

Mertoun Sydney Mills



Corporal Mertoun Mills
36th Battalion AIF
Z3A Australian Medium Trench Mortar Battery
Service Number: 1278

Born: 30 January 1895, Penrith, NSW

Died: 12 June 1917, Nieppe, France

Mertoun Sydney Mills was born on 30 January 1895 at Penrith, the son of Robert and Elizabeth Mills. The Mills family had the family business called Railway House, on the corner of High and (now) Lawson Streets. The building still stands, being one of the oldest buildings in Penrith. Mills completed his schooling at Penrith Superior Public School before attending Stott and Hoare's Commercial College where he undertook courses in typing and shorthand. At the time of his enlistment, his occupation was listed as a drapery salesman, probably in his parent's store.

Mills had been a corporal in the cadets as well as a member of the militia at Penrith for 5 years. He enlisted on 14 February 1916, following a letter of consent from his father. Mills left Sydney on 13 May 1916 aboard *HMAT Beltana* and arrived at Devonport, England on 9 July 1916. He, like most other members of the AIF, then underwent training on the Salisbury Plains.

On 23 November Mills was sent to France and served in the Flanders region before being sent to northern France. On 14 January 1917, he contracted mumps and was admitted to hospital. In February, he was again admitted to hospital with boils. He rejoined his unit on 16 February. Mills was attached to the Divisional Ammunition Column, whose role it was to bring ammunition and supplies to the battery positions. He was killed just after the Battle of Messines on 12 June 1917. He was having dinner when a shell hit a house and killed an old woman, a few soldiers, two children and a young girl. Mills ran to their rescue, and another shell hit and killed him.

Rev James McKee conveyed the sad news to his parents. Writing to the red cross for more information on Mills' death, Rev McKee stated 'Young Mills was a good boy – the only son of good parents'. In his letters home, Mills referred to meeting up with other Penrith soldiers

including Privates Rickards and Ausburn and his cousins from Maryborough in Victoria. Lieut. W J Burnett, with whom Mills was a great friend, wrote to his wife (nee Eisenhuth, of Mulgoa) – ‘I was very fond of him, and he died a hero. I know where he was buried, and will see that a cross is placed over his grave’.

Memorial Details:

- Nieppe Communal Cemetery, France
- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith
- Honour Roll, Presbyterian Church, Penrith
- Honour Roll, Penrith Superior Public School

Sources:

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

TROVE:

- [Nepean Times 14 July 1917, pg 5, Col. 1](#)
- [Nepean Times 21 July 1917, pg 2, Col. 4](#)
- [Nepean Times 15 September 1917, pg 2, Col. 5](#)