

Hurdcott Death



Lest we Forget

World War I



773 PRIVATE

H. E. WEBB

AUSTRALIAN MACHINE GUN CORPS

26TH OCTOBER, 1918 Age 28

*HAVE MERCY UPON HIM O LORD
AND LET THY LIGHT
SHINE UPON HIM*

*Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte H. E. Webb is located in
Fovant (St. George) Churchyard*

Herbert Edward WEBB

Herbert Edward Webb was born in Brisbane, Queensland to parents Michael & Elizabeth Nuitt Webb. His birth was registered in 1890.

Herbert Edward Webb was a 26 years & 7 months old Brickmaker from Mary Street, South East Bundaberg, Queensland when he enlisted at Townsville, Queensland on 24th January, 1917 with the 7th Machine Gun Company, 14th Reinforcements of the Australian Army. His service number was 773 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Olive Webb.

Herbert Edward Webb married Olive Stokes on 12th February, 1917, at Presbyterian Church, Bundaberg, after he enlisted.

Pte Herbert Edward Webb embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Nestor (A71)* on 21st November, 1917 & disembarked at Suez on 15th December, 1917.

Pte Webb was then attached to Australian Camp at Suez from 15th December, 1917 to 30th December, 1917. He was then transferred to Alexandria, Egypt & on 24th January 1918 disembarked at Southampton, England.

Pte Webb was marched in to Sutton Veny, Wiltshire on 24th January, 1918 & transferred to 9th Battalion from 7th Machine Gun Company.

Pte Webb proceeded overseas to France on 15th April, 1918 & marched in to New Zealand Infantry & General Base Depot at Etaples, France. On 18th April, 1918 Pte Webb was transferred to 1st Australian Machine Gun Corps.

Pte Webb was wounded in action in France on 26th August, 1918 & was admitted to Hospital with a gunshot wound to his right knee & invalided back to United Kingdom on 28th August, 1918.

Pte Webb was absent without leave from the 5th Southern General Hospital at Portsmouth, England from 7 p.m. on 3rd September, 1918 till 6 p.m. on 5th September, 1918 when he was handed over by the Civil Police. He was awarded 2 days forfeiture of pay.

Pte Webb was transferred to 3rd Auxiliary Hospital, Dartford on 30th September, 1918 & on furlough from 1st October, 1918 to 15th October, 1918. He was then to report to No 4 Command Depot at Hurdcott, Wiltshire on his return. Pte Webb was marched in to Hurdcott Camp on 15th October, 1918. A hospital report dated 16th October, 1918 reports that Pte Webb "Feels well, Knee wound negligible".

Pte Herbert Edward Webb was found hanging in woods near No 7 Camp Hurdcott on 26th October, 1918. A Coroner's Inquest found that he had committed suicide on 25th October, 1918.

A death for Herbert E. Webb, aged 28, was registered in the December quarter, 1918 in the district of Wilton, Wiltshire. (Fovant was a parish in the district of Wilton).

A Court of Inquiry was held at Hurdcott, Wiltshire on 26th October, 1918 for the purpose of "investigating the circumstances under which a man (unidentified and dressed in the uniform of an Australian Soldier) met his death." Ten witnesses were called for the Inquiry over the 28th, 29th and 30th October, 1918.

Cpl. P. Kerr No. 149 stated that Pte Webb "came into Camp on 15.10.18 and was in my hut up till the time of his death.....He seemed to me to be a peculiar man when he was in the Hut. He was very reserved and hardly ever spoke. I knew Webb about twelve months ago in No. 2 Camp, Fovant." Pte J. B. Sharp No. 3355 stated at the Inquiry about Pte Webb "I used to think that he was slightly off his head, as he was so silent and reserved." Pte G. Weir No. 3481 stated at the Inquiry "I knew No. 773 Pte Webb H. E. 1st M.G.B. He had the next bunk to me in Hut No. 3 I have spoken to him but found him very silent and reserved. I thought that he was peculiar because when spoken to he would not answer but only give a bit of a grunt." Medical Officer Capt. G. J. M. Saxeby A.A.M.C. stated that on examination of the body "In my opinion the man had been dead between one and two days. There were no marks of external violence and death was apparently due to hanging..... I came to the conclusion that death was due from hanging from the puttee round the neck..... There seemed no possibility of death from any other cause." The Court Finding was, on the evidence available, "that the man found dead is No. 773 Private Webb, H. E. of the 1st Battalion, Australian Imperial Force and that he met his death by hanging, attributable to his own hand." He had committed suicide by hanging himself on or about 25th October, 1918 in Pond Copse, Hurdcott.

Pte Herbert Edward Webb was buried at St George's Parish Churchyard, Fovant, Wiltshire on 31st October, 1918 at 3 p.m. From the burial report of Pte Herbert Edward Webb – Coffin was good, Polished Elm with Brass Mounts – *Deceased was buried with full Military Honours. The funeral was preceded by a Firing Party and Band from No 4 Australian Command Depot. Six of deceased's late Comrades acted as Pall bearers. 3 Officers and about 80 N.C.O.'s and Men from No 4 Command Depot attended as mourners. Headquarters A.I.F. Depots in United Kingdom were represented at the funeral.*

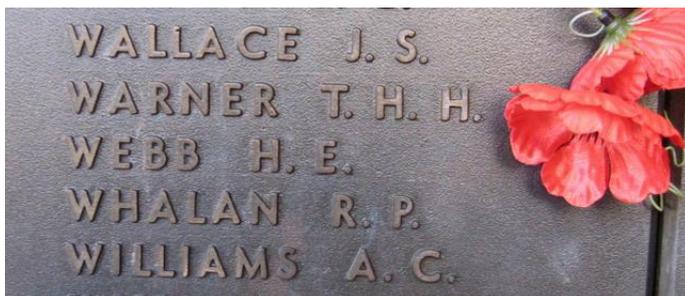
Mrs Olive Webb, widow of late Pte Webb wrote to Base Records on 23rd December, 1918 requesting a date of death for her husband & how he died. A reply dated 31st December, 1918 was sent from Officer In Charge of Base Records to Mrs O. Webb, Franklin Estate, Bundaberg, Queensland informing her that her husband "is reported as having committed suicide on 25.10.18, being found hanging in a wood near No. 7 Camp, Hurdcott, England."

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing File on Pte Herbert Edward Webb contains a letter dated 7th January, 1919 addressed to the O.C. No. 7 Camp, No. 4 Command Depot, Hurdcott from the Red Cross, on behalf of Pte Webb's relatives, asking for further information about his death. A reply from 12th Training Battalion A.I.F. states "*Died 25-10-18*". "*I am afraid that little information of the nature required can be supplied at this date. The facts are these:- Pte Webb's body was found hanging in Polygon Wood, near No 7 Camp on 25-10-18, and as he was never on the strength of*

this T.B., he was not identified for several days. At length three soldiers belonging to No 4 Command Depot (No 149. Cpl Keir. P. 25th Battalion. No 3355. Pte Sharpe. J.B. 44th Battalion and No 3481. Pte Weir. G. 54th Battalion came forward and positively identified the body as that of Pte Webb. It is possible that further information may be obtained from No 4 Command Depot to which the above mentioned man belong, but it is doubtful whether they are still here. I might add that no documents of any kind were found on the deceased. The money coins etc. were forwarded to Headquarters through the usual channels – 12th Training Battalion A.I.F.”

Pte Herbert Edward Webb requested in his Will dated 10th July, 1917 that his whole property & effects be given to Olive Webb (wife) of South Bundaberg, Queensland.

Private H. E. Webb is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 175.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

Pte Herbert Edward Webb was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were sent to Pte Webb's widow – Mrs Olive Webb (July, 1921 & December, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Pte Herbert Edward Webb, of 1st Battalion Australian Machine Gun Corps, as the son of Michael & Elizabeth Webb; husband of Olive Webb of Prospect St, Bundaberg, Queensland. His date of death is recorded as 26th October, 1918.

Pte H. E. Webb is also remembered on the Bundaberg War Memorial at the intersection of Bourong & Barolin Street, Bundaberg.



(Photos by Shirley & Trevor McIvor)

(94 pages of Pte Herbert Edward Webb'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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NEWSPAPER REPORTS

ROLL OF HONOUR

Casualty List No. 434

Wounded

Herbert Edw. Webb, S, Bundaberg

(The Brisbane Courier, Qld, 15th October, 1918)

ROLL OF HONOUR

Casualty List No. 448 - 449

DIED OTHER CAUSES

Herbert Edward Webb, S, Bundaberg, 25/10/18 (prev. rep. w'ded, C.N.S)

(The Brisbane Courier, Qld, 2nd December, 1918)

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 H. E. Webb does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Photo of Pte H. E. Webb's Headstone at St George's Churchyard, Fovant.



(Photo by Andrew Stacey 2012)