

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

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



4558 PRIVATE

W. M. RILEY

9TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

20TH JUNE, 1918 Age 32

His Country Called

He Answered

May His Soul Rest In Peace

William Michael RILEY

William Michael Riley was born at Bundaberg, Queensland around 1885 to parents Thomas and Elizabeth Ann Riley.

The 1913 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Lismore, subdivision of Bexhill, NSW recorded William Michael Riley, Farmer from Bexhill. His mother – Elizabeth Ann Riley was also listed at Bexhill.

William Michael Riley was a 30 year old, single, Labourer from Lismore, NSW when he enlisted on 21st August, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 4558 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs E. A. Riley, Bexhill, Richmond River, NSW.

Private William Michael Riley was posted to 14th Reinforcements of 9th Battalion on 31st August, 1915 for recruit training.

Private William Michael Riley embarked from Brisbane, Queensland, Australia on HMAT *Wandilla* (A62) on 31st January, 1916 with the 9th Infantry Battalion, 14th Reinforcements & disembarked at Alexandria on 5th March, 1916.

Private William Michael Riley embarked from Alexandria on 9th May, 1916 on H.T. *Caledonia* to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) from 3rd Training Battalion. He disembarked at Marseilles, France (no date).

Private William Michael Riley reported from Egypt to 1st A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 29th May, 1916. He was marched out from 1st A.D.B.D. on 11th July, 1916 & was taken on strength of 9th Battalion in France on 29th July, 1916. (The Statement of Service form recorded that Private Riley was marched in from 1st Anzac Entrenching Battalion, France to 9th Battalion on 30th July, 1916.)

Private William Michael Riley was sent sick to Hospital on 7th November, 1916. He was admitted to 5th Australian Field Ambulance on 7th November, 1916 – P.u.O. (Pyrexia (fever) of unknown origin). Private Riley was transferred the same day & admitted to 36th Casualty Clearing Station. He was transferred to 9th Ambulance Train on 8th November, 1916 & admitted to 3rd Stationary Hospital at Rouen, France on 8th November, 1916. Private Riley was transferred to No. 2 Convalescent Depot on 12th November, 1916 & discharged to Base Details on 16th November, 1916. He was marched in to 1st A.D.B.D. at Etaples on 4th March, 1917 & rejoined 9th Battalion in France on 6th March, 1917.

Private William Michael Riley was on leave to UK from 22nd October, 1917 & rejoined his Battalion on 5th November, 1917.

Private William Michael Riley was sent sick to Hospital on 9th November, 1917 while in Belgium. He was marched in to A.I.B.D. (Australian Infantry Base Depot) at Havre, France on 8th January, 1918. Private Riley was marched out to his Unit on 13th January, 1918 & rejoined his Battalion in the Field on 15th January, 1918.

Private William Michael Riley was sent sick to Hospital on 7th February, 1918. He was admitted to 1st Australian Field Ambulance on 7th February, 1918 then transferred the same day to 1st Australian Casualty Clearing Hospital where he was admitted with Dermatitis. Private Riley was transferred & admitted to 2nd Casualty Clearing Station on 12th February, 1918. He was transferred & admitted to 7th Stationary Hospital on 14th February, 1918 – N.Y.D. Skin (not yet diagnosed). Private Riley was transferred & admitted to 7th General Hospital at St. Omer, France on 24th February, 1918 with Dermatitis & P.U.O. (Pyrexia (fever) of unknown origin). He was transferred & admitted to 4th Stationary Hospital at Arques on 8th March, 1918 with Exfoliative & P.U.O. Private Riley was transferred & admitted to 13th Stationary Hospital on 23rd April, 1918 with Dermatitis. He was transferred to England on Hospital Ship *Brighton* on 26th April, 1918 suffering from Arsenical Dermatitis.

Mrs E. Riley, Bexhill, Richmond River, NSW, mother of Private William Michael Riley, was advised by Base Records on 29th March, 1918 that Private W. Riley had been *“removed from seriously ill list. In view of the fact that no previous report has been received, A.I.F. Hd-Qrs. has been asked the nature of his disability. Upon receipt of this information, you will be promptly notified.”*

Mrs E. Riley, Bexhill, Richmond River, NSW, was advised by Base Records on 10th April, 1918 that Private W. M. Riley has been *“admitted to 7th General Hospital, France, suffering from foliative dermatitis dangerous. You have since been advised that he has been removed from seriously ill list.”*

9th Battalion

The 9th Battalion was among the first infantry units raised for the AIF during the First World War. It was the first battalion recruited in Queensland, and with the 10th, 11th and 12th Battalions it formed the 3rd Brigade.....

In March 1916 the battalion sailed for France and the Western Front. From then until 1918 the battalion took part in operations against the German Army. The battalion's first major action in France was at Pozieres in the Somme valley. The 9th Battalion attacked on the extreme right of the line and it was during this action that Private John Leak won, with the bayonet, the battalion's only Victoria Cross. Later the battalion fought at Ypres, in Flanders, before returning to the Somme for winter. In 1917 the battalion moved back to Belgium for the advance to the Hindenburg Line, and in March and April 1918 helped stop the German spring offensive.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private William Michael Riley was admitted to General Military Hospital at Colchester, England on 26th April, 1918 with Dermatitis (severe).

Private William Michael Riley was transferred to 1st Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield Park, Harefield, Middlesex, England on 23rd May, 1918 with Tubercle miliary & was reported as dangerously ill.

Mrs E. Riley, Bexhill, Richmond River, NSW, was advised by Base Records on 16th May, 1918 that Private William Riley has been admitted to General Military Hospital Colchester, England on 25th April with Dermatitis severe.

Mrs E. Riley, Bexhill, Richmond River, NSW, was advised by Base Records on 6th June, 1918 that Private William Riley was seriously ill Broncho Pneumonia & Dermatitis.

Mrs E. A. Riley, of Ballina Street, Lismore, NSW, mother of Private William Michael Riley, wrote to Base Records on 8th June, 1918 to advise of her change of address. She stated she had changed her address before "*but letters are still sent to our old address & it is weeks before I receive them.*" She also asked for full particulars about her son No. 4558 Private W. M. Riley "*who is ill as the telegram I have received is terrible mixed up I cannot understand it...*"

Mrs E. A. Riley, of Ballina Street, Lismore, NSW, was advised by Base Records on 10th June, 1918 that Private W. M. Riley was progressing favourably. She was advised again on 12th June, 1918 that Private W. M. Riley was convalescent.

Mrs E. A. Riley, of Ballina Street, Lismore, NSW, was advised by Base Records on 15th June, 1918 that Private William Riley was again dangerously ill with Miliary Tubercule.

Base Records replied to Mrs Riley on 17th June, 1918 with the following information: "*Admitted to 7th General Hospital, France, on 1/3/18 suffering from foliative dermatitis, dangerous. Removed from Seriously Ill List. Tranferred to General Military Hospital, Colchester, England, 25/4/18, Dermatitis, severe. Seriously ill, Broncho Pneumonia and Dermatitis 29/5/18. Progressing favourably. Convalescent. Again dangerously ill, Miliary Tubercule.*"

Private William Michael Riley died at 7.15 am on 20th June, 1918 at 1st Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield Park, Harefield, Middlesex, England from Tubercle of Lung.

A death for William M. Riley, aged 32, was registered in the June quarter, 1918 in the district of Uxbridge, Middlesex, England.

Mrs Elizabeth Riley, Lismore, NSW was advised by Base Records on 21st June, 1918 that Private William Riley's condition was stationary.

Private William Michael Riley was buried at 10.30 am on 22nd June, 1918 in St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England – Plot number Aust. 53 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Private William Michael Riley – *Military Funeral. Coffin was "usual Pine coffin supplied by A.I.F." The Funeral left the Hospital Grounds at 10.30 am. A number of Staff and patients attended. A*

wreath was supplied by C. Billyard-Leake Esq., the owner of Harefield Park Estate. Firing Part and Bugler were supplied from Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London.

Listed with details for the Funeral of Private William Michael Riley were details of his Next of Kin – mother Mrs E. Riley, Bexhill, NSW & a Special Notification – Brother (Prisoner of War) No. 2358a Pte T. Riley, 15th Battalion, Gef Lager, Gustrow, Mecklenberg-Schwerum, Germany.

Private William Michael Riley requested in his Will, dated 15th July, 1917, that all his personal estate be bequeathed to Elizabeth Ann Riley, Lismore, NSW.

Base Records contacted Mrs E. A. Riley, 48 Orion Street, Lismore, NSW on 4th November, 1921 stating she was registered on the records of the late No. 4558 Private W. M. Riley & were enquiring if there were any nearer blood relatives than herself & specifically asked if his father was still alive due to the “Deceased Soldiers Estates Act 1918” which stated that the War Medals & Mementoes of a deceased soldier were to be handed in the following order of relationship – Widow, eldest surviving son, eldest surviving daughter, father, mother, eldest surviving brother, eldest surviving sister etc.

Mrs E. A. Riley replied to Base Records on 12th December, 1921 stating that her husband had been dead for 10 years & that she was his wife & next of kin.

Private William Michael Riley was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Riley’s mother - Mrs E. A. Riley, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent February, 1922 & Plaque sent November, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private William Michael Riley – service number 4558, aged 32, of 9th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of Thomas and Elizabeth Ann Riley, of 48 Orion Street, Lismore, New South Wales.

Private W. M. Riley is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 57.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

W. M. Riley is remembered on the Lismore Memorial Baths WW1 Honour Board, located at Lismore Memorial Baths, 179 Molesworth Street, Lismore, NSW.



Lismore Memorial Baths (Photo from AWM – Places of Pride – Graeme Bray)



Lismore Memorial Baths WW1 Honour Board (Photo from AWM – Places of Pride – Graeme Bray)

W. Riley is remembered on the Dunoon District War Memorial for The Great War 1914 – 1919, which is located outside Dunoon Hall, 114 James Street, Dunoon, NSW.



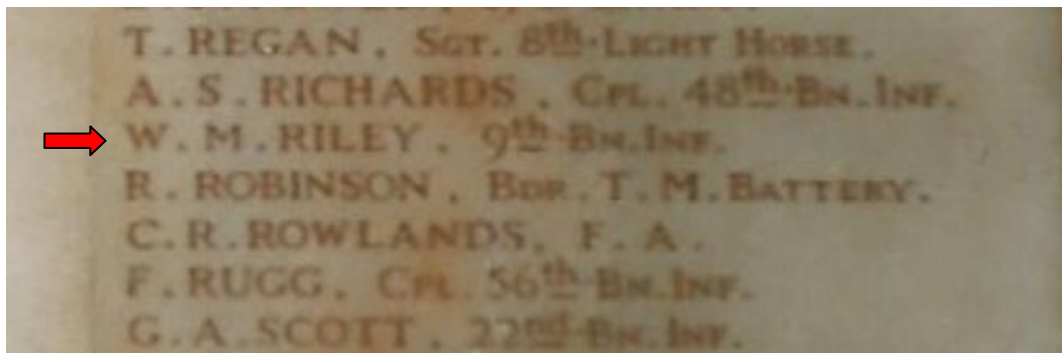
Dunoon District War Memorial (Photos from War Memorials Register NSW)



W. M. Riley is remembered in 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)



(68 pages of Private William Michael Riley'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

Connected to Private William Michael Riley:

Younger brother - Private Terence Riley - No. 2358A, 15th Battalion. Enlisted 28th January, 1916 as a 21 year old Farmer. Reported Missing in Action – 11th April, 1917. Captured at Reincourt on 11th April, 1917 & officially reported as a Prisoner of War interred in Germany. Returned to Australia 31st March, 1919 from England & disembarked in Australia 18th May, 1919. Entitled to British War Medal & Victory Medal.



Newspaper Notices

ROLL OF HONOUR

390th LIST

ILL

William Michael Riley, Bexhill, N.S.W. (dang)

(*The Queenslander*, Brisbane, Queensland – 27 April, 1918)

The Lismore Diocese

The sad news reached Lismore last week of the death of Private William Michael Riley, son of Mrs Elizabeth Riley, of Ballina-street, Lismore. He was a good Catholic lad, and much sympathy is expressed for his respected mother. – R.I.P.

(*The Catholic Press*, Sydney, NSW – 4 July, 1918)

AUSTRALIAN CASUALTIES

LIST No 415

Died from Other Causes

Private W. M. Riley (New South Wales – illness)

(*Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton, Queensland – 9 July, 1918)

ROLL OF HONOR

RILEY – In loving remembrance of my dear son and brother, No. 4558, Private W. M. Riley, who died of illness in England on 20th June, 1918.

We never knew the pain you bore, dear Willie,

We never saw you die;

We only knew you passed away

And never said good-bye.

God will link the broken chain

Closer when we meet again.

Inserted by his loving mother, sisters and brother, Terence, who has lately returned.

(*Northern Star*, Lismore, NSW – 20 June, 1919)

ROLL OF HONOR

RILEY – In everlasting love to the memory of my dear brother, Private W. M. Riley, who die dof illness in military hospital, England, 20th June, 1918, aged 31 years.

No matter how we pray, dear Will,
No matter how we call,
There is nothing left to answer
But you photo on the wall.

Inserted by his loving sister and brother-in-law, Dolly and Dave Cunningham.

RILEY – In sad and loving memory of my dear son and brother, Pte William M. Riley, who died of illness in military hospital, England, 20th June, 1918, aged 31 years.

I seem to see your face, dear Will,
Through a mist of anxious tears,
But a mother's part is a broken heart
And a burden of lonely years.

Inserted by his loving mother, brothers and sisters.

RILEY – A tribute of love to the memory of my dear brother and our dear uncle, Will, who die dof illness in hospital in England on the 20th of June, 1918, aged 31 years.

Some day we will meet, dear brother,
Some day, we know not where,
But will clasp your hand in a better land
And never part again.

Inserted by his loving sister Norah Sinclair and four little nephews.

(Northern Star, Lismore, NSW – 19 June, 1920)

ROLL OF HONOR

RILEY – In loving memory of our darling son and brother, Pte William Michael Riley, who died at Harefield Hospital on June 20th, 1918.

As we gaze upon your photo.,
A likeness so loving and true;
Do you know our hearts are aching
And longing, dear Willie, for you.

Inserted by his loving mother, sisters and brother.

(Northern Star, Lismore, NSW – 20 June, 1921)

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 28th July, 1921, to Mrs E. A. Riley, Ballina Street, Lismore, NSW advised that a letter from the Defence Dept. concerning an inscription on the headstone of her son, the late Private W. M. Riley, 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. M. Riley does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

His Country Called

He Answered

May His Soul Rest In Peace

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 & photos from CWGC)



St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield





St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield



Photo of Private W. M. Riley'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)

