

Thomas Alexander David Fuller 1895 - 1955

Born 8th October 1895 in Kyabram, Victoria.

Parents - Grace and George Fuller.

Thomas was the third child of Grace and George; he had three sisters and one brother,

- Grace Ann Fuller (1890 – 1979)
- Louisa Margaret Fuller (1892 – 1942)
- William George Fuller (1900 – 1975)
- Lillian May Fuller (1903 – 1943)

Family noted as living in Tongala, Victoria in 1903

Family noted as living in Wyuna, Victoria in 1916

Thomas enlisted in the AIF on the 22nd March 1917, joining the 9th reinforcement of the 57th Battalion. Noted as 3396 Pte Thomas Alexander David Fuller.

- 21st June 1917 embarked for active service abroad – France.
- 25th October 1919 returned to Melbourne, Australia.
- Discharged from the AIF, 2nd December 1919

Noted as living in Wyuna East, Victoria in 1919, occupation, labourer.

Noted as living in Beechworth, Victoria in 1931, occupation, labourer.

Noted as living in Yarrawonga, Victoria in 1936, occupation, labourer.

Noted as living in Beechworth, Victoria in 1942, occupation, Attendant, Beechworth Mental Hospital.

Married Florence Alexandra Golledge (1903 – 1962) in 1943

They had three children

- Gordon Alexander Fuller (1944 – 1944)
- Daughter born 1945
- Daughter born 1947

Thomas and Florence were noted as living in Crawford Street, Beechworth, Victoria.



L to R William, Grace, Louisa, Thomas
Seated Grace Brown Fuller (Gillespie)



Thomas Alexander David Fuller 1st AIF 1917



Thomas Alexander David Fuller 1921

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Thomas Alexander David Fuller started employment at the Beechworth Mental Hospital in June 1940 as an attendant.

Beechworth on the 14th July 1955 was experiencing heavy rain with 228 points of rain being recorded at the Beechworth Police Station by 9.00am and a further 93 points of rain being recorded by 9.00am 15th July 1955.

The morning of the 14th July 1955, Thomas awoke at 5.30am, his wife, Florence, spoke with her husband and he appeared quite well, he fed his fowls and his horse. Regarding the horse, Thomas said to Florence that he had fed the fowls and the horse and "that you need not feed it again, I will feed it when I come home".

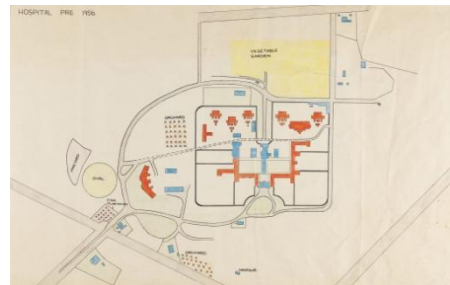
At 6.25am, 14th July 1955, The Beechworth Milkman, Clarence Edwin Boys delivered milk to the Fuller's home in Crawford Street, he noticed that Thomas was dressed in a uniform that he knew was worn by attendants at the Beechworth Mental Hospital, He noticed that Thomas was not wearing an overcoat. Clarence offered Thomas a ride to work, but he replied "I'm not quite ready; I'll be another five minutes".

Thomas always walked to work and despite a suggestion from Florence that they get a car, he said that he preferred to walk as it was good for him.

Thomas left their home in Crawford Street for work, on foot at 6.40am, 14th July 1955.



Beechworth Mental Hospital - 1950
By John T Collins - National Library of Australia, Public Domain,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4819577>



Hand drawn, aerial view plan of Beechworth Mental Hospital, Victoria
Registration No. SH923138 Original drawing of the asylum and farm before Ha-Ha walls were removed. Dated pre-1956 at top but most likely ca1930s. Image from The Mayday Hills Art Society Archive

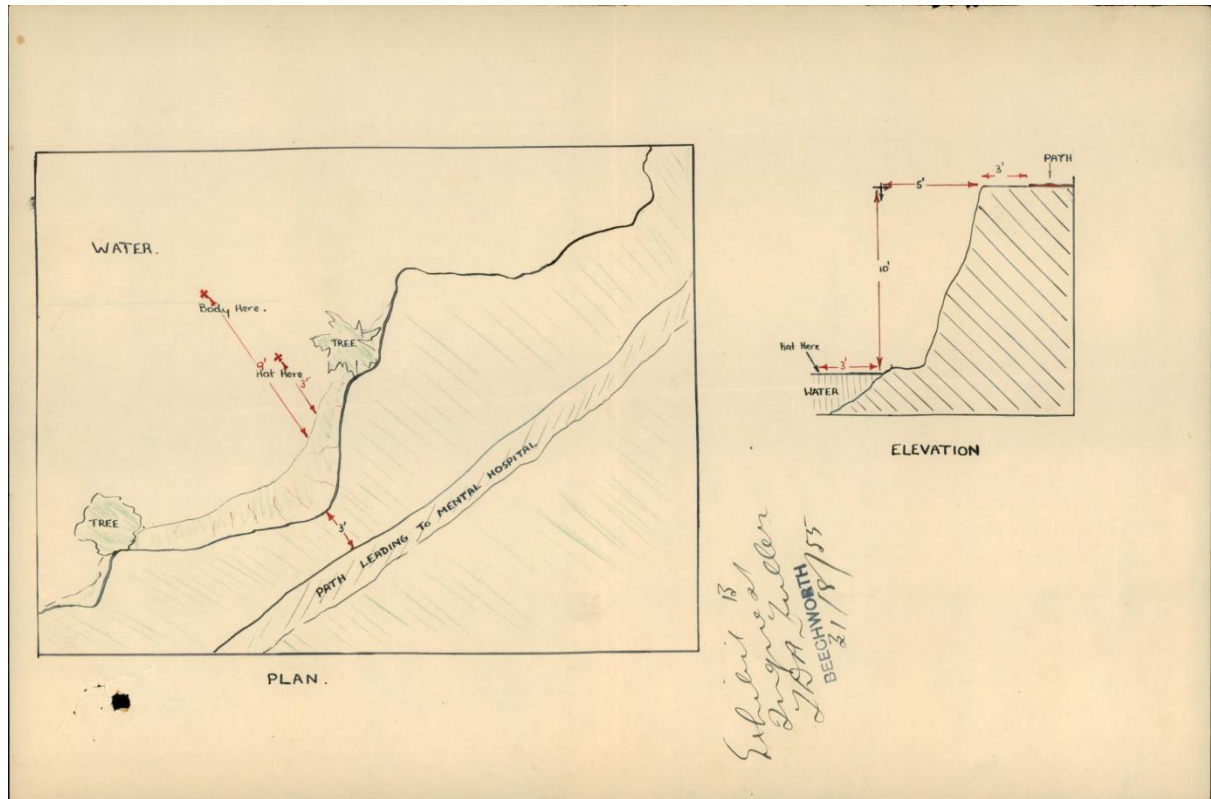


Aerial photo of Beechworth 1940 – Showing path taken by Thomas Alexander David Fuller 14th July 1955

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At 6.55am, 14th July 1955, as Thomas approached the sewerage dam in the grounds of the Beechworth Mental Hospital, in the early morning half light, a very heavy fog and possibly raining. Thomas fell in to the sewerage dam and drowned.

The path at the point where Thomas fell was only three feet (1 mt) from the edge of the dam and the drop in to the dam was ten feet (3.5 mt), the bank of the dam was clay.



Map drawn by Constable 10675, Herbert Thomas Crossman, Victoria Police – July 1955



Photo taken by Constable 9825, Thomas Francis Naughtin, Victoria Police – July 1955

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By 8.00pm, 14th July 1955, Thomas had not returned home from work at the Beechworth Mental Hospital, Florence presumed that Thomas had been detained for duty at the pictures with the patients. When he had not returned home by 12 midnight, Florence saw her neighbour and reported Thomas missing, the neighbour called the police.

Friday, 15th July 1955 at 1.30am Constable Thomas Francis Naughtin was informed that Thomas was missing. He made enquires at the Beechworth Mental Hospital and was informed that Thomas had not arrived at work and had been marked off for the day. Constable Naughtin walked the track from Kerford Road, around the dam up to the Mental Hospital; he found no trace of Thomas and abandoned the search at about 3.30am. At 7.00am when visibility was better, Constable Naughtin, together with Clarence Boys (The Milkman) resumed the search, but still no sign of Thomas.

At around 9.30am a search party was organised, later Constable Herbert Crossman found Thomas's felt hat in the sewerage dam and dragging operations commenced in the sewerage dam.

At 2.00pm, Edward Walter Huggins, an Attendant from the Beechworth Mental Hospital was using a grappling hook from the rear of a row boat when Thomas's body was recovered from about six feet (2 mt) of water. The body was nine feet (3 mt) from the southern side of the dam. Thomas was fully dressed in his attendants uniform, heavy rubber soled shoes and a full length Gabardine coat. There were no visible injuries.

3.00pm, 16th July 1955, after the body of Thomas was recovered, Dr William Leembruggen pronounced life extinct in the presence of Constable Naughtin. 9.00am 17th July 1955, a post mortem examination was conducted by Dr Leembruggen, Constable Naughtin and Mr Ronald Gladstone. Constable Naughtin searched Thomas's pockets and found a pocket watch which had stopped at 6.55, Constable Naughtin shook it and the watch started again, he also found a small torch.

Thomas Alexander David Fuller is buried at the Beechworth Cemetery.



Thomas Alexander David Fuller's Grave at Beechworth Cemetery – Picture taken 2018



3396 Pte Thomas Alexander David Fuller
Springvale War Cemetery – Springvale Botanical Cemetery

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Footnote

20th January 1956, the State Accident Insurance Office requested a certified copy of the Post Mortem notes from the coroner's inquest into the death of Thomas Alexander David Fuller on the 14th July 1955.

There was a suggestion that the death of Thomas may not have been an accident, but suicide.

Thomas was admitted to the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital from the 23rd December 1954 for four weeks, suffering from War Neurosis. He was again admitted to the Ovens and District Hospital, Beechworth as a repatriation patient, suffering depression on the 29th May 1955 and following treatment, was discharged on the 27th June 1955. Thomas resumed duty at the Beechworth Mental Hospital on the 4th July 1955.

Despite the investigation from the State Accident Insurance Office, with support from the union, the death was deemed to be accidental and the insurance claim was honoured.

3.

PROCEEDINGS BEFORE CORONERS

INQUISITION

VICTORIA }
To Wit. }

AN INQUISITION for our Sovereign ~~Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.~~ taken at
Beechworth in the State of Victoria, the 15th day of July A.D. 1955/ and the 31st day of August 1955
year of the reign of our said ~~most Excellent Majesty~~ ^{Lady Queen} by me, James Gifford Thompson
gentleman,¹⁾ a Deputy Coroner of our Sovereign Lady the Queen

1) A Coroner of our Lord the King for the said State or a Deputy Coroner, or a Justice of the Peace for the same.

Balliwick, acting by virtue of Section 29 of the *Justices Act 1928*.

Having inquired upon the part of our ~~most Excellent Majesty~~ ^{Lady Queen} when, where, and how the said THOMAS ALEXANDER DAVID FULLER

(2) His or her, came by ^{his} death, I say that on the 14th day of July 1955 at Beechworth in the said State, the said Thomas Alexander David Fuller

(3) Here state cause of death, if known; if unknown, state, but, or no evidence, died from ^{asphyxia} caused by drowning, such drowning being accidental.

In witness whereof, I, the aforesaid Deputy Coroner have to this Inquisition put my hand this thirty-first day of August in the year of our Lord One thousand nine hundred and fifty-five.

Deputy Coroner.
J. G. Thompson

Requisition for Certified Copy of Document

Name of Applicant STATE ACCIDENT INSURANCE OFFICE

Address

Date 20 JAN 1956 Time

Nature of document and Registered No. (if any) *copy of Post mortem notes FULLER Thomas Alexander David date of death 14.7.55 Resubmitted*

When promised Total folio fees

STATE ACCIDENT INSURANCE OFFICE
Signature of applicant.
Rex Stubbs

Remarks: *Re-submitted*

The information in this history of Thomas Alexander David Fuller, the events around his death were taken from witness statements contained within the Coroner's Inquest conducted 31st August 1955 and from family tree information gathered by Rex Stubbs

19th February 2023