

**Haggate Baptist Chapelyard,
Burnley, Lancashire**

War Grave



Lest We Forget

World War 1



3299 SERJEANT

W. THOMAS

49TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

19TH MAY, 1918 Age 30

He Died

That Others Might Live

From Mother

William (Billy) THOMAS

William Thomas was born at Burnley, Lancashire, England in 1888 to parents Charles Thomas & Selina Thomas (nee Trevidyk).

The 1891 England Census recorded William Thomas as a 3 year old, living with his family at 13 Heath Street, Burnley, Lancashire, England which was a 4 roomed dwelling. His parents were listed as Charles Thomas (Coal Miner, aged 44, born Exeter, Devon) & Selina Thomas (aged 40, born Colstock, Cornwall). William was one of seven children listed on this Census – Thurza Thomas (Cotton Weaver, aged 17, born Colstock, Cornwall), Elizabeth Thomas (Cotton Weaver, aged 16, born Burnley, Lancs), Eliza Thomas (Cotton Weaver, aged 13, born Burnley, Lancs), John Thomas (Scholar, aged 9, born Burnley, Lancs), Annie Thomas (Scholar, aged 6, born Burnley, Lancs), then William & Harry Thomas (aged 1, born Burnley, Lancs).

A death was registered in the December quarter, 1891 in the district of Burnley, Lancashire for Charles Thomas, aged 45.

The 1901 England Census recorded William Thomas as a 13 year old Cotton Weaver, living with his family at 41 Burnley Road, Brierfield, Lancashire. His widowed mother was listed as Selina Thomas (aged 50). William was one of six children listed on this Census – Elizabeth Thomas (Cotton Weaver, aged 26), Eliza Thomas (Cotton Weaver, aged 23), John Thomas (Wood Sawyer, aged 19), Annie Thomas (Cotton Waver, aged 16), then William & Ernest Thomas (aged 9).

The 1911 England Census listed William Thomas as a 23 year old, Loom Oiler (Cotton weaving) living with his family in a 4 roomed dwelling at 26 Rawson Street, Burnley, Lancashire. William lived with his widowed mother – Selina Thomas (aged 60) & younger brother – Ernest Thomas (Weaver, aged 19). Selina had given birth to 13 children with only 8 still living.

A "William Thomas", aged 23, was listed as a passenger on *Kaikoura* which departed from England and arrived at the port of Brisbane on 24th September, 1911.

William Thomas was a 27 year old, single, Miner when he enlisted at Brisbane, Queensland on 10th August, 1915 with the 9th Infantry Battalion, 11th Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 3299 & his religion was Methodist. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs S. Thomas of 40 Wynothan Street, Burnley, England.

Private William Thomas embarked from Brisbane on HMAT *Warilda (A69)* on 5th October, 1915 & disembarked at Egypt (no date recorded). (The date of 5th October, 1915 is recorded on the Australian War Memorial's Embarkation Roll. The Casualty Form – Active Service located in the Service Record file for William Thomas records that he embarked from Australia on 21st October, 1915.)

Private William Thomas was posted to Camp with 9th Battalion, 11th Reinforcements on 28th February, 1916.

Private William Thomas was allotted & proceeded to join 49th Battalion on 29th February, 1916 at Zeitoun from 3rd Training Battalion.

Private William Thomas was taken on strength with 49th Battalion at Tel-el-Kebir on 29th February, 1916.

Private William Thomas was to be Lance Corporal on 13th May, 1916.

Lance Corporal William Thomas proceeded to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) from Alexandria on 5th June, 1916 on *Arcadian*. He disembarked at Marseilles, France on 12th June, 1916.

Lance Corporal William Thomas was promoted to Corporal on 6th September, 1916 in the field.

Corporal William Thomas was temporarily attached to Miners' Corps from 10th January, 1917. He was to be Sergeant from 15th January, 1917 vice Sergeant Devin who had been killed in action.

Sergeant William Thomas rejoined the 49th Battalion & his Unit on 24th February, 1917.

Sergeant William Thomas was wounded in action in France on 4th April, 1917. He was taken to 4th Australian Field Ambulance with a gunshot wound to right arm then transferred to Casualty Clearing Station. Sergeant Thomas was admitted to 11th Stationary Hospital at Rouen, France on 6th April, 1917 then transferred to 2nd Convalescent Base Depot at Rouen on 7th April, 1917. Sergeant Thomas was transferred to 11th Convalescent Depot on 15th June, 1917.

Sergeant William Thomas was transferred to Base on 29th June, 1917 & marched in to 4th A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Havre on the same day. He was placed on the Supernumerary List of 49th Battalion, A.I.F on 4th July, 1917 owing to evacuation from Unit for a period of 3 months. Sergeant Thomas proceeded to join his Unit on 16th July, 1917.

Sergeant William Thomas rejoined his Unit in the field from wounds on 17th July, 1917.

Sergeant William Thomas was on leave to Paris on 9th February, 1918 & rejoined his Unit from leave on 16th February, 1918.

Sergeant William Thomas was wounded in action (2nd occasion) – gassed on 25th April, 1918. He was taken to 12th Casualty Clearing Station on 26th April, 1917 then transferred by Ambulance Train 42 to 2nd Canadian Hospital at Outreau on 27th April, 1918. Sergeant Thomas was marked for transfer to England on 29th April, 1916 and embarked on Hospital Ship *Guildford Castle* on 30th April, 1918.

Sergeant William Thomas was admitted to War Hospital, Exeter, England on 1st May, 1918 suffering from Mustard Gas Poisoning – severe.

Sergeant William Thomas died at 1.43 pm on 19th May, 1918 at No. 5 Section, War Hospital Exeter, England from Shell Gas Poisoning & Broncho Pneumonia.

A death for William Thomas, aged 30, was registered in the June quarter, 1918 in the district of Exeter, Devon, England.

Sergeant William Thomas was buried on 25th May, 1918 in Haggate Baptist Chapelyard, Burnley, Lancashire, England, – Grave reference 11. 62 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Sergeant William Thomas - *Coffin was good, polished Elm. The deceased soldier was accorded a Private funeral. The coffin was draped with the Union Jack, and surmounted by many beautiful wreaths, which were placed on the coffin by relatives. Prior to the interment a service was held by the Rev. W. J. Clark, in the Chapel at the Cemetery. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral. The funeral was attended by Mrs S. Thomas, mother of the late Sergeant William Thomas & other relatives.*

William Thomas requested in his Will (undated) that all his personal estate he bequeathed to his mother – Mrs Selina Thomas of 10 Faraday Street, Ighten Hill, Burnley, Lancashire, England.

Sergeant William Thomas was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Sgt. Thomas' mother – Mrs S. Thomas, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque both sent to England in November, 1922).

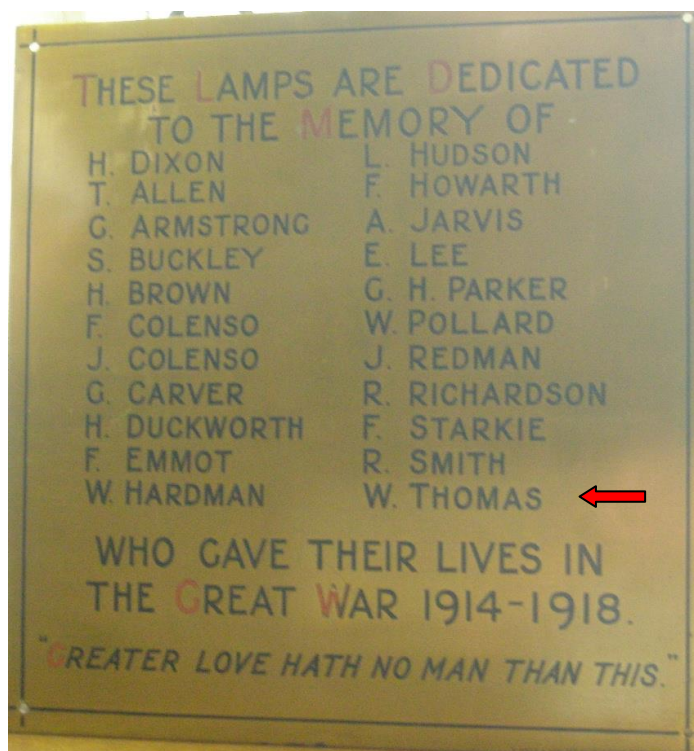
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Sergeant William Thomas – service number 3299, aged 29, of 49th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of Mrs S. Thomas, of 18 Faraday St., Ightenhill, Burnley, Lancs, England.

Sergeant W. Thomas is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 149.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

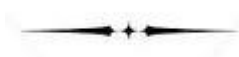
W. Thomas is remembered on the Mount Zion Baptist Chapel's Roll of Honour, now located in Towneley Hall.



(Photo from [Burnley in the Great War](#))

(46 pages of Sergeant William Thomas' 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





(Photo courtesy of Andrew Mackay – Burnley, Lancs)



Newspaper Notices

BURNLEY COLONIAL

Funeral at Haggate of Sergeant who succumbed to Gas Poisoning

After serving eighteen months in France with the Australian Imperial Forces, which he joined in the distant colony nearly three years ago, Sergeant William (Billy) Thomas, son of Mrs Thomas, of 10, Faraday-street, Burnley, died in hospital at Exeter on Sunday, May 19th, from the effects of severe gas poisoning contracted during the recent heavy fighting on the Western Front. Sergeant Thomas, who was 30 years of age, and single, went to Australia, seven years ago, being previously employed as a loom-oiler at Rake Head Mill, Burnley. In Australia he was an out-door worker engaged on railway construction. He was formerly associated with Mount Zion Primitive Methodist Chapel and Sunday School, Colerne-road, where he is on the roll of honour. Sergeant Thomas was wounded some twelve months ago in France, and on returning to his unit after treatment, it was found necessary that he should undergo an operation to remove shrapnel from his arm, following which he again was sent on active service. He had served in Egypt prior to being drafted to France. His brother, Driver Ernest Thomas, R.F.A., who enlisted in May, 1915, has also served in Egypt and France, and a cousin, Private Samuel Buckley, of Burnley, was killed in action about twelve months ago.

The funeral of the late Sergeant Thomas took place at Haggate Baptist Chapel. The mourners were: Mrs Thomas, Evelyn Thomas, Mr and Mrs Redman, Mr and Mrs Hargreaves, Mr and Mrs Perkins and Doris, Mr and Mrs John Thomas, Miss Nellie Redman, Miss Ethel Hargeaves, Miss Ena Redman, Misses Sarah and Lily and Master Hargreaves, Mrs Holsgrove, Mr William Buckley, Mr Fred Buckley, Mrs Teale, Mrs Hart, Warrant-officer Syd. E. Yeomans, Mrs Hodson, Mrs Dodson, Mr J. Allen and the Rev. W. Clark.

Floral tributes were sent from:- His sorrowing mother and brother Ernest (in France); Evelyn; Lizzie, Nellie and Edna; Eliza, Will, and daughter Doris; John, Emma and daughter Ena; Annie, Jem and children, Ethel, Sarah, Lily, Harold and John; Mr and Mrs Holsgrove, William and Fred; Mr and Mrs Seal and family; Mrs Allen and family; Mr Hart, Sarah, Ann, Clare and Fred (in France); Mrs Windle and daughters; the Nursing Staff and Patients of No. 1 Ward V.A.D. Hospital, Exeter; Mrs Snowball and Mrs Anderson, Australian Red Cross Visitors; from his fellow Australian soldiers in No. 5 Military Hospital, Exeter; Annie and Phyllis; Mr and Mrs J. Redman and family; his old friend Nellie Whitham; Mr and Mrs Dodson and family; Mr and Mrs Hodson and family; Nellie Haggarth; Warrant Officer Syd E. Yeomans, an Australian comrade representing Administration Headquarters, A.T.F., London; and Mr and Mrs George H. Smith.

Messrs Geo. Smith & Sons, of Padiham-road, carried out the funeral arrangements.



(*Burnley News*, Burnley, Lancashire, England – 1 June, 1918)

TOLL OF WAR

LAST NIGHT'S CASUALTY LIST – 408th

DIED OF WOUNDS

Sgt. W. Thomas, England, 19/5/18

(*The Daily Mail*, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia – 13 June, 1918)

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*)

Serjeant W. Thomas does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

He Died That Others Might Live

From Mother

Haggate Baptist Church Burial Ground, Burnley, Lancashire, England

Haggate Baptist Church Burial Ground contains 21 Commonwealth War Graves, 14 relating to World War 1 & 7 relating to World War 2. The Church Burial Ground is located on Nelson Road, Burnley, Lancashire.



Photo of Serjeant W. Thomas' Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Haggate Baptist Chapelyard, Burnley, Lancashire, England.



(Photo courtesy of Andrew Mackay)