

ROSS

Thomas Donald

Service No: 471



Thomas Donald Ross

Courtesy National Archives of
Australia

Family History

Alexander Ross was a convicted murderer who arrived in Western Australia in 1866 after being sentenced to fifteen years by the Court in Inverness, Scotland. He received his Ticket of Leave in November 1872 but, that same month, was convicted of burglary and sentenced to five years' imprisonment at Fremantle Prison.

Alexander received his Conditional Release in 1883, by which time he was already working in the York area as a labourer and general servant.

In 1880, Alexander married Sarah McGlinn at York. Sarah was the daughter of another convict, Thomas McGlinn, and his wife, Catherine Walker. Thomas McGlinn had arrived in Western Australia in 1853.

Alexander and Sarah had seven children, all born in York: Laura Ann (1880), Jane (1882), Rose McKenzie (1884), James Alexander (1887), Thomas Donald (1891) Selina Jessie (1895) and Katherine Mary (1901).

Alexander continued to find work in the York district, taking whatever he could find. He often worked for the Municipal Council and tendered for work ranging from labouring to clearing trees, road building and screening gravel. In 1903, Alexander was recorded as a labourer at Tipperary and, between 1895 and 1915, he often served as Pound Keeper and Ranger for the Council. Occasionally, he served as Lamplighter or Bathhouse Keeper/Caretaker. Sarah remained at home, bringing up the family.

By 1910, the family was living in Macartney Street in York. Alexander was working as a lamplighter and Sarah was a laundress. This change in occupation for Sarah may indicate that they were struggling financially as, the year before, two advertisements appeared in the Eastern Districts Chronicle for the auctioning of furniture belonging to the family.

Alexander and Sarah managed to remain in their home in Macartney Street. He continued to work as a labourer and held the position of Town Ranger in 1912, 1913 and 1916 but resigned as Pound Keeper in 1915.

In 1925, Sarah was still working as a laundress, and Alexander was still recorded as a labourer even though, at the age of eighty, it was unlikely he was still working.

Alexander died in 1928, after an extended period of poor health. Sarah went to live with her daughter, Rose McKenzie Perkins, who had been living in the Pemberton area since around 1925. By 1943, they were living in Throssell Street, North Perth, where Sarah died in 1946.

Basic Information

Name: Thomas Donald Ross

Service Number: 471

Date of Enlistment: 16/12/1914

Age at Enlistment: 23 years 7 months

Civil Occupation: Labourer

Medals, Honours, Awards: British War Medal, Victory Medal, 1914/15 Star

Height: 5ft 8 ½ inches

Weight: 143 lbs.

Chest Measurement: 34 inches

Complexion: Dark

Eye Colour: Brown

Hair Colour: Dark Brown

Father: Alexander Ross

Mother: Sarah McGlinn

Married: Sylvia Louise Tremaine

Children: Daphne Jean (1917), Joan (1919), Shirley McKenzie (1928).



SERGEANT T. D. ROSS, Invalided from the Dardanelles, now in hospital at Netley, England, 10th Light Horse.

Courtesy National Archives of Australia

Life Story

Thomas was born in York in 1891, but little is known about his early life.

In 1907, he was working for Joseph Hicks, a farmer from Gwambygine, when he was successfully sued by Hicks for not attending his place of work. Two years' later, there is a record of Thomas playing for the York Football Club against Newcastle (Toodyay). By 1913 he was living at his parents' home in Macartney Street, York, and earning his living as a labourer.

Thomas enlisted on the 16th October 1914 and was promoted to Corporal on the 20th November 1914. He embarked aboard the *Surada* on the 17th February 1915, bound for Egypt.

On the 12th April Thomas was briefly admitted to the 2nd Australian General Hospital at Mena, suffering from diarrhoea/colitis before embarking for Gallipoli on the 16th April 1915. In July, he spent another week in hospital with influenza before returning to duty.

On the 7th August, Thomas participated in the Charge at the Nek, a tragic and unsuccessful assault by the dismounted members of the 3rd, 8th and 10th Light Horse Brigades on a narrow bridge of land stretched between the Gallipoli landmarks of Russell's Top and Baby 700. In around forty-five minutes, three waves of troops, and part of a fourth wave, were cut down. Most men fell before they got near the Turkish lines. Of the 600 Australian troops involved, 234 were killed and 138 were wounded.

On the 16th August, Thomas was promoted to Sergeant and, on the 29th August, he participated in another memorable fight: The Battle for Hill 60, which was part of the August Offensive. Hill 60 was a low rise at the north-western end of Anzac, and the Battle was the last major Allied offensive operation on the Peninsula.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ART07965

The charge of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade at the Nek, 7 August 1915 by George Lambert, 1924
AWM ART07965. Courtesy Australian War Memorial

On the 11th September 1915, Thomas was readmitted to hospital suffering from diarrhoea. He was transferred to hospital in Mudros, Egypt, where he was diagnosed with enteric fever (typhoid). Thomas was returned to England and sent to the Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley. According to an interview he gave to the Eastern Districts Chronicle in June 1916, Thomas remained in hospital for seventeen weeks before taking six weeks' furlough which was spent travelling in the United Kingdom. He then returned to hospital for seven more weeks before leaving England.

On the 8th May 1916, Thomas was returned to Australia as an invalid. His service record stated that he was suffering from fibrosis of the lung and labelled him as unfit for further military service. As fibrosis can be caused by regularly breathing in chemicals or hazardous substances (such as mustard gas), it is likely that Thomas' disability was a direct result of his War service. Thomas did attempt to re-enlist in 1916 but was rejected.

In July 1916, Thomas attended a fundraising event for the French Red Cross at the York Town Hall. He addressed the gathering which doubled as a public reception for his return.

That same year, he married Sylvia Louise Tremaine who had migrated to Western Australia in late 1912. The pair had probably met before Thomas' enlistment in 1914.

By 1917, Thomas and Sylvia were living at "Fleetwood" in Scott Street, Fremantle. Thomas recorded his profession that year as soldier, but appears to have been in poor health, as the couple were struggling to make ends meet.

In 1919, Thomas appeared in the Fremantle Police Court accused of creating a disturbance while inebriated. He appealed for a reduction in his fine because of his dire financial circumstances due to being unable to work for nine months. When fined £5 instead of £10, Thomas informed the Bench that all he possessed was some furniture and it took him all his time to pay the rent. The Bench gave him a month to pay the fine.

Clearly his marriage was under great stress because, in late 1921, Sylvia applied for a legal separation and maintenance, as they had two very young children. Thomas claimed he was unable to get work and was practically a cripple. Sylvia was granted the separation with twenty shillings' maintenance per week.

This was not the first time the couple had separated but, at some point, the couple reunited and, by 1925, they were both living at 86 Richmond Street, in Leederville. Thomas had found work as a blacksmith, possibly with Sylvia's brother, Albert, who had been living in Perth for several years.

Thomas and Sylvia remained at this address until 1930, when they moved to 45 Armagh Street, in Victoria Park. By this time, he was working as a labourer.

In January 1943, Thomas Donald Ross died of tuberculosis at the Wooroloo Sanatorium. His wife, Sylvia, died in Victoria Park in 1964.

Thomas was part of a large extended family, many of whom enlisted in World War One.

He was a cousin to Thomas McGlinn, Ernest William McGlinn, John McGlinn, Lieutenant Thomas Henry McGlinn, Robert James McGlinn, Steven McGlinn and Christopher James McGlinn.

Thomas was also a nephew of James McGlinn, and his uncle, David Patrick McGlinn, married Sarah Ashworth, the aunt of Arthur Devereux Ashworth, Charles Alexander Ashworth, Walter Ashworth and William Nathan Ashworth.

Thomas' cousin, Thomas McGlinn, married Margaret Ellen Wilkie, the sister of James Wilkie and Francis Hugh Wilkie. His cousin, Maud McGlinn, married Daniel Patrick Bryan, and another cousin, Gertrude Eva McGlinn, married Otto Max Paul Klemm.

All of these men served. Some did not return. The impact of the War on this family can only be imagined.

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