

**Botley Cemetery,  
Botley, Oxfordshire, England  
War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**LIEUTENANT**

**S. W. THORNTON**

**AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY**

**19TH NOVEMBER, 1919 Age 42**

## Sidney Whitta THORNTON

Sidney Whitta Thornton was born at Braintree, Essex, England on 12th April, 1877 to parents John and Martha Jane Thornton

The 1881 England Census recorded Sidney Thornton as a 3 year old, living with his family at College House, London Road, Braintree, Essex, England. His parents were listed as John Thornton (Schoolmaster, aged 38, born Cambridge, Cambs) & Martha J. Thornton (aged 43, born Banbury, Oxfordshire). Sidney was the youngest of four children listed on this Census – Lydia J. L. Thornton Scholar, aged 15, born London, Middlesex), Francis O. Thornton (Scholar, aged 14, born London, Middlesex), Arnold Thornton (Scholar, aged 9, born Chesterton, Cambs) then Sidney.

Sidney Whitta Thornton was educated at Avenue House, Sevenoaks, Kent, England.

The 1891 England Census recorded Sidney Thornton as a 13 year old Scholar, living with his family at Avenue House School, St. John's Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, England. His parents were listed as John Thornton (Schoolmaster, Principal of Private School, aged 48) & Martha J. Thornton (aged 53). Sidney was the youngest of three children listed on this Census – Lydia J. S. Thornton (Music Teacher, aged 25), Francis O. Thornton (School Master – Vice Principal, aged 24) & Sidney. Also listed was a Boarder – Ernest E, Malthouse (Scholar, age 15).

Sidney Whitta Thornton, Schoolmaster, aged 23, married Adeline Gray, aged 25, on 18th April, 1900 at St. James Church, Clapham Park, Lambeth, England.

A son, John Wakefield Dewitt Gray Thornton, was born on 10th July, 1901 at Kirikiriroa, New Zealand to parents Sidney & Adeline Thornton.

According to information provided by his widow for the Roll of Honour, Sidney Whitta Thornton was sent to New Zealand in 1900 & Australia in 1913. *"In 1915 he was appointed Hon. Sec. to the Australian Red X Commission in Egypt, returning to Australia in 1916. He gave many Red X lectures in NSW & in 1918 toured Queensland for the Red X & raised large sums of money & created a new interest in the cause."*

The 1905-1906 New Zealand Electoral Roll for the division of Wellington, subdivision of Hutt recorded Sidney Whitta Thornton, Auditor, & his wife Adeline Thornton of "Rawhiti", Richmond Street, Petone.

The 1911 New Zealand Electoral Roll for the division of Wellington, subdivision of Wellington Suburbs and Country recorded Sidney Whitta Thornton, Accountant, & his wife Adeline Thornton of Karaka Bay.

The 1914 New Zealand Electoral Roll for the division of Wellington, subdivision of Wellington Suburbs and Country recorded Sidney Whitta Thornton, Accountant, & his wife Adeline Thornton of Belmont Road, Hutt.

Newspaper item – *The Daily Mail*, Brisbane, Queensland – 14 June, 1918:

### **Mr S. W. THORNTON**

#### **TO TAKE UP WAR WORK ABROAD**

*When Mr. S. W. Thornton, so well known for his splendid Red Cross work, arrived, in Brisbane by the Sydney mail train last evening, he brought the news that he had been accepted by the Defence Department for work abroad in connection with, the Army Pay Corps of the A.I.F., and was required to report for duty in Melbourne on Tuesday next. This development suggested that Mr Thornton's proposed campaign in Queensland on behalf, of the Red Cross would have to be abandoned. Subsequently, however, it was ascertained that his services would be availed of at a recruiting meeting at the G.P.O. to-night at 8 o'clock, and at a Red Cross rally in Edward-street at 9 o'clock (organised by the Tramway branch of the Red Cross). He will also give a brief address during the interval at the Red Cross gathering in the Albert Hall on Saturday night.*

*As Mr Thornton is to leave for Melbourne on Sunday, this is as much as can be managed on the present occasion, but it is hoped that he will be able to secure special leave in order to revisit Queensland in the near future. He hopes that it will be possible to return and speak at Brisbane, Townsville, and other important centres on behalf of the Red Cross.*

*The work on which Mr. Thornton is to embark abroad is a branch for which the Defence Department invited applications from returned disabled soldiers and rejected volunteers, and Mr. Thornton is one of the latter. Forty men were required for service in connection with the Pay Corps— this presumably being consequent on the critical position on the western front, and the combing out of every available man fit for active service — and, although only trained accountants were asked for, no fewer than 650 applications were received. Mr. Thornton, who is an accountant of exceptionally high standard, was one of the successful applicants.*

*Mr. Thornton lives in Sydney, but he is no stranger to Brisbane, having lectured here on several occasions. He went abroad early in the war with the Red Cross commissioners, and carried out important work in Egypt, England, and France. Since his return to Australia he has taken a prominent part in Red Cross activities. The chief part of this work has been carried out as a lecturer and organiser in New South Wales.*

Sidney Whitta Thornton was a 41 year old, married, Accountant from Sydney, NSW when he joined the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.) on 4th October, 1918. His service number was 71583 & his religion was Church of England. The Australia Club, Sydney was listed as his postal address. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs A. Thornton, of “The Grange”, Parramatta, NSW. Sidney Thornton stated on his Attestation Papers that he had previously been rejected as unfit for His Majesty’s Service due to deficient eyesight.

Private Sidney Whitta Thornton was posted to A.A. P.C. (Australian Army Pay Corps) on 4th October, 1918. He was promoted to Corporal on 5th October, 1918.

Corporal Sidney Whitta Thornton embarked from Sydney, NSW on SS *Wyremma* on 14th October, with the rank of Acting Sergeant (Voyage Only) & was to revert back to the rank of Corporal at port of destination.

Corporal (Acting Sergeant) Sidney Whitta Thornton, en route for London for duty in Pay Office of Administrative Headquarters, disembarked from *Wyremma* at Cape Town on 21st November, 1918 to await continuation of the voyage to England. He re-embarked on *Berwick Castle* on 28th December, 1918 for England from Cape Town & disembarked at Devonport, England on 29th January, 1919.

Corporal (Acting Sergeant) Sidney Whitta Thornton was marched in to Australian Pay Corps in London from Australia on 29th January, 1919.

Corporal (Acting Sergeant) Sidney Whitta Thornton was detached to Audit Section for duty on 3rd February, 1919.

Corporal (Acting Sergeant) Sidney Whitta Thornton was to retain the rank of Acting Sergeant whilst acting as Red Cross Representative (Audit).

Acting Sergeant Sidney Whitta Thornton was granted the relative honorary rank of Lieutenant in Australian Red Cross Society, but without addition pay or allowances from 23rd July, 1919.

Honorary Lieutenant Sidney Whitta Thornton died on 19th November, 1919 at Longwall Cottage, Longwall Street, Oxford, Oxfordshire, England from Pleurisy & Pneumonia. His brother – F. Oliver Thornton was present at the death.

A death for Sidney W. Thornton, aged 42, was registered in the December quarter, 1919 in the district of Oxford, Oxfordshire, England.

Lieutenant MacMillan, Graves Registration Branch, 6th Floor, Victorian Govt. Buildings, Melbourne Place. Strand was advised by letter on 22nd November, 1919 by Major J. A. Neale, Officer i/c Records the following regarding Hon. Lieut S. W. Thornton, Australian Red Cross Society: “*The above named deceased Officer died at Longwall Cottage, Longwall Street, Oxford of the 29th instant. Before his death he requested that his remains should be handed to the Department of Human Anatomy, Oxford University. The Official there has been interviewed and advises that the remains will not be available for burial until about the latter end of March next.*”

*Arrangements have been made with Mr Montgomery, Deputy Town Clerk, Oxford for the remains to be then interred in the soldiers portion of the Botley Cemetery. A cross to be erected over the grave was left by S/Sgt Rook with the Cemetery Authorities, who have promised to erect it when burial has taken place."*

Newspaper item – The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 25 November, 1919:

### **DEATH OF MR S. W. THORNTON**

*Advice has been received by cable of the death in London of Mr S. W. Thornton, F.S.A.A., F.C.I.S., from pneumonia. Mr Thornton was private secretary to Mr Kelso King, and secretary of the Electrolytic Refining and Smelting Company of Australia, Ltd, and the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company Co., Ltd. Early in the war he offered himself for active service, but was rejected owing to defective eyesight. He later offered his services again to the Defence Department, and was finally accepted in August, 1918, and allotted to the Accounts Branch of the A.I.F. After spending two months at Victoria Barracks, Mr Thornton sailed from Australia in the steamer Wyreema on October 14, 1918, and has been occupied on important accountancy work in connection with the A.I.F. Pay Office in London.*

*Mr Thornton took an active part in the affairs of the Red Cross Society, and in 1915 proceeded to Egypt as secretary to the Commissioners. He remained there for six months, and then, after visiting England and France, returned to Australia. Until he again sailed for London, in October last year, he toured the Commonwealth, lecturing at the various Red Cross centres, and organising new branches of the society. Mr Thornton was also an ardent worker in the interests of the Navy League, being a member of the executive committee. For some time he acted as secretary of the Servian Canteen Fund, in which position he was succeeded by General Finn. While in Sydney Mr Thornton resided at The Grange, Parramatta. He was 42 years of age, and is survived by a widow and one son, the latter having recently been awarded a bursary from King's School to Oxford University. Both Mrs Thornton and her son are now in England.*

Honorary Lieutenant Sidney Whitta Thornton was buried on 8th April, 1920 in Botley Cemetery, Botley, Oxfordshire, England – Plot number 11. 246 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Honorary Lieutenant Sidney Whitta Thornton - *Coffin was Elm with brass mountings. The deceased was accorded a full Military Funeral. The coffin was draped with the Australian flag. Pall bearers and firing party were provided by a detachment from the Oxford & Bucks Regiment stationed in Oxford. Three volleys were fired over the grave and the Last Post was sounded. Lt. C. P. Kelly. 33rd Btn. A.I.F. represented the A.I.F. at the funeral.*

*Names of Relatives or Friends present at the Funeral – Widow – Mrs S. W. Thornton; Cousins – Mr & Mrs F. S. Thornton, Longwall Cottage, Longwall Street, Oxford.*

#### Probate details:

Thornton, Sidney Whitta of Longwall Cottage, Longwall, Oxfordshire, died 19 November, 1919. Probate London 1 October 1921 to Adeline Thornton, widow. Effects £100.

Honorary Lieutenant Sidney Whitta Thornton 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 Honorary Lieutenant Thornton's widow – Mrs A. Thornton, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque issued in England in December, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Honorary Lieutenant Sidney Whitta Thornton, aged 42, of Australian Red Cross, attached to Australian Army Nursing Service. He was the son of John and Martha Jane Thornton; husband of S. W. Thornton, of Old Forge, Winchelsea, England.

S. W. Thornton is remembered on the St. John's Anglican Cathedral Memorial Arch, Church Street, Parramatta, NSW.



St. John's Anglican Cathedral Memorial Arch, Parramatta (Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)





Lieutenant S. W. Thornton is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 184.



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

(48 pages of Honorary Lieutenant Sidney Whitta Thornton'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) & National Archives*



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **OBITUARY**

A cable was received in Sydney on Tuesday announcing the death, at the early age of 42, of Mr. S. W. Thornton, secretary of the E. R. & S. Coy. and Mt. Morgan G.M. Coy. Deceased, who succumbed to pneumonia, was at the time of his death, engaged in important accountancy work with the A.I.F. in London. He had identified himself in Sydney with most patriotic bodies, particularly the Red Cross. A widow and son, at present in England, survive the deceased.

*(Illawarra Mercury, Wollongong, NSW – 28 November, 1919)*

---



SIDNEY WHITTA THORNTON,  
Hon. Lieut., Australian I.F.,  
and formerly Capt. (Acting-Major) Australian Red Cross.

**Sidney Whitta Thornton**



### 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)*

Lieutenant S. W. Thornton does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

### **Botley Cemetery, Botley, Oxfordshire, England**

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.

During the First World War, the 3rd Southern General Hospital (an Oxfordshire Territorial Unit) was housed in the Examination Schools and a number of other buildings in Oxford. Oxford (Botley) Cemetery contains 156 burials from the First World War, all in the war graves plot in section I/1. The cemetery was designated a Royal Air Force regional cemetery during the Second World War and was used by RAF stations in Berkshire and neighbouring counties. Practically all of the 516 Second World War burials (one of them unidentified) are in the war graves plot, which was extended from the section used during the First World War. The architectural features of the plot were designed by Edward Maufe, ARA. In addition to the Commonwealth war graves, Oxford (Botley) Cemetery contains almost 70 war graves of other nationalities.

There are eight Australian World War 1 War Graves.

*(Information from CWGC)*



*(Photo by Stephen Potts – Find a Grave)*





**Botley Cemetery** (*Photos from CWGC*)



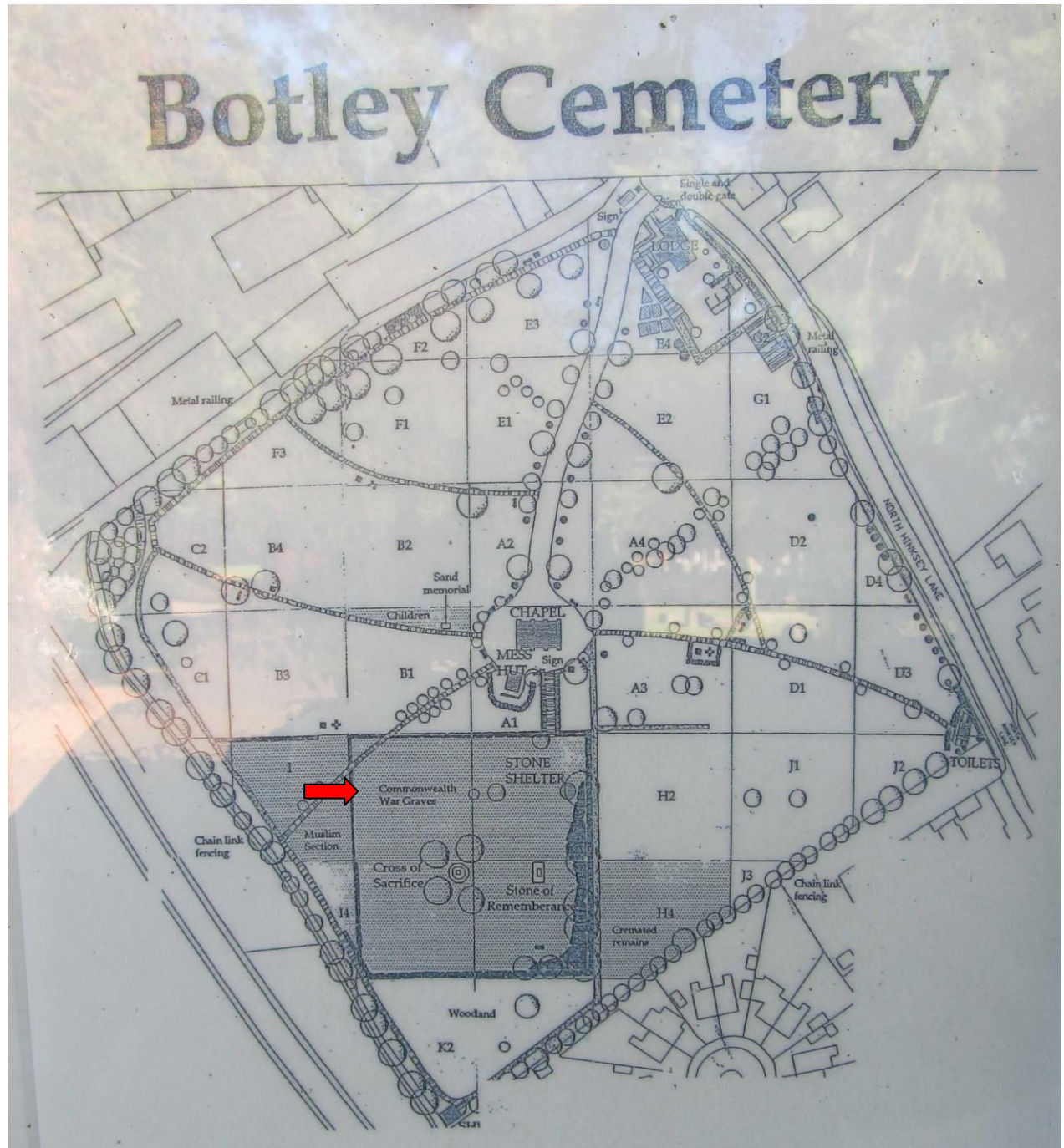


Photo of Lieutenant S. W. Thornton's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Botley Cemetery, Botley, Oxfordshire, England.



*(Photo by Stephen Potts – Find a Grave)*



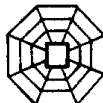


(Maps by Kevin Smith – Find a Grave)



STONE OF REMEMBRANCE

PLOT H. 3



CROSS OF SACRIFICE

PLOT I. 2



SHELTER

REGISTER BOX

PLOT H. 1

1914-1918  
WAR  
BURIALS

PLOT I.1

GERMAN  
BURIALS

GERMAN  
BURIALS

ITALIAN  
BURIALS

E  
N  
T  
R  
A  
N  
C  
E

### OXFORD (BOTLEY) CEMETERY

#### WAR GRAVES PLOT

