



Private Thomas Fidler (1645A) was born in 1892 to parents William and Bridget (nee Pyne). William's occupation was recorded as a general labourer. The couple had married in the latter part of 1886 and their first child, also called William, was born in 1888. Harriet was their second child followed by Thomas, and three more daughters - Martha, Emily and Anna. All the children were born in Brentford. The 1901 Census records that the family were living at 1 Retreat Terrace, Field Lane, Brentford where the family remained for many years. Thomas went to Ham School.

Thomas emigrated to Australia in the hope of a better life. We don't know exactly when he left the UK. Australian electoral registers from 1914, record a Thomas Fidler in the town of Balkatta Perth, working as a factory hand. The 1915/16 registers show a Thomas Fidler living at 25 Wellington St. Perth and working as a hotel steward. His army records tell us that he was indeed living in Perth Western Australia when he attested in 1916. The 1911 UK Census and his Army Service records note that Thomas is a Butler.

When war broke out the Australian PM Andrew Fisher quickly demonstrated loyalty to Britain with the famous quote... **'till the last man and the last shilling'**. Thomas showed his loyalty too and enlisted on 29th Jan. 1916. He attested at Claremont on June 3rd that year and after a period of training in Australia, embarked on 6th June 1916 aboard the HMAT Suevic A29 from Fremantle to Plymouth. His original unit was the 44th Bn. 1st Reinforcement, but later he came under the 28th Bn. He disembarked on 21st July '16 and spent some time at Larkhill in Wiltshire, where he had further training on Salisbury Plain. **It is recorded that Thomas went AWOL from Reveille and was punished with three days (cc) confined to camp and a forfeiture of 2 days' pay!**

Thomas's service record shows that he arrived in France on 11th Sept. 1916, - in the midst of the mud and gore that was the 'Somme Winter'. He was now fighting with the 28th Bn. It is unclear exactly which battles Thomas fought in, however his battalion was at or near Flers where the fighting conditions were appalling. The aim of the battle was to push forward and get out of the low valley and up to the Bapaume Ridge before winter. The devastated landscape surrounding the Australians made army manoeuvres almost impossible, and the torrential rain did not help. **'The men were exhausted from the effort of it all.'** By late October, the Australians were fighting east of Flers. Sadly, sometime between 3-6th November Thomas went 'missing.' It is recorded that *"a witness saw the soldier killed on 5th during a charge in front of Flers, about 9.30 am on Sunday morning. While crossing No Man's Land, soldier was killed by a shell, but witness does not know if soldier is buried. New him well, being in the same battalion."* Witness Tyask W No. 1728. Thomas was subsequently deemed to have been killed in Action on 3rd November 1916 near Bapaume, Somme Sector, France. It is recorded that he was 28, but he was probably only 24. He is buried at Walencourt British Cemetery. II.C.12. and was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

