

William John Crook
Private 64 and 878

William John Crook was born in Kilmore in 1892, the son of Thomas and Mary Jane Crook (nee Penman). At school he served 18 months in the cadets and then became a bricklayer.

William, known as Willie, was only 164 cms tall when he enlisted in Melbourne on August 18, 1914, soon after war was declared. He was living with his parents in Wonthaggi. During training Willie was a batman (private, 64) attached to Divisional Headquarters for two weeks. He embarked on the Orvieto for Egypt on October 21, 1914 where he was attached to 2nd Divisional Headquarters and 1st Anzac Headquarters.

Willie spent time in Alexandra, the Dardanelles and Ismailia where he was a groom to the Assistant Provost Marshall. In April 1916 he embarked for service in France and was attached to Anzac Headquarters in northern France. In June 1916 at Bailleul, Willie was ill with tonsillitis and on July 4, 1916 he was promoted to Corporal.

On September 16, 1916, Willie was transferred to the Anzac Provost Police in France; his duties unknown. In January 1917 he became ill with laryngitis and on February 5 Willie was transferred to England where he was admitted to the County of London Hospital. After he was discharged in April he rejoined the Provost Police in England but in July he went AWOL for 3 days for which he was reprimanded and forfeited two days pay.

Willie was transferred to the Australian Flying Corps (duties unknown) on September 16, 1917, and in October he was again admitted to hospital with laryngitis. His condition resulted in his return to Melbourne on the Persic; arriving on February 12, 1918. He was discharged medically unfit (chronic laryngitis) on March 26, 1918.

Willie was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. After the War he competed as a jockey in country towns and died as a result of an accident at the Foster races on March 24, 1933.

Contributed by the Kilmore Historical Society