



In Memory of
Private
WILLIAM ARTHUR BAUER

593, 7th Coy Australian Machine Gun Corps
who died age 21
on 20 September 1917

Son of John C. and Christina Bauer,
of Mary St., Toowoomba, Queensland.

Remembered with honour
LIJSSENTHOEK MILITARY CEMETERY



William Arthur Bauer was a young bank clerk working in Melbourne during the Great War. He seems to have waited until he had turned twenty before he could get parental permission to sign up; permission being necessary until age twenty-one. William came home to Toowoomba, where his parents, John Charles and Christina Bauer, were living in Mary Street, to obtain their written consent. He was their second son to enlist, signing up in Toowoomba on 31 July 1916, at the height of the Battle of the Somme.

William was born at Clermont in central Queensland and spent some of his youth in Melbourne, where he attended school and performed his compulsory military service with the 53rd Infantry at the Drill Hall in Hawthorn. He also attended the Toowoomba Grammar School. He was 5'10" tall and weighed 140 pounds. He had a fresh complexion, grey eyes and brown hair and was of the COE. He enlisted at twenty years and five months of age.

Due to his Victorian residency, William may have volunteered for the machine gunners, a posting that took him back to Victoria and training at Seymour. He sailed with the 10th Reinforcements of the 7th M.G. Company from Melbourne aboard RMS *Omrah* on the 17 January 1917. The voyage to England took 69 days. William was marched into camp at Belton Park in Lincolnshire, the home of the Machine Gun Corps, where he trained for another seven weeks before posting overseas to France. He reached his unit on 31 May. As William arrived at the front the AIF was preparing for months of heavy fighting in Belgium. Offensives at Messines and Ypres would continue until November. Casualties would be in the hundreds of thousands on both sides. On 7 June he signed his will, witnessed by Lieut Rodger Douglas and Pte Robert White. The Battle of Messines began the same day.

William was wounded in action on 20 September 1917 in an engagement that captured Polygon Wood near Ypres. He was evacuated to the 3rd Canadian Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) with "GSW, compound fracture thigh, right chest penetrating". He died the same day. In the fighting, Lieut Douglas, from Charters Towers, received the M.C. for his actions. He had led his machine gunners right to the front with the infantry; it was immensely dangerous, but effective, the day's battle being considered a success. The intention was to have the machine gunners assist in repulsing ferocious German counter-attacks once the front-lines were taken.

Several survivors of the battle gave statements to the Red Cross. Pte Irvine stated that several gunners were . . . **in a pill box just below Westhoek Ridge (when) a shell burst. I went in to get them out and found (3 men) were killed outright and Bauer badly wounded and died about an hour later.** Pte Cresswell said, **I saw him wounded at Westhoek Ridge, at Ypres. He was caught by a shell, fragments of which hit him about the legs and chest. He was taken away to the dressing station where he died several hours later.** William's older brother, Charles, was a corporal in 26th Battalion, who enlisted in Toowoomba where he worked as a boilermaker at the foundry. He had been captured by the Germans at Lagnicourt earlier in the year. At the POW Camp, *Gefangenenlager Soltau*, he received a letter from the Red Cross in London, in April 1918, informing him of the death of his brother. Charles survived and returned to Australia in March 1919.

William was buried at the Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery to the west of Ypres (grave XXIV.H.8). The cemetery holds the graves of 9900 British and Commonwealth soldiers who died in the battles at Ypres. After the war his parents received his medals and the symbolic items marking his sacrifice. He was missed by many; the files contain numerous letters from people in Melbourne inquiring about his loss.

External Links:

[National Archives of Australian Military Records](#)

[CWGC](#)

[Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing](#)