

# Sutton Veny War Graves



*Lest we Forget*

## World War I



**5031 PRIVATE**

**A. ATKINS**

**10TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**19TH NOVEMBER, 1917**

*Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte A. Atkins is located in  
Grave Plot # 252. B. 19. of St. John the Evangelist Churchyard, Sutton Veny*

## Alfred ATKINS

Alfred Atkins was born at Geelong, Victoria. He was a 45 year old, single, Plumber from Grunthal, South Australia when he enlisted at Adelaide, Sth Australia on 30<sup>th</sup> December, 1915 with the 16<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements, 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 5031 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his friend – Mr C. Wilson of Grunthal, South Australia. Alfred Atkins had served 3 years with Ballarat Volunteer Militia.

Private Alfred Atkins embarked from Adelaide on HMAT *Shropshire* (A9) on 25th March, 1916 & disembarked at England. (Pte Atkins' Service Record file does not state the port he disembarked or the date.)

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 Alfred Atkins was admitted sick to Fargo Military Hospital at Durrington, Wiltshire from 3<sup>rd</sup> Training Battalion. He was discharged from Hospital back to duty at 3<sup>rd</sup> Training Battalion on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 1917.

Pte Alfred Atkins was classed as C1 on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1917. (Medical categories were introduced to ascertain the physical condition of a soldier) C1 being Fit for Home Service Only.

Private Alfred Atkins was declared illegally absent from 8<sup>th</sup> May, 1917. A Court of Inquiry was held on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1917 & no disciplinary action was taken.

Private Alfred Atkins died on 19th November, 1917 of wounds (cut throat - self inflicted) at No. 3 Camp, Larkhill, Wiltshire, England. He was admitted into Fargo Hospital dead.

A Coroner's Court was held at Fargo on 21<sup>st</sup> October, 1917. The Coroner's Inquest – Press Report for the Salisbury Times & South Wilts Gazette reads (from Pte Atkins' Casualty Form – Active Service): "*Held at Fargo Military Hospital 21-11-17. Coroner Mr F, H, Trethowan enquiry into the death of Pte Atkins who was found with his throat cut & razor in his hand. The Jury returned a verdict of – Suicide while of unsound mind.*"

From Pte Atkins Service Record – Certified True Copy of Report in *The Salisbury Times* and *South Wilts Gazette* – Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1917.

### **A Soldiers Suicide**

#### **Tragic Discovery In A Camp**

*An Australian soldier named Alfred Atkins was discovered dead at No 3 "A" Camp, Larkhill, late on Monday night, with a razor in his hand and his throat cut. The Police were communicated with, and the Coroner for South Wilts (Mr F. H. Trethowan) held an enquiry into the sad circumstances on Wednesday at Fargo Military Hospital.*

*P.C. Maslin, stationed at Bulford, said that on being informed of the discovery he went to the camp and saw the body. The man was fully dressed and had a razor in his right hand. There were no letters throwing any light on the matter, but there was a pay book which gave some personal information. His name was given as Alfred Atkins, AIF, and his religion was stated as Presbyterian. He attested on December 30th, 1915, and was 45 when he enlisted. He appeared to have drawn his last pay on April 21st, 1917. His home was in South Australia. Witness also found a pass giving Atkins 12 hours' leave, which was dated May 3rd, 1917, and he afterwards learnt that the man had been absent from his unit since that date.*

*Capt. Lucas, stationed at Larkhill, said that he first saw Atkins on Saturday, November 17th, when he was given a "shake down" in the hut witness occupied, for the time being. He seemed to be miserable and there was a vacant look about his eyes. The man was waiting for a warrant to go to Sutton Mandeville to join his unit. Witness had heard that Atkins had been sand-bagged in London. He told him his age was 64.*

*Sergt. Palmer, A.I.F, gave details as to finding the body at 11pm, on Monday, and said that it was then rigid as if Atkins had been dead some hours.*

*The jury returned a verdict of "Suicide while of unsound mind."*

A death for Alfred Atkins, aged 46, was registered in the December quarter, 1917 in the district of Warminster, Wiltshire.

Pte Atkins's body was sent by request of Unit to 2<sup>nd</sup> Training Battalion, Sutton Veny for burial. Private Alfred Atkins was buried on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1917 in St. John the Evangelist Churchyard at Sutton Veny - Grave no. 252. From the burial report of Pte Atkins - *Coffin supplied by Fargo Hospital, plain oak with name plate in brass. There are 18 other Australian soldiers buried in the same corner of Cemetery. A wooden cross is being made to erect on grave.*

Pte Alfred Atkins' personal belongings were returned to his friend Mr C. Wilson of Grunthal, South Australia. requested in his Will

A letter dated 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1922 to Officer in Charge Base Records, Melbourne from District Finance Officer, 4<sup>th</sup> District Base reads: ".....I have to advise that no claim for War Gratuity in respect of the services of the abovenamed deceased soldier (Pte. A. Atkins, 5031, 10<sup>th</sup> Btn) has yet been received, and our records state that there are no relatives of this man alive."

Private A. Atkins is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 58.



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

A. Atkins is also remembered on the Verdun War Memorial located on Onkaparinga Valley Road, Verdun, South Australia.



**Verdun Roll of Honour** (Photos courtesy of [Torie Lelas](#))



Pte Alfred Atkins was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War.

The CWGC lists Private A. Atkins, 5031, of 10th Battalion, Australian Infantry, A.I.F. No family details are listed.

(50 pages of Pte A. Atkins' 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) & National Archives.*



## Newspaper Reports

### THE ROLL OF HONOUR

#### 372<sup>nd</sup> CASUALTY LIST

##### Died

5031 Pte A. Atkins, Grunthal (20.11.17, cause not stated)

*(The Advertiser, Sth Australia – Tuesday 18 December, 1917)*

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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 St. John the Evangelist Churchyard at Sutton Veny. 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 Alfred Atkins does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.



**War Graves at Sutton Veny** *(Photos from CWGC)*



Photo of Pte A. Atkins's Headstone in St. John the Evangelist's Churchyard, Sutton Veny, Wiltshire.



*(Photo courtesy of Andrea Charlesworth 2012)*