

**Widnes Cemetery,  
Widnes, Cheshire, England  
War Grave**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**2244 PRIVATE**

**E. E. PRIESTLY**

**13TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**11TH JUNE, 1918 Age 24**

## Eric Ernest (Ric) PRIESTLY

Eric Ernest L. Priestly was born in 1893 in the district of Glebe, NSW to parents Henry Samuel and Amy Priestly (nee Carrington).

Eric Ernest Priestly was a 22 year old, single, Labourer from 11 Vincent Street, Balmain, NSW when he enlisted at Liverpool, Sydney, NSW on 3rd May, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 2244 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr H. Priestly, of 11 Vincent Street, Balmain, NSW.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Wandilla* (A62) on 14th June, 1915 with the 13th Infantry Battalion, 6th Reinforcements.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly joined M.E.F. (Mediterranean Expeditionary Force) at Gallipoli on 2nd August, 1915.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was taken on Lemos on S. S. *Georgian* on 11th August, 1915 with gunshot wounds. He embarked on S. S. *Aquatania* for England on 14th August, 1915.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was admitted to 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth, England on 23rd August, 1915 with gunshot wounds to neck. He rejoined 13th Battalion at Ismalia on 15th January, 1916.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly proceeded to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) from Alexandria on 1st June, 1916 on Troopship *Transylvania* & disembarked at Marseilles, France on 8th June, 1916.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was wounded in action – shell shock in France on 11th August, 1916. (From the War Diary the 13th Battalion were at Pozieres on 11th August, 1916). He was admitted to 29th Casualty Clearing Station on 12th August, 1916 & transferred to Ambulance Train P on 13th August, 1916. Private Priestly was admitted to 20th General Hospital at Camiers on 14th August, 1916 then discharged to Convalescent Depot at Camiers on 19th August, 1916.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was taken on strength at Australian Base Depot at Etaples, France on 31st August, 1916. He was marched out to his Unit on 11th September, 1916 & rejoined his Unit in France on 11th September, 1916.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was sent to Hospital on 4th December, 1916. He was admitted to 38th Casualty Clearing Station on 5th December, 1916 then transferred to Ambulance Train 17. Private Priestly was admitted to No. 2 General Hospital at Etaples on 6th December, 1916 then embarked for England the same day from Havre, France on Hospital Ship *Wandilla* with Trench feet.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was admitted to 2nd Southern General Hospital, England on 7th December, 1916 with Trench Feet. He was transferred & admitted to 3rd Auxiliary Hospital, Dartford on 20th December, 1916 with Trench feet (slight). (Note – the Hospital Admission form recorded “Appendicitis.” as the cause of his admission.) Private Priestly was discharged for furlo from 23rd February, 1917 to 10th March, 1917 & was to report to Wareham.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was marched out from No. 4 Command Depot at Wareham, Dorset to Hurdcott on 14th March, 1917. Private Priestly was marched in to No. 3 Command Depot at Hurdcott, Wiltshire on 17th March, 1917 & medically classified as B1 A3 (Unfit for Service for 1 to 2 weeks). He was medically classified on 15th May, 1917 as B1 A4 (Medically fit – awaiting dental completion).

Private Eric Ernest Priestly proceeded overseas to France from Infantry Draft Depot via Southampton on 14th June, 1917. He was marched in to 4th A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Havre, France on 15th June, 1917. Private Priestly was marched out to his Unit on 3rd July, 1917 & rejoined his Unit in Belgium on 4th July, 1917.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was wounded in action (3rd occasion) in Belgium on 27th August, 1917. He was admitted to 4th Australian Field Ambulance with shrapnel wounds to left arm then transferred to 2nd Australian Casualty Clearing Station on 27th August, 1917. Private Priestly was transferred to Ambulance Train 14 on 29th August, 1917 & admitted to 16th General Hospital at Le Treport on 30th August, 1917. Private Priestly was transferred to 3rd Convalescent Depot on 18th September, 1917 with gunshot wounds to left arm. He was discharged to 4th A.D.B.D.

(Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Havre on 21st September, 1917 & marched out to his Unit on 28th September, 1917. Private Priestly rejoined his Unit in France on 30th September, 1917.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was wounded in action (4th occasion) in France on 24th October, 1917. He was admitted to 3rd Australian Field Ambulance on 24th October, 1917 then transferred to 2nd Canadian Casualty Clearing Station the same day. Private Priestly was transferred to Ambulance Train on 25th October, 1917 then admitted to 2nd Australian General Hospital at Wimereux on 26th October, 1917 – gas shell wound. Private Priestly embarked for England on 2nd November, 1917 on Hospital Ship *Jan Breydel*.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was admitted to Royal Infantry Hospital, Chester (affiliated with Chester War Hospital) on 2nd November, 1917 having been gassed (shell). He was transferred to 1st Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield on 29th January, 1918. Private Priestly was discharged to furlough from 31st January, 1918 to 14th February, 1918 & was then to report to No. 4 Command Depot at Hurdcott.

Eric Ernest Priestly married Ellen Cameron in 1918. Their marriage was registered in Chester, Cheshire, England in the March quarter, 1918. (According to family research Ellen Mona Cameron had moved to London in 1913, at the age of 15, to work as a nurse. Ellen & Eric married on 9th February, 1918 at the Chester Registry Office. The address listed for Eric Priestly was Eaton Temperance Hotel, City Road, Chester & the address for Ellen Cameron was 15 Trinity Street, Chester.)

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was marched in to No. 4 Command Depot at Hurdcott, Wiltshire on 14th February, 1918.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was marched out to Overseas Training Brigade at Longbridge Deverill, Wiltshire on 11th March, 1918. He proceeded overseas to France from Longbridge Deverill via Southampton on 2nd April, 1918.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was marched in to A.I.B.D. (Australian Infantry Base Depot) at Havre, France on 3rd April, 1918. He was marched out to his Unit on 8th April, 1918 & rejoined his Unit in France on 11th April, 1918.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was wounded in action (5th occasion) in France on 30th April, 1918. He was admitted to 12th Australian Field Ambulance on 1st May, 1918 with bullet wounds to right femur & left tibia then transferred to 61st Casualty Clearing Station the same day. Private Priestly was transferred to Ambulance Train -14 on 2nd May, 1918 & admitted to 4th General Hospital in 2nd May, 1918 with right fractured femur. Private Priestly was transferred to Ambulance Train 38 on 3rd June, 1918 & embarked for England the same day on Hospital Ship Brighton with gunshot wounds to right thigh & fractured tibia.

### **13th Battalion**

In August, the 4th Brigade attacked Hill 971 (at Gallipoli). The hill was taken at great cost, although Turkish reinforcements forced the Australians to withdraw. The 13th also suffered casualties during the attack on Hill 60 on 27 August. The battalion served at ANZAC until the evacuation in December.

After the withdrawal from Gallipoli, the battalion returned to Egypt. While in Egypt the AIF was expanded and was reorganised. The 13th Battalion was split and provided experienced soldiers for the 45th Battalion. The 4th Brigade was combined with the 12th and 13th Brigades to form the 4th Australian Division.

In June 1916, the 13th sailed for France and the Western Front. From then until 1918, the battalion took part in bloody trench warfare. Its first major action in France was at Pozieres in August. In February 1917, Captain W. H. Murray, who had transferred to the 13th from the 16th Battalion, earned the Victoria Cross for his actions during an attack near Gueudecourt. He became one of the most highly decorated officers in the AIF. 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.

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

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was admitted to Reading War Hospital, Berkshire, England on 3rd June, 1918 with gunshot wounds to right femur, left tibia –seriously ill & secondary Haemorrhage.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly died at 12.30 pm on 11th June, 1918 at No. 1 Reading War Hospital, Berkshire, England from gunshot wounds to right femur, left tibia, compound comminuted fractures. His next-of-kin was listed as his wife – Mrs E. Priestly of 16 Margaret Street, Widnes, Lancashire, England. (Note – the Hospital Admissions form recorded “*Died of 2nd Haemorrhage on 12.6.18.*”)

A death for Eric E. Priestly, aged 25, was registered in the June quarter, 1918 in the district of Reading, Berkshire, England.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was buried at 3 pm on 15th June, 1918 in Widnes Cemetery, Widnes, Cheshire, England – Plot number IV C. CE. 1977 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Private Priestly - *Coffin was good condition polished Elm and brass mountings. The funeral arrangement were made by the Widow and the date and hour of the funeral were not notified these Headquarters in time to admit of a representative being present.* Mrs E. Priestly (wife), of 16 Margaret Street, Widnes and many other relatives were present at the funeral.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Private Eric Ernest Priestly contains several letters regarding his last wounding.

- Pte J. P. O’Lonovan, No. 5743, A. Company, 13th Battalion wrote: “*Informant described Priestly as about 5ft 5 inches high, medium build, dark complexion aged about 24. Informant states that they both belonged to A Company No 2 Platoon. On 1/5/18 the Battalion was outside Villers Bretonneux. A party of about 12 including Priestly but not Informant made a raid on a German Machine gun post about 60 or 70 yards from our line. This was at night time. Before the party could reach the machine gun post it was discovered and the machine gun opened fire on them and the party had to come back. Priestly had been hit and Informant saw him when he was brought back into the trench. Infomart was wounded later on and both he and Priestly were in the same hospital at Camers near Etaples. This was about 8 May and Informant spoke to Priestly on two occasions. He seemed to be doing well but was confined to his bed. Informant left the hospital on 10th May and never heard any more of Priestly until he heard from me that he was dead. Informant added that Priestly was extremely popular with his mates.*”
- Corporal W. P. Leister, No. 2586, A. Company 13th Battalion wrote: “*Informant described Priestly as about 5ft 8 inches high, about 21 stone, fair complexion, aged about 23 or 24. Informant states that they both belonged to A Company 2nd Platoon. On or about 1/5/18 the Battalion was to the left of Villers Bretonneux. They had just advanced about 400 yards, and were engaged digging in. Priestly was out in a Covering Party during the digging in operations, and was hit in both legs by Machine gun or rifle fire. Informant did not see hi, hit, but he was brought back to the trench where he was and he and Lieutenant Baker bandaged Priestly’s wounds. He was conscious and in good spirits and spoke to those around hm. He thought lightly of his wound and Informant did not think that they were likely to prove fatal. He saw the Stretcher Bearers take Priestly to the Regimental Aid Posts and never saw him again, but heard that he died. Informant added that Priestly was a very decent lad and very well like by his mates.*”

Mrs E. Priestly, widow of the late Private Eric Ernest Priestly, of 16 Margaret Street, Widnes, signed for a package of the personal effects of her late husband in July, 1918.

Private Eric Ernest Priestly was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also to be sent to Private Priestly’s widow - Mrs Ellen Priestly, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent & received November, 1921)

Base Records advised Headquarters, 2nd District Base, Sydney, in July, 1921 that the 1914-15 Star for the late Private E. E. Priestly had been forwarded to the Military Authorities , Australia House, London for transmission to the deceased’s wife but it had been returned stating that Mrs Priestly was now a resident of Australia & could they advise of her present address so that the War Medals could be disposed to her as they came to hand. Base Records

again wrote to Headquarters, 2nd District Base, Sydney, in September, 1921 as no reply had been received from them.

The War Medals for Private Priestly were originally marked for "Untraceables" as communications to the widow had been returned unclaimed. The address of the widow of the late Private Eric Ernest Priestly was recorded as the corner of Scott & Napier Streets, Whittle Hills, Bendigo, Victoria. Mrs E. Priestly advised Base Records of her change of address in November, 1920 to 91 Milroy Street, Bendigo, Victoria. Communications to this address had been returned unclaimed.

Base Records had contacted the Department of Repatriation in June, 1923 to ask for the current details of the widow of the late Private Eric Ernest Priestly. The Department of Repatriation advised that the War Pension formerly paid to the widow of Private Priestly had been cancelled in December, 1921 as she had remarried.

Base Records wrote to Mrs Amy Priestly, mother of the late Private Priestly, in June, 1923 & again in March, 1924 asking for the present address of her son's widow (now remarried) & if there had been any children from the marriage. Base Records advised if there were no children & the whereabouts of her son's widow was unknown then it would be recommended that the mementoes issued on account of her son's service would be handed over to her & that a Statutory Declaration be signed to that effect.

Amy Priestly, of 14 Donnelly St, Balmain, mother of the late Private Priestly, advised Base Records in April, 1924 that she did not know that whereabouts of her son's widow but did "*know for certain there was no issue of the marriage (no child at all).*" She signed a Statutory Declaration on 1st April, 1924 stating that she would "*preserve with due care any War Medals or other items given into my custody on account of the abovementioned late soldier's service and will return them to the Department of Defence at any time upon receipt of its demand in writing.*"

The Memorial Plaque was sent to Mrs A. Priestly, mother of the late Private Eric Ernest Priestly, in February, 1925. From the service record file of the late Private Eric Ernest Priestly – it is not clear who received his War Medals.

Mona Priestly, widow of the late Private Eric Ernest Priestly, married Alexander Agnes Reid in Victoria 1920.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Eric Ernest Priestly – service number 2244, aged 25, of 13th Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of Henry and Amy Priestly, of Sydney, New South Wales; husband of Ellen Priestly.

Private E. E. Priestly is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 70.



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

(103 pages of Private Eric Ernest Priestly'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*



## **Newspaper Notices**

Advice has been received that Private E. E. Priestly, grandson of Mr Henry Priestly, sen., of Fairfield, has been wounded, this being the second time for him.

*(The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Parramatta, NSW – 30 September, 1916)*

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## **CASUALTIES**

### **263rd LIST**

NEW SOUTH WALES

ILL

Pte E. E. PRIESTLY, Balmain

*(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 13 January, 1917)*

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## **MORE CASUALTIES**

### **TWO LISTS ISSUED**

NEW SOUTH WALES

WOUNDED

Pte ERIC ERNEST PRIESTLY, Balmain (Fourth occasion, gas)

*(The Sun, Sydney, NSW – 8 December, 1917)*

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## **WAR CASUALTIES**

### **NEW SOUTH WALES LOSSES**

#### **406th LIST**

WOUNDED

Pte PRIESTLY, W. E. (Balmain) fifth

*(Evening News, Sydney, NSW – 4 June, 1918)*

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The funeral of Eric Earnest Priestly took place in Widnes the husband Mrs Ellen Priestly of 16 Margaret Street. They were only married in January of this year Mrs Priestly being then in France in the service of the Navy and Army Canteen Board. Private Priestly was 25 years old joined the Australian forces early in the war and had been wounded 4 times before receiving the wounds to which he succumbed in hospital in Reading on June 9th. He was the first Australian soldier to be killed or died of wounds received to be interred in the cemetery. The funeral was attended by a firing party of the South Lancashire Regiment from Warrington, and also a party of buglers. The coffin being covered with the Union Jack. The Rev H. J. Gibbins (Vicar of St Paul's ) officiated and the chief mourners were Mrs Priestley (widow), Mr W. Cameron (father-in-law), Private Alex. Cameron (brother-in-law) of the Gordon Highlanders (who obtained leave from hospital and attended on crutches. Mr Tom Cooksey (friend of the deceased and a discharged Australian Soldier) Mrs Myers, Mrs Jones, Mr and Mrs Shaw, Mr Ned Flanagan, Mr Edward Tobin, Mr M. Hastings and a number of employees from the Muspratt Works (another works from Newtown).

*(Widnes Weekly News – June, 1918)*

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## **413th CASUALTY LIST**

### **NEW SOUTH WALES**

#### **DIED OF WOUNDS**

Pte ERIC ERNEST PRIESTLY, Balmain

*(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 2 July, 1918)*

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#### **DIED OF WOUNDS**

##### **PRIVATE E. E. PRIESTLY**

The sad news has been received that Private Eric Ernest Priestly of Fairfield, has died from wounds. He was a member of the 6th Reinforcements, 13th Battalion, and enlisted in April, 1915, being wounded shortly after arriving in Gallipoli, and altogether was wounded on five occasions. His parents were building up hopes of their son coming home after being wounded on so many occasions, but it has been willed otherwise. He died a hero, and is acknowledged to be one of the best and gamest of Australia's sons, too game, in fact, as he, was offered his discharge on two occasions, first when wounded in 1916 at the Dardanelles, and later in France, but he refused. "Men are wanted in the trenches," he said. The brave young man entered the trenches on eight different occasions, and he had a rough time, but bore his wounds like the brick he was. He died in Reading War Hospital, Lancashire, and his relatives are relieved to know that he is laid to rest on English soil and not on the battlefields. He is another that has given his life for his country and our freedom. He was the son of Henry and Amy Priestly, of Balmain, the grandson of Henry Priestly, sen., of Dawson-street, Fairfield, nephew of Fredk., Sergt. major George, Samuel Gilbert, Keith, Bert, in fact a relative of all the Priestly family of Fairfield. Although he died for his country, like many others, if the "peace at any price" crowd had done their duty the war might have been over long ago and very many good men might be still amongst the living.

*(The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Parramatta, NSW – 13 July, 1918)*

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#### **IN MEMORIAM ON ACTIVE SERVICE**

PRIESTLY – In loving memory of Private Eric E. Priestly, 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion, who died June 14, 1918.

A brave young life that promised well,  
By the will of God a hero he fell.

Inserted by his loving brother, Horrie, and sister-in-law, Essie.

*(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 14 June, 1919)*

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**IN MEMORIAM  
ON ACTIVE SERVICE**

PRIESTLY – In fond and loving memory of our dear son and brother, 2244, Pte E. E. (Ric) Priestly, who died result of wounds, June 11, 1918.

Loved and respected by all who knew him.

Inserted by his loving mother, sisters and brothers, 14 Donnelly-street, Balmain.

PRIESTLY – In sincere and loving memory of Pte E. E. (Ric) Priestly, 6th Reinforcements, 13th Batt., Gallipoli-France, 1915-1918, died result eight time wounded, Villers Bretonnuex, 1918. His duty well and truly done.

Inserted by his sister and brother-in-law, Gladys and W. Savage.

*(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 12 June, 1920)*

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**IN MEMORIAM  
ON ACTIVE SERVICE**

PRIESTLY – In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Eric (Ric) Priestly, 6<sup>th</sup> Rein., 13<sup>th</sup> Batt., who died result of eighth time wounded, Villers Bretonneux, June 11, 1918.

He died that we night live.

Inserted by his mother, father, brothers, Roy, Neville, sisters, Gladys and Doris and brother-in-law, W. Savage.

PRIESTLY – In loving memory of Eric Priestly, who died of wounds, June 11, 1918. Inserted by his loving brother-in-law, Vince Blackburn.

*(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 11 June, 1921)*

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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 E. E. Priestly does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.



## Widnes Cemetery, Widnes, Cheshire, England

Widnes Cemetery contains 103 Commonwealth War Graves – 56 from World War 1 & 47 from World War 2.

The graves are scattered in various parts of the cemetery. After the war a Cross of Sacrifice was erected facing the entrance in honour of all these servicemen. Subsequently a Special Memorial was installed commemorating two men buried in a part of the cemetery which was turned into a Garden of Rest, where their graves could no longer be maintained. A similar memorial commemorates three men originally buried in Widnes (St. Mary) Old Cemetery around the site of a former church, whose graves are now lost. *(Information from CWGC)*



*Photo above by Len Scott; below by Cookie - Find a Grave)*



Photo of Private E. E. Priestly's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Widnes Cemetery, Widnes, Cheshire, England.



*(Photo courtesy of Len Scott)*

# Widnes Cemetery



## Welcome to Widnes Cemetery

All persons entering into, or having business in connection with the Cemetery must be aware of, and be prepared to comply with the Cemetery rules, a copy of which can be obtained by telephoning 0303 333 4300.

### Opening hours

The Cemetery will be open to the public as follows:

- 1 November to 31 January 9am - 4.30pm
- 1 February to 28/29 February 9am - 6pm
- 1 March to 31 March 9am - 7pm
- 1 April to 31 August 9am - 8pm
- 1 September to 31 October 9am - 7pm

For general Cemetery enquiries, please call 0303 333 4300 between the hours of 10.45am and 14.45pm

### Lawned Section

All Cemetery Regulations Apply

Unauthorised memorials, edgings, fencing, chippings, trees and shrubs are not permitted and will be removed if found.

Public toilets located in the Crematorium

Water point

### Safety Notice

Please walk with care. Memorials could be laid flat and may present a tripping hazard. On some sections, concrete plinths have been installed for the erection of memorial headstones. These plinths should not be used as footpaths.



Take care in icy conditions



No Alcohol



Take your litter home



No dogs allowed except for guide dogs