

Thomas Victor Burgess

1899- 1918



By Ivor Williams

Thomas Victor Burgess, was born on Sunday 3rd December 1899 at No 9 Boss's Gardens, Brighton to the parents of George Henry Anthony Burgess and Eliza Burgess, nee Jupp.

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Registration District: BRIGHTON

1900 BIRTH to the 30th instant of East Brighton, Brighton in the County of Brighton

No.	When and where born	Sex	Name of father	Name, maiden and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature of registrar and date of registration	When registered	Signature of registrar	When issued
68	Third child of 1049 9 Boss's Gardens, Brighton, Sussex	M	George Henry Anthony Burgess	Eliza Burgess nee Jupp	Bricklayer	f. H. A. Burgess 9 Boss's Gardens Brighton	3rd Dec 1899	J. H. Jupp	28th Sept 2011

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Births in the District above mentioned

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, this 28th day of September 2011

BXCF 166244

WARNING: THIS IS A CERTIFICATE ISSUED TO ENLIGHTENED CITIZENS - A CERTIFICATE AND LOGO OF POSSESSION OF A FALSE CERTIFICATE IS A CRIME UNDER COPYRIGHT

WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY

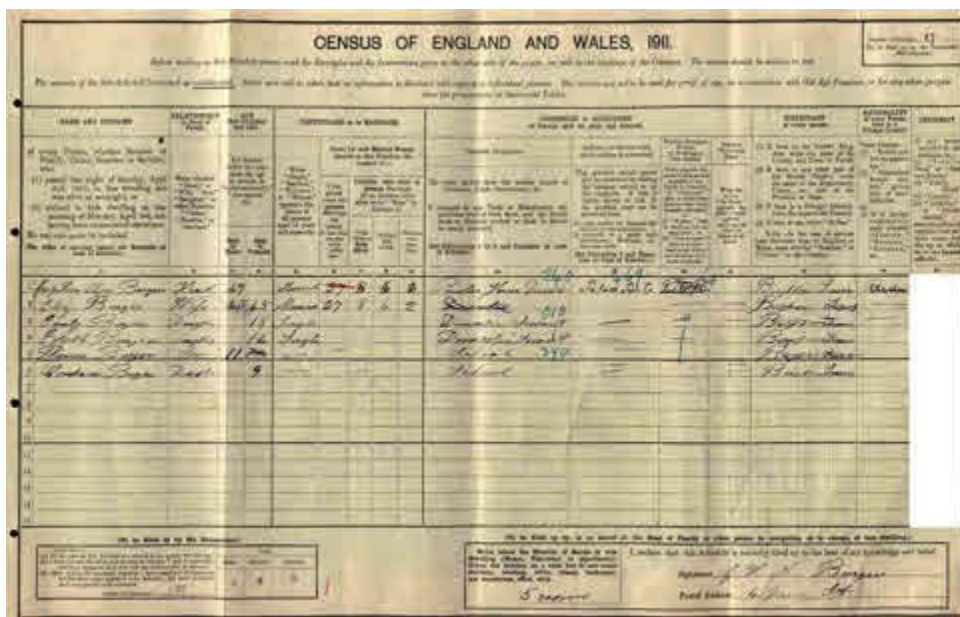


As with his siblings, we know very little of Thomas's childhood. In the first record we have, the 1901 Census, Thomas was only 1 year old. All we know at that stage is that Thomas was the youngest of five children. He would eventually have a younger Sister.

Name	Relationship	Con	DoB	Age	Profession	Where Born	Remarks
George H Burgess	Head	Married	1864	37	Bricklayer	Brighton, Sussex	Burgers in census
Eliza	Wife	Married	1867	34		Brighton, Sussex	
George H A	Son	Single	1885	16	Brickies Labourer	Brighton, Sussex	
Willie	Son	Single	1887	14	Brickies Labourer	Brighton, Sussex	
Emily	Daughter	Single	1894	7		Brighton, Sussex	
Edith	Daughter	Single	1897	4		Brighton, Sussex	
Thomas	Son	Single	1900	1		Brighton, Sussex	

By the next Census in 1911 the family had moved from Boss's Gardens into a larger home at No4 Jersey Street, Brighton.

By now Thomas was the only Son at home. His brothers, George and William, had now grown up, married and had left home. Thomas was still only eleven years of age and studying at school, or we hope he was studying!



During the period between the Census in 1911 and December 1915 the family had moved twice. First to 16 Richmond Hill, Brighton and then between May and December 1915, to 29 Lennox Street, Brighton. We know that from his father's records and Thomas's own application to join the Army.

It was on Friday 3rd December 1915 that Thomas Victor Burgess had a medical to see if he was fit enough to join the Army. Thomas had claimed to be 19 years and 1 month old.

His medical shows he was 5 foot 2 ¼ inches tall and a chest of only 32 ¼ inches with an expansion of 2 ½ inches. His vision was good and the form says his physical development was good, although I would have questioned his height.

The Medical Officer, Harry Shelton of Hove, had declared Thomas 'fit for service in the field and abroad' for the 'Territorial Force'.

Description of *Thomas Burgess* on Enlistment.

MEDICAL INSPECTION REPORT.	
(Applicable to all Ranks.)	
Name	<i>Thomas Burgess</i>
Apparent age	<i>19</i> years <i>1</i> months <i>2</i> weeks <i>5</i> days
Height	<i>5</i> feet <i>2 1/4</i> inches.
*Chest measurement	Girth when fully expanded <i>32 1/2</i> inches.
	Range of expansion <i>2 1/4</i> inches.
Vision	<i>6/6 both</i>
Physical development	<i>good</i>
<p>* Chest measurement will be obtained by adjusting the tape so that its posterior upper edge touches the inferior angles of the shoulder blades, and its anterior lower edge the upper part of the nipples, while the arms hang loosely by the side.</p>	
<i>Certificate of Medical Examination.</i>	
<p>I have examined the above-named Recruit and find that he does not present any of the causes of rejection specified in the Regulations. He can see at the required distance with either eye; his heart and lungs are healthy; he has the free use of his joints and limbs; he does not suffer from hernia; and declares that he is not subject to fits of any description.</p>	
<p>I consider him <i>fit</i> for service in the field <i>reduced</i> for the Territorial Force.</p>	
Date	<i>3 Dec</i> 1915.
Place	<i>Hove Sussex</i>
	<i>Harry L. Shelton</i> Medical Officer <i>M.A.S. R.F.P.</i>
<p>NOTE.—Should the Medical Officer consider the Recruit unfit, he will fill in the foregoing certificate only in the case of those who have been attested and will briefly state below the cause of unfitness.</p>	
<i>Certificate of Primary Military Examination.</i>	
<p>I hereby certify that the above-named Recruit was inspected by me, and I consider him <i>fit</i> for service in the <i>4th B. Sussex Regt.</i> and that due care has been exercised in his enlistment.</p>	
Date	<i>4 Dec</i> 1915.
Place	<i>Hove</i>
	<i>W. R. ...</i> Recruiting Officer. <i>4th B. Sussex Regt.</i>
<p>* Insert here "B" or "Capt." † Insert the "Regiment" or "Corps."</p>	
<i>* Certificate of Approving Officer.</i>	
<p>I certify that this Attestation of the above-named Recruit is correct, and properly filled up, and that the required forms appear to have been complied with. I accordingly approve, and appoint him to the <i>4th BATT. ROYAL SUSSEX REGT.</i></p>	
<p>If enlisted by special authority, Army Form B. 203 (or other authority for the enlistment) will be attached to the original attestation.</p>	
Date	<i>13 DEC</i> 1915.
Place	<i>HORSHAM.</i>
	<i>MAJOR</i> COMMAND ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRE <i>4TH ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT.</i> Approving Officer.
<p>* The signature of the Approving Officer is to be affixed in the presence of the Recruit. † Here insert the "Corps" for which the Recruit has been enlisted.</p>	

On Saturday 4th December 1915, a Captain of the 4th Royal Sussex Regiment acting as the Recruitment Officer in Hove, signed Thomas into the 4th Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment.

Before his 'posting,' Thomas had to complete his Attestation. This was done on the Saturday 11th December 1915, again in Hove.

Thomas's Attestation form can be found on the following page and begins with a series of questions put to the Soldier and the answers are written down on the form next to the questions. By doing it this way there are no mistakes made should the Soldier not be able to read or write properly. These are fairly simple and straight forward questions about name and

address, previous service etc.

Thomas would then sign a declaration to state the answers given were true and that he would fulfil the engagements made. Thomas would then have taken the oath, which was as follows;

**OATH TO BE TAKEN BY RECRUIT
 ON ATTESTATION**

I, Thomas Burgess, swear by Almighty God, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and dignity against all enemies and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

The next step on the Attestation Form is to have everything certified by a magistrate. This went as follows;

**CERTIFICATE OF
 MAGISTRATE OR ATTESTING
 OFFICER**

The Recruit above named was cautioned by me that if he made false answer to any of the above questions he be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act. The above questions were then read to the Recruit in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me at Hove on this 11th day of December 1915
 Signature of the Justice
 Certificate of Approving
 Officer.

The Approving Officer was a Captain.



Dec. 15 1915

Army Form No. 501

TERRITORIAL FORCE.
 4 years' Service in the United Kingdom.

ATTESTATION OF
 No. 38200 Name *Thomas Burgess* Corps **4TH ROYAL SUSSEX REGT**

Questions to be put to the Recruit before Enlistment.

1. What is your Name and Address? *Thomas Burgess
 29 Lennox St
 Brighton*

2. Are you willing to be attested for service in the Territorial Force for the term of 4 years provided His Majesty should so long require your services for the County of *Sussex* to serve in the *4th Royal Sussex Regt*?

3. Have you received a notice stating the liabilities you are incurring by enlisting and do you understand them?

4. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in the Royal Navy, the Army, the Royal Marines, the Militia, the Special Reserve, the Territorial Force, the Imperial Yeomanry, the Volunteer, the Army Reserve, the Militia Reserve, or any Naval Reserve Force? If so, state which unit, and, if discharged, cause of discharge.

5. Are you a British Subject?

Under the provisions of Sections 13 and 39 of the Army Act, if a person knowingly makes a false answer to any question contained in the attestation paper, he renders himself liable to punishment.

Thomas Burgess do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements made.

Thomas Burgess SIGNATURE OF RECRUIT.
E. W. Golden SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY RECRUIT ON ATTESTATION.
Thomas Burgess swear by Almighty God, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs, and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, in Person, Crown, and Dignity against all enemies, according to the conditions of my service.

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE OR ATTESTING OFFICER.
 I, *Capt. Bruce Brown*, do hereby certify, that, in my presence, all the foregoing Questions were put to the Recruit above named, that the Answers written opposite to them are those which he gave to me, and that he has made and signed the Declaration, and taken the Oath in this *11th* day of *December* 1915. *Bruce Brown* Signature of Justice of the Peace, Officer, or other person authorized to attest Recruits.

If any objection is required on this page of the Attestation, a Justice of the Peace should be represented to make it and send the Attestation under Section 39 (1) of the Army Act.
 The Recruit should, if he requires it, receive a copy of the Declaration on Army Form E. 2011.
 (Have these printed.) (Check each Lough.)

Finally another Approving Officer, this time a Major, completed the medical Form which stated Thomas was posted to the 4th Royal Sussex Regiment's depot at Horsham, Sussex on the Monday 13th December 1915.

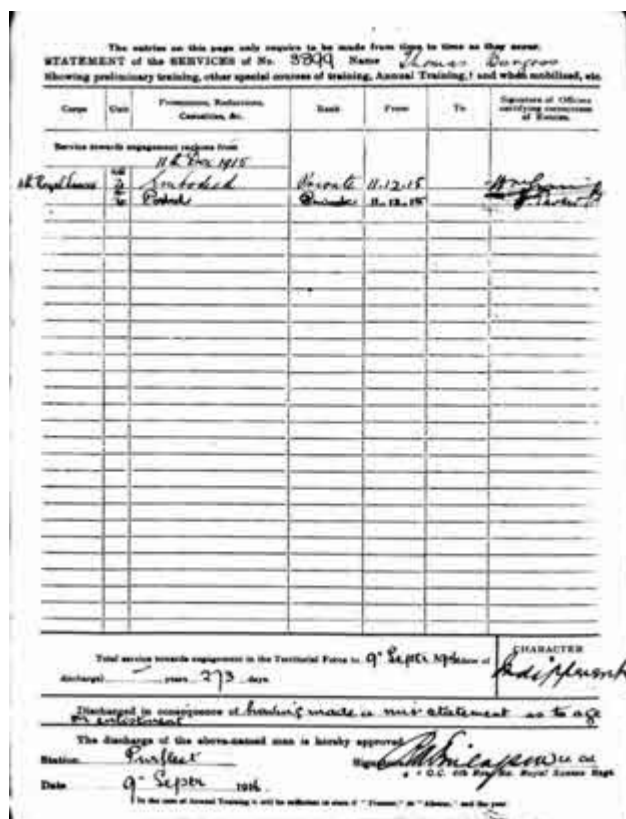
I cannot help wondering if this was the Barracks in Broadbridge Heath, Horsham which I use to see in the fields during my journey from Brighton to Farnham in my Army days? The Barracks was demolished in the 1970's and is now part of the Leisure Centre and Tesco.

So Thomas Victor Burgess, Regimental Number 3899, started his Army career with the 4th Battalion The Royal Sussex Regiment. He had answered all the questions, been vetted by a number of different people of varying ranks, all of whom had signed the forms to state that Thomas was fit, well and capable of serving his Country and die for it if need be.

There was one major problem to all of this and that problem was a serious one. Thomas Victor Burgess, on the date of his medical on 3rd December 1915, was just SIXTEEN years of age.

How the discovery was made is not known. Maybe his father, mother or brothers had found out where he was and told the Army the truth? Maybe Thomas himself became homesick and told them? Or maybe it was just a normal follow up check for a birth certificate had made the discovery? How or who discovered the truth will never be known but discovered it was. Thomas had served his Country for 273 days before being discovered and discharged from the Army

On Thomas's 'Statement of the Services' form it shows Thomas was embodied and posted on Saturday 11th December 1915. At the bottom of the page it states that on Saturday 9th September 1916 Thomas was discharged.



Next to 'Discharged in consequence of' is written "having made a misstatement as to age on enlistment"

The document was signed by a Lt. Colonel who was the Officer Commanding, of the 4th (reserve) Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment. This appears to be in Purfleet, which I believe is the one in Essex?

Looking carefully at the 'Medical Inspection Report' next to the 'Apparent Age' there is a little comment which says 'Born 3 Dec 1899

with certificate from 21 Aug 1916'. I can only assume this was written after the mistake was discovered and a copy of Thomas's Birth Certificate was seen?

It is not known, nor recorded, if Thomas got into trouble for what he had done.

The entries on this page only require to be made from time to time as they occur.

No. 3899 Name, Thomas Burgess
MILITARY HISTORY SHEET.

1. Service.	Place	From	To	Years	Days
	<i>Home</i>	<i>18 Dec 1916</i>	<i>9-9-16</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>273</i>
2. Passed classes of instruction? (This includes any number and class of instruction.)					Records of Other making the entry.
3. Campaigns (with medals and decorations)					
<i>None 18.12.16 to 9.9.16</i>					
4. Wounded					
5. Effects of wounds					
6. Special instances of gallant conduct and services in public opinion					
7. Annuities					
8. Injuries in or by the Service					
9. Name and address of next of kin <i>M. G. Burgess (Mother) 29 Abchurch Lane Southampton</i>					

It may have been 'hushed up' because he had fooled so may Officers during his Medical and Attestation. Either way, Thomas's days in the Army were over for a while or at least until he had reached 18 years of age.

As it happens Thomas was never to re-join the Army again.

Thomas eventually went on and joined the Royal Navy. There are no records to say when this occurred, but I would have thought Thomas would have been of legal age and would not dare to try the same trick twice?

All we know of Thomas's Naval career was that he was based at HMS Victory, which was a Training facility in Portsmouth. Here he was Ordinary Seaman SS/9420.

Thomas's Military History Sheet

Tragically his life was to be cut short. Thomas was to catch a disease while in Portsmouth and was admitted to the Naval Hospital there in 1918. There was an epidemic throughout the whole of Europe at that time which became known as 'Spanish Flu'. This disease eventually killed over 30 million people in Europe. Being a Naval Port it would be an easy entrance into England.

Thomas Victor Burgess eventually succumbed to the illness and died of pneumonia eight days later on Thursday 12th September 1918 at Portsmouth. One cannot help thinking how his life would have been had he not been discharged from the Army?

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number: 3525157-7


REGISTRATION DISTRICT				PORTSMOUTH				
1918 DEATH in the Sub-district of				in the County of Portsmouth C.B.				
Portsea and Landport								

Columns	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
	12th September 1918 20, Royal Naval Barracks Portsmouth	Thomas Victor Burgess	Male	18	Seaman H.M.S. 'Victory' Brighton	Consumption & lung Disease Contracted by Ordice H. Burgess 1913	John J. Angley Seaman in the ship 16, Cliff Road South End Portsmouth	12th September 1918	A.W. [Signature] Registrar

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 28th day of September 2011

DYD 116409



CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE. ©CROWN COPYRIGHT
 WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

Copy of Thomas Victor Burgess Death Certificate

Although the entry below states Thomas died at home on the 12th September 1918, the death Certificate states he died at the Royal Naval Barracks, Portsmouth. The Certificate should, and would, be correct.

BURGESS
Thomas Victor

Ordinary Seaman SS/9420, H.M.S. 'Victory', Royal Navy. Portsmouth Division. Died at home 12th September 1918. Aged 18. Son of Mr G. H. A. & Eliza Burgess of 29, Lennox Street, Brighton. Listed in St. Peters Memorial Book under Royal Navy Seamen. Buried in Brighton Bear Road Cemetery.

There were many young seamen who died of this disease in Portsmouth and a 'Roll of Honour' does exist for them. They were;

- Victory, RN Barracks/Base,
- Portsmouth, all illness BRUTON,
- William, Ordinary Seaman, SS
- 9201 BURGESS, Thomas V,
- Ordinary Seaman, SS 9420
- CUNNIFFE, Henry, Ordinary
- Seaman, SS 9547 DOWLING,
- John J, Stoker 2c, K 53483
- EVANS, Evan O, Able Seaman,
- MMR, 825383 GREEN, Leonard,
- Stoker 2c, K 52679 HAMMOND,

George L, Signal Boy, RNR, SB
2265 HEWITT, Alfred C, Ordinary
Seaman, SS 5934 KENNEDY,
Colin, Ordinary Seaman, SS 8929
LLOYD, John J, Stoker 1c, SS
116844
MACKAY, James Mc D, Seaman,
RNR, A 9501 STREETER, Edward V,
2nd Cook's Mate, M 33678
TOINTON, Charles H, Ordinary
Seaman, SS 9210 WICHELOW,
Thomas C J, Ordinary Seaman, SS
9318

Thomas is mentioned on the British Legion's 'Roll of Honour' and has a grave which should be maintained by the War Graves Commission.

Name: Thomas Victor
Burgess Rank: Ord Smn
Birth Date: 3 Dec 1899
Birth Place:
Brighton,
Sussex Branch
of Service:
Royal Navy
Cause of Death: Died from disease Official Number Port
Division: S.S.9420. (Po) Death Date: 12 Sep 1918 Ship or
Unit: HMS Victory

Location of Grave: R.39. 64.

Name and Address of Cemetery: Brighton & Preston Cemetery,
Hartington Rd, Brighton, Sussex Relatives Notified and Address:
Father: George, 29, Lennox St, Brighton.

Thomas Victor Burgess - 1899 - 1918

A brave man or a young fool hardy lad?

Sources:

Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk) for First World War Service Records and Medal Index Cards