

Sydney William Bennett



Sapper Sydney Bennett
2nd Signal Squadron
Serial Number: 21660

Born: 22 December 1889, St Marys, NSW
Died: 21 October 1918, Damascus, Syria

Sydney William (Billie) Bennett was born on 22 December 1889 at home at *Bronte*, St Marys, the third son of James William and Mary Barclay (nee Shand) Bennett. James Bennett operated a successful wagon building trade in Queen Street. Young Sydney attended St Marys Public School and worked in his father's business as a blacksmith before enlisting.

Bennett enlisted on 26 November 1917, and on 4 December he was allocated to the Engineer Reinforcements, 2nd Military District Engineers. He then transferred to Signals as a sapper on 13 February 1918. Bennett embarked on the HMAT *Port Darwin* on 30 April 1918 and after disembarking at Suez on 7 June 1918, marched into camp at Moascar, Egypt. On 9 July, Bennett was posted to the Signal Training Unit and a fortnight later was posted to 2nd Signals Squadron, Australian Mounted Division.

On 1 October 1918, British and Australian troops entered Damascus. On 16 October, Bennett was admitted to hospital in Damascus, suffering from malignant malaria. On 21 October 1918 he was transferred to the Australian Divisional Receiving Station and died there the same day. He was buried the following day, alongside many, who had died from an epidemic of malaria, cholera and influenza that had swept through Palestine at the time. During the second week of October, more than 1,800 new malaria infections were diagnosed and pandemic influenza had broken out. During the summer of 1918, it became apparent that when Allied troops moved into former Turkish controlled territories they would be exposed to high levels of malaria transmission. In order to prepare for this eventuality mobile malaria diagnosis stations were

formed. After treating Allied troops they were faced with treating thousands of sick civilians and Turkish soldiers.

In his will, dated 23 February 1918, Bennett bequeathed his estate to his sisters Elsie and Bertha. His younger brother, Harold Victor also enlisted and served with the 20th Battalion and after being wounded, was invalided home to Australia in November 1918.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, St Mary Magdalene Anglican Church, St Marys
- Honour Roll, Victoria Park, St Marys
- Damascus West Military Cemetery

Sources:

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

TROVE:

- [Nepean Times 26 October 1918, Page 3 Col 7](#)
- [Nepean Times 2 November 1918, Page 3 Col 7](#)