomas Vaughan of the Worcester regiment who was killed in action 3rd September, 1918 in the final weeks of the Salonika campaign. Initial information with the plaque suggested that Thomas Vaughan was recruited into the 8th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment and, therefore, was likely to be from Redditch, Bromsgrove or nearby districts – However, our member was aware that the 8th battalion Worcester Regiment had never served in Salonika.



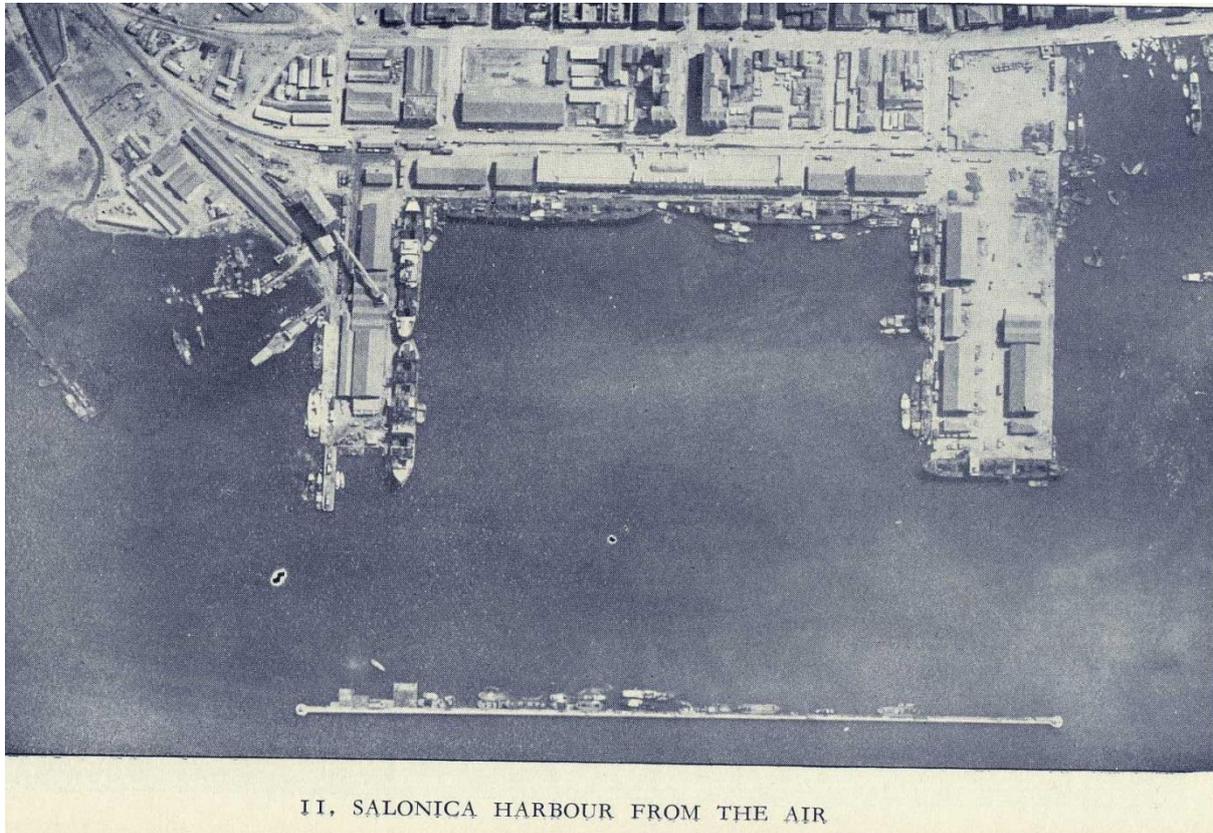
'Soldiers died in the Great War' confirmed that Private 38161 Thomas Vaughan of Talgarth, Breconshire had enlisted in the 11th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment.

His Medal Index Card [MIC] confirmed his entitlement to the British War and Victory medals.

Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
VAUGHAN Thomas	Worc R. Regt		38161
Medal	Roll	Page	Remarks
VICTORY	4/02 B29645		
BRITISH	do	do	
SPAN			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

Salonika and the Balkan theatre of operations:

Since 1912, Salonika was and still is a major port in Greece at the head of the gulf of Salonika.



Much regional unrest had preceded the Great War . Salonika was seized from the Ottoman Empire after the ending in 1912 of the 'First and second Balkan Wars'.

The 'Balkans' comprised the regions of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia - Prince Otto Von Bismarck had predicted in 1890 'If there is ever another war in Europe, it will come out of some damned silly thing in the Balkans..' Fast forward to 28th June, 1914, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria [and his wife Sophie] during a visit to Sarajevo, Serbia, provoked the declaration of war by Austria on Serbia 28th July, 1914.

The Balkans region not only contributed to the start of the Great War but also the Balkans' theatre contributed significantly to the ending of the war when Bulgaria [allied to Germany] withdrew from the front signing an armistice in late September,1918. More details on this are to follow.

British Involvement in the Balkans:

By the time the British and French armies started arriving in Salonika in October,1915 [troops being increasingly available from the Dardanelles campaign] Serbia had already been overrun by Austrian and Bulgarian forces – Much initial effort went into improving the infrastructure of the region – for example, only two roads went out of Salonika and neither was suitable for heavy traffic...

Allied troop numbers reached almost 300,000 in 1916. The Bulgarian positions were typically well engineered in often mountainous natural defensive strongholds. The British section of the front was roughly ninety miles long running up the Struma valley across the southern shore of lake Doiran and to the Vardar river.

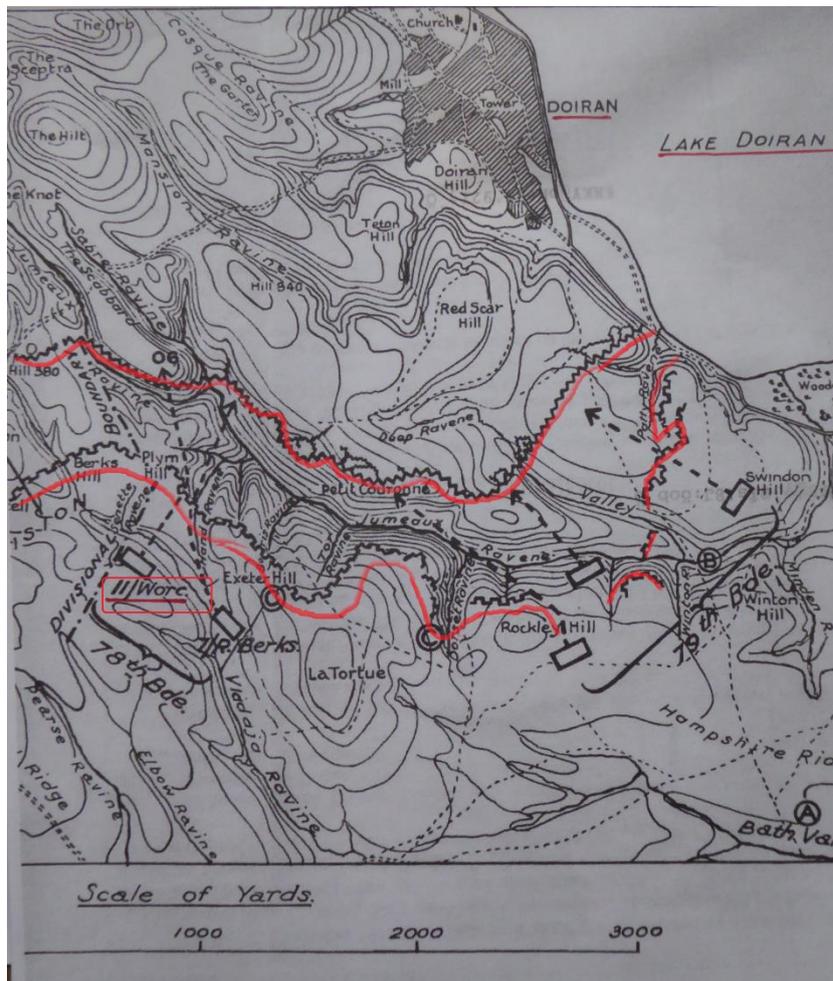
August, 1916

The Romanians joined the conflict on the Allied side conditional on a guarantee of protection against Bulgaria by the opening of an Allied offensive from Salonika.

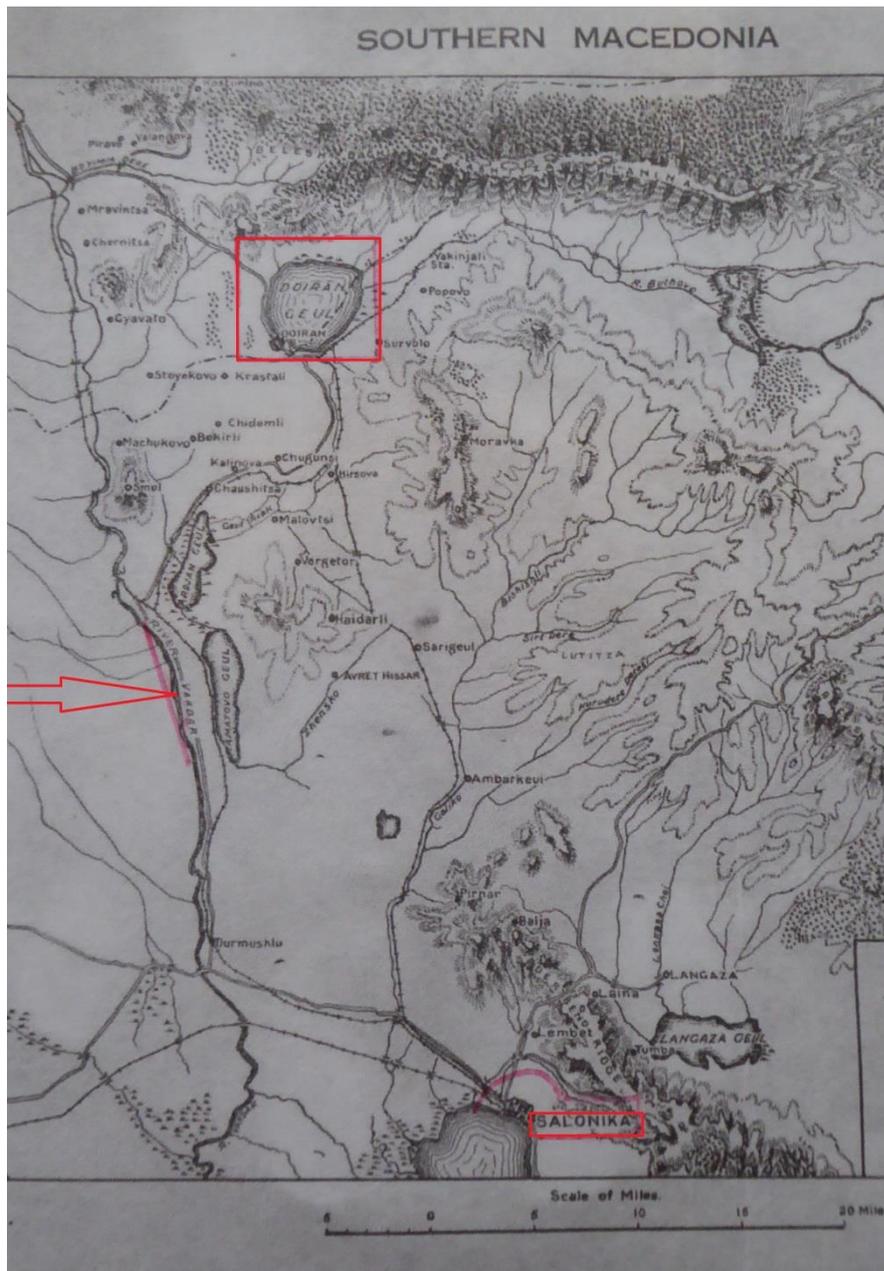
Lake Doiran

Two previous Allied assaults on Doiran in 1916 and 1917 had been resisted with heavy allied casualties due to the quality of the Bulgarians' defensive positions.

The third assault was part of a broad Allied offensive in Macedonia which started 1st September, 1918. The Allied objective was the town of Gradsko some 35 miles away on the Vardar river. Specifically, British forces with the support of the Greeks and a French Zouave regiment were given the critical task of driving the Bulgarians out of their mountainous defensive positions on the 'Pip ridge' a row of little eminences known as Pip 1,2,3,4 and 5. The main assault started on 18th September, 1918 was utterly repulsed with some 7000 Allied dead.



Map showing trench positions around Lake Doiran 1917 and showing position of 11th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment [circled in red]. Note the steepness of the local terrain as indicated by the tightly packed contour lines...



To the West, the Franco-Serbian army had defeated part of the Bulgarian army at the battle of Dobro-Pole near the Vardar Valley - their advance caused the retreat of the Bulgarian First Army. Similarly, the Bulgarian Second Army defending near Doiran realised its plight and retreated to avoid being cut off, hurriedly abandoning its Pip Ridge positions on 21st September, 1918. The Bulgarians' government rapidly understood their hopeless position requesting a ceasefire on 24th September, 1918. The Armistice of Salonika was signed on 29th September, 1918 effectively ending Bulgaria's involvement in the Great War the following day.

Above. Map of southern Macedonia showing positions of Salonika, Lake Doiran and the Vardar river [arrowed].

Conditions for the troops

The soldiers arriving in late 1915 came straight from Gallipoli exchanging baking sands for the Winter blizzards of the Balkans. That first Winter, 1500 cases of frostbite occurred in men accommodated in tents and not issued with adequate clothing.

'Upcountry, conditions were entirely different, the mountains treeless, majestic and sparsely populated. It was still a land of brigands...' Frontline troops might have to stay in trenches for up to a year engaged in fighting which was generally less intensive than in France. The troops stationed there felt they had been 'banished to the moon'. The Macedonian climate claimed the lives of many servicemen because of malaria and enteric fever.

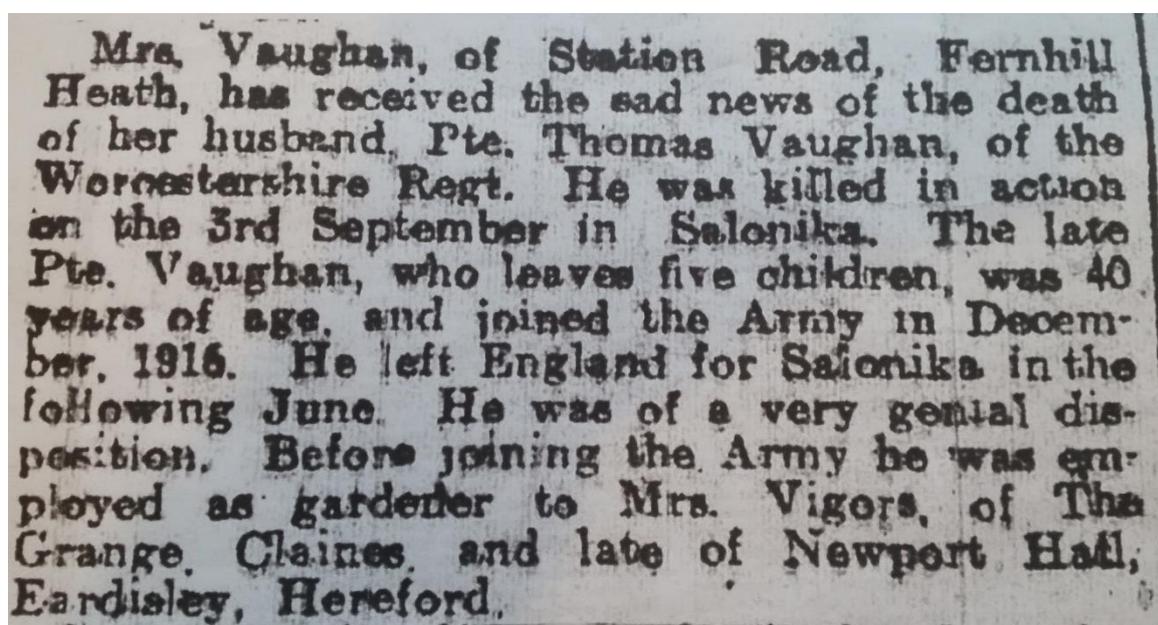
About Private 38161 Thomas Vaughan

Thomas was born in 1879 Talgarth, Breconshire , Wales.

His father, David Vaughan, was initially a farmer but by 1891, he was working as a labourer on the railways. Thomas Vaughan is working as a 'domestic' in 1901 at Newport House, Almeley St. Mary, Herefordshire – this property was owned by the Reverend Richard Vigors and his wife Emily Vigors – one of their five children is Phillip Urban Vigors is mentioned later in the presentation.

Thomas Vaughan marries Alice Elizabeth Hall in 1901 and by the next census of 1911, they have four children. Thomas continues to work for the Vigors family.

The circumstances of Thomas Vaughan's death are documented in the Worcestershire Regimental History by Capt. H FitzM. Stacke as follows: ' On the 3rd September, 1918, an 8 inch shell struck one of the company's dugouts smashing it and burying several men. Company Sergeant-Major Joseph Pardoe DCM rushed to the spot and was heading the efforts to dig out the victims when another great shell struck on the same spot and lortally wounded him. Company Sergeant-Major Joseph Pardoe DCM died of his wounds on the 4th September, 1918 and it was said that he had been a fine soldier and that his loss would be deeply felt'. Thomas Vaughan's obituary notice appears in 'Berrow and Worcester Journal' of 21st September, 1918 which stated that prior to joining the army, Thomas was employed as a gardener to Mrs Emily Vigors.



Mrs. Vaughan, of Station Road, Fernhill Heath, has received the sad news of the death of her husband, Pte. Thomas Vaughan, of the Worcestershire Regt. He was killed in action on the 3rd September in Salonika. The late Pte. Vaughan, who leaves five children, was 40 years of age, and joined the Army in December, 1916. He left England for Salonika in the following June. He was of a very genial disposition. Before joining the Army he was employed as gardener to Mrs. Vigors, of The Grange, Claines, and late of Newport Hall, Eardisley, Hereford.

Obituary Notice Berrow and Worcester Journal



Obituary notice of Private Vaughan [his image highlighted in red]. Note the two rows of soldiers listed as either killed, wounded or missing along with photographs of two local weddings. *Borrow and Worcester Journal [Gratis Supplement] 21st September, 1918.*

Both Thomas Vaughan and Joseph Pardoe are buried in the Karasouli Military Cemetery [now Polykastron] near Doiran, Central Macedonia, Greece. [Thomas Vaughan, Plot D grave number 892 and Joseph Pardoe DCM Plot C grave number 535].

The 11th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment after the War

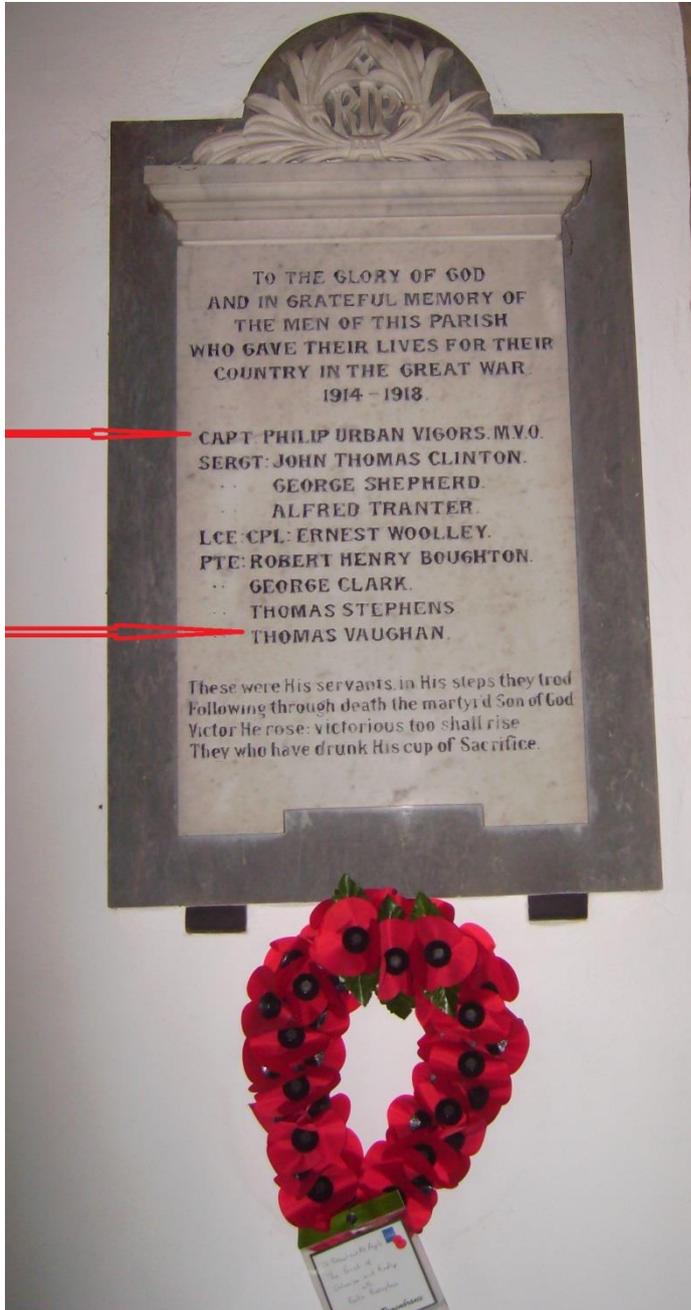
The regiment were required to provide a peace keeping role in Bulgaria and Romania after the war had ended as atrocities attributable to both sides continued after cessation of hostilities. The Regiment's return and demobilisation started in late January, 1919 completing by late September, 1919.

On 30th September, 1919, the 11th was merged into the 9th battalion which itself was finally disbanded 19th December, 1919. During the arrangements for return to England, the regimental drums of the 11th battalion were lost – This loss was keenly felt as the drums had been the private property of the battalion having been presented by the ladies of Worcester.

UK memorials to Vaughan, Pardoe and Vigors.

Thomas Vaughan – at the church of St Michael and All Angels, Martin Hussingtree.

Also on that memorial Captain Phillip Urban Vigors MVO who is also buried there.



Joseph Pardoe – commemorated on the War Memorial in the grounds of St Cassian's Church at Chaddesley Corbett, near Kidderminster.

Jeff would like to thank all those who helped him with this presentation including Dave Holland, John Barker, Bill Walton, Paul and Su Handford, the staff at various local libraries and last but not least Jeff's wife Val!

Sources:

Soldiers died in the Great War Part 34 The Worcestershire Regiment.

The Worcestershire Regiment in the Great War by Captain H FitzM Stacke.

Berrow's Worcester Journal.