

# Durrington War Graves



*Lest we Forget*

## World War I



**4146 PRIVATE**

**V. R. BAKER**

**2ND BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**6<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 1917**

*Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte V. R. Baker is located in Plot # 243  
of Durrington War Graves Cemetery*

## Victor Roy BAKER

Victor Roy Baker was born at Palmer's Island near Clarence River, New South Wales to parents William & Mary Jane Baker (nee Maclean). His birth was registered in 1889 in the district of Maclean, NSW. Victor Baker was a 26 year old, single, Labourer from Yamba, Clarence River, NSW when he enlisted on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1915 with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Battalion, 13<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 4146 & his religion was Methodist. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr W Baker of Yamba, Clarence River, NSW.

Pte Victor Roy Baker embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Aeneas (A60)* on 30<sup>th</sup> December, 1915 & disembarked at Egypt.

Pte Victor Baker was transferred to 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1916 at Tel-el-Kebir, Egypt. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1916 Pte Baker was admitted to Field Ambulance at Serapeum then transferred to 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Ambulance with Mumps. He was then transferred to Ismailia, Egypt on 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1916. On 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1916 Pte Baker embarked for overseas from Alexandria & disembarked at Marseille, France on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1916.

On 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1916 Pte Baker was sent to Field Ambulance in France & admitted the next day to No. 7 Casualty Clearing Station with Influenza. On 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1916 he was admitted to Lahore General Hospital with nephritis.

On 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1916 Pte Baker was admitted to Hospital Ship *Brighton* from Calais, France headed for England with acute nephritis & Bronchitis.

Pte Baker was admitted to Hospital on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1916 with nephritis – “readmitted from furlough”. Pte Baker was discharged for return to Australia on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1916.

Pte Baker was taken on strength with 1<sup>st</sup> Training Battalion from Weymouth on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1916 to Depot at Tidworth.

Pte Victor baker was attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Training Battalion as Home Service Details on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1916.

Pte Victor Roy Baker was admitted sick to Fargo Military Hospital on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 1915 from 1<sup>st</sup> Training Battalion, Durrington.

Pte Victor Roy Baker died of Gunshot wounds to right chest (Self Inflicted) on 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1917.

A Coroner's Court was held at Fargo on 8<sup>th</sup> May, 1917 & the Jury's Verdict was *“Victor Roy Baker died on 6<sup>th</sup> day of May, 1917 at Fargo Military Hospital from the effects of a self-inflicted revolver-shot wound and so do further say that the said Victor Roy Baker not being of sound mind did kill himself.”*

A death for Victor R. Baker, aged 26, was registered in the June quarter, 1917 in the district of Amesbury, Wiltshire.

Pte Victor Roy Baker was buried on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1917 at Durrington Cemetery, Wiltshire – Plot number 243. From the burial report of Pte Baker - *Coffin was Elm*. Remarks of Interest to Next-of-Kin – *The Rector of Durrington is arranging for one of his parishioners to tend and care for this grave and he will gladly reply to any enquiries.*

The Coroner for South Wiltshire's Inquest into death of Pte Victor Baker –

*The Coroner for South Wilts (Mr F H Trethowan) held an inquest at Fargo Military Hospital on Tuesday concerning the death of an Australian soldier named Victor Roy Baker, whose home was in New South Wales.*

*Second-Lieutenant Howell said that Baker had been acting as batman for him and two other officers. He had been depressed for some time, but there was nothing in his behaviour to indicate that he might take his life. He was not supposed to carry a revolver, though it would be a simple matter for a batman to obtain possession of one.*

*Corporal Stevens, of the Australian Military Police, said that on Wednesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, he went to a revolver trench and saw Baker lying in it, with a revolver by his side, and suffering from a bullet wound in the chest. He intimated that he shot himself because he was suffering from venereal disease.*

*Captain Richmond, RAMC, said Baker was admitted to Fargo Military Hospital suffering from severe haemorrhage caused by a bullet wound, apparently self-inflicted. From what the man said he gathered that the disease from which he suffered had got on his mind. He died on May 6<sup>th</sup> from the haemorrhage.*

*A verdict of "Suicide whilst of unsound mind" was returned. (With thanks to [Salisbury Inquests](#))*

Mary Baker, mother of the late Pte Victor Roy Baker wrote a letter to Base Records dated 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1917 – *"We have been notified from Brisbane that our son Victor Roy Baker died of gunshot wounds received in action 6<sup>th</sup> May last, his death occurred in Hospital at Fargo. We are wondering if there is a mistake as he was not in the Firing Line having been reported as unfit for further military duties almost a year ago, he was then about to be returned to Australia but was one of eighty who were retained for Hospital orderly duties .....Would you kindly reply by return if the report is correct. Mary Baker"* A reply was sent from Officer in Charge of Base Records dated 19<sup>th</sup> June, 1917 informing Mrs Mary Baker that her son had died on 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1917 *"of wounds, self inflicted whilst not of sound mind."*

Pte Victor Roy Baker requested in his Will dated 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1916 that in the event of his death he gives £20 to Mrs Mary Jane Baker & £20 to Miss Muriel Baker & the remaining part of his property he gives to Mr. William M. Baker of Yamba.

Private V. R. Baker is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 31.



(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)



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

Victor Roy Baker is also remembered on his mother's headstone in Maclean General Cemetery.



(Photo from Australian Cemeteries Index)





(43 pages of Pte Victor Roy Baker'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) & National Archives*

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## Newspaper Reports

### **CASUALTIES – 173RD LIST**

NEW SOUTH WALES

ILL

Pte V. R. Baker, Yamba

*(The Brisbane Courier, Qld, Thursday 1 June, 1916)*

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### **CASUALTIES – 301st List**

NEW SOUTH WALES

Died of Wounds

Pte V. R. Baker, Yamba

*(The Land, Sydney, NSW, Friday 25 May, 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 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)*

Pte V. R. Baker does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Photo of Pte V. R. Baker's Headstone at Durrington War Graves Cemetery, Wiltshire.



(Photo © Ian King - with permission)



Pte V. R. Baker is also remembered on the Red Granite Obelisk Memorial to Men of 1<sup>st</sup> Training Battalion A.I.F. which is located in Durrington Cemetery, Wiltshire.



*(Photo by Dave Healing 2013)*



*(Photos by Ian King 2010)*





**Memorial to 1<sup>st</sup> Training Battalion A.I.F. at Durrington Cemetery**