

**Shorncliffe Military Cemetery,
Folkestone, Kent
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



3150 PRIVATE

W. B. GEMMELL

45TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

17TH APRIL, 1918 Age 27

William Burns (Jerry) GEMMELL

William Burns Gemmell was born at Balgownie, NSW in 1891 to parents Allan and Esther Gemmell. His birth was registered in the district of Wollongong, NSW.

William Burns Gemmell was a 25 year old, single, Miner from Balgownie, NSW when he enlisted on 29th October, 1916 with the 45th Infantry Battalion, 8th Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 3150 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr Allen Gemmell, Balgownie, NSW.

Private William Burns Gemmell embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Beltana* (A72) on 25th November, 1916 & disembarked at Devonport, England on 29th January, 1917.

Private William Burns Gemmell was admitted sick (slight) to Military Hospital at Devonport on 30th January, 1917. He was discharged to Perham Downs on 2nd February, 1917.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Private William Burns Gemmell was marched in to No. 1 Command Depot at Perham Downs, Wiltshire and marched out to 12th Training Battalion at Codford, Wiltshire on 5th February, 1917.

Private William Burns Gemmell was admitted to Hospital at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire on 27th February, 1917 with Bronchitis & discharged on 5th March, 1917.

Private William Burns Gemmell proceeded overseas to France from 12th Training Battalion at Codford, via Folkestone, England on 3rd May, 1917. He joined the 4th A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 4th May, 1917. Pte Gemmell was marched out to his Unit on 7th May, 1917 & taken on strength of 45th Battalion in France the same day.

Private William Burns Gemmell was wounded in action on 11th October, 1917. He was transferred & admitted to 14th Stationary Hospital at Boulogne, France on 13th October, 1917 with exhaustion & Trench Feet. Pte Gemmell embarked for England on Hospital Ship *St. Denis* on 15th October, 1917.

45th Battalion

The 45th Battalion was in reserve for the 4th Division's first major action of 1917 'the first battle of Bullecourt' and was not committed to the attack. It was, however, heavily engaged during the battle of Messines in June, and suffered commensurate casualties. The focus of the AIF's operations had now switched to the Ypres sector in Belgium and the 45th took part in another major battle near Passchendaele on October 12. Conditions were horrendous and the operation was hastily planned - thus it resulted in failure.

(Extract of information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private William Burns Gemmell was admitted to Military Hospital at Lakenham, Norwich, England on 16th October, 1917 with exhaustion & Trench Feet. He was transferred to 1st Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield Park, Middlesex on 21st November, 1917. He was discharged to furlo from 4th December, 1917 to 18th December, 1917 & was then to report to No. 3 Command Depot at Hurdcott.

Private William Burns Gemmell was absent without leave from 18th December, 1917 & returned on 29th December, 1917. His case was dismissed by Headquarters at Tidworth, Wiltshire.

Private William Burns Gemmell was medically classified at No. 4 Command Depot, Hurdcott, Wiltshire on 8th January, 1918, 14th January, 1918, 21st January, 1918 & 28th January, 1918 & classified as B1 A3 each time (Fit for Overseas Training Camp in 2 to 3 weeks). He was medically classified as B1 A4 (Fit for Overseas Training Camp when passed Dentally fit) on 4th February, 1918.

Private William Burns Gemmell was admitted to Camp Isolation Hospital on 10th February, 1918 & was marched in to No. 4 Command Depot at Hurdcott, Wiltshire on 22nd February, 1918 from Camp Isolation Hospital.

Private William Burns Gemmell was marched in to Overseas Training Brigade at Longbridge Deverill, Wiltshire on 21st March, 1918.

Private William Burns Gemmell was written up for an Offence while posted at Sandhill – Absent without Leave from Tattoo on the 12th April, 1918 until 10 am on 15th April, 1918. He was awarded 14 days Field Punishment No. 2 & forfeited a total on 17 days' pay.

Private William Burns Gemmell died on 17th April, 1918 at No. 3 Rest Camp, Folkestone, Kent, England.

A Coroner's Court was held on the 18th April, 1918 at the Town Hall, Folkestone, Kent into the death of William Burns Gemmell.

EDWARD JOHN CHADWICK being sworn, saith:-

"I am Coroners Officer for the Borough
Yesterday morning, the 17th. inst, at 9.40
a.m. from information received, I went to No.
3 Rest Camp Earls Avenue.

On arrival, I went to the Medical Room
on the ground floor, front room. Dr. Nuttall
was there and also Cpl. Hogben.

In a room at the back was the body now
viewed by the Jury,

The man was lying on the floor on his
back; a large quantity of haemorrhage was on
the bedstead and on the floor.

Deceased had a very deep wound in the
throat; he was dead.

There was a razor wide open, now produced,
lying near him; there was fresh blood upon

it.

The razor case was on the bed, small

part on the floor.

Dr. Nuttall handed the Pay Book now produced
as also the identify disc. on him.

I removed deceased to the mortuary, undressed
him; there was only a testament found.

Name in Testament:-

Pte. E.M.Doyle,

37, Cedar St.

Belleville. Ont.

T.M.B. London. 28th. July 1916.

Cpl. Hogben told me that the deceased had cut his throat.

Inside deceased's left knee was an old scar, about the size of a two shilling piece. "

(Signed) E. J. Chadwick.

(Signed) Geo W. ~~Hambes~~ *Haines*

Coroner.

HARRY ALEXANDER HOGBEN, being sworn saith:-

"I am a Corporal No. 350 R.A.M.C. stationed at No.3. Rest Camp, Folkestone.

On Tuesday night last, deceased came into the Camp with a draft.

On Wednesday at 9.20 a.m. deceased came to me and reported sick. Complained of aching all over. I took him into room at the back, and told him to lie down.

I put in a clinical thermometer and felt his pulse, and directed Lce. Corpl. Hook to cover him over with a blanket.

I left the room to go to the latrine. On my return I was called back almost immediately by Lce. Cpl. Hook.

On coming back, I found Private Gemmell on the floor on his back; his throat was cut; both hands were stretched away from the body; there was nothing in either of the hands.

I saw a razor lying on the floor on his left hand side.

There was a quantity of blood on the left hand. He was not conscious, but alive. I telephoned for the Doctor.

I waited with the body until the Doctor arrived."

(Signed) H. A. Hogben,

Cpl., R.A.M.C.

(Signed) Geo. W. Haines,

Coroner.

WILLIAM ARROW HOOKE. being sworn saith:- "I am a Lance Corporal No. 27700, R.A.M.C. stationed at No. 3. Rest Camp, Folkstone.

On Wednesday morning last, about 9.20.a.m. Corporal Hogben gave me instructions to take deceased's temperature: ^{he was then lying on the bed. I took temperature;} it was normal. he never spoke a word. Corporal then told me to cover him over with a blanket and keep him warm till the Doctor arrived. I asked him whether he was warm enough; he said "Yes". I then came out and went into the Medical Officers room which adjoins, the door communicating being on the jar. On getting into the room, I heard a noise as of a man in a fit. I went back into the room and saw deceased: he was lying down on the bed, his head, rather inclined: the blankets were kicked over part of his face, he was kicking his legs up and throwing his arms about. I saw that he had cut his throat. I got hold of his hands and he made a spring out of bed on to the floor, almost pulling me down with him. He had blood on his left hand. Afterwards I saw the razor on

the floor, which was left until the arrival of the Coroner's Officer.

I remained until the arrival of the Doctor".

(Signed) W.A. Hooke,

L. Cpl. R.A.M.C., 27700

(Signed) Geo. W. Haines,

Coroner.

WALTER WINGFIELD NUTTALL being sworn saith:-

"I am a Medical Practitioner, practising in Folkestone, attached to the Military Rest Camp, No. 3, Folkestone.

On Wednesday morning last, I was called there and on arrival saw a man lying on the floor on his back with his arms and legs stretched out: large amount of haemorrhage on his head, floor, blankets and bed; a razor a few inches from his left hand, on which was some blood.

No blood on the right hand: a gash in his throat commencing on the right hand side, angle of the jaw, extending right across the neck to the other side: not quite below the angle of the jaw: one deep cut right through the organs of the neck and the large vessels.

The wound must have been caused with some violence and determination.

It would appear as if done with his left hand.

Death was due to haemorrhage. He was dead on my

arrival.

I searched him, and found an identity disc and a Pay Book as also a Testament which I handed to the Coroner's Officer."

(Signed) W. W. Nuttall.

(Signed) Geo. W. Haines,

WILLIAM McCULLOCH CLIFF being sworn saith:-

"I am a Captain, 3rd Hussars, attached to No. 3 Rest Camp, Folkestone.

On Wednesday morning last the 17th inst., I saw Captain Page, an Officer, who was in charge of the draft to which deceased belonged.

He handed me the post card now produced, and told me it had been written by the deceased and handed to one of the men in his draft to be posted a short time before the deceased reported sick.

Private J. R. Hunter, 3267, 45th. Bn. A.I.F. stated to me that he had known deceased well: he came over from Australia with him: he noticed on the night of the 16th. inst: that he had changed considerably: his manner was strange and complained that he was feeling unwell: his eyes had a wandering and vacant look.

(Signed) William McCulloch Cliff, Capt.

3rd. Hussars,

attached No.3. Rest Camp

Folkestone.

(Signed) Geo. W. Haines,

Coroner.

The disc shows:- 3150. Gemmell, Initials:- W.B. 45th. Bn., A.I.F., &"P", which is for religion.

The Pay Book produced shows:- No. of Pay Book, 143801, Gemmell, William Burns, No. 3150, Religion:- Presbyterian, Rank, Private. Attested 27th, Oct 1916. 45th Bn. Age., on enlisting 25 yrs 7 months.

Balgownie, a minor,

N.S.W.

(Signed) Geo. W. Haines.

Coroner.

C O P Y . P O S T C A R D .

This space may be used for communication
The address to be written here.

Dear Mother
the Military
tha Military
over to France
has sentimely
murdered as
over to France
to be wilfully
murdered as

I knew to much
for them I gave them
the best soye system that
the world could ever
be produced ending
up with their ruin
writing

no address or name of addressee thereon, on the obverse a
picture of statue Wm. Wilberforce in Westminster Abbey.

(Signed) Geo. W. Haines.

Coroner.

C O P Y V E R D I C T O F J U R Y .

"Cut his throat with a razor whilst temporarily insane".
I certify the foregoing as a true copy of the depositions
taken before me on the 18th. April 1918. at an inquest held
by me on the body of William Burns Gemmell.

(Signed) Geo. W. Haines.

Coroner.

Borough of Folkestone.

Newspaper Report – *The Times* – 19 April, 1918:

An inquest was held at Folkestone yesterday on the body of Private William Burns Gemmell, Australian Infantry, who was found dead with his throat cut by a razor, which was at his side, He had been wounded at the front. A postcard addressed to his mother showed that his mind was wandering. A verdict of "Suicide while temporarily insane" was returned.

A death for William B. Gemmell, aged 27, was registered in the June quarter, 1918 in the district of Elham, Kent, England.

Private William Burns Gemmell was buried at 3 pm on 19th April, 1918 in Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, Folkestone, Kent, England – Plot number N. 644 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Pte W. B. Gemmell - Coffin was *1st Class Brass mountings and name plate. The late soldier was accorded a Military funeral, band, firing Party and buglers being supplied by the Canadian Headquarters at Shorncliffe. The coffin was draped with the Union Jack. The "Last Post" was sounded at the graveside. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral.*

Private William Burns Gemmell's parents were advised in a letter from Base Records, dated 18th July, 1918, that their son had died as a result from suicide whilst temporarily insane. The same letter described to them the details of their son's Military Funeral.

A War Pension was granted to Esther Gemmell, mother of the late Private William Burns Gemmell, in the sum of £1 per fortnight from 22nd June, 1918.

Private William Burns Gemmell was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Gemmell's father - Mr A. Gemmell, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque sent October, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private William Burns Gemmell – service number 3150, of 45th Battalion Australian Infantry. No family details are listed.

Private W. B. Gemmell is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 139.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

W. Gemmell is remembered on the Balgownie War Memorial, located at corner of Balgownie Road & Para Streets, Balgownie, NSW.



Balgownie War Memorial (Photos from Illawarra Mercury)





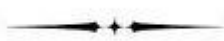
W. Gemmell & his brother A. Gemmell are both remembered on the Balgownie Presbyterian Church Roll of Honour for 1914 – 1919.



Balgownie Presbyterian Church Roll of Honour (Photo from Illawarra Remembers)

(65 pages of Pte William Burns Gemmell'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

WAR CASUALTIES

WOUNDED

Pte WM. BURNS GEMMELL, Balgownie

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 1 January, 1918)

BALGOWNIE

We are sorry to hear that Mr and Mrs Allan Gemmell, of Balgownie, received word on Tuesday that their son, Pte Wm. Gemmell, has died of wounds and gas poison. The greatest sympathy is felt for the bereaved family, and also for the deceased soldier, who was well liked and respected. Many old comrades will long remember the merry and genial Jerry, as he was known to all.

(South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus, NSW – 26 April, 1918)

MAITLAND DISTRICT

DIED OF WOUNDS

PRIVATE GEMMELL – Mr and Mrs Gemmell, of Gillies-street, Kurri Kurri, have received intelligence that their brother, Private William B. (Jerry) Gemmell, late of Balgownie, has died in hospital of wounds. Prior to enlisting he was employed at Hebburn colliery.

(Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate, NSW – 1 May, 1918)

CHURCH SERVICES

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Wollongong.....Rev. D. McKay Barnet, B.A., Balgownie, in memoriam Pte W. B. Gemmell 2 pm.,

(Illawarra Mercury, Wollongong, NSW – 3 May, 1918)

ROLL OF HONOUR

GEMMELL – Died from wounds received in action in France, April 17th, 1918. Private William B. Gemmell, dearly beloved son of Mr and Mrs A. Gemmell, Balgownie, and brother of Mrs Jos. McDonald, Dapto; James, Kurri Kurri; Allan, Pte Alex. (lately returned). Deeply mourned.

He answered the Call.

(South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus, NSW – 3 May, 1918)

BALGOWNIE

A memorial service was held on Sunday afternoon in the Presbyterian Church in memory of Private W. Gemmell, who was killed in France. A very impressive sermon was delivered by the Rev. D. McKay Barnet. The "Last Post" was played by Mr R. Grant.

(Illawarra Mercury, Wollongong, NSW – 10 May, 1918)

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

GEMMELL – In loving memory of our dear son and brother, who died at Faulston, the 17th April, 1918, aged 27 years.

We pictured your safe returning,
We longed to clasp your dear hand,
But God has postponed our meeting,
It will be in a better land.

Inserted by his loving father and mother, sister and brothers, of Balgownie.

(South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus, NSW – 17 April, 1919)

ROLL OF HONOUR

GEMMELL – In loving memory of our dear brother and uncle, Private William (Jerry) Gemmell, buried at Fockstown, England, April 13, 1918, aged 28 years.

It's just two years ago to-day
Since our dear brother died.
Gone is our brother we loved so dear,
Far away from those who love him
In a hero's grave he lies,
'Tis too far away your grave to see,
But not too far for our memory.

Inserted by his loving brother and sister, and parents, nephews and nieces, Jim and Marion Gemmell, Gillies-street, Kurri Kurri and A. and E. Gemmell, Balgownie, South Coast.

(Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate, NSW – 13 April, 1920)

ROLL OF HONOUR

GEMMELL – In loving memory of our dear brother, Private William Burns Gemmell (Jerry), late Balgownie, buried at Fockstown, England, April 13, 1918; aged 28 years.

O'er the sea our thoughts do wander,
To where dear Willie sleeps far from home;
In a soldier's grave he is sleeping,
One of the bravest and best.
In our hearts he will live for ever,
Thought we know he is only at rest.

Inserted by his loving brother and sister, nieces and nephews, James and Marion Gemmell, Gillies-street, Kurri Kurri and mother and father and brothers, A. E. Gemmell, Balgownie, South Coast; and sister, Dapto.

(Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate, NSW – 13 April, 1921)

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

GEMMELL – In loving memory of our dear son and brother, William B. Gemmell, who died at Foulstone, England, 17th April, 1918, aged 27 years, late A.I.F., 45th Battalion.

Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee.

Inserted by his loving father and mother, sister and brothers, and friends.

(South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus, NSW – 22 April, 1921)

IN MEMORIAM NOTICES

GEMMELL – In loving memory of our dearly beloved son and brother, the late Pte William B. Gemmell, who died at the Rest Camp, Folkestone, Kent, April 17, 1918, aged 27 years.

Beloved in life and honoured in death.

Inserted by his loving father and mother, brothers (Balgownie) and sister and brother-in-law, Mrs and Mr McDonald (Dapto).

(South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus, NSW – 17 April, 1924)

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)

A letter from Base Records, dated 12th July, 1921, to Mr A. Gemmell, of Balgownie, South Coast, NSW, advised that a letter from the Defence Dept. concerning an inscription on the headstone of his son, the late Pte W. B. Gemmell, had not been answered & non-receipt of a reply within 21 days would have to be accepted as indicating that no further action was to be taken.

Private W. B. Gemmell does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, Folkestone, Kent, England

Shorncliffe Military Cemetery belongs to the Ministry of Defence and contains war graves of both World Wars. It is close to the military camp at Shorncliffe, 2 miles west of Folkestone

During the First World War a number of Canadian military establishments were centred on Shorncliffe. There were camps and a Machine Gun School which were served by the Shorncliffe Military Hospital (later No. 9 Canadian General), the Moore Barracks Military Hospital (later No. 11 Canadian General), and other Canadian hospitals. The Canadian Army Medical Corps Training Depot was at or near Shorncliffe during almost the whole of the war. On three occasions Canadian soldiers were killed during air raids on Shorncliffe.

Shorncliffe Military Cemetery contains 471 First World War burials, more than 300 of them Canadian. Second World War burials number 81, including 1 unidentified U.K. soldier and 1 Polish Foreign National. The cemetery also contains a screen wall on which are commemorated 18 Belgians originally buried in a mausoleum, now demolished.

There are 11 Australians from World War 1 buried in this Cemetery – 2 with Royal Air Force.

(Information from the CWGC)



Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, Folkestone *(Photo courtesy of Paul Kendall)*



Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, Folkestone (Photo above courtesy of Paul Kendall & below Stephen Summerfield)



Photo of Private W. B. Gemmell's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, Folkestone, Kent, England.





Cross of Sacrifice (Photo courtesy of Paul Kendall)