UNFINISHED LIVES

William and Violet Inglis 1873-1941

David Sulman Carment
CONTENTS

Preface

PART ONE: WILLIAM

1. A Scottish Soldier 1873-1913
2. Serving Australia 1913-1927
3. St George Retirement 1927-1941

PART TWO: VIOLET

4. The Soldier’s Daughter 1903-1926
5. Marriage and Motherhood 1926-1933
6. Divorce, Remarriage and Death 1933-1939

Epilogue: Mary 1941-1958
Preface

This history of my great grandfather William Inglis (pronounced Ingles) and his daughter, my grandmother Violet Louise Inglis (later Sulman and Elvy) is of two lives that were and are unfinished. The undermining of his health during the First World War precipitated William’s death. Violet was killed while still young in a motor vehicle accident. Few of their personal papers survive. Although William was a well-regarded soldier, he was not a prominent public figure. Violet was even less well known. Their stories can only be partially recorded from accessible historical sources.

There are, however, strong personal motives for me to write about them. As a child, I quite frequently visited William’s widow, my great grandmother Mary Inglis, at her Carlton home in southern Sydney. Stories of William’s courage, good humour and generosity were part of my upbringing. His exemplary service in the British and Australian armies allowed him to escape his Scottish working class origins. Violet intrigued me as a shadowy and sometimes mysterious figure. Relatives spoke of her vivacity, charm and good looks. My mother Diana, her only child, kept photographs of her. When I was very young, my mother would sometimes talk about Violet but in later years said that she could not properly remember her. It was not until I was a teenager that I learned that Violet and my grandfather Tom Sulman were divorced and only much later did I find out that she left my six-year old mother with family members in Sydney before joining her lover Wallace Elvy in Britain, never to see Diana again. The account that follows is a response to long-standing curiosity.

William and Violet are also worthy of attention for other reasons. As my friend and fellow historian Mickey Dewar pointed out, stories like theirs ‘do a lot to document the extraordinary upheavals that families experienced in the first half of the twentieth century as they struggled with Australian/British residence; wars; the Depression and other less dramatic intersections like…education, work and identity’.¹ Through their migration from Scotland to Australia, William’s military service in many different parts of the world and Violet’s six voyages between Australia and

¹ Mickey Dewar, email to the author, 18 June 2009.
Britain, they led what historians now describe as transnational lives. Their stories remind us, as Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott recently observed, ‘that white Australia has never existed in isolation from conflicts and crises elsewhere around the globe. Australian lives are intricately enmeshed with the world, bound by ties of allegiance and affinity, intellect and imagination.’ While William quickly identified with Australia and was happy to retire there, Violet yearned to return to the nation of her birth. William’s British army service provides a case study of Scottish soldiers’ contributions in assisting the British Empire reach its final peak. His later career illuminates aspects of Australia’s participation in the First World War. William’s marriage to Mary Ferguson was generally happy and produced four children, but his long absences from home resulted in similar difficulties for Mary and the children to those of many army families in the same era. Violet was much influenced by middle class women’s rapidly changing roles in Australia and Britain during the first four decades of the twentieth century. She was interested in fashion, films and travel, and defied social conventions in search of love. Numerous other western women of her class and generation shared her adventurous and restless spirit.

I could not have written this study without others’ help. I am particularly grateful to my late mother Diana Carment, my late great aunt Irene Inglis, William and Mary’s surviving grandchildren Sue George, David Inglis and Robyn McAlpine, and my siblings Annie Carment and Tom Carment for all their generous assistance. It is also my pleasure to thank the late Barbara Ash, the Australian War Memorial, Baiba Berzins, the late Maxwell Carment, Mickey Dewar, Zeny Edwards, Bill Gammage, the General Register Offices in Edinburgh and London, June Hunt, Peter Loveday, Robert McAlpine, the National Archives of Australia, the National Archives in Great Britain, the National Library of Australia, the New South Wales Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages, Christine Pittman, Jenny Rowland, the Royal Australian Historical Society library, St George Girls High School, Meryn Stranahan, and the State Library of New South Wales.

This attempt at her grandfather and mother’s biographies is dedicated to the beloved memory of Diana Inglis Carment (1927-2005).
PART ONE
WILLIAM
A Scottish Soldier 1873-1913

There was a soldier, a Scottish soldier
Who wandered far away and soldiered far away
There was none bolder, with good broad shoulders...

From the popular song ‘Scottish Soldier: The Green Hills of Tyrol’

William Inglis was born in the Greenside district close to the centre of Scotland’s capital city Edinburgh on 13 October 1873. He was the first child of William Inglis, a brassfinisher (journeyman), and his wife Joan Inglis, nee Sutherland. The place of birth on his birth certificate appears to be ’10 Simpstones Court’ but the writing is very difficult to read and no place resembling that name exists in maps of nineteenth century Greenside. His parents were married in Edinburgh on 24 January 1873. The surname Inglis was originally given in Scotland to distinguish the family of an English settler.

William Inglis senior would have been employed in a factory or workshop in which he sanded, buffed and polished brass products with the assistance of steam powered shafts, pulleys, belts, lathes and wheels. Working hours were generally long and fine dust, smoke and debris were often everywhere. Nothing else is known of


him and Joan Inglis except that in the 1881 Census they are recorded as being 29 and 31 years old respectively and living at 23 South St James Street in Greenside with three children: William, a scholar (that is at school) aged seven; Adam, a scholar aged four; and Marchall (in fact Marshall), aged one month. Joan is listed as ‘Jane’. William senior’s birthplace is shown as Edinburgh while Joan was born in Sunderland, Durham, England.5

The St James Square area, of which South St James Street was part, occupied a prominent position above the northeastern corner of Edinburgh’s best known and most beautiful thoroughfare, Princes Street, lined with handsome shops and overlooked by the impressive Edinburgh Castle. It was, though, of low socio-economic status.6 An 1819 map shows South St James Street being dominated by tall housing blocks where large numbers of tenants resided. These were not demolished until the 1970s.

---


Detail from map of St James Square in 1819 (National Library of Scotland),
images%3Fq%3DSt%2BJames%2Bedinburgh%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG,
downloaded 19 March 2009)

St James Square in the 1950s (Evening News). (http://
%2BSquare%2Bedinburgh%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26um%3D1,
downloaded 19 March 2009)
The young Willie or Will, as he was frequently called, grew up in Edinburgh but there is nothing further known of his life there until he joined the army on 20 July 1889. His first regiment was the 79th Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders, based at Edinburgh Castle. On 30 August that year, he transferred to the 2nd Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, his regimental home for the next 24 years. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were formed in 1881 from an amalgamation of the 91st Argyllshire Highlanders raised in 1794 and the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders raised in 1799. The regimental headquarters was at Stirling Castle, ‘the gateway to the north’. The regiment’s men wore ‘government tartan’ kilts and distinctive sporrans (pouches hung on the fronts of kilts), each with six tassels.

In spite of its obvious dangers, an army career offered greater opportunities for advancement, adventure, glamour, travel and secure employment than were found in most other occupations open to a Scottish working class boy of William’s generation. There was also a strong martial tradition in Scotland of which he must have been very conscious. His two brothers, Adam and Marshall, later joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, as did a number of his cousins.

The army encouraged him to further his education as in about 1890 he obtained his 2nd Class Military Leaving Certificate at Dr Bell’s School, which occupied a prominent nineteenth century building in Great Junction Street Edinburgh. Posted to the 1st Battalion of his regiment in the British colony of Hong Kong on 16 December 1890, he had his earliest experience of overseas living in a mainly Chinese community that could hardly have been more different from Edinburgh. Returning home in the following year, on 18 August 1892 he was promoted Lance Corporal in

---

7 These and all other details of William’s British army service are, unless separately acknowledged, from an undated detailed record compiled by his son Norman Inglis and in the author’s possession. His army service records could not be found in the National Archives in Kew, London. Many such records were destroyed by bombing during the Second World War,


9 Robin Wilson [a retired Lieutenant-Colonel in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders who served with William], letter to William Inglis, 10 August 1937, in the author’s possession.
Edinburgh and on 1 April 1894, still in Edinburgh, was made a Corporal. On 8 April 1896 at Aldershot in England, he became a Lance Sergeant, and on 8 December that year in Aldershot was promoted to Sergeant. As a Sergeant, he was second in command of a platoon of about 30 to 50 men.

Dr Bell's School in Edinburgh, no date, (http://www.edinphoto.org.uk/10/12_edinburgh_today_-_dr_bells_school.htm, downloaded 17 February 2009)

On 26 October 1894, Corporal Inglis, based at North Camp in Aldershot, was married in a Presbyterian service in Edinburgh to Mary Ann Ferguson, who was born in that city on 12 October 1874.\(^9\) She was the daughter of Peter Ferguson (about 1854-1900), an illiterate labourer (he could not sign his name), and his wife Susan Ferguson, nee Reilly or Riley (born in about 1855). In 1881, she had two brothers and a sister. She lived with her parents at 1 Fleshmarket Close, High Street, Edinburgh, one of the city’s most overcrowded and confined precincts.\(^8\) There are no other details of her upbringing but the shaky grammar in her later letters indicates a limited

\(^9\) ‘Extract from an entry in a REGISTER OF MARRIAGES’, District of St George in the County of Edinburgh, 1894, given under the Seal of the General Register Office, New Register House, Edinburgh, 1 October 2004, in the author’s possession.

\(^8\) ‘1874 FERGUSON, MARY ANN [Statutory Births 685/04 0966]’, image generated 12 February 2009 from ScotlandsPeople; ‘1881 British Census 1 Fleshmarket Close (High Street)’, printout dated 8 November 2004 from Robyn McAlpine (nee Inglis); ‘1900 FERGUSON, PETER [Statutory Deaths 685/04 1031]’, image generated 14 February 2009 from ScotlandsPeople.
formal education. It must be assumed that she met her future husband before he moved to Aldershot.

Fleshmarket Close in 1845

A diminutive, kindly, quiet and uncomplaining woman who was devoted to her husband, Mary spent much of the next two decades moving with him from one set of army married quarters to another. Their initial home together was in Aldershot but by September 1896, they were at the Maryhill barracks in Glasgow, Scotland’s largest city. On 9 September 1896, their first child, Mary, was born at the Fergusons’ home in Fleshmarket Close. Tragically for her parents, on 20 May 1897 at Maryhill she died.

12 ‘1896 INGLIS, MARY [Statutory Births 685/04 0810]’, image generated on 14 February 2009 from ScotlandsPeople.
of acute laryngitis aged only seven months. A year later, on 10 August 1898, their first son, William Anderson, known as Bill, was born at Maryhill.

William’s time with Mary and Bill was short lived. In August 1899, his battalion was warned to make ready for war in South Africa, where trouble was rapidly developing between the British and the Boers, the descendants of Dutch immigrants who by the late nineteenth century controlled the independent republics of Orange Free State and Transvaal. Together with his brothers Adam, a Lance Corporal, and Marshall, a bugler and drummer, William sailed from Queenstown in Ireland on SS Orcana with the 1st Battalion of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Its 1,080 men arrived at Cape Town on 19 November. In the meantime, war erupted between Britain and the Boer republics on 12 October 1899. Within a week General Sir Redvers Buller was despatched to South Africa to command the British imperial forces there in what many wrongly believed would be a short and sharp conflict.

The Inglis brothers’ battalion was placed under Buller’s command as part of the Highland Brigade led by Major General Andrew Wauchope and the 1st Division under Lieutenant General Lord Methuen. The tactical situation was still very fluid, with the Boers besieging the towns of Mafeking and Ladysmith. To relieve both places, Methuen assigned the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders to a force on the Orange River that would advance along the Cape Town to Kimberley railway line. The battalion went into action against the Boers on 28 November 1899 at the point where the line crossed the Modder and Riet rivers. However, well-concealed artillery ambushed the British column and for 10 hours under blazing sun kept it pinned down. The Highlanders’ kilts provided them with little protection against the sun and many got badly blistered legs. Among the battalion’s 112 casualties was Adam Inglis, who

---

13 ‘1897 INGLIS, MARY [Statutory Deaths 622/01 022171]’, image generated on 14 February 2009 from ScotlandsPeople.

14 ‘1898 INGLIS, WILLIAM ANDERSON [Statutory Births 622/01 09541]’, image generated on 30 January 2009 from ScotlandsPeople.

15 Royle, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, pp 93-94; 1899 newspaper cuttings in Mary & William Inglis, newspaper cuttings book, in the author’s possession.
died on 28 November. The battle went on until, late in the day, the Boers were forced to retreat and the British crossed the Modder River.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{battle_of_modder_river}
\caption{The Battle of Modder River as drawn by a British officer of the Grenadier Guards (The Mansell Collection, reproduced in W Baring Pemberton, \textit{Battles of the Boer War}, B T Basford, London, 1964)}
\end{figure}

Marshall and William had little time to mourn Adam as on 10 and 11 December the battalion was again in action at Magersfontein Kopje, a rocky outcrop that reminded the advancing British soldiers of the prow of a battleship. From the very start, the poorly planned operation proved costly. The well-positioned Boers fired at close range into the British ranks, causing disorder and panic. Both Major General Wauchope and the 1\textsuperscript{st} Battalion’s commanding officer were killed in the heavy rifle fire. The British position rapidly became hopeless. Their command structure collapsed and survivors were pinned down in the hot sun, clearly exposed to Boer snipers. The Highland Brigade made a panic-stricken retreat to safety. Thirty-

six Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were killed in the debacle.\textsuperscript{17} Marshall and William were most fortunate to be among the survivors. Following the events from afar, Mary pasted news stories about the war into her cuttings book. She would have been enormously relieved when she learned that her husband was safe.

In early 1900, the British forces were expanded and regrouped under the new leadership of Field Marshal Lord Roberts and General Lord Kitchener. Major General Hector Macdonald, who had risen from the ranks and was known as ‘Fighting Mac’, replaced Wauchope in the Highland Brigade. The changes raised spirits and led to a string of British victories. In February, Kitchener defeated the Boers at Paardeberg in a fierce battle that extended for almost a week. William was among the Highland Brigade soldiers who made a frontal attack there on the Boer positions. During this fighting a further 23 members of his battalion were killed. On 16 March 1900, William was promoted to Colour Sergeant, a rank bestowed on courageous Sergeants who distinguished themselves in battles.\textsuperscript{18} Paardeberg marked the turn of the tide. Before long, the British advanced into Orange Free State and Transvaal and by September, Pretoria and Johannesburg, the principal Boer cities, were occupied.\textsuperscript{19}

The Boers still, nevertheless, experienced some successes in their attacks on the British and in one of these, in June 1900, both Marshall and William were taken prisoner. They do not appear to have been badly treated and were released when the main Boer army surrendered in September. Mary carefully kept William’s telegrams regarding his imprisonment and release. These are the only surviving communications from him during his Boer War service.\textsuperscript{20} Not long afterwards, she learned on 4 October of her father’s death.\textsuperscript{21} Although she was far removed from the fighting in Dublin and later in Edinburgh, the war was a time of anxiety and grief for her.

\textsuperscript{17} Royle, \textit{The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders}, pp 96-98.


\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, pp 99-100.

\textsuperscript{20} William Inglis, telegrams to Mary Inglis, 14 May and 10 September 1900, in the author’s possession.

\textsuperscript{21} ‘1900 FERGUSON, PETER’.
William remained in South Africa until May 1902, being engaged in campaigns in Cape Colony and Transvaal against the approximately 30,000 Boer guerrillas who refused to give up. On 3 July 1901, a column under the command of Colonel G E Benson of which William was a member surprised the Boers at Vlakfontein, killing six of them and capturing large numbers of horses and cattle. For the rest of the war William took part in a series of drives in which Boers, including women and children, were rounded up and put in concentration camps. Their homes were burnt to the ground. Ultimately these brutal tactics worked but they received much criticism.²²

Colour Sergeant William Inglis in South Africa in about 1901. The broad brimmed hat gave some protection against the sun and a kilt apron covered the sporran.
(In the author’s possession)

By the end of the South African conflict, William was a very experienced and obviously much valued member of his battalion and regiment. Although only about 167 centimetres tall, he appeared impressive in his uniform. In the fashion of the day, he curled and waxed the ends of his moustache. For his service, he received the Queen’s South African Medal with four clasps and the King’s South African Medal with two clasps, each clasp representing a battle or campaign that was felt worthy of commemoration. His return to Britain in 1902 after almost three dangerous and difficult years in South Africa allowed him to resume a family life. Three-year-old Bill Inglis would not have remembered him. There was much catching up to do.

On 19 February 1903, he was posted to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders’ depot at Stirling Castle. His second daughter, Violet Louise, was born there in the Military Married Quarters at Kings Stables on 6 December 1903. On 24 November 1904, he was attached to the permanent military staff at Guernsey in the Channel Islands, and on 1 February 1906, he was transferred back to his battalion in Chatham in England. On 1 July 1907, he was posted to Thornliebank, near Glasgow, as an instructor on the permanent staff of the 3rd Volunteer Battalion of his regiment. His second son, Norman Argyll, was born in Thornliebank on 7 September 1907. The family moved to Paisley in Scotland when he was posted to the 6th Territorial Battalion on 1 March 1908. Volunteers and Territorials were part-time soldiers with a similar function to the Army Reserve in Australia today. Each of their battalions had a small core of regular officers and non-commissioned officers like William. On 1 September 1909, he was promoted Sergeant Major, the most senior non-commissioned officer rank in the British army at that time. In an unusual period of domestic stability, he and the family remained at Paisley for over five years. Eleven kilometres to the east of Glasgow, it was a large town with some handsome public

---


24 ‘1907 INGLIS, NORMAN ARGYLL [Statutory Births 562/00 004141]’. Image generated 24 March 2009 from ScotlandsPeople.
buildings and was famous for its weaving industry.²⁵ Violet and Norman commenced their schooling there.

A memorial at Stirling Castle unveiled by the Duchess of Montrose on 12 January 1907 commemorates the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders during the Boer War. It takes the form of a granite pedestal surmounted by the statue of a bareheaded, kilted soldier of the regiment with bandolier, blanket and water bottle hung across his shoulders and his rifle at the ready. Names of the 149 men in the regiment who lost their lives in South Africa are listed on the pedestal, Adam Inglis among them. Hubert Paton was the sculptor.²⁶ For many years within the Inglis family, there has been a strong belief that William was Paton’s model. While this is neither confirmed nor denied in other sources, the face of the soldier in the statue closely resembles William’s.


²⁶ ‘Roll of Honour’.
Boer War memorial, Stirling Castle in 1998
(The author)

Top part of statue, Stirling Castle in 1998
(The author)
William claimed his discharge from the army on 19 August 1913. He was at the time Regimental Sergeant Major, that is the highest-ranking non-commissioned officer, in the 6th Territorial Battalion at Paisley. He had added the Imperial Long Service and Good Conduct Medal and the King George V Coronation Medal to his other awards. His fellow senior non-commissioned officers and officers in the battalion presented him with inscribed silver cigarette cases.
Cigarette cases presented to William Inglis in 1913
(The author. In the author’s possession.)

His reasons for seeking a discharge are undocumented but his service was long enough to qualify for an army pension. It is also likely he believed that in spite of all his experience, including attendance at various army schools of instruction, he would never at his age reach commissioned (that is officer) rank. Scottish soldiers from poor backgrounds and who started as Privates, the most notable of whom was Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, did very occasionally obtain commissions before the First World War. However, it was rare and usually occurred well before the men concerned reached their fortieth birthdays.

William and his family decided to settle in Sydney, Australia, the home of many other emigrant Scots and a country that appeared to have a much less rigid social structure than England or Scotland. The climate, which compared favourably with Scotland’s, was also a possible attraction. Possibly in response to an offer or advertisement, he seems to have organised an appointment in the Permanent Australian Military Forces to take effect as soon as he arrived in his new country.
William was appointed a Staff Sergeant in the Permanent Australian Military Forces on 24 October 1913.\(^1\) Staff Sergeants’ roles were normally administrative, the rank being quite frequently given to senior non-commissioned officers responsible for equipment and stores.\(^2\) Following Field Marshal Lord Kitchener’s 1909 report, the Australian army at this time comprised a small core of Permanent, that is full-time, soldiers who provided organisational and training functions for a much larger Citizen, or part-time, component.\(^3\)

William and Mary purchased a new house, which they named ‘Argyll’, at 57 Arthur Street, Kogarah (the street later became part of Carlton) in Sydney’s still raw and rapidly developing southern suburbs. With Hurstville and Rockdale, Kogarah was part of the St George district. The Kogarah Municipality’s population in 1911 was 6,533, growing to 18,226 in 1921 and 30,646 in 1933. Not one of Sydney’s fashionable or wealthier areas, Kogarah could probably be best described in 1913 as lower middle class. Even so, it had many advantages. A railway line meant that its residents could travel easily and quickly to central Sydney, most of them lived in detached homes with gardens and the area was reasonably well provided with schools,

\(^1\) Unless otherwise cited, all information on William Inglis’ military service in this chapter is from Norman Inglis’ undated detailed record of that service in the author’s possession and/or from William’s digitised First World War service record in the National Archives of Australia, Canberra, series B2455, item L/Major. The National Archives was unable to locate any records for his military service between 1913 and 1914 and 1919 and 1927.


shops and other services. Nearby Carss Park on the Georges River was a popular place for swimming.4

While it is unknown exactly when ‘Argyll’ was built, its brick construction and style indicate that it was not long before William acquired it. His granddaughter Robyn McAlpine clearly recalls the house:

As you came up the front steps and into the hall there were two bedrooms on the left and one on the right. I remember Nanny [Mary] using the one on the left in her latter years. The hall led into the loungeroom but did not go through to the back verandah. On the left side of the loungeroom there was a door leading to the dining room and a door from the dining room into the kitchen. I’m not sure if I’m remembering correctly but I think there may have been a step down into the kitchen. Another door led from the kitchen to the closed in back verandah. There was a long central path in the backyard leading up to the laundry at the back on the right side.5

My own rather hazy memory is that while there was a bathroom in the house, the toilet was located in the back garden. ‘Argyll’ remained William and Mary’s home until the latter’s death in 1958. It still stands but has been very extensively modified.

William had only a short time to enjoy his new home as in August 1914 the British Empire, including Australia, entered the First World War. On the outbreak of war the British government asked Australia to take control of German New Guinea, a colony acquired in 1884 that comprised the northeastern quarter of New Guinea and a number of islands to the east, the largest of which were Bougainville and New Britain. The Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force, a motley and incompletely trained collection of naval reservists, infantry soldiers and machine gunners, was quickly raised under Colonel William Holmes’ command. William

---


5 Robyn McAlpine (nee Inglis), email to the author, 26 February 2009.
enlisted in this force on 9 August 1914 and on 18 August was promoted to Warrant Officer Class 1, the highest non-commissioned rank in the Australian army. He sailed from Sydney with the force as a Regimental Sergeant Major and Assistant Provost Marshall, a post that dealt with disciplinary matters, on HMAS Berrima the following day. The warships HMAS Australia and HMAS Sydney provided an escort.6

The force commenced landing at Kakabaul in New Britain on 11 September. After a short fight in which six Australians were killed, the wireless station at Bitapaka was destroyed and Rabaul, the capital of German New Guinea, capitulated two days later. William participated in a successful advance to nearby Toma, to which the German Governor had withdrawn, which surrendered on 17 September. He also took part in the subsequent occupation of Kieta on Bougainville and Kaiser Wilhelmsland on the New Guinea mainland before serving the military government established to administer the former German territory. He remained there, based in Rabaul, until March the following year. His earliest surviving letter is a brief undated postcard sent to his son Norman from Rabaul.7


7 William Inglis, postcard to Norman Inglis, no date [1914 or 1915], in Robyn McAlpine’s possession.
As Assistant Provost Marshall, he was almost certainly involved in the single most contentious episode of Australia’s military administration. In retaliation for the flogging by drunken Germans of a British missionary, Colonel Holmes ordered that provosts (military policemen) in Rabaul publicly flog the four Germans concerned on 30 November 1914. The floggings caused international protests and demands were made for Holmes to be disciplined but the Australian government stood by him. It is hard to tell from grainy photographs of the event if William was present, but it is likely as the senior non-commissioned officer among the provosts that he was. He did not, for obvious reasons, discuss the event with his family nor is it mentioned in his service record or surviving papers.  

---

8 For descriptions of the floggings, see Mackenzie, *The Australians at Rabaul*, pp 120-126 and, for an eyewitness’s memories, *The Sun*, 9 November 1965.
On 15 December 1919, long after the New Guinea campaign, the French government awarded William with the *Medaille Militaire* (Military Medal) for his service with the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force. It was the highest French decoration for a non-commissioned officer or enlisted man who showed bravery in action against an enemy force. He received the medal and its accompanying certificate in a ceremony, presumably in Sydney, on 22 July 1920.\(^9\) There was no citation and while this was the case with many other awards of the decoration, the Australian War Memorial file that includes recommendations for the *Medaille Militaire* does not mention him.\(^{10}\) A French warship, *Montcalm*, was, though, involved in operations in which he took part\(^{11}\) and William’s courage possibly came to the attention of the ship’s officers. Whatever the reasons for its bestowal, the medal was a most significant honour that he greatly valued.

On 27 March 1915, William was back in Sydney as an army instructor. His family was, no doubt, pleased to see him again. By August that year, nevertheless, he decided to join the Australian Imperial Force, an expeditionary force entirely composed of volunteers that was raised for overseas service.\(^{12}\) From the perspective of 2009, it seems an odd decision. He was almost 42 years old, had done more than his fair share of dangerous soldiering and his three children were still at home. However, he loved the military life and, like many of his generation, had a strong and uncomplicated sense of loyalty to his King and the British Empire. On 12 August 1915, he was appointed a Lieutenant in the Australian Imperial Force’s 32\(^{nd}\) Battalion. According to his enlistment papers, he was 167 centimetres tall, weighed 71


\(^{10}\) Amelia Hartney, Australian War Memorial, email to the author, 20 February 2009. The file is AWM25, 241/2. The historian Bill Gammage in an email to the author of 1 February 2010 suggests that the medal may be part of a post-war ‘block allocation’ to deserving men. I wrote to the archives of the French Ministry of Defence but received no response.


\(^{12}\) ‘Australian Imperial Force (AIF)’, in Dennis et al, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*. 
kilograms, had a chest measurement of 95 to 104 centimetres and had good eyesight. He embarked for service abroad on 8 November 1915, arriving at Suez in Egypt on 18 December.

Shortly after his arrival at Suez, he visited an officer with whom he had served in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. When the officer initially failed to recognise William, the latter asked him if he still liked two glasses of port after dinner. His memory of William immediately returned. On 21 February 1916, he transferred to the Headquarters of the 12th Infantry Brigade in Egypt as a Temporary Staff Captain and he was promoted to Captain on 14 April 1916. His brigade commander and fellow Scot, Brigadier General Duncan Glasfurd, would have previously known William as they were the same age and were together in 1900 with the 1st Battalion of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in South Africa. His duties in Egypt were mainly involved with administration and training. As part of its training, the 12th Brigade participated in a particularly arduous march across the Egyptian desert. Again, he made a favourable impression, being Mentioned in Despatches on 25 September 1916 for his ‘continuous good work’ between March and June 1916.

On 29 May 1916, he proceeded with his brigade to France, disembarking at Marseilles on 5 June and moving to the Western Front in northern France. During early July the 12th Brigade went into action against the Germans. The conditions were appalling, with soldiers spending much of their time in muddy trenches and suffering huge casualties when making attacks. They were also subjected to poison gas. As The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History explains the situation:

13 Robin Wilson, letter to William Inglis, 10 August 1937, in the author’s possession.


15 Bean, Anzac to Amiens, p 218.


At the point that the Australians were to enter battle on the Western Front the problem of the attack in trench warfare had been reduced to a matter of artillery resources. The two weapons that had prevented the infantry from gaining significant ground in all previous offensives were the machine-gun and the enemy’s artillery. Machine guns, firing about 600 rounds per minute, could destroy any formation of infantry once it had left the safety of its trenches and ventured into no man’s land. Such a slow-moving body could also be hit from long range by enemy artillery which could quite easily drop the shells into the relatively large space that no man’s land usually represented. The task of the attackers, therefore, was to annihilate these weapons or at least to suppress their fire for the period of time that its own infantry was exposed in no man’s land. As the foot-soldiers could not carry with them the implements to overcome the barbed-wire protected and entrenched machine-gunners (let alone the distant enemy guns) the tasks fell to their own artillery. In late July 1916, however, artillery was not present in such volume to accomplish these tasks.18

Early in August the 12th Brigade moved to Pozieres Heights, near the French village of Pozieres that Australian forces captured in July. The Australians’ objective during the following six weeks was the high ground between the village and Mouquet Farm. Between the end of July and early September they launched nine separate attacks, most of which were very costly and gained little ground.19 As The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History further explains:

the guns supporting the Australians could not dominate the German artillery; nor could they eliminate sufficient German machine-guns to allow the infantry to progress. Consequently the troops, not being bullet-proof, could only inch forward.20


19 Unless otherwise indicated, information on Australians at the Western Front is from Bean, Anzac to Amiens and ‘Western Front’.

20 ‘Western Front’, p 655.
Around Pozieres and Mouquet Farm, about 23,000 Australians were killed or wounded in six weeks.

From 5 to 15 August and 29 August to 3 September, William was constantly at the advanced dumps (that is stores) superintending the supply of ammunition, tools, food and water to soldiers on the front line. The dumps were at times heavily shelled yet he stuck to his task. By constant hard work, he assured the forward flow of supplies and also collected and sorted out large quantities of valuable equipment for salvage. These actions resulted in Brigadier General Glasfurd, who was killed in action a month later, recommending on 10 October 1916 that William receive the Military Cross. The recommendation was for ‘devotion to duty near Pozieres’. ‘This officer’s cheerful energy’, Glasfurd wrote, ‘had the best effect on all who came in contact with him’.21 Created in 1914, the Military Cross was granted to commissioned officers of the substantive rank of Captain or below and for Warrant Officers who performed acts of gallantry.22 Its award to William was gazetted on 1 January 1917.23

---


On 9 September 1916, William was admitted to hospital, suffering from colitis, a chronic digestive disease associated with inflammation of the colon. Ten days later, he was invalided to England but on 5 October was back with the 12th Brigade Headquarters in the field. He was promoted to Major in southern Belgium on 1 November 1916. During the next few months, he experienced one of the most awful winters of the war. Frequent snow and freezing sleet created mud and slush. Trench foot and frostbite cases increased. In spite of the terrible conditions, he still managed to send cheerful short postcards back to his family at home. Early in 1917, for instance, he wrote to Violet warmly congratulating her on being admitted to a high school.\(^{24}\) In April 1917, his brigade was involved in a disastrous attempt to penetrate the Germans’ Hindenburg Line near the French village of Bullecourt, which resulted in more heavy casualties. All of this led to a complete breakdown in William’s health, forcing him to relinquish his appointment with the 12th Brigade on 29 April 1917 after being admitted to hospital suffering from myalgia, rheumatism and gas poisoning on 20 April. It was probably during this hospital stay that the diaries he was keeping

\(^{24}\) William Inglis, undated postcard to Violet Inglis [March 1917], in the author’s possession.
were lost or taken from him. On 24 April 1917, he was transferred to England, where two days later he was admitted to the 4th London General Hospital.

William Inglis, postcard to Violet Inglis, about March 1917
(In the author’s possession)

On 22 July 1917, he embarked for Australia, reaching Melbourne on 24 September and then travelling on to Sydney for what must have been a joyous reunion with his family. On 19 March 1918, his Australian Imperial Force appointment was terminated due to his disability. Among other problems, his gas poisoning meant that he experienced severe coughing fits for the rest of his life, which cannot have been helped by his heavy cigarette smoking. He received for his wartime service

25 William Inglis, undated letter to Director, Australian War Memorial [received 20 February 1930], Australian War Memorial, Canberra, AWM93, 12/11/2931.

26 His granddaughter Diana Carment (nee Sulman) remembered the coughing fits well.
Bronze Star of 1914-1915, the General Service Medal 1914-1918, the Victory Medal with a bronze leaf for being Mentioned in Despatches and the Commonwealth Meritorious Service Medal.

Able to transfer as a Major back to the Australian Military Forces, until his retirement on 20 April 1927 William served in Sydney as the adjutant, that is the senior administrative officer, of two citizen (militia) battalions, of the Central Training Depot and of various schools of instruction. At the time of his retirement, he was with the 45th Battalion, St George Regiment, Citizen Military Forces, which gave him a farewell dinner at Sydney’s Imperial Service Club on 27 June 1927.27

Mary and William at ‘Argyll’ in about 1920
(In the author’s possession)

27 The 45th Battalion St George Regt. C.M.F. Farewell Dinner to Major Wm. Inglis, M.C., Sydney, 1927.
Major William Inglis, MC, at about the time of his retirement in 1927. The Military Cross is the first medal on the left and the Medaille Militaire is the last medal on the right.
(In the author’s possession)
THREE

St George Retirement 1927-1941

William’s retirement was mainly spent with Mary and his family, which expanded to include grandchildren who knew their Inglis grandparents as Grandad and Nannie or Nanny. Violet, whose life is described in more detail later, married Tom Sulman in 1926 and their only child, Diana, was born in 1927. Bill, a bookkeeper, married Florence Best in 1933 and they lived at Lindfield on Sydney’s north shore. Their two children, David and Sue, were born in 1935 and 1938 respectively. Norman, an accountant, was unemployed for much of the economically depressed 1930s and lived with his parents until his marriage to Irene Towers in 1937. He and Irene moved to a new home in Park Road, Kogarah, not far from ‘Argyll’. Both Bill and Norman served in the citizen forces, Bill becoming a Lance Sergeant and Norman receiving a commission.¹

As William received an Australian army pension in addition to his British one, he and Mary resided comfortably at ‘Argyll’. Life in the St George district suited them well and both established local personal friendships. Diana could not, when I asked her, recall either of her Inglis grandparents ever expressing a wish to be back in Britain or move to another part of Sydney. It is, though, unlikely that they were more than modestly well off. They did not, for instance, own a motorcar.

In spite of heart trouble and his persistent bad cough, William enjoyed horse riding and participated in special military parades on occasions like the King’s Birthday. His grandson David remembered his fondness for whisky, his loud voice and the fact that he never swore. The loud voice may have been due to Mary’s increasing deafness. In common with many other Protestant men of his generation

¹ This information comes from a variety of family sources, the index of the New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and Bill and Norman’s service records in the National Archives of Australia, series B4747 & B883, items 9289699 & 5664093.
with service backgrounds, William was an active Freemason, being a member of the Prince of Wales Masonic Lodge.²

David, Florence, Sue and Bill Inglis in 1939
(In the author’s possession)

Irene, Norman and Mary Inglis with Diana Sulman at ‘Argyll’ in about 1937
(In the author’s possession)

² David Inglis, conversation with the author, 19 April 2009; newspaper cutting [obituary of William Inglis], 16 January 1941. In recent years, some mainstream Australian Protestant denominations have discouraged their adherents from being Freemasons but that was not the case in the 1920s and 1930s. Catholics were prohibited by their church from Freemason membership although some ignored this directive.
The failure of Violet’s marriage, however, brought unexpected changes and anguish. She and Tom, in circumstances described in detail later, separated in 1931, came back together in England in 1932 and separated again in 1933. Violet returned to Australia with Diana in early February 1933, both staying at ‘Argyll’. She travelled to England without Diana at the end of that year, never to see her daughter again. After early 1934, both she and Tom lived separately in England. They were divorced in 1938 on the grounds of Violet’s adultery with Wallace Elvy. Violet and Wallace married shortly afterwards. Tom did not return to Australia until 1946. There appears to have been no contact between William and Mary and their new son in law although they kept in touch with Violet. On the other hand, they remained fond of Tom and William wrote to him. Violet’s death in a London motor accident on 1 April 1939 was a terrible shock.³ Their granddaughter Sue recalled that the telegram with the bad news was kept thereafter on a table near ‘Argyll’’s front door.⁴

³ See Chapters 5 & 6 for further details and full documentation. Both Diana Carment (nee Sulman) and Robyn McAlpine (nee Inglis) in various conversations with the author mentioned the lack of contact with Wallace.

⁴ Sue George (nee Inglis), conversations with the author, 2008 & 2009.
Diana lived with William and Mary for long periods and she was officially placed in their care on 19 July 1937.\(^5\) She lovingly remembered her grandparents; quite frequently speaking of William’s warm sense of humour and the way he impressed others with his charm. When she was very young, William built her a wonderful dolls’ house and a puppets’ theatre. Between 1933 and 1936, Diana attended the new Danebank School in Hurstville, not far from Kogarah, and she started boarding at Presbyterian Ladies College in Pymble on Sydney’s north shore in 1937.\(^6\)

\(^5\) National Archives, Kew, London, Records of the Supreme Court of Judicature and related courts, item J 77/3768/4782.

\(^6\) Diana Carment, various conversations with the author.
The trees are green the grass is too
The sky blue overhead,
But none are like my dreams of you,
As I ly in my bed.

Homesickness does no good,
As I have found out now,
But try as you would,
You feel it by the hour.

Every thing I get thats new,
All my friends no matter who.
Everything I ever do,
Are nothing like my dreams for you.7

William and Mary also visited Diana at Pymble. William’s charm impressed the
normally formidable Headmistress, Dorothy Knox. At school functions, Miss Knox,
as she was always known, would seek William out and ask him to sit with her.8

He regularly posted photographs of Diana to her parents in England. On the
back of each, he wrote a short humorous note describing her progress. One is of Diana
sitting on a merry go round horse and is captioned ‘Diana on Phar-Lap [the famous
Australian racehorse] at the [Royal Easter] Show with her mouth full of Barley
Sugar.’9 Another, of Diana and Mary both looking very serious, reads:

Inglis Sulman Progress Photo.
Copyright ?

7 Diana I Sulman, ‘Dreams’, no date [1937], in the author’s possession.
8 Diana Carment often told this story in conversations with the author.
9 William Inglis, undated postcard to Tom Sulman [1938], in the author’s possession.
Dear Tom they say this Photo is not nice however it is natural. Diana says that Nannie has high heeled shoes. Diana is really slightly taller than Nannie.\(^{10}\)

The last surviving photograph before he died, taken by a street photographer in October 1940, is a particularly happy one of him, Mary and Diana walking down a Sydney street after lunch together.

Mary, William and Diana in a Sydney street after lunch together in 1940
(William Inglis, postcard to Tom Sulman, 22 October 1940, in the author’s possession)

\(^{10}\) William Inglis, postcard to Tom Sulman, 11 November 1939, in the author’s possession.
On the Second World War’s outbreak in 1939, William unsuccessfully offered himself for military duties. In a written document setting out his experience, he described his occupation as ‘gentleman of leisure’ and noted that he suffered from ‘heart trouble’. ‘I will’, he continued, ‘tackle anything to be of use but under the circumstances administrative and sedentary duties might be preferable’.  

The authorities were right to decline his offer as he was clearly far from well. He died aged 67 at the St George District Intermediate Hospital in Kogarah on 10 January 1941 of pulmonary oedema, coronary thrombosis and cardio-vascular sclerosis. The death certificate recorded that he had suffered from the last condition for 13 years. His remains were cremated in a Presbyterian service at Woronora Crematorium on 11 January. It was in many respects a long distance from South St James Street in Edinburgh.

---

11 William Inglis, undated document setting out experience [1939], in the author’s possession.

PART TWO
VIOLET
FOUR

The Soldier’s Daughter 1903-1926

Violet Louise Inglis, as previously mentioned, was born on 6 December 1903 at the Military Married Quarters, King’s Stables, Stirling.¹ Her birthplace was just outside the walls of Stirling Castle but part of the castle precinct. Built in about 1870, the still standing Military Married Quarters comprise two stone blocks, one three storey and the other two storey.² With her family, she later moved to Guernsey, Chatham and Thornliebank before they settled in Paisley for five years from 1908. Her early education was in Paisley. However, no information has been found about the school or schools she attended there.

Violet was almost 10 when the family migrated to Australia so she retained memories of Scotland. She and her brothers Bill and Norman quite quickly lost their Scottish accents. They did not, though, adopt noticeably Australian accents. Bill, aged 15 when he reached Sydney, initially found it difficult to adjust to Australia. Violet’s reactions are unknown but she was keen to return to Britain as an adult. Norman, being the youngest in the family, appears to have settled in the most easily.³

Violet’s first school in Sydney was probably the Kogarah Superior School. This mainly functioned as an infants and primary school but some of its students were doing secondary work. Its enrolment in 1909 was 1,500. From 1913, the school included a Girls Intermediate High School department, which broke away in 1916 to form St George Girls High School.⁴


³ Conversations with Diana Carment (nee Sulman), David Inglis, Sue George (nee Inglis) and Robyn McAlpine (nee Inglis).

Violet entered St George Girls High School in Kogarah on 5 February 1917 and left on 19 December 1919 aged 16. Her record from the admissions register indicates that she completed the first and second academic years there and, on leaving school, her intended profession or occupation was ‘At home’.

She passed the Qualifying Certificate in order to be admitted to the school. Unlike some other girls pictured with her in a 1918 class photograph, including her future bridesmaid Kath Broome, she did not obtain an Intermediate Certificate. The school, opened in a period of quite rapidly increasing expectations regarding girls’ education in New South Wales, had high academic standards. In 1920, 16 of the 17 teachers were university graduates and there were 311 pupils. During Violet’s time as a pupil there, it had no uniform, most girls wearing blouses and skirts. School sports included tennis, swimming and hockey and there was an active camera club.

---

5 Katherine, St George Girls High School, email to the author, 13 February 2009.

6 List of St George Girls High School 1919 Intermediate examination results, provided to the author by June Hart, The St Georgians, 13 July 2009.

Violet Inglis in about 1914  
(In the author’s possession)

Violet (back row, last on left) with her class at St George Girls High School in 1918. Kath Broome, bridesmaid at her wedding in 1926, is immediately to her right. (St George Girls High School)
Violet seems to have spent the next six years living at ‘Argyll’ with her parents and helping her mother. There is no record of her undertaking any further formal education or being employed. While by this time more New South Wales girls than in the past were completing a secondary education or engaging in further studies, the majority did not do so. During her immediate post school years, like so many other young Australian women during the era known as ‘the roaring twenties’ and ‘the jazz age’, she became interested in fashion and films. She loved going to the cinema and tried to dress as her favourite actresses did. Even as a girl, she had a lively sense of humour, which included hiding from her father in a home cupboard. Photographs show that, like her mother, she was short in stature. She was, though, physically attractive, her future sister in law Florence describing her as ‘a pretty little thing’. At some stage in about 1924, she attracted the attention of Thomas Noel, always called Tom, Sulman, a salesman with Thomas Gurdon Motors in Sydney. They were engaged on 10 January 1925 not long after Violet’s 21st birthday. It is unclear how they met although Diana later thought it may have been because Violet was a friend of Tom’s sister Joan.

Tom was the son of Sir John Sulman (1849-1934) and his second wife Annie Elizabeth (nee Masefield), Lady Sulman (1865-1949), who lived in considerable comfort in their mansions ‘Burrangong’ on the harbour foreshore at McMahons Point in northern Sydney and ‘Kihilla’ at Lawson in the Blue Mountains near Sydney. The English-born John was a distinguished and highly successful architect, town planner and patron of the arts who was knighted in 1924. The Australian-born Annie was the adopted sister of the fabulously rich philanthropist Dame Eadith Walker and was quite well known as a photographer of Australian wildflowers. In spite of their prominence, neither John nor Annie came from particularly well to do families. John was the son

---

8 Meryn Stranahan (nee Shallard), conversations with the author, July 2007 in which she recalled the memories of her mother Joan Shallard (nee Sulman).

9 Irene Inglis, various conversations with the author.

10 David Inglis, conversation with the author, 21 April 2009.

11 Sydney Morning Herald, 10 January 1925.

12 Diana Carment, various conversations with the author.
of a small retailer while Annie was the daughter of a schoolteacher and the granddaughter of an Irish convict. This may explain why the apparent difference between the social classes to which the Inglis and Sulman families belonged in Australia was not of concern to them. John had three children with his first wife Sarah, who died in 1888, and four with Annie, of whom Tom, born at Wentworth Falls in the Blue Mountains on 25 December 1899, was the second youngest.\textsuperscript{13}

Tom was educated at Woodford Academy in the Blue Mountains, and when still young developed an absorbing interest in motor vehicles. After studying fitting, turning and mechanical drawing at Sydney Technical College, with his father’s financial assistance he designed and built motorcars. He also raced cars and motorcycles, and repaired and sold motor vehicles. Tom’s autobiography devotes great attention to motor vehicles and his racing but says very little about Violet, who when mentioned is always ‘my wife’.\textsuperscript{14} While she never shared his obsession, there were other strong reasons why she was drawn to him. He was handsome, fun loving, popular and from a wealthy and supportive family.


Their wedding took place on 30 January 1926 at Scots Presbyterian Church on Church Hill in Sydney. Violet wore an ‘exquisite’ veil of Brussels lace. Her gown, also of Brussels lace, was mounted over ivory satin. Reverend G W Willis officiated and William proudly gave the bride away. Tom’s school friend Bruce Shallard, a medical practitioner who married Joan Sulman in 1928, was the best man. The
bridesmaid, Kath Broome, was Violet’s classmate from St George Girls High School. After the ceremony, Mary received the guests at the nearby Petty’s Hotel.15

Tom and Violet’s first home together was ‘Euthella’, the holiday house (and after 1949 the home) of Tom’s eldest sister Florrie in Collaroy, a suburb alongside one

Violet at her wedding in 1926
(In the author’s possession)

of Sydney’s northern surf beaches. Designed and built by John Sulman in 1922, it was an idyllic residence incorporating ‘Arts and Crafts’ elements on the slope of a hill. Facing northeast, it fanned out to take full advantage of the sun and coastal breezes and had a huge garden with sweeping lawns, large trees and a tennis court.¹⁶ They often later returned there for enjoyable weekend visits.

Following their stay in ‘Euthella’, although the date is unclear, Tom and Violet moved to Cremorne, on Sydney Harbour’s north shore. Tom joined the distributors of Crossley vehicles as a salesman and promised Violet to give up racing for a year. He secretly, however, tested a friend’s racing car and almost had a bad accident.¹⁷ It was not a good omen for the future.

---


Towards the end of 1926, Tom had a row with the Crossley manager, ‘a pompous little Englishman, and it was unanimously decided that I would be there no longer’.\textsuperscript{18} John Sulman suggested buying a service station in Cremorne and financed Tom to do so. By this stage, in spite of his earlier promise to Violet, he was openly and frequently racing. His autobiography is filled with details of the races in which he participated and the cars that he drove.\textsuperscript{19} At about the same time as he acquired the service station, he and Violet moved into a large modern apartment at ‘Florida Flats’, 36 Milson Road, Cremorne. Still standing and located on the Cremorne Point foreshore, it has magnificent harbour views. It remained their home for the next three and a half years.\textsuperscript{20}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{36_Milson_Road_Cremorne_and_view_2009.jpg}
\caption{36 Milson Road, Cremorne (left) and its view (right) in 2009 (The author)}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., pp 28-30.

\textsuperscript{20} Sands NSW Directory for 1930, John Sands, Sydney, 1930, p 686. They lived in Flat 4.
On 6 September 1927, their daughter, Diana Inglis Sulman, was born at Cooinda Private Hospital in Cremorne,\textsuperscript{21} the same hospital in which her future husband Maxwell Carment was born nine years earlier. Tom recalled that this came after ‘three false alarms’.\textsuperscript{22} Violet and Tom appear to have been delighted with their new daughter. Diana spent her first few years in the Cremorne flat and joined her parents on frequent motor vehicle visits to their Inglis and Sulman relatives. Diana was, as mentioned earlier, a first grandchild for William and Mary Inglis, who treated her with much affection. She was the second grandchild for John and Annie Sulman and regularly went to ‘Burrangong’, as well as ‘Euthella’, which often provided a venue for Sulman family gatherings.

\textsuperscript{21} ‘BIRTH REGISTERED IN NEW SOUTH WALES AUSTRALIA’, Diana Inglis Sulman, issued at Sydney, 9 August 1984, in the author’s possession.

Violet and Diana, probably at ‘Argyll’, in 1927
(In the author’s possession)

Diana, Tom and Violet in about 1928
(In the author’s possession)
In 1928, Tom became unwell. He does not mention the name of his illness in his autobiography, but it affected his sight and hearing and required surgery with a long period of convalescence. As he could not work for several months, he sold the Cremorne service station. Once he returned to normal, he was appointed Sales Manager of New South Wales Motors, agents for the then popular Austin vehicles. He also participated in car trials.23

In 1929, Violet informed Tom that she wanted to visit Britain to see her birthplace again. As he was making a good income, he arranged for her to do so with Diana.24 Shipping records show that Violet and Diana arrived in London on Balranald on 17 May 1930 but were back in Fremantle en route to Sydney by the same ship on 8 July that year. The journeys were via Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide, Fremantle, Colombo, Port Said, Malta and Plymouth.25 As Tom later wrote, ‘My father had warned me that he considered we were all living beyond our means and it could not last, but I am afraid I did not believe him. Unluckily he was right and I had to cable my wife to return immediately’.26

The aborted holiday marked the beginning of the end of the marriage. At about the time Violet and Diana returned, Tom took up a new job organising Standard motor vehicle sales in New South Wales but before long he was unemployed when, due to the Great Depression, the company for which he worked went into liquidation. For a while, Tom ran motor auctions but found it hard to get much business so he went back to repairing vehicles. In spite of the financial difficulties, he continued his racing. In

23 Ibid., pp 30-32.

24 Ibid., p 32.


26 Ibid., pp 33-34.
early 1931, Violet asked Tom for a separation.27 ‘As’, he recalled, ‘there was just enough money coming in from investments to support her and Diana, I decided to try my luck overseas’.28 He arrived in Hull, England on Moreton Bay on 13 April 1931. One can only speculate about the reasons for the separation. Violet possibly met her future second husband Wallace Elvy on one of her 1930 voyages. While he does not appear in the Balranald passenger lists, he might have been a crewmember, perhaps, as Irene Inglis later suggested, a ship’s steward.29 It also seems that Violet and Tom were increasingly incompatible due to their differing interests and Tom’s insistence on continuing to race.

Tom found various temporary jobs in England, including repairing and driving vehicles, looking after an aeroplane and operating a cinema projector, before being employed as a salesman at the Bedford truck agency at Hendon near London. In early 1932, Violet attempted to rescue the marriage when she and Diana sailed to England to join Tom there, arriving at London on Strathnaver on 22 April 1932.30 Tom got a new job at Maidenhead near London selling Hillman cars. The family lived at ‘Peace Cottage’, a traditional house with a thatched roof, in Cookham Dean, a beautiful small village in the Thames Valley.31 Although Diana later said that she could scarcely recall her time in ‘Peace Cottage’, when I was a small boy she drew me a picture of it. It was from Cookham Dean that Violet wrote her future sister in law Irene one of her

27 Ibid., p 34.

28 ‘UK Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960 – Ancestry.co.uk’,
http://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/ssedll?indiv=1&MS_AdvCB=...
3892 x=1& F0004517 x=1& ne=3&pcat=40&fh=0&h=4178771&recoff=1+3,
downloaded 30 January 2009.

29 Robyn McAlpine (nee Inglis) suggested this possibility, based on what her mother told her, to the author on 10 February 2009. Irene could not, though, remember on which voyage Wallace and Violet met. It could have been on her trip to England in 1932.

30 ‘UK Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960 – Ancestry.co.uk’, http://search.co.uk/
egi-bin/ssedll?indiv=1&db=bt26&...
=1& 83004002 x=1&sho=0&ne=3&pcat=40&fh=1&h=8588714&recoff=1+3,
downloaded 30 January 2009.

few surviving letters. On the back of an undated postcard depicting ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’, a local inn, it reads:

_Irene Dear A little inn in this quaint old village Do write again soon. I am better now but have had a rotten skin. Hope our Norman has something to do [illegible word] this. Master still hasn’t. Much love_  
Violet²²

![Uncle Tom's Cabin, Coolham, Dean](image)

**Violet’s postcard to Irene Towers in about 1932**  
(In the author’s possession)

‘It was wonderful’, Tom remembered, ‘having my daughter with me again but the marriage was still not a success’.³³ Possibly the breaking point came for Violet when, in an argument over sales commissions, Tom angrily pushed his employer through a closed glass office door and lost his job.³⁴ Although I remember Tom as a

---

³² Violet Sulman, undated postcard to Irene Towers [about 1932], in the author’s possession.


³⁴ _Ibid._
gentle person, his autobiography reveals several nasty instances in which he violently attacked people with whom he disagreed. Diana, in spite of loving him dearly, once noted without further comment that he was an unpleasant person when drunk. She said on another occasion that ‘Peace Cottage’ was ‘far from peaceful’. While the later divorce papers are not specific about when Violet commenced a relationship with Wallace Elvy, they suggest that it was while she and Tom were at ‘Peace Cottage’. ‘My wife and I’, Tom’s autobiography briefly records, ‘decided to part for good and she went back to Australia with my daughter’.

Violet and Diana arrived in Fremantle en route to Sydney on Barrabool on 20 February 1933. Diana, accompanied by a nurse, was unwell with whooping cough for most of the voyage. The Sydney Morning Herald of 3 April 1933 has a news item featuring Violet’s photograph which states:

Mrs. Tom Sulman, who is out here on a visit, and is staying with her father, Major Inglis, of Arthur Street, Kogarah. Mrs. Sulman will be returning soon to England. Her husband is the son of Sir John Sulman.

As earlier discussed, Diana commenced school at Danebank shortly after returning to Australia. Violet appears to have resumed contact with the Sulman family as there are photographs from this period of Diana and her at ‘Euthella’.

35 The conversations with Diana Carment were in about 1970 and 2004.
38 ‘National Archives of Australia – Passengers Report’.
39 Diana Carment, various conversations with the author.
Violet’s return to Britain to be reunited with Wallace was not as rapid as she hoped. For whatever reasons, it was delayed until her departure on Orsova on 18 December 1933. It is clear from her mother in law’s diary that she left in some secrecy. She arranged to see John and Annie Sulman on 10 January 1934 but by then she was well on her way to Britain, leaving Diana with William and Mary. Violet appears to have confided in her sister in law Joan, who on 5 January 1934 told Annie Sulman ‘of Violet going to England etc’. Sue George (nee Inglis) remembered family conversations indicating that her father Bill Inglis tried to prevent Violet from leaving Australia. William and Mary must have been aware of their daughter’s plan but their reactions to it are unknown. Violet never saw Australia or her family there again.

40 Annie Sulman, 1934 diary, in the possession of Heather & Lea Sulman and on loan to Zeny Edwards, various entries. Her 1933 diary does not survive.

41 Sue George, conversation with the author, 10 February 2009.
Violet’s return voyage to England was a difficult time for her. While she no doubt looked forward to seeing Wallace Elvy again, she also missed her six-year-old daughter. Diana told me on various occasions that she could not remember receiving any letters from Violet once she departed. After my mother’s death, however, I discovered that she had kept two letters from Violet in a small bag of important family papers that were carefully packed in the early 1970s. The first of these, an incomplete and undated note on the back of an Orsova card reads:

My Darling Baby. I do hope you are cheerful and happy. I miss you dreadfully. Be a good little girl, remember to speak nicely and write to me often. I thought you would like this picture of a ship. Darling you wont be away from me any more than six months so be very happy and...

Violet’s undated postcard to Diana [early 1934]
(In the author’s possession)
Tom’s failed marriage caused great anguish for the Sulman family. For much of 1934 Diana lived with Joan and Bruce Shallard, attending Danebank with their daughter Barbara. Annie Sulman’s diary for the year records quite frequent contact with Diana, no doubt in an attempt to compensate for her parents’ absence. In a 2003 interview about her time at Danebank Diana said, ‘I didn’t have a mother’ and that the school’s principal assumed that role for her. Even in her last years, she was most reluctant to discuss the trauma she must have experienced. Her cousin Barbara believed that Diana’s deliberately positive, ‘Pollyanna’ like, attitude to life originated as a response to separation from her parents. Annie’s diary includes some brief but revealing entries regarding the marriage breakdown:

9 January

---

42 Annie Sulman, 1934 diary, in the possession of Lea & Heather Sulman and on loan to Zeny Edwards, entries for 1 January, 29 January, 1 February, 4 February, 5 March, 8 March, 18 March, 9 September, 11 September, 14 September, 15 September, 24 November & 29 December.


44 Barbara Ash (nee Shallard), conversation with the author, January 2006.
Dad [Sir John Sulman] ...to see Major Inglis.

19 April

Major & Mrs Inglis here to tea.

4 May

Dad excited over business re Tom & Violet.

21 August

Joan came over with a letter from Tom under cover to her – a very worrying one.

The diary also chronicles the last days of John Sulman’s life until his death on 18 August 1934. Despite being very ill, he was, his biographer Zenaida S. Edwards observes of the diary, ‘more worried about his children’s well-being than his own’ and was particularly concerned about Tom’s failed marriage and the care of Diana.\(^\text{45}\) Shortly before his death, he carefully altered his will to ensure that it totally excluded Violet from receiving any benefits.\(^\text{46}\)

Wallace Hall Elvy, for whom Violet sacrificed so much, was born in South Stoneham, Hampshire, England in March 1903.\(^\text{47}\) His parents were Wallace John Elvy, a marine surveyor and later a civil servant who received the Imperial Service Order, and Ellen Mary Elvy. In 1911, he had three brothers and two sisters.\(^\text{48}\) Nothing further is known of his life before he met Violet and I was unable to locate any photographs of him. As discussed, he and Violet may have met on one of her voyages


between England and Australia and they appear to have developed their relationship in 1932. In Tom’s petition for a divorce of 21 May 1937, it is alleged that Violet ‘frequently committed adultery with Wallace Elvy’ and that ‘from the 11\textsuperscript{th} day of May 1936 to the 12\textsuperscript{th} day of July 1936 in the Old Star Inn, Collingham near Leeds in the County of York the Respondent [Violet] committed adultery with the said Wallace Elvy’.\footnote{National Archives, Kew, London, Records of the Supreme Court of Judicature and related courts, item J 77/37648/4782.}

Violet’s life between early 1934 and 1936 is largely unrecorded. She at least occasionally communicated with her parents and Diana and sent them two glamorous studio photographs. The second of her surviving letters to Diana is dated, in Annie Sulman’s handwriting, 11 October 1935. On the back of a postcard depicting a Norman church porch in Headingley, an inner suburb of Leeds in West Yorkshire, it says:

This church is just near where I live & is one of the oldest in England. Thank you for the snaps [photographs] and your letter Darling but what a big girl you are. It has been terrible. It looks very like war here [the Italian invasion of Abyssinia started in October 1935]. Everyone expects it. It is very worrying as if that happens I must get you to me here even if I have to come & fetch you myself. I'm saving up as much as I can so I might be able to soon. All my love my Darling, Mummy.\footnote{Violet Sulman, undated postcard to Diana Sulman [received 11 October 1935], in the author’s possession.}
Violet did not contest Tom’s divorce petition nor did she seek custody of Diana. On the last matter, the court ordered on 19 July 1937 that:

The child, issue of the marriage between the Petitioner and the Respondent, do remain in custody of the Petitioner until further order of the Court. And it appearing that such child is at present residing out of the jurisdiction of the Court and the Court giving leave it is further ordered that the said child be not removed from the care of the parents of the Respondent with whom she is at present residing at “Argyle” Arthur Street Kogarah New South Wales Australia until further order of the Court.

Violet is shown in the divorce papers as living at 78 Durham Road, Sheffield and Tom at 24B Clifton Gardens, Maida Vale, London. The addresses may have been mistaken, as 19B Clifton Gardens, a still standing block of flats in Paddington, which adjoins Maida Vale, was where Violet and Wallace lived after the divorce. The marriage was finally dissolved on 30 January 1938.

51 Records of the Supreme Court of Judicature and related courts.

52 Ibid.
In the British world of the late 1930s, divorce still carried a moral stigma. It was a major barrier to social respectability. The legislation under which Tom initially sued Violet for divorce required proven evidence of adultery. King Edward VIII’s unsuccessful efforts in 1936 to obtain church and government approval to marry a divorced woman while remaining on the throne resulted in his abdication and exile. 53 ‘No fault’ divorces in Australia and Britain did not emerge until well after the Second World War. Divorced individuals, particularly those judged the ‘guilty’ parties, were frequently seen as embarrassing their families. The Inglis and Sulman families dealt with Tom and Violet’s divorce by hardly ever mentioning it. As noted in the Preface, it was not until I was a teenager in the 1960s that I learned about the divorce.

It must be assumed that Violet did not seek custody of Diana because she knew that, as the ‘guilty’ party, she was most unlikely to receive it. She also needed

the divorce so that she could marry Wallace even if that meant not being with her daughter again. She obviously loved Diana but she either loved Wallace more or naively believed that she and Diana could one day be reunited. Her adultery with Wallace at Collingham in 1936 was probably deliberately arranged and made known to Tom’s solicitor to hasten the divorce. The legal system forced Violet to make at least a temporary choice between the man she wanted to marry and her daughter. Diana once told me that she had no letters from Violet after the divorce. That might be incorrect as she also failed to remember or chose not to reveal the letters she did receive in 1934 and 1935. The perception here, nevertheless, was as important as the reality. It was part of the inevitably complicated memory that she developed of her mother.

A few years before Diana died in December 2005, issues about Violet re-emerged when my sister Annie fostered a child, Johnson Lorenzo, whose mother no longer wanted to look after him. Annie later wrote:

She [Diana] often asked me about Johnson’s Mum [who was still living] and was very reluctant to criticise her – she really seemed to be searching for some understanding about why his Mum was not trying to get her children back.

She told me that the hardest thing for her was not knowing whether her mother had been prevented from having her (by the Sulman family? by social convention?) or just didn’t want her.

She really wanted to know whether her mother was bonded to her and suffering from the loss or had never properly bonded.55

Wallace, described as a sales manager, and Violet were married on 2 March 1938 at the Register Office in Leeds North. They were both then living at the Great

54 Diana Carment, conversation with the author, about 2004.
55 Annie Carment, email to the author, 23 June 2009.
Northern Hotel in Leeds. Before long, though, they were at Clifton Gardens and Wallace was working as a salesman based in London.

Shortly after 10 pm on 1 April 1939, Wallace was driving Violet in their small car at the junction of Tavistock Square and Bedford-way in central London. When they were about half way across the road junction they collided with a larger car. Neither driver sounded a horn. Violet suffered laceration of the pulmonary artery and other multiple injuries and died shortly after being admitted to the University College Hospital in Gower Street, London. At the inquest, Wallace, who was not seriously hurt, said that he saw the other car approaching some distance away but thought he had time to go across in front of it and went straight on. He was nearly across when Violet told him to look out, as the other car would hit them. ‘I turned and all I saw was headlights’, he added. The driver of the larger car claimed that he looked right and left before reaching the crossing but saw nothing coming. He was very much surprised when the Elvys’ vehicle suddenly appeared. Although he braked immediately, it was impossible to avoid the collision.

The inquest jury decided that it was a case of ‘accidental death’ but both drivers should have exercised more care. Tom Sulman, coincidentally also killed in a car crash while racing in Australia in 1970, once told me that Violet was at the wheel yet the extensive documentation regarding her death shows that was not the case. English road rules were poorly enforced and there were no driving licence tests until 1934, and then only for new drivers. The number of people killed on English

56 ‘Certified Copy of an Entry of Marriage Given at the General Register Office Application Number COL710193’, 22 January 2008, in the author’s possession.


59 Tom Sulman, conversation with the author, late 1960s.
roads in the 1930s was greater than those killed 30 years later when the number of cars had increased six times.\textsuperscript{60}

Having never apparently been in a paid job and receiving nothing from John Sulman’s will, Violet’s estate was very modest. She did not leave a will and her effects were valued at only 25 Pounds. Wallace, described in the probate records as a chemical products salesman, was named executor of the estate.\textsuperscript{61}

There is an intriguing postscript to the story of Violet’s untimely passing. Late in the Second World War, when Diana was living with Annie Sulman at ‘Burrangong’, Wallace visited Sydney, possibly as a member of the Royal Navy’s Pacific Fleet, and attempted to contact his stepdaughter. He telephoned Bill Inglis who, after consulting his brother Norman, strongly advised against any such contact.\textsuperscript{62} Wallace must have persisted as he also tried to speak with Diana at ‘Burrangong’. My sister Annie remembers our mother saying that she overheard Annie Sulman telling Wallace on the telephone that he could not talk to her.\textsuperscript{63} It is impossible to know exactly why Wallace was so keen to communicate with Diana, but he may well have had personal effects from Violet that he wanted to pass on to her.

Like Violet, Wallace was not destined for a long life. He died aged 48 on 17 March 1951 of cardiac failure, status asthmaticus and acute bronchitis. He was then living at Burton on Trent and employed as a personnel officer with Artificial Silk Manufacturers. He had also remarried, leaving Dorothy Elvy as a widow.\textsuperscript{64} The causes of his death were similar to symptoms consistent with influenza and a very severe English winter in early 1951 caused an influenza epidemic with an unusually

\textsuperscript{60} Taylor, \textit{English History 1914-1945}, pp 379-380.

\textsuperscript{61} National Probate Calendar.

\textsuperscript{62} David Inglis, conversation with the author, 19 May 2009.

\textsuperscript{63} Annie Carment, email to the author, 5 May 2009. I recall a similar conversation with my mother. Attempts to find out anything about Wallace Elvy’s Second World War service record through various internet searches proved unsuccessful. Most of the relevant British records are not indexed online or digitised.

\textsuperscript{64} ‘Certified Copy of an Entry of Death Given at the General Register Office Application Number 932502-1’, 6 February 2009, in the author’s possession.
high death toll.⁶⁵ I was unable to discover what happened to his widow, as Dorothy Elvy is a quite common name in British marriage and death records from the 1940s onwards. There is no record of any children.

My London friend Christine Pittman after researching some of Violet’s experiences in England perceptively commented, ‘It all sounds very sad. I feel as if Violet led a life that was fast and loose, because she had to fit all into such a short time’.⁶⁶ Violet’s sudden and untimely death also largely explains why, in spite of our best efforts to uncover her story, there are so many unanswered and unanswerable questions. Although I now know a good deal more about her than I once did, the grandmother I never met remains in many key respects the mysterious and shadowy figure I first heard of as a child.

---

⁶⁵ Cecile Viboud, Theresa Tam, Douglas Fleming, Mark A Miller & Louis Simonsen, ‘The 1951 Influenza Epidemic, England and Wales, Canada and the United States’, in Emerging Infectious Diseases, vol 12, no 4, April 2006. I am grateful to Christine Pittman for this advice and the reference.

⁶⁶ Christine Pittman, email to the author, 11 March 2009.
Epilogue

Mary 1941-1958

Following her husband’s death, Mary remained at ‘Argyll’ for most of the rest of her life. The fact that Norman and Irene lived so close was of considerable comfort to her and the birth of their only child, her last grandchild Robyn, not long after William’s passing in 1941 would have been a joyful occasion. Between 1942 and 1944, however, Norman was on active military service, much of which he spent in Queensland and New Guinea. For part of that time, Irene and Robyn were also in Queensland. Norman reached the army rank of Major but his appointment was terminated on medical grounds in November 1944, allowing him to return home. He subsequently became a senior executive with General Motors Holden. Bill, unable to enlist because his position as a bookkeeper with the Maritime Services Board was designated as a reserved occupation, remained with his family at Lindfield. Diana boarded at Presbyterian Ladies College Pymble until 1944, after which she studied Architecture at the University of Sydney and lived with her Sulman grandmother at ‘Burrangong’.¹

Robyn Inglis in about 1942
(In the author’s possession)

¹ Sue George (nee Inglis), conversation with the author, 10 February 2009; Robyn McAlpine (nee Inglis), conversations with the author 2008 & 2009; National Archives of Australia, series B883, item NX111830.
With the end of the war in 1945, Mary enjoyed her growing number of descendants. Following Tom Sulman’s return to Australia in 1946, Diana lived with him until she married Maxwell (sometimes Max) Carment in 1948. She and Maxwell subsequently produced three great grandchildren for Mary: myself, born in 1949; Ann (later Annie), born in 1951; and Tom, born in 1954. Her various grandchildren and great grandchildren regularly visited ‘Argyll’. Robyn later recalled:

*My memory of the furniture is hazy but the lounge suite was one of those large Chesterfield types, brown, I think. I remember very clearly always playing with Grandad’s horse whip and switch. Also Nanny had a traymobile from where she always served the afternoon tea. I always wanted to have poached eggs at her place because she had one of those very modern egg poachers where eggs were in little...*
containers with the water underneath and you ended up with a very neat poached egg unlike the ones that were just dropped in boiling water.²

My own recollections of Nan, as I called her, are of a kindly and small old woman who was quite deaf (my sister Annie and I remember talking to her through an ear tube) living in an old fashioned house with a large back yard. Although ‘Argyll’ in those days was usually at the most an hour’s drive from our Clifton Gardens home, our car trips there often took longer as we had to stop from time to time due to my sister’s carsickness. Mary was not a woman who dwelt on the past. Only rarely did she mention Violet or her family in Scotland.³ Surviving letters from Mary to Diana show how pleased she was when each new great grandchild arrived. After Ann’s birth, she wrote:

Dear Diana,

Thanks for your welcome letter & I am so pleased that you have got a dear little girl & am longing to see it. If I felt up to it I would have been out to the hospital to see you both before now.

I am hoping Norman will do something about taking me out will just have to wait and see.

I dont know what to buy Diana for my Great Grand Daughter Can you give me some idea of what you need or would you accept the money to buy something for yourself

Well my dear I am so pleased its all over & you had not so bad a time after all your long wait & I do hope you have a longer time before you have another Get some strength build up a bit

Excuse me for saying this to you but its just how I feel & things are so bad these days for bringing up a big Family

² Robyn McAlpine, email to the author, 26 February 2009.

³ Diana Carment, various conversations with the author; Robyn McAlpine, conversation with the author, 22 June 2009.
I am glad Maxwell is pleased about his Daughter. Your Dad Rang me the day she was born & is so pleased it was a girl

Well my dear I wish you & Maxwell all the best

Lots of love & a big x [kiss] for Baby I like her name Ann Its very nice & unusual

Keep well & get Strong again

Yours Loving Nan

x x x x x

David, Ann, Maxwell, Tom and Diana Carment at their Clifton Gardens home in 1954
(In the author’s possession)

Mary’s last years were not entirely happy. Robyn recalled that at some stage, although she could not remember exactly when, her grandmother moved to a flat in

---

4 Mary Inglis, undated letter to Diana Carment [September 1951], in the author’s possession. Spelling and punctuation are as in the original.
the Lindfield area, with ‘Argyll’ being rented out for a year. After a few months, however, Mary decided to return to ‘Argyll’. Norman had to renegotiate the rent arrangements so that she could do so. Bill died suddenly of a heart attack in February 1953, meaning that she had outlived all but one of her four children. During the final few years of her life, she was increasingly disoriented and unwell. Norman paid a Miss Bates, who had helped Florence Inglis with housework, to live with his mother at ‘Argyll’. Not long before her death, Mary went to Villiers hospital in Mosman, not far from Diana’s home. I was shocked at how small and emaciated she appeared when I visited her there.

She died at Villiers Hospital of a cerebral haemorrhage and cerebral arteriosclerosis on 23 August 1958 aged 83. According to the death certificate, she had suffered from the latter condition for over four years. She was cremated three days later following a Church of England service at the Woronora Crematorium in southern Sydney.

---

5 Robyn McAlpine, conversation with the author, 22 June 2009.
6 Sue George, conversation with and information to the author, 10 February 2009.
7 Robyn McAlpine, conversation with the author, 22 June 2009.
8 ‘DEATHS registered in the District of Sydney at Rockdale’, registration number 1958/021198, in the author’s possession. The monument for her at Woronora is at Rose 10 in Bed 16.