

## Matthew Harold Wilks

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Matthew Harold Wilks enlistment No. 3572, Lance Corporal in 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion. He enlisted on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 1915 at Blackboy Hill.

He was born in Stockport, Cheshire in 1894 to parents Matthew Wilks and Alice Lloyd. The family came to Fremantle, Australia on the "Otway" departing 14<sup>th</sup> October 1910 from London.

Matthew gave his occupation as Clerk and was living at Darlington with his parents. He embarked from Fremantle on the "Benalla" on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1915.

Matthew arrived in France in early 1916 and saw action at Pozier and Mouquet farm where he was wounded by a gunshot to the head fracturing his skull. He was evacuated to England to recover then re-joined his Battalion in early December 1916. By late December 1916 he was appointed Lance Corporal.

April 1917 saw the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion in action at Bullecourt where Matthew was again injured with a gunshot wound to his right foot and left leg. It was while injured on the 11<sup>th</sup> April that he was taken prisoner by the Germans but recorded as missing on the Somme. He was first reported as a Prisoner of War to the Red Cross by a letter sent from Reserveiazarett Strettin III Hospital dated 8<sup>th</sup> June 1917.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> June a German document records Matthew's capture at Renicourt on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 1917. It appears that his family was not officially informed he is a POW until 21<sup>st</sup> December 1917, although Matthew has been interred at Limberg since 8<sup>th</sup> August 1917. This camp was near Frankfurt, Germany and also had a camp hospital where Matthew would have been able to access treatment for his wounds and convalesce. On the 27<sup>th</sup> December 1918 after the Armistice, Matthew was repatriated to England, given leave and admitted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Scottish General Hospital in Edinburgh for further treatment on his injured left leg.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> March 1919 he was transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Auxillary Hospital in Manchester then discharged on the 12<sup>th</sup> March and granted leave until he returned to Australia on the 19<sup>th</sup> April on the "Marathon" as an invalid. He was discharged on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 1919.

Soon after Matthew moved to Auckland New Zealand and obtained work at the South British Insurance Co. having studied accounting as a POW. In 1920 Matthew married Annie Isabel Parker who had joined him in Auckland from Adelaide, South Australia. The couple then moved to Taumarunui in the centre of the North Island to try and improve Matthew's health as he was suffering from Tuberculosis. He qualified as a Fellow Public Accountant in 1921 and set up an accountancy business which flourished.

The couple had two children. Both Matthew and his son Dick served in WW2 in the New Zealand Army, Matthew served as a Captain and Dick served in Egypt and Italy as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the New Zealand Artillery and later in the J Force as Lieutenant.

After the war son Dick worked his way to Governor with the Reserve Bank of New Zealand. Matthew's daughter became a Physiotherapist. In 1948 Matthew retired from accountancy due to deafness caused by the war and moved to Takapuna in Auckland. Surgery helped to improve Matthew's hearing and he enjoyed many overseas trips. Matthew died in 1970 in Takapuna, and was cremated at Purewa Cemetery in Meadowbank, Auckland. His wife Annie died in 1977 and was also cremated at Purewa Cemetery.

Courtesy Lyn Myles and Janet Coombes