

**Tottenham Cemetery,
Greater London, Middlesex, England**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



651 PRIVATE

R. J. WILLS

29TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

2ND AUGUST, 1916 Age 24

Robert Joseph WILLS

Robert Joseph Wills was born at Werribee, Victoria in 1892 to parents James William Howell Wills & Thyza Eliza Wills (nee Griffiths).

Robert Joseph Wills attended Werribee State School, Victoria.

Robert Joseph Wills was a 23 year old, single, Chaff Cutting Contractor from Thornleigh, Werribee, Victoria when he enlisted in Melbourne, Victoria on 19th July, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 651 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs Jane Wills, Thornleigh, Werribee, Victoria.

Private Robert Joseph Wills was posted to 99th Company Depot at Seymour, Victoria on 19th July, 1915 for recruit training. He was transferred to "B" Company, 29th Battalion on 12th August, 1915.

Private Robert Joseph Wills embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Ascanius* (A11) on 10th November, 1915 with the 9th Infantry Brigade, 29th Infantry Battalion "B" Company & disembarked at Suez on 7th December, 1915.

Private Robert Joseph Wills embarked from Alexandria on 16th June, 1916 on *Tunisian* to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force). He disembarked at Marseilles, France on 23rd June, 1916.

Private Robert Joseph Wills was wounded in action in France on 19/20th July, 1916. He was admitted to 2nd Casualty Clearing Station on 20th July, 1916 with G.S.W. (gunshot wound/s) to Buttock. Private Wills was transferred to No. 18 Train on 20th July, 1916 & admitted to 3rd Canadian Stationary Hospital at Boulogne, France on 21st July, 1916. He was transferred to England on Hospital Ship St David on 21st July, 1916 with G.S.W. Buttock.

29th Battalion

The 29th Battalion was raised as part of the 8th Brigade at Broadmeadows Camp in Victoria on 10 August 1915. Having enlisted as part of the recruitment drive that followed the landing at Gallipoli, and having seen the casualty lists, these were men who had offered themselves in full knowledge of their potential fate.

The 8th Brigade joined the newly raised 5th Australian Division in Egypt and proceeded to France, destined for the Western Front, in June 1916. The 29th Battalion fought its first major battle at Fromelles on 19 July 1916. The nature of this battle was summed up by one 29th soldier: "the novelty of being a soldier wore off in about five seconds, it was like a bloody butcher's shop". Although it still spent periods in the front line, the 29th played no major offensive role for the rest of the year.....

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

War Diary – 29th Battalion

19th July, 1916:

8 pm – Moved to position at Croix Blanch. 2 Coys being detailed to carry bombs, stores to front trenches (D & A Coys).

Received order to send 1 Coy "D" to front trench & 1 "C" to support line (300 yds)

10 pm – At 10 pm Col Clark 30th asked for assistance.

11 pm – "C" Coy moved to front line.

B & C Coys were at this time carrying supplies of ammunition & bombs along Cellar Farm Avenue.

Parties of D & C doing same over NO MANS LAND

A large number of hand grenades carried were not fused.

Night of 19/20:

At 2 o'clock the Enemy were counter attacking & our line relieving, by this time D & A Coys were drawn into the fight and C & D who had manned the front line of our trenches were covering their retirement. At this stage the whole battalion was engaged.

After a struggle in NO MANS LAND the Enemy were content to stop at their own trench.

The 29th Bn remained in the front line during the remainder of the fight.

20th July, 1916:

As soon as bombardment ceased the companies were reorganised & told off to hold the front line – about 500 yds.

Large number of wounded brought both by day & night.

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Private Robert Joseph Wills was admitted to Military Hospital, Silver St, Edmonton, England on 22nd July, 1916 with Shrapnel wound/s to Buttock, Leg & Shoulder (slight).

Private Robert Joseph Wills died on 2nd August, 1916 at Edmonton Military Hospital, London North, Middlesex, England from wounds received in action in France – G.S.W. Buttock.

A death for Robert J. Wills, aged 24, was registered in the September quarter, 1916 in the district of Edmonton, Middlesex, England.

Base Records sent a communication to Mrs J. Wills, Thornleigh, Werribee, Victoria on 6th August, 1916 advising that No. 651 Private R. J. Wills, 29th Battalion has been reported wounded.

Private Robert Joseph Wills was buried in Tottenham Cemetery, Greater London, Middlesex, England – Heroes Corner Grave No 7334.

Base Records wrote to Mrs J. Wills, "Thornleigh", Werribee, Victoria on 20th April, 1920 with the following: "*With reference to my communication of the 18th January, 1917, regarding the regrettable loss of your son the late No. 651 Private R. J. Wills, 29th Battalion, I am now in receipt of further advice which shows that his remains have been exhumed from grave No. 7334, Tottenham Cemetery, Tottenham, London, and re-interred in grave No. 7357 in the same Cemetery. This work is carried out with every measure of care and reverence in the presence of a Chaplain.*"

He is now remembered on CWGC Screen Wall - Gen. 7357 (Screen Wall) as he has no headstone. His death is still acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Mary Tinsley Wise, Greaves Street, Werribee, wrote to Base Records on 8th February, 1917 with the following: "*Would you kindly let me know if the kit-bag belonging to Pte R. J. Wills (deceased) has been returned to your depot and also what it contained.*"

Base Records replied to Miss M. T. Wise on 13th February, 1917 advising "*....the personal effects of the late No. 651 Private R. J. Wills, 29th Battalion, have been returned to Australia, and transmitted to the registered next-of-kin, viz, deceased's mother. I regret I am unable to supply you with any further information on the subject, and can only suggest that you write to the next-of-kin in question.*"

Base Records contacted Mrs J. Wills, Melbourne Road, Werribee, Victoria on 1st November, 1920 stating she was noted as the registered next-of-kin on the records of the late No. 652 Private G. C. Wills, 29th Battalion and the late No. 651 Private R. J. Wills, 29th Battalion but desired to know if there were any nearer blood relatives than herself & was specifically asked if their 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.

Private Robert Joseph Wills was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Wills mother – Mrs J. Wills, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent October, 1921 & Plaque sent July, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Robert Joseph Wills – service number 651, aged 24, of 29th Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of James & Thyza Wills, of Werribee, Victoria, Australia.

R. J. Wills & his brother G. C. Wills are both remembered on the Werribee Honour Roll, located in Werribee RSL, 2A Synnot Street, Werribee, Victoria.

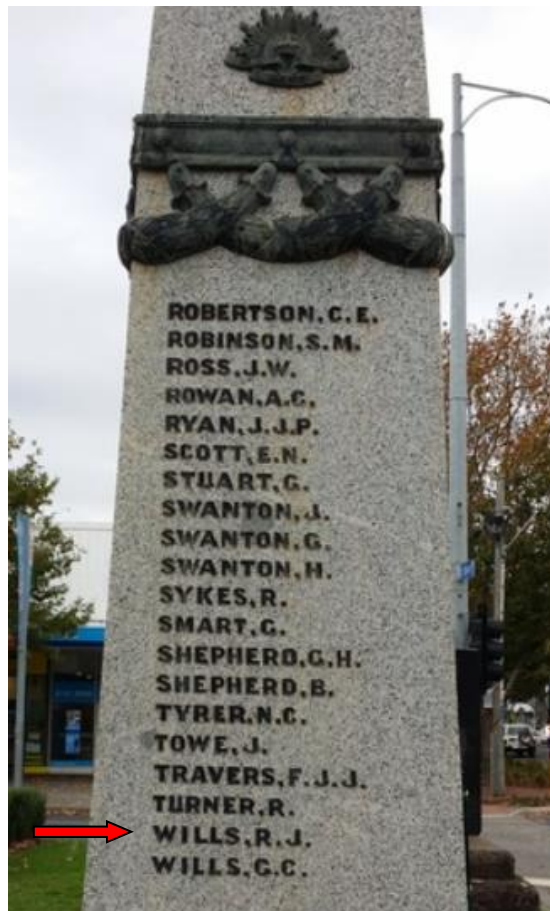


Werribee Honour Roll (Photo from Wyndham History)

R. J. Wills & his brother G. C. Wills are both remembered on the Werribee War Memorial, located at Watton Street & Station Place, Werribee, Victoria.



Werribee War Memorial

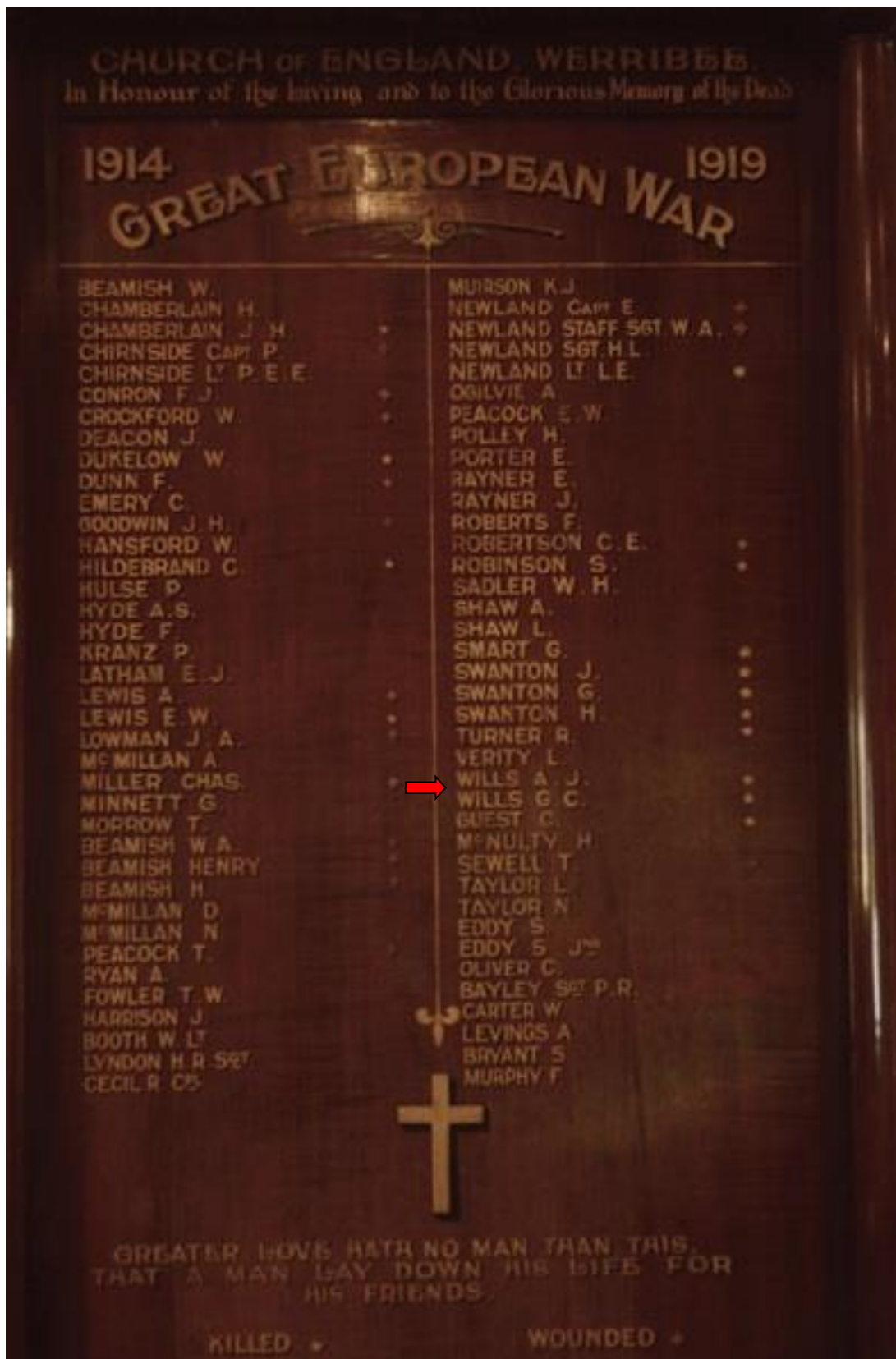


R. J. Wills & his brother G. E. Wills are both remembered on the Werribee State School Honor Board, now located in Werribee Primary School, 2 Deutgam Street, Werribee, Victoria.



Werribee State School Honor Board (Photo from *Wyndham History* – Bill Strong)

A. J. Wills & his brother G. C. Wills are both remembered on the St Thomas's Honor Board, located in St. Thomas's Church, 117 Synnot Street, Werribee, Victoria.



St Thomas's Honor Board, Werribee (Photo from Wyndham History)

R. J. Wills & his brother G. C. Wills are both remembered on the St Thomas's Presbyterian Church Honor Board which was located in St. Thomas's Presbyterian Church (now Crossroads Uniting Church, Watton Street, Werribee, Victoria) – location now unknown.



St Thomas's Presbyterian Church Honor Board (Photo from Wyndham History)

R. J. Wills & his brother G. C. Wills are both remembered on the Wyndham Presbyterian Church Honor Roll, located in Wyndham Presbyterian Church, 116 – 120 Black Forest Road, Wyndham Vale, Victoria.



Wyndham Presbyterian Church Honor Roll (Photo from Wyndham History – Heather Noble)

Private R. J. Wills is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 116.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(40 pages of Private Robert Joseph Wills' 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 Robert Joseph Wills:](#)

Older Brother George Charles Wills - Enlisted on 19th July, 1915 as a 27 year old Contractor with his younger brother – Robert Joseph Wills. Embarked on 10th November, 1915 on HMAT Ascanius (A11) as Private No 652 with 29th Battalion. Killed in action at Fleurbaix on 20th July, 1916. Buried Rue-Petillon Military Cemetery, Fleurbaix, France.

Entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War medal & Victory Medal.



Rue-Petillon Military Cemetery, Fleurbaix (Photo from Find a Grave – Wayne Thomas)



Newspaper Notices

WERRIBEE

Another Werribee volunteer has given his life for his country, as Mr M. Delaney, Metropolitan Farm, has been notified that his son Private E. Delaney, had been killed in action in France. Mr J. Wills, of Melbourne road, Werribee, received a cable message this week that his son, Private R. Wills, had been wounded in France, and was now in London.

(Melton Express, Victoria – 5 August, 1916) & (The Bacchus Marsh Express, Victoria – 5 August, 1916)

WERRIBEE

Last week we had to chronicle the sad news of the death in action of Pte Delaney, of Metropolitan Farm. Since then another name has been added to the list of Werribee's losses. On Wednesday Mr Wills, of Melbourne road, received a cable stating that his son, Pte R. J. Wills, had died of wounds sustained in France. The fallen soldier was a splendid type of your Australia, and the sympathy of the whole district goes out to his sorrowing relatives.

(Melton Express, Victoria – 12 August, 1916) & (The Bacchus Marsh Express, Victoria – 12 August, 1916)

IN MEMORIAM

WILLS – In loving memory of Private R. J. Wills, who died of wounds received in France.

When days are dark and friends are few,

Dear Bob, how I think of you.

Roses may wither, leaves fade and die,

Some may forget you, but never shall I.

-Inserted by his true intended, Mary Tindlsey (Wise), Greaves-street, Werribee.

(Werribee Shire Banner, Victoria – 17 August, 1916)

WERRIBEE RIFLE CLUB

A fair muster of members attended at the local range on Saturday, 12th inst., to compete in a pool shoot. Conditions, ten shots at 600 yards. Members wore arm bands as a tribute to the memory of their late club mate, Private R. J. Wills, whose death was reported during the week from wounds received in action in France.....

(Werribee Shire Banner, Victoria – 17 August, 1916)

IN MEMORIAM SERVICE

St. Thomas' Church was crowded on Sunday evening, when friends of the late Private R. J. Wills came to show their sympathy with his bereaved, relatives. A powerful and touching sermon was preached by the Rev. Laceby Cecil on

St. John, 15ch., 13v.--" Greater love hath no man than this than that a man lay down his life for his friends." He said that St. Paul spoke of three great powers - Faith, Hope, and Love - and then declared that the greatest was love: - Christ Jesus spoke of the tremendous sacrifices true love would entail. Love of country. of King and empire, of true liberty for women and children, had caused Bob. Wills to leave a happy home life, and everything that man holds dear. He was a true, manly, God-fearing volunteer, and as such won our respect, our admiration, and our love. The poet, writing of such as he, says :-

 "He leapt to arms unbidden,
 Unneeded, overbold,
His face by earth is hidden,
 His heart in earth is cold.
Curse on the reckless daring
 That could not wait the call,
The proud, fantastic bearing
 That would be first to fall.
Oh, tears of human passion
 Blur not the image true,
This was not folly's fashion
 This was the man we knew."

The general who does his duty in the critical hour knows that his shall be the glory of battle, but brave volunteers such as the late Bob. Wills make the greater sacrifice. They know their names will be forgotten, their fate unnoticed, except by their family circle, and that often where they fall they shall lie. Tonight we honor their memory. He who would be a good soldier of God, and a worthy citizen of our sunny Australian-land, if there be in his spirit one spark of what is noble, or generous, or manly, must when occasion comes, whether it be for God or for truth, or for pity, or for right, or for home and native land-must I say. when the occasion comes, fight, and fight hard-strike, and strike home. Let no man think of the Christianity of our soldiers, apart from that manliness, that free-born courage, which is the might and, glory of a man. Timidity is no Christian virtue. Resolve this night, like him we mourn, to be pure, and true; resolve to fight the good fight of faith in the warfare in which there is no discharge; resolve to be faithful, obedient unto death.

(Werribee Shire Banner, Victoria – 17 August, 1916)

Killed in Action

WILLS— On the 20th July, killed in action in France, George Charles, the dearly loved fourth son of James and Thyrsa Wills, Werribee, and dearly loved brother of Mrs J. L. Dunn, Byrneside, Tom. Mrs T. Richardson (Berwick), Will, Jim Percy and Bob (died on service), and Eiffie. Aged 27 years. Also on the 2nd August, in Hospital, London of wounds received in France on 23rd of July, Robert Joseph, dearly loved youngest Son and Brother of the above ; aged 21 years. Also on the 20th of July, killed in action in France, Robert Harker, the dearly loved second Son of Thomas and Catherine Harker, of Yallock, Gippsland, and much loved Cousin and Nephew of the above. Aged 27 years.

(Kyabram Guardian, Victoria – 18 August, 1916)

196th CASUALTY LIST

DIED, CAUSE NOT STATED

Pte R. J. Wills, Werribee

(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – 23 August, 1916)

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BEREAVEMENT NOTICE

Mr and Mrs James Wills and family desire to convey to all kind friends and relatives their sincere and heartfelt thanks for kind expressions of sympathy and letters, cards and telegrams in their recent sad loss of their two dear sons and brothers, who died fighting for King and Country, especially thanking Rev. H. Laceby Cecil, Dr. Manly, Mr W J Troup and Miss A G Taylor for their kind attention. 'Thornleigh' Werribee.

(Werribee Shire Banner, Victoria – 24 August, 1916)

IN MEMORIAM

WILLS – In loving memory of Pte R. J. Wills, who died of wounds on the 2nd August, 1916.

A painful shock, a blow severe,
To part with one I loved so dear;
My loss is great, I'll not complain,
But trust in God to meet again.

-Inserted by his sorrowing fiancé, Mary Tinsley (Wise), Werribee.

(Werribee Shire Banner, Victoria – 2 August, 1917)

IN MEMORIAM

On Active Service

WILLS – Sacred to the memory of our dear Bob, who died of wounds on 2nd August, 1916 in England; also our dear (Dick) George, killed in action 19th July, 1916, in France.

Inserted by father, mother, brothers and sisters, "Thornleigh," Werribee

(Broadmeadows Camp Sentry, Victoria – 3 August, 1917)

AUSTRALIAN GRAVES

FLOWERS IN TOTTENHAM CEMETERY

Eight Australian soldiers are lying in Tottenham Cemetery, England. News of the tending of their graves has been received by Miss G. Limmer, of 299 Avoca street, Randwick, in a letter from a friend, Miss Lillian Short whose address is 130A Gladstone Avenue, Wood Green, London N. The letter says:

In Tottenham Cemetery there are eight Australian soldiers buried, and a few friends and myself have under taken to place flowers on the graves once every month, so that they are not forgotten. The graves are beautifully turfed and looked after by the cemetery authorities, but we supply the flowers. We have been wondering whether the relatives of the men would like to know that we are doing this. It seems so dreadful to think that the poor boys are lying here and their friends cannot get to them. I went to the cemetery yesterday and put daffodils, narcissus and marguerites (yellow) there. They looked so nice when they were finished. The men's names and numbers are as follow:

3959 Pte. W. Whitehead, 23rd Battn., died October 2, 1916.

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4654 Pte. W. G. Staveley, 58th. Battn.. died November 12, 1916.

651 Pte. E. J. Willis, 29th Battn., died August 2, 1916.

3558 Pte. E. Smith, 6th Battn., died September 9, 1916.

2778 Pte. H. L. Beaumont, 10th Battn., died September 25, 1916.

4146 Pte. F. A. Beard, 59th Battn., died July 30, 1916.

553 Pte. D. Low, 32nd Battn., died August 4, 1916.

2466 Pte. R. V. Feehan, 10th Battn., died September 22, 1916.

(Advocate, Burnie, Tasmania – 17 June, 1921)

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.

Tottenham Cemetery, Greater London, Middlesex, England

Tottenham Cemetery contains burials of both wars. Most of the 293 First World War graves are in a plot on the western side of the cemetery, backed by a Screen Wall bearing the names of those buried both there and elsewhere in the cemetery, whose graves could not be individually marked.

There are 212 burials of the Second World War, mostly scattered, but 30 graves form a small plot facing the First World War plot. Again, some graves could not be individually marked and these casualties are commemorated on supplementary panels to the Screen Wall.

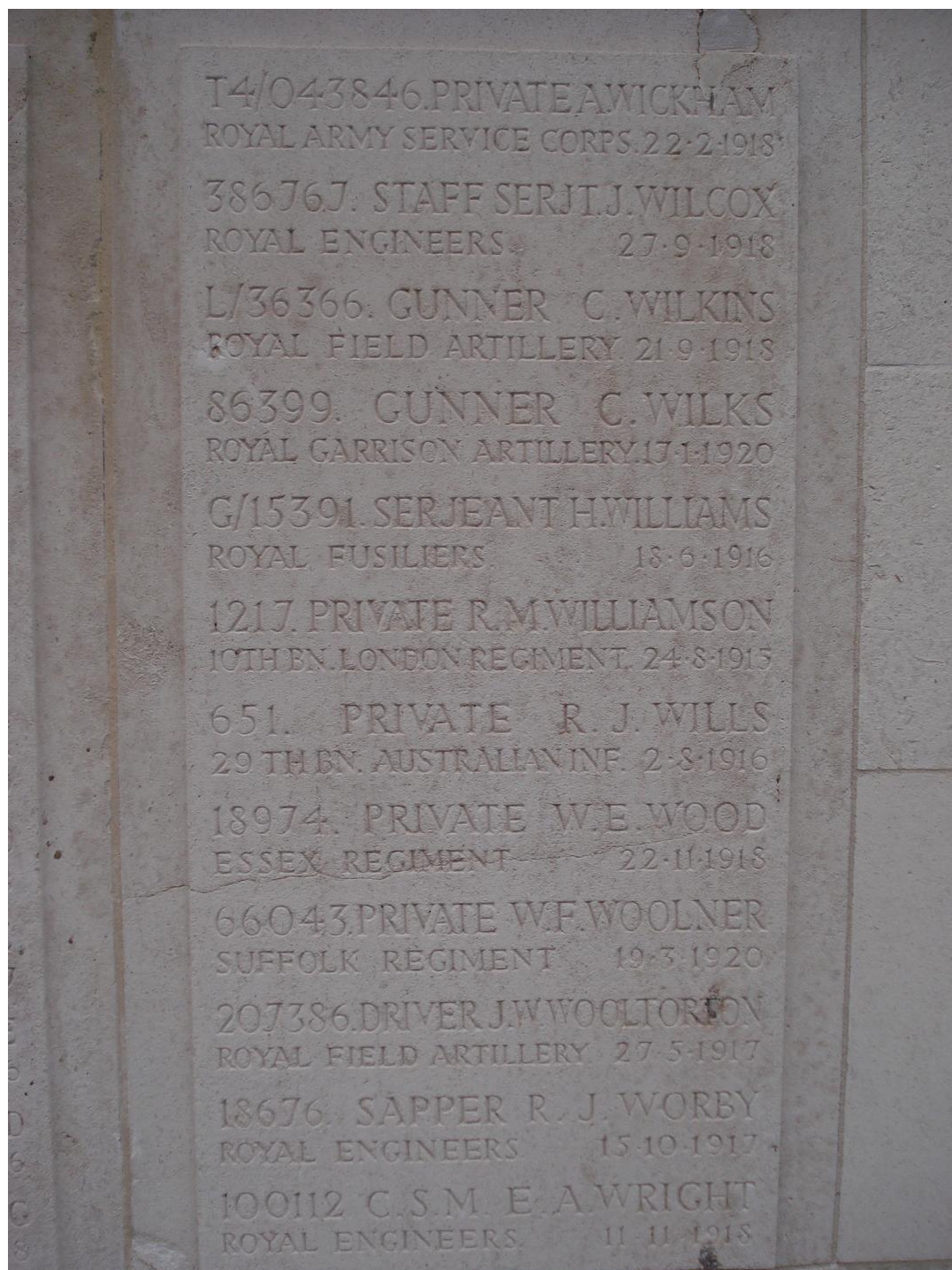
(Information from CWGC)



Tottenham Cemetery (Photo above from Find a Grave – Mike Ganly; below from CWGC)



Photo of Private R. J. Wills' name on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Screen Wall in Tottenham Cemetery, Greater London, Middlesex, England.



(Photo from Find a Grave – Julia&keld)





(Photo by Geoffrey Gillon)



Tottenham Cemetery Map (Photo from Find a Grave – Justin)