

# 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 193

## **THOMAS DOUGLAS WATSON 1884—1953**



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Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.

*For his conspicuous services Conductor TD Watson was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in March 1916. A 'Conductor' was a senior appointment held by a few selected warrant officers class 1.*



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2017, 2019

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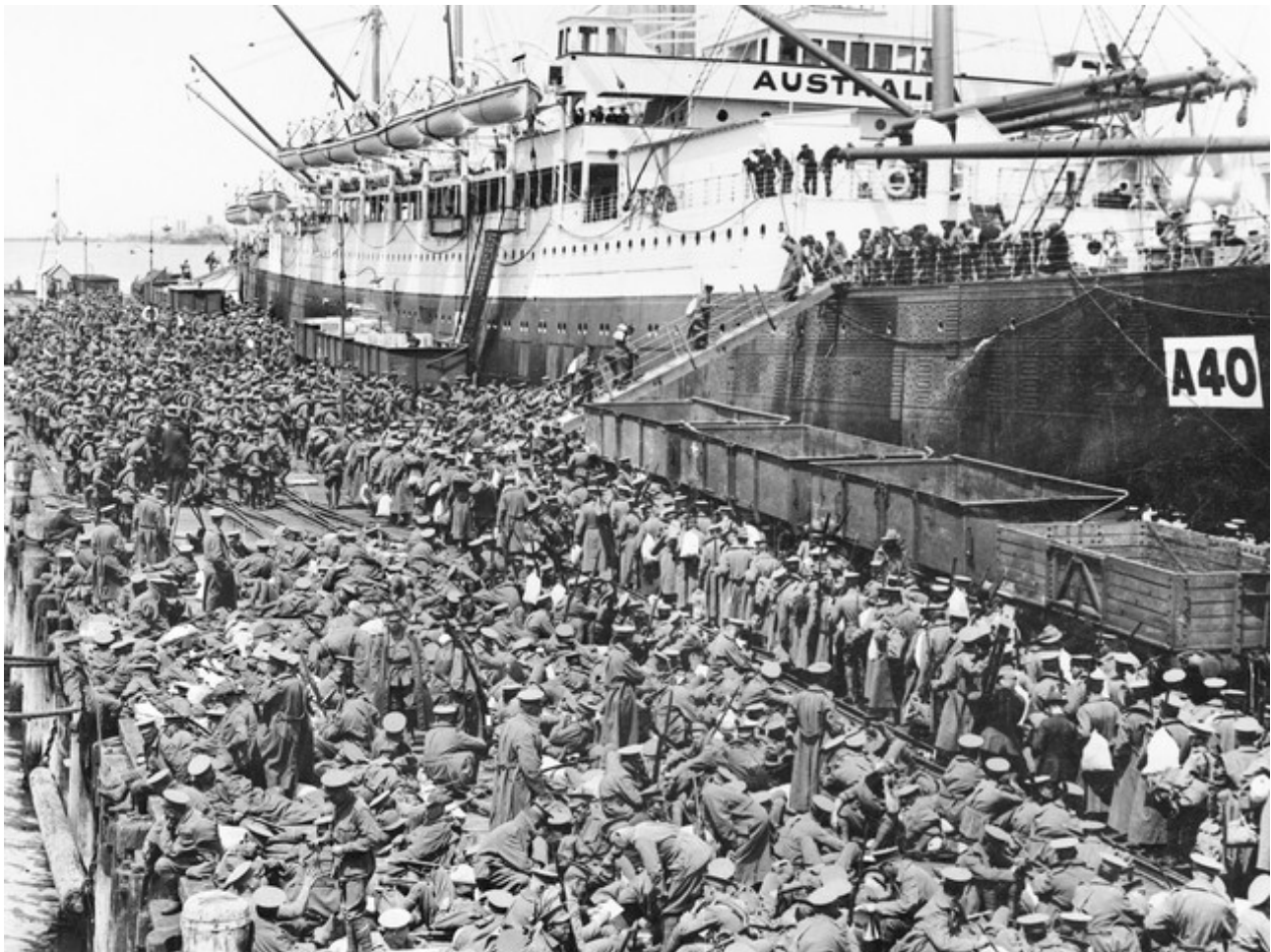
## **Lieutenant Thomas Douglas Watson MSM MiD**

This soldier's name is shown as Sgt Thomas Watson on one of the two honour boards on the walls of the Merrington Anzac Memorial Peace Chapel which were unveiled in 1915. In his distinguished military career Thomas Watson received a commission, a meritorious service medal and was mentioned in despatches. Somewhat by contrast, he lived quietly and unassumingly on his return to Brisbane after the war.

Thomas Douglas Watson (Tom) was born in Brisbane on 29 March 1884, eldest in a family of three boys and two girls who lived in Harcourt Street in the suburb of Teneriffe. Their Scottish father Thomas Douglas Watson (senior) and English mother Mary Ann (Polly) Munt married in Spring Hill, Brisbane in 1883. Thomas Watson (senior) was in partnership with his brothers in a Brisbane plumbing business but he died suddenly in 1902 at the age of 46, leaving his widow Polly to bring up the family. At the time of his father's death Tom Watson was 18 and employed as a draper's assistant. Tom moved with his mother, brothers and sisters to 123 Warry Street, Valley where Mrs Polly Watson lived for the rest of her life. Tom changed his occupation to commercial traveller.

Soon after the declaration of war in August 1914, Tom Watson aged 30 and still single, decided to serve in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). He signed his attestation paper in Brisbane on 26 September and was assigned to 301 Mechanical Transport Division of the Australian Army Service Corps with regimental number 1810. In his school days he had trained as an officer cadet and this would have been taken into account when he was given the rank of Lance Corporal Gunner on enlistment.

Soon afterwards he was attached to the Divisional Ammunition Corps in Victoria in preparation for embarkation from the Port of Melbourne on HMAT<sup>1</sup> *Ceramic* A40 on 22 December 1914.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

H19500

*The Ceramic leaving Melbourne in 1914*

Australian troops were camped in Egypt prior to the Gallipoli landing in April 1915. Lance Corporal Watson embarked from Alexandria on the troopship *Franconia* for the Dardanelles on 14 May 1915. He was promoted to the rank of sergeant in September but soon afterwards was transported to hospital at Malta with diarrhoea and dysentery, returning to Gallipoli in late October. In Egypt after the evacuation, the Anzac Corps was reorganised before joining the British Expeditionary Force in Europe.

1. His Majesty's Australian Transport

At Tel al Kabir in December Tom was promoted to the rank of staff sergeant and transferred to 5<sup>th</sup> Division Artillery. In March 1916 he was Warrant Officer Class 1 in the AIF Divisional Headquarters in France, performing duties connected with supply and transport, providing food, equipment and ammunition. He was appointed Conductor, a senior appointment held by a few selected warrant officers class 1. For his conspicuous services Conductor TD Watson was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. An extract in the *London Gazette*<sup>1</sup> stated, "His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the Meritorious Service Medal to the undermentioned non-commissioned officer, in recognition of valuable services rendered with the armies in the field during the present war:- No 1810 Conductor T. D. Watson." The same acknowledgement was announced in the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*<sup>2</sup>. One can imagine the pleasure Tom Watson's mother at home in Brisbane would have felt, on receiving an official AIF letter<sup>3</sup> advising her of the way her son's loyalty and efficiency had been recognised.

Tom Watson's impressive war service record continued in 1918. He was appointed 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant attached to Australian Army Ordnance Corps in February and Lieutenant in May. In June he was appointed Deputy Assistant Director Ordnance Services Australian Corps Troops and Mentioned in Despatches.



*The Victory Medal with an oak leaf, showing that the soldier had been mentioned in despatches*

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1. *London Gazette*, Supplement No 30450, 28 December 1917
  2. *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No 57, 18 April 1918
  3. O/C Base Records, Melbourne to Mrs Watson, 123 Warry Street, Valley, 2 May 1918

Lieutenant Thomas Watson, MSM, MiD returned to Australia per the troopship *Borda* at the end of 1918. His appointment was terminated on 2 February 1919 and in following months he received the 1914/15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal for his outstanding services.

On 11 March 1920 Thomas Watson married Margaret Elizabeth Scott Chisholm, the second daughter of William and Margaret Chisholm, at the bride's parents' home Loade Bank in Leichhardt Street, Brisbane. The ceremony was conducted by Rev Dr EN Merrington. Mr William Chisholm was a draper and his eldest son was Alexander Chisholm<sup>1</sup> whose name is on another honour board in the Merrington Anzac Memorial Peace Chapel. The couple settled at 417 Gregory Terrace while Tom Gibson's occupation continued as commercial traveller. Unfortunately Margaret Elizabeth Scott Watson died on 26 September 1937 and her body was privately cremated at Mt Thompson. Tom returned to his mother's home at 123 Warry Street for a while and married again in 1940, Isabel Winfred Warwick. Their new home was situated at 53 Abbot Street, New Farm, Tom employed as an agent and Isabel, a clerk. During World War 2 Thomas Watson served in the Army Citizen Military Forces, service number Q185031.



*On 27 December 1945, Thomas Watson's mother, Mrs M A Watson (Polly), widowed for 43 years, passed away in her old home at 123 Warry Street, having reached the age of 86 years. She was privately interred in the Toowong Cemetery.*

In their retirement, Tom and Isabel Watson moved to 100 Main Street Kangaroo Point where Tom died on 23 May 1953. His private funeral service was conducted in the chapel of the Mt Thompson Crematorium. Isabel's death occurred in 1980.

1. See *Alexander Chisholm*, booklet no. 23 in this series [Stories from the Honour Boards](#)



## References

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*Courier-Mail*, 25 May 1953, page 10

Compiled by Noel E Adsett  
Brisbane  
May 2017, revised 2019



*Lest we forget*