

**Shorncliffe Military Cemetery,
Folkestone, Kent
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



2703 PRIVATE

R. W. WILLIAMS

2ND BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

6TH OCTOBER, 1916 Age 26

Robert William WILLIAMS

Robert William Williams was born in Penmachno, near Betws-y-coed, North Wales in 1890 to parents William Robert Williams & Alice Williams.

The 1901 Wales Census recorded William R. Williams as a 7 year old, living with his family at Penmachno, Caernarvonshire, Wales in a 4 roomed dwelling. His parents were listed as William R. Williams (Quarryman, aged 36) & Alice Williams (aged 32). Robert was one of five children listed on this Census – Henry Williams (aged 10) then William R., Elizabeth Williams (aged 5), Jane Williams (aged 3) & Richard Williams (aged 3 months).

The 1911 Wales Census recorded Robert Williams as a 22 year Labourer, living with his family in a 3 roomed dwelling at Fyches Goch, Penmachno, Denbighshire, Wales. His parents were listed as William R. Williams (Labourer, aged 48) & Alice Williams (aged 44). William & Alice Williams had been married for 24 years & had 11 children. Robert was the eldest of 8 children listed on this Census – Robert, Hanery (Labourer, aged 19), Jane (aged 12), Richard (aged 11), Thomas (aged 9), David (aged 7), Anne (aged 4) & Alice (aged 1).

Robert William Williams was a 26 year old, single, Miner from Kurri Kurri, NSW when he enlisted at Liverpool, Sydney, NSW on 15th June, 1915 with the 2nd Infantry Battalion, 8th Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 2703 & his religion was Congregational. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr W. Williams, of Penmachno, North Wales.

Private Robert William Williams embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Runic (A54)* on 9th August, 1915.

Private Robert William Williams joined 2nd Battalion at Gallipoli Peninsula on 4th November, 1915. He disembarked at Alexandria from *Huntsgreen* on 28th December, 1915.

Private Robert William Williams embarked from Alexandria on Troopship *Invernia* on 22nd March, 1916 & disembarked at Marseille, France on 28th March, 1916.

2nd Battalion

The 2nd Battalion was among the first infantry units raised for the AIF during the First World War. Like the 1st, 3rd and 4th Battalions it was recruited from New South Wales and, together with these battalions, formed the 1st Brigade.

The battalion served at ANZAC until the evacuation in December 1915.

After the withdrawal from Gallipoli, the battalion returned to Egypt. In March 1916, it sailed for France and the Western Front. From then until 1918 the battalion took part in operations against the German Army, principally in the Somme Valley in France and around Ypres in Belgium.

(Extract of Battalion information from The Australian War Memorial)

Private Robert William Williams was sent to No. 3 Australian Field Ambulance on 6th June, 1916. He was transferred & admitted to No. 1 Australian Field Ambulance with P.U.O. (Pyrexia (fever) of unknown origin) on 7th June, 1916 then transferred to 1st Australian Divisional Rest Station on 8th June, 1916 with Influenza. Pte Williams was admitted to No. 1 Casualty Clearing Station on 12th June, 1916 with Pleurisy & then transferred by Ambulance Train where he was admitted to No. 3 Canadian Stationary Hospital at Boulogne, France on 15th June, 1916. Pte Williams was invalided to England from Boulogne on Hospital Ship *St. Dennis* on 18th June, 1916 with Pleurisy.

Private Robert William Williams was admitted to Manor House Hospital, Folkestone on 18th June, 1916 with Pleurisy (slight). Laboratory Tests for T.B. in regards to Pte R. W. Williams were completed on 5th July, 1916 & the result was negative for T.B. A letter dated 28th August, 1916 from Manor House Hospital to O.C. Military Hospital. Shorncliffe, regarding Pte Williams states he is in a serious condition & that the Medical Officer considers that at present he was not fit to be moved. The letter states that Pte Williams has had relations to see him.

Private Robert William Williams was transferred on 14th September, 1916 to Shorncliffe Military Hospital, Kent (date as per Hospital Admissions form). *(Note: dates vary on when Pte Williams was transferred to Shorncliffe – Casualty Form Active Service records date as 31st July, 1916; Statement of Service form has date as 29th August, 1916. A letter dated 7th September, 1917 from Manor House Hospital states that Pte Williams was still a patient & was fit to be moved a short distance - for example Shorncliffe but was not fit for a railway journey.)*

A Medical Report was completed on Private Robert William Williams on 12th September, 1916 at Shorncliffe Military Hospital, Kent, England. He was diagnosed with Phthisis which he had contracted in France in 1916. His symptoms had been a cough, poor appetite, had lost weight from 11 stone to 9 stone but still carried on in the trenches until around mid-June when he felt some pains when he coughed & took a long breath. The Medical Board reported that Pte R. W. Williams had Tuberculosis of lungs following pleurisy which had been caused by active military service due to exposure in the trenches. The Medical Board decided on 19th September, 1916 that Private Robert William Williams be discharged as permanently unfit.

Two Laboratory Tests for T.B. were completed Pte R. W. Williams on 13th September, 1916 & the result was negative for T.B. for one & positive for another.

Private Robert William Williams died at 2.30 pm on 6th October, 1916 at Shorncliffe Military Hospital, Kent, England from Phthisis.

A death for Robert W. Williams, aged 27, was registered in the December quarter, 1916 in the district of Elham, Kent, England.

Private Robert William Williams was buried on 10th October, 1916 in Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, Folkestone, Kent, England – Plot number P. 447 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The personal effects of the late Private Robert William Williams were sent to his father – Mr William Williams, Tain-y-Foel, Penmachno, North Wales.

A War Pension was granted to Alice Williams, Tain-y-Foel, Penmachno, North Wales, mother of the late Private Robert William Williams, in the sum of 20/- per fortnight commencing 13th December, 1916. This was reviewed on 20th June, 1917 & a reduced amount of 7/6 per fortnight commencing 21st June, 1917 was decided.

A War Pension was granted to Elizabeth Jane Davies, of 28 Gertrude Street, Abercynon, Glamorgan, unmarried wife of the late Private Robert William Williams, in the sum of £2 per fortnight from 13th December, 1916. A War Pension was also granted to his illegitimate daughter – Alice Mabel Davies in the sum of 20/- per fortnight commencing 13th December, 1916.

A signed letter by Elizabeth June Hughes, unmarried wife of the late Private Robert William Williams, dated 17th February, 1922, in regards to the disposal of the War Medals of the late Pte Williams reads: “ *I Elizabeth June Hughes do hereby agree to preserve with due care any mementos, medals etc of the late No. 2703 Pte Robert Wm. Williams, 2nd Bn. A.I.F. allotted to me as custodian of his ex-nuptial child, Alice Mabel Davies, and I do also agree to produce them any time on receipt of a demand in writing from a representative of the Commonwealth of Australia.*”

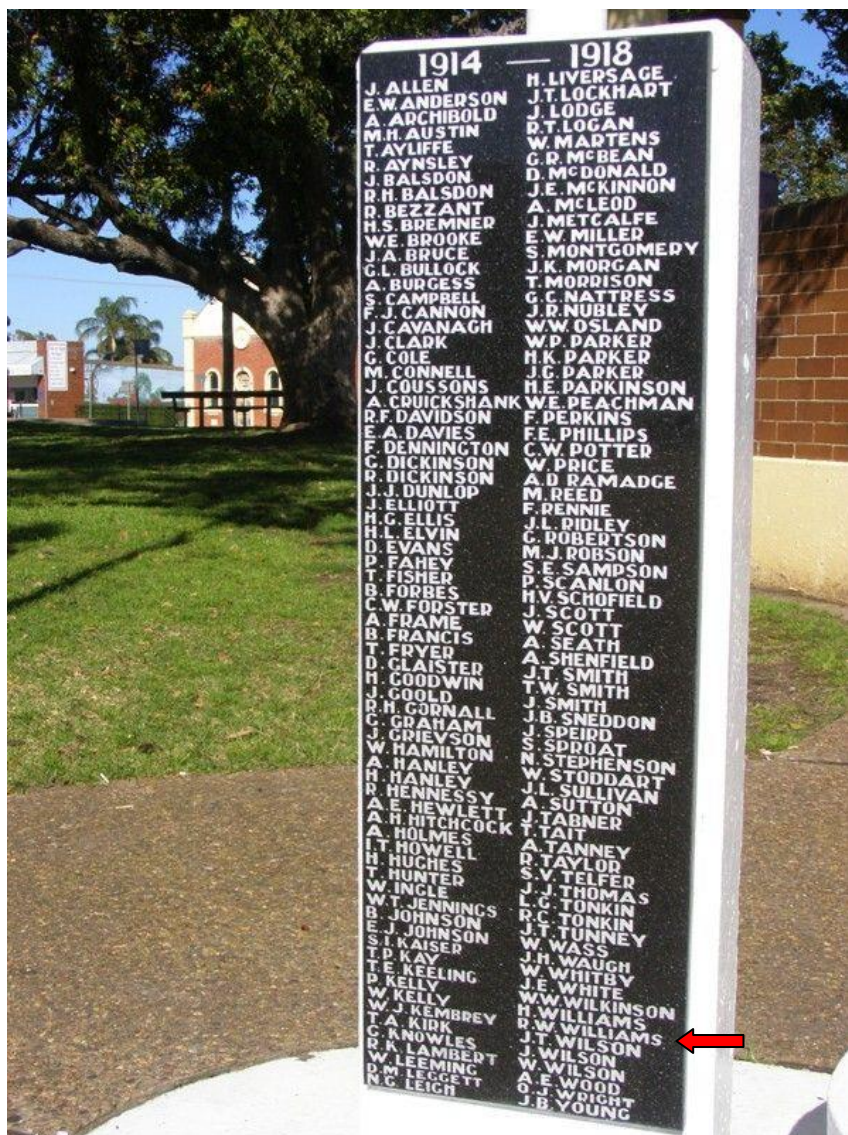
Private Robert William Williams was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. No record of any person signing for receipt of medals to be found in the Service Record file for the late Private Robert William Williams. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to the closest next-of-kin. The Memorial Plaque was sent to Mr W. Williams, father in November, 1921. No record showing the Memorial Scroll.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private R. W. Williams – service number 2703, of 2nd Battalion Australian Infantry. No family details are listed.

R. W. Williams is remembered on the Kurri Kurri War Memorial, located in Rotary Park, Lang & Hampden Streets, Kurri Kurri, NSW.



Kurri Kurri War Memorial (Photos from Monument Australia – Sandra Brown)



Private R. W. Williams is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 35.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

Robert W. Williams is remembered on the War Memorial located in Churchyard of St. Tudclud's Church, Penmachno, Conwy, North Wales.



Penmachno War Memorial, North Wales



(65 pages of Pte Robert William Williams' 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



Newspaper Notices

THE FIELD OF HONOUR

TO-DAY'S CASUALTY LIST

NEW SOUTH WALES

ILL

Pte R. W. WILLIAMS, England (dangerously, previously reported seriously ill)

(The Sun, Sydney, NSW – 12 October, 1916)

WAR LOSSES

237TH CASUALTY LIST

NEW SOUTH WALES

DIED OF ILLNESS

Pte R. W. WILLIAMS, Penmachno (previously reported dangerously ill).

Pte R. W. WILLIAMS, England (now reported died of illness 6/10/16; previously reported died of illness, 7/10/16)

(The Sun, Sydney, NSW – 22 October, 1916)

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 R. W. Williams does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, Folkestone, Kent, England

Shorncliffe Military Cemetery belongs to the Ministry of Defence and contains war graves of both World Wars. It is close to the military camp at Shorncliffe, 2 miles west of Folkestone

During the First World War a number of Canadian military establishments were centred on Shorncliffe. There were camps and a Machine Gun School which were served by the Shorncliffe Military Hospital (later No. 9 Canadian General), the Moore Barracks Military Hospital (later No. 11 Canadian General), and other Canadian hospitals. The Canadian Army Medical Corps Training Depot was at or near Shorncliffe during almost the whole of the war. On three occasions Canadian soldiers were killed during air raids on Shorncliffe.

Shorncliffe Military Cemetery contains 471 First World War burials, more than 300 of them Canadian. Second World War burials number 81, including 1 unidentified U.K. soldier and 1 Polish Foreign National. The cemetery also contains a screen wall on which are commemorated 18 Belgians originally buried in a mausoleum, now demolished.

There are 11 Australians from World War 1 buried in this Cemetery – 2 with Royal Air Force.

(Information from the CWGC)



Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, Folkestone *(Photo courtesy of Paul Kendall)*



Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, Folkestone (Photo above courtesy of Paul Kendall & below Stephen Summerfield)



Photo of Private R. W. Williams' Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, Folkestone, Kent, England.



(Photo courtesy of Kyle Tallett)



Cross of Sacrifice *(Photo courtesy of Paul Kendall)*