

Cecil Thomas's life

Cecil Walter Thomas was born in 1885 in Shepherd's Bush. At a young age he joined his father's seal engraving workshop in Soho, where he continued working while also studying at the Slade, before going on to become an independent professional engraver. From 1905 Thomas began accepting commissions on an international scale, including from Faberge, and from 1909 was exhibiting work at the Royal Academy and the Royal Society of Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Gravers, alongside Salons in Paris and shows in the US. In 1912 Thomas created the Oxford Millenary Medal, which exemplified his interpretation of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

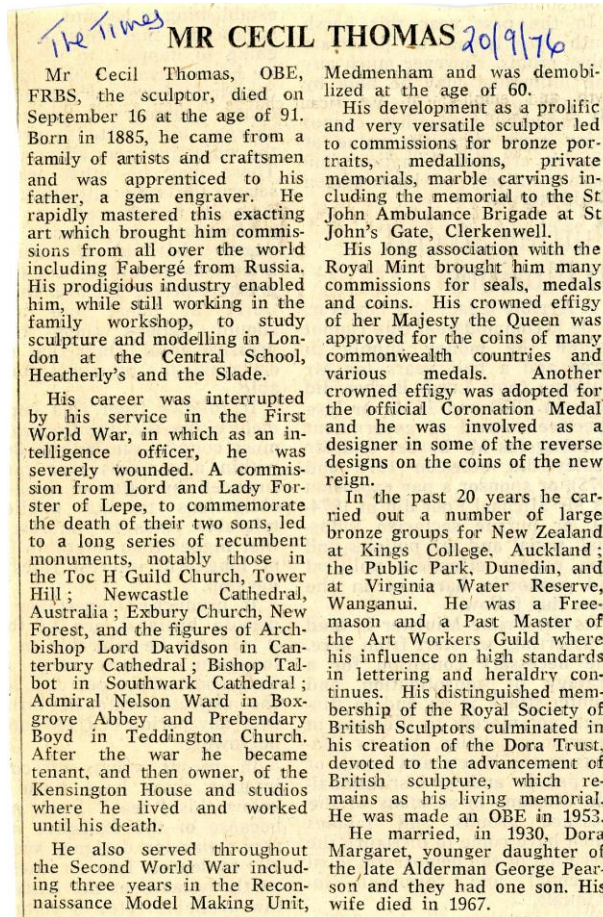
From 1914-1917 Thomas served as a Lieutenant and later an Intelligence Officer in the First World War, based in Belgium, during which time his main duties involved the production of detailed, three dimensional maps and models of the local terrain. After the end of the war, and his recovery in hospital, Thomas took up residence in 1919 at 108 Old Brompton Road, Kensington, later bequeathed to the then named Royal Society of British Sculptors, of which he became a Fellow in 1938. Prior to this, in 1930, Thomas married Dora Pearson, who was commemorated by her husband upon her death when he re-named their Kensington home Dora House. Thomas and his wife had one son, Anthony, and the three lived happily with their much-loved dog Judy, sharing their time between homes in London and Flamstead.



A page from Cecil Thomas's family photograph album

Thomas volunteered for the Royal Air Force in the Second World War, serving in the model-making section of the RAF, interpreting aerial photographs to produce terrain models. Post-war he became a Master of the Art Workers Guild in 1946. In 1948 he designed a seal for the British Transport Commission, and in 1953 won the competition to design the new coinage to mark the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, as well as receiving an OBE.

Following the death of his wife in 1967, Thomas founded the Dora Charitable Trust in her memory, dedicated to the advancement of British sculpture, and in the early 1970's provided a room in Dora House for use by the Society. Thomas passed away in 1976, aged 91, and by 1986 the Society was granted the freehold of Dora House to be used as its permanent headquarters.



Cecil Thomas's obituary published in *The Times*, 20 September 1976

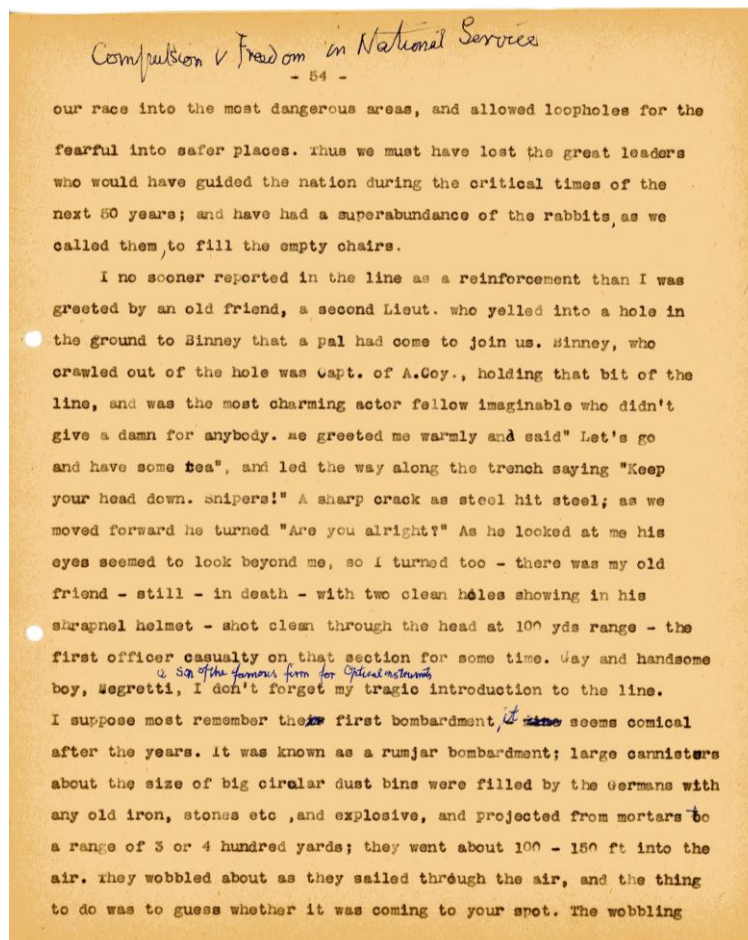
The First World War

Thomas's detailed account of the First World War is recorded faithfully in his unpublished autobiography, thought to have largely been written in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Across hundreds of typed and annotated pages, Thomas recalls the every-day through to the extraordinary with poignancy, wit and emotion.

The autobiography's opening chapters give a detailed account of military training in Colchester and then Shoreham, where Thomas was put in charge of training 3,000 men in musketry for 13 weeks, the only field training the soldiers were to receive before taking their place in the trenches. Thomas writes, *'The C.O. asked me to paint Germans firing from trenches and cover points all over the camp and on the huts, so that the men got used to the idea.'* Thomas continues to oversee the men's training until 1916, when he is posted to Belgium.

As he begins this portion of his autobiography, Thomas ruminates on the stories of trench warfare told by his generation after the war, and how these 'bring mankind to shame for his stupidity and at the same time show the grandeur of his nature, his selfishness and his unselfishness, his bravery and his fear, and no one could spend a day in the forward areas without realizing that our system filtered the best of our race into the most dangerous areas, and allowed loopholes for the fearful into safer places. Thus we must have lost the great leaders who would have guided the nation during the critical times of the next 50 years; and have had a superabundance of the rabbits, as we called them, to fill the empty chairs.'

Thomas recounts his early impressions of warfare and the tactics used by each side: 'I suppose most remember the first bombardment [...] known as a rumjar bombardment; large canisters about the size of big circular dust bins were filled by the Germans with any old iron, stones etc, and explosive, and projected from mortars to a range of 3 or 4 hundred yards; they went about 100 - 150 ft into the air. They wobbled about as they sailed through the air, and the thing to do was to guess whether it was coming to your spot. The wobbling made this uncertain. When one decided it was really going to land on you, it was astonishing how quickly one dived into the next bay of the trench. He also recalls 'a fantastic form of underground warfare that had developed on this static front, in which each side tunnelled to get under his opponents' important points, and at awkward moments blew a mine.'



Typed and annotated page from Cecil Thomas's autobiography

Drawing on his pre-war artistic career, Thomas begins sculpting soldiers during active service. Amidst the chaos of an air missile bombardment he describes creating a portrait of an officer named Solomon, grandson of the first Prime Minister of Cape Colony in South Africa, who is later killed. Thomas manages to track down his grand-daughter 52 years later when visiting Cape Town and delivers the portrait, writing *'I hope it hangs somewhere where it can commemorate a soldier from Africa who sacrificed his life for Freedom and Honour.'*

In the Spring of 1917 Thomas is involved in planning for the famous Battle of Messines and recalls meeting the platoon: *'We started the first morning with the maps to talk about our part in the forthcoming battle. They were so keen and were trying so hard to visualise the lie of the land and what they had to do, that it was a little while before I realised they did not know a the first thing about map reading, and neither could they follow the aeroplane photography which was not very good. Of a sudden I said "We will knock off now and have the talk tomorrow morning and I'll make you a model which will help you to see what we have to do".'*

Training for Messines Ridge
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The winter and early spring of 1917 was spent in the usual round of tours in the line, short courses and trench repair work until about March when we went for a rest somewhere near Hazebroek to train for the battle of Messines Ridge which earned for Gen. Plumer the distinction of being the best organised military operation of the Western Front to date. Mark and I were billeted in a delightful farm house, with my platoon in a barn -very comfy. I hardly knew the men, and they were little more than schoolboys, but I thought them a nice lot so we started the first morning with the maps to talk about our part in the forthcoming battle. They were so keen and were trying so hard to visualise the lie of the land and what they had to do, that it was a little while before I realised they did not know a the first thing about map reading, and neither could they follow the aeroplane photography which were not very good. Of a sudden I said "We will knock off now and have the talk again tomorrow morning and I'll make you a model which will help you to see what we have to do". I told Mark; he was full of enthusiasm. "What will you make it of?" "Oh - clay if we can find some". So to find some clay. The butchess housewife of the farm said there was some in a field over there. Off we went with a couple of buckets and sure enough some very good dark brown clay - quite good enough for the purpose - was there in plenty.

A flat board, a squared grid drawn on to a decent size - then the contours drawn on, and with a wire bent to measure the height of each contour - they were quickly modelled, the grid lines being marked on the edge of the board, were easily marked on the clay



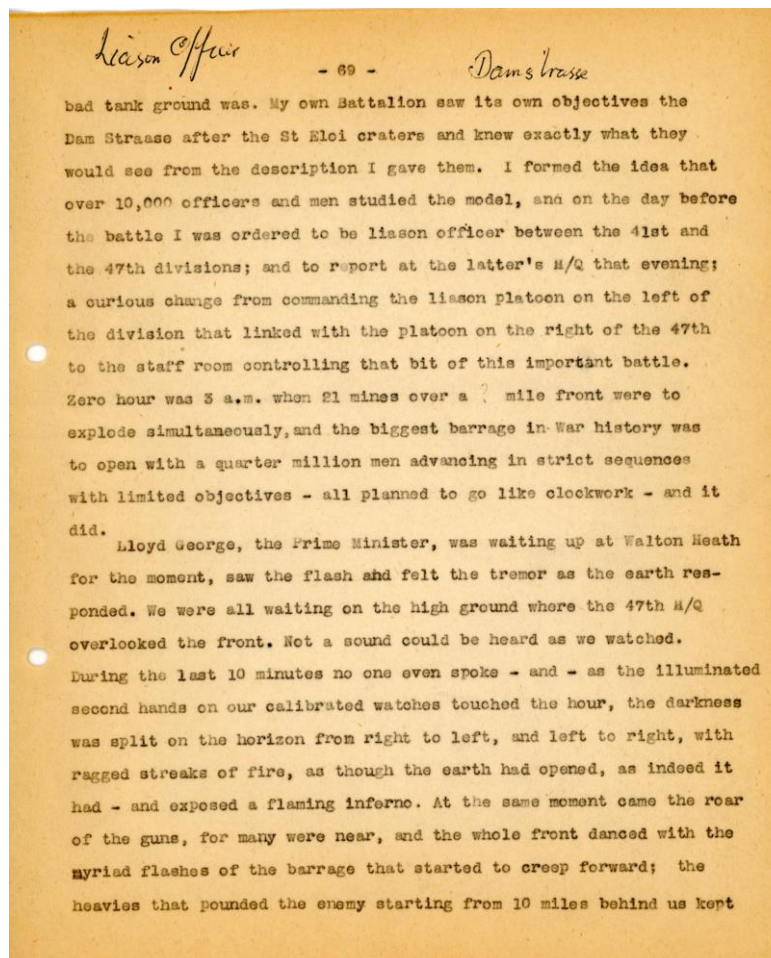
Sir Sidney Lawford, General commanding 41. Division 1914-19 War See Messines

Typed page from Cecil Thomas's autobiography and enclosed image of General Sidney Lawford

And so begins Thomas's wartime career in model-making, as he sets off to find some clay from the land, which forms the basis for his first model: *'A flat board, a squared grid drawn on to a decent size - then the contours drawn on, and with a wire bent to measure the height of each contour - they were quickly modelled, the grid lines being marked on the edge of the board, were easily marked on the clay [...]* The men were really thrilled to see so exactly what they had to do and from their questioning and talk it was obvious they knew where they had to go and what they were in for.'

The model is regarded as such a success by Thomas's superiors that he is instructed to produce a larger model of the whole divisional front, and further to detailed research and reconnaissance he produces a faithful rendering, including of a particularly steep section of land on which the battle will play out. The ability to visualise this unique terrain so clearly, becomes instrumental in the platoon's tactical planning. The General orders every man in the division to view the model: *'From the next day, groups from half a dozen officers to 500 men came on a regular time table; adjoining divisions, tank corps, Artillery - all in their turn, and, to my delight - A Coy of my own Battalion, the 23rd Middlesex who were going to do a sortie for prisoners, came and worked out their operation on the model, cutting the wire, laying the tapes. The enthusiasm with which some used the model was very heartening.'*

Thomas describes how the dramatic Battle of Messines plays out: *'Zero hour was 3 a.m. when 21 mines [...] were to explode simultaneously, and the biggest barrage in War history was to open with a quarter million men advancing in strict sequences with limited objectives [...] Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, was waiting up at Walton Heath for the moment, saw the flash and felt the tremor as the earth responded [...] Not a sound could be heard as we watched. During the last 10 minutes no one even spoke - and - as the illuminated second hands on our calibrated watches touched the hour, the darkness was split on the horizon from right to left, and left to right, with ragged streaks of fire, as though the earth had opened, as indeed it had - and exposed a flaming inferno'.*



Typed page from Cecil Thomas's autobiography

Following the battle Thomas searches out his men: *'Col. Haig Brown, with his uniform tattered and torn with the wire, as were many others, was pleased to see me, said marvellous things about the model – how they knew their way and recognised everything.'*



Photograph of Colonel Haig-Brown inserted in Cecil Thomas's autobiography

Thomas is promoted to Intelligence Officer, conducting reconnaissance missions and compiling detailed reports on the terrain and the enemy's position, in preparation for future attacks, including the Battle of Passendale in October 1917. Unfortunately, Thomas is wounded by gunfire shortly before, and the model is never produced: *'So in this way my very small experience of war was ending, for the next chapter was to bring a major change, far too common to far too many in war, the common lot.'*

Thomas is first transferred to an infirmary in France, and then to London where he recovers in Cadogan Square hospital: *'Can I never forget or be grateful enough, for all the comfort and charm of that hospital, in which I was destined to spend a great part of the next two years; from where sprung lifelong friendships – events that altered and shaped my career'.*

Recovery and re-visiting

During his convalescence in hospital Thomas learns of the fate of his division during the battle for which he had begun preparing a model. Many had been killed due to their unpreparedness for the terrain: *'The appalling waste of the lives of those men, some of whom I had known since the beginning, saddened me; and I somehow felt guilty that I had been unable to do anything to prevent it. I also learned that someone had been asked to make a model map, but that nobody seemed to think much of it, and evidently no reconnaissance. I cannot imagine anything more suicidal than an incorrectly modelled map to guide a life and death infantry battle. Better none, and just use your native wit.'*

'It made me think that one day I would like to visit the place of this tragedy. It was 43 years after that I and my wife spent 4 days at Skindles in Poperinghe and motored round the area. We came towards Ypres from Comines in the train, and as we left Hollebeke on the embankment, 15 feet above the broken ground, we saw the beginning of the deadly triangle, or point, where the German strong point had been. Now the ground, to our surprise, was still broken with holes full of water, and covered with trees; and it was obvious that we were looking at ground untouched since 1917, with the scars of war clothed in undergrowth and small trees.'

Thomas and his wife tour the area and talk to locals about their memories of that time. He is very moved by his return visit, and to mark the pilgrimage and the fate of those who lost their lives, he writes a poem:

The Damm Strasse

The Dam Street, the road of frustration of Life
will yield to the effort of man or his wife
or even a soldier bent on his task
may find that the end may not be the last
but just the beginning of a new street or road
not dammed or damned but open and broad
where we all may travel, straight and true
with plenty of room for me and you
whether you are black or brown, yellow or white
But remember
Leave your guns behind.

opposite, had come every year for twenty eight years.

Well, it had all given us a lot of food for thought, and before I go back to the hospital, to the routine of a record, I'll sum these up in this doggerel;

The Dam Strasse

The Dam Street, the road of frustration of Life
will yield to the effort of man or his wife
or even a soldier bent on his task
may find that the end may not be the last
but just the beginning of a new street or road
not dammed or dammed but open and broad
where we all may travel, straight and true
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But remember

Leave your guns behind.

At the end of 1917 I was getting well enough to go out a bit, and about this time I was very flattered to have a request to visit General Sir Sidney Lawford DSO., who had come over to be knighted. He received me in his rooms in Jermyn Street with Lady Lawford, on his return from the Palace, and told me the Division was going to Italy, and would I like to come too and model the Italian mountains? I was thrilled at the prospect. He asked my position. "Still in hospital - but I feel fit enough to come at once." "It's not so easy as that" he said, "If you can get overseas, I can claim you. Get overseas - and go to the first R.T.O. to inform me by telegraph, and it's done". I thanked him and said I would do my

The first memorial commission

In 1918 Thomas finds himself back on light duty as an Adjutant in Borden, Kent with the remaining members of his previous battalion, and describes Spanish Flu sweeping through the camp. Thomas becomes ill, causing the wound made from shrapnel, still lodged within his diaphragm, to become infected, sending him back to Cadogan Square hospital.

'Here I met the handsome youth whose tragic death inspired my first important work of sculpture – Alfred Forster – only 21, from Winchester [...] I was amazed that one could know so much at such an age; his was the richest mind I had met, and now looking back, I see how war deprived the generation I have lived through, of men like Alfred, who from his quality and opportunity, would have made a marked influence on the events of his time.' Thomas's shrapnel is successfully removed, but Forster's fairly routine operation unfortunately results in septicaemia and the young soldier dies.

'The morning after the death of Wag Forster is vivid in my memory. The mother came to my bedside saying "Wag told us you were an artist; could you make a sketch of him, as we would like to have a memorial. Asking what kind of a memorial they were thinking of, and learning that it was to be a recumbent figure, I said a model would be more useful to the sculptor, and would they mind if I made a model. So I secured plasticene and a small board, and persuaded the Matron to let me work in his room that night. It had to be done secretly, and I could go up at 11 o'clock, when all was quiet and I should not be noticed as absent from the ward. It was a sad and poignant experience to model the body of one's friend. I worked for three hours and found it difficult to control my emotions.'

'I had modelled to scale, down to the waist, a portrait of this handsome and finely drawn figure, with its sensitive face and hands. But my model was of a dead man and it hurt one to look at it. After showing it once to Wag's parents who were obviously moved by it, I never showed it again. They seemed so content that I should make this memorial because Wag had spoken of me, and because they were impressed by the fact that I had been able to produce such a model under such circumstances. I too was impressed that without having seen my work, they should have such confidence in me, and deep were my thoughts on the strangeness of destiny, that should enable me to live, when I should have died, and he who should have lived, thus to pass away [...] With such thoughts I determined with God's help, I would make him live in death, that the qualities of greatness that belonged to him, might go sown the ages, and perhaps help to show mankind the uncounted cost of their foolishness. Perhaps bring consolation to the many who are bereaved; by trying to convey in bronze the immortality of the soul.'

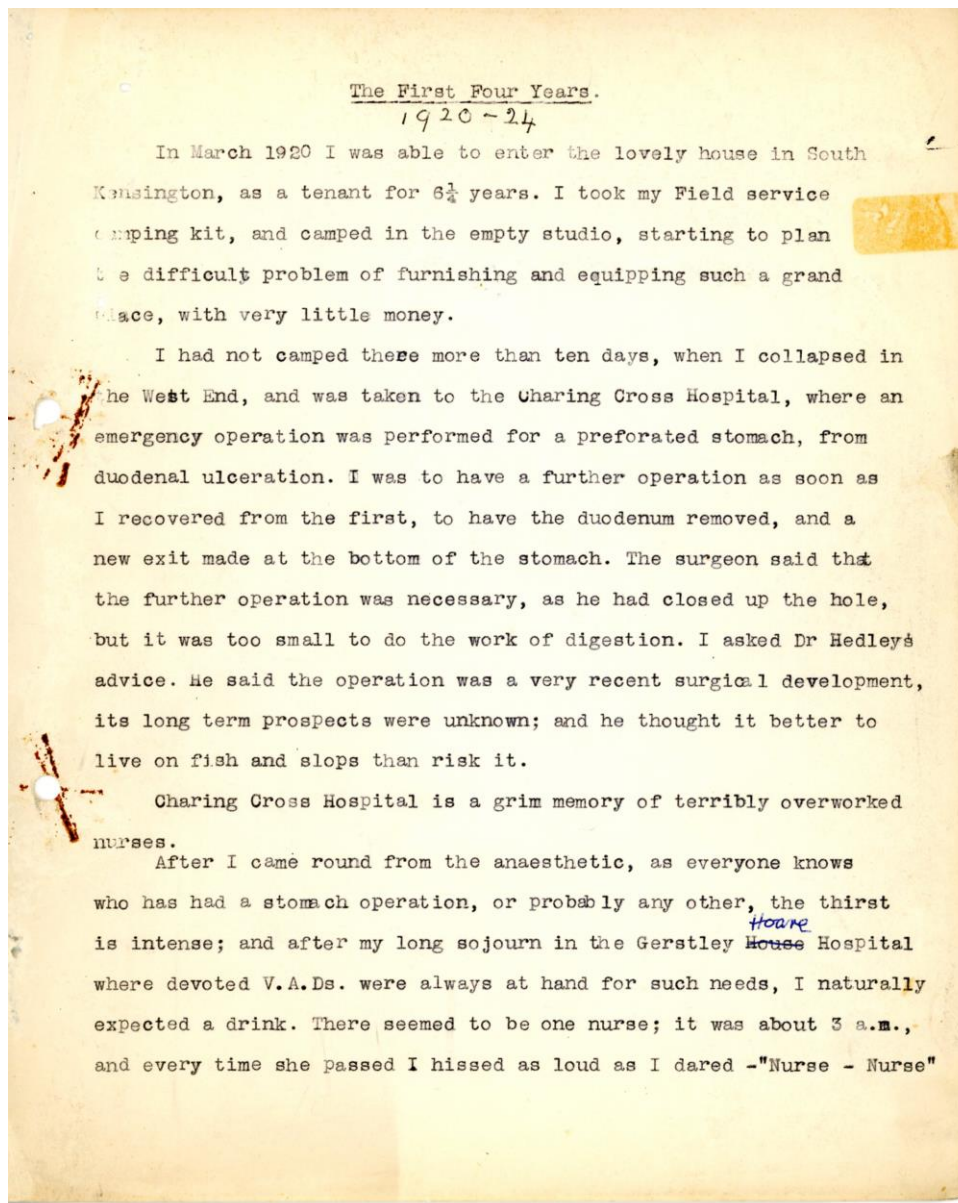
Post-war career

Thomas begins the description of beginning his post-war and post-hospital career with the following observation:

'Though it had been the common lot of those who had served, to go to hospital, and be nursed back to health by devoted women, and the nation, in consequence, had become more conscious of women's

value in national life, many had returned like Carr to find homes broken by human frailty, that same human frailty that had precipitated our entrance into war sacrificing others for our greed and need. On the whole I had found the war an ennobling [sic] experience, far outweighing the destruction of the human body and spirit that was inseparable from it. I had had no emotional ties, so felt as free as could be, to enter into what turned out to be four interesting years of hard work, and play.'

Thomas manages to secure his first post-war home and studio in South Kensington, in the building that would later become named Dora House in memory of his wife, Dora Pearson: '*I was able to enter the lovely house in South Kensington, as a tenant [...] I took my Field service camping kit, and camped in the empty studio, starting to plan the difficult problem of furnishing and equipping such a grand place, with very little money.'*



Typed page from Cecil Thomas's autobiography

Early on in his tenancy, Thomas holds an exhibition of works to display his portfolio and secures £650 worth of commissions, including a crystal Buddha carved as a gift from Prince Purachatra to the Emerald Temple in the Palace of Bangkok. In parallel, Thomas produces the memorial to Alfred Forster over the course of several years. The bronze effigy shows Forster lying with his right hand over his chest, his left arm by his side. An eagle rests at his feet and a laurel wreath by his head. It is extremely detailed, down to showing the laces on his boots.

'In 1924 I exhibited the recumbent figure of Wag Forster in the R.A. and it was placed under the dome in the octagon room – the only time I occupied this coveted place. I can still feel the tingles down my spine when I first saw it there.' The figure was later installed at Lord and Lady Forster's local church, St Katharine's in Exbury in Hampshire.

Later that year, Thomas is visited by his friend, the Reverend Clayton, Vicar of All Hallows church, who had asked the permission of Lord Forster to commission a copy for his own church: *'He explained that he wanted it as an unknown soldier as a memorial to the Elder Brethren, as he titled those he had known in Flanders who had died [...] There the bronze interpretation of this handsome youth lies; his face reflecting all that is finest in the British character, epitomising all I felt about his sacrifice and of those others I had known [...] As I sensed that my prayer that Wag should live in bronze to do some part of the great work he would have done in life, was being realized, I felt a humble gratitude to this man who with his vision had made it possible.'*

In later years two other copies were made, one for Christ Church cathedral in Newcastle, Australia where Lord Forster served as Governor General, and one for St John's Church in Southend, Kent. It was Lord Forster's wish that the additional memorials would be less personal and more universal. The version in All Hallows Church bears the inscription: 'They Shall Grow Not Old As We That Are Left Grow Old. Age Shall Not Worry Them Nor the Years Condemn' / 'At the Going Down of the Sun and in the Morning We Will Remember Them'. This is taken from a poem by Robert Laurence Binyon titled 'For the Fallen', written in 1914 at the outbreak of war.



Cecil Thomas's memorial in All Hallows Church

In his autobiography Thomas speaks very highly of the Vicar for whom the second memorial was produced: *'So this is how I got to know one of the most remarkable men in my generation; the only one, in my view, who made a practical spiritual profit for humanity from the war; who strived from the wrack and sacrifice to build a new world by reminding ourselves of those who died, by ourselves making some sacrifice to help others. They had given everything to preserve our way of life; let us remember them and give and help others in memory. It may seem a simple message but it takes a genius to apply it successfully; to build the complex detail that will play the right notes in the minds of the young men he was out to capture for God's work.'*

Thomas is moved by the fact that, following the memorial's unveiling at All Hallows church, he begins to hear touching stories of flowers being found in the figure's hands and children being visibly moved by the statue: *'Perhaps what pleased me more than anything else was that among those who came and prayed beside the figure or to sit in contemplation, was Mrs Holman Hunt, widow of the great artist who had been a great inspiration to me – indeed I liked to feel I belonged to his order of mind and work, for was not his favourite pupil E.R. Hughes who finished the Light of the World in St Paul's Cathedral when the Master was going blind, my favourite master – one of the most sympathetic and gentle of all the teachers I worked under.'*

Thomas recalls again his experience of making the original effigy, and writes, *'Continually during the four years the work was in progress my thoughts were centred on the strangeness that I should be called to commemorate him, and resolved that I would with God's help make his character and sacrifice so live in the bronze that he would at least do some of the great work he would undoubtedly have done had he lived.'*

The Second World War

In 1939 Thomas was enjoying a peaceful life and career, splitting his time between Dora House and his family's country home in Flamstead. But Thomas describes being ever conscious of the 'German menace' and attending a church service on September 3 at which the congregation are informed that Britain has declared war with Germany, and hearing the air sirens raise their alarm almost immediately, while the service is still taking place.

Thomas receives a letter from the War Office inviting him to serve, or defer for a year. He chooses the latter, so that he is able to complete a memorial commission in honour of Admiral Nelson-Ward. He recounts hearing the news that Germany has invaded Belgium and about the dramatic evacuation of British soldiers from Dunkirk, and describes the dawning realisation that the first six months of war have been the 'lull before the storm'.

'As a musketry training officer of the First World War, my thoughts had been considering how I could best do something to help in the war effort. I had already designed an anti-aircraft missile, made careful working drawings, had them considered by the inventors boards, and received their thanks and regrets. I now thought I would start a miniature rifle shooting club in the Village [...] and teach all how to handle a rifle and shoot straight [...] On Monday the family went to London for Weston-super-

Mare, I for the Rifle Club place, whilst the little boats were making history at Dunkirk. Tuesday the House of Commons formed the Home Guard, Wednesday the Village Police asked me to take command of the Flamstead Platoon, Thursday I planned its organisation and work.'

A few months later he receives a request from the Air Ministry to take a commission in the RAF for the defence of the airfields. Thomas is aged 55 at this point, at the top of the age limit. He feels it is his duty to accept and is posted to West Freugh near Stranraer in Scotland, a training station for bombers. He is later promoted to Gas Officer, training the men in how to respond to possible gas attacks and fortifying the site against its effects.

By 1942 the war effort is building momentum. At the age of 57 Thomas is too old to be posted to one of the fighting battalions, but becomes part of the defence force at Benson, the airfield from which photographic reconnaissance planes flew. He also becomes involved in training the men.

'One of the R.A.F. Officers I got to know lived not far from the camp; I dined with him and his parents one evening in a charming country house [...] Learning I was a sculptor, he told me there was a top secret station attached to Benson where they would be interested in me and my profession. He could not tell me more, but advised me to ring up the Camp Commandant, tell him who I was, and what I did, and ask if he would like to see me. I did this, and received a call back saying he would like to see me [...] Despite my experience in the First World War, I had not got a clue as to why the R.A.F. should take an interest in sculptors. Group Capt. Stewart proved a charming man, we had an enjoyable conversation mainly directed to getting me to tell of my experience in the two wars. He then rang someone on the telephone, asked if he knew a sculptor named F.O. Cecil Thomas. To my surprise he did know of me. He asked him to come over to the Orderly Room, and interview me. It appeared he and some members of his unit knew me as Hon. Secretary of the Art Workers' Guild. The G.C. then told him to show me the works and report back to him afterwards. I was delighted when I entered the large studio to find about fifty engaged in making relief maps. The utmost secrecy was necessary because these were the maps for the next operations on the various fronts or of places to be bombed. The Squadron Leader was interested to learn I had made relief maps for my own division in the First World War and said he would be glad to have my help. I welcomed the opportunity, for I found the job of Defence Officer with no efficient assistance too strenuous.'

Thomas describes how the map making unit had evolved as the result of a few men who knew the value of relief maps and were aware that sculptors and craftsmen were the perfect candidates to undertake this work. He recalls that they had appointed a group of Prix de Rome scholars who, assisted by a number of NCO's from the Camouflage section, had managed to set this aspect of the war effort off on the right footing, and that the department was attached to the photographic reconnaissance unit. The unit has been in operation for more than a year before Thomas joins. He is appointed as leader of the one of the three sections, in which the officers included watercolourists Bill Mann and Geoffrey Pimlott and the sculptor Harold Dow.

Dow is in charge of the casting processes *'carried out by the brilliant sculptor's assistant Bill Smith. He and his brother Joe were sons of the studio hand not only of Sir Hamo Thorneycroft but of the latter's father, Thomas, before him. In the Thorneycroft studio from whence so many of London's*

bronze sculpture have come; from the Boadicea by Thomas on Westminster Bridge, to the Cromwell near by Hamo; had also come these three men who had helped in the ever important structural part of all these works'.

Thomas describes how a training school for would-be relief map makers was established, preparing officers for an examination in mathematics, geometry, scale work, knowledge of materials and accurate technique in precision work. He describes the different map-making groups working in shift patterns and writes, *'We became aware that in the great build up of our war potential that had taken place during 1942 that those in control had become very relief map minded, that Churchill used them at his early morning breakfast conferences, Montgomery demanded them, the Imperial War Council used them.'*

Thomas also recounts how his experiences in the First World War helped him to understand the needs of the soldiers on the ground. He describes how the American officers within the map-making division develop a 'do-it-yourself simple way of making a small relief map' intended to be made on the field: *'Remembering the need so tragically learnt in the First World War of giving those who had to make decisions some correct information as to the kind of terrain, they were going to encounter when they reached the area of their operations especially at night I saw these crude reliefs might be better than nothing'.*

Thomas discusses developments in technology in the context of map-making, describing how latex moulding was being developed in industry at this time and that the need for easily transportable relief maps was so urgent that large ovens were obtained. He recalls the sculptor Bill Smith making moulds and producing latex casts which could be rolled up and easily transported and unfolded.

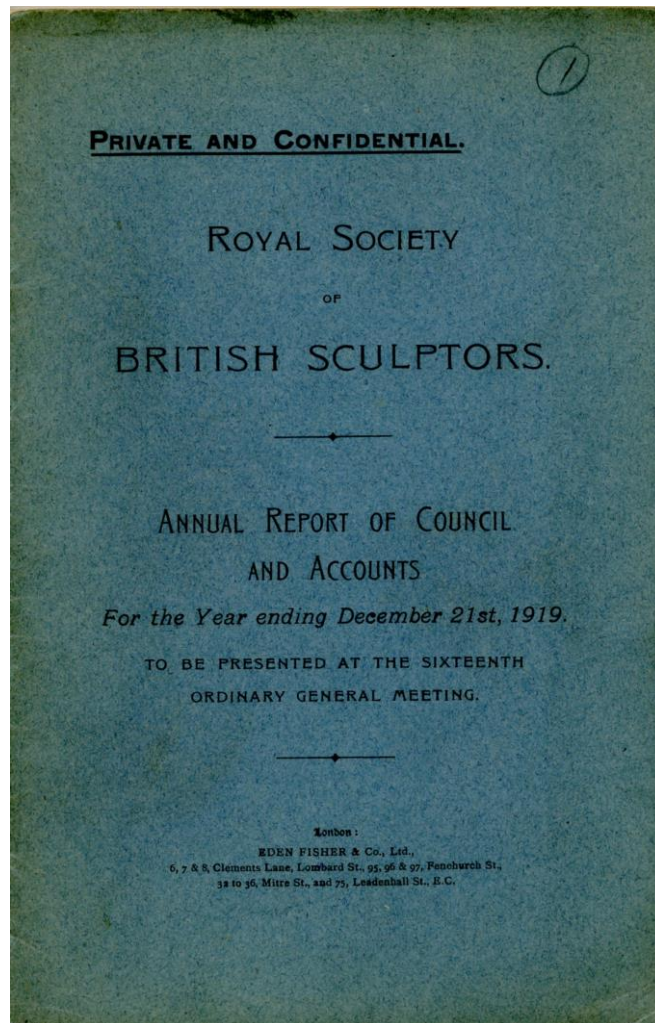
He recounts that the usefulness of the relief map making unit began to wane as the British and American armies swept across France and that they could not produce models fast enough for the day to day movement of the troops. He describes the last ever model he produced during the Second World War. This was of Walcherin, the principal island controlling the German defence system:

'In bombing and bombarding these islands naturally the dykes were broken, and there was tremendous flooding. The model was returned many times for adjusting as the attack proceeded. Churchill was very concerned about this flooding, and we had to show exactly where it had reached every day. We all felt very sad as villages and hamlets disappeared under the encroaching waters—and though now quite useless to them, the Germans held on stubbornly, making it imperative to drown them out. I understand this was done with the full acceptance of the local authorities, in view of the vital importance of clearing this important supply route. A brave decision of the people of Walcherin which moved us map makers as we blotted out more of their fair country below sea level, with the cruel but helpful floods [...] This was the last model of our European war.'

Thomas recalls with emotion the atmosphere of VE day, and of re-starting post-war life: *'It was a strange and memorable experience taking the family from Marlow to Paddington and then to Charing*

Cross en route for Broadstairs on V.E. day. It reminded me of the sensations I had as a child, after lingering between life and death in a darkened room for 6 weeks. I was carried downstairs and holding hands with my nice big cousin Aggie, walked out into the sunlit garden and saw and felt the loveliness of creation. It was early and London was taking its first free day for 5 years with a calm and relaxed and happy air. One felt it pervading everything and everybody.'

The role of the Society in the creation of war memorials



Front cover of the Society's 1919 Annual Report

The Society played a very active role in advocating for the importance of memorial sculpture, in securing work in this field for its members, and 'directing the character of memorials to be erected by the various authorities' (1919 Annual Report).

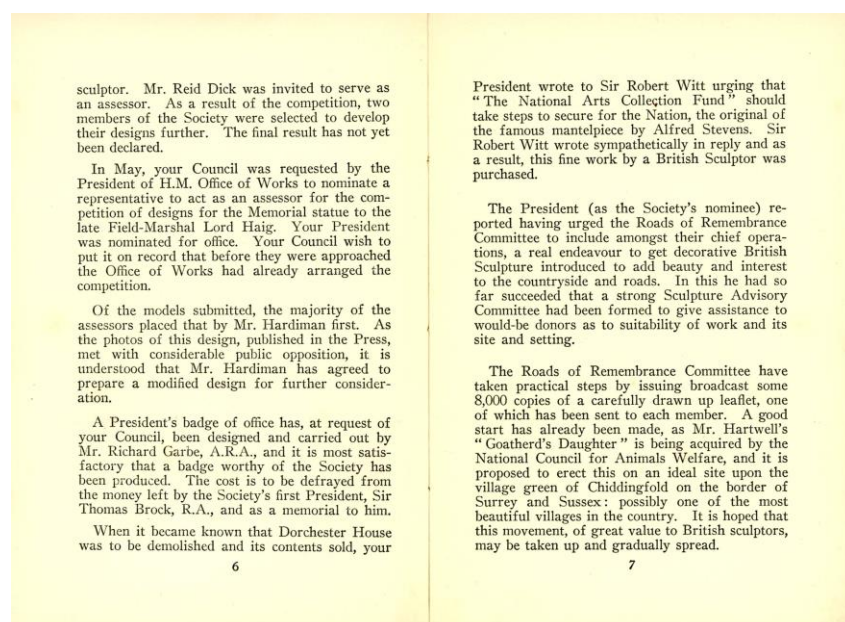
The Annual reports from the post-war years document how the Society was regularly contacted by individuals and public bodies from around the UK and also the Colonies, to offer guidance and connect commissioners up with sculptors who could produce suitable work. They also saw it

as their duty to ensure that adequate and realistic budgets were secured for the commissioning of high quality works. Achieving authority in this area was the combined result of their existing reputation and their prominent membership, in parallel with advertising campaigns in publications including The Times: *'Your Council is gratified at the gradually expanding influence of your Society, as evidenced by questions on sculpture being referred to it by such public authorities as the War Office, the High Commissioner for New Zealand, the Royal Academy, and others'* (1920 Annual Report). In the 1920 Annual Report the following achievement is recorded:

'The various points on which advice was sought, are too numerous to mention in detail, sometimes the question was one of site only, but whatever the enquiry was it enabled your Council to diffuse broadcast a greater knowledge of the true intent and purposes of sculpture, and a higher appreciation of the value and importance of taste in selection.

The one great lesson taught by your Council was, to go direct to the sculptor for sculpture and, if deemed necessary, to engage an Assessor to advise on taste and craftsmanship, and the Council ventures to think that their communications conveyed to large bodies of business men cannot have failed to give food for earnest thought and consideration which, though perhaps not bearing immediate fruit, will ultimately prove of the greatest benefit not only to members of your Society, but the Art which it is your Society's aim to foster and cherish.'

The Society was involved with a number of realised works, including the Welsh National War Memorial, sculptures in Folkestone, Paisley, Wrexham, Carnforth and Melbourne, and a War Office competition for the reverse of a medal to be presented to foreign subjects who assisted British prisoners of war. Members' work was also shown as part of an exhibition of war memorial designs held at the Imperial War Museum in 1925, and some was acquired for the national Roads of Remembrance scheme, focused on building 'highways of exceptional dignity and beauty, with open spaces at intervals as special memorials of the Great War' (Remembrance Association Committee pamphlet).



Pages from the Society's 1929 Annual Report, discussing the Roads of Remembrance scheme