

# Durrington War Graves



*Lest we Forget*

## World War I



**7017 PRIVATE**

**W. HUMPHREYS**

**7TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**19TH MARCH, 1917 Age 35**

*In Memory Of The  
Loved Brother Of Isabella  
Of Melbourne*

*Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte W. Humphreys is located in Grave Plot # 225  
of Durrington War Graves Cemetery*

## William Humphreys

William Humphreys was born around 1882 at Collingwood, Melbourne, Victoria to parents Henry and Mary Humphreys. He was a 36 year old, single, Cook from 14 Sydney Street, Collingwood, Victoria when he enlisted on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 1916 with the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, 23<sup>rd</sup> Reinforcements of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 7017 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his sister – Mrs B. Fromer of 14 Sydney Street, Collingwood, Victoria (parents were deceased). William stated on his Attestation Papers that he had previously been rejected as unfit to serve due to a hernia which had since been operated on.

Pte William Humphreys embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Hororata (A20)* on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1916 & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 1917.

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 Humphreys was admitted to Fargo Military Hospital on 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1917 with concussion.

Private William Humphreys died at 5.25 a.m. on 19<sup>th</sup> March at Fargo Military Hospital, Wiltshire from Injuries – Concussion of the Brain.

A Coroner's Court was held at Fargo Military Hospital on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1917. Coroner F. H. Trethowan, Esq. enquired into the cause of death. The Court found that death was due to concussion of the brain, caused by his being accidentally knocked down by a car driven by Arthur Sydney Hughes. (See below)

A death for William Humphreys, aged 36, was registered in the March quarter, 1917 in the district of Amesbury, Wiltshire.

Private William Humphreys was given a Military Funeral and buried on 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1917 at Durrington Cemetery, Wiltshire – Plot number 225. He has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private William Humphries – service number 7017 as being 35 years old & served with 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of Henry and Mary Humphreys.

County of Wilts      INFORMATION of witnesses taken this twenty second day  
to wit.                of March one thousand nine hundred and seventeen at the  
Military Hospital Fargo in the parish of Rolleston in  
the County of Wilts before me Frank Henry Trethowan one  
of the Coroners for the said County touching the death  
of William Humphreys then and there lying dead, as  
follows:-

AND James Adlam on his oath saith, I am Constable, Wilts  
Constabulary stationed at Durrington. An accident was reported  
to me in the parish of Amesbury. As Coroner's officer I made  
enquiries. I found that as a result of the accident a man named  
William Humphreys a private in the 2nd. Training Batt: A.I.F.  
No.5. Camp, Larkhill, home address 14 Sydney Street, Victoria,  
Australia, age 36 had died at Fargo Hospital. At the time of  
the accident a private in the A.I.F. named William George Lorimer  
was in the deceased company. I saw him and took a statement from  
him which I produce.

The statement referred to

William George Lorimer. I belong to the 2nd. Training Battn.  
A.I.F. No.5. Camp, Larkhill. On Sunday 18th. day of March. 1917.  
I was coming from Amesbury to Larkhill about 9 p.m., in Company  
with Private Humphreys of the same Batt., about a quarter of a  
mile from Amesbury. I saw a motor car coming in the opposite  
direction with bright lights. I walked across the other side  
of the road and left Humphreys on the left side of the road and  
when the car passed I heard a bump as if the car had knocked  
something. I went back about 5 yards and saw Humphreys lying in  
the road, the car pulled up and the driver came back. Several  
other soldiers put him into the car and took him to Fargo Hospital.  
I should think the car was travelling about 14 to 15 miles an  
hour. We had been to Amesbury and had a few drinks but Humphreys  
was not drunk.

(Sgd) William George Lorimer.



AND James Michael Scanlan on his oath saith.

I am a Corporal in the 1st. Pioneer Training Batt. A.I.F. stationed at No. 26. Camp Larkhill.

On the 18th. March about 8.55 p.m. I was walking from Amesbury to the Camp about 60 yards the Amesbury side of the level crossing. I saw one or two people in the road. I went up and found the deceased lying in the gutter on my near side. He was breathing heavily, I took charge, put the man in the car, and took him to Fargo Hospital. The injured man had a bottle in his pocket. I do not know what it contained. His mate took it from him on the way to hospital.

(Sgd) J.M. Scanlan.

AND Hugh Camera Wilson on his oath saith:-

I am Lieut: in the R.A.M.C. stationed at Fargo Hospital.

On the 18th. March. 1917 the deceased was brought to the hospital and I saw him. He was then alive but unconscious. He was suffering from concussion of the brain. There was a wound in the back of the head. He died about 5.25 a.m. on the 19th. inst. without recovering consciousness. Death was due to concussion of the brain. His breath smelt of drink.

(Sgd) Hugh Wilson.

AND Arthur Sydney Hughes on his oath saith

I am a recruit being tested in the A.S.C, at GunnPark No. 301615  
On the 18th. March I was driving from Lark Hill to Amesbury I had passed the level crossing. I saw the deceased in the middle of the road. I swerved to the left to give the deceased more room but he lurched in that direction as well and stood in front of the car. The right mudguard struck him and knocked him down. I pulled up and went back. He was put in the car and I drove the car to Fargo Hospital. I slowed down when I first saw the man. I was going about 14 to 15 miles when I reached him. The deceased was walking unsteadily.

(Sgd) Arthur Sydney Hughes.

Severally taken before me (Sgd) F.H. Trethowan.

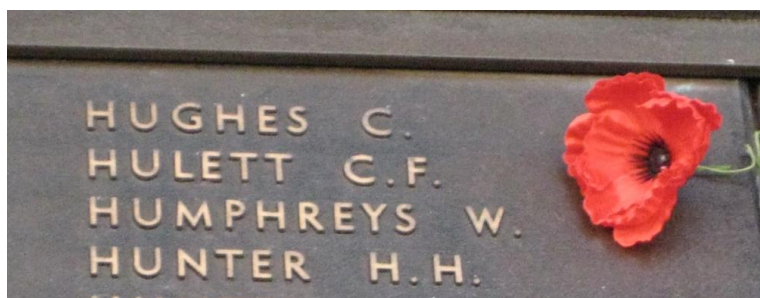
this 22nd. day of March. 1917.

H.M. Coroner for South Wilts.

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY  
6 SEP 1918

*Chas. L. Cunningham Esq.  
for J.P. Richards.*

Private W. Humphreys is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 50.



(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)



*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

Pte W. Humphreys was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Humphreys's eldest sister (nearest blood relative) – Mrs B. Fromer (November, 1921 & November, 1922).

Isabella Fromer, sister of late Pte William Humphreys applied for a War Pension was this was rejected on the grounds of "Relationship and dependence unproved".

(67 pages of Pte William Humphreys' 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 Reports

### CASUALTIES ABROAD

Private William Humphreys, eldest son of the late Mr Humphreys, of Collingwood, has been killed in action in France.

*(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria – Thursday 29 March, 1917)*

---

### AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES – 234TH CASUALTY LIST

#### DIED FROM INJURIES

Pte W. Humphreys, Collingwood, 19/3/17.

*(Bendigo Advertiser, Victoria – Saturday 31 March, 1917)*

---

### 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 Durrington War Graves 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)*

A letter from Base Records, dated 19<sup>th</sup> July, 1921, to Mrs B. Fromer advises that a letter from the Defence Dept. concerning an inscription on the headstone of the late Pte W. Humphreys 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.

Pte W. Humphreys does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*In Memory Of The Loved Brother Of Isabella Of Melbourne*



Photo of Pte W. Humphreys' Headstone at Durrington War Graves Cemetery, Wiltshire.



(Photo © Ian King - with permission)