

**Brookwood Military Cemetery,
Brookwood, Surrey, England**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



6971 PRIVATE

W. J. WILSON

23RD BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

8TH NOVEMBER, 1918 Age 32

William James WILSON

William James Wilson was born at Clifton Hill, Victoria on 15th April, 1886 to parents James Laurie Wilson & Mary Ann Wilson (nee Emery).

William James Wilson attended Rathdown Street State School, Victoria.

William James Wilson married Catherine Mary McMahon on 5th December, 1906 in Melbourne, Victoria. They had the following children - Mary Cecilia Wilson (born in 1908 at Carlton ; died on 22nd April, 1909); Kathleen Veronica Wilson (born 1909 in Carlton); Agnes Wilson (born 1911 at Carlton); William Rupert Leonard Wilson (born 20th April, 1913 at North Fitzroy) & Lawrence Wilson (born 1915 at Armadale).

William James Wilson was a 31 year old, married, Chauffeur from South Melbourne, Victoria when he enlisted on 9th August, 1917 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 6971 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs C. Wilson, 98 Napier Street, South Melbourne, Victoria. (Attestation Papers listed the address as 95 Napier Street, South Melbourne)

Private William James Wilson was posted to Depot on 9th August, 1917 then transferred to Recruit Depot at Broadmeadows, Victoria on 13th August, 1917. He was transferred to 1st (Depot) Battalion, A.I.F. at Broadmeadows from 3rd September, 1917 then on 19th September, 1917 he was transferred to 20th Reinforcements of 23rd Battalion.

Private William James Wilson embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Nestor (A71)* on 21st November, 1917 with the 23rd Infantry Battalion, 20th Reinforcements & disembarked at Suez on 15th December, 1917 for Australian Camp.

Private William James Wilson entrained for embarkation at Gabbary (?) on 5th January, 1918. He embarked for overseas on H.M.T. *Abbassieh* on 8th January, 1918 & disembarked at Taranto, Italy on 13th January, 1918. Private Wilson was left in Isolation at Cherbourg on 22nd January, 1918.

Private William James Wilson was marched in to 6th Training Battalion at Fovant, Wiltshire, England on 18th February, 1918.

Nellie Maloney, 215 George St, Fitzroy, Victoria, wrote to Base Records on 18th February, 1918 asking for the regimental number for Private W. J. Wilson, -20th Reinforcements, 23rd Battalion.

Base Records replied to Miss N. Maloney on 21st February, 1918 advising that the regimental number for Private W. J. Wilson was 6971.

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 William James Wilson was marched in to 5th Training Battalion at Fovant from 6th Training Battalion on 22nd April, 1918.

Private William James Wilson proceeded overseas to France from Fovant via Folkestone on 20th May, 1918. He was marched in to A.I.B.D. (Australian Infantry Base Depot) at Havre, France on 22nd May, 1918. Private Wilson was marched out from A.I.B.D. on 24th May, 1918 & was taken on strength of 23rd Battalion in France on 26th May, 1918 from Reinforcements.

Private William James Wilson was wounded in action on 4th July, 1918. He was admitted to 6th Australian Field Ambulance on 4th July, 1918 with G.S.W. (gunshot wound/s) to Knee then transferred to 5th Casualty Clearing Station. Private Wilson was transferred to 9th USA General Hospital at Rouen, France on 8th July, 1918. He was invalided to England on 10th July, 1918.

23rd Battalion

The 23rd Battalion was raised in Victoria in March 1915 as the third battalion of the 6th Brigade.....

In April 1918 the 23rd helped to turn back the German spring offensive, and then took part in the battles that would mark the beginning of Germany's defeat - Hamel, Amiens and Mont St Quentin.....

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

23rd Battalion War Diary

4th July, 1918:

Uneventful night. At 3.10pm in conjunction with 7th A.I. Bde on right & 4th A.I. Bde on left, Bde attacked, this Bn being allotted right sub sector frontage. Coys were Right D Coy (Lt S. T. Hodgson), centre B (Capt Hinchcliffe) left A (Capt Moss) – carrying Coy C (Lt W. A. Martin). All objectives were gained; no serious opposition or counter attacks were experienced. C.O. accompanied by Lt. Lowe made an extended reconnaissance of captured area immediately afterwards. They returned to H.Q. at 12.15 pm. H.Q. moved back to O24 C13 at 2 pm. At night enemy showed increased activity but no C. Attacks developed.

Report on Operations 4th July, 1918 (Appendix 3):

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Casualties - Officers – Killed..... 1

- Wounded.... 4

O. Ranks – Killed.... 9

- Wounded....61

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Private William James Wilson was admitted to 5th Southern General Hospital at Portsmouth, England on 11th July, 1918 – left Leg amputated – severe.

Mrs C. Wilson, 95 Napier Street, South Melbourne, Victoria, wife of Private William James Wilson, was advised by Base Records on 19th July, 1918 that he had been wounded. Mrs Wilson was advised again on 31st July, 1918 that Private W. J. Wilson had been admitted to 5th Southern General Hospital, Portsmouth, England on 11th July, 1918 suffering from amputation of left leg, severe but was now progressing favourably.

Private William James Wilson was transferred to Adhurst St Mary Red Cross Hospital on 18th July, 1918. He was transferred to 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Southall, Middlesex on 23rd August, 1918.

A Medical Report was completed on Private William James Wilson on 23rd August, 1918 while a patient at No. 2 Australian Auxiliary Hospital. His disability was listed as Amputation Left Leg (above knee) which had occurred on 4th July, 1918 at Villers Bretonneux, France. “GSW through & through causing comminuted fracture of lower end of femur involving knee joint. Leg amputated same day.” His present condition was “Stump healed”. The Officer in charge of the Medical Case recommended that Private Wilson be discharged as permanently unfit & to be transferred to Australia. The Medical Board decided on 28th August, 1918 that Private William James Wilson was permanently unfit for General & Home Service.

Private William James Wilson was discharged to furlo on 12th September, 1918 & was to report back to 2nd Auxiliary Hospital on 26th September, 1918.

Mrs C. Wilson, 98 Napier Street, South Melbourne, Victoria, wife of Private William James Wilson, was advised by Base Records on 6th September, 1918 that a cable had been received regarding Private W. J. Wilson, No. 6971, 23rd Battalion on 30th July, 1918 & he was reported to be progressing favourably. She was advised on 25th September, 1918 that Private Wilson's condition was improving.

Mrs C. Wilson was advised by Base Records on 17th October, 1918 that Private W. J. Wilson was now convalescent.

Private William James Wilson died at 3.45 pm on 8th November, 1918 at No. 2 Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Southall, Middlesex, England from Broncho Pneumonia.

A death for William J. Wilson, aged 33, was registered in the December quarter, 1918 in the district of Uxbridge, Middlesex, England.

Private William James Wilson was buried on 16th November, 1918 in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England – Australian Military Burial Ground – Grave No. 182,210.

From the burial report of Private William James Wilson - Coffin was good plain Elm. Deceased soldier was accorded a Military Funeral, Firing Party, Bugler and Pallbearers being in attendance. The coffin was draped with the Australian Flag and surmounted by beautiful wreaths sent from: - Cousins Mr & Mrs Percy Evans, Anzac Buffet, Victoria St, London. The Last Post was sounded at the Graveside and the Rev. Shannon, A.I.F. Headquarters 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.

Names of Relatives & Friends present at the Funeral – Cousin – Mr P. Evans, Anzac Buffet, Victoria St, London. Friends – 6161 Pte Hutson, R. H., 23rd Bn, A.I.F. Headquarters & 6767 Pte Bourchand, 22nd Bn, A.I.F. Headquarters.

Base Records wrote to Mrs C. Wilson, 568 Lygon Street, Carlton, Victoria on 17th April, 1923 stating that the site of No. 6971 Private W. J. Wilson's grave in Brookwood Military Cemetery had been officially registered as Plot 4 Row J Grave 14. "*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 - Plot number IV. J. 14. Private W. J. Wilson now has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Private William James Wilson stated "*I do not desire to make a will one already made, original will with A.I.F. Authorities, Australia.*" A Will, dated 4th October, 1917 made at Broadmeadows Camp, Victoria on 4th October, 1917 stated "*In the event of my death I give the whole of my property and effects to my wife Catherine Wilson of 98 Napier St, South Melbourne, Victoria.*"

Miss E. Purcell, 124 Nolan Street, Bendigo, Victoria, wrote to Military Defence Department on 8th December, 1918 with the following letter: "*As I have a young man at the front and have not had any mail from him for 4 mails and I was reading the casualty list of the 2nd of this month I noticed in the list of deaths from others causes the same name as my young man Private W. J. Wilson South Melbourne but I understand his address was Hawthorn. I am very much worried about him and would be very pleased if I could know through the Defence department his address is Private W. J. Wilson 20 Reinforcements 23 Battalion 6th Brigade Aust Inf's Forces Abroad Number 6971. Kindly let me know as soon as convenient as I am still writing to him at the front.*"

Base Records replied to Miss E. Purcell on 12th December, 1918 advising her that "*No. 6971 Private W. J. Wilson, 23rd Battalion, is reported as having died on 8-11-18, at 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Southall, Middlesex, England, of Broncho Pneumonia. No further information is yet available. However, later official advice coming to hand my mail will, it is anticipated, give further particulars, which will be available to you on application subsequent to their receipt.*"

The Mutual Life And Citizens' Assurance Co. Ltd, Sydney, NSW wrote to Base Records on 20th December, 1918 requesting a certificate of death for the late Private W. J. Wilson, No. 6971.

A formal acknowledgment was sent on 31st December, 1918.

A telephone inquiry was made to Base Records on 7th January, 1919 by Mrs Wilson for the death certificate of her late husband – Private W. J. Wilson, No. 6971, 23rd Battalion.

Base Records wrote to Mrs C. Wilson on 7th February, 1919 enclosing a certificate of report of death of the late No. 6971 Private W. J. Wilson, 23rd Battalion.

Mrs Catherine Wilson, widow of the late Private William James Wilson, advised Base Records in July, 1919 that she was moving from 98 Napier Street, South Melbourne to 568 Lygon Street, Carlton.

Communications addressed to Mrs C. Wilson, 568 Lygon Street, Carlton, Victoria, in 1923 were returned unclaimed.

Base Records wrote to Deputy Commission of Repatriation, Melbourne, Victoria on 15th March, 1923 regarding the late No. 6971 Private William James Wilson, 23rd Battalion: "I shall be much obliged if you can furnish me with the present address of Mrs C. Wilson, widow of the abovementioned soldier, or, failing that, any information that will assist me to get into touch with her..."

Private William James Wilson was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal (Victory Medal was originally returned unclaimed in May 1923 but signed for in April, 1924 by Catherine Wilson). A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Wilson's widow – Mrs C. Wilson, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll signed for in July, 1921 & Plaque signed for in February, 1923).

Mrs Catherine Wilson, War Widow, 111 Lennox St, Nth Richmond, wrote to Base Records on 6th November, 1951 asking *"..if it is possible to replace an A.I.F. Brooch 1914 – 1918 (War Widow). I lost mine some time ago and although advertised for it I never received it back. My late husband died at Southall 8 Nov 1918. His reg number was 6971 Pte William James Wilson 20/23rd Battalion, A.I.F. Enlisted at Sth Melbourne 1917. Hoping you will do something for me.."*

Base Records replied to Mrs C. Wilson on 9th November, 1951 advising that *"... the issue of the Widow's Badge 1914-18 ceased some years ago, as stocks were exhausted. This badge is no longer available for issue or replacement."*

Mrs Catherine Wilson, War Widow, 111 Lennox St, Nth Richmond, wrote to Base Records again on 7th June, 1955 with a similar request for *"Lost World War 1 next of kin badge"*.

Base Records replied Mrs C. Wilson on 10th June, 1955 *"concerning the loss of your Nearest Female Relative Badge (Silver & Enamel) and its possible replacement, and in reply regret to advise it is not possible to issue you with a badge which had previously been issued in respect of another soldier. It is noted that in your letter to this office dated 6th November, 1951, you refer to the loss of Widow's Badge and we advised this type of badge was no longer available for issue or replacement, now however, with the knowledge that the lost badge is the Nearest Female Relative, you are advised that this may be replaced on the prepayment of 10/2d. If you desire the badge please complete the attached form of Statutory Declaration and return it to this office with your remittance when a new badge will be forwarded to you."*

The Office of The Public Trustee, Melbourne, Victoria, wrote to The Officer in Charge, Base Records, Canberra, A.C.T. on 13th June, 1957 in regards to Estate of Annie Waghorn. They requested a *"Certificate of Death of William James Wilson, son of James Wilson, who is reported to have died at the Southall Hospital, England on the 8th November, 1918. It is understood that he was a member of the 23rd Battalion of this Regiment, number being VX6971."*

A reply was sent on 27th June, 1957 enclosing a Certificate of Death of No. 6971 Private William James Wilson, 23rd Battalion.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private William James Wilson – service number 6971, aged 32, of 23rd Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of James Laurie Wilson & Mary Ann Wilson. Native of Victoria, Australia.

Private W. J. Wilson is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 100.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(88 pages of Private William James Wilson'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

DEATHS

On Active Service

WILSON – On the 8th November officially relisted died of broncho-pneumonia at 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital, England, Pte William James Wilson, beloved husband of Catherine Wilson and dear daddy of Kathleen, Nellie, Lennie and Laurence, of 98 Napier-street, South Melbourne.

(The Age, Melbourne, Victoria – 19 November, 1918)

The 448th and 449th CASUALTY LISTS

VICTORIAN NAMES

DIED OF ILLNESS

Private W. J. Wilson, South Melb.

(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – 4 December, 1918)

IN MEMORIAM

On Active Service

WILSON – In memory of my loving husband and our dear daddy, No. 6971, 23rd Battalion, Private William James Wilson, died at Southall on the 8th November, 1918 from bronchial pneumonia. May his dear soul rest in peace.

Inserted by his loving wife and children, C. Wilson, 568 Lygon-street, Carlton.

WILSON – In fond memory of Private William Wilson, who passed to a higher life at Southall, England, 8th November, 1918. Remembrance.

-Inserted by his friends, Rupert and Barbara Amery.

(The Age, Melbourne, Victoria – 8 November, 1919)

IN MEMORIAM

On Active Service

WILSON – In loving memory of my dear beloved husband and our dear daddy, No. 6971 Private William J. Wilson, who died at Southall, 8th November, 1918.

In our home you are fondly remembered,
Loving memories cling round your name;
The heart that held you in deepest affection
Still loves you in death just the same.

-Inserted by his loving wife and children, C. Wilson, 568 Lygon-street, Carlton.

(The Age, Melbourne, Victoria – 8 November, 1920)

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 W. J. Wilson does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

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.



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 (Photo from CWGC)



Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)



Australian Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)





(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)



Australian War Graves *(Photo courtesy of Neil Bright 2020)*

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



(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)



(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher – Jan 2021)

