

**St. George's Churchyard,
Millom, Cumbria
War Grave**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



464 PRIVATE

W. J. THOMAS

AUST. ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

5TH JULY, 1921 Age 39

His Sufferings Were Great

His End Was Peace

William John THOMAS

William John Thomas was born at Bootle, near Millom, Cumberland, England in the September quarter, 1881 to parents James & Louisa Thomas (nee Rowe).

[According to his age in the 1911 Census, William John Thomas was born around 1882, however based on his age stated on his Attestation Papers he was born around 1879.]

The 1891 England Census recorded William J. Thomas as a 9 year old Scholar, living with his family at 5 Albert Street, Millom, Cumberland, England. His parents were listed as James Thomas (Clerk, aged 37, born Cornwall) & Louisa Thomas (aged 31, born Devonshire). William was one of five children listed on this Census (all born Millom, Cumberland) – Emma M. Thomas (Scholar, aged 11) then William, Mable A. Thomas (Scholar, aged 5), Adelia F. Thomas (aged 4) & Alfred S. Thomas (aged 1). Also listed in the household was Maria Thomas (mother of James, married, aged 62, Living on her own Means) & Mary Thomas (sister of James, aged 22, Living on her own Means).

The 1901 England Census recorded William John Thomas as a 19 year old Iron Ore Miner, living with his family at 97 Albert Street, Millom, Cumberland, England. His parents were listed as James Thomas (Mine Clerk, aged 47) & Louisa Thomas (aged 41). William was the eldest of six children listed on this Census – William, Joseph Henry Thomas (P____, aged 18), Mabel Annie Thomas (aged 15), Alfred Kimmer Thomas (aged 8, born Millom, Cumberland), Lillian Lanyon Thomas (aged 8, born Millom, Cumberland) & Adelia F. Thomas (aged 14).

William John Thomas married Martha Evans on 28th August, 1905. Their marriage was registered in the September quarter, 1905 in the district of Bootle Cul, Cumberland, England.

A birth was registered in the September quarter, 1906 for Doris Thomas in the district of Bootle Cul, Cumberland, England.

The 1911 England Census recorded William John Thomas as a 29 year old Miner (Iron Ore) living with his wife Martha Thomas (aged 27, born Millom, Cumberland) & their daughter – Doris Thomas (aged 4, born Millom, Cumberland). William & Martha Thomas had been married for 5 years & only had 1 child. The family were living in a 5 roomed dwelling at 83 Lomsdale Road, Millom, Cumberland. Also listed were 3 Boarders – F. W. Giles (Labourer Iron Ore Mines – above ground), aged 25), Walter Evans (Widower, Bricklayer, aged 39) & Walter L. B. Evans – son of Walter Evans (aged 10).

William John Thomas was a 35 year old, married, Miner c/o Mrs Dawson, Chapple Lane, between Chloride and Oxide Streets, Broken Hill, NSW when he enlisted at Morphettville, South Australia, on 22nd August, 1914 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Methodist & his next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs H. Thomas, of 83 Lonsdale Road, Millom, Cumberland, England. William Thomas stated on his Attestation Papers that he had previously served for 7 years with 4th Battalion, Kings Own Royal Lancaster Regiment.

Private William John Thomas was posted to "H" Company, 10th Battalion on 22nd August, 1916.

Private William John Thomas, Service number 464, embarked from Adelaide, South Australia on HMAT *Ascanius* (A11) on 20th October, 1914 with the 10th Infantry Battalion "H" Company.

Private William John Thomas embarked from Alexandria to join M.E.F. (Mediterranean Expeditionary Force) at Gallipoli on 2nd March, 1915.

Private William John Thomas was admitted to Casualty Clearing Station on 19th August, 1915 having suffered an Epileptic fit while at Gallipoli. He was transferred to Mudros on the same day & admitted to 10th Stationary Hospital. Private Thomas was transferred on Hospital Ship *Ulysses* & disembarked at Alexandria on 25th August, 1915. He was admitted to No. 2 General Hospital at Ghezira, Cairo the same day. The Hospital Report reads: "*Has had attacks of epilepsy off & on during the past 5 or 6 months. Last attack 2 days ago.*" The Medical Report completed at Anzac on Private William John Thomas on 28th August, 1915 regarding his Epilepsy reads: "*Has had attacks of unconsciousness off and on during the last six months. These attacks last for a few minutes – he is then dazed and knows nothing for two or three hours. Coming from Anzac he had an attack. Attribute first attack to Typhoid inoculation. It was recommend that he be discharged permanently unfit (for active service) & to change to England –*

his family being in England. Private Thomas was transferred to Mena House Hospital on 7th September, 1915 then transferred to Helouan on 20th September, 1915.

Private William John Thomas was on light duties at Zeitoun from 10th October, 1915.

A Medical Report was completed on Private William John Thomas at Zeitoun on 28th October, 1915 in regard to his disability – Epilepsy. The reports states that Private Thomas had his first fit at the age of 13 & had no recurrence until the second attack on 15th August, 1915 at Gallipoli & had since had two or three more attacks. The Epilepsy was stated to have recurred probably as a result of exposure. His condition was aggravated by active service. It was recommended that Private Thomas be discharged as permanently unfit.

Private William John Thomas was transferred to No. 2 Auxiliary Hospital at Cairo with Epilepsy on 29th November, 1915 then transferred to Base Depot at Gheyreh on 10th December, 1915.

Private William John Thomas rejoined his Battalion from Details at Serapeum on 10th March, 1916. He was marched out the same day for Tel-el- Kebir.

Private William John Thomas was transferred to A.A.M.C. (Australian Army Medical Corps) Details on 23rd March, 1916.

Private William John Thomas proceeded to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) from Alexandria on 27th March, 1916 & disembarked at Marseilles, France on 3rd April, 1916.

Private William John Thomas was taken to 2nd Field Ambulance on 14th September, 1916 with Dysentery then transferred & admitted to 14th Stationary Hospital at Boulogne on 17th September, 1916.

Private William John Thomas embarked from Calais, France on 5th November, 1916 on Hospital Ship *Newhaven* with Bronchitis. He was admitted to 3rd Northern General Hospital with Bronchitis on 5th November, 1916. Private William Thomas was transferred to 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital on 13th November, 1916 with Bronchitis & Laryngitis & discharged on 29th November, 1916.

Private William John Thomas was taken on strength at 2nd Auxiliary Hospital at Southall, West London, England on 10th January, 1917 from 10th Battalion.

Private William John Thomas was on furlo from 22nd March, 1917 to 6th April, 1917.

Private William John Thomas was admitted to 2nd Auxiliary Hospital at Southall, West London, England with an injury to his foot on 5th May, 1918. He was discharged to duty with Staff on 20th May, 1918.

Private William John Thomas was granted 75 days leave in UK from 25th October, 1918 & was due to report to 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital, London for duty on 5th January, 1919 in lieu of Return to Australia (Special leave 1914).

Private William John Thomas was on Special leave on 8th January, 1919 & reported to 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital, London on 10th January, 1919.

Private William John Thomas was admitted to 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital, London on 11th April, 1919 with Scabies. He was discharged to duty on 22nd April, 1919.

Private William John Thomas was marched out from Southall on 22nd April, 1919 on Leave & to report to A.M.C. at Fovant, Wiltshire. He was marched in to Training Depot at Fovant, Wiltshire on 6th May, 1919.

Private William John Thomas was marched out from Training Depot at Fovant on 22nd July, 1919 & marched in Headquarters, London on 27th August, 1919.

A Medical Report was completed on Private William John Thomas at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire on 5th October, 1919 regarding his disability of Dysentery which originated in August, 1915 at Gallipoli. He was found to be temporarily Unfit for General Service for more than six months & fit for Home Service.

Private William John Thomas was discharged from the Australian Imperial Forces on 22nd October, 1919 being medically unfit after serving for 5 years & 62 days. He was discharged in the United Kingdom as his wife & daughter had a medical certificate stating that they were "*both in a delicate state of health &unfit to undertake the journey to Australia.*"

William John Thomas was awarded the Silver War badge No. A 88706 in October, 1919. Another Silver War Badge was issued No. 253830 in December, 1919 in respect of his service with Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.).

Silver War Badge

The Silver War Badge was issued in the United Kingdom and the British Empire to service personnel who had been honourably discharged due to wounds or sickness from military service in World War I. The badge, sometimes known as the "Discharge Badge", the "Wound Badge" or "Services Rendered Badge", was first issued in September 1916, along with an official certificate of entitlement.

The large sterling silver lapel badge was intended to be worn on civilian clothes. The decoration was introduced as an award of "King's silver" for having received wounds or injury during loyal war service to the Crown's authority. A secondary causation for its introduction was that a practice had developed in the early years of the war in the United Kingdom where some women took it upon themselves to confront and publicly embarrass men of fighting age they saw in public places who were not in military uniform, by ostentatiously presenting them with white feathers, as a suggestion of cowardice. As the war had developed substantial numbers of servicemen who had been discharged from His Majesty's Forces with wounds that rendered them unfit for war service, but which were not obvious from their outward appearance, found themselves being harassed in such a manner and the badge, to be worn on the right breast while in civilian dress, was a means of discouraging such incidents being directed at ex-forces' personnel. It was forbidden to wear the badge on a military uniform. (*Wikipedia*)



The Silver War Badge

Private William John Thomas was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal.

Private William John Thomas died on 5th July, 1921 at 81 Lonsdale Road, Millom.

A death for William J. Thomas, aged 39, was registered in the September quarter, 1921 in the district of Bootle Cul, Cumberland, England.

Newspaper item – *Millom Gazette*, Millom, Cumberland, England - 8 July, 1921:

DEATH OF MILLOM MAN

Readers will learn with regret of the demise of Mr William John Thomas, 81 Lonsdale road, Millom, which occurred on Tuesday, after a lengthy illness. Deceased was 39 years of age, and was employed at Barrow. He served in the Great War with the Australian Forces, during which his health became seriously affected by the privations endured during the campaign. Deceased was very well-known and highly esteemed by the townspeople, The interment takes lace to-morrow (Saturday) at St. George's.

Private William John Thomas was buried in St. George's Churchyard, Millom, Cumbria, England – Plot number B. 361 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

England & Wales Probate Calendar:

THOMAS, William John of 3 Queen-street, Millom, Cumberland, Storekeeper, died 5 July, 1921 at 81 Lonsdale-road, Millom. Probate Carlisle 3 August to Martha Thomas, widow. Effects £256 1s. 10d.

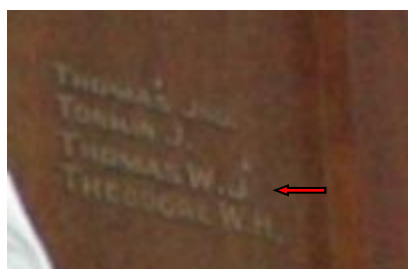
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private William John Thomas – service number 464, aged 39, of 2nd Australian Hosp., Australian Army Medical Corps. He was the husband of Martha Thomas, of 74 Lonsdale Rd, Millom.

W. J. Thomas is remembered on the South Mine Broken Hill Roll of Honour which is located at Sulphide Street Station Railway & Historical Museum, 230 Blende Street, Broken Hill, NSW.



South Mine Broken Hill Roll of Honour

(Photo from Register of War Memorials in NSW – Mr Patrick Gillespie & Mr Rhys Haskard, Broken Hill City Council)



A "W. J. Thomas" is named on the Millom WW1 Memorial, located at Station Road, junction of Cambridge Street & Duke Street, Millom,



Millom WW1 Memorial (Photo Streetview)



Private W. J. Thomas is not commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia as the official cut-off date for inclusion on the Roll of Honour ends on 31st March, 1921 for World War 1.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(111 pages of Private William John 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) & National Archives



Newspaper Items

Funeral of the late Mr William John Thomas

The mortal remains of the late Mr Wm. J. Thomas, of Lonsdale road, whose death we recorded last week, took place on Saturday afternoon last, and was largely attended. The Rev. G. C. Frazer-Campbell, who wore the uniform of hon. Chaplain to the Forces, which post he held in the Great War, conducted service in the Baptist Church prior to interment in St George's Churchyard. Mr W. J. Thomas ably presided at the organ, and the choir rendered suitable music. A military escort was in attendance, under the charge of C.S. Major Mullen, and the Holborn Hill Brass and Reed Band (of which deceased had been a member) contributed solemn selections. The mourners were: Mrs W. J. Thomas and Mr J. Thomas, Miss Doris Thomas and Mr W. Thomas, Mrs Thomas (mother), Mr and Mrs Gill, Mr and Mrs Sharples, Mr and Mrs Evans, Mrs J. Thomas and Mr Nurden, Mr and Mrs Nicholas, Mr Metcalf and Mr W. Evans, Mr and Mrs W. Evans, Mr W. Evans and Mrs Ashburner, Mr Smallman and Mr McKay Biggar, Mrs Timmington, Mr Nurden and Mr B. Evans, Mr and Mrs C. Evans, Mr and Mrs Warburton, Mr and Mrs T. Park. The bearers were: Messrs I. Newby, T. Richards, J. Holmes, T. Orpewood, E. J. Green, W. Fawcett, m. Mason, and J. Ormandy.

Wreaths were sent by:- Loving Wife and Daughter; Mother, Brothers, and Sisters; Father and Mother; Walter and Nephew Walter; Will, Sarah, and family; Ada, Harold, and baby; Cecil, Gert, and family; Mr and Mrs Richards; Cousins Will and Annie; Cousins Maggie and Tom; British Legion (late Comrades of the Great War); Staff and Workmen of Barrow Steel Works; Dorothy; Mr and Mrs Park; Mr and Mrs Holmes; Mr and Mrs Carter; Mr and Mrs Graham; Mr and Mrs Ashburner; Mr and Mrs Mellon.

(Millom Gazette, Millom, Cumberland, England - 15 July, 1921)

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)

Private W. J. Thomas does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

His Sufferings Were Great

His End Was Peace

St. George's Churchyard, Millom, Cumbria, England.

St. George's Churchyard, Millom, Cumbria contains 17 Commonwealth War Graves – 10 relate to World War 1 & 8 are from World War 2.



(Photos by Sue Crilly)



Photo of Private W. J. Thomas's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St. George's Churchyard, Millom, Cumbria, England.



(Photo by Sue Crilly)



(Photo by Peter Moore)