

Lionel William Bennett

Private Lionel William Bennett (also known as William Edward John Sargent)

3rd and 55th Battalions, AIF

Serial Number: 3006A

Born: 1893, Whiteside, Queensland

Died: 2 April 1917, Bullecourt, France

William Edward John Sargent was born about 1893 at Whiteside near North Pine, Queensland, the son of John and Esther Sargent. After completing his schooling, Sargent worked as a clerk with the Queensland Railways for three years. When he moved to the Mulgoa area around the beginning of 1914 he was employed by Mrs Hinks. He was a member of the Mulgoa Men's Club. They organized a send-off in his honour presenting him with a wristlet watch. At the same time, gifts were made to him from the local branch of the Red Cross Society.

Sargent enlisted on 17 August 1915 under the name, Lionel William Bennett. On his enlistment form, he noted his next of kin was his mother, Esther. Sargent was allocated to the 10th Reinforcements, 3rd Battalion and sailed for Egypt aboard HMAT Warilda on 8 October 1915. He remained in Egypt undergoing training until February 1916 when he was transferred to the 55th Battalion as part of the restructure of the AIF.

On 29 June 1916, Sargent embarked for Marseilles. His battalion entered the frontline trenches for the first time on 12 July and fought its first major battle at Fromelles a week later. Although in reserve, the 55th was quickly committed to the attack and eventually played a crucial role, forming the rearguard for the 14th Brigade's withdrawal. In early 1917 the 55th Battalion participated in the advance that followed the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line. Sargent was killed in action on 2 April 1917 and was buried as Bennett.

At the end of the war, Sargent's mother attempted to have his medals issued in his real name. Her request was denied as Army policy stated that medals were issued in the name under which the soldier served, unless changed by Statutory Declaration before discharge or death. However, the Army amended his service record to read 'Stated to be William Edward John Sargent'.

Memorial Details:

- Lebuquiere Communal Cemetery Extension, France
- Honour Roll, St Thomas Anglican Church, Mulgoa

Sources:

- [National Archives Australia](#): B2455 BENNETT L W
- Australian War Memorial First World War Nominal Roll
- [Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour](#)
- Penrith City Library Biography files