

**St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard,  
Harefield, Middlesex, England**

**War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**1677 PRIVATE**

**WILLIAM THOMAS HITCHEN**

**45TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**3RD SEPTEMBER, 1916 Age 44**

## William Thomas HITCHEN

William Thomas Hitchen was born at Mudgee, New South Wales on 19th February, 1864 to parents George & Catherine Hitchen (nee Guare).

William Thomas Hitchen married Emma Jane Lyons on 28th May, 1890 at Coonamble, New South Wales.

According to information provided by his wife for the Roll of Honour – William Thomas Hitchen was *“the originator & conductor of Route Marches in Australia.”*

Newspaper item – Leader, Orange, New South Wales – 8 October, 1915:

### **HITCHEN'S MARCH TO THE SEA**

*"Major" Bill Hitchen of Gilgandra!*

*The military name is conferred by the "Leader," but if any man deserved it more than this man, well, we want to see him. Fifty men - men from the plough handles and men from the sleeper camps, men from shearing sheds, horny-handed sheep and cattle men, fifty of them--are rolling their swags at Gilgandra preparatory to doing the march to the sea, there to take up arms against the common foe. Hats off to them. Make your cheers reverberate throughout the length and breadth of the land. In honour of their self-sacrifice and patriotic spirit, in thus saving the military authorities the expense of paying their railway fares to Sydney. What a welcome will be their's when they arrive in Sydney, these boys from the Castlereagh, and incidentally, what is Orange going to do when they arrive here en route. Every town is out to give them a right royal reception, and we know that the public-spirited people of this town will not be behind the others in the matter. A camping ground will have to be arranged for them, wood and water procured, and a welcome extended. All recruits who are anxious to join in the march are welcome, as long as their tucker bill is defrayed by the Orange citizens, and no better opportunity ever offered itself for a monster recruiting meeting on the night of the arrival of the Gilgandra boys. In all probability it will be arranged that the regiment in embryo will march into town early so every one can see them.*

William Thomas Hitchen stated he was a 44 year old, married, Plumber from Gilgandra, NSW when he enlisted on 10th October, 1915 at Bathurst, NSW with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 1677 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Emma Jane Hitchen, Bridge Street, Gilgandra, NSW.

Private William Thomas Hitchen was posted to “B” Company of Depot Battalion at Bathurst on 10th October, 1915. He was transferred to 2nd Reinforcements of 45th Battalion from 29th March, 1916.

Private William Thomas Hitchen embarked from Sydney, New South Wales on HMAT *Ceramic (A40)* on 14th April, 1916 with the 45th Infantry Battalion, 2nd Reinforcements.

Private William Thomas Hitchen embarked from Alexandria on 6th June, 1916 & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 16th June, 1916.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

The Casualty Form – Active Service for Private William Thomas Hitchen recorded that he was appointed Acting Corporal (undated).

### **45th Battalion**

The 45th Battalion was raised in Egypt on 2 March 1916 as part of the "doubling" of the AIF. Approximately half of its new recruits were Gallipoli veterans from the 13th Battalion, and the other half, fresh reinforcements from Australia. Reflecting the composition of the 13th, the new battalion was composed mostly of men from New South Wales.....

*(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)*

Acting Corporal William Thomas Hitchen was admitted to General Hospital, Devonport, England on 16th June, 1916 with Influenza from 12th Training Battalion. He was transferred to 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield, Middlesex, England on 21st June, 1916 with Diabetes Insipidus (& defective Heart).

Base Records sent a communication on 7th July, 1916 to Mrs E. J. Hitchen, Bridge Street, Gilgandra, NSW advising that her husband Corporal William T. Hitchen was seriously ill with Diabetes Insipidus & a weak Heart.

A Medical Report was completed on 9th July, 1916 on Acting Corporal William Thomas Hitchen while at 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield. His disability was listed as Diabetes Insipidus. On 11th June, 1916 Acting Corporal Hitchen had been invalided on Transport *Franconia* with Tonsillitis. He had a "*history of Polyuria from the beginning of May. Had Rheumatism, 5 years ago. Injury to Head & shoulder December 26th, 1913. Admitted Harefield Park 21/6/16.*" His disability was caused from strain on active service. The Officer in charge of the case recommended that Acting Corporal Hitchen be discharged as permanently unfit. The Medical Board agreed on 28th July, 1916 that Acting Corporal Hitchen was permanently unfit for General Service & permanently unfit for Home Service.

Mrs E. J. Hitchen, Gilgandra was advised again on 22nd July, 1916 by Base Records that her husband Corporal William T. Hitchen's condition was stationary. She was advised on 1st August, 1916 that her husband's condition was still stationary. Base Records advised Mrs E. J. Hitchen on 5th August, 1916 that her husband Corporal William T. Hitchen was improving.

The Registrar & Adjutant, 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield Park, Middlesex, wrote to D.M.S., A.I.F. on 11th August, 1916 with the following: "*re No. 1677, Cpl. Hitchin, N. 12th Tn. Btn – The above named N.C.O., who is lying dangerously ill at this Hospital, with Diabetes, has expressed a desire to see his son, No. 456, Pte Hitchin, W. J. 30th Battn. As Cpl. Hitchin is gradually sicking, I should be pleased if you would let me know if anything could be done towards sending for Pte Hitchin.*"

Colonel Giblin, D.D.M.S., A.I.F. added to the bottom of the above letter – to D.A.A.G. "*Recommended that if practicable, Pte Hitchin be permitted to visit his father.*"

A Cablegram was sent on 17th August, 1916 from Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F., London to 5th Australian Division B.E.F., France which reads: "*Would No. 456 HITCHIN, 30th Battalion be sent England to see his father who is dangerously ill at Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield.*"

[Note: The last rank held by William Thomas Hitchen was Acting Corporal, however the Commonwealth War Graves Commission & the Australian War Memorial both have his rank listed as Private. His headstone also records the rank of Private.]

Private William Thomas Hitchen died on 3rd September, 1916 at 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield Park, Harefield, Middlesex, England from Melanotic Sarcoma.

A death for William T. Hitchen, aged 45, was registered in the September quarter, 1916 in the district of Uxbridge, Middlesex, England.

Private William Thomas Hitchen was buried on 5th September, 1916 in St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England – Plot number Aust. 6 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Horatio Beveridge, Solicitor, Gilgandra, NSW, acting for the Executors of the Will of Corporal W. T. Hitchen, wrote to Base Records on 10th November, 1916 requesting a Certificate of death.

A reply was sent from Base Records on 22nd November, 1916, enclosing a certificate of report of death of the late No. 1677 Corporal W. T. Hitchen, 45th Battalion.

A War Pension was granted to Emma Jane Hitchen, Gilgandra, widow of the late Corporal William Thomas Hitchen in the sum of £2: 12:3d from 14th November, 1916.

Private William Thomas Hitchen was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Hitchen's widow – Mrs E. J. Hitchen, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent February, 1922 & Plaque sent January, 1923).

[Note: A handwritten note in the Service Record file for Private William Thomas Hitchen reads: "*Incorrect spelling of surname – Plaque roll reads Hitchin Records Hitchen 2/8/22*". Another handwritten note reads "*Rank should be Corporal on Scroll.*" It is not known whether these errors were corrected or if they were issued as is.]

Emma Jan Hitchen, "Cooee", 66 Barker Street, South Kensington, wrote to Base Records on 15th January, 1923 with the following: "*Re any medals which are due to me (widow of the late W. T. Hitchen) kindly forward to above address.*"

Base Records replied to Mrs E. J. Hitchen at South Kensington, New South Wales, on 2nd February, 1923 advising "*...that the British War Medal, the only Medal issuable on account of the service of your husband, the late No. 1677 Corporal W. T. KITCHEN, 45th Battalion, was forwarded to Headquarters, Victoria Barracks, Paddington, NSW, on 6/1/22 for transmission to you. I am therefore, referring your enquiry to that Office for attention. As the late soldier did not enter a theatre of war he was not eligible for either the 1914/15 Star of Victory Medal.*"

Base Records also advised Headquarters 2nd District base, on 2nd February, 1923 that the British War Medal issuable on account of the service of the late No. 1677 Corporal W. T. Hitchen has been forwarded to them on 6th January, 1922 & advised the deceased's widow's new address was at 66 Barker Street, South Kensington, Sydney, NSW. "*...I shall be glad if you will arrange for the British War Medal to be despatched accordingly.*"

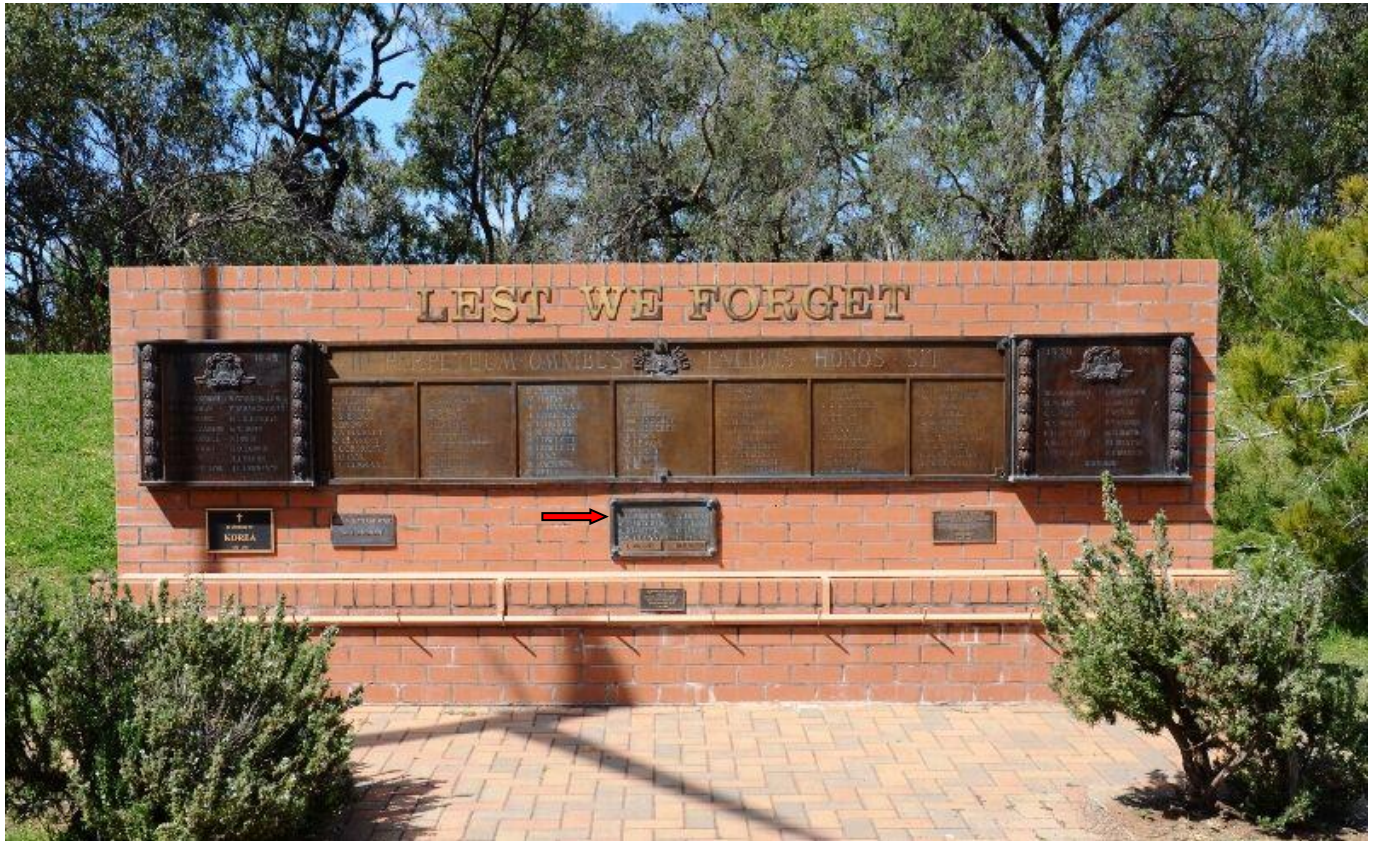
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private William Thomas Hitchen – service number 1677, aged 52, of 45th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of George and Catherine Hitchen; husband of E. J. Hitchen, of Bridge St., Gilgandra, New South Wales.

Private W. T. Hitchen is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 139.



*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

W. T. Hitchen is remembered on the Gilgandra War Memorial, located at Miller Street (Castlereagh Highway) & Castlereagh Street, Gilgandra, NSW.



**Gilgandra War Memorial** (Photos from Monument Australia – Henry Moulds)



W. Hitchen is remembered on the Coo-ee March Memorial Park Gateway, located in Coo-ee March Memorial Park, Newell Highway, Gilgandra, NSW.



**Coo-ee March Memorial Park Gateway** (Photos from AWM Places of Pride – Henry Moulds)





Bill Hitchen is remembered (named & photo) on the 50th Anniversary Coo-ee March storyboard for the Coo-ee March 1915, located in Bridge Street, Gilgandra, NSW.



**Cairn & Storyboard marking the 50th Anniversary of the start of the Coo-ee March at Gilgandra**

*(Photos from AWM Places of Pride – Henry Moulds)*



Commemorative Plaque on Cairn marking the 50th Anniversary of the start of the Coo-ee March

## COO-EE MARCH 1915



Coo-ee marchers leaving Gilgandra

**T**he Coo-ee Recruitment March left this point on October 10, 1915 with 35 men and arrived in Sydney on November 12, 1915 with 263 men.

The following is an extract from John Meredith's book *The Coo-ee March*:

Following the disaster of Gallipoli and the heavy casualties in France in the latter half of 1915, recruiting figures for enlistment in World War I had dwindled. Numerous recruiting rallies became increasingly ineffective. It was at this dark hour that Gilgandra's butcher, R.G. Hitchen and his brother Bill, the local plumber, had the idea of organising a route march of volunteers to Sydney, enlisting recruits as they marched.

The idea caught the imagination of the public, and the Coo-ees (as the volunteers were known) became national heroes. The action of "Hitchen's Own" and the subsequent marches, which followed, were responsible for a dramatic upturn in recruitment figures.

35 men left the little western town on the Castlereagh River. They were feted at each town on the route, and the stirring story of their march has become part of the official war history of Australia.



Bill Hitchen, Leader of the Coo-ee's

Recruitment meetings were held in each centre and their number increased to 263 by the time they reached Sydney. Conditions in the country in 1915 were vastly different from those today. Meredith describes: The unsealed roads were made of dirt, or perhaps, in a town, of crushed stone or blue metal. In dry weather traffic was coincidental with clouds of dust; when it rained the roads became ribbons of mud. Considered against this background a march of 320 miles over those rough roads was a much greater undertaking than it would be under today's conditions. The feats of cooking, transporting and servicing the food provided for the Coo-ees at each camp place, and even assembling of welcoming crowds were huge accomplishments.

The picture below shows a portion of the immense crowd which stretched from Newtown to the Sydney Domain to welcome the Coo-ees at the end of their historic march. This is just the Martin Place block between Pitt and George Street.



Scene on arrival at Martin Place Sydney

**ORIGINAL COO-EE MARCHERS**

W T Hitchen	John R Lee	John McNamara
John Quinn	Stanley E Stevens	Jack Hunt
William I Hunt	Albert Pearce	Leslie Greenleaf
Charles Finn	Francis White	Alfred Wardrop
Victor Quinton	William Alston	Sidney Bennett
Harold Baxter	Charles Wheeler	James McKeown
James Crawford	Charles Marchant	Andrew McGregor
Lawrence McGuire	Robert Campbell	Peter Wilson
Frank Humphrey	William Smith	Jim Maher
James Cameron	Alfred Lynne	Charles Simpson
Les Stinson	Richard Wrigley	Bill Howard
Tyson Ryan	Thomas Turvey	





Bill Hitchen is remembered (named & photo) on the 100th Anniversary Coo-ee March information board for the Coo-ee March 1915, located in Miller Street, Gilgandra, NSW.



The Coo-ee Digger (Photo from AWM Places of Pride – Henry Moulds)

**COO-EE** The Story of the Coo-ee Bronze Sculpture

*The Coo-ee Recruitment March left Gilgandra on 10 October 1915 with 28 men and their Commanding Officer and arrived in Sydney on 12 November 1915 with 263 men.*

*A further 10 men from Gilgandra joined the March along the way. They were fed at each town on the route where recruitment meetings were held, and the stirring story of their march has become part of the official war history of Australia.*

*The following information is sourced from John Meredith's book The Coo-ee March.*

*Following the disaster of Gallipoli and the heavy casualties in France in the latter half of 1915, recruiting figures for enlistment in World War I had plummeted. Numerous recruiting rallies became increasingly ineffective. It was at this dark hour that Gilgandra's butcher, W.B. Hitchen and his brother Bill, the local plumber, had the idea of organising a march of volunteers to Sydney, sending the men as they marched.*

*The idea caught the imagination of the public, and the Coo-ees (as the volunteers were known) became national heroes. The action of "Hitchen's Day" and the subsequent marches, which followed, were responsible for a dramatic return in recruitment figures.*

*Mr Bill Hitchen, Secretary of the local Recruiting Association, is recognised as having assisted the Hitchen Brothers to organise the March however did not accompany the marchers on their trek to Sydney.*

Bill Hitchen, leader of the Coo-ees

**ORIGINAL COO-EE MARCHERS**

W T Hitchen	John Lee	John McInerney
John Dwyer	Stanley S Stevens	Jack Hunt
William L Hunt	Albert Pearce	Leslie Greenleaf
Charles Finn	Francis White	Alfred Wardrop
Victor Dunton	William Alton	Sidney Bennett
Harold Baxter	Charles Wheeler	James McEwen
James Crawford	Charles Marchant	Andrew McGregor
Lawrence McGuire	Robert Campbell	Peter Wilson
Frank Humphrey	William Smith	Jim Maher
James Cameron	Alfred Latta	Charles Simpson
Leo Simpson	Richard Wrigley	Bill Howard
Tyson Ryan	Thomas Turvey	

**THE ARTIST**

It was artist Brett Stirling who proposed the idea of a sculpture and generously offered to undertake the project. The Gilgandra district is home for the Stirling clan and Brett was keen to give something back to a town that has such significance to his family's history.

**THE FUNDRAISING EFFORT**

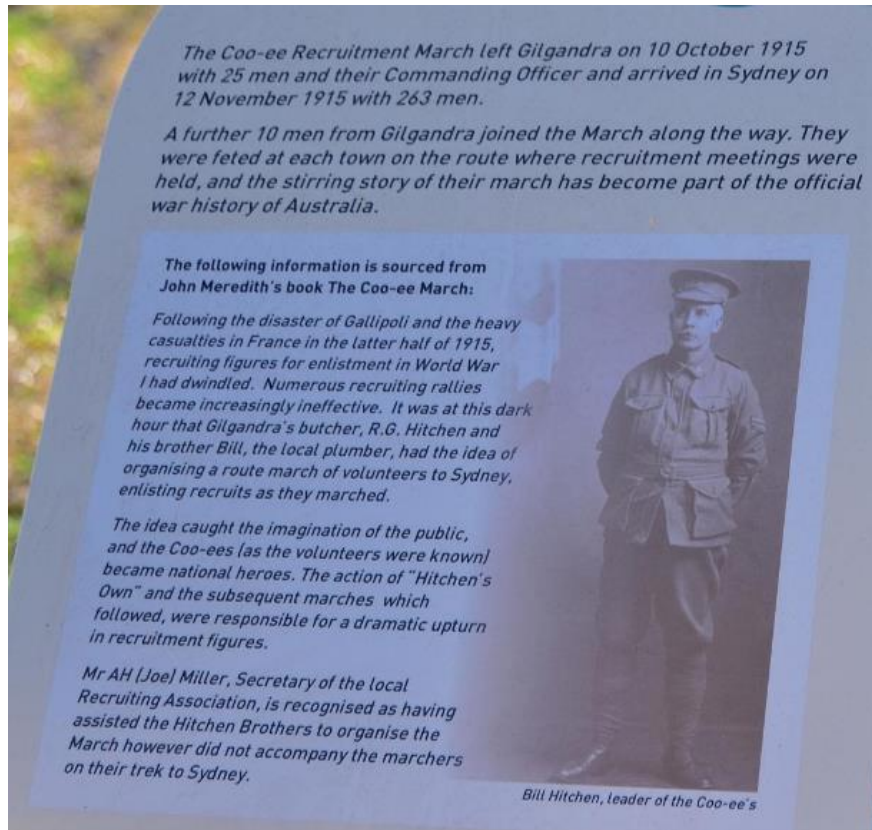
In June 2013 the Gilgandra Lions Club chose this project as their major fundraiser to honour the commitment of local citizens in the First World War. Fundraising Co-ordinator, Douglas W. Diggs OAM, drove the project with sheer determination. Doug's passion was evident in the many fundraising activities organised and countless hours spent in pursuit of the required funding. The NSW State Government provided funding for the grant under the Community Building Partnerships program. Gilgandra Shire Council managed the implementation of this \$100,000 project. The sculpture was unveiled by Brian Bywater OAM on the Centenary of ANZAC 2015. The Gilgandra community, many of whom had family involved in WWI, continue to honour those who serve our Country.

Further information on the original Coo-ee March, associated marches and re-enactments, is available at the Gilgandra Coo-ee Heritage & Visitor Information Centre, Bennett Highway, Bridge Street, the starting point of the March is located 75 metres to the right of this location. Hitchen House is located at 62 Miller Street - 100 metres to the right of this location.

**COO-EE MARCH RE-ENACTMENT 1987**

In 1987 a new band of "Coo-ees" set off to re-enact the March and put Gilgandra back on the map. As with the original March, three men organised this re-enactment: Brian Bywater, Kimlyn Templation and Robert McLean. Gilgandra contributed 60% of those who left Gilgandra on 24 October 1987 as marchers and supporters. They marched via the original route and relied on the generosity of private citizens in towns and cities along the way, arriving in Sydney some 22 days later on 14 November 1987. Film Australia captured the story of these Coo-ees for all to see in a movie, "Coo-ees", which received nominations for the Sydney and Melbourne Film Festivals.

(Photo by Pat Sengos)



W. T. Hitchen is remembered on the Gulargambone War Memorial, located in Gulargambone Park, Castlereagh Highway, Gulargambone, NSW.



Gulargambone War Memorial (Photo from AWM Places of Pride – Henry Moulds)

W. T. Hitchen is remembered on the United Grand Lodge Honour Roll, located in United Grand Lodge of Sydney, 279 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, NSW.



United Grand Lodge Honour Roll (Photo from Monument Australia)

W. T. Hitchen is remembered on the William Thompson Masonic Schools First World War Memorial, located in Balcombe Heights Estate, 92 Seven Hills Road, Baulkham Hills, NSW.



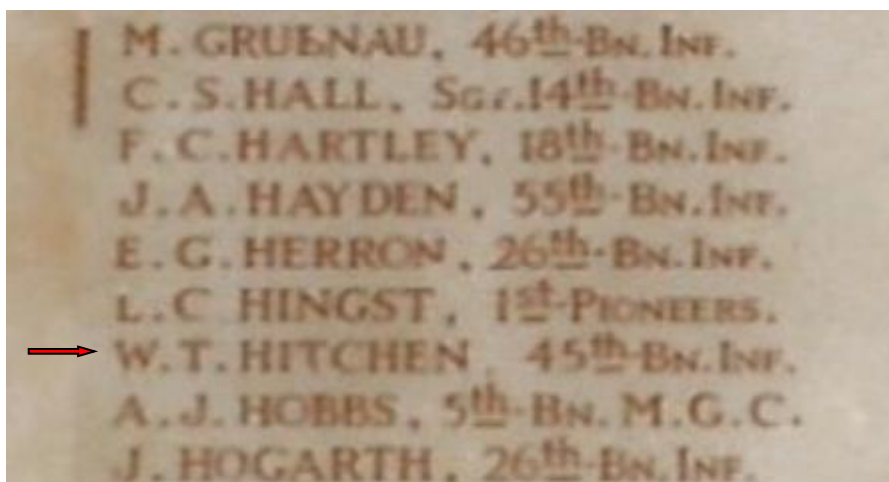
William Thompson Masonic Schools First World War Memorial (Photos from War Memorial Register NSW)



W. T. Hitchen is remembered on the Australian Soldiers' Memorial in St. Mary the Virgin Church, Church Hill, Harefield, Middlesex, England.



Australian Soldiers' Memorial, Harefield (Photo from War Memorials Online – B. Wood)



(72 pages of Private William Thomas Hitchen's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives

## LAST POST CEREMONY

Private William Thomas Hitchen was remembered in the Last Post Ceremony held at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on 3rd September, 2018.

Commencing at approximately 4.45 pm AEST, the Memorial farewells visitors with its moving Last Post Ceremony in the Commemorative Courtyard. Each night the ceremony shares the story behind one of the names on the [Roll of Honour](#).

The ceremony begins with the Australian national anthem followed by the piper's lament. Visitors are invited to lay wreaths and floral tributes beside the Pool of Reflection. An individual's story is told, and the Ode is recited by Australian Defence Force personnel. The ceremony ends with the sounding of the Last Post.

*(Information from The Australian War Memorial)*



### Speech transcript

1677 Private William Thomas Hitchen, 45th Battalion  
DOD 3 September 1916  
Story delivered 3 September 2018

Today we remember and pay tribute to Private William Thomas Hitchen.

William Hitchen was born in 1864 in Mudgee, New South Wales, to George Hitchen, a migrant from Lanarkshire in Scotland, and his wife Catherine. George Hitchen had come to Australia to try his luck in the gold rush of 1840, and went on to run hotels at Toraweenah, Collie, and Peak. Bill's father was a hard worker, and "taught all his family that work was one of the chief duties of life." Bill Hitchen went on to become a master plumber and in 1890 married Emma Jane Lyons in Coonamble. In 1906 the couple and their children moved to Gilgandra from Gulargambone, and Bill set up business as a plumber and windmill expert. Windmills were just becoming popular at the time, and Bill and two of his sons were responsible for erecting many of the windmills in and around Gilgandra.

Bill Hitchen was too old to enlist for active service on the outbreak of war in 1914. But he became increasingly concerned about falling enlistment numbers in the Australian Imperial Force. A staunch supporter of conscription, Hitchen decided to try to boost enlistment himself by organising a route march to Sydney from Gilgandra. He began with 20 or so recruits, and the group marched away, calling loud cooees as they reached a town, hoping to attract more recruits as they went.

Hitchen's patriotism was the pride of Gilgandra. Local newspapers reported that through his work Gilgandra had "proved to be one of the most loyal towns in the state". These route marches were known as "snowball" marches because of the way a snowball gathers more snow as it rolls down a hill. More were organised, but they were never particularly popular with military authorities, and stopped within a few months.

Bill Hitchen's service did not come to an end with the arrival of the Cooee March to Sydney. Having marched the whole way, the 51-year-old lied about his age, saying he was 44, and enlisted for active service. He passed the medical exam and was posted to the 45th Battalion. He left Sydney for active service overseas on 14 April 1916.

Just weeks after arriving in England, Private Bill Hitchen fell ill. He was taken to an Australian military hospital in Harefield, just outside of London, and died there from a malignant skin cancer on the 3rd of September 1916. Hitchen was in hospital with Private Albert Tracey, a young man from Gilgandra who had known Bill all his life. In August, shortly before he died, Hitchen asked for Tracey, who was able to visit. Tracey later wrote "He cried when I left him, and never let my hand go all the time I was with him, and he used to keep on saying, "you know, Albert, I can't write, but you tell the people from me it wasn't my fault I never got to the trenches". He was too old, poor old fellow, for the army, but he was a good man, and should never have been let to come away. If every one of those that talk so much did for the boys what that man did they would do some good. His whole heart and soul were with the army ... He said, "I want to show the people of Australia that I'm not out for the good of my health, but for the boys".

One of Bill's sons had enlisted for active service a few months before his father, and was able to visit him in hospital before he died. Two of his nephews repeatedly ran away from home, trying to enlist even though they were only young teenagers.

Bill Hitchen was buried in St Mary's Church yard in Harefield, Greater London. He was 52 years old.

His name is listed on the Roll of Honour on my right, among almost 62,000 Australians who died while serving in the First World War.

This is but one of the many stories of service and sacrifice told here at the Australian War Memorial. We now remember Private William Thomas Hitchen, who gave his life for us, for our freedoms, and in the hope of a better world.

Meleah Hampton  
Historian, Military History Section



**William Thomas Hitchen**



**Private William Thomas Hitchen**





## **Newspaper Notices**

### **Route March to Sydney**

Mr A H Miller (secretary of the Gilgandra Recruiting Association) forwards the following:—

At a meeting of the Gilgandra Recruiting Association, it was agreed to arrange a recruiting scheme, placed before the association by Mr W T Hitchen, captain of the local rifle club. It consists of a route march from Gilgandra to Sydney, a distance of 320 miles, on a basis of 10 miles a day. Apart from the march, the men will be instructed in drill, etc., daily, as we have two officers accompanying them on the trip. At every town and village on the route we propose to hold a demonstration for the purpose of securing recruits.

We invite your association's co-operation in this march. If your association have any recruits who wish to take part in the march, we would be very pleased for them to join us. The conditions are: Every unit to have its own transport, every town its own unit, and each unit to be financed by the respective towns. The men are not paid for this march, as they will not come under the military authorities until they reach Sydney.

We have practically completed arrangements so that our men can be finally passed and sworn in before leaving here. We are sure the moment this moving army reaches your town it will give recruiting a great lift in your district. We are making an appeal here for funds to assist our men through, and have already received offers by two of our leading storekeepers to provision the men for the first week, also our transports have already been donated, besides a fair amount of cash.

We would like your Association's co-operation in the following matters:

- (1) To make arrangements for receiving our men on arrival, and arranging demonstration and meeting at night, at times to suit yourselves.
- (2) In selecting camps in your town for men who will arrive on, or about the date indicated in the list below. (Exact date will reach you a week ahead of arrival).
- (3) To keep this march well before the press so that residents all along the route wishing to give them assistance, in the way of food, etc., will know about what time they will be passing.
- (4) To arrange with local store- keepers, butchers, bakers, etc., to supply the army with any goods re- quired at lowest possible prices, which will be paid for in cash.
- (5) To arrange for speakers, etc., at meetings in your town.

In respect of any information required I will communicate with you by return of mail. Kindly advise me at earliest possible opportunity of what arrangements are being made. Thanking you on behalf of my Association for whatever assistance you can give us.

#### **ROUTE OF MARCH.**

October 10 — Balladoran.

October 11 — Eumungerie.

October 12 — Mogriguy.

October 13 — Dubbo.

October 14 — Wongarbon.

October 15 — Geurie.

October 16 — Wellington.

October 17 — Wellington.

October 18 — Dripstone.

October 19 — Stuart Town.

October 20 — Eucharena.

October 21 — Boomey.

October 22 — 5-mile post, Orange. Molong Rd (Molong about mid-day).

October 23 — Orange.

October 24 — Orange.

October 25— Millthorpe.

October 26 — Blayney.

October 27 — Bathampton.

October 28 — Bathurst.

October 29 — Yetholme.  
 October 30 — Wallerawang.  
 November 1 — Wallerawang.  
 November 2 — Lithgow.  
 November 3 — Little Hartley.  
 November 4 — Mt Victoria.  
 November 5 — Katoomba.  
 November 6 — Lawson.  
 November 7 — Springwood.  
 November 8 — Springwood.  
 November 9 — Penrith.  
 November 10 — Parramatta.  
 November 11 — Ashfield.  
 November 12 — Sydney (mid-day).

Subject to slight alterations.

(*Nepean Times*, Penrith, NSW – 9 October, 1915)

## GREAT RECRUITING MARCH



**THE GILGANDRA “COO-EES” STRIDING IT OUT ALONG THE ROAD SEVEN MILES WEST OF BATHURST.  
 WITH STAFF-CAPTAIN EADE AND CAPTAIN HITCHIN IN THE LEAD.  
 TRANSPORT WAGGONS BRING UP THE REAR**

The Inset shows Ald H. C. Beavis (Mayor of Bathurst), who has given his three sons – one of whom has been killed in action – to the service of the Empire extending the hand of welcome to Captain Hitchin.

(*The Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, NSW – 30 October, 1915)

## THE COO-EES' LEADER.



**Captain Hitchens, leader of the "Coo-ees," resting by the wayside.**

*(The Mirror of Australia, Sydney, NSW – 13 November, 1915)*

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### **Australia's Honor Roll**

#### **189th CASUALTY LIST**

#### **PROGRESS REPORTS**

Corporal W. T. Hitchen, Gilgandra – condition stationary; previously reported seriously ill.

*(National Advocate, Bathurst, NSW – 4 August, 1916)*

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## **HITCHEN DEAD**

### **THE MAN FROM GILGANDRA**

Corporal William T. Hitchen, died of illness, Harefield Hospital. The simple announcement of a simple fact, and yet what a flood of memories it begets. How short a time it seems since Captain Bill Hitchen loomed so large and warmly in the public eye. How we hung upon the tale of the progress of his stalwarts from Gilgandra to Gallipoli. With his own two good hands and trusting heart he attempted to prove that the voluntary system of recruiting wanted but the impetus his plans would give it. For a brief while he looked like doing it. Then as the days and weeks passed; as each month recorded its march of the Wallabies, of the Waratahs, and the like, and still the men held back—we saw the failure we had dreaded for him. But bluff Bill Hitchen would admit no failure. If failure there, was he would take the blame to himself. It will come as a surprise to many to hear that Hitchen was 52 years of age. Fifty-two years, a husband and a father of three sons, and now dead of illness in a war hospital.

*(The Bathurst Times, NSW – 18 September, 1916)*

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## **WESTERN CASUALTIES**

### **DEAD, WOUNDED AND ILL**

#### **DIED, CAUSE NOT STATED**

Corporal W. T. Hitchen, Gilgandra (previously reported seriously ill)

*(National Advocate, Bathurst, NSW – 3 October, 1916)*

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## **THE COOEES**

Last Tuesday was the anniversary of the start of the Cooees — the first route march of the Empire — suggested by the late W. Hitchen, and largely organised and conducted by him. The whole State, the Commonwealth, and, indeed, the Empire, rang with enthusiastic comments on the scheme of recruiting, which made Gilgandra one of the most talked of places in the world. American journals took up the subject, and from the land of the Stars and Stripes the beginning and subsequently the accomplishment — all the results of the late Bill Hitchen's inspiration — were reported in the enemy countries, where they created a profound impression, dispelling completely any remaining misconception of Australia's loyalty. Naturally the people of Gilgandra are proud of the lustre which surrounds the name of their town through the Cooees' march, and generations to come in Gilgandra will honor the memory of the hero of the march — the late Bill Hitchen. The anniversary was marked by a patriotic social— in aid of the Repatriation Fund. It might here be remarked that the snowball army which left Gilgandra twelve months ago had grown to 220 before it marched into Sydney. Of that number only 19 have been put out of action, though they gone through much stern fighting.

*(Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent, NSW – 13 October, 1916)*

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THE END OF THE MARCH. THE LEADER OF THE COO-EES GOES TO HIS LONG REST



Photopress.

The Late Corporal Hitchins, the Leader of the "Coo-ees."

Corporal Hitchin, the Gilgandra man who organised the great route march of the Coo-ees, has given his life for the Empire. He passed away at one of the great military Hospitals in England. No one played a greater part in winning recruits for the Australian forces than this fine specimen of Australian manhood. Our photo shows Corporal Hitchin in his hospital bed, with two of his old comrades at his side. All three have been fighting in France.

(*The Mirror of Australia*, Sydney, NSW – 4 November, 1916)

## Route March Hitchen Dead

Recently Mr J. C. Smirthwaite received from England a newspaper which contained something of interest to Gilgandra people (says the "Weekly"). Amongst its illustrations was one entitled, "The End of the March." This represented the death in Harefield Hospital, England, of Corporal W. Hitchen, whose name will go down in history as the author of route marches in Australia at a time when reinforcements for our troops in other lands were urgently needed. Cpl Hitchen is seen in the peaceful sleep of death, his body covered with the British flag, for whose honor this noble souled Australian had done so much. It is a picture that stirs the inmost feelings of those who knew the late Corporal Hitchen. He rests in a carefully tendered grave beyond the sea, but his memory is buried deep in our hearts – good sterling patriot that he was.

*(The Uralla Times and District Advocate, NSW – 9 December, 1916)*

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**\*\*Note:** There are many more newspaper items about the Coo-ee March from Gilgandra, NSW (see Trove)

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## Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

*(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)*

A letter from Base Records, dated 16th July, 1921, to Mrs E. J. Hitchen, Bridge Street, Gilgandra, NSW, advised that a letter from the Defence Dept. concerning an inscription on the headstone of her husband, the late No. 1677 Corporal W. T. Hitchen, 45th Battalion, had not been answered & non-receipt of a reply within 21 days would have to be accepted as indicating that no further action was to be taken.

Private William Thomas Hitchen does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

## St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England

St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield contains 126 Commonwealth War Graves.

During the two world wars, the United Kingdom became an island fortress used for training troops and launching land, sea and air operations around the globe. There are more than 170,000 Commonwealth war graves in the United Kingdom, many being those of servicemen and women killed on active service, or who later succumbed to wounds. Others died in training accidents, or because of sickness or disease. The graves, many of them privately owned and marked by private memorials, will be found in more than 12,000 cemeteries and churchyards.

Harefield (St. Mary) Churchyard contains war graves from both world wars. There are 120 First World War graves, mostly those of Australians who died in No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield Park. Uniquely, their graves are marked by scroll shaped headstones, chosen by the staff and patients at the hospital. In the centre of the Australian plot stands a memorial obelisk which was erected by Sir Francis Newdegate, late Governor of Tasmania and of Western Australia, and Mr. C.A.M. Billyard-Leake, of Harefield Park. The churchyard also contains six graves of the Second World War.

*(Information & photos from CWGC)*





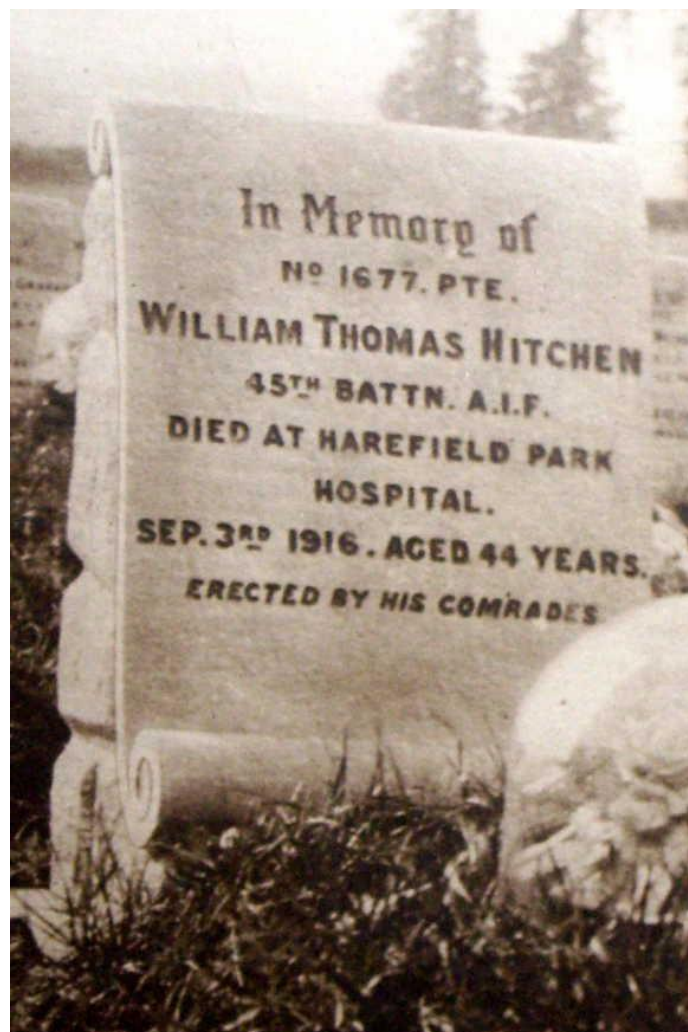
**St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield**







Private William Thomas Hitchen's Headstone in Harefield (Photos from *Discovering Anzacs* – uploaded by kay 1615)



Early photo of Private William Thomas Hitchen's Headstone

Photo of Private William Thomas Hitchen's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England.



*(Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)*



IN MEMORY OF  
No 1677 PTE  
WILLIAM THOMAS KITCHEN  
46TH BATTN A.I.F.  
DIED AT HAREFIELD PARK  
HOSPITAL.  
SEP. 3RD 1916 - AGED 44 YEARS  
ERECTED BY HIS COMRADES

Woo-ee March  
1915 - 2015





St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield (Photos courtesy of Peter Bennett)

