

**Brookwood Military Cemetery,
Brookwood, Surrey
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



61710 PRIVATE

J. W. WILLETT

58TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

27TH DECEMBER, 1918 Age 21

May His Soul Rest In Peace

Our Dear Jack

John William (Jack) WILLETT

John William Willett was born at Warragul, Victoria on 25th September, 1897 to parents John & Mary Willett (nee Moore).

John William Willett attended St. Joseph's Sacred Heart School, Morwell, Victoria.

John William Willett was a 20 year old, single, Postal employee (G.P.O.) from Morwell, Victoria when he enlisted at Melbourne, Victoria on 24th May, 1918 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 61710 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr J. Willett, Morwell, Victoria. John William Willett stated on his Attestation Papers that he had previously been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service due to his physique.

As John William Willett was under the age of 21 years – his parents were required to sign that they had no objection to his enlistment in the Australia Imperial Force. John Willett & Mary Willett both signed on 1st June, 1918.

The Deputy Postmaster General wrote to the Assistant Adjutant General, Headquarters Camp Staff, 3rd Military District, Melbourne on 24th May, 1918 stating "*I beg to inform you there is no objection to Mr J. W. Willett, Postal Assistant, Stratford, being enrolled for active service with the Australian Imperial Expeditionary Force.*"

Private John William Willett was posted to Recruit Depot at Broadmeadows on 27th June, 1918. He was admitted Hospital on 29th June, 1918 due to haemorrhage after teeth extraction & was discharged on 1st July, 1918. Private Willett was transferred to Depot Battalion at Broadmeadows on 17th July, 1918 then transferred to 12th General Service Reinforcements (Victoria) on 16th July, 1918 (date as recorded on Statement of Service form).

Private John William Willett embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Barambah* (A37) on 31st August, 1918 with the 12th Victorian Reinforcements & disembarked at London, England on 14th November, 1918.

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 John William Willett was marched in to No. 2 Details Camp from Australia on 14th November, 1918 & allotted to Reinforcements of 58th Battalion on 14th November, 1918.

Private John William Willett was sent sick to No. 1 Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield from Parkhouse, Wiltshire, England in 8th December, 1918.

Private John William Willett was marched in to 14th Training Battalion, Hurdcott, Wiltshire on 14th December, 1918 (date as per Casualty form – Active Service) from No. 2 Camp, Parkhouse.

Private John William Willett was admitted to Southern Western Hospital, Metropolitan Asylums Board, London, England seriously ill with mumps on 10th December, 1918 (date as per Casualty form – Active Service)

Private John William Willett died on 27th December, 1918 at Southern Western Hospital, London Rd, Stockwell, England from Mumps & Scarlet Fever.

A death for John W. Willett, aged 21, was registered in the March quarter, 1919 in the district of Lambeth, Greater London, England.

Private John William Willett was buried on 2nd January, 1919 in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England – Plot number 182, 655 A.M.B.G. Section (Australian Military Burial Ground).

Base Records wrote to Mr J. Willett, Morwell, Victoria on 17th April, 1923 stating that the site of his son's grave in Brookwood Military Cemetery had been officially registered as Plot 4 Row 1 Grave 6. "*While the actual place of burial remains unchanged the previous registration allotted thereto has been altered to conform with the uniform layout of this Cemetery.*" This is now recorded by CWGC as Memorial reference - IV.N.6. Private Willett has a

Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Private John William Willett - *Coffin was Elm. The deceased soldier was accorded a full Military Funeral, Firing Party, Bugler and Pallbearers being in attendance. The coffin was draped with the Australian Flag and conveyed to the graveside where the "Last Post" was sounded, and the Rev: Father Murphy of the A.I.F. London conducted the burial service. The grave will be turfed and an oak cross erected, by the A.I.F. London. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral.*

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Private John William Willett includes two letters regarding Private Willett's illness:

- S. A. Villiers, Matron, South Western Hospital, Stockwell wrote "*I passed your letter on to the Medical Sup: as he likes to answer officially all enquires about patients, but I thought the friend of Pte Willett might like to know that the nurses tended him most sympathetically & assiduously during his very short illness. He was such a nice bright fellow and we all felt so sorry he should have come so far from his friends to die among strangers after so short an illness, thus the nurses' sympathy was especially evoked in his case. I can assure you that nothing that the care and devotion of the staff could supply was left undone during his brief illness.*"
- F. Foord Caiger, Medical Superintendent of South Western Hospital, Stockwell wrote "*Re No 61710. Pte John William Willett, 12th General Service Reinforcements Battalion, A.I.F. This soldier was admitted to this Hospital December 8th 1918 with a severe attack of mumps having a history of having had Influenza on the boat coming over, since which he had suffered from a nasal discharge. Pte Willett had a prolonged attack and improved sufficiently to be able to get up on 21st December. On 25th, the nasal discharged became more profuse and he complained of his throat again being painful. His temperature rose to a high level and the throat rapidly got worse, becoming much swollen and ulcerated. His circulation became very feeble and the glands terribly swollen and he showed signs of conjection of the lungs. He sank rather rapidly in spite of everything we could do by way of treatment and died on the evening of December 27th. There is no doubt that his strength had been reduced by having so recently, 2 diseases, influenza and mumps, and when the tonsillitis supervened on December 25th, it rapidly passed into septicaemia which rapidly overcame his powers of resistance. He was buried by the Military Authorities at Brookwood Cemetery on January 2nd 1919.*"

Private John William Willett requested in his Will dated 29th July, 1918 that in the event of his death the whole of his property and effects to be given to his mother - Mary Willett of Morwell.

M. Willett, Morwell, wrote to the District Paymaster, 3rd Military District, Melbourne on 24th January, 1919 asking "*when I will receive the Official Certificate of the Defence Dept. as evidence of the death of Pte J. W. Willett No. 51710 12th Bte G.S. Rfts. This is required as evidence of death by the A.M.P. Society in which office deceased was insured. He was Postal Assistant and as such was compelled to be insured.....*"

Private John William Willett was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Willett's father – Mr J. Willett, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent July, 1921 & Plaque sent November, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private John William Willett – service number 61710, aged 21, of 58th Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of John and Mary Willett, of Police Station, Morwell, Victoria, Australia.

Private J. W. Willett is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 166.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

According to the Australian War Memorial's Roll of Honour - Private John William Willett was associated with Stratford, Victoria.

J. Willett is remembered on the Stratford War Memorial, located in Memorial Park, Tyers Street (Princes Highway), Stratford, Victoria.



Stratford War Memorial (Photos from Monument Australia)

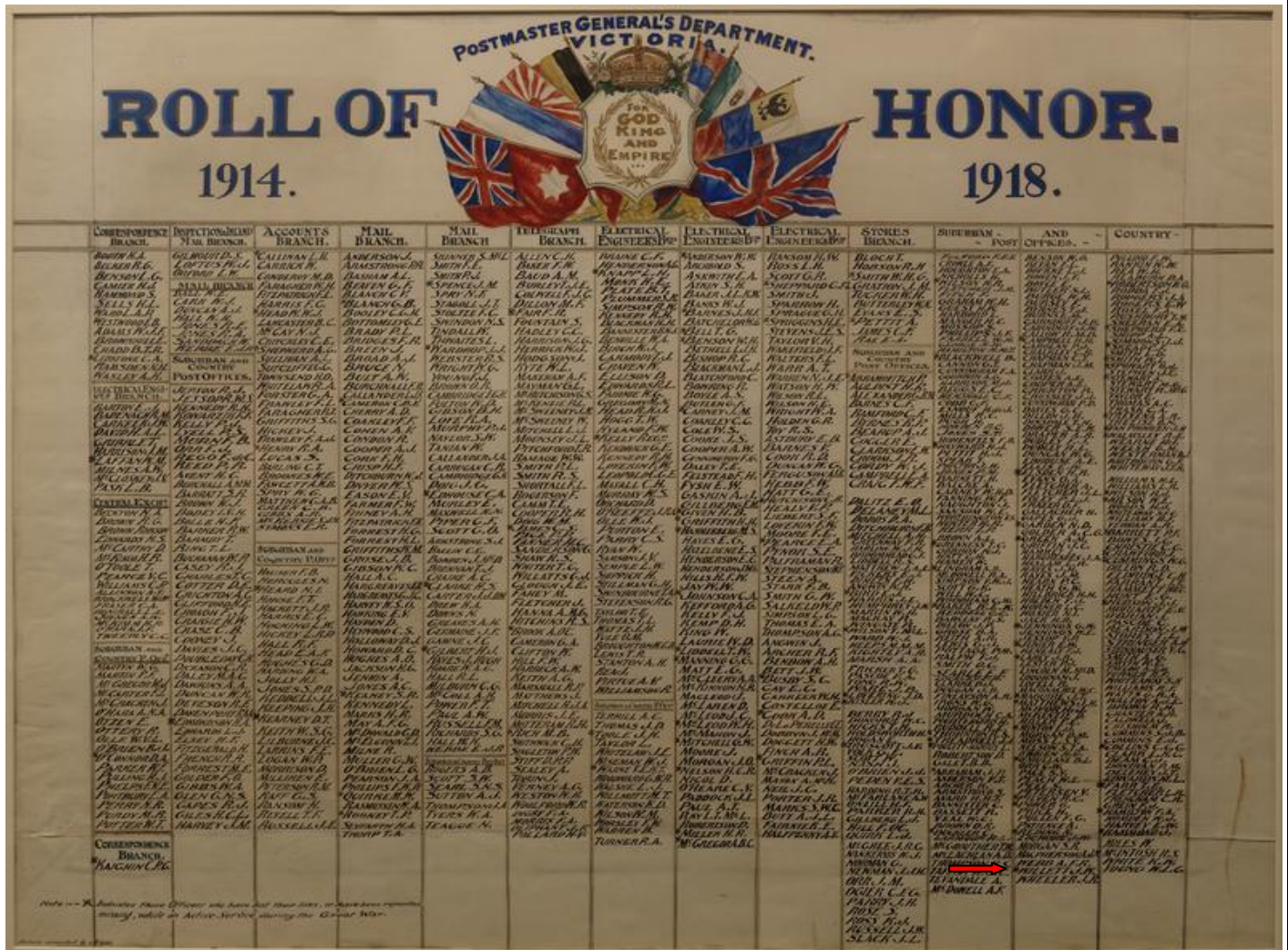
J. W. Willett is remembered on the Postmaster General's Department Honour Roll, located in former G.P.O. Building, Bourke & Elizabeth Streets, Melbourne, Victoria.



Postmaster General's Department Honour Roll, Melbourne
 (Photo above from Monument Australia – Kent Watson; below VWMA)



J. W. Willett is remembered on the Postmaster General's Department, Victoria Roll of Honour 1914 – 1918, located at Telstra Museum, 375 Burwood Road, Hawthorn, Victoria.



Postmaster General's Department Roll of Honour 1914 – 1918 (Photo from VWMA)

(59 pages of Private John William Willett'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

Master Jack Willett, who has been employed at local Post Office for some time, had been promoted, and is about to be transferred to Melbourne.

(Morwell Advertiser, Victoria – 18 June, 1915)

About Our Soldiers

Jack Willett, eldest son of Constable and Mrs Willett, or Morwell, who was operator in Stratford Post Office for some time past, went into camp, yesterday

(Morwell Advertiser, Victoria – 28 June, 1918)

Death

WILLETT – On the 27th December, 1918, at North Western Military Hospital, Stockwell, England, Private J. W. Willett, dearly beloved eldest son of Constable John and Mary Willett, Police Station, Morwell; grandson of Mrs Moore, Warragul; late postal assistant, Stratford. Aged 21 years.

R.I.P.

(Morwell Advertiser, Victoria – 10 January, 1919)

Soldier's Death

The sad news came to hand on Wednesday, that Private Jack Willett, eldest son of Constable and Mrs Willett, of Morwell, had died in Military Hospital, Stockwell (England) on the 27th ult.

The deceased soldier, who was just 21 years of age, joined the Postal Department a few years ago, and by marked ability quickly rose in the service. He gave up a good position in Stratford Post Office in order to go to the Front. It is only about four months ago since he left Australia, and peace was declared about the time he arrived in England. His parents, naturally, fully expected to see Jack home again at an early date, and the news of his death came as a great shock to them and their many friends.

No details are to hand, but it is likely that deceased contracted influenza, which is now so prevalent in the Old Country.

Deep sympathy is expressed on all sides for Mr and Mrs Willett in their sad bereavement.

(Morwell Advertiser, Victoria – 10 January, 1919)

Deaths

WILLETT – On the 27th December, 1918, at South-Western Military Hospital, Stockwell, England, Private J. W. Willett, dearly beloved eldest son of Constable John and Mary Willett, Police Station, Morwell; grandson of Mrs Moore, Warragul; late postal assistant, Stratford, aged 21 years. R.I.P.

(Advocate, Melbourne, Victoria – 1 February, 1919)

THE 456th CASUALTY LIST

VICTORIAN NAMES

DIED OF OTHER CAUSES

Private J. W. Willett, Morwell

(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – 1 February, 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. 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 J. W. Willett does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

May His Soul Rest In Peace

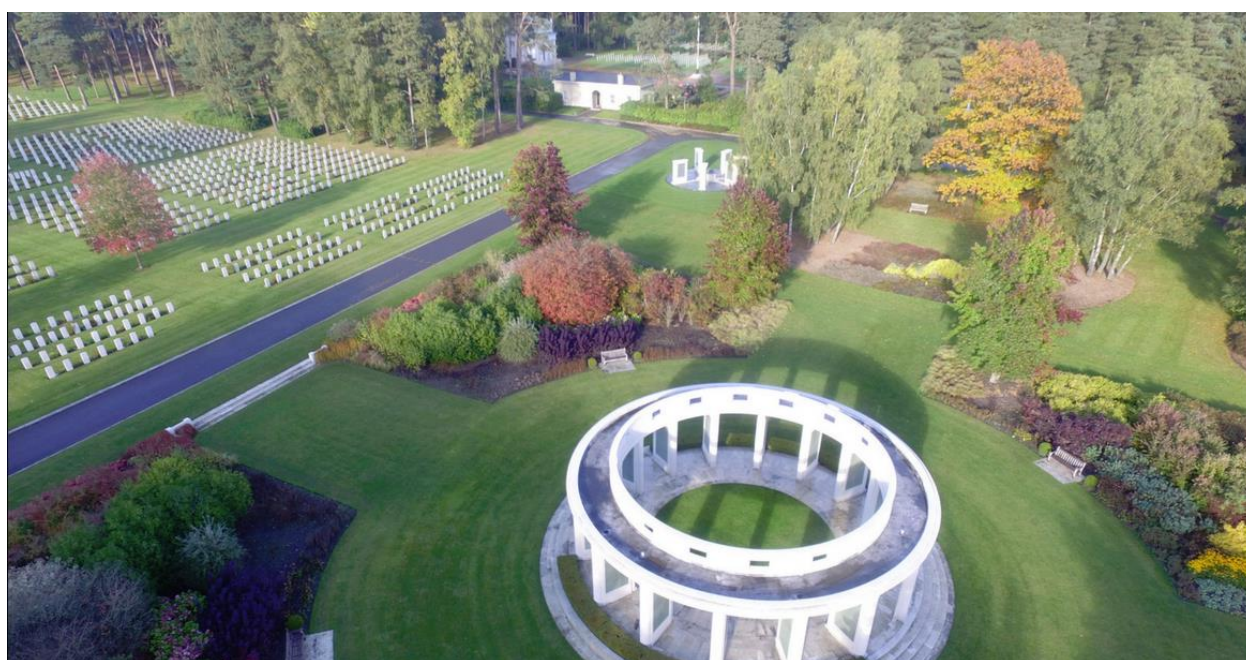
Our Dear Jack

Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England

Located 30 miles from London in Surrey, Brookwood Military Cemetery is the largest CWGC cemetery in the United Kingdom. The cemetery contains the graves of more than 1,600 servicemen of the British Empire in the First World War and over 3,470 from the Second World War.

Brookwood Military Cemetery lies adjacent to Brookwood Cemetery (The London Necropolis), a vast space which covers 500 acres. In 1917, an area to the north of the cemetery was set aside as Brookwood Military Cemetery for men and women of Commonwealth forces who died, many of battle wounds, in the London district. This site was further extended to accommodate Commonwealth casualties of the Second World War. *(Information from CWGC)*

There are 446 Australian War Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery – 351 from World War 1 & 95 from World War 2.



Brookwood Military Cemetery *(Photo from CWGC)*



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00185

A large crowd attends an A.I.F. military funeral at Brookwood Cemetery. In the foreground wooden crosses mark rows of graves. (Photo c1919)

Identified: Front row, left to right: Second Lieutenant Douglas Abbott Ferguson, Australian Flying Corps, died of accidental injuries 18 August 1918; Lieutenant (Lt) Francis John Smedley MC, 7th Battalion, died of wounds 20 August 1918.

Second row: 6860 Private (Pte) James Alexander McKeown, 21st Battalion, died of wounds 20 June 1918; 3622 Pte S T Wilson, 2nd Australian Pioneers, died of wounds 4 July 1918; 2390 Sergeant Frederick Charles Stronell, 21st Battalion, died of wounds 9 July 1918; Lt Arthur Melville Lilburne MC, 6th Brigade Australian Field Artillery, died of disease 11 July 1918.



Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)



Australian Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)



Australian Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery



Photo of Private J. W. Willett's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England.





Australian War Graves (Photo courtesy of Neil Bright 2020)

