

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

**War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**1440 PRIVATE**

**W. COPTON**

**8TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**19TH AUGUST, 1918 Age 26**

*Gone But Not Forgotten*

## William COPTON

William Copton was born around 1891.

[His Attestation Papers recorded that he was born at Launceston, Tasmania, however information provided for the Roll of Honour by Mrs E. Eskins, 77 Stoke St, Melbourne, Victoria recorded he was born in Melbourne, Victoria. A search of both Tasmanian & Victorian birth records failed to identify any matching records.]

According to information provided for the Roll of Honour – William Copton served with Merchant Service.

From *Police Gazette*, Tasmania – 26 July, 1912:

### **WARRANTS ISSUED AND NOW IN THIS OFFICE**

*HOBART – WILLIAM COPTON is charged, on Warrant of Commitment issued on the 20th ultimo, by W. O. Wise, Esq., J.P., for seven days' imprisonment in the Hobart Gaol, in default of payment of 17s. 6d., fine and costs, convicted of having disturbed the peace at Hobart on the 2nd April, 1912. Description: About 20 years of age, 5 feet 7 or 8 inches high, slight build, dark hair, pale complexion, long features, clean-shaven; a seaman or labourer. May be found at Launceston, where he is well-known.*

William Copton was a 23 year old, single, Seaman when he enlisted on 19th November, 1914 at Healesville, Victoria with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 1525\*\* & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his aunt – Miss Hankings, Surges Bay, Tasmania. Description: 5 feet nine inches; fair complexion; blue eyes & brown hair. Tattoo on left arm – Rock of ages, coat of Arms, Union Jack & female bust. Tattoo on right arm – Britannia, Coat of Arms England Ireland & Scotland, Ship Star, etc.

[\*\* Private Copton's Service number was changed to 1440. Reason & date not recorded.]

Private William Copton was posted to 3rd Reinforcements of 8th Battalion on 19th November, 1914 for recruit training.

Private William Copton embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Runic (A54)* on 19th February, 1915 with the 8th Infantry Battalion, 3rd Reinforcements.

Private William Copton joined 8th Battalion at Anzac on 8th May, 1915 from 3rd Reinforcements

Private William Copton reported sick on 25th August, 1915. He was admitted to 3rd Field Ambulance at Anzac on 25th August, 1915 then transferred to Casualty Clearing Station the same day. Private Copton was admitted to Hospital Ship *Valdrina* on 26th August, 1915 then transferred to H.C. *Ionian* with Enteritis & Debility on 29th August, 1915. He was admitted to St. Patrick's Military Hospital, Malta on 1st September, 1915 then transferred to Hospital Ship *Panama* on 13th September, 1915.

Private William Copton was admitted to 3rd London General Hospital, Stamford on 21st September, 1915 with Enteric. He was transferred to Weymouth Base Depot on 21st October, 1915 & was marched in to Weymouth Base Depot the same day.

Private William Copton had his pay stopped from 17th December, 1915 to 20th December 1915 – 4 days inclusive due to Veneral.

Private William Copton was absent from Monte Video Camp, Weymouth from 9th March, 1916 to 16th March, 1916. He forfeited 8 days' pay.

Private William Copton was admitted to Verne Military Hospital, Portland on 27th March, 1916 with V.D. He was discharged on 29th March, 1916. Total V.D. period – 3 days. Total period of VD in UK – 6 days.

Private William Copton was Absent without Leave from midnight on 28th May, 1916 till 2.30 pm on 29th May, 1916. He forfeited 1 days' pay & was awarded 3 days confined to Barracks.

Private William Copton proceeded to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) on 7th June, 1916 with 35th Draft from Monte Video, Weymouth.

Private William Copton was written up while posted at Base Depot at Etaples, France on 29th June, 1916 – 1. Wilfully damaging government property in Guard Room & 2. Breaking out of Camp. He was awarded 10 days Field Punishment No. 1 on 29th June, 1916.

Private William Copton was sent to Detention at Etaples on 8th July, 1916 from 1st A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot).

Private William Copton joined 8th Battalion in France on 29th July, 1916.

Private William Copton reported sick on 22nd September, 1916. He was admitted to 2nd Field Ambulance then transferred to D.R.S. (Divisional Rest Station) on 23rd September, 1916. Private Copton was transferred to 10th Casualty Clearing Station on 27th September, 1916 with Diarrhoea. He was discharged to duty on 6th October, 1916 & rejoined his Battalion in France on 7th October, 1916.

Private William Copton reported sick on 16th October, 1916. He was admitted to 2nd Field Ambulance on 16th October, 1916 with Chancre then admitted to 10th Stationary Hospital at St. Omer on 18th October, 1916 with VDG. Private Copton was transferred to 1st Convalescent Depot at Boulogne on 18th October, 1916 then transferred to Camier on 19th October, 1916. He was admitted to 18th General Hospital at Camier on 19th October, 1916 then transferred to 51st General Hospital at Etaples on 27th October, 1916. Private Copton was discharged on 18th November, 1916.

Private William Copton was posted to 1st A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 23rd December, 1916 from Hospital. He was marched out to his Unit on 15th January, 1917 & rejoined 8th Battalion in France on 18th January, 1917.

Private William Copton was A.W.L. (Absent without Leave) from Tattoo on 29th March, 1917 till 20.00 hrs on 31st March, 1917. He was awarded 14 days Field Punishment No. 2 on 4th April, 1917.

Private William Copton reported sick on 1st November, 1917. He was admitted to 1st Australian Divisional Rest Station on 2nd November, 1917 with a Fever then transferred & admitted to 10th Casualty Clearing Station on 3rd November, 1917. Private Copton was transferred to Ambulance Train & admitted to 7th Canadian General Hospital at Etaples, France on 4th November, 1917. He embarked for England on 6th November, 1917 on Hospital Ship *Stad Antwerpen*.

## **8th Battalion**

The 8th Battalion was among the first infantry units raised for the AIF during the First World War. Like the 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions, it was recruited from Victoria and, together with these battalions, formed the 2nd Brigade.

The battalion was raised from rural Victoria by Lieutenant Colonel William Bolton within a fortnight of the declaration of war in August 1914 and embarked just two months later. After a brief stop in Albany, Western Australia, the battalion proceeded to Egypt, arriving on 2 December. It later took part in the ANZAC landing on 25 April 1915, as part of the second wave. Ten days after the landing, the 2nd Brigade was transferred from ANZAC to Cape Helles to help in the attack on the village of Krithia. The attack captured little ground but cost the brigade almost a third of its strength. The Victorian battalions returned to ANZAC to help defend the beachhead, and in August the 2nd Brigade fought at the battle of Lone Pine. The battalion served at ANZAC until the evacuation in December.

After the withdrawal from Gallipoli, the battalion returned to Egypt. In March 1916, it sailed for France and the Western Front. From then until 1918 the battalion was heavily involved in operations against the German Army. The battalion's first major action in France was at Pozieres in the Somme valley in July 1916. Private Thomas Cooke, one of 81 members of the battalion killed at Pozieres, earned a posthumous Victoria Cross during the action. After Pozieres, the battalion fought at Ypres, in Flanders, returning to the Somme for winter. In 1917, the battalion participated in the operations that followed-up the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line, and then returned to Belgium to join the great offensive launched to the east of Ypres.

*(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)*

Private William Copton was admitted to East Suffolk & Ipswich Hospital, England on 7th November, 1917 with Trench Fever. He was transferred to 3rd Auxiliary Hospital, Dartford on 30th November, 1917. Private Copton was discharged to Furlo on 5th December, 1917 & was to report to Depot at Sutton Veny on 19th December, 1917.

Private William Copton was reported AWL (Absent without Leave) from No. 1 Command Depot at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire from 3.30 pm on 19th December, 1917. He returned at 8 pm on 27th December, 1917.

Private William Copton was written up for an Offence at Sutton Veny – A.W.L. from 2.30 pm on 19th December, 1917 until 8 pm on 27th December, 1917. This was admonished by Lieut. Colonel W. O. Mansbridge on 4th January, 1918 & Private Copton forfeited 9 days' pay.

Private William Copton married Mary (May) Wood at St. George's Catholic Cathedral, Southwark, London on 21st December, 1917. Their marriage was registered in the December quarter, 1917 in the district of Southwark, London, England. William Copton was aged 26 & a Merchant Seaman (father - John Copton (deceased) Baker – Journeyman) & his address was listed as Y.M.C. Hut Waterloo Road. May Wood was aged 30 & a Drapers Packer (father – Thomas Wood – Sapper Royal Engineers) & her address was listed as 41 Paris Gardens.

Private William Copton was A.W.L. from No. 1 Convalescent Depot on 15th January, 1918. He was declared an Illegal Absentee by a Court of Inquiry held on 7th February, 1918 at Sutton Veny.

Private William Copton was apprehended by Army Provost Corps on 25th February, 1918.

Private William Copton was admitted to 1st Australian Dermatological Hospital, Bulford, Wiltshire on 28th February, 1918 – cause N.Y.D. (not yet determined). He was discharged on 27th April, 1918 for Trial under escort. Total VD period – 59 days.

Private William Copton was marched in to No. 1 Command Depot from Bulford on 29th April, 1918.

Private William Copton reported sick to 1st Australian Dermatological Hospital at Bulford on 1st May, 1918. He was discharged on 6th May, 1918 under escort. Total VD period – 6 days.

A District Court Martial was held at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire on 13th May, 1918. Charge: A.W.L. from Sutton Veny from 15th January, 1918 till apprehended at Southwark on 25th February, 1918. Pleading: Guilty. Finding: Guilty Sentence: 50 days Field Punishment No. 2 Confirmation: 30 days remitted by Major General The Hon. Sir J. W. McCay, K.C.M.G. C.B. V.D. G.O.C.A.I.P. on 17th May, 1918. Period under Charge: 76 days Total forfeiture of 138 days (arrested 25/2/18).

Private William Copton was written up for an Offence at Sutton Veny on 24th May, 1918 – Failing to answer defaulters Roll Call, after being duly warned. This was admonished by Major A. W. Aitken. Private Copton was awarded 20 days Field Punishment No. 2 on 13th May, 1918.

Private William Copton was written up for an Offence at Reading on 8th June, 1918 – Neglecting to obey A.I.F. H.Q. Order 719 of 22nd June, 1917 – Being in Reading on 8th June, 1918 without a pass. He was awarded 7 days Field Punishment No. 2.

Private William Copton was A.W.L. on 14th June, 1918. He was declared an Illegal Absentee by a Court of Inquiry held at Sutton Veny on 6th July, 1918. There was no record of disciplinary action (as recorded on Casualty Form – Active Service).

Private William Copton's correct Regiment Number was recorded as 1440 on 28th June, 1918 (\*\* as recorded on Casualty Form – Active Service).

Private William Copton was admitted to 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield, Middlesex, England on 1st August, 1918 with Gastric duodenal catarrh & Jaundice.

Private William Copton died at 10.40 am on 19th August, 1918 at 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield Park, Harefield, Middlesex, England from Acute Yellow Atrophy of Liver.

A death for William Copton, aged 27, was registered in the September quarter, 1918 in the district of Uxbridge, Middlesex, England.

Harefield Hospital telegraphed Administrative Headquarters A.I.F. with the following: "*No. 1440 Pte William COPTON 8th Bn Age 26 Roman Catholic died this Hospl 10.40 am today AAA Cause Acute Yellow Atrophy of Liver AAA Please notify Wife Mary Copton 88 Dennington Road Lambeth SB.1 of time of funeral and send free railway pass to that address for her and sister Mrs Borden to attend funeral AAA Time 2.30 pm Wednesday 21st AAA Firing part to catch 12.55 train Marylebone and have dinner here as arranged by telephone.*"

Private William Copton was buried on 21st August, 1918 in St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England – Grave No. 63.

From the burial report of Private William Copton - *Coffin was good Polished Elm. The deceased soldier was accorded a Military funeral. Wreaths were given by wife and C. Billyard-Leake Esq., of Harefield. Firing Party, and Bugler were in attendance Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London. A few of the Staff and patients attended the funeral.*

*Names of Relatives and friends present at the Funeral – Wife Mrs May Copton, 88 Kennington Rd, Lambeth with her mother and two friends.*

Private William Copton's grave is now recorded by CWGC as Plot - Aust. 61 and he now has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Private William Copton contains a letter from Registrar, No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield Park which reads: "*Pte Copton was admitted to this Hospital on the 1st August 1918, from Australian Headquarters, London, suffering from Acute Yellow Atrophy of Liver, and died on the 19th August 1918. He was buried with full Military Honours at 2.30 pm on Wednesday 20th August 1918. Grave No. 63, Australian Section, Harefield Parish Churchyard, Officiating Clergyman, Rev. Father C. Caron. St. Augustine's Presbytery, Rickmansworth, Herts. Arrangements have been made whereby all the Graves of Australian soldiers in the above Churchyard will be turfed and kept in order for many years to come, and Headstones are being erected by the Australian Government.*"

Private William Copton requested on 10th March, 1915 that in the event of his death the whole of his property & effects to be given to his Aunty – Elizabeth Ekstrom of No. 177 Stokes St., Port Melbourne, Victoria.

Private William Copton did not desire to make a Will – dated 2nd August, 1917.

Private William Copton requested in his Will dated 25th January, 1918 that in the event of his death the whole of his property & effects be given to his wife – Mrs Copton, c/o Mrs Williams, No. 24 Mews Chambers, Castle Street, Long Acre W.C.2 London.

Private William Copton was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also to be sent to Private Copton's Widow – Mrs M. Copton, as the closest next-of-kin. (No record of when the Scroll & Plaque were sent).

The Salvation Army, Melbourne, Victoria wrote to The Secretary, Department of Army, Melbourne, Victoria on 3rd October, 1951 with the following regarding "*William Copton (deceased) late 1st A.I.F.*": "*We have an enquiry from Canada on behalf of the daughter (only child) of the above. The lady in question states that her mother is also dead, but she is very anxious to get into touch with her relatives, and will be glad if your records can reveal any information that will be helpful in the search. We regret that we have no other information re William Copton.*"

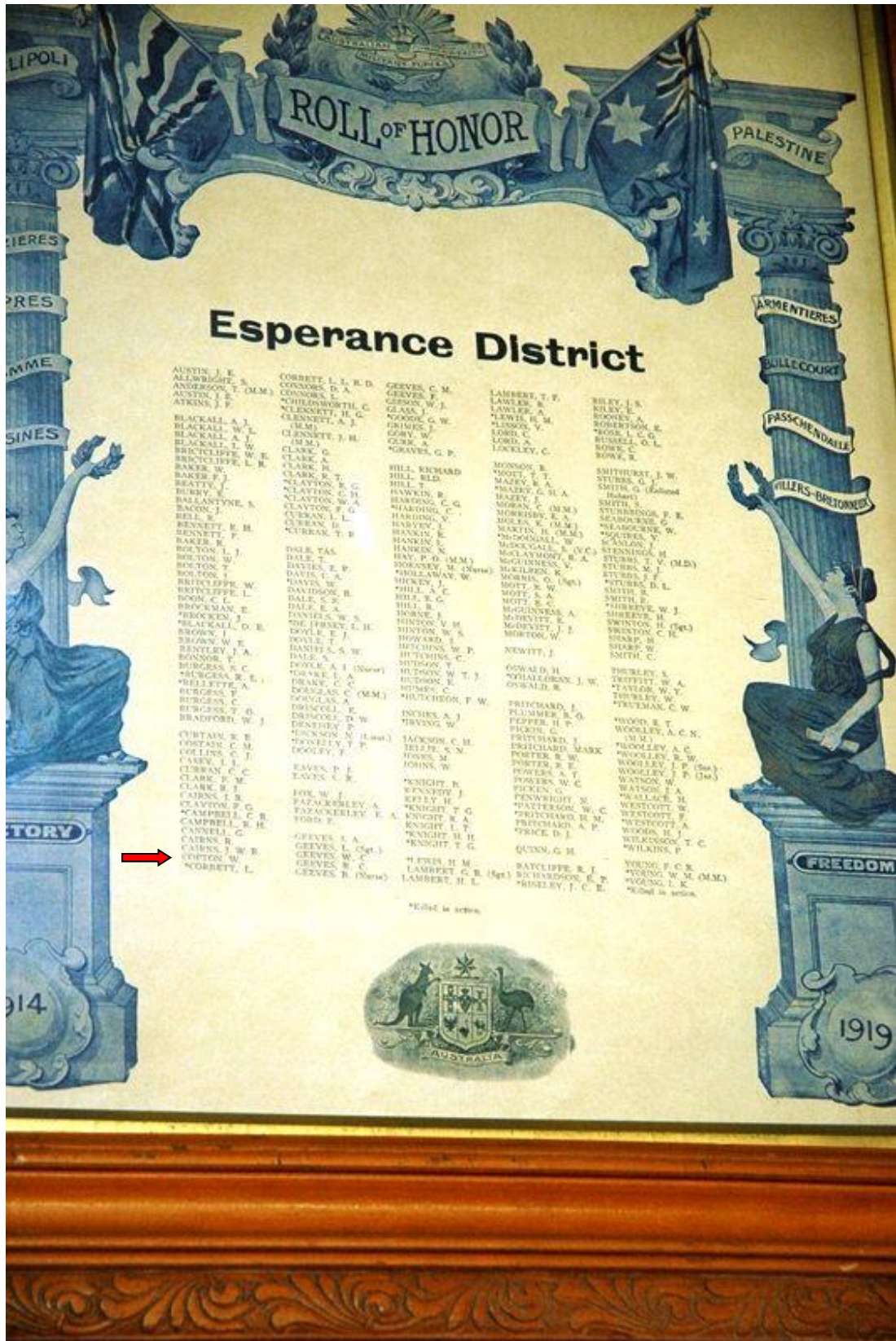
Base Records replied to Salvation Army on 17th October, 1951 advising "*re No 1440 Private William COPTON 8th Battalion 1914 – 18. In reply to your letter dated 3rd October 1951 requesting particulars of relatives of the abovenamed I have to advise, the only address recorded on enlistment of William Copton, was Aunt, Mrs Harkings,*







W. Copton is remembered on the Esperance District Roll of Honour (framed paper honour roll), located in Geeveston RSL, 11 Memorial Drive, Geeveston, Tasmania.



Esperance District Roll of Honour (Photo from AWM Places of Pride – Arthur Garland)



Private W. Copton is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 52.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

W. Copton is remembered on the Australian Soldiers' Memorial in St. Mary the Virgin Church, Church Hill, Harefield, Middlesex, England.



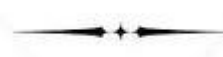
Australian Soldiers' Memorial, Harefield (Photo from War Memorials Online – B. Wood)



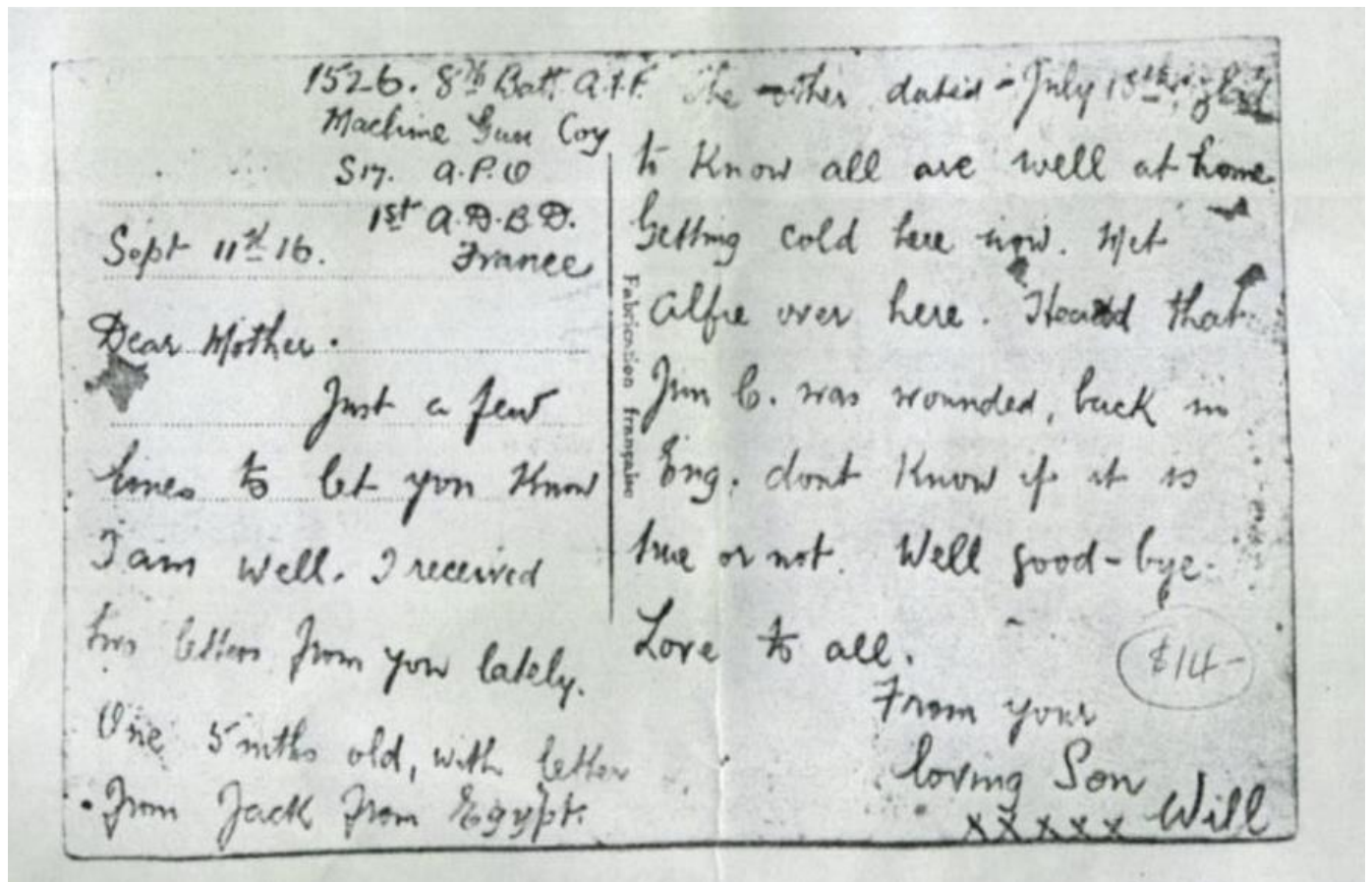


( pages of Private William Copton's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

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



**Copy of a letter located in Service Record file of Private William Copton:**



<p>1526. 8<sup>th</sup> Batt. A.I.F. Machine Gun Coy S17. A.P.O. 1<sup>st</sup> A.D.B.D. France</p>	<p>The other dated July 15<sup>th</sup> glad to know all are well at home. Getting cold here now. Met Alfie over here. Heard that Jim C. was wounded, back in Eng. Don't know if it is true or not. Well good-bye</p>
<p>Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 16 Dear Mother Just a few lines to let you know I am well. I received two letters from you lately, one 5mths old, with letter from Jack from Egypt</p>	<p>Love to all</p> <p style="text-align: right;">From your Loving son xxxxx Will</p>

## Newspaper Notices

### STANLEY DROWNING CASE

#### THE INQUEST

The inquest touching the death of Cecil Richardson, a Hobart youth, who was drowned at Stanley on Monday, in circumstances briefly recorded in "The Mercury," was held on Tuesday, before Mr. H. T. Spicer (Coroner), Senior Constable Donohue also being present.

Robert James Blackwood said that he was master of the schooner Mariner, now in port loading cargo for Hobart. Deceased was a ship's cook, employed by him, 17 years of age, and a native of Hobart, where his people reside. He had been in his employ for a month and ten days. On Monday he saw the deceased and two other boys leave the schooner in a boat, to do some fishing in the bay. Shortly afterwards he was informed by **William Copton**, a sailor, that one of the boys had fallen overboard. He got a boat, and went with Mr. Feutrill to the scene of the accident. The body was recovered with grappling irons, but all efforts to restore animation failed.

Dr. Samuel McCausland testified as to having attended deceased, and every effort was made to bring back respiration, but without avail. Death was due to drowning, and there were no marks of violence. Walter L. Foutrill gave evidence, which largely corroborated that of Captain Blackwood.

Frank Pritchard, a sailor boy on the Mariner, identified the body as that of Cecil Richardson. He went out in a boat with the deceased and a Stanley lad named Reuben Cross to do some fishing. Deceased was sculling, and over-balanced and fell into the water, taking the paddle with him. Witness tried to scull to him, but could not manage it. None of them could swim. He wanted to jump in and rescue deceased, but Cross held him down.

Reuben Cross, a boy living at Stanley, deposed that he went out in a boat with Pritchard and deceased. His evidence was similar to his companion's. He said Frank got very excited, and wanted to jump in after the deceased, and witness had great difficulty in preventing him. He cried out for assistance, and when other boats arrived a sailor strapped Pritchard down, so that he would not be able to do injury to himself.

Christian Hanson, a sailor, residing at Stanley, deposed that he recovered the body, which was lying in about two fathoms of water. The Coroner returned a verdict of accidentally drowned, and that every effort was made to restore animation, but without success.

(*The Mercury*, Hobart, Tasmania – 4 March, 1910)

## **POLICE COURTS**

### **HOBART**

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William Copton was charged with creating a disturbance in Macquarie-street on the 2nd inst. Defendant failed to appear, and was unrepresented. The evidence of the arresting constable was to the effect that defendant was quarrelling with another man, an when witness told them to go home, the men struck each other. A fine of 10s., with 5s. costs was imposed. Thomas Mottson, the other party concerned in the disturbance, who also failed to appear, was fined 10s., with 4s. costs.

(*The Mercury*, Hobart, Tasmania – 13 April, 1912)

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## **Roll of Honour**

### **Tasmanian Casualties**

#### **The 85th List**

#### **HOSPITAL CASES**

Private W. COPTON, 8th Battalion, 3rd Reinforcements (Sturges Bay) ill (disembarked at Malta)

(*Examiner*, Launceston, Tasmania – 2 October, 1915)

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## **AUSTRALIA'S**

### **ROLL OF HONOR**

#### **CASUALTY LIST NO. 183**

#### **RETURNED TO DUTY**

#### **TASMANIA**

Private W. Copton, Surges Bay, previously reported ill.

(*Daily Telegraph*, Launceston, Tasmania – 8 July, 1916)

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## **VICTORIAN CASUALTIES**

### **List No. 428**

#### **DIED OTHER CAUSES**

COPTON, W., England, 19/8/18 (illness)

(*The Argus*, Melbourne, Victoria – 1 September, 1918)

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## 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 W. Copton does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*Gone But Not Forgotten*

## **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 from CWGC)*







**St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield** (Photos from CWGC)





Photo of Private W. Copton'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)







*(Photo from CWGC)*