

Thomas Francis OLDHAM

- Born:** 18th March 1893, Port Pirie, South Australia
- Occupation:** Labourer
- Enlisted:** Tasmania: 7th August 1916 (Volunteer)
- Unit:** 12th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force
- Rank/number:** Private: No.6775
- Death:** Died of wounds, 16th April 1917
- Detail:** Thomas Oldham, a native-born Australian with a Padstonian father, travelled half-way around the world to fight for the Old Country in the Great War. But within a few weeks of arriving on the Western Front he was dead. Thomas was fatally wounded as he and his countrymen beat off a German attack at Lagnicourt during the Battle of Arras in April 1917.
- Age at death:** 24
- Military info:** The outbreak of war was greeted with wild enthusiasm in Australia and in November 1914 the first 20,000 Diggers sailed off to fight. Thomas, aged 23, joined the army in August 1916. He was 5ft 6ins tall, weighed 10 stone and lived with his widowed mother in Queenstown in Tasmania, an island state off the Australian coast. Thomas sailed on 30th September that year, arriving in England on 21st November. He was posted to the experienced 12th Battalion, part of 3rd Brigade in the 1st Australian Division, and landed in France on 22nd December. Thomas reached his unit at Flers in January 1917. He was hospitalized soon afterwards, but rejoined his battalion at Dernancourt on the 3rd March. Despite the bloodletting at Verdun and the Somme in 1916, the allies planned new offensives for Spring 1917. The British would attack first at Arras, drawing the enemy, before the French stormed the Chemin des Dames ridge to the south. But plans were disrupted in February when Germans withdrew to the Hindenburg Line. Despite this the attack went ahead at Arras on 9th April. But the advance left the Australian Lagnicourt sector thinly held and the Germans struck on the 15th. The outnumbered Diggers won - but young Thomas fell dying.
- Grave/memorial:** Thomas is buried as Grevillers British Cemetery, and is listed on the Australian Roll of Honour, at St Petroc's Church, Padstow and on Padstow War Memorial.
- Family info:** Father: Thomas Lovering Oldham, born Padstow, Cornwall in 1859. He wed Elizabeth Burgess in 1885, but she died two years later and Thomas started a new life in Australia. Mother: Evelyn Phillips, born Tasmania in 1865. She wed Thomas in 1890 and one of her three children was Thomas Francis Oldham. Thomas Senior died at Lyell, Tasmania in 1906. Two years later Evelyn married a William Hooper.
- Additional info:** There are two Thomas Oldhams on Padstow War Memorial - TF Oldham is the Australian cousin of Padstonian TL Oldham. Their Cornish fathers were brothers.



This information was researched by Peter Smith, who is currently writing a book about Padstow's part in the Great War. Anyone wishing to correct errors or supply additional information can write to him at 24 Mallard Drive, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5PW. Also phone 01825 762226 or email smithpeter24@gmail.com