

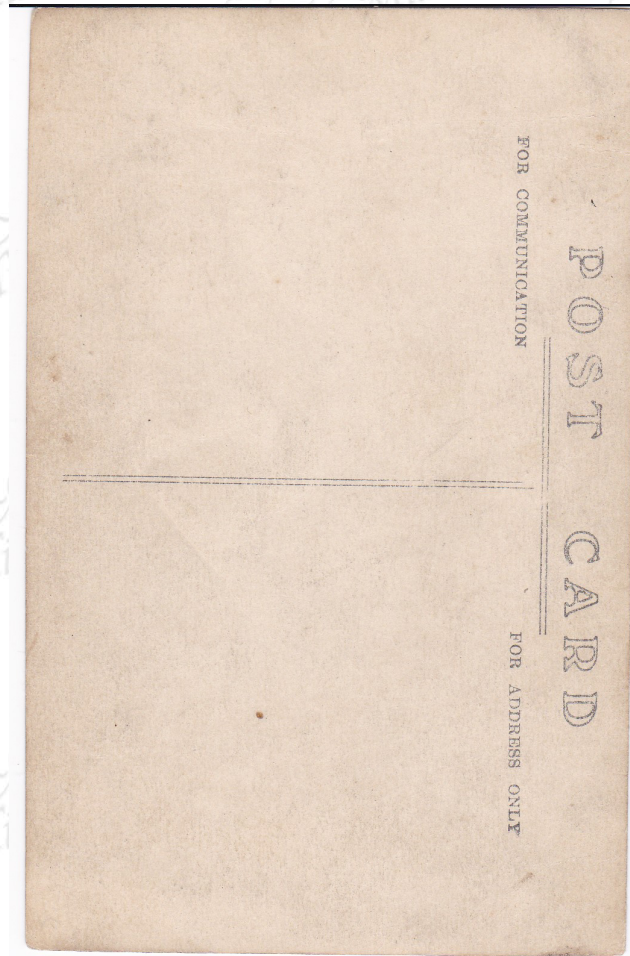
**A SCARCE VICTORIA CROSS GREAT WAR PHOTO POSTCARD PORTRAYING
LIEUTENANT SERGEANT TOM MAYSON. AWARDED THE VICTORIA CROSS
FOR ACTIONS AT WIELTSE**



Tom Fletcher Mayson (1893-1958) was born at Silecroft, Cumberland on 3rd November 1893. His father, William, was a farm servant at Town Ends, Whitbeck, Cumberland. Tom's mother, Annie late Raw nee Kneebone, had originally married John Raw (died 1877) in 1873. She married William in 1879. By 1881, William was now a pit worker at Hodbarrow iron ore mine. Annie died when Tom was three, and his father married Elizabeth Mason in 1900. She

was the licensee of the John Bull Inn in Silecroft, and later ran the Prince of Wales Hotel, Foxfield, near Ulverston, Lancashire. Tom had ten siblings from his parents' three marriages.

Tom was educated at Whicham School and was then employed as a labourer on Mr Dawson's Gutterby Farm at Whitbeck. He enlisted on 16th November 1914 and went to France on 3rd May 1915. Having been admitted to 1/3rd Highland Field Ambulance at Hillencourt on 16th November, he passed through No 51 (Highland) Casualty Clearing Station at Villers Bocage north of Amiens next day, 6 Ambulance Train on the 19th and arrived at St John's Ambulance Brigade Hospital, Etaples later that day. Tom was evacuated to England on SS Stad Antwerpen on 10th December. Having recovered, he embarked at Southampton on 18th April 1916 and joined 55th Division Base Depot at Rouen next day. He rejoined the Battalion on 4th May and was attached to Brigade on 20th May until returning to the Battalion again on 1st June. He was sentenced to ten days' Field Punishment No 1 on 2nd June for making a false statement to the CO and having a dirty rifle in the trenches. It didn't stop his promotion to Lance Corporal in July and Corporal in August.



Tom received a gunshot wound to the hand on 25th September and was admitted to No 15 Casualty Clearing Station at Hazebrouck before transferring to 6th General Hospital at Rouen next day. He was eventually evacuated to England in December, and was out of action until March 1917 when he joined 23rd Infantry Base Depot the next day and rejoined the Battalion on 21st April. He was appointed unpaid Lance Sergeant on 15th July.

On 31st July 1917 at Wieltje, Belgium, when his platoon was held up by machine-gun fire, Lance-Sergeant Mayson, without waiting for orders, at once made for the gun which he put out of action with bombs, wounding four of the team; the remaining three of the team fled, pursued by Lance-Sergeant Mayson to a dug-out where he killed them. Later, when clearing up a strongpoint, this NCO again tackled a machine-gun single-handed, killing six of the team. Finally during an enemy counterattack he took charge of an isolated post and successfully held it until ordered to withdraw and his ammunition was exhausted.

Tom was promoted to Sergeant on 20th August and returned to England on leave between 18th November and 3rd December. Millom and Silecroft gave him a great welcome before his investiture, raising £200 in cash and £169 in war savings certificates. The VC was presented by King George V at Buckingham Palace on 28th November 1917.

Back in France, Tom was treated for myalgia and was soon evacuated back to England on 11th January 1918. Having recovered, he embarked at Folkestone and disembarked at Boulogne on 6th April. He reported to the Base Depot at Etaples the same day and rejoined the Battalion on 14th April. The onset of winter caused a recurrence of myalgia, and he was admitted back into hospital. On recovery, he moved to 3rd Infantry Base Depot at Rouen on 4th November, and he transferred to the Labour Corps on 4th December. He served in 186th Company, Chinese Labour Corps until returning to England via Dieppe on 29th January 1919. Tom was disembodied from Heaton Park Dispersal Centre on 5th March 1919 with 20% disability due to myalgia.

Tom returned to farm labouring and was later a greenkeeper on a local golf course. He married Sarah Eleanor Sharp at St Mary's Church, Whicham in 1935. Sarah already had a daughter, Dorothy, but the couple went on to have eleven children of their own – William, John, Jane, Ruth, Isaac, Jonathan, Anthony, Isabel, Joseph, Annis and Elizabeth.

Tom served in HM Coastguard during World War Two and was also a special constable. He was also a Freemason (Whitwell Lodge No 1307). By the 1950s, he was living at the Miner's Arms at Silecroft while employed by the Atomic Energy Authority at Sellafield. He retired in early 1957 due to ill health. He died in North Lonsdale Hospital, Barrow-in-Furness on 21st February 1958. He was buried in St Mary's Churchyard, Whicham. The funeral was attended by fellow VC, Harry Christian. In addition to his VC, he was also awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-20, Victory Medal 1914-19, George VI Coronation Medal 1937, Elizabeth II Coronation Medal 1953 and Special Constabulary Long Service Medal. The VC was held by St Mary's Church, Whicham but, because of its value, it passed on long term loan to the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment for security. A replica is displayed in St Mary's, and labelled as such, was stolen, as was a replacement. The medal is now displayed in the Regimental Museum, Lancaster City Museum.

Postcard sized Approx 13.7 x 8.6 cm. The above taken from the fine vconline website:

<http://www.vconline.org.uk/tom-f-mayson-vc/4587567066.html>

A scarce original period VC recipient VC photo postcard