



# Private Tom Lillingstone

WWI Soldier

1883-1917



***Tom moved from London to Queensland as a child, lived in Marburg and Brisbane, then Maleny on the Blackall Range. Emigrating from Maleny to Canada in 1907, he soon returned to Queensland and lived in different towns before enlisting in 1916 in Lismore, NSW. In October 1917, Tom made the ultimate sacrifice at the Battle of Broodseinde Ridge in Belgium.***

## Birth

Tom (not Thomas)<sup>1</sup> Lillingstone was born on 2 June 1883 in London, Middlesex, England.<sup>2</sup> The first child of Jessie Elizabeth Smith and William Hammond Lillingstone (a shipping clerk).<sup>3</sup> They had married in London on 1 July 1882.<sup>4</sup> Tom would later have six Queensland-born brothers and sisters: Dudley, Theodora (who died in Brisbane aged 2 months), Jessie, Charlotte, Doris, and William (jnr).<sup>5</sup>

## London to Queensland

At around 18 months of age, Tom arrived in Queensland with his parents.<sup>6</sup> The family initially lived in Marburg<sup>7</sup> where William Lillingstone worked as a sawmill labourer,<sup>8</sup> before they moved to Brisbane<sup>9</sup> where he gained employment as the resident manager of the Kangaroo Point & Nerang Sawmills Company, Main Street, Kangaroo Point, Brisbane.<sup>10</sup>

## The Blackall Range

The Lillingstone connection to Maleny commenced on 30 June 1887 when Tom's father made a land application in Brisbane.<sup>11</sup> William applied for a 160-acre agricultural farm in the Parish of Maleny after the Queensland Government opened 50 square miles of land in what had formerly been part of the Blackall Range Timber Reserve.<sup>12</sup> The land selected is now in North Maleny and William took up residence in October 1887 to clear the "dense vine scrub"<sup>13</sup> (five months before he received his official License to Occupy).<sup>14</sup>

1 Birth Certificate (GRO Reference: 1883 S Quarter in LAMBETH Volume 01D Page 430).

2 Ibid.

3 1881 England Census (RG11/529).

4 Marriage Certificate (GRO Reference: 1882 S Quarter in LAMBETH Volume 01D Page 857).

5 Queensland Government, Family History Research Service: Dudley (Birth 1885/C/6834); Theodora (Birth 1887/B/37863, Death 1887/B/19638, Funeral Notice *The Brisbane Courier* 12 February 1887 pg 1, buried Toowong Cemetery Grave Location 4-10-23); Jessie (Birth 1888/B/40439); Charlotte (Birth 1892/C/1868); Doris (Birth 1895/C/1674); and William (Birth 1900/C/1495).

6 Australian War Memorial, Tom Lillingstone Roll of Honour Circular (<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/R1638213>).

7 *The Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, 30 December 1884, pg 5, Local and General News; Birth of Dudley Lillingstone, 30 May 1885 at Marburg (National Archives of Australia, Item details for: B2455, Lillingstone Dudley); and *The Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, 20 October 1885, pg 5, Opening of the School of Arts at Marburg.

8 *The Telegraph*, 28 January 1939, pg 21, Pioneer Celebrates 80th Birthday.

9 The Lillingstone family had moved from Marburg to Brisbane by October 1886 (*The Brisbane Courier*, 19 October 1886, pg 3, Classified Advertising, Electoral Rolls, Lillingstone, William H., Main street, Residence, Main street [sic], Kangaroo Point.)

10 Brisbane PO Directory and Country Guide 1887, Alphabetical Directory pg 243, Lillingstone, W. H, resident manager, Kangaroo Point & Nerang Sawmills, Main st, K.P.

11 Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM2796929.

12 *Queensland Government Gazette*, 7 May 1887, pg 20.

13 Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM2796929.

14 Ibid.



was the Maleny Provisional School teacher.<sup>22</sup> (Even without professional training, William was described as an “*earnest and enthusiastic*”<sup>23</sup> teacher, yet his level of education did not allow him to become a Queensland State School teacher at that time.)<sup>24</sup>



Tom Lillingstone, circa 1907.<sup>25</sup>



Lillingstone family, early 1900s.  
L-R: William, Doris, William (jnr),  
Dudley, Jessie, Charlotte, & Tom.<sup>26</sup>

## Life in Maleny

Many early Europeans in Maleny, including the Lillingstones, found the cost of developing a property a strain on their finances. In 1891, Tom’s father wrote to the Department of Lands seeking permission to leave his farm for 6-7 months to earn extra money.<sup>27</sup> In 1893, his mother also wrote. Jessie was anxious for extra time to pay for their land deed, worried there might be a fine if the payment was late. “*Times have been fearfully hard with us, & my husband having been from home a great deal in search of employment, our own place has been neglected, our children all being too young to give any material help.*” She worried needlessly as the Department assured her that “*grace is allowed*”.<sup>28</sup>

The first Lillingstone home in Maleny was a small, two-roomed cottage of sawn Beech timber with an added verandah room.<sup>29</sup> It remained in use until a larger home was built sometime later.<sup>30</sup> Life would have been busy for the family in establishing a farm, keeping chickens and pigs,<sup>31</sup> and in later years,

22 Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM987867; and *The Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, 9 February 1907, pg 4, Maleny. William Lillingstone’s teaching career at North Maleny lasted less than seven years and included a gap during 1904 when he resigned but was later re-employed. The small school on the Lillingstone farm was called the Maleny Provisional School. A new Maleny Provisional School was built and opened close to their farm in March 1902 on land gazetted as a School Reserve by the Queensland Government (Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM15292).

23 Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM987867. The government file notes that William Lillingstone had no professional training as a teacher.

24 A file titled *1860-1902* by the Queensland Department of Education states, “Because there was no teachers training college in Queensland, teachers were recruited (except for some British immigrant teachers) through the pupil-teacher system.” (<https://education.qld.gov.au/about/history/Documents/female-teachers-1860.pdf>)

William Lillingstone did not go through the pupil-teacher system and he arrived in Queensland without teaching qualifications (Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM987867). A “provisional school teacher appointed was usually an unclassified teacher who was not provided with a residence by the Department and who received a salary that remained less than that of the lowest classified teacher. Consequently, such a teacher was often a person with barely adequate education, or occasionally, a well educated person who had failed in other occupations, or an educated woman forced to provide for herself.”

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20171101091737/http://education.qld.gov.au/library/edhistory/state/provisional/origins.html>)

25 Picture Sunshine Coast. Tom Lillingstone, circa 1907. Copyright expired.

26 Lillingstone family records. Copyright expired.

27 Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM2796929.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Lillingstone family records.

31 Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM2796929.

dairy cows.<sup>32</sup> Tom had his mother's sister, Hannah Wells, living with her family on a farm next door. Though younger than him, he had cousins to play with as well as other local children.<sup>33</sup>

At the age of 17 years, Tom selected his own farm. In October 1900 he applied at the Brisbane Land Office for a 160-acre agricultural farm.<sup>34</sup> It was near his family in North Maleny but had already been forfeited once.<sup>35</sup> One can imagine the confidence of youth that he would make a success of it. Tom was granted a License to Occupy in January 1901 but had made no improvements to the land by August 1902,<sup>36</sup> possibly because he had no access other than by foot or by horse.<sup>37</sup>

In the end, Tom was no more successful than its first selector. He abandoned his farm which was officially forfeited and re-offered for selection in October 1902.<sup>38</sup> (A Nambour newspaper in 1914 noted that this farm had been forfeited four times due to a lack of road access.<sup>39</sup>)



Signature, 1900.<sup>40</sup>

## Maleny to Canada, 1907

The Lillingstone family's connection to Maleny came to an end in early 1907.<sup>41</sup> After 19 years in Maleny,<sup>42</sup> Tom's father had been offered a good price for his dairy farm.<sup>43</sup> He accepted and the family exchanged Maleny's rolling green hills for the Canadian city of Vancouver in British Columbia.<sup>44</sup> They sailed from Brisbane on the *R.M.S. Aorangi* in February 1907<sup>45</sup> (leaving behind Tom's sister, Jessie, who had married in 1905<sup>46</sup> and was expecting her second child<sup>47</sup>).

On the voyage, Tom's parents, sisters (Charlotte and Doris) and youngest brother (William jnr.) travelled Second Class while he and his brother, Dudley, travelled steerage.<sup>48</sup> His father arrived in Canada with \$1,000 in his pocket, Tom and Dudley with \$250 each.<sup>49</sup> The Lillingstones planned to settle in Canada but this did not eventuate.<sup>50</sup> Tom worked as a clerk in Vancouver<sup>51</sup> but returned home

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32 Queensland State Library Acc OM78-30.

33 Tom's maternal aunt, Hannah Smith, was a resident of Maleny when she married William Wells in Brisbane in 1889 (Queensland Government, Family History Research Service: Marriage 1889/B/13588). Jessie Lillingstone was a witness to their marriage (Marriage Certificate). Hannah and William Wells had three children: Francis born 1890, Ferdinand born 1896, and Vivieen born 1904 (Queensland Government, Family History Research Service). William Wells had also selected land in 1887 in what would one day be North Maleny (Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM2796964).

34 Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM2799856.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 *The Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, 8 May 1914, pg 3, Landsborough Shire Council.

40 Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM2799856.

41 *The Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, 9 February 1907, pg 4, Maleny.

42 A calculation of the length of residence for William Lillingstone in North Maleny is 19 years and 4 months. From October 1887 (Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM2796929) until February 1907 (*The Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, 9 February 1907, pg 4, Maleny). This calculation does not include the time spent away from his farm in the 1890s.

43 *The Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, 9 February 1907, pg 4, Maleny.

44 Ancestry, Canada, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1865-1935.

45 *The Brisbane Courier*, 21 February 1907, pg 4, Shipping.

46 Queensland Government, Family History Research Service: Jessie Ellen Lillingstone and John McGrath (Marriage 1905/C/277).

47 Queensland Government, Family History Research Service: Arthur William McGrath born 23 August 1907 (Birth 1907/B/15506).

48 Ancestry, Canada, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1865-1935; and Ancestry, Honolulu, Hawaii, U.S., Arriving and Departing Passenger and Crew Lists, 1900-1959.

49 Ancestry, Canada, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1865-1935.

50 Ibid.

51 Henderson's City of Vancouver Directory 1908.

to Queensland between 1909-1911.<sup>52</sup> Dudley returned in October 1911,<sup>53</sup> and his remaining family in September 1912.<sup>54</sup>

## Back in Queensland

On Tom's return to Queensland, he left behind farming,<sup>55</sup> dairying<sup>56</sup> and office work<sup>57</sup> to take up carpentry. He lived for a time in Nanango<sup>58</sup> but it's believed he "*knocked about all over the country*".<sup>59</sup> However, shortly after Dudley's return from Canada, the two brothers set up the "*Lillingstone Bros.*" carpentry business in Brisbane.<sup>60</sup> Once the remaining family returned from Canada, Tom and Dudley moved in with their parents to a home in Auchenflower.<sup>61</sup> A second move occurred in 1914 when Tom and his family relocated a short distance to Bellevue Street, Milton.<sup>62</sup>



*Rifle Range Camp, Enoggera Barracks, Brisbane, Queensland.*<sup>63</sup>

## WWI Enlistment, Lismore, 1916

In 1916, Tom was residing in Bonalbo, NSW,<sup>64</sup> when he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force at the Lismore Recruiting Depot on 10 October.<sup>65</sup> Described as a 33-year-old carpenter, tall, slim, with grey eyes and dark brown hair,<sup>66</sup> with his father at Bellevue Street, Milton, as his next-of-kin.<sup>67</sup> Tom was allocated to the 41<sup>st</sup> Battalion in November 1916 and completed his basic training at Rifle Range Camp, Enoggera.<sup>68</sup> Three weeks before he sailed for England in the service of his adopted country, he married 25-year-old Stella Booth<sup>69</sup> of Wellington Point, Brisbane.<sup>70</sup>

52 Tom is recorded in Henderson's City of Vancouver Directory in 1908. He is not recorded in the 1911 Canadian Census although his parents, two sisters and two brothers were. Next record found is *The Gympie Times and Mary River Mining Gazette*, 30 December 1911, pg 2.

53 Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Unassisted Immigrant Passenger Lists, 1826-1922.

54 Ibid.

55 Ancestry, Canada, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1865-1935.

56 1906 Australia Electoral Roll, Tom Lillingstone, Dairyman, Maleny.

57 Henderson's City of Vancouver Directory 1908.

58 1912 Australia Electoral Roll, Lillingstone, Tom, Nanango, carpenter.

59 Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Files (<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/R1494067>).

60 *The Gympie Times and Mary River Mining Gazette*, 30 December 1911, pg 2, Advertising.

61 *The Telegraph*, 26 November 1912, pg 8, Advertising; and *The Telegraph*, 30 January 1913, pg 9, Advertising; and the 1914 Australia Electoral Roll, Lillingstone, Tom, McIlwraith st., Auchenflower, carpenter, enrolled 31 December 1912.

62 1915 Australia Electoral Roll, Lillingstone, Tom, Bellevue st., Milton, carpenter, enrolled 2 September 1914.

63 Australian War Memorial, Accession Number P06276.009. Copyright expired.

64 *The Northern Star*, 16 October 1916, pg 3, Local Enlistments.

65 National Archives of Australia, Item ID 8198991.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

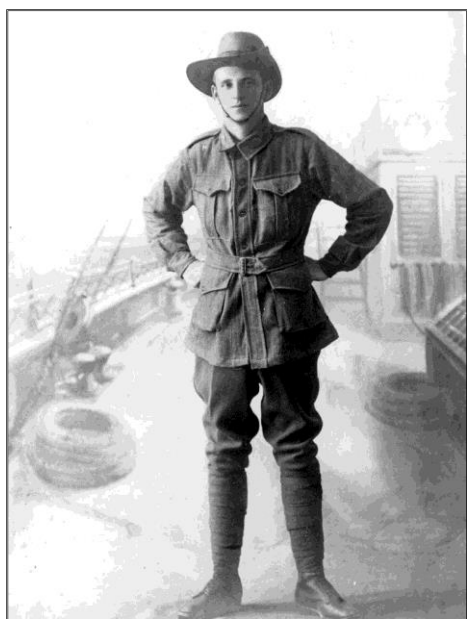
68 Marriage Certificate (Queensland Government, Family History Research Service: Stella Booth and Tom Lillingstone, Marriage 1916/B/19497).

69 Stella Booth, daughter of Alice and George Booth, born 22 March 1891 in Wandandian, Shoalhaven, NSW ([bdm.nsw.gov.au](http://bdm.nsw.gov.au), Birth 26455/1891).

70 1916 Australia Electoral Roll, Booth, Stella, Wellington Point, home duties.

## Marriage

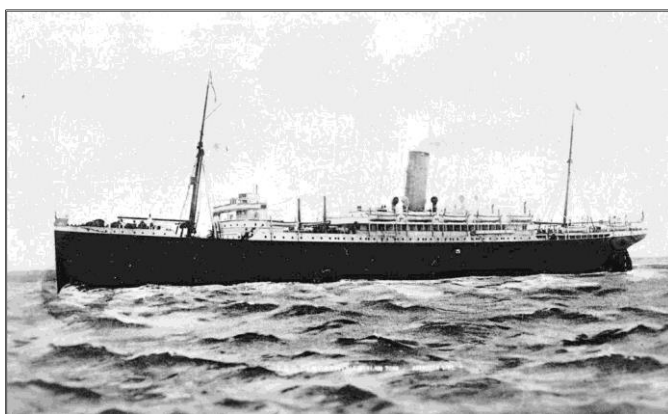
Stella and Tom's wedding was a small affair with only close family and friends.<sup>71</sup> This was due to the death, six months earlier, of Stella's eldest brother and because another brother was on his way to the Front.<sup>72</sup> Their marriage took place on Saturday, 2 December 1916, in the Wellington Point Methodist Church,<sup>73</sup> followed by a reception in Stella's family home.<sup>74</sup>



Tom Lillingstone.<sup>77</sup>

## To War

Shortly before Christmas 1916, Tom sailed from Sydney, NSW, on the troopship HMAT *Demosthenes*.<sup>75</sup> She carried 1,240 troops and 46 naval officers, arriving at Plymouth, on the English south-west coast, on 3 March 1917.<sup>76</sup>



The HMAT Demosthenes troopship.<sup>78</sup>

Tom had been admitted to the ship's hospital during his voyage and was again hospitalised while undertaking infantry training in England.<sup>79</sup> In July 1917, he landed in France, posted to D Company, 15<sup>th</sup> Platoon, 41<sup>st</sup> Battalion which formed part of the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade.<sup>80</sup>

*"His unit was training behind the lines at Messines, a few miles south of Ypres in Belgium, and on 31 July Lillingstone took part in the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade's successful diversionary stunt at Warneton, east of Messines village."<sup>81</sup>*

According to the Australian War Memorial, *"the 41st's experience of the battles in Belgium during 1917 was relatively straightforward. It had a supporting role at Messines on 7 June, captured its objectives at Broodseinde on 4 October with little difficulty, and was spared the carnage of Passchendaele on 12 October."<sup>82</sup>* A statement such as this would have been cold comfort to the Lillingstone family who lost Tom at Broodseinde. He was killed in action on 5 October 1917,<sup>83</sup> one of 36 soldiers killed during the Battle of Broodseinde Ridge with more than 200 wounded.<sup>84</sup>

71 *The Brisbane Courier*, 13 February 1917, pg 4, Family Notices.

72 Ibid. James Booth of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF was Stella's brother on his way to the Front. He was killed in action on 4 July 1917 and was buried in Belgium, three months before Tom was killed in action, also in Belgium.

73 Marriage Certificate (Queensland Government, Family History Research Service: Stella Booth and Tom Lillingstone, Marriage 1916/B/19497).

74 *The Queenslander*, 17 February 1917, pg 16, Family Notices.

75 National Archives of Australia, Item ID 8198991.

76 HMAT (Hired Military Australian Transport) Transport Ships (<https://www.flotilla-australia.com/hmat3.htm>); and Australian War Memorial, AWM7 Demosthenes 5 - [Troopship records, 1914-1918 War:] Demosthenes: Sydney December 1916 - Plymouth March 1917.

77 J.S. Wiley, & J.S. Wiley. (2005). Tom Lillingstone. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland. Copyright expired.

78 Demosthenes (ship). (2004). John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland. Copyright expired.

79 National Archives of Australia, Item ID 8198991.

80 Australian War Memorial, Men of Menin, Accession Number AWM2018.1007.1.5.

81 Ibid.

82 <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/U51481>

83 National Archives of Australia, Item ID 8198991.

84 Australian War Memorial, Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries, 1914-18 War - AWM4 Subclass 23/58 - 41st Infantry Battalion.

Although he has no known grave, Private Tom Lillingstone's sacrifice will never be forgotten. His name has been placed on several memorials, each time reminding us of the cost of war:

- Belgium: Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres.<sup>85</sup>
- Canberra: Panel 134 in the Commemorative Area, Australian War Memorial (AWM).<sup>86</sup>
- Brisbane: 41<sup>st</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion Memorial, Shrine of Memories, ANZAC Square.<sup>87</sup>
- Lismore: Reproduction of Brisbane's 41<sup>st</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion Memorial.<sup>88</sup>
- Maleny: Tom's name has been recently added to the Witta Honour Board in the RSL, as well as the Memorial Hospital's Honour Board, and the Hospital's Walk of Remembrance.

In addition, his name is projected every three months onto the exterior of the Hall of Memory at the AWM in Canberra. A tribute to all who have made the ultimate sacrifice.<sup>89</sup> Lest we forget.



AWM caption: "View of the woods and 'no man's land' at Broodseinde Ridge in the Ypres Sector, over which the Germans attacked a few minutes before our advance opened on the morning of 4 October 1917. The Australians met the enemy with the bayonet and after a fierce combat the German effort withered."<sup>91</sup>



Studio portrait of Private Tom Lillingstone (Regimental No. 2837) with faint pencil date, Jan 1917.<sup>90</sup>

May 2023  
(Updated November 2024)



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85 <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/1599150/tom-lillingstone/>

86 <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/R1638213>

87 <https://www.anzacsquare.qld.gov.au/memorials/41st-australian-infantry-battalion>

88 <https://placesofpride.awm.gov.au/memorials/259101>

A reproduction of the 41<sup>st</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion Memorial (unveiled in 1931 in the Shrine of Memories, ANZAC Square, Brisbane) is held by the 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion Association. Dedicated on 4 May 2018, it is in the Stirling Room, Byron Barracks, Military Road, East Lismore. It lists the 469 Battalion members who paid the supreme sacrifice in WWI.

89 <https://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/honour-rolls/roll-honour-name-projections>

90 Australian War Memorial, Accession Number P07779.001. Copyright expired.

91 Australian War Memorial, Accession Number E00961. Copyright expired.