

William (Willie) Thompson

(1893 – *unknown*)

William Thompson was born in Skipton. He was the second son in the Thompson family and he had had two older sisters who had died in infancy.

After his mother died, when he was three, William and his brother went to live with their maternal aunt and her husband in Kildwick. By the time he was 18, William was working in a mill and he would go on to work with a local firm of builders.



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Serving as a Private, with the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment during World War 1, he was reported as missing in action in April 1917 but this was subsequently amended to prisoner of war. He was held at Dulmen Westphalia.

Released under the terms of the Armistice in 1918, he returned to Farnhill, where he resumed his former occupation with the building firm. After marrying he moved to live in Eastburn. The couple had no children and nothing further is known of his life.

Pre-war life

Willie Thompson was born in Skipton on the 21st September 1893.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT					SKIPTON					
1893 BIRTH in the Sub-district of Skipton					in the County of York					
Columns:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
499	Twenty first September 1893 9 Back Bridge Street Skipton W.S.	Willie	Boy	Jonathan Thompson	Ann Thompson formerly Moorby	Cotton Weaver	Ann Thompson Mother 9 Back Bridge Street Skipton	Fourth November 1893	William Dale Barrett Registrar	

Willie Thompson's birth certificate
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Note: The birth certificate records his name as Willie. However the name William seems to have been used for most of his life – the Farnhill Parish Council WW1 Roll of Honour recorded him as "Wm. Thompson". To avoid confusion, the name William is used in the rest of this biography.

He was the second son of Jonathan and Ann (nee Moorby). Jonathan (b. 1857) was a cotton weaver, originally from Grassington; Ann (b. 1863), who also worked as a cotton weaver, was from Skipton.

William was the couple's fourth child, although two older sisters had died young – Alice Ann, in infancy, in 1886, and Maria, aged three, just a few months before William was born in 1893.

In 1896 William's mother, Ann Thompson, died at the age of 33. This death almost certainly brought about the break up of the family, with William and his older brother Ernest moving to live with their uncle and aunt, Joseph and Margaret Richmond, in Church Terrace, Kildwick. (Margaret was Ann's sister.)

The 1901 census recorded William's father, Jonathan Thompson, boarding with the family of Robert Moorby, his brother-in-law, at 5 Carrs Yard, Skipton. He died suddenly in 1907 after collapsing in the street. A coroner's inquest, held in Skipton Town Hall, on 26th February, recorded "Death by natural causes, probably heart failure".

By the time of the 1911 census, the Richmonds and the two Thompson boys had moved to 60 Starkey Lane, Farnhill (they would move again, to 58 Airedale Cottages – on Skipton Road – before the outbreak of the war). In this census, William was recorded as being a "Doffer", in a worsted mill. He subsequently worked for John Barritt's, the Crosshills builder and stonemason.

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.									
Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.									
The contents of the Schedule will be treated as <u>confidential</u> . Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, than the preparation of Statistical Tables.									
NAME AND SURNAME		RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family.	AGE (last birthday) and SEX.	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE.			PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards.	BIRTHPLACE of every person.	
1	Joseph Richmond	Head	56	Married	None	27	Cartwright & Co. 378	Worth	Yorks, Bally Bridge
2	Margaret Richmond	Wife	54	Married	29	2			Yorks, Grassington
3	Ernest Thompson	Boarder	22	Single			Joiner & Labourer 211	Worth	Yorks, Skipton
4	William Thompson	Boarder	17	Single			Doffer Yarn 845	Worth	Yorks, Skipton
5									

Extract from the 1911 census return for 60 Starkey Lane, Farnhill
Used under licence from the National Archive

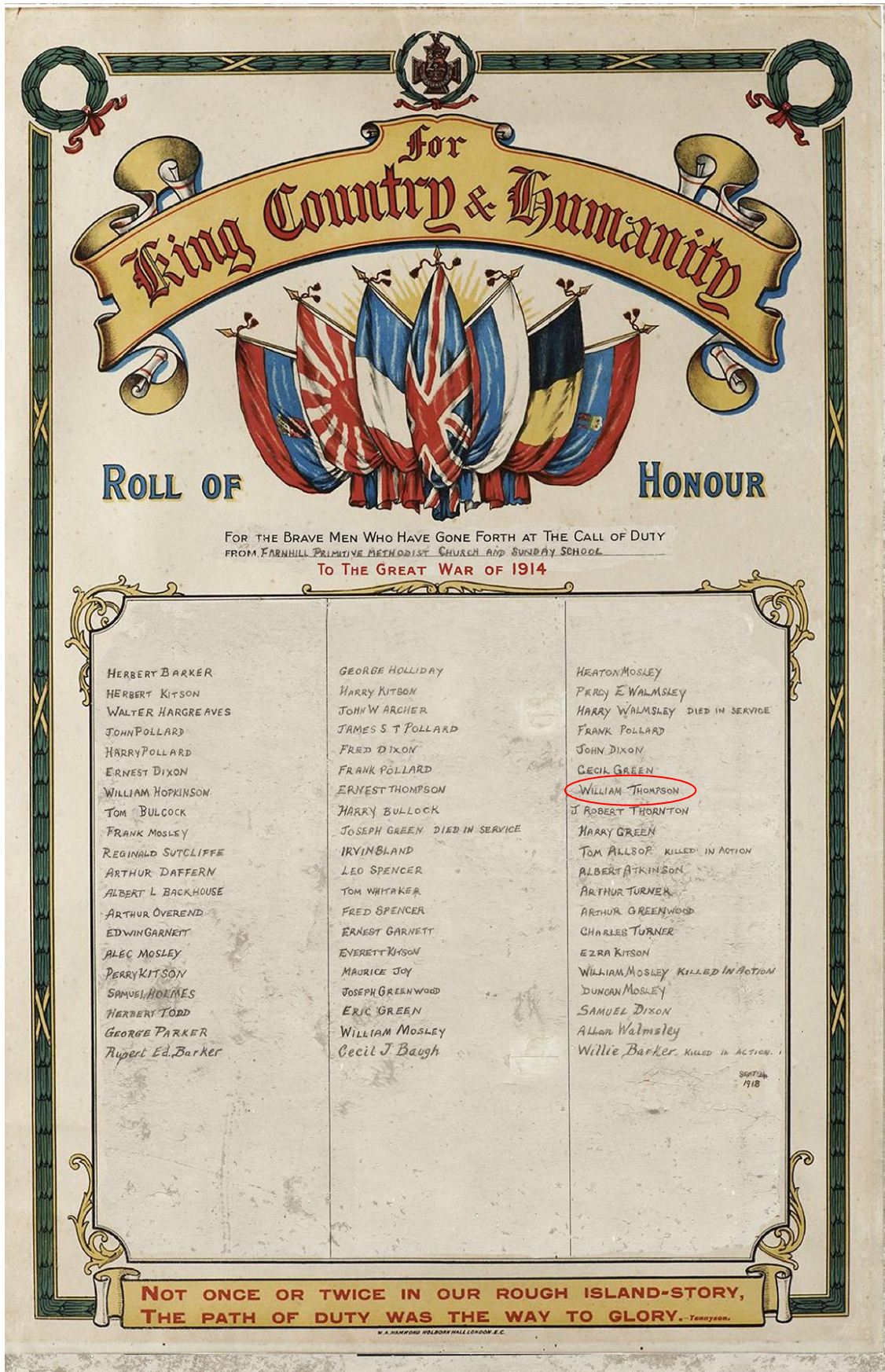
Note: The "Particulars of Marriage" section records that the Richmonds had been married for 29 years; they had had two children but both had died.

WW1 service

William Thompson's WW1 service records consist of a single page. This simply records that he was aged 20 years and five months when he attested on the 8th February 1916. His next of kin was his brother Ernest, whose address was 58 Skipton Road; and that he was posted to a regiment, as a Private, in September 1916 (no details of the regiment were noted).

However, other sources have been used to construct a fragmentary account of William Thompson's WW1 service.

William's name was included on Farnhill Methodist Chapel's Roll of Honour, unveiled on 9th July 1916, next to that of his brother Ernest. This confirms that he had already left the village by this time.



The digitally-restored Farnhill Methodist Roll of Honour (1916)

The first indication of which unit William served in comes from news reports of April 1917.

KILDWICK.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Richmond, of Church Terrace, Kildwick, received a letter from Captain B. Nother, on Wednesday, informing them that their nephew, Private Willie Thompson, of the York and Lancaster Regiment, had been missing since April 9. If he heard anything of Private Thompson he would write. The officers and men of the battalion sent their deepest sympathy. Private Thompson joined the Army in the early days of the war, and has been out in France with his regiment over twelve months. He is 24 years of age, and lived with his uncle and aunt for a number of years. He formerly worked for Mr. John Barritt at Cross Hills, was a prominent member of the Kildwick and Farnhill Institute, and a very popular lad. His elder brother, Private Ernest Thompson, of the Royal Field Artillery, who also resided with Mr. and Mrs. Richmond, has been in France for a considerable time.

Report of William Thompson missing in action, from the Keighley News 28/4/1917

By kind permission of the Keighley News

Note: A contemporary report in the West Yorkshire Post gives the Richmonds' address as "Airedale, Farnhill".

A month later the news was a little better – although still not good.

KILDWICK.

A PRISONER OF WAR.

About a week ago Private William Thompson, of the York and Lancaster Regiment, was officially posted as a prisoner of war, but no place of internment was given. Private Thompson had previously been posted as missing from April 9, and a letter was about that time received by his uncle and aunt from Captain B. Nother stating that he was missing from his battalion. Private Thompson joined up about the beginning of the war, and has been out in France over twelve months. He formerly worked for Mr. John Barritt, Cross Hills. He is 24 years of age, and lived with his uncle and aunt at Church Terrace, Kildwick. His elder brother, Private Ernest Thompson, of the Royal Field Artillery, who also resided with Mr. and Mrs. Richmond, has been in France for a considerable time.

First report of William Thompson as PoW, from the Keighley News 2/6/1917

By kind permission of the Keighley News

News of William's whereabouts were forthcoming in July 1917.



First report of William Thompson as PoW, from the Keighley News 16/7/1917

By kind permission of the Keighley News

William saw out the rest of the war as a prisoner and was released under the terms of the Armistice at the end of 1918.



News of William Thompson's release and return to the UK, from the West Yorkshire Pioneer 27/12/1918

By kind permission of the Craven Herald

Post-war life

After the war William returned to live with his uncle and aunt in Farnhill, and it seems likely that he resumed his employment at Barritt's.

William's aunt, Margaret Richmond, died early in November 1919 at the age of 60 and the funeral took place at St. Andrew's, Kildwick on the 8th. Later the same month, on the 22nd, William's brother Ernest married and the couple moved in with Joseph Richmond and William for a short while.

The 1921 census records Joseph Richmond and William living together at 58 Skipton Road; William was working as a mason's labourer for Barritt's.

On the 31st July 1926, William Thompson married Mary Spencer, of Eastburn, in St. Andrew's Church, Kildwick. The couple moved in with Joseph Richmond at 58 Airedale, Farnhill.

In March 1929, William's uncle, Joseph Richmond died at 16 Gargrave Road, Skipton, at the age of 73. The funeral took place at St. Andrew's, Kildwick, on the 23rd.

Shortly after this, William and Mary moved to Eastburn. They initially lived at 2 North View, but by 1932 had moved to 40 Main Road. They moved next door, to number 42, in 1935. (Mary's brothers William and Hartley were living at number 44 Main Road throughout this period; William's brother, Ernest, was also living in Eastburn, at 51 Sun Street.)

The register taken in September 1939, when WW2 ration cards were being issued, showed the couple living together at 42 Main Road, Eastburn. William was recorded as being a "Builder's Lorry Driver" – perhaps Barritt's ? There were no children recorded.

Beyond this, no further information is known about William Thompson. He was not recorded in any of the post-WW2 electoral rolls for the area (there were no rolls taken for the period 1940 to 1945), although no definitive details of his death have been found.

The 1945 electoral roll recorded William's wife, Mary, living with his brother Ernest at 51 Sun Street in 1945 (his first wife died in 1943), but this arrangement seems to have ended by the time Ernest remarried in 1946 – after which Mary also disappears from all local records.

William Thompson – a life in summary

Born: 21/9/1893, Skipton

Died: *unknown*

Parents

Father: Jonathan; b. 1857, Grassington; d. 1907, Skipton

Mother: Ann or Annie (nee Moorby); b. 1863, Skipton; bapt.8/2/1863, Skipton Christ Church;
d. 1896, Skipton (Registration district)

Married: 1884, Skipton (Registration district)

Siblings

Walter Moorby (half-brother); b. 1881, Skipton

Alice Ann; b. 31/7/1885, Skipton; d. 1886 (aged 0)

Ernest; b. 1/12/1888, Skipton; m1. Edith Smith, 22/11/1919, Keighley Register Office;

m2. Caroline Elizabeth Race, 27/3/1946, Steeton St. Stephen

d. 27/10/1957, Eastburn

Maria; b. 1890, Skipton; d. 1893, Skipton (aged 3)

WW1 service

Attested: 8/2/1916

Regt.: York and Lancs. Regt.

Medals: British War Medal, Victory Medal

Relationship to other volunteers

Ernest Thompson – brother

Marriage

Wife: Mary Spencer; b. 6/8/1894, Eastburn

Date: 31/7/1926, St. Andrew's Kildwick

Children

None known.

