

Tom Lillingstone

1883-1917



From childhood to adulthood, Tom lived in Maleny; moved to Canada in 1907; returned to Australia and lived in various towns before enlisting in Lismore, NSW, during WWI. He made the ultimate sacrifice at the Battle of Broodseinde Ridge in Belgium, October 1917.



Birth

Born 2 June 1883 in London, Middlesex, England. Tom (not Thomas) was the first child of Jessie Elizabeth Smith and William Hammond Lillingstone (a shipping clerk) who had married in London on 1 July 1882.

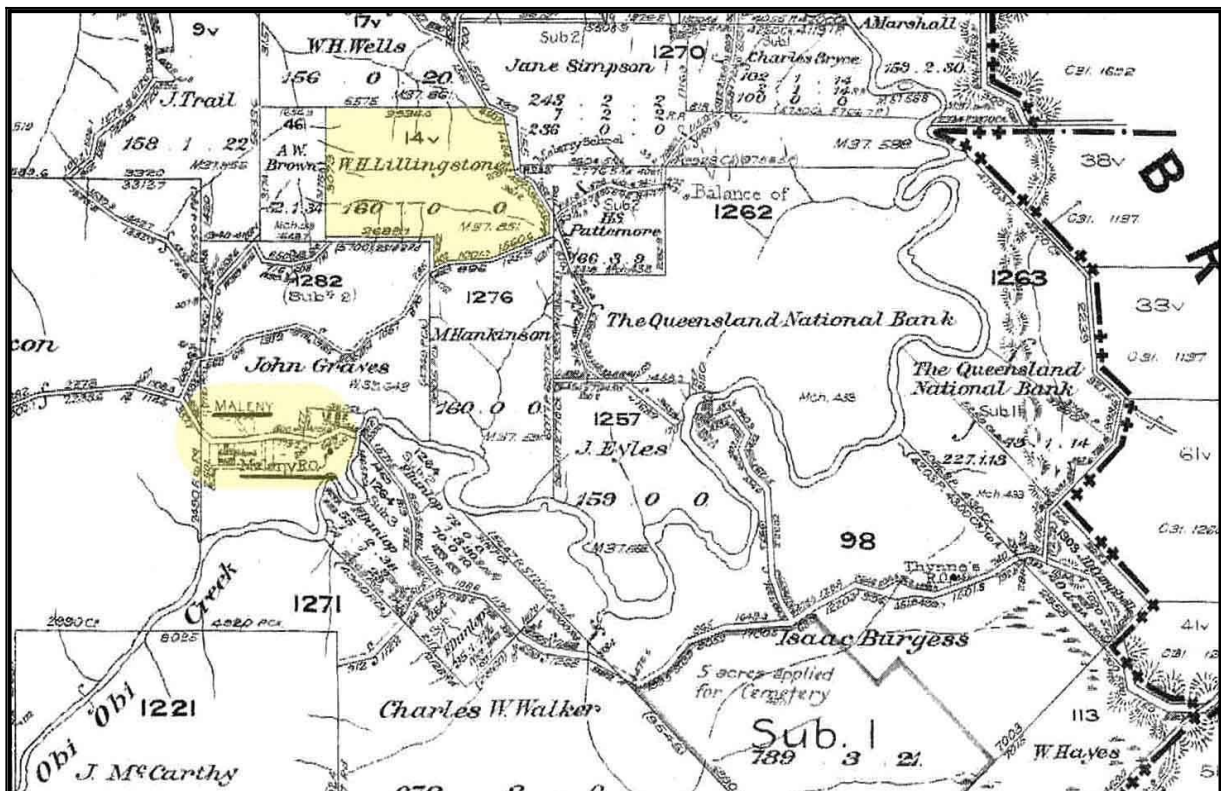
Tom would have six younger brothers and sisters: Dudley, Theodora (died aged 2 months while the family lived in Kangaroo Point, Brisbane), Jessie, Charlotte, Doris, and William (jnr).

From London to Queensland

When Tom was about 18 months old, he arrived in Queensland with his parents (circa December 1884). The family lived in Marburg during 1885 but had moved to Brisbane by 1886. His father worked as a sawmill labourer but he soon became the resident manager for the Kangaroo Point and Nerang Sawmills Company in Main Street, Kangaroo Point.

The Blackall Range

The Lillingstone connection to Maleny can be traced back to a land application made in Brisbane on 30 June 1887 by Tom's father. William H. Lillingstone 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. The land selected is now in North Maleny and William took up residence to clear his "dense vine scrub" in October 1887 (five months before he received his official License to Occupy).



Schooling

Tom attended school in Brisbane and on the Blackall Range. For a very short time, he and younger siblings, Dudley and Jessie, were enrolled at the Provisional School in Teutoburg (now Witta). In January 1896, 12-year-old Tom and 10-year-old Dudley were placed in Second Class; 8-year-old Jessie was placed in First Class in February 1896. All three left the school in February 1896.

Compulsory, free education came to Queensland in 1875 for children aged 6-12 years but it was not until 1900 that the compulsory clauses of the Education Act were gazetted. Before this date, many children went without schooling in rural or isolated communities although the Lillingstone children were fortunate to have parents with enough education to ensure they learnt the basics. In 1891, Tom's mother was suggested as a possible teacher for the school at Teutoburg, locals believing she had sufficient education to fill the position. With three young children at home, Jessie Lillingstone did not apply. When Tom was long past school age, a small half-time school opened on the family farm, its teacher travelling back and forth from the Blackall Range Provisional School. From 1900-1906, his father was the Maleny Provisional School teacher. (Even without professional training, William was reported as an *"earnest and enthusiastic"* teacher, yet his level of education did not allow him to become a Queensland State School teacher at this time.)



Tom Lillingstone, early 1900s.



Right: Lillingstone family, early 1900s.
L-R: William, Doris, William (jnr),
Dudley, Jessie, Charlotte, and Tom.

Life in Maleny

For the Lillingstone family, as with many early European settlers in the Maleny district, life was hard when financial resources were limited. So hard, that Tom's father wrote to the Department of Lands in 1891 seeking permission to leave the farm for 6-7 months to earn some money. 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"*.

The first Lillingstone home in Maleny was a small, two-roomed cottage of sawn Beech with an added verandah room. This was in use until a larger home was built some time later. It would have been a busy time for the family in establishing a farm, keeping chickens and pigs and, in later years, dairy cows. 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.

When he was 17 years old, Tom selected his own farm. At the Brisbane Land Office in October 1900, he applied for a 160-acre agricultural farm. It was close to his family in North Maleny but had already been forfeited once. One can imagine youth's confidence 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, possibly because he had no access other than by foot or by horse. In the end, Tom was no more successful than its first selector. He abandoned the farm which was forfeited and re-offered for selection in October 1902. (A local newspaper report in 1914 noted that Tom's farm had been forfeited four times through a lack of road access.)

Tom Lillingstone

Signature, 1900.

Leaving Maleny, 1907

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

On the voyage, Tom's parents, sisters (Charlotte and Doris) and youngest brother (William jnr.) travelled Second Class while he and brother, Dudley, travelled steerage. His father arrived in Canada with \$1,000 in his pocket, Tom and Dudley with \$250 each. The Lillingstones' plan was to settle in Canada but this did not eventuate. Tom worked as a clerk in Vancouver but returned home to Queensland sometime between 1909-1911, Dudley in October 1911, and the rest of the family in September 1912.

Back in Queensland

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



WWI Enlistment, Lismore, 1916

In 1916, Tom was living in Bonalbo, NSW, when he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force at the Lismore Recruiting Depot on 10 October 1916. He was a 33-year-old carpenter, tall, slim, with grey eyes and dark brown hair. His father, William H. Lillingstone of Bellevue Street, Milton, was listed as his next-of-kin. Tom was appointed to the 41st Battalion in November 1916 and completed his basic training at Rifle Range Camp, Enoggera. Three weeks before he sailed for England to serve his country, Tom married his sweetheart, 25-year-old Stella Booth of Wellington Point, Brisbane.

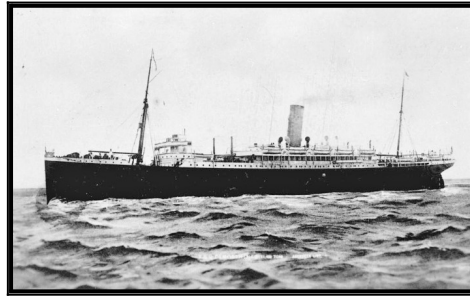
Marriage

Stella and Tom's wedding was a small affair attended only by near relatives and close friends. This was due to the recent death of Stella's eldest brother and because her second brother was on his way to the Front. Their marriage took place in the Wellington Point Methodist Church on Saturday, 2 December 1916, followed by a celebration in Stella's family home.



To War

Just prior to Christmas 1916, Tom sailed from Sydney, NSW, on the troopship HMAT *Demosthenes*. She carried 1,240 troops and 46 naval officers, arriving at Plymouth, on the south-west coast of England, on 3 March 1917.



The HMAT Demosthenes troopship.

Soon after his arrival, Tom had two bouts in hospital in between infantry training. He landed in France in July 1917 and was posted to D Company, 15th Platoon, 41st Battalion which formed part of the 11th Brigade. *"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 11th Brigade's successful diversionary stunt at Warneton, east of Messines village."*

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."* 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, one of 36 soldiers killed during the Battle of Broodseinde Ridge with more than 200 wounded.

Tom Lillingstone's sacrifice will never be forgotten. His name has been placed on a number of memorials, each time reminding us of the cost of war:

- In Brisbane, on the 41st Australian Infantry Bn. Memorial, Shrine of Memories, ANZAC Sq.
- In Belgium, on the Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres.
- In Lismore, on a reproduction of Brisbane's 41st Australian Infantry Battalion Memorial.
- In Canberra, on panel 134 in the Commemorative Area, Australian War Memorial (AWM).
- Also in Canberra, his name is projected every three months onto the exterior of the Hall of Memory at the AWM, as part of the tribute to all who made the ultimate sacrifice.

When Tom's widow, Stella, was asked for his details for Australia's Roll of Honour, she wrote that he was chiefly connected with Brisbane and should be commemorated there. Tom and Stella had no children, but one of his many nieces and nephews wanted his military service and sacrifice acknowledged in Maleny. Even though Tom had left Maleny in 1907 and enlisted in Lismore in 1916, a niece from Melbourne has recently had his name added to two Maleny Honour Boards and a Walk of Remembrance. Perhaps, in future, the question should be asked, "When do the wishes of the present generation overrule the wishes of the past?"