

**Hitchin Cemetery,
Hitchin, Hertfordshire
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



E. C. WILLIAMS

AUSTRALIAN MUNITION WORKER

26TH JULY, 1918

Ernest Charles WILLIAMS

Ernest Charles Williams was born around 1869 in Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire, South Wales.

The following information in [] are possible details of Ernest Charles Williams' early life in Wales:

[Ernest Charles Williams was baptised on 9th January, 1870 in Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire, Wales to parents Roderick & Mary Williams.]

[The 1871 Wales Census recorded Ernest Williams as a 1 year old living with his family at King Street, Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire, Wales. His parents were listed as Roderick Williams (House Builder, aged 47, born Llanbadarn, Cardigan) & Mary Williams (aged 38, born Tunbridge Wells, Kent). Ernest was the youngest of 8 children listed on this Census (all born Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire, Wales) – Robert (apprentice Builder, aged 17), (Pupil Preacher's School (?), aged 14), Eliza M. (aged 12), Richard (aged 10), John (aged 8), Mary (aged 5), Arthur (aged 3) then Ernest. Three others were listed in the household – Mary Jones (Domestic Servant, aged 19) & two lodgers – John Arthur Murphy (Dental Surgeon, aged 32) & David Francis (Curate of Aberystwyth).]

[The 1881 Wales Census recorded Ernest Charles Williams as a 12 year old scholar, living with his family at 4 King Street, Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire, Wales. His father was listed as Roderick Williams (widower, Builder, Master employing 8 men, aged 57). Only one older brother was listed at home – Richard Page Williams (Jeweller & Lapidary, aged 21). Two others were listed in the household – Catherine Jones (General Servant, aged 20) & William Robert Hall, a Boarder (Reporter, aged 31, born Somerset, England).]

[The 1891 England Census recorded Ernest C. Williams as a 22 year old Commercial Traveller, living with his brother & his family at 18 Pickford Street, Stretford, Lancashire, England. Ernest's brother was listed as John Williams (Ironmonger's Assistant, aged 28) along with his wife Agnes Williams (aged 27) & their 8 month old son – Ernest C. Williams.]

The 1913 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Balmain, subdivision of Balmain North, NSW recorded Ernest Charles Williams, Carpenter, of 45 Cove Street. Also listed at that address were Llewellyn William, Mariner; Margaret Jane Williams, Domestic duties & Richard Williams, Mariner.

Ernest Charles Williams applied for enrolment as a Volunteer for Manufacture of Munitions in Great Britain. He was a 43 year old, married, Carpenter living at 47 Cove Street, Balmain. He listed only his wife as a dependant. The application form required a short statement of apprenticeship or training to which Ernest Williams answered: "*I served my apprenticeship o the carpenter & joinery work at the above named town (Aberystwyth) which is situated in Cardiganshire, South Wales & worked in different towns in England viz. London, Cardiff, Hereford, Manchester & came to Australia about 23 years ago.*" The application form required specifically where engaged and class of work during the past three years to which Ernest Williams answered: "*I have worked at Cockatoo Island, also for Messrs Norton Griffiths & Co. Contractors & for Dr. Robert Stopford, Balmain. Ship Painters & Dockers Union.*" Names & addresses of two personal references as to character – "*Mr John Storey, M.L.A. Balmain, Police Inspector W. J. Jones, Paddington.*" Ernest Charles Williams had also work at Clyde Engineering Co. as a Joiner for 12 months.

Ernest Charles Williams embarked from Australia on S.S. *Ulysses* on 9th May, 1917 & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 27th July, 1917.

Ernest Charles Williams, Badge No. 1917, was sent to work for P. & W. Anderson as a Joiner. Address listed - 42 Periwinkle Lane, Hitchin, Herts,. He departed from London at 10.30 on Monday 13th August, 1917 & started work at 6.30 on 14th August, 1917.

AUSTRALIAN MUNITIONS WORKERS.

No. 12569

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Name E. C. Williams Badge No. 1917

Name of Factory P. W. Anderson

Present Trade or Occupation Joiner

Postal Address 42 Periwinkle Lane
Hitchin. Herts

Left London in train at 10.30 o'clock on Monday 13th

Began work at 6.30 o'clock on August 14th 1917

Signature E. C. Williams 28.8.17

Date Aug 16th 17

A.M.W.O.—5000—10/7/17

Ernest Charles Williams contracted Pneumonia & was sent to Hitchin Hospital on Saturday 13th July, 1918.

Munitions Worker Ernest Charles Williams died suddenly at 6 pm on 26th July, 1918 at Hitchin Hospital from Septic Pneumonia following Influenza.

A death for Ernest C. Williams, aged 49, was registered in the September quarter, 1918 in the district of Hitchin, Hertfordshire, England.

The death certificate for Ernest Charles Williams has the informant listed as R. E. Williams, brother of 31 Penybryn Road, Gabalfa, Cardiff.

Newspaper Article (no date or name) located in Ernest Charles Williams' Muniton Service file:

HENLOW WORKER'S DEATH

The death took place on Friday at the Hitchin Hospital, of Ernest Williams, an Australian, who worked at Henlow. The cause of death was pneumonia, and the sad event evoked widespread sorrow among his comrades. The funeral took place at the Hitchin Cemetery on Tuesday, a large number of men attending by arrangement with the contractors, The first part of the service was conducted in St. Saviour's Church by the Rev. J. G. Williams, and the last rites at the graveside were administered by the Rev. G. B. Gainsford. The principal mourners were Mr J. Williams (brother) and Mr Jones; while the representatives of the allied trades included Messrs J. Kerr and J. Doyle (carpenters), H. French (bricklayers), R. Silvester (plasterers), R. Allen (scaffolders), F. Fish (labourers), J. H. Webb (painters), and Bentley (plumbers). The six bearers were: Messrs Stebbs, West, Coombes, Toombs, Teasel and Laing. The coffin bore the inscription, "Ernest Williams; died July 26, 1918; 49 years." Beautiful wreaths were sent by the following: Australian mates; Australian workers (two); Messes Stibbs-West and Coombes; joinery and machinery department; shop stewards; Robert and Mag (Cardiff). Mr George Kirby was the undertaker.

Munitions Worker Ernest Charles Williams was buried in Hitchin Cemetery, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, England, – Plot number SE. Extn. 773 & has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone.



Postcards of St. Saviour's Church, Hitchin where Ernest Charles Williams' funeral service was held

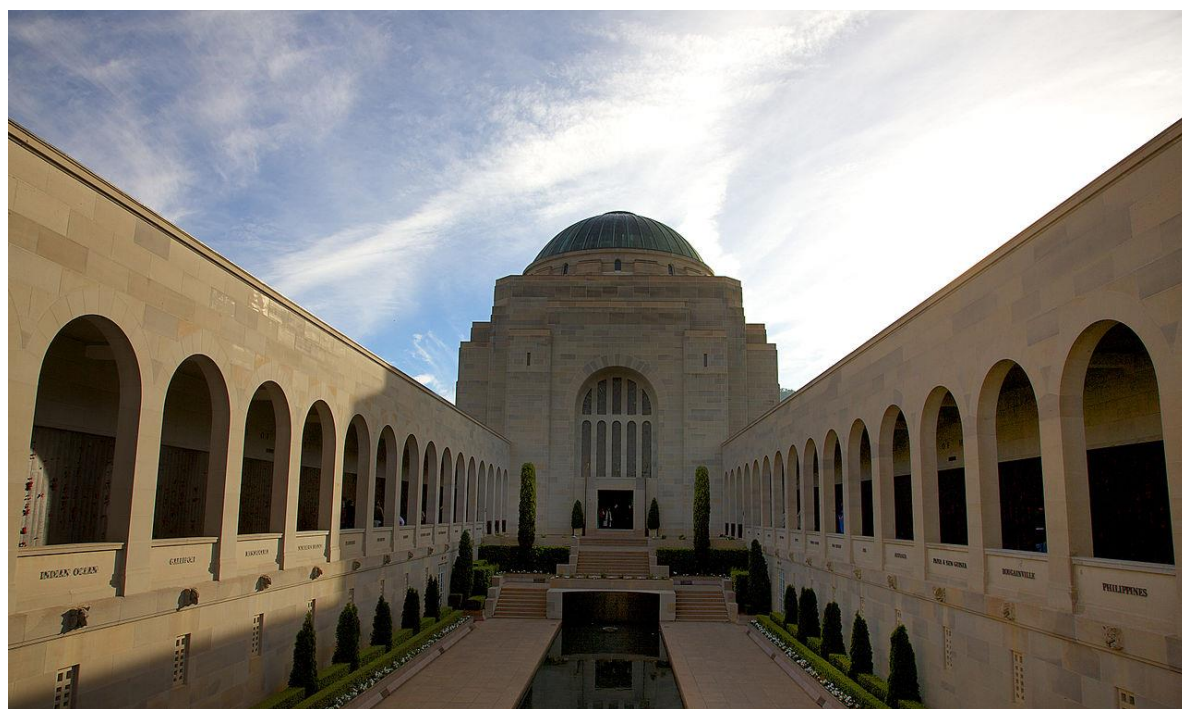


The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Worker E. C. Williams, Australian Muniton Worker. No family details are listed.

Australian Munitions Worker Ernest Charles Williams, number 1917, is remembered on the Commemorative Roll Book, located in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The Commemorative Roll records the names of those Australians who died during or as a result of wars in which Australians served, but who were not serving in the Australian Armed Forces and therefore not eligible for inclusion on the Roll of Honour.



Commemorative Roll (Photo from AWM)



Commemorative Area of the Australian War Memorial (Capital Photographer)

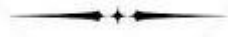
Australian Munitions Workers

Men enlisted under a joint Australian Commonwealth - Imperial Government scheme for providing skilled Australian workers to British war industries during the First World War. Under this scheme the volunteers would receive free passage to Great Britain, an allowance for travel time, a special allowance for the duration of service, and eventual repatriation to Australia. Married men also received a separation allowance, but were required to allot a portion of all their earnings to dependants. The men were expected to work in whatever industries they were directed to by the British Board of Trade, and under the prevailing conditions and wages for the duration of hostilities.

Government newspaper adverts appeared in August, 1916, and the first party of 76 workers departed Australia in September. Groups continued to be recruited and sent at intervals, with the eventual number of workers under the scheme totalling just over 5,000. Almost 1,000 of these had already been working in Britain under private agreements with large firms such as Vickers, and were brought under the conditions of the scheme. An additional 200 former AIF soldiers were also recruited in Britain. Initially only skilled workers were sought, however at the request of the British Government later groups included large numbers of navvies for general labouring.

These men were not members of the Australian Imperial Forces and did not serve in combat units, but were recruited to meet the shortfall in skilled labour that threatened many of Britain's key wartime industries including munitions. *(Source: Australian War Memorial)*

(30 pages of Ernest Charles Williams' First World War Muniton Worker's dossier is available for viewing on-line at the National Archives of Australia)



Newspaper Notices

CONTRACTORS AT LAW

Before Judge Rogers, in the Sydney District Court this morning, Ernest Charles Williams, contractor, of 45 Cove-street, Balmain, claimed £83 7s 6d from William C. Harwood, builder, of Gray-street, Carlton, alleged to be the balance due in respect of a contract for the building of a refreshment-room at Coogee.

The defendant pleaded never indebted, except as to £13 15s, which he paid into court in full satisfaction of plaintiff's claim; and, by way of counter-action, claimed £18 5s for work and labour done, which amount eh was willing to set off against so much of plaintiff's claim.

His Honour found a verdict for the plaintiff for £37 17s 6d, including the amount paid into Court.

(Evening News, Sydney, NSW – 9 March, 1908)

The newspapers at the time were encouraged not to report munition explosions or deaths through TNT poisoning as it would affect the morale of the civilian population and so reports in newspapers are virtually non existant. When the war ended the Australians returned home and life moved on.

MUNITION WORKERS

AUSTRALIANS IN GREAT BRITAIN

Melbourne, Thursday.

The Minister for Defence (Senator Pearce) announces that during the period from the inception of the schemes for the despatch of munition workers and navvies to Great Britain up to June 30 last, 2662 munition workers had been disembarked in England for employment on munition and war work. There had also been enrolled under the munition workers' scheme 124 men who had been discharged from the A.I.F. in England for that purpose, and two discharged A.I.F. men had enrolled under the navvies' agreement, making the total number of men engaged in work in Great Britain under both these schemes 4,998. Of this number 384 men had returned to Australia – the majority on account of ill-health. There had been 23 deaths. The agreement of 38 men had been cancelled for disciplinary and other reasons. Six of the men had enlisted in the A.I.F., in England, five men had enlisted in the Royal Navy, and nine men had enlisted in the British Army, leaving the total number of men still in England under the Commonwealth agreement as 4,533. In addition these men were registered on the index held in Australia House 674 Australian munition workers who proceeded to Great Britain under private contract prior to the inauguration of the Commonwealth scheme. Of the men still in England on June 30, 1918, 87 were waiting return up to that date, 152 men had proceeded to France to engage in special work, and 107 of them had returned again to England. Australian munition workers were employed at 409 different firms or centres, and navvies at 192, and the value of the output produced by the labour of these men was estimated at £6,000,000.

Provision for the payment of munition workers and navvies who proceeded to Great Britain on war work under the agreement with the Commonwealth Government is made in an amendment to the war financial regulations issued today. Munition workers and navvies are to be provided with a free passage from Australia to Great Britain and back. In the case of munition workers a dependants' allowance of 25s a week, with allowances for children, will be made for the first eight weeks after embarkation. Subsequently the allowance will be 20s. Separation allowances equal to that paid in the case of a private in the A.I.F. will be paid to dependants.

(Examiner, Launceston, Tasmania – 30 August, 1918)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Munition Worker's End

Word has been received by Mrs E. C. Williams, of 26 Stephen-street, Balmain, that her husband, Mr E. C. Williams, died in Hitchin Hospital, England from septic pneumonia, following influenza on July 26. He left Sydney on May 10, 1917, as a munition worker.

(The Sun, Sydney, NSW – 18 August, 1918)

MUNITION WORKER'S DEATH

Mrs E. C. Williams, 26 Stephen-street Balmain, has received news that her husband, Mr E. C. Williams, late of 47 Cove-street, Balmain, died on July 26 at Hitchin Hospital, England, from septic pneumonia, following influenza. He volunteered as a munition worker, and sailed from Sydney on May 18. He was a carpenter by trade, and had worked on many of the principal buildings in Sydney.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 8 October, 1918)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) honours the 1,700,000 men and women of the forces of the Commonwealth who died in the two world wars and ensures that their memory is never forgotten. The applicable periods of consideration are 4 August 1914 to 31 August 1921 for the First World War and 3 September 1939 to 31 December 1947 for the Second World War.

The Commission's principles:

- Each of the dead should be commemorated by name on the headstone or memorial
- Headstones and memorials should be permanent
- Headstones should be uniform
- There should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed

During both WW1 (& WW2) a number of Commonwealth civilian organisations were accepted by the military as qualifying for war grave status.

Members of the Recognised Civilian Organisations had to meet two additional criteria not required by military casualties.

1. Their death had to be caused by war actions or the increased threat caused by war and
2. They had to be on duty at the time of their death - being posted overseas counted as 'being on duty'.

The Australian government deemed that their War and Munitions Workers (men and women) qualified for war grave treatment as they were recruited as a body and were posted overseas for the war effort. Some of their CWGC entries show a 'service number' indicating that they were an organised body. All but one of these casualties are buried in the UK - the other being in France.

Hitchin Cemetery, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, England

Hitchin Cemetery, Hitchin, Hertfordshire contains 61 Commonwealth War Graves – 31 relating to World War 1 & 30 from World War 2.



Hitchin Cemetery (Photo courtesy of Edward Finch 2022)



Hitchin Cemetery (Photo above courtesy of Edward Finch 2022; below from CWGC)



Photo of Munition Worker E. C. Williams' Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Hitchin Cemetery, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, England.



(Photos courtesy of Edward Finch 2022)

