

**St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard,
Harefield, Middlesex, England**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



4312 PRIVATE

L. J. BASSETT

32ND BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

10TH JANUARY, 1919 Age 37

A More Fearless & Splendid Boy

Never Came To France

G.O.C. 8TH B'Gade

Leslie John BASSETT

Leslie John Bassett was born in Hackney, London, Middlesex, England on 1st January, 1882 to parents Henry James and Sarah Bassett (nee Levett).

Leslie Bassett was listed on the School Admissions and discharged Register of Junior Mixed at Tottenham Road School, Hackney, London. He was admitted on 14th October, 1889 with his last school listed as Tottenham Road Infants. Leslie Bassett's father was listed as Henry & the family lived at 39 Stamford Road. Leslie Bassett left the school on 7th December, 1889.

Henry James Bassett, father of Leslie John Bassett, died on 11th January, 1898. He was buried in Waltham Forest, Greater London, England.

Sarah Bassett, mother of Leslie John Bassett, died in April, 1899. She was buried in Waltham Forest, Greater London, England.

The 1891 England Census recorded Leslie J. Bassett (written as "Kelsie") as a 9 year old, living with his family at 39 Stamford Road, West Hackney, London, England. His parents were listed as Henry James Bassett (Tailor, aged 43, born Bethnal Green) & Sarah Bassett (aged 38, born Stepney). Leslie was the youngest of four children listed on this Census (all born at Hackney) – Ernest H. Bassett (Engineer, aged 15), Stanley H. Bassett (News Boy, aged 13), Allen H. Bassett (aged 11) & Leslie.

Leslie John Bassett attended London Council School, England (according to information provided for the Roll of Honour).

The 1901 England Census recorded Leslie J. Bassett living at 39 Stamford Rd, South-West Hackney, London, England. Leslie's older brother - Ernest H. Bassett (Tailor's Cutter (working on own account), aged 25) was listed as the Head of the House. Also listed was Stanley H. Bassett – brother (Tailor's Cutter (working on own account), aged 23) & Elizabeth Brightman (Servant – Housekeeper, aged 41).

A "Leslie Bassett", Ship's Steward, aged 31, from S.S. *Benglow*, was listed on the Dreadnought Seaman's Hospital Admissions Register for 26th April, 1913. He had been admitted with an Ulcer of leg & was discharged on 14th June, 1913 having recovered.

According to information provided by his eldest brother for the Roll of Honour – Leslie Bassett had come to Australia when he was 31 years of age. He had also served as Captain's Steward with Mercantile Marine.

Leslie John Bassett was a 33 year old, single, Officer's Steward from Duntroon, NSW when he enlisted at Casula, Sydney, NSW on 20th December, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 4312 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his brother – Ernest H. Bassett, 180 Bishopsgate, London, England. Leslie Bassett stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served for 3 months with Queens Cadets in England but they had disbanded.

Private Leslie John Bassett was posted to "D" Company, 17th Battalion from 20th December, 1915 for recruit training. He was transferred to "A" Company, 20th Battalion on 23rd December, 1915.

Private Leslie John Bassett embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Orsova* (A67) on 11th March, 1916 (date as per Embarkation Roll; Casualty Form- Active Service recorded "*Embarked 13.3.16*") with the 20th Infantry Battalion, 10th Reinforcements.

Private Leslie John Bassett embarked from Alexandria on 9th May, 1916 on Troopship *Scotian* to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force). He disembarked at Marseilles, France on 18th May, 1916.

Private Leslie John Bassett was taken on strength of 2nd Australian Divisional Base Depot on 5th June, 1916.

Private Leslie John Bassett was marched out from 2. A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 2nd July, 1916 to Machine Gun School. He reported for Training at Machine Gun Corps Base at Camiers on 3rd July, 1916.

Private Leslie John Bassett was taken on strength of 5th Machine Gun Company on 8th July, 1916 from 2nd Australian Divisional Base Depot.

Private Leslie John Bassett was transferred to 8th Infantry Brigade Headquarters on 22nd December, 1916 & was taken on strength of 8th Brigade Headquarters the same day. (Statement of Service form has date as 7th January, 1917)

Private Leslie John Bassett was transferred to 31st Battalion from 9th January, 1917.

31st Battalion

In early 1917, the German Army withdrew to the Hindenburg Line allowing the British front to be advanced and the 31st Battalion participated in the follow-up operations. The battalion subsequently missed the heavy fighting to breach the Hindenburg Line during the second battle of Bullecourt as the 8th Brigade was deployed to protect the division's flank. The only large battle in 1917 in which the 31st Battalion played a major role was Polygon Wood, fought in the Ypres sector in Belgium on 26 September.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private Leslie John Bassett was attached to 60th Battalion from 1st April, 1917 from 31st Battalion. He ceased to be attached on 9th April, 1917.

Private Leslie John Bassett was transferred to 32nd Battalion on 5th June, 1917 from 31st Battalion. He was taken on strength of 32nd Battalion on 5th June, 1917.

Private Leslie John Bassett was on Leave to UK from 24th December, 1917. He rejoined his Unit with 32nd Battalion on 10th January, 1918.

Private Leslie John Bassett was attached to 8th Infantry Brigade Headquarters from 19th May, 1918 & ceased attachment on 28th May, 1918.

32nd Battalion

.....The only large battle in 1917 in which the 32nd Battalion played a major role was Polygon Wood, fought in the Ypres sector in Belgium on 26 September.

Unlike some AIF battalions, the 32nd had a relatively quiet time during the German Spring Offensive of 1918 as the 5th Division was largely kept in reserve. The Allies launched their own offensive with the battle of Amiens on 8 August, in which the 32nd Battalion participated. It was subsequently involved in the operations that continued to press the retreating Germans through August and into September. The 32nd fought its last major action of the war between 29 September and 1 October when the 5th and 3rd Australian Divisions and two American divisions attacked the Hindenburg Line across the top of the 6-kilometre-long St Quentin Canal tunnel; the canal was a major obstacle in the German defensive scheme.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private Leslie John Bassett was sent sick to Hospital on 23rd September, 1918. He was admitted to 8th Australian Field Ambulance on 23rd September, 1918 with a strain to right Thigh then transferred the same day to 12th Casualty Clearing Station. Private Bassett was transferred to Ambulance Train 42 on 25th September, 1918 & admitted to 2nd General Hospital at Havre, France on 26th September, 1918. Private Bassett embarked for England on Hospital Ship *Formosa* on 27th September, 1918 with a sprained right thigh.

Private Leslie John Bassett was admitted to War Hospital at Bath, England on 28th September, 1918 with a strained right thigh.

Private Leslie John Bassett was discharged from War Hospital at Bath on 24th October, 1918 & was on furlough until 7th November, 1918 when he was then to report to No. 1 Command Depot at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire, England.

Private Leslie John Bassett was admitted to 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield, Middlesex, England on 20th December, 1918 with Lumbago.

Private Leslie John Bassett was reported to be seriously ill with Debility on 7th January, 1919 while a patient at 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield, Middlesex, England.

Private Leslie John Bassett died at 10.30 pm on 10th January, 1919 at 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield, Middlesex, England from Tubercle of Lung (secondary – Tubercular Meningitis).

A death for Leslie J. Bassett, aged 38, was registered in the March quarter, 1919 in the district of Uxbridge, Middlesex, England.

Private Leslie John Bassett was buried on 15th January, 1919 in St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England – Plot number Aust.91 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Private Leslie John Bassett – *Military Funeral. Officiated by Rev. A. P. Bladen, attached No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield. Middlesex. Wreath supplied by Mr C. Billyard Leake. Headquarters Firing Party & Bugler in attendance. Lt. H. Hudson, Officer i/c Funeral. A small number of Patients and Staff attended the Funeral.*

Names of Relatives or Friends present at the Funeral – *Brother – Mr Ernest Bassett, 180, Bishop's Gate, London and 6 other relatives.*

Private Leslie John Bassett requested in his Will dated 25th July, 1917 that all his personal estate be bequeathed to his brother – Mrs Ernest Henry Bassett, of 43 Amberley Rd., Palmer's Green, London, England.

Private Leslie John Bassett was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Bassett's brother - Mr E. H. Bassett, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque issued in England November, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Leslie John Bassett – service number 4312, aged 37, of 32nd Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of Henry James and Sarah Bassett, 39 Stamford Rd., Kingsland, London, England.

Private L. J. Bassett is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 119.

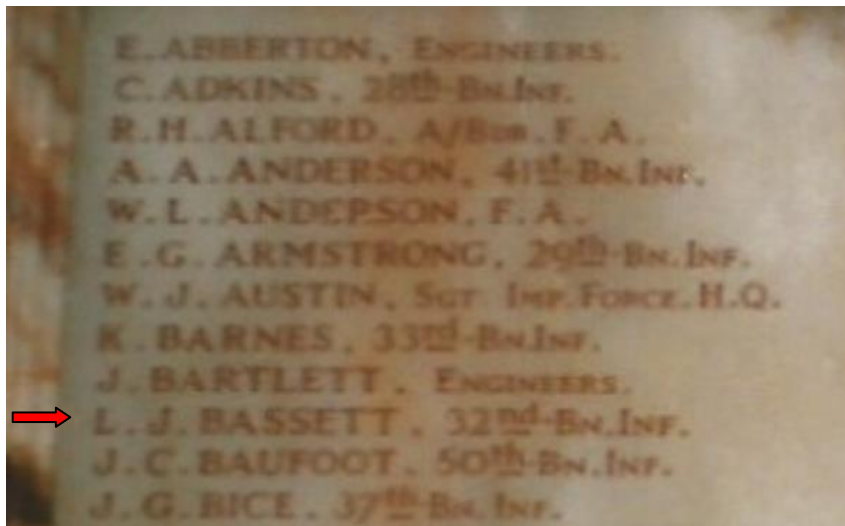


Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

L. J. Bassett is remembered in the Australian Soldiers' Memorial in St. Mary the Virgin Church, Church Hill, Harefield, Middlesex, England.



Australian Soldiers' Memorial, Harefield (Photo from War Memorials Online – B. Wood)



(44 pages of Private Leslie John Bassett's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll) & National Archives

Newspaper Notices

DEATHS

BASSETT – On the 10th January, 1919, at Harefield A.I.F. Hospital, Private Leslie J. Bassett, 32nd Battalion, A.I.F. Buried at Harefield Cemetery, _____, Wednesday, January 15th. Pro Patria,

(Newspaper source unknown. Newspaper clipping located in PDF for Roll of Honour – Australian War Memorial)

458th CASUALTY LIST

NEW SOUTH WALES

DIED, OTHER CAUSES

Pte LESLIE JOHN BASSETT, England

(*The Sydney Morning Herald*, NSW – 18 February, 1919)

FOR KING & COUNTRY

PRIVATE L. J. BASSETT

Private Leslie J. Bassett, who belonged to the Fifth Division of the Australian Infantry Force, which was specially mentioned for fine work in the field, died on the 10th inst., at the Australian General Hospital, Harefield, Middlesex. A Londoner born, Private Bassett had been in many parts of the Far East, and had seen much of the world. The outbreak of war found him at Duntroon Military College in the Federal Territory of the Australian Commonwealth, where he had been settled for a couple of years, but his efforts at first to join the magnificent forces the Commonwealth sent to the help of the Mother Country were without avail. Four times he tried to enlist and was four times rejected, but on presenting himself for the fifth time was accepted and sent to Egypt, later on being transferred to France, where he took part in much of the heavy fighting, especially during the later part of 1917 and the whole of 1918, up to within a month of the signing of the Armistice. He took part in the devastating struggle for Polygon Wood, of which his Colonel said to Private Bassett on his applying to go into the line again, "If you could live through Polygon Wood you can live through anything, so you may go." Other places where Private Bassett, in company with the men of the Fifth Division, fought the enemy were the Amiens front, around Albert, at Arras, Messines, Corbie, Armentieres, Ypres, Fromelles, &c. Beside the wrecking strain of actual fighting at close quarters, it will never be realised as those realised it who took part, what exhausting toll has taken of the infantryman's physical endurance in march, and counter-march through the awful mud, rain, and desolation of the front. On one occasion Private Bassett was six hours up to his armpits in Somme mud before he was found by a runner and a rescue party sent back. Such prolonged drain often sapped the finest strength and proved as fatal as bullet and wound. Private Bassett was invalided home in October last, and, making no progress was ordered to hospital where he died at the age of 37. He was a nephew of Mr W. C. Bassett, of Bromley.

Private Bassett was buried with full military honours on Wednesday, in the churchyard of Harefield, amid comrades who had gone before. The service was conducted by Major Bladon, C.F. Lieutenant Hudson was in command of the escort, and the firing party consisted of seven files of men from London headquarters, under Sergeant Stone. Comrades at headquarters sent a chaplet of immortelles to be placed on the grave.

(Newspaper source unknown. Newspaper clipping located in PDF for Roll of Honour – Australian War Memorial)

From BRIGADIER-GENERAL C. S. DAVIES

G.O.C. 8th Brigade, A.I.F., France.

“He has always been more of a friend than a “batman” to me for the last five years. As a soldier a more fearless and splendid boy never came to France. He was a great favourite in the Battalion..... To me it is as if my own brother had passed away.”

(Located in PDF for Roll of Honour – Australian War Memorial)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)

Private L. J. Bassett does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

A More Fearless & Splendid Boy Never Came To France

G.O.C. 8TH B'Gade

St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England

St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield contains 126 Commonwealth War Graves.

During the two world wars, the United Kingdom became an island fortress used for training troops and launching land, sea and air operations around the globe. There are more than 170,000 Commonwealth war graves in the United Kingdom, many being those of servicemen and women killed on active service, or who later succumbed to wounds. Others died in training accidents, or because of sickness or disease. The graves, many of them privately owned and marked by private memorials, will be found in more than 12,000 cemeteries and churchyards.

Harefield (St. Mary) Churchyard contains war graves from both world wars. There are 120 First World War graves, mostly those of Australians who died in No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield Park. Uniquely, their graves are marked by scroll shaped headstones, chosen by the staff and patients at the hospital. In the centre of the Australian plot stands a memorial obelisk which was erected by Sir Francis Newdegate, late Governor of Tasmania and of Western Australia, and Mr. C.A.M. Billyard-Leake, of Harefield Park. The churchyard also contains six graves of the Second World War.

(Information & photos from CWGC)





St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield



Photo of Private L. J. Bassett's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England.



(Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)



St Mary the Virgin Church, Harefield (Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)



St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield (Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)



St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield (Photos courtesy of Peter Bennett)



