

Compton Chamberlayne War Graves



Lest we Forget

World War I



1725 PRIVATE

W. E. RILEY

60th BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

22nd MAY, 1917

*Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte W E Riley is located in Middle Row
Grave Plot # 6 of Compton Chamberlayne Cemetery*

William Ernest Riley was born at Glenferrie, Victoria in 1898. He was a Driver, single & aged 18 years, from Boundary Road, Burwood, Victoria when he enlisted on 24th February, 1916 with the 15th Infantry Brigade, 60th Infantry Battalion, 2nd Reinforcements of the Australian Army. His service number was 1725 & his religion was Methodist. His next of kin was listed as his Guardian – William Dunstan of Burwood Boys' Home, Boundary Road, Burwood, Victoria as his parents were deceased.

Pte William Ernest Riley embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Port Lincoln (A17)* on 4th May, 1916 & disembarked at Suez on 10th June, 1916 & posted to the 5th Division at Tel-el-Kebir, Egypt.

On 21st August, 1916, Pte Riley was marched into 15th Training Battalion at Codford, in the Salisbury Plain area, in the county of Wiltshire.

Pte Riley was admitted to Codford Group Clearing Hospital in the county of Wiltshire on 31st October, 1916 for 1 day suffering influenza. He was then transferred to Military Hospital at Sutton Veny on 1st November, 1916 & discharged on 13th November, 1916.

On 15th May, 1917 Pt Riley was admitted to the Military Hospital at Fovant & was treated for Haematuria.

Pte William Ernest Riley died at 11.45 p.m. on 22nd May, 1917 at the Military Hospital at Fovant. A post mortem was conducted & the examination showed "old standing tubercular disease of the kidney (Left) & miliary tubercularis in right kidney & in both lungs." Cause of death was decided as General Tuberculosis. A death for William E Riley, aged 19 years, was registered in the June quarter, 1917 in the district of Wilton, Wiltshire. (Fovant was a parish in the district of Wilton).

A Statutory Declaration submitted to the Supreme Court of Victoria, in regards to the Probate of Pte Riley, written by Alexander Soul, an Officer of the Y.M.C.A. at Hurdcott, recounts his interaction with Pte Riley while he was in the Military Hospital at Fovant –

That about the hour of nine o'clock on the night of the 22nd May, 1917 I was requested by the Matron of the Military Hospital, Fovant England to interview William Ernest Riley Private number 1725 of the 59th Battalion who was then a patient.....

The said deceased appeared to be in a very critical condition but was quite conscious and intelligent and apparently knowing that the chances of his ultimate recovery were hopeless gave me the following directions as his last wishes in case of his deceased:-

He desired that the sum of £24.5.5 the amount in his possession when he entered the said hospital should be forwarded to Mrs Jones of 30 Union Street, Kew in the said state for her own use as she had nursed him during an illness, he also desired that the whole of monies due to him on his paybook should be forwarded to Miss P Halligan of 611 Sabestable Street, Ballarat in the said state for her own use and he further desired that the whole of his deferred pay should be forwarded to Me W H Dunstan of "The Burboys" Burwood in the said state for the use of the Burwood Boys Home, and the said deceased informed me that he was an orphan and had been brought up at the said Home.

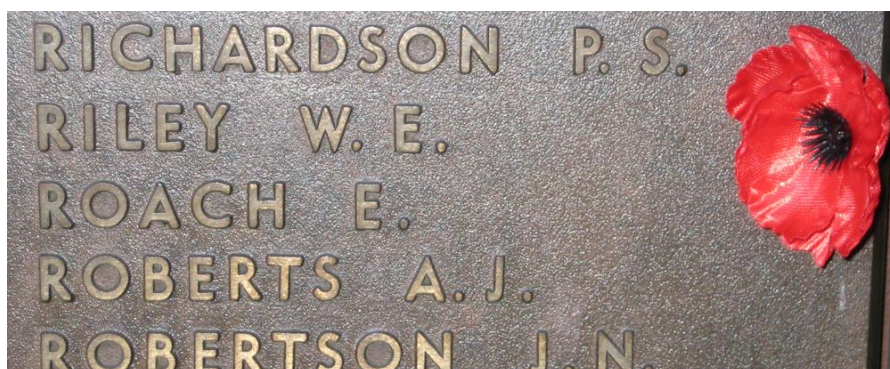
No other person was present at the bedside of the said deceased when he confided to me his wishes as set outand the said deceased died about 5 hours later.

A letter from the Military Hospital at Fovant, dated 10.9.17, regarding the death of Pte W E Riley answering a request from a Miss Pearl Halligan of Ballarat –
Died of Illness

Was admitted into Hospital on the 15.5.17, Complaining of severe pain in back etc., he did not react to any treatment he was diagnosed General Tuberculosis. Everything possible was done for him but without avail. He died 22.5.17 and was buried at Compton Chamberlayne. He informed us he had no next of kin alive or I should have written to them.

Pte William Ernest Riley was buried on 24th May, 1917 at Compton Chamberlayne cemetery. From the burial report of Pte Riley – Coffin was oak polished, with Brass Mounted & name plate. Pte Riley was given a Military Funeral.

Private W E Riley is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 170.



(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

Pte William Ernest Riley was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. Pte Riley's British War Medal, a Memorial Scroll (July, 1922) & Memorial Plaque (August, 1922) were sent to Mr R C Edwards at the Burwood Boys Home.

(69 pages of Pte W E Riley's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives

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THE 310th CASUALTY LIST

The Victorian Names are –

Died of Illness

Private W. E. Riley, Burwood

(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – Saturday 16th June, 1917)

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** Included in Pte William Ernest Riley's Service Records is a letter dated 30th October, 1969 from the Office of the Public Trustee, Melbourne – "re Estate of William John REILLY (or Riley)" The letter states that the Public Trustee is administering the estate of the abovenamed deceased or Eltham, who died on 16th March, 1964.

"The Public Trustee has been informed that the deceased is an ex-serviceman from the 1st World War. Please confirm this.....

The Public Trustee is also seeking a certificate of the death of the abovenamed deceased's son, William Ernest Reilly or Riley who, it is believed, died on active service in the 1st World War. No details of his actual date and place of death are known but your assistance in furnishing the required certificate of death would be appreciated."

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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 at Compton Chamberlayne Cemetery. 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)

Pte W E Riley does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Photo of Pte W E Riley 's Headstone at Compton Chamberlayne War Graves Cemetery



Photo courtesy of Andrew Stacey