

**Hartshill Cemetery,
Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire**

War Grave



Lest We Forget

World War 1



5402 PRIVATE

W. H. RAWLINS

26TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

29TH AUGUST, 1918 Age 30

Christ Shall Link

The Broken Chain

Closer When We Meet Again

William Henry RAWLINS

William Henry Rawlins was born in 1888 at Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England to parents William and Mary Ann Rawlins (nee Grocott).

The 1891 England Census recorded William H. Rawlins as a 2 year old living with his family at 6 Dean Street, Stoke upon Trent, Staffordshire, England. His parents were listed as William Rawlins (Groom, aged 24, born Cotwalton near Stone, Staffordshire) & Mary Ann Rawlins (Potter's Transferrer, aged 24, born Stoke upon Trent, Staffordshire). Also listed was William Henry's younger sister – Ann J. Rawlins (aged 4 months, born Stoke upon Trent, Staffordshire)

The 1911 England Census recorded William Henry Rawlins as a 22 year old Groom, living with his family at 15 Shelton Old Road, Stoke-Upon-Trent, Staffordshire in a 6 roomed dwelling. His parents were listed as William Rawlins (Store Keeper - Brewers, aged 44) & Mary Ann Rawlins (aged 44). William & Mary Ann Rawlins had been married for 24 years & had 5 children in total, 2 having since died. William Henry Rawlins was the eldest of the 3 children still living at home – Alfred Rawlins (Market Gardener, aged 18) & Emmie Rawlins (Dress Maker Apprentice, aged 15). Also listed on the Census - Ann Rawlins (Widowed Mother, aged 81) & Claude Hill Powner (Adopted Son, Clerk Manufacturers, aged 20).

William Henry Rawlins, Groom, aged 24, was listed as a passenger on *Otway* which had departed from the port of London on 13th September, 1912 bound for Brisbane, Australia.

William Henry Rawlins was a 27 year old, single, Clerk from Moore, Brisbane Valley Line, Queensland when he enlisted on 17th March, 1916 with the 7th Infantry Brigade, 26th Infantry Battalion, 14th Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 5402 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs Mary Rawlins of 25 Lewis Street, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England.

Private William Henry Rawlins was posted to No. 11 Depot Battalion on 21st March, 1916. Pte Rawlins was posted to 14th Reinforcements, 26th Battalion on 19th April, 1916 as Provisional Corporal.

Provisional Corporal William Henry Rawlins embarked from Brisbane on HMAT *Itonus (A50)* on 8th August, 1916 & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 18th October, 1916.

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.

Provisional Corporal William Henry Rawlins was marched in to 7th Training Battalion in England on 18th October, 1916.

Provisional Corporal William Henry Rawlins proceeded overseas to France via Folkestone from 7th Training Battalion, Rollestone, Wiltshire on 13th December, 1916 on SS *Victoria*.

Provisional Corporal William Henry Rawlins was marched in to 2nd Australian Divisional Base Depot at Etaples, France on 14th December, 1916. His rank reverted to Private on joining 2nd A.D.B.D. He was marched out to join his Unit on 17th December & was taken on strength with his Unit in France on 19th December, 1916.

Private William Henry Rawlins was taken to 8th Australian Field Ambulance on 8th February, 1917 with a sprained ankle. He was transferred & admitted to 5th D.R. Station. Pte Rawlins was discharged to duty on 26th February, 1917 & rejoined his Battalion on 28th February, 1917.

Private William Henry Rawlins was sent sick to Hospital on 5th March, 1917. He was admitted to 56th Casualty Clearing Station – P.U.O. (Pyrexia (fever) of unknown origin). He was discharged to duty on 9th April, 1917 & rejoined his Battalion in France on 11th April, 1917.

Private William Henry Rawlins was sent sick to Hospital on 27th June, 1917. He was admitted to 5th Australian Field Ambulance - P.U.O. (Pyrexia (fever) of unknown origin). He was transferred to D.R. S. (7 A.F.A.) on 28th June, 1917 then transferred & admitted to 56th Casualty Clearing Station on 3rd July, 1917. Pte Rawlins was transferred to Ambulance Train No. 2 on 7th July, 1917 & admitted the same day to 54th General Hospital. Pte Rawlins was

transferred to 7th Convalescent Depot at Boulogne, France on 17th July, 1917 then transferred to 10th Convalescent Depot at Ecault, France on 19th July, 1917. Pte Rawlins was transferred to Convalescent Depot at Trouville on 6th August, 1917 & admitted the next day with Trench Fever. He was transferred to 2nd Divisional Base Depot at Havre France on 18th September, 1917. Pte Rawlins proceeded to join his Unit from Base Depot on 23rd September, 1917 & rejoined his Battalion in Belgium on 25th September, 1917.

Private William Henry Rawlins proceeded on English Leave from Belgium on 2nd January, 1918 & rejoined his Battalion in Belgium from leave on 18th January, 1918.

Private William Henry Rawlins was killed in action on 29th August, 1918 in France.

26th Battalion

The 26th Battalion was raised at Enoggera, Queensland, in April 1915 from recruits enlisted in Queensland and Tasmania, and formed part of the 7th Brigade.

In early 1917, the 26th Battalion joined the follow-up of the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line and attacked at Warlencourt (1-2 March) and Lagincourt (26 March). For his valorous actions at Lagincourt, Captain Percy Cherry was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. On 3 May, the Battalion was also involved in the second attempt to breach the Hindenburg Line defences around Bullecourt. Later that year the focus of the AIF's operations switched to Belgium. There, the 26th battalion fought in the battle of Menin Road on 20 September, and participated in the capture of Broodseinde Ridge on 4 October.

Like most A.I.F. battalions, the 26th fought to turn back the German spring offensive in April 1918, and in the lull that followed mounted "peaceful penetration" operations to snatch portions of the German front line. In one such operation in Monument Wood on 14 July the 26th Battalion captured the first German tank to fall into Allied hands - No. 506 "Mephisto". In another, on 17 July, Lieutenant Albert Borrella was awarded the Victoria Cross. Later in the year the 26th participated in the great offensive that began on 8 August, its most notable engagement being an attack east of Mont St Quentin on 2 September. The Battalion's last action of the war was the capture of Lormisset, part of the operation to breach the Beaurevoir Line, on 3 October 1918. The 26th Battalion was disbanded in May 1919.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Memo from Lieutenant G. W. Francis, A/Adjutant for Commanding Officer, 26th Battalion, A.I.F. reads:

5402 Pte RAWLINS, W. H. 26th Battalion, A.I.F.

Killed in Action 29.8.18

"In reply to above-memo regarding No. 5402 Pte W. H. Rawlins I have to advise that he was killed in an attack on the enemy position on 29.8.18. His body was buried at Reference Map 62C.O.15.c and a cross has been erected over his grave."

Private William Henry Rawlins was buried in Eterpigny Communal Cemetery Extension, France – Plot number A. 3. and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Pte William Henry Rawlins requested in his Will dated 24th September, 1917 that any credit balance in his pay book be left to his mother – Mrs Mary Rawlins of 25 Lewis Street, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire.

Private William Henry Rawlins was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Rawlins' mother in England – Mrs M. Rawlins. (Scroll & Plaque sent November, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private William Henry Rawlins – service number 5402, aged 30, of 26th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of William and Mary Ann Rawlins, of 25 Lewis St., Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, England.

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W. H. Rawlins is remembered on the Moore Roll of Honour, located in the Moore Soldiers Memorial Hall, Lennox & Main Streets, Moore, Queensland.



Moore Roll of Honour (above) & **Soldiers Memorial Hall** (below)
(Photos from Monument Australia – John Huth & Diane Watson)



Private W. H. Rawlins is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 108.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(44 pages of Private William Henry Rawlins' 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 Notices

CASUALTIES

LIST NO. 435

KILLED IN ACTION

W. H. Rawlins, England, 29/8/18

(Daily Standard, Brisbane, Queensland – 19 October, 1918)

William Henry Rawlins is named on his parents' headstone located in Hartshill Cemetery, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England.



Rawlins Family Headstone (Photo by Alf)

In

Loving Memory Of

WILLIAM

Beloved Husband Of

MARY ANN RAWLINS,

Of Lewis St. Stoke,

Who Died Jan. 7th 1922, aged 55 Years.

Thy Will Be Done.

Also WILLIAM HENRY Son of The Above

Killed In Action Aug. 29th 1918,

Buried At Eterpigny Communal Cemetery, France.

Aged 30 Years.

Duty Nobly Done.

Also The Above

MARY ANN RAWLINS

Who Died Aug 30th 1934, Aged 67 Years.

Reunited

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)

Pte W. H. Rawlins' does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Christ Shall Link The Broken Chain Closer When We Meet Again

Eterpigny Communal Cemetery Extension, France

Eterpigny is a small village 2 kilometres south of Peronne on the D1017.

The Extension, where the war graves are situated, is behind the Communal Cemetery and is signposted from the centre of the village.

Eterpigny was captured by the enemy in March, 1918, and recovered at the end of the following August; in October, 1918, it was H.Q. Fourth Army.

The Extension was a row of graves, begun by the enemy in March, 1918, when United Kingdom and German soldiers were buried, and completed at the end of August when Australian soldiers were buried by their comrades. The German graves were removed in 1924.

There are now 27, 1914-18 war casualties commemorated in this site. Of these, 9 are unidentified.

(Information & photo from CWGC)



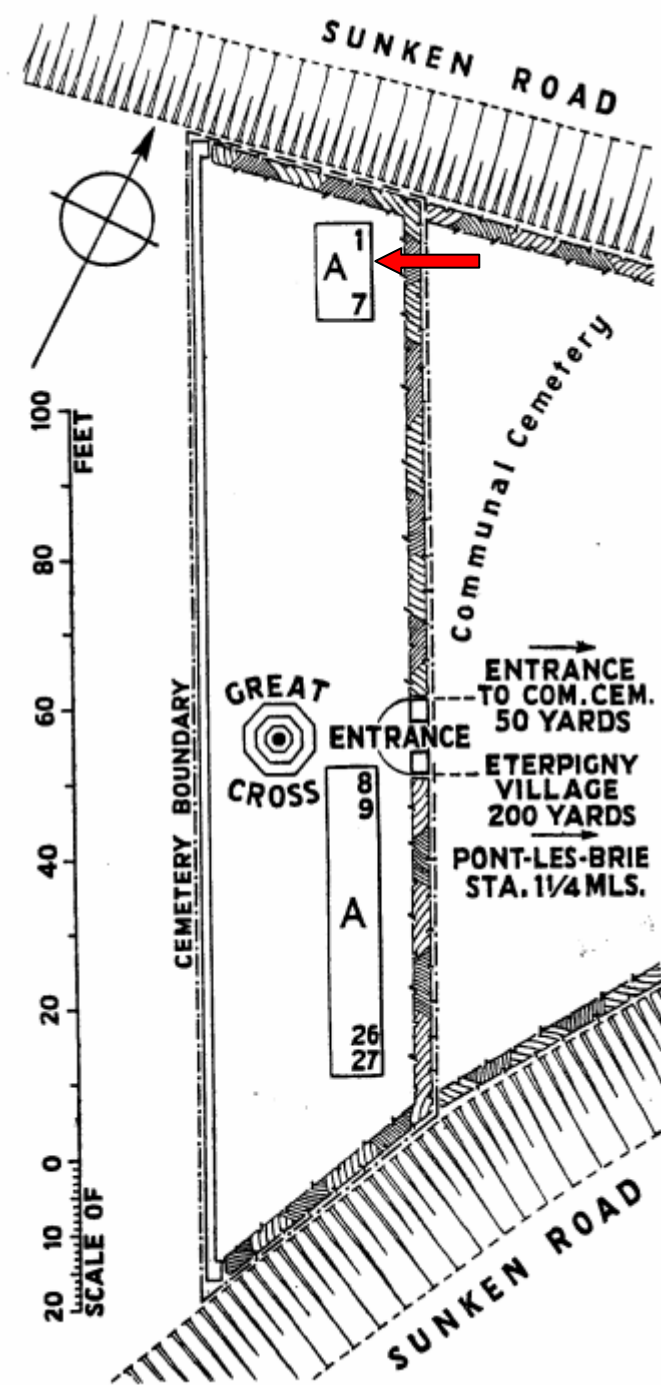
Eterpigny Communal Cemetery Extension, France (Photos from *In Memory* – Jean-Claude Graux (Fr))



Photo of Pte W. H. Rawlins' Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Eterpigny Communal Cemetery Extension, France.



(Photo courtesy of David Milborrow)



ETERPIGNY COMMUNAL CEMETERY EXTENSION.