

## THORN FAMILY



Left-Right: Lindsay, Norman and Harold Thorn  
Courtesy WA Newspapers

## THORN <sup>MM</sup>

### Colin Melville

Service No: 5205



## Basic Information

Name: Colin Melville Thorn MM

Service Number: 5205

Date of Enlistment: 2/2/1916

Age at Enlistment: 18 Years

Civil Occupation: Saddler

Medals, Honours, Awards: British War Medal, Victory Medal, Military Medal

Height: 5ft 9 inches

Weight: 122 lbs.

Chest Measurement: 34 – 36 inches

Complexion: Fresh

Eye Colour: Hazel

Hair Colour: Black

Father: Albert Thorn

Mother: Mary Elizabeth Newport

Married: Mavis Margaret Gillespie

Children: Stewart James, Albert John, Glennis I, Margaret and Janice/Jannette



Colin Thorn in Uniform  
Courtesy Glenis Screaigh

## Family History

Albert Thorn was born in Angaston, South Australia, and moved to Western Australia around 1888, joining his older brother Thomas Henry, who was a partner in Thorn, Bower and Stewart, a York building firm. This building company won Government tenders to build many public buildings in the York district from 1886, including the York Post Office, York Flour Mill and York Court House.

Albert worked as an engine driver at the York Flour Mill then spent two years at the Phoenix Flour Mill in Fremantle before returning to the York Mill. Around 1908, he was appointed the local agent for companies such as Massey-Harris and Dalgety's.

Albert married Mary Elizabeth Newport in 1895 at York. The couple had six children together: Cora, born 1896, Colin, born 1898, Ivy Clarice, born 1899, Myrtle Hannah Margaret, born 1902, Lorna Ruby, born 1908 and Joyce, born 1911.

Active on the York Council, both as a councillor and then Mayor, Albert was also a member of the York Agricultural Society, holding the position of Vice President, and an exhibitor of Clydesdales and trotters, which he bred on his property.

## Life Story

Colin was born on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 1898 in York. He attended the York State School, along with his sister Cora, and is listed on the school's Honour Roll.

Colin enlisted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1916 in Perth at the age of eighteen, though he stated his age was nineteen years and two months. He also stated on enlistment that he was serving with the 25<sup>th</sup> Light Horse and that his occupation was saddler.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> April 1916, Colin embarked the *Shropshire* and joined the 4<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion in Egypt but, by the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1916, he was in hospital with dysentery. After being discharged, Colin joined the British Expeditionary Forces in Alexandria before finally boarding the *Ionian*. He disembarked at Marseilles on the 14<sup>th</sup> June and was Taken on Strength with the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion in August 1916.

Three weeks later, Colin was admitted to hospital with influenza. Over the next three weeks, he was transferred to various hospitals, before being discharged from the hospital at Etaples and marched back to re-join his unit in the Field on the 24<sup>th</sup> December 1916.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1917, Colin was admitted to hospital with a gunshot wound to his face and shoulder. By the 1<sup>st</sup> October 1917, he had been discharged to spend time at the Base Depot before re-joining his battalion on the 15<sup>th</sup> December.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 1918, Colin was awarded the Military Medal for expedition bravery during operations near Mericourt Sur Somme.

*Working as a signaller for B Company, Colin repeatedly ran backwards and forwards to repair telephone lines, to enable communications to be maintained from the Front Line to Battalion Headquarters. He continued this day and night, for 3 days from the 8<sup>th</sup> August, while under intense machine gun and sniper fire.*



Colin returned to Australia on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1919 and returned to York and the Mt Hardy area.

In 1924, he married Mavis Margaret Gillespie in Fremantle. The couple had five children together: Stewart, born 1925, Albert, born 1928, Glennis, born 1928, Margaret, born 1932 and Jannette. Glenis Collin's daughter described her father as "a very kind father who loved his children".

Along with farming, Colin spent time breeding, exhibiting and racing horses.

He became a life member of the York Trotting Club and a committee member of the York Agricultural Society.

Colin was also elected a committee member of the York Sub-branch of the R.S.L. and served as president for several years.



Colin and Margaret on their wedding day  
Courtesy Glenis Screaigh



Colin Thorn at the York show with his brother 1922  
Courtesy Glenis Screaigh

During World War Two, he was a committee member of the Patriotic Fund, raising funds for the benefit of soldiers overseas. He also became an active member of the Civilian Military Force.

Colin died on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 1977, aged 79, and was buried at York Cemetery.

## THORN

### Norman Blakiston

Service No: 2263



PTE. N. THORN.  
16th Battalion. Ill. Disembarked at  
Malta.

Courtesy National Archives of Australia

## Basic Information

Name: Norman Blakiston Thorn

Service Number: 2263

Date of Enlistment: 15/3/1915

Age at Enlistment: 25 years 3 months

Civil Occupation: Labourer

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

Height: 5 ft. 11 inches

Weight: 162 Lbs.

Chest Measurement: 36 inches

Complexion: Fresh

Eye Colour: Brown

Hair Colour: Light Brown.

Father: Thomas Henry Thorn

Mother: Isabella Blakiston

Siblings: Lindsay (1891), Gordon (1892), Harold (1894), Bell (1896-1896),  
Thelma Clare (1899)



## Family History

Norman's father, Thomas Henry, arrived in Western Australia around 1886. He was a partner in the firm of Thorn, Bower & Stewart which was the principal building company in town. The company won Government tenders to build many public buildings in the York district from 1886, including the York Post Office, York Flour Mill and York Court House.

Thomas also spent time in the Goldfields. He was involved in the formation of the Union Gold Mining Company in late 1888 and went to the Goldfields in November 1888 but returned in January 1889. The company does not appear to have been successful.

Thomas married Isabella Blakiston at the Holy Trinity Church in York in March 1889. She was a teacher, the daughter of George Blakiston who had been tutor for the Burges Family and headmaster of the York Boys' School between 1868 and 1882.

In 1886, Thorn, Bower & Stewart won the contract to build a new school building in Howick Street. The company also began construction of the Empire Roller Flour Mill in Broome Street in 1891. It opened in May 1892 and operated until 1894, when it closed for a period of three years. During this time, Thomas moved to Fremantle and formed the Eureka Milling Company.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> May 1896, Thomas' wife died, four days after giving birth to a daughter who also died, three weeks later. Isabella left three surviving children. Thomas married Clara May Cadd in 1897 and the couple went on to have another daughter, Thelma Clare, in 1899. While in Fremantle, Thomas joined the Fremantle Infantry Volunteers. He had also been a Lieutenant in the York Infantry Volunteers in 1893.

Thomas contracted typhoid fever and died in March 1899. In 1901, Clara married George Stuart Pilmer and had at least two more children. She and her second husband ran the Canning Bridge Hotel between 1909 and 1913, when George Pilmer died.

## Life Story

Norman Blakiston Thorn was born at York in 1890. He was a cousin of Colin Thorn.

There are few records, but Norman's brother, Lindsay, is known to have been educated at Beaconsfield Primary School and Fremantle Boys' School. As their uncle, William James Thorn, lived for many years in Beaconsfield and ran a carrier business in the Fremantle district, it is possible that he took responsibility for Norman and his brothers after Thomas's death and Clara's remarriage in 1901.

Norman was working as a labourer in Fremantle before he enlisted on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1915. He was Taken on Strength with the 6<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements, 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion at Gallipoli on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1915.

Family recollections state that Norman was involved in a "bloody battle" after his group became isolated and had to fight their way back to their position. It was high summer and conditions on the Peninsula were bad: the food was poor, and flies and disease were rife.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> August, Norman was admitted to hospital and transferred to Lemnos. Diagnosed with "general debility" he re-joined his unit on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

However, two months later, Norman was again admitted to hospital. He was transferred from Lemnos to St George's Hospital on Malta and diagnosed with enteric fever before being admitted to the No. 2 Auxiliary Hospital in Ghezireh, Egypt, on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 1916.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> February 1916, Norman embarked the *Nestor* to return to Australia for three months' convalescence. He was admitted to the No. 8 A.I.F. Hospital in Fremantle on the 6<sup>th</sup> March but, on the 15<sup>th</sup> July, was found to be unfit for service and discharged from the Army.

Family recollections state that Norman suffered from shell shock (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). He refused to sign any papers and spent the rest of his life working as an itinerant shearer or teamster.

# THORN

## Lindsay

### Service No: 12323

## Basic Information

Name: Lindsay Thorn

Service Number: 12323

Date of Enlistment: 7/10/1915

Age at Enlistment: 24 years 5 months

Civil Occupation: Horse Driver

Medals, Honours, Awards: British War Medal, Victory Medal,

Height: 5 Ft 8 ½ inches

Weight: 143 Lbs.

Chest Measurement: 34 inches

Complexion: Dark

Eye Colour: Brown

Hair Colour: Black.

Father: Thomas Henry Thorn

Mother: Isabella Blakiston

Siblings: Norman Blakiston (1890), Gordon (1892), Harold (1894), Bell (1896-1896), Thelma Clare (1899)

Children: Joyce Isabella (1920), Alwyn Clara (1921), Beryl Mae (1923), Thomas Peter (1928).

## Life Story

Lindsay Thorn was born at York in 1891. He was a cousin of Colin Thorn.

Lindsay was educated at Beaconsfield Primary School and Fremantle Boys' School. As his uncle, William James Thorn, lived for many years in Beaconsfield and ran a carrier business in the Fremantle district, it is possible that he took responsibility for Lindsay and his brothers after Thomas's death and Clara's re-marriage in 1901.

Lindsay married Sarah Olive Neilson in Fremantle in 1913. The couple made their home in Beaconsfield where they had four children.

Lindsay enlisted as a Private on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 1915 and trained as a Gunner with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Brigade. He left Australia on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 1916 and, once in Cairo, was Taken on Strength with the No. 3 Section of the Division Artillery Column (D.A.C.).

In May, Lindsay transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> D.A.C. in France then, in November, he was mustered as a driver in the Field. Soon after, Lindsay was appointed Acting Bombardier before reverting to Driver at his own request on the 28<sup>th</sup> December.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1918, Lindsay was admitted to hospital in France, suffering from pyrexia (fever) of unknown origin. He spent time at the 1<sup>st</sup> Eastern General Hospital in Cambridge before, in October, being admitted to King George's Hospital suffering from "concussion of the brain." Lindsay had been gassed and was dangerously ill.

After his discharge on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1918, Lindsay was returned to Australia on the *Barekara*. He arrived home on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 1919.

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After the War, Lindsay resumed his life with his wife, Sarah. In 1920 they were still living in Beaconsfield but, by 1925, they were residing at "Millendon", in Herne Hill, where he was listed as an orchardist and, later, as a vigneron (grape grower).

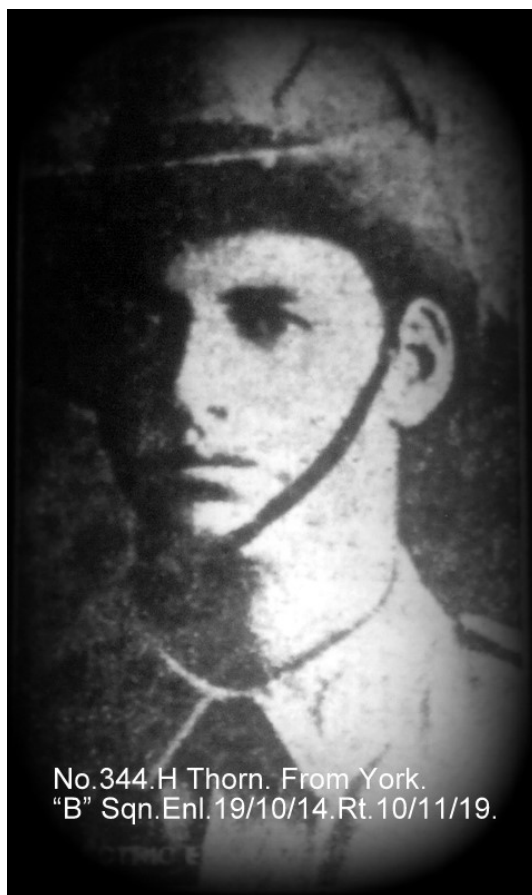
Lindsay was active in the community, serving as official judge of dried fruit at the Royal Agricultural Show and chairman of the Growers' Country Distribution Association. He was also active in the R.S.L.

In 1925, Lindsay was appointed Commonwealth Dried Fruit Inspector, a position he still held in 1930 when he contested the seat of Toodyay for the Country Party. Lindsay was elected to the Legislative Assembly, a position he held until 1959.

During his political career, Lindsay became the Minister for Lands, Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Labour after the Liberal/Country Party won the 1947 State election. He lost the Agricultural Portfolio in January 1948 but was appointed Minister for Immigration in October 1949. Lindsay also served as the Deputy Leader of the Country Party between 1943 and 1956.

Lindsay was widowed in 1952 and remarried, to Jane Eliza Jones, the following year. He died in Perth in 1971.

## THORN Harold Service No: 344



No.344.H Thorn. From York.  
"B" Sqn.Enl.19/10/14.Rt.10/11/19.

Courtesy National Archives of Australia

## Basic Information

Name: Harold Thorn

Service Number: 344

Date of Enlistment: 19/10/1914

Age at Enlistment: 22 years 1 month

Civil Occupation: Bushman

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

Height: 6 Ft 1 inch

Weight: 163 Lbs.

Chest Measurement: 36 inches

Complexion: Dark

Eye Colour: Brown

Hair Colour: Dark

Father: Thomas Henry Thorn

Mother: Isabella Blakiston

Siblings: Norman Blakiston (1890), Lindsay (1891), Gordon (1892), Bell (1896-1896), Thelma Clare (1899)

Married: Margaret Lucy Clarke

## Life Story

Harold Thorn was born at York in 1894, the youngest son of Thomas and Clara. He was a cousin of Colin Thorn.

Harold was probably educated at Beaconsfield Primary School and Fremantle Boys' School along with his siblings. As his uncle, William James Thorn, lived for many years in Beaconsfield and ran a carrier business in the Fremantle district, it is possible that he took responsibility for Harold and his brothers after Thomas's death and Clara's re-marriage in 1901.

Harold described himself as a bushman when he enlisted as a Trooper with the 10<sup>th</sup> Light Horse in October 1914. He was appointed a driver with the 10<sup>th</sup> Light Horse on the 15<sup>th</sup> November.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1915, Harold embarked at Fremantle on the A47 *Mashobra*, bound for Egypt.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> May, Harold was charged with having embarked for the Gallipoli Peninsula from Alexandria without authority. He was returned to Heliopolis and forfeited five day's pay. Family recollections state that Harold had been instructed by his commanding officer to carry the officer's gear up the back gangplank and not come down. Apparently, both men were unhappy that he was to remain in Egypt caring for the horses instead of leaving for Gallipoli with his unit.

Harold was finally Taken on Strength with the 10<sup>th</sup> Light Horse at the Peninsula on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1915 but, by the 16<sup>th</sup> October, he had been admitted to hospital suffering from enteric fever (typhoid). Harold was transferred to hospital in Egypt, then Malta, before being returned to Egypt and diagnosed with paratyphoid. On the 21<sup>st</sup> January 1916, he was returned to Australia for three month's rest and recuperation.

By September, Harold was back in Egypt and, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1916, he was Taken on Strength with the 10<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Battalion.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1917, Harold transferred on probation as a N.C.O. (Non-Commissioned Officer) to the Australian Army Service Corps Division and, on the 13<sup>th</sup> August, he was Taken on Strength with the 33<sup>rd</sup> Company of the A.A.S.C Australian and New Zealand Division as a Corporal, serving with the Egyptian Expeditionary Forces. On the 29<sup>th</sup> October, Harold was promoted to Sergeant.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> April 1918, Harold was admitted to hospital in the Field, suffering from enteritis. He was transferred to various hospitals before ending up at a rest camp in Moascar in late May. Harold returned briefly to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Company in the Field but was readmitted to hospital suffering from malaria on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July. Nine days later, he was admitted to the 14<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital and diagnosed with influenza. It was not until the 21<sup>st</sup> September that Harold finally re-joined the 33<sup>rd</sup> Company.

In November 1918, Harold was struck down with dysentery and admitted to the 44<sup>th</sup> Stationary Hospital at Kantara, south of Suez. He returned to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Company on the 16<sup>th</sup> December and, three months' later, embarked aboard the *Malwa* at Port Said to return to the United Kingdom. From there, Harold returned to Australia on the *Somali*. He was finally discharged on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 1919.

After the War, Harold married Margaret Lucy Clarke at Beverley in 1921 and took up farming at Bruce Rock, where he remained until his retirement in 1956.

The couple had five children: Isobel (1922), Margaret Collins (1924), Helen Mary (1927), James Clarke (1930) and Thomas Harold (1932). Both sons became farmers in the Bruce Rock area. James took over "Lawford Hills," the family property.

Harold died in 1970. His wife, Margaret, lived on until 1990.

## Acknowledgements

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