

**Christ Church,  
Swindon, Wiltshire, England**

**War Grave**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**6092 PRIVATE**

**W. OAKES**

**13 BATTALION**

**16TH OCTOBER, 1960 Age 73**

*A Beloved Husband Father And*

*Brother In God's Keeping*

## William OAKES

William Oakes was born at Devizes, England in 1887 to parents George & Louisa Oakes (nee Hayden). His birth was registered in the December quarter, 1887 in the district of Devizes, Wiltshire, England.

The 1891 England Census recorded William Oakes as a 3 year old, living with his family at 4 Springfield Road, Swindon, Wiltshire, England. His parents were listed as George Oakes (Currier, aged 36, born Devizes, Wiltshire) & Louisa Oakes (aged 32, born Norwich, Norfolk). William was one of four children listed on this Census – Bessie Oakes (aged 5, born Devizes, Wiltshire) then William, Frederick Oakes (aged 2, born Swindon, Wiltshire) & Agnes L. Oakes (aged 7 months, born Swindon, Wiltshire).

The 1901 England Census recorded William Oakes as a 13 year old Boot finisher, living with his family at 24 Lethbridge Road, Swindon, Wiltshire, England. His parents were listed as George Oakes (Leather Currier, aged 46) & Louisa Oakes (aged 42). William was one of seven children listed on this Census – Bessie Oakes (Boot Fitter, aged 15) then William, Frederick Oakes (aged 12), Agnes Oakes (aged 10), Leonard Oakes (aged 6, born Swindon, Wiltshire), Alice Oakes (aged 4, born Swindon, Wiltshire) & Mabel Oakes (aged 2, born Swindon, Wiltshire).

The 1911 England Census recorded William Oakes as a 23 year old Boot Maker visiting the Smith family at Brokenborough, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, England. The Smith Family consisted of Henry Smith (Gardener, aged 53) & his wife E. Fanny Smith (aged 51) & 3 of their children – Frederick (Labourer, aged 20), Arthur Smith (Office Boy, aged 15) & Elsie (at School, aged 10).

William Oakes stated on his Attestation Papers that he had been an apprentice in the Boot Trade with Reynolds & Coy, England.

William Oakes was a 28 year old, single, Engine Driver from 611 Illawarra Road, Marrickville, NSW when he enlisted at Bathurst, NSW on 21st February, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 6092 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs L. Oakes, 24 Lethbridge Road, Swindon, Wiltshire, England.

Private William Oakes was posted to Bathurst Camp for recruit training. He was transferred to 13th Battalion on 17th April, 1916 then to 19th Reinforcements of 13th Battalion on 15th May, 1916.

Private William Oakes embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Wiltshire (A18)* on 22nd August, 1916 with the 13th Infantry Battalion, 19th Reinforcements & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 13th October, 1916.

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, others were in the county of Dorset.

Private William Oakes was marched out to No. 3 Command Depot from Wool, England on 13th October, 1916.

Private William Oakes proceeded overseas to France per S.S. *Arundle* via Folkestone on 12th December, 1916. He was marched in to 4th A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 13th December, 1916. Private Oakes was taken on strength of 13th Battalion in France on 19th December, 1916.

Private William Oakes was sent to Hospital on 4th February, 1917. He was admitted to 12th Australian Field Ambulance on 4th February, 1917 with a sprained ankle then transferred to Rest Station. He rejoined his Unit on 1st March, 1917.

Private William Oakes was on leave from 12th September, 1917 & rejoined his Unit on 24th September, 1917.

Private William Oakes was reported with his Unit on 26th September, 1917.

Private William Oakes was sent to Hospital in France on 3rd November, 1917. He was admitted to 4th Australian Field Ambulance on 3rd November, 1917 with Scabies. Private Oakes was transferred to 58th Casualty Clearing Station on 3rd November, 1917 then discharged to duty on 5th November, 1917. He rejoined 13th Battalion in France on 5th November, 1917.

Private William Oakes was wounded in action on 16th May, 1918. He was admitted to 12th Australian Field Ambulance on 17th May, 1918 with shrapnel wounds to right arm & chest & transferred the same day to 2nd Casualty Clearing Station. Private Oakes was transferred to Ambulance Train 3 on 19th May, 1918 & admitted to 9th USA Hospital at Rouen, France on 19th May, 1918 with GSW (gunshot wound/s) to arm, chest & right arm. He embarked for England on 6th June, 1918 on Hospital Ship *Grantully Castle*.

### 13th Battalion

The 13th Battalion AIF was raised from late September 1914, six weeks after the outbreak of the First World War. The battalion was recruited in New South Wales, and with the 14th, 15th and 16th Battalions formed the 4th Brigade, commanded by Colonel John Monash.....

The 13th Battalion, along with most of the 4th Brigade, suffered heavy losses at Bullecourt in April when the brigade attacked strong German positions without the promised tank support. The battalion spent much of the remainder of 1917 in Belgium advancing to the Hindenburg Line.

In March and April 1918, the battalion helped to stop the German spring offensive. It subsequently played a role in the great allied offensive of 1918, fighting near Amiens on 8 August 1918. This advance by British and empire troops was the greatest success in a single day on the Western Front, one that German General Erich Ludendorff described as "...the black day of the German Army in this war...".

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

### From War Diary – 13th Battalion

15/16th May, 1918.

"B" and "A" Coys were relieved by "D" and "C" Coys.  
Our Artillery active.  
T.M's fired several rounds on enemy positions in 0.36.a.  
Our aircraft were again ~~busy~~ very active and bombing planes at night dropped many bombs on enemy rear positions.  
Our patrols were out all night. An enemy listening post was located about 100 yards N. of red roofed house in P.31.a.  
Otherwise everything was quiet during the night.  
Enemy artillery shelled VILLERS-BRETTONNEUX and BOISLE-ABBE from 2.30. - 3.30. p.m.  
Enemy machine guns were very quiet during the night.  
Trench Mortars fired about six rounds from P.25.c.9.3. at 3.30 p.m.  
Enemy message dog was set off on the 15th inst at 5.30 a.m. from 0.36.b.90.45. Lewis gun fired on the animal and wounded it in both fore legs.  
Enemy aircraft flying low over VILLERS-BRETTONNEUX at 12.10 a.m. dropped 14 bombs in 0.35.b. A number of bombs were also dropped in 0.35.d. about 2.5 a.m.  
Weather fine visibility good.

16/17th May, 1918.

Our Artillery active.  
T.M's. fired a few rounds on houses in 0.36.d.85.95 during the day. About 30. N.36 Rifle Grenades were fired from 0.36.d.15.60. during the night on suspected enemy M.G. posts.  
Aircraft was active as usual, and bombing planes carried out good work at night.  
Patrols were out continuously throughout the night.  
Enemy party was working for some time in rear and on flanks of houses in 0.36.d.85.95.  
One enemy M.G. was seen to fire ~~from~~ from N.3 Hangar in P.25.c. M.G. at 0.36.d.45.35. fired on patrol at 1.30 a.m. Another M. Gun was located at about 0.36.d.55.45.  
Enemy Artillery activity was increased. VILLERS-BRETTONNEUX was shelled at intervals during the day.  
Enemy Trench Mortars fired about 12 rounds from approximately P.31.a. at about 4 a.m.

(C ntd).

Machine Guns very active firing on our posts.  
Increased activity on part of enemy aircraft. - Bombs were dropped  
on VILLERS-BRETONNEUX during the night.  
Shortly after dawn two enemy were seen to walk from 0.36.d.85.95.  
to trench in rear of houses.  
At 6 p.m. an enemy sentry was seen looking over trench at  
0.36.d.6.2. Immediately afterwards a fife grenade was fired  
from this point on to our post at 0.36.d.15.35.  
Weather fine, visibility fair.

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Newspaper item – The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 20 June, 1918:

#### **410th CASUALTY LIST**

#### **NEW SOUTH WALES**

#### **WOUNDED**

*Pte WM. OAKES, England*

Private William Oakes was admitted to Horton County of London War Hospital, Epsom, England on 7th June, 1916 with bullet wounds to right arm – fractured Humerus – severe. He was transferred to 3rd Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford, Kent on 2nd August, 1918 then discharged to No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth, Dorset on 13th August, 1918.

Private William Oakes was marched in to No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth, Dorset on 13th August, 1918 & medically classified as B2 b (temporarily unfit for General or Home Service).

Private William Oakes was returned to Australia on 23rd September, 1918 on H.T. *Runic* for early return due to bullet wounds to right elbow & chest. He disembarked in Australia on 26th November, 1918 then overland to 2nd Military District.

Private William Oakes was discharged from the Australian Imperial Force on 13th June, 1919.

Private William Oakes was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal.

William Oakes married Grace May Jepson on 19th November, 1921 in St. Clements' Church, Marrickville, Sydney, NSW, Australia. William was listed as a 34 year old Fitter & Turner from Marrickville & Grace was listed as a 28 year old from 341 Illawarra Rd, Marrickville.

A daughter – Joyce May Oakes was born in 1926.

Grace May Oakes, wife of William Oakes, died 30th October, 1959 at Caringbah, NSW, Australia.

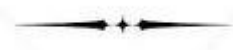
William Oakes died on 16th October, 1960, aged 73 years.

A death for William Oakes, aged 73, was registered in the December quarter, 1960 in the district of Swindon, Wiltshire, England.

William Oakes was buried in Christ Church Burial Ground, Swindon, Wiltshire England.

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

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



### Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for cemeteries and memorials in 23,000 locations, in 153 countries. In all 1.7 million men and women from the Commonwealth forces from WWI and WWII have been honoured and commemorated in perpetuity.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, as part of its mandate, is responsible for commemorating all Commonwealth war dead individually and equally. To this end, the war dead are commemorated by name on a headstone, at an identified site of a burial, or on a memorial. War dead are commemorated uniformly and equally, irrespective of military or civil rank, race or creed.

Not all service personnel have a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. In some instances the relative chose to have their own memorial/headstone placed on the deceased's grave. These private headstones are not maintained by the CWGC as they have no jurisdiction to maintain them.

William Oakes has a personal inscription on his headstone.

*A Beloved Husband Father And Brother In God's Keeping*

William Oakes is listed on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission database as a NWG (Non War Grave) & his headstone is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. A note in the CWGC database has the following information "*L/T. (Australian Post War Grave – maintenance refunded by Australian Govt.)*"

(Note: L/T means level turf)



## Christ Church Burial Ground, Swindon, Wiltshire, England

Christ Church Burial Ground, Swindon contains 25 Commonwealth War Graves – 11 from World War 1 & 14 from World War 2.



*(Photo by Helen Roberts)*



*(Photo by Kevin Farmer)*



Photo of William Oakes' Headstone in Christ Church Burial Ground, Swindon, Wiltshire, England.



*(Photo by Andy Saunders)*





*(Photo by Stiron – Find a Grave Dec 2017)*