

**Brighton City (Bear Road) Cemetery,
East Sussex, England**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



1607 PRIVATE

W. B. WOOD

3RD AUSTRALIAN PIONEERS

21ST OCTOBER, 1917

William Brown WOOD

William Brown Wood was born at Bacchus Marsh, Victoria in 1893 with his twin James, to parents Robert Shaw Wood & Elizabeth McFarlane Wood (nee Brown).

Elizabeth McFarlane Wood, mother of William Brown Wood, died 12th January, 1896 at South Melbourne, Victoria.

William Brown Wood attended school at Coburg, Victoria.

William Brown Wood was a 23 year old, single, Joiner from Sunnyside Farm, Seville, Victoria when he enlisted in Melbourne, Victoria on 6th March, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 1607 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr Robert Shaw Wood, of Sunnyside Farm, Seville, Victoria. According to information supplied for the Roll of Honour by his step-mother – Violet May Wood – William Wood had served with Senior Cadets & 34th Engineers in Melbourne, Victoria. William Wood state don his Attestation Papers that he had previously served for 18months with Senior Cadets & also served for 2 years with 34th A.E. (Australian Engineers) – discharged at own request.

Private William Brown Wood was posted to "A" Company, 3rd Australian Pioneer Battalion on 21st March, 1916 for recruit training. He was transferred to 1st Reinforcements of 3rd Australian Pioneer Battalion on 5th April, 1916.

Private William Brown Wood embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Wandilla* (A62) on 6th June, 1916 with the 3rd Pioneer Battalion, 1st Reinforcements. He was admitted to Ship's Hospital from 13th June to 25th June, 1916 suffering from Influenza & mild Broncho Pneumonia. Private Wood was transferred to "A" Company, 1st Reinforcements of 3rd Pioneers while at Sea on 14th June, 1916. He disembarked at Plymouth, England on 26th July, 1916.

3rd Pioneer Battalion

The 3rd Pioneer Battalion was an Australian infantry and light engineer unit raised for service during the First World War as part of the all volunteer Australian Imperial Force (AIF). Formed in Victoria in March 1916, the battalion subsequently undertook further training in the United Kingdom before arriving in France in late 1916. It later served on the Western Front in France and Belgium until the end of the war.

The 3rd Pioneers were raised in Victoria, in March 1916, from volunteers drawn from Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia and was subsequently assigned to the 3rd Division.

Trained as infantrymen, the pioneers were tasked with light combat engineer functions in the field, with a large number of personnel possessing trades from civilian life. The concept had existed within the British Indian Army before the war, but was adopted by the Australian Army in early 1916 to meet a need for troops with construction and engineering skills to assist with digging trenches, labouring, constructing strong points and undertaking battlefield clearance. As such, they were designated as pioneer units. At the same time, they could be pressed into the line to fight alongside regular infantry where required.

A total of five pioneer battalions were raised by the AIF during the war, with one being assigned to each of the five infantry divisions that the Australians deployed to the battlefield in France and Belgium. The battalions consisted of four companies, under a headquarters company. To identify the 3rd Pioneer Battalion's personnel, they were issued with a purple and white Unit Colour Patch. The colours were in common with other Australian pioneer battalions, while the horizontal oval shape denoted that the unit was part of the 3rd Division.

The battalion's first commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel Robert Law, and upon establishment it was decided that the unit would be an "all States" unit, meaning that personnel would not just be drawn exclusively from one particular state, but would instead draw recruits from all around Australia. The headquarters and 'A' Company were recruited from Victoria, and was established at Ascot Vale, before moving to Campbellfield in March, while 'B' Company was composed of New South Welshmen, 'C' Company came from Queensland and 'D' Company was a composite sub-unit drawn from South Australia and Western Australia. After the sub-units had formed in their home locations – Liverpool, Bathurst, Brisbane, Blackboy Hill, and Adelaide – the battalion began concentrating at Campbellfield in April 1916.

Detailed training began at Campbellfield shortly after concentration and in May the battalion marched through the streets of Melbourne, before being presented with its unit colour. They were subsequently laid up at St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne prior to embarkation. They departed Australia on the transport *Wandilla* on 6 June 1916, and

endured a seven-week voyage to the United Kingdom, sailing via Cape Town. After arriving in the United Kingdom, the battalion subsequently concentrated with the rest of the 3rd Division around Larkhill on Salisbury Plain, in Wiltshire. Between July and November 1916, the 3rd Pioneers carried out intensive training to prepare them for their arrival on the Western Front. Finally, on 25 November the battalion entrained at Amesbury bound for Southampton from where they were ferried across the English Channel to Le Havre.

(Pioneer Battalion information from Wikipedia)

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 Brown Wood proceeded overseas to France via Southampton, England on 24th November, 1916.

Private William Brown Wood was sent sick to Hospital on 25th December, 1916. He was admitted to 10th Australian Field Ambulance on 25th December, 1916 with Mumps then transferred & admitted to 7th General Hospital at St. Omer, France on 26th December, 1916. Private Wood was discharged on 14th January, 1917 – “*new disease supervening.*” The Casualty Form – Active Service recorded the following information for 14th January, 1917: “*Admitted 7th General Hospital N.Y.D.*” (Not yet determined). Private Wood’s progress report for 28th February, 1917: “*Appendicitis – dangerously ill.*” He was marked for transfer to England on 28th February, 1917 & embarked from Boulogne, France on 1st March, 1917 on Hospital Ship *Princess Elizabeth* with Appendix Abscess.

Private William Brown Wood was admitted to 3rd Australian General Hospital, Brighton, Sussex, England (later known as Kitchener Military Hospital) on 2nd March, 1917 with Appendix Abscess – slight. He was reported to be still in Hospital on 21st July, 1917.



Private William Brown Wood died at 6.45 am on 21st October, 1917 at Kitchener Military Hospital, Brighton, Sussex, England from Acute Appendicitis with Abscess & Septic Broncho Pneumonia.

A death for William B. Wood, aged 24, was registered in the December quarter, 1917 in the district of Brighton, Sussex, England.

Private William Brown Wood was buried at 2 pm on 24th October, 1917 in Brighton City (Bear Road) Cemetery, East Sussex, England – Plot number ZIF. 105 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Private William Brown Wood - *Coffin was good polished Elm. The deceased soldier was accorded a*

Military Funeral. Firing Party was supplied by R.F.A. stationed at Brighton and Bearers by Canadian Army Medical Corps of Kitchener Hospital, Brighton. A service was conducted at the graveside by Rev. H. Sherer, 69, Dyke Road, Brighton. (Acting Chaplain to Kitchener Hospital, Brighton). Three wreaths were sent by Misses Irwin Scott, 18, Denmark Villas, Hove. An oak cross will be erected by the A.I.F.

Names of relatives or friends present at the Funeral – (Cousin) Mrs Morris, 6 Sheaf Gardens, Sheffield and Mrs Jackson (cousin), 291 Frankend Rd, Kings Norton, Birmingham.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Private William Brown Wood contains several updates over several months into his condition. The following are a few of the letters contained in his file:

- *Ill May-June-July – He is in a dangerous condition and has been for four or five months. He has an abscess of the appendix and his abdomen is in a very bad state. Sister in Charges tells me she regards the case as very seriously but the patient does not, he often speaks of returning to Australia. He is naturally often moody and depressed but is very well cared for indeed. He has all sorts of luxuries provided by the Hospital and there is also a lady of Brighton Mrs Gordon Canning who is specially kind to him and sends in a dinner for him everyday and also provides champagne and port wine. I am sure everything possible is being done for him. The Red Cross representative visits him at least twice a week.*
- *You will have heard no doubt from the Central Office at Kitcheners that one of our Corps who has been seriously ill for some months and whom I wrote to the enquiry office about, has died i.e. Pte W. B. Wood 1607 3rd Pioneer Batn. Everything possible was done for him by everyone who came in touch with him, he had made quite a number of good friends in Brighton who were very kind indeed to him, and the sister-in-charge of his ward was especially good to him. She has written a long letter to his mother and I believe the chaplain has also done so.*
- *“...I beg to report that he was admitted to this Hospital from France 2.3.17, suffering from acute appendix abscess. Operations were performed, but recurrent abdominal abscesses continued. A subphrenic abscess former, bursting into the lung, causing septic broncho pneumonia, from which he died at 6.45 am 21.10.17...”*

Private William Brown Wood requested in his Will dated 24th May, 1916 that he bequeathed all his property both real and personal “*to my beloved father Robert Shaw Wood.*”

A War Pension was granted to Violet May Wood, Sunnyside, Seville P.O., Step-mother of the late Private William Brown Wood, in the sum of £2 per fortnight from 3rd January, 1918.

Mrs V. M. Wood, Fern Hill, Warburton, Victoria, stepmother of the late Private William Brown Wood, contacted Base Records on 30th March, 1922 stating “*I have just received word from my sister that you require information regarding my husband Robert Shaw Wood formerly of Sunnyside Seville & father of 1607 Private William Brown Wood 3rd Pioneers. I must tell you that my husband died 3 years ago & I am Willie step mother now of the above address. I will be pleased to forward you any information you require & also any communications you can give me in regards my Dear Lad affairs trusting to hear from you & I am sorry if I have caused for any inconvenience by not altering the address.*”

V. M. Wood, of Fern Hill, Warburton, replied to a communication from Base Records in May, 1922 of which an extract of her letter follows: “*...I wish to state here that owing to sickness & moving about I lost the paper for the memorial inscription. I will be very glad to fill in paper of you will be so kind has to send me along another one. I loved my Boy & reared him from little Boyhood till he left for the War & he recognized me has his mother. He never knew his own she died when he was 2 years old. I think I have been recognized his next of kin since his father death his eldest step sister is my Daughter & I think the world rather me have the Memorial Plaque. I was coming to town this week but have been to ill & I was going to call at the Barracks but I will be very pleased to fill in form if you will kindly send me one. I am so sorry this matter has been delayed but will see to it has soon as possible....”*

Base Records contacted Mrs V. M. Wood, Fern Hill, Warburton, Victoria, stepmother of the late Private William Brown Wood, on 17th May, 1922 stating that their memo of the 6th April last for which no reply had been received. The memo was sent concerning the fact that the late soldier's father was deceased & asked who was the next-of kin & specifically asked if there were *"any brothers, the eldest of them would be so regarded and his name and address should be forwarded. Should there be no brothers, the eldest sister would become the next-of-kin....The Memorial Plaque is now available for issue, but cannot be disposed of until the above information is received."*

The Department of Defence (Central War Gratuity Board) wrote to Base Records on 4th July, 1922 with the following information: " No. 1607, Private W. B. Wood (deceased), 3rd Pioneer Bn. With reference to your memorandum ...relative to payment of War Gratuity in respect of the services of the abovenamed ex-member of the A.I.F., I have to advise as follows -

1. Gratuity paid to Mrs Violet May Wood (Step-Mother)
2. Yes, brother James Wood "Cranford" State Street, Malvern, Vic.
3. Gratuity paid to the step-mother as a 'dependent'."

Base Records wrote to Mr James Wood, "Cranford" State Street, Malvern, Victoria on 21st July, 1922 stating *"I understand you are a full brother of the late No. 1607 Private W. B. Wood, 3rd Pioneer Battalion, and shall be glad to learn whether there are any good and sufficient reasons as to why deceased's war medals, etc. should not be handed over to his stepmother, Mrs V. Wood of Warburton, who seems to have distinct moral claims to them on the grounds that she reared the late soldier from the age of 2 years. I am holding the matter open for 14 days from this date when, if no reply is to hand, the mementos will be forwarded to Mrs Wood as they become available."*

James Wood replied to Base Records on 1st August, 1922 stating *"In reply to your letter of the 21st July last, I do not consider the War Medals of my brother the late No. 1607 Private W. B. Wood, 3 Pioneer Battalion, should go to my step-mother, for the following reasons:-*

1. *That I am a twin brother of the deceased.*
2. *That we were 11 or 12 years of age when my father remarried for the third time.*
3. *That my aunt Mrs Urquhart, Hilton Park, Bacchus Marsh, cared for both of us in infancy and when at the age of five years my father again married one, Kate McKinnon of Buninyong, Vic., who died about five years later. Two years after the death of his second wife, my father married Violet May Oldham, the present applicant for the medals.*
4. *I voluntarily waived my claim to the War Gratuity in order that my stepmother may benefit.*
5. *I was on friendly terms with my brother and am anxious to receive his War Medals, which under the circumstances I consider my due."*

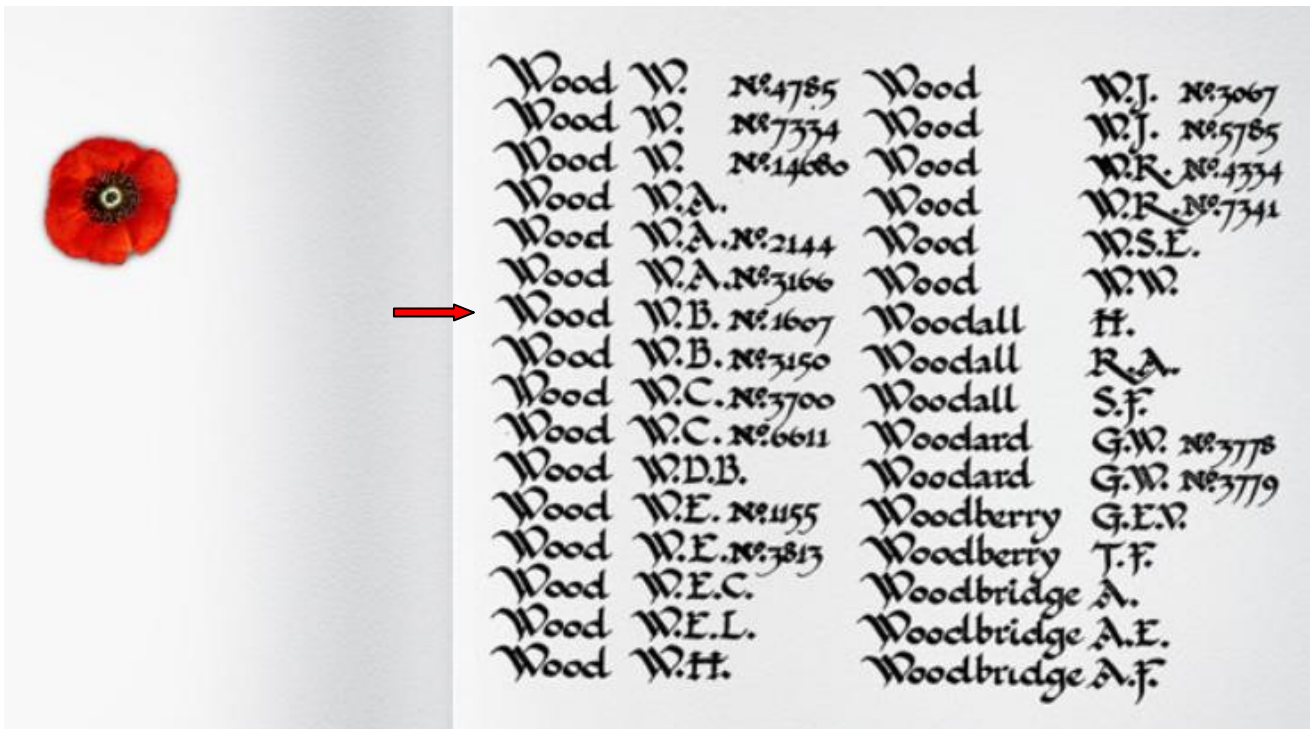
Mrs V. Wood, stepmother of the late Private William Brown Wood, was advised by Base Records on 10th August, 1922 that *"after carefully considering the whole of the surrounding circumstances it has been decided to hand over the late soldier's war medals, etc. to his twin brother, who is the person entitled to receive in keeping with the instructions under the Deceased Soldiers' Estates Act of 1918."*

Private William Brown Wood was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Wood's brother – Mr J. Wood, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent September, 1922 & Plaque sent June, 1923).

James Wood, twin brother of the late Private William Brown Wood, advised Base Records on 19th October, 1922 that his address had changed from State St, Malvern to Glen View, Iris Rd, South Camberwell.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private W. B. Wood – service number 1607, of 3rd Australian Pioneers. No family details are listed.

W. B. Wood is remembered in the Book of Remembrance at the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne, Victoria.



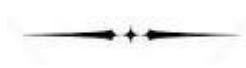
Private W. B. Wood is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 173.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(77 pages of Private William Brown Wood'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

AUSTRALIAN CASUALTIES

SERIOUSLY ILL

Private W. B. Wood, Seville

(Dandenong Advertiser and Cranbourne, Berwick and Oakleigh Advocate, Victoria – 1 March, 1917)

Australians and the War

Died of Illness

Pte W. B. Wood, son of Mr and Mrs Wood, of Seville, has died of illness. He enlisted on March, 1916, and sailed with the 3rd Australian Pioneer Battalion on 6th June, 1916. After seeing service in France he was admitted to hospital in France with appendicitis on Christmas day, and died in the Kitchener Hospital, Brighton, on 21st October/ Before he enlisted he served for a few years with the 34th Engineers' Corps.

(The Age, Melbourne, Victoria – 15 November, 1917)

The 354th CASUALTY LIST

DIED OF ILLNESS

Private W. B. Wood, Seville

(*The Mildura Cultivator*, Victoria – 24 November, 1917)

William Brown Wood is remembered on his parents' headstone in St. Kilda Cemetery, Victoria.





Also

WILLIAM BROWN WOOD

Son Of Above

Died O. A. S. 21st Oct 1917

Brighton, England, Aged 24 Years

A Life Made Beautiful By Kindly Deeds

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 30th August, 1921 to Mr R. S. Wood, Sunnyside Farm, Post Office, Seville, Victoria advised that a letter from the Defence Dept. concerning an inscription on the headstone of his son, the late Private W. B. Wood, 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.

Base Records contacted Mrs V. Wood, Fern Hill, Warburton, Victoria, on 30th June, 1922 acknowledging receipt of the Memorial "A" from completed in respect of her stepson, the late No. 1604 Private W. B. Wood, 3rd Pioneer Battalion, but desired to "point out that unfortunately the personal inscription chosen for the grave headstone was in excess of the limit imposed by the Imperial War Grave Commission, which restricted the number of letters (and spaces) to 66 on account of limits of space. A total number of 76 letters (including spaces between words) is involved in the epitaph:- "To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die, loved and remembered at home." and it will

be necessary for you to curtail this to some extent or submit a shorter verse. Kindly arrange to have the matter attended to at your earliest convenience, as it is desired to advise the overseas authorities of your wishes in this connection by the next outgoing mail."

Private W. B. Wood does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Brighton City (Bear Road) Cemetery, East Sussex, England

The cemetery is on the Lewes road. It was opened in 1857, and now covers 44 acres. It climbs the hill Eastward, crossing a public road. A War Cross stands in the cemetery.

There are 275 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war and a further 102 of the 1939-1945 war commemorated in this site. The 1939-45 commemorations include 3 unidentified Merchant seamen and 1 unidentified British soldier. There are also 40 Foreign National war burials here and 4 non-war service burials.

(Information from CWGC)



(Photos by julia&keld – Find a Grave)



(Photo from CWGC)

Photo of Private W. B. Wood's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Brighton City (Bear Road) Cemetery, East Sussex, England.



(Photo by Terry Denham)



(Photo from CWGC)