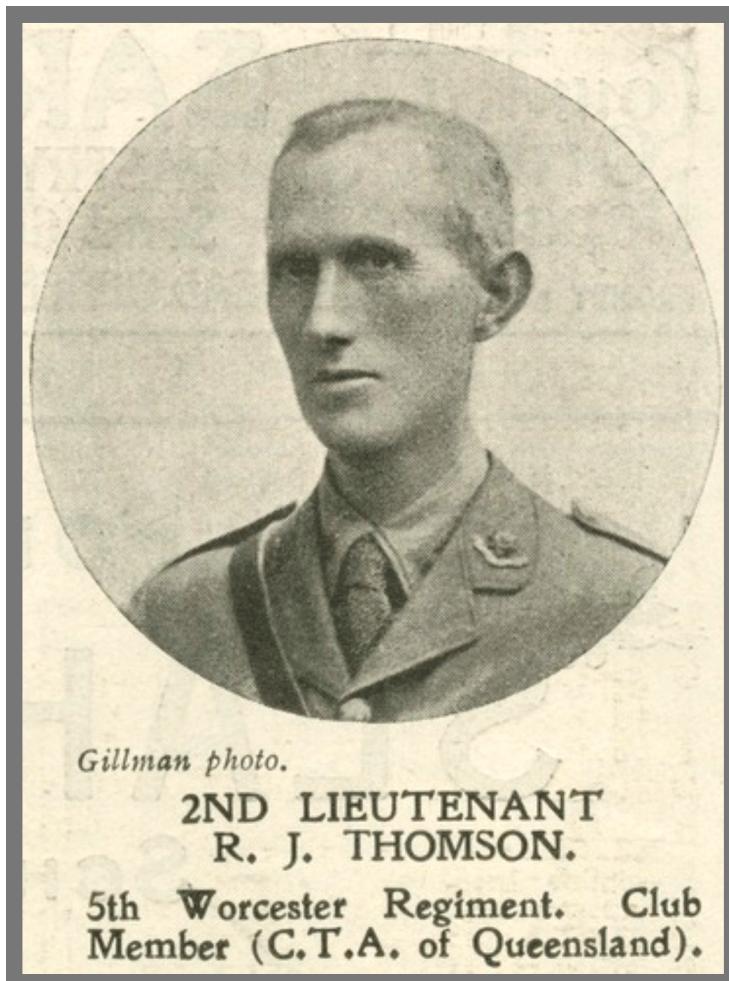


# Stories from the Honour Boards

Stories of those who served and are remembered on the Honour Boards in  
the Merrington Anzac Memorial Peace Chapel at Saint Andrew's Uniting Church

Booklet Number 192

# **ROBERT JENSEN THOMSON 1869—1943**



*Gillman photo.*

**2ND LIEUTENANT  
R. J. THOMSON.**

**5th Worcester Regiment. Club  
Member (C.T.A. of Queensland).**

This booklet remains the property of Saint Andrew's Uniting Church.  
Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.



*The 1st Queensland Mounted Infantry marching down Queen Street  
Brisbane, before embarking for the Boer War*

*Robert Thomson served in the 1st Queensland Mounted Infantry  
in the Boer War, 1899-1901.*

[From: *The Queenslander*, 4 November 1899, p. 906.]

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Corner Ann and Creek Streets,  
Brisbane, QLD, 4000.  
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Go to <http://heritage.saintandrews.org.au/>  
for an online copy of this booklet and more pictures.

## Lieutenant Robert Jensen Thomson

Lieutenant RJ Thomson's name is on one of the honour boards unveiled by Rev John Robb at Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church in October 1915. Robert Jensen Thomson and two of his brothers John<sup>1</sup> and Richard were booksellers in Brisbane and when the Great War of 1914-1918 broke out, RJ Thomson paid his passage to England and enlisted with the Fifth Worcestershire Regiment. A veteran of the Boer War, RJ Thomson lived an adventurous life in many parts of the world – soldier in Mesopotamia, businessman in Brisbane, wheelwright in Lancashire, pioneer settler in New South Wales, tin miner in Africa and a farmer in Wagga Wagga where he died aged 74.

Robert Jensen Thomson was born in Liverpool, England on 4 November 1869, the youngest in the family of twelve children of William Thomson (1821 – 1874) and Jane née Rae (1828 – 1906). His father was a bookseller in Lancashire where Jensen (known as Jense in his youth) learned the trade of wheelwright and coachbuilder. The Thomson family had booked their passages for Australia but just days before the date for sailing, Mr William Thomson became ill and died. However, Mrs Thomson and her children immigrated and lived at first in Victoria where Mrs Jane Thomson died in 1906 at Beechworth. RJ Thompson was to be found in Coolgardie, Western Australia in the late 1890s working as a newspaper editor.

He voluntarily enlisted to serve in the 1<sup>st</sup> Queensland Defence Force Contingent in the Boer War in South Africa in 1899. He was discharged on arrival in Brisbane on 7 February 1901, having returned with the Queensland Mounted Infantry on the ship *Orient*.

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1. See *John Thomson*, booklet no. 64 in this series Stories from the Honour Boards

One of Jensen Thomson's sisters, Mary Agnes, after marrying Captain WH Lyons in Liverpool before the Thomson family came to Victoria, later settled in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales. They took up the holding which became known as Sackville, Forest Hill. Jensen Thomson who was then a young man in his early twenties, assisted Captain Lyons to settle on his Sackville property, helping to excavate the first dam at Forest Hill and to build the first line of fencing on Sackville. He next moved to Brisbane and assisted his brothers in their bookselling ventures there while residing in Montague Road, South Brisbane. When the First World War commenced in 1914, he went to England and enlisted in the 5<sup>th</sup> Worcesters with whom he fought in France, Mesopotamia and India. On retirement from the British army, he went to Nigeria and engaged in tin mining for about ten years before returning to Sackville where he spent most of his time for the rest of his life.

One of Jensen Thomson's unforgettable experiences was on the occasion he rounded Cape Horn in a 500 ton barque commanded by another brother, Captain Maitland Thomson. RJ Thomson signed on as ship's carpenter. He often declared that it was a trip he would not take on again for thousands of pounds.

Jensen Thomson retained the title Lieutenant and became well known and liked in the Wagga community. Those who met Lieutenant Thomson were charmed by his lack of affectation and were also greatly attracted by his quiet recital of the many experiences of his life.

He was also noted for his fine shooting ability and held many trophies of big game taken with his gun in other parts of the world. One tribute said, “He loved a day in the field quail shooting and those who enjoyed the privilege of shooting with him found him not only a good shot but a fine companion.”<sup>1</sup>

Lieutenant Thomson died on 8 September 1943. His funeral service was held in St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Wagga. The casket which was draped with the Union Jack was interred in the Presbyterian portion of the Wagga cemetery.

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1. *Daily Advertiser*, 10 September 1943, page 2

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Compiled by N E Adsett

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*Lest we forget*