

William Isaac Arnold

(2678)

18/02/1884 - 08/04/1917



Son. Husband. Father. Soldier
Lilydale, Tasmania.

By John Bennett for the Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize 2018

18th February 1884 – 24 June 1915 – Life before war.

William Isaac Arnold was born 18 February 1884 and was the first son of Isaac and Lucy Arnold.¹ In the year directly leading up to his birth, Isaac's father recorded the purchase of what would become the family farm on Second River Road, just north of the Lilydale township (then known as Upper Piper).² Isaac and Lucy had been living on their Upper Piper block since 1880, but the farmhouse that William may have remembered was not completed until the winter of 1886.³ During the years between 1889 and 1893 Isaac Arnold was developing an orchard on the property and by 1903 he and Lucy had 11 children, although it appears William had left home by this point to take up work in the Bisie Tin Mine in Derby.⁴ In 1904 William was listed as being injured while working in the mine.⁵

It is while working in Derby that William met Alice Louisa Gregson, who he would marry on 19 February, 1910. Alice was living with her family on Back Road in Derby at the time and it appears that William and Alice took over the family house soon after their marriage, as Alice's parents relocated to Winnaleah. William and Alice had three daughters; Gladys, Lucy and Olive, who were born in 1911, 1912 and 1914.⁶

¹ B Viney, *The Arnolds of Lilydale*, in , Bellingham [Tas.], B. Viney, 2007.

² Excerpts of Isaac's diary were supplied by Betty Viney.

³ B Viney, *The Arnolds of Lilydale*, in , Bellingham [Tas.], B. Viney, 2007.

⁴ in Pewterbank.com, , 2018,

<http://www.pewterbank.com/Tin_Mining_in_Tasmania.....34.pdf> [accessed 19 January 2018].

⁵ J Beswick, *Brothers' home*, in Gravelly Beach, Tas., R. and D. Beswick, 2003.

⁶ B Viney, *The Arnolds of Lilydale*, in Bellingham [Tas.], B. Viney, 2007.



Isaac and Lucy with their children c.1898. Image sourced from private collection belonging to B. Viney.





William and Alice's three daughters; Gladys, Lucy and Olive

25 June 1915 – 7 April, 1917 – Answering the call.

William enlisted at Scottsdale, Tasmania on the 24 June, 1915 and listed his trade as 'labourer'.⁷ William was appointed to the 8th reinforcements, 12th Battalion and embarked from Melbourne aboard the HMAT Makarini on 15 September 1915, nine days after his youngest daughter's 1st birthday.⁸ In early January 1916, William arrived a training camp at Tel-el-Kabir and, after being transferred to the 52nd Battalion, William found himself a member of the 4th Pioneer Battalion, who set sail for France in June 1916.

The 4th Pioneer Battalion arrived in Marseilles on 10 June, 1916 and reached Bailleul on the French-Belgian border a few days later. They were then sent further south to Armentieres, Fleurbaix, Canaples and Albert.⁹ The first significant combat action that William and the 4th Pioneer Battalion encountered was the Battle of Pozieres in late July and early August, 1916. The Pioneer's diary describes the battalion as taking shifts to maintain communication trenches near the Pozieres front line. This must have been incredibly taxing work and the battalion suffered 230 casualties.¹⁰ During the winter of 1916/1917 the 4th Pioneer Battalion were primarily engaged in training and the construction or maintenance of roads and tramways.

In the spring of 1917 the Australian 4th Division were preparing for an attack on the small village of Bullecourt. The battalion was moved to Bapaume in mid-March and were put to work constructing communication trenches, machine gun installations and completing tramways.¹¹

⁷ NAA: B2455, ARNOLD W I

⁸ B Viney, *The Arnolds of Lilydale*, in, Bellingham [Tas.], B. Viney, 2007.

⁹ NAA: B2455, ARNOLD W I

¹⁰ Total casualties for the 4th Division were 7100. (Bean CEW)

¹¹ NAA: B2455, ARNOLD W I

8 April 1917 - Death

It was on 8 April 1917, in the lead up to this now famous battle, that an aeroplane bomb, which killed one other Pioneer, killed William. The 4th Pioneers suffered only 10 casualties during April 1917, with only four combat-related deaths. William's daughters were 5, 4 and 2 years old and his Wife, Alice, would not learn of his death for over 3 months. It would take almost a year for his personal belongings to be sent home.¹² William was buried at Vaulx Hill Cemetery, near Bullecourt and remains there to this day.

9 April 1917 – 22 April 2018 – Remembrance and Commemoration.

Some time after William's death, Alice moved to Station Road, Lilydale, with her three daughters. The family's new neighbor was local bus driver Harvey Bardenhagen. Lilydale and its surrounds contributed over 300 men to the war effort and almost 60 never returned. Of those who did return, many carried significant mental and physical scars, and the Lilydale community would feel the effects for many years.¹³ Children living in the area at the time grew up in the shadows of men who were willing to give everything for their families, friends and country. This impact was evident when looking at enlistment numbers from the area during World War Two and is still visible today in the way the local community selflessly shares burdens and success.

The fallen of World War One are certainly not forgotten in Lilydale. In 2007 *The Arnolds of Lilydale* was published by William's great niece, Betty Viney, and in April 2018 a new memorial was unveiled, featuring photos of the men who gave their lives in The Great War, including William.¹⁴ This ongoing connection to a time long passed is testament to the town's willingness to give and the level of respect given to those who have made sacrifices for others.

¹² B Viney, *The Arnolds of Lilydale*, in, Bellingham [Tas.], B. Viney, 2007.

¹³ "Price paid went beyond call of duty", in Themercury.com.au, 2018, <<http://www.themercury.com.au/news/opinion/insight-towns-left-to-pay-a-price-that-went-far-beyond-call-of-duty/news-story/ee354dfea52e1f8d7b29ccb7c015f902>> [accessed 19 January 2018].

¹⁴ K Wilkins, "Lilydale RSL honours fallen soldiers with new WWI memorial", in The Examiner, , 2018, <<https://www.examiner.com.au/story/5355061/lilydale-rsl-honours-fallen-soldiers-with-new-wwi-memorial/>> [accessed 11 May 2018].



23 April, 2018 – Pilgrimage and Reflection.

Standing in Vaulx Hill Cemetery on this day, close to where William died, I'm surrounded by the cool French breeze, duplicate headstones and a somewhat motley assemblage of Tasmanians. At my hip is the headstone of a man time would never have permitted me to meet, yet who I've grown to feel some kind of connection to. Instead of the waves of sadness I had thought I might experience, I feel rolling breakers of certainty and validation. Over the past 101 years, millions of people have gone to great lengths to remember and commemorate people like William and I had done a great deal of wondering why. My conclusions, when I came to them, helped me understand many things about war, my country, the aforementioned motley assemblage and myself.

When William died, Alice lost a husband. Gladys, Lucy and Olive lost a father. The townships of Lilydale and Derby lost a worker, a friend, a brother and a son. But all of these people also gained an understanding of the value of giving something of yourself for others. This awe they felt in regards to the sacrifice of William and his fellow fallen, I believe, turned them into better people. People more willing to give, knowing that William will have always given more than they. This sense of empowerment and self-worth was a value that these people developed so

strongly, and felt was so important, that they passed it on to the next generation. They used stories of the brave and devoted heroes to inspire in their children a sense of community and selflessness. Such is the success of this passing on of values that the people, places and stories to which they are attached have maintained their significance.

So with William's headstone at my hip I feel the swells of certainty and validation as I look at six young, interested faces. It's not the body in the ground that matters, I'm sure. He can't know we are even here. It's the fragile art of selflessness that is being preserved by these white stones, and it looks like they're doing a stellar job to me.







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