

## Henry Raymond Willis

**Sergeant Henry Willis**  
**7th Field Artillery Brigade, AIF**  
**Service Number: 18554**

**Born:** 1890, Penrith, NSW

**Died:** 16 September 1917, Zillebeke, Belgium

Henry Raymond Willis was born in 1890 at Penrith, the youngest son of Charles and Altamira (nee Dunkley) Willis. Charles Willis was a well-known building contractor around the district. Shortly before his death in 1904 he passed the business over to his son Alexander. The family lived in Castlereagh Street until about 1903 before moving to Alice Street Newtown.

Henry Willis, who was known as Ray, completed his schooling with his siblings at Penrith Public School and prior to enlisting, worked as a business agent and wire weaver. Three brothers and two sisters became teachers.

Willis enlisted on 15 November 1915 and was allocated to the 1/15 Field Artillery Reinforcements and was transferred to the 25th Field Battery a few months later. His brigade embarked from Sydney on *HMAT Argyllshire* on 11 May 1916, arriving at Devonport, England on 19 July. On 27 July, he was promoted to temporary corporal, with the rank being confirmed on 27 December. Two days later Willis embarked for the Western Front. The brigade including the 25th Field Battery went into action on 17 January 1917 at Armentieres.

On 25 August 1917, Willis was promoted to temporary sergeant with the promotion being confirmed on 16 September, the day Willis was killed in action at Zillebreke. At about 2 pm that afternoon, Willis was killed in the gun pit by a shell that burst between two guns. Two other members of the battery, Richards and Redman, died with him. Gunner Coleman stated 'Willis was well liked by his chums'.

Willis' family initially questioned the authorities about his death as they had received a telegram, dated 16 September 1917 from Willis saying, 'All's well'. It was sent the day he died. His mother's death in 1919 was put down to her grief at losing her son. Willis' brother Alexander waived his right to his war medals in favour of his sister Amy who was also sole beneficiary under his will.

### Memorial Details:

- Perth Cemetery (China Wall) Zillebeke, Belgium.
- Honour Roll, Penrith Superior Public School

### Sources:

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

### TROVE:

- [Nepean Times 3 November 1917, p.2 Col. 4](#)