

## Private William Llewellyn Thomas<sup>©</sup>

**Regimental number: 34133**

**1/5th Battalion, Prince of Wales's Volunteers (South Lancashire) Regiment**

**born: 1877–died: 23 April 1918**

Note: The names Thomas and Williams are very common in Wales. In fact, they were the second and fourth most common names in Wales in 1853. ("Surnames in Wales, Ireland, Cornwall Genealogy, Isle of Man - International Institute," *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/>: accessed 21 August 2023). Every attempt have been made to ensure that information on family members is correct, but it is possible that names have been mixed up.

Private William Llewellyn Thomas was the third child and first son of William Llewelyn Thomas and his wife, the former Martha Williams.<sup>1</sup> William Sr., who was born in Swansea, Wales, in about 1847<sup>2</sup> and Martha, born on 22 July 1846<sup>3</sup> in Llanelli, Wales,<sup>4</sup> were married on 24 December 1872 at the parish church of Llanelli in Dafen, Carmarthenshire, Wales.<sup>5</sup>

They had eight children, all born in Llanelli:

- Martha Ann (born on 5 May 1874)<sup>6</sup>
- Sarah Jane (born on 15 November 1875)<sup>7</sup>
- William Llewellyn (born in 1877)<sup>8</sup>
- Elizabeth Gertrude (born in 1879, but sadly died at the age of 16 months)<sup>9</sup>
- David Arthur (born in 1880 and baptized on 13 July 1880)<sup>10</sup>
- Elizabeth Ethel (born on 26 August 1881)<sup>11</sup>
- Winifred May (born on 1 May 1885)<sup>12</sup>
- Thomas Illtyd (sometimes known as Thomas, sometimes as Illtyd) (born on 30 November 1887)<sup>13</sup>

William's father was a joiner and carpenter. In 1881, the family was living at 2 Railway Terrace in Llanelli and 10 years later on Pentrepoeth Road. By 1901, William's sisters were in the workplace—Ann was a dressmaker and Ethel and Winnifred, school teachers. William himself had joined his father as a joiner and carpenter. In 1911, William was still living at home in Wenvoe House on Pentrepoeth Road; his sister Sarah had also become a dressmaker and his youngest brother, a blacksmith's striker. All members of the family living there were able to speak both Welsh and English.<sup>14</sup>

William probably enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force in about April 1916.<sup>15</sup> He served first with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers (regimental number 43052) but, at some point, transferred to the 1/5th Battalion of the Prince of Wales's Volunteers (South Lancashire) Regiment.<sup>16</sup>

In April 1918, William's battalion was in the field northeast of Lens in northern France.<sup>17</sup> The battalion saw action with heavy shelling and numerous casualties in the middle of April. However, the day on which William may have been injured was described in the unit's war diary as a "normal day with usual shelling." William was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 23 April with gunshot wounds that penetrated his back. He died the same day and was buried the next day in Pernes Military Cemetery (Plot I, Row D, Grave 30) with the Canadian chaplain G. C. Easum presiding.<sup>18</sup>

When William was at No. 1 CCCS, the station and the military cemetery had just been set up, two Canadian casualty clearing stations having been pushed back to Pernes by the German advance.<sup>19</sup> William was one of 2140 admissions and 46 deaths at the station that month.<sup>20</sup>

The chaplain sent a letter to his father, who later requested the following inscription on his gravestone:

REST IN PEACE  
HIS DUTY DONE<sup>21</sup>

William was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).<sup>22</sup>

William's father died on 21 March 1925 at home in Wenvoe House.<sup>23</sup> In 1939, William's mother was an invalid, living with her daughter and son, Sarah and Illtyd, at 17 Pentrepoeth Road in Furnace, Llanelli.<sup>24</sup> Martha likely died the following year, at the age of 93.<sup>25</sup>

It is uncertain if either of William's brothers served in the military. If they did, at least Illtyd survived the war. He was living with his mother and sister in 1939 in Llanelli.

Three of William's four sisters married—two of them to men with the surname Thomas.

- **Martha Ann** married David Thomas, a clerk at a copper works, on 27 December 1902 in the parish church of Holy Trinity in Felinfoel, Carmarthenshire. In 1939, she and David were living at 4 Penallt Terrace in Llanelli.
- **Sarah Jane** did not marry and, in 1939, was living with her mother and brother.<sup>26</sup> She died on 11 March 1965 and is buried in Holy Trinity Churchyard in Felinfoel, with her brother Thomas Illtyd.<sup>27</sup>
- Like her sister Martha, **Elizabeth Ethel** married at Holy Trinity in Felinfoel. She wed Thomas Sydney Edwards, a draper, on 14 April 1906. In 1911, they were living at 54 Penallt Terrace in Llanelli, with two sons and a daughter.<sup>28</sup> In 1939, they were living at 11 Charles Terrace in Llanelli.<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth died in 1978 at the age of 96.<sup>30</sup>
- **Winifred May** married at Holy Trinity in Felinfoel—wedding Richard Eldridge Handel Thomas, a refiner, on 2 March 1905.<sup>31</sup> She and Richard were living at 3 Cwm Terrace, Llanelli, in 1939.<sup>32</sup> Winnifred probably died in Llanelli in 1963.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 16 August 2023), entry for William Li [*sic*] Thomas, Registration district: Llanelly, Sub-registration district: Llanelly, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 33, Household schedule number: 105, Piece: 5090, Folio: 106, Page: 20

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 21 August 2023), entry for Martha A Thomas, Line number: 14, Schedule number: 128, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration district: Xekj, Borough: Llanelly

<sup>4</sup> "1901 England Census," *Ancestry*, entry for William Li [*sic*] Thomas. The anglicized spelling "Llanelly" was used until 1966. After a public campaign, the spelling returned to its Welsh form "Llanelli." ("13 facts about Llanelli that might surprise you," *WalesOnline* <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/whats-on/arts-culture->

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[news/13-facts-llanelli-might-surprise-17538719](#): accessed 21 August 2023). The two spellings are used in different genealogy records.

<sup>5</sup> “Carmarthenshire, Wales, Anglican Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1560–1994,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](#): accessed 17 August 2023), entry for William Llewellyn Thomas, Record type: Marriage, Page number: 166

<sup>6</sup> “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](#): accessed 14 June 2023), entry for Martha A Thomas, Line number: 28, Schedule number: 20, Sub-schedule number: 2, Enumeration district: Xdhn, Borough: Llanelly, Registration district: 596-3

<sup>7</sup> “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry*, entry for Martha A Thomas

<sup>8</sup> “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry*, entry for William Li [*sic*] Thomas

<sup>9</sup> “Carmarthenshire, Wales, Anglican Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1560–1994,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](#): accessed 17 August 2023), entry for Elizabeth Gertrude Thomas, Record type: Baptism, Page number: 36; “Carmarthenshire, Wales, Anglican Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1560–1994,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](#): accessed 17 August 2023), entry for Elizabeth Gertryd [*sic*] Thomas, Record type: Burial, Page number: 38

<sup>10</sup> “Carmarthenshire, Wales, Anglican Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1560–1994,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](#): accessed 17 August 2023), entry for David Arthur Thomas, Record type: Baptism, Page number: 48

<sup>11</sup> “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](#): accessed 21 August 2023), entry for Elizabeth Edwards, Line number: 39, Schedule number: 207, Sub-schedule number: 2, Enumeration district: Xdhj, Borough: Llanelly, Registration district: 596-3

<sup>12</sup> “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](#): accessed 14 June 2023), entry for Winnifred M Thomas, Line number: 12, Schedule number: 3, Sub-schedule number: 2, Enumeration district: Xekh, Borough: Llanelly, Registration district: 596-2

<sup>13</sup> “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry*, entry for Martha A Thomas

<sup>14</sup> “1911 Wales Census,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](#): accessed 16 August 2023), entry for William Stewillys [*sic*] Thomas, Registration district: Llanelly, Registration district number: 596, Sub-registration district: Llanelly Rural, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 05, Household schedule number: 25, Piece: 32837

<sup>15</sup> Based on “War Gratuity Calculator” (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](#): accessed 16 August 2023), entry for William Llewellyn Thomas

<sup>16</sup> “UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](#): accessed 16 August 2023), entry for William Llewellyn Thomas

<sup>17</sup> “1/5th Battalion South Lancashire Regiment,” *The National Archives* ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](#): accessed 19 August 2023), 1916 Jan - 1919 July, WO 95WO-95-2929/2. Unless otherwise indicated, all information about the movements of his battalion come from this source.

<sup>18</sup> “Search Name Index,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](#): accessed 20 August 2023), entry for Thomas, W

<sup>19</sup> “Pernes British Military Cemetery,” *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 13 January 2015)

<sup>20</sup> “War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31,” *Library and Archives Canada* (<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/Pages/war-diaries.aspx>: accessed 26 March 2023)

<sup>21</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](#): accessed 3 December 2023), entry for Private William Llewellyn Thomas

<sup>22</sup> “British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](#): accessed 22 August 2023), entry for William L Thomas

<sup>23</sup> “England & Wales Government Probate Death Index 1858–2019,” *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](#): accessed 21 August 2023), entry for William Llewellyn Thomas

<sup>24</sup> “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry*, entry for Martha A Thomas

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- <sup>25</sup> "England & Wales Deaths 1837–2007," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 29 January 2023), entry for Martha Thomas, District: Llanelly
- <sup>26</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry*, entry for Martha A Thomas
- <sup>27</sup> *UK and Ireland Find A Grave Index, 1300s–Current*, *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 22 April 2023), entry for Sarah Jane Thomas
- <sup>28</sup> "1911 Wales Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 16 August 2023), entry for Elizabeth Ethel Edwards, Registration district: Llanelly, Registration district number: 596, Sub-registration district: Llanelly Urban, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 09, Household schedule number: 62, Piece: 32854
- <sup>29</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry*, entry for Elizabeth Edwards
- <sup>30</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 21 August 2023), entry for Elizabeth Ethel Edwards, Registration district: Llanelly, Inferred county: Dyfed, Volume: 24, Page: 2184
- <sup>31</sup> "Carmarthenshire, Wales, Anglican Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1560–1994," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 17 August 2023), entry for Winnifred Mary [*sic*] Thomas, Record type: Marriage, Page number: 144
- <sup>32</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry*, entry for Winnifred M Thomas
- <sup>33</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 21 August 2023), entry for Elizabeth Ethel Edwards, Registration district: Llanelly, Inferred county: Carmarthenshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 326