

# Sutton Veny War Graves

## World War 1



*Lest We Forget*



**7313 SAPPER**

**W. J. GRILLS**

**AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS**

**25TH MAY, 1919 AGE 26**

*The Lord Gave*

*And The Lord Hath Taken Away*

*Thy Will be Done*

*CWGC Headstone for Sapper W. J. Grills is located in  
Grave Plot # 80. K. 9. of St. John the Evangelist Churchyard, Sutton Veny*

## William James GRILLS

William James Grills was born at South Brent, Plymouth, Devonshire, England in 1893 to parents Walter Parnell Grills & Philippa Grills (nee Lamble). William's birth was registered in June quarter, 1893 in the registration district of Totnes, Devon.

The 1901 England Census recorded William J. Grills as an 8 year old living with his family at Hedstron, South Brent, Devon. His parents were listed as Walter P. Grills (Farmer, aged 38, born North Huish) & Philippa Grills (aged 29, born Harberton). William was the second of four children listed in this Census – Bessie (aged 9), then William, Francis H. (male - aged 3) & John H. (aged 11 months). All the children had been born at South Brent. Also listed were 2 servants – May Mugridge (Housemaid, aged 14) & Samuel Statt (Carter on Farm, aged 15).

The 1911 England Census recorded William James Grills as an 18 year old Farmer's son working on Farm, living with his family at Stidston Farm, South Brent, Devon in a 7 roomed dwelling. His parents were listed as Walter Parnell Grills (Farmer, aged 48) & Philippa Grills (aged 38). William's parents had been married for 20 years, having had eight children, with one deceased. William was the eldest of six children in this Census – William, Francis Walter Gidley Grills (aged 13, school), John Henry Grills (aged 10, school), Philippa Kate Grills (aged 9, school), Walter Parnell Grills (aged 6, school) & Mary grills (aged 1 month). Also included was Mary Anna Lamble (a Visitor, aged 74, widow).

William Grills (Dairy hand, aged 20), along with his mother Philippa (Housewife, aged 40) & 6 children – Bessie (aged 21), Kate (aged 11), Mary (aged 2), Francis (Farm Labourer, aged 15), Hy. (aged 13) & Walter (aged 8) departed from Plymouth on 5th December, 1913 aboard SS *Marathon* bound for Melbourne, Australia. The ship arrived at the port of Brisbane on 15th January, 1914. Walter Grills (aged 49) had sailed on *Marathon* a year earlier arriving in Australia (port of Brisbane) on 2nd April, 1912, headed for Melbourne.

William James Grills (Labourer from Mead), Philippa Grills (Home Duties from Mead) & Walter Parnell Grills (Farmer from Mead) were all listed on the 1914 Australian Electoral Roll in the division of Wimmera, subdivision of Kerang, Victoria.

William James Grills was a 24 year old, single Labourer from Mead, Cohuna, Victoria when he enlisted at Bendigo, Victoria on 11th April, 1917 with the Tunnelling Companies, March 1917 Reinforcements of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 7313 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs P. Grills of P.O., Mead, Cohuna, Victoria. William Grills had previously been rejected from serving due to his eyesight.

Pte Grills was based at the Recruitment Depot at Broadmeadows, Victoria from 31st May to 18th June, 1917.

Pte Grills was transferred to Miners Reinforcements at Seymour on 18th June, 1917 as his eyesight was considered "defective" & he was unfit for infantry, he was then given the rank of Sapper & was transferred to Tunnelling Company on 16th July, 1917

Sapper William James Grills embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Themistocles* (A32) on 4th August, 1917 & disembarked at Glasgow on 2nd October, 1917.

Sapper William James Grills was marched in to 1 & 3 Details Camp at Parkhouse, England from Australia on 3rd October, 1917.

Sapper Grills was transferred to Engineers Details Brightlingsea from Tunnel Reinforcements on 7th November, 1917.

Sapper Grills proceeded overseas to France from Brightlingsea via Southampton on 31st January, 1918.

Sapper Grills was marched in to the Australian General Base Depot at Rouelles from England on 1st February, 1918 & marched out to his Unit on 4th February, 1918.

Sapper Grills was taken on strength with 13th Field Company Engineers in France on 9th February, 1918. He was detached for temporary duty on 16th March, 1918 & returned to duty with 13th Field Company Engineers on 26th March, 1918.

Sapper Grills was admitted to 20th Casualty Clearing Station on 15th December, 1918 with an abrasion to his right heel. He was discharged to duty on 19th December, 1918.

Sapper Grills was on leave to UK on 17th January to 10th February, 1919. He rejoined his Unit from leave in UK on 13th February, 1919.

Sapper Grills was appointed to the rank of Driver on 14th February, 1919 & reverted back to the rank of Sapper on 1st April, 1919.

Sapper Grills was marched out to UK for non-military employment from Havre on 9th April, 1919. He disembarked at Southampton on 10th April, 1919 & was to report to Sutton Veny, Wiltshire.

Sapper Grills was marched in to No. 2 Camp, 2 Group at Sutton Veny from France on 10th April, 1919.

Sapper William James Grills died at 10.45 a.m. on 25th May, 1919 at the 1st Australian General Hospital, Sutton Veny of Appendicitis.

A death for William J. Grills, aged 26, was registered in the June quarter, 1919 in the district of Warminster, Wiltshire.

Sapper William James Grills was buried on 28th May, 1919 in St. John the Evangelist Churchyard at Sutton Veny - Grave no. 80. From the burial report of Sapper Grills - *Coffin was Elm with Brass Mounts – Deceased was buried with full Military Honours, the coffin draped with the Australian flag. A Firing Party from No. 2 Australian Group, Sutton Veny was in attendance. Six of deceased's late Unit comrades supported the Pall. The "Last Post" was sounded and volleys fired over the grave. A number of Australians followed the remains and were present at the graveside ceremony. Headquarters A.I.F. Depots in United Kingdom were represented at the funeral.*

*Also in attendance at the funeral were – (Cousin) Miss P. Grills, Grand Hotel, Torquay; (Friend) Mr M. J. Taylor, 3 Sherwood Ter. Park St. Torquay; (Friend) Miss D. L. Taylor, 3 Sherwood Ter. Park St. Torquay; (Friend) Pte D. Sutherland, 1st A.C.C., A.I.F.; (Friend) Pte N. Horridge, 24th Bn, A.I.F.*

Sapper W. J. Grills is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 23.



*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

Sapper William James Grills was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Sapper Grills's father – Mr W. P. Grills (November, 1922)

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Sapper William James Grills, 7313, of 13th Field Coy., Australian Engineers, A.I.F. as the son of Walter Pamell Grills and Phillipa Grills, of Mead, Macorna, Victoria. Born in Devonshire, England.

(22 pages of Sapper William James Grills' Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

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



## **Newspaper Reports**

### **THE HONOR LIST**

Since Monday, the 16th April, the following local men have passed for the A.I.F.:- W. J. Grills (attested at Bendigo)

*(Kerang Observer, Victoria – Wednesday 25 April, 1917)*

---

### **COHUNA**

Frantz's Hall was not large enough to accommodate the crowd that attended the patriotic demonstration on Empire night, and as a fair number of eligible young men were noticeable among the audience, the members of the local committee were hopeful of a good response to the recruiting appeal to be made by Lieut. Holder. Their hopes, however, were not realised, for the screening of the war films "Will They Never Come" and "Heroes of the Dardanelles," the singing of patriotic airs by the school children and the eloquent and impassioned appeal by Lieutenant Holder all failed to arouse the eligibles to a sense of their duty, and in spite of the repeated pleadings of the speaker, not one new recruit came forward. Three young men, W. J. Grills, C. Lynch and W. Pitts, who had volunteered at a meeting recently held at Mead, walked forward to the platform and were received with deafening cheers. It was hoped that this would give a lead to the others, but they remained unmoved, seemingly unashamed, and the lieutenant had to console himself with the hope that his efforts would bear fruit at some later stage. The chairman (Cr J. Mc K. King, J.P., announced that the local Recruiting Committee had lately been revived and they intended to do their part in securing recruits with renewed vigor. Mr C. L. King, J.P., proposed a vote of thanks to Lieut. Holder, and in seconding it Mr Keppel Turnour referred in tones of scornful indignation to the shirkers who were skulking here at home and allowing others to fight for them. He stigmatised them as rank cowards, unfit to live in this fair land of Australia. The meeting concluded with the National Anthem and cheers for the boys at the front.

*(Kerang New Times, Victoria – Tuesday 29 May, 1917)*

---

### **VICTORIAN CASUALTIES**

#### **List No. 466 Issued**

#### **DIED OF ILLNESS**

Grills, W. J. Mead, 25/5/19

*(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria – Thursday 19 June, 1919)*

---

### 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 at St. John the Evangelist Churchyard at Sutton Veny. 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)*

Sapper William James Grills does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*The Lord Gave And The Lord Hath Taken Away Thy Will Be Done*

### **St. John the Evangelist's Churchyard, Sutton Veny, Wiltshire, England**

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. The 26th Division was concentrated at Sutton Veny in April 1915 and No 1 Australian Command was there from the end of 1916 to October 1919. There was also a hutted military hospital of more than 1200 beds at Sutton Veny for much of the war and No 1 Australian General Hospital was stationed there after the Armistice. Sutton Veny (St John) Churchyard contains 168 First World War burials, 167 of them in a plot at the north west corner of the church. Of these, 143 are Australian. There is only one Second World War burial in the churchyard.

*(Information from CWGC)*



**War Graves at Sutton Veny** *(Photos from CWGC)*





AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00376



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P03318.020



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00388



Photo of Sapper W. J. Grills' Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone in St. John the Evangelist's Churchyard, Sutton Veny, Wiltshire, England.



*(Photo courtesy of David Milborrow)*



William Grills is also remembered on his brother's headstone in Cohuna Cemetery, Victoria.



*(Photo by Peter Dennis via AIF Project)*

*In Loving Memory Of*

*HARRY*

*Beloved Son Of*

*W. P. & P. GRILLS*

*Who Passed Away 23rd April 1926*

*Aged 26 Years*

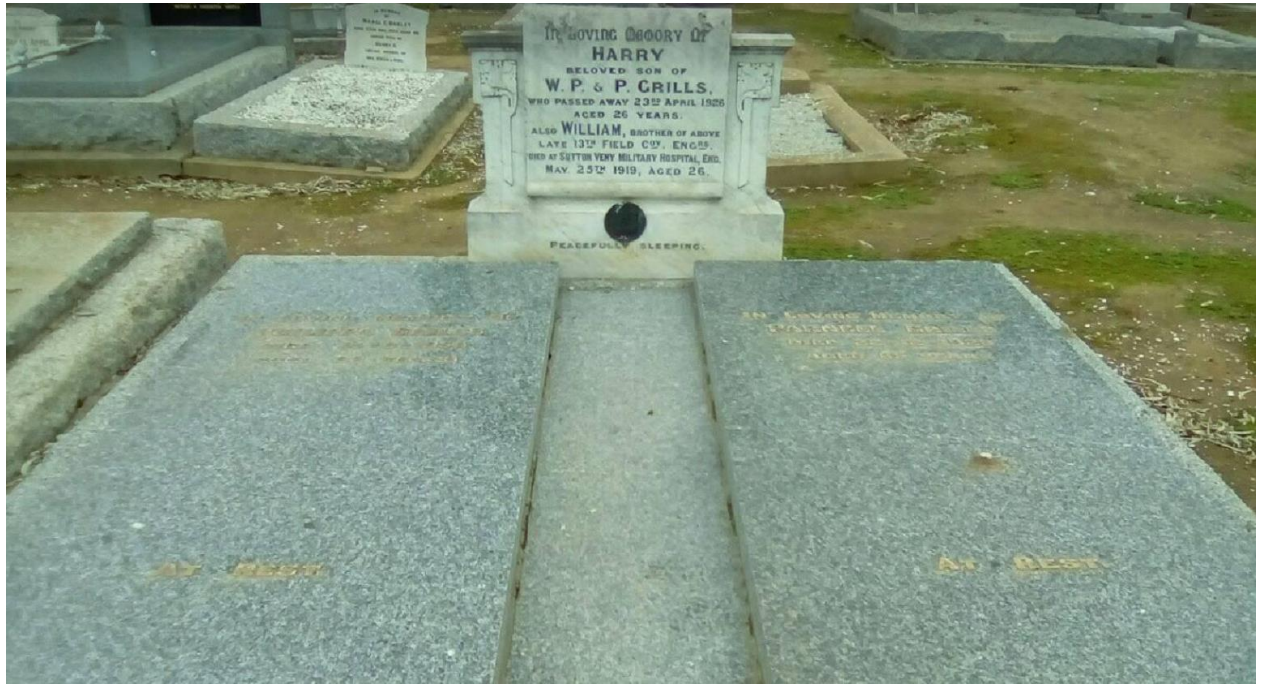
*Also WILLIAM, Brother Of Above*

*Late 13th Field Coy. Engrs.*

*Died at Sutton Veny Military Hospital, Eng.*

*May 25th 1919, Aged 26*





(Photo from Find a Grave – Cyril Smith)