



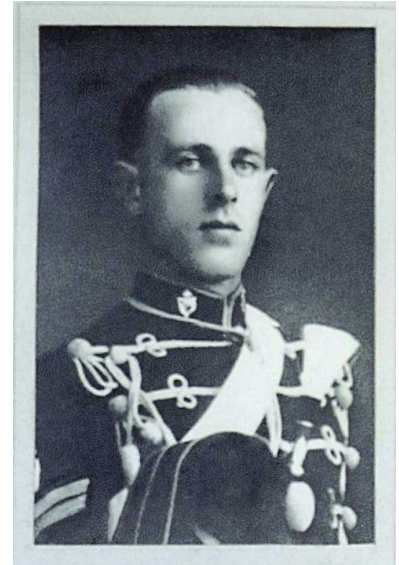
Trooper Bert Edward Thatcher - 551639

4th Queen's Own Hussars,
Royal Armoured Corps

Born 13th August 1912
Died 9th February 1945, aged 33

Klagenfurt Commonwealth War Cemetery, Austria,
Plot 2, Row E, Grave 1.

Burbage War Memorial.



Bert Edward Thatcher was born in Stoke, Coventry, the son of Mr Bertie Edward and Mrs Kate Thatcher of 85 Chandos Street. By the time Bert was ten they had moved to Burbage, where Bert and his elder sister Florence May attended the National School.

Bert was a reservist and was recalled on the outbreak of war, he had seen six years service of which four and a half had been abroad and had been at home for two years. Before the outbreak of war, he was employed by Hinckley Urban District Council and was living with his parents at 42 Freemans Lane, Burbage.

Hinckley Times Report 13 June 1941 - Missing

TROOPER B. E. THATCHER	
Trooper Bert E. Thatcher, of The Hussars, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Thatcher, of 42, Freeman's Lane, Burbage, has been reported missing since April 28th, while serving with H.M. forces in the Middle East.	in the Hussars, and was, for 4½ years of peace time in Egypt. He had been decorated for distinction while serving in Palestine.
Trooper Thatcher, who was 29 years of age, had served ten years	Up to the outbreak of war he was employed as a lorry driver by the Hinckley Urban District Council.

Trooper B. E. Thatcher a Prisoner of War

A communication from the Red Cross intimating that Trooper B. E. Thatcher, of The Hussars, is a prisoner of war at a camp in Germany, has been received by his mother, Mrs. Thatcher, of 42, Freeman's Lane, Burbage.

This was the first news Mrs. Thatcher had received of her eldest son since he was reported missing on April 28th, and her anxiety during the intervening months can be well imagined. However, news of his safety has come as a great relief to his parents and to his many friends in the Hinckley locality. He was reported missing on April 28th, while serving with the Forces in the Middle East.

Thatcher, who is 29 years of age, had served for ten years in the Hussars, and was for 4½ years of peace time in Egypt. He was decorated for distinction while serving in Palestine.



TROOPER. B. E THATCHER

Before the outbreak of war he was employed as a lorry driver by the Hinckley Urban District Council.

He was taken prisoner in Greece in April 1941 and died whilst held prisoner in Germany on 9th February 1945. Bert is buried at Klagenfurt Commonwealth War Cemetery, Austria.


Records indicate that Bert was held prisoner at Stalag 344 at Lambinowice, Poland and most probably died whilst being marched to Germany. In January 1945, the Soviet Army advanced into Poland and the Nazis made the decision to evacuate the PoW camps to prevent the liberation of the prisoners by the Russians.

Many of the prisoners were marched westward in groups of 200 to 300 in the so-called Long March or Death March. Many of them died from the bitter cold and exhaustion.

Austria was annexed by Germany in March 1938, and many labour, prisoner-of-war and concentration camps were established there by the Germans. The principal POW camps were at Döllersheim, Gneixendorf, Kaisersteinbruch, Lienz, Spittal an der Drau, Wolfsberg and Graz. Commonwealth war dead buried in Austria were mainly servicemen who died in these camps in captivity, airmen who were shot down or crashed while flying over the country and those who died while serving with the army of occupation after the war. Klagenfurt, the only Commonwealth war cemetery in Austria, was begun in June 1945 by the British occupying forces, who moved graves into it from all over the country. It now contains 589 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War.



**TROOPER BERT THATCHER
DIES IN GERMANY**



Trooper Bert Thatcher

Mr. and Mrs. B. Thatcher, of 42, Freeman's Lane, Burbage, have received the sad news that their eldest son, Tpr. Bert Thatcher, of the 4th Hussars, died on February 9th last while a prisoner of war in German hands.

Tpr. Thatcher was a reservist and had only been home two years, after six years service, including four and a half years abroad, when he was re-called on the outbreak of war.

He was taken prisoner in Greece in April, 1941.

Before the war he was employed as a driver by the Hinckley Urban District Council.

Hinckley Times 6th July 1945



Klagenfurt Commonwealth War Cemetery, Austria

The Long March

The Long March was during the final months of the Second World War in Europe. About 30,000 Allied PoWs were force-marched westward across Poland and Germany in appalling winter conditions, lasting about four months from January to April 1945. It has been called various names: "The Great March West", "The Long March", "The Long Walk", "The Long Trek", "The Black March", "The Bread March", but most survivors just called it "The March". It has also been called "The Lamsdorf Death March".

As the Soviet army was advancing on Poland, the Nazis made the decision to evacuate the PoW camps to prevent the liberation of the prisoners by the Russians. During this period, also hundreds of thousands of German civilians, most of them women and children, as well as civilians of other nationalities, were making their way westward in the snow and freezing weather and many died. January and February 1945 were among the coldest winter months of the twentieth century, with blizzards and temperatures as low as $-25\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($-13\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$), even until the middle of March temperatures were well below $0\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$ ($-18\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$). Most of the PoWs were ill-prepared for the evacuation, having suffered years of poor rations and wearing clothing ill-suited to the appalling winter conditions.

Each Stalag was responsible for co-ordinating the movement of POW at the outlying labour camps as well as those at the main camp. In the case of Stalag 344 Lamsdorf (formerly Stalag VIII-B) they took a northerly route via Dresden.

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