

William KEATING

Service Number: 6555

Born: 1889, Euroa, Victoria

Parents: Ellen KENNEDY &

John Francis KEATING

Enlisted: 15/04/1915, Warragul

Aged: 24 years and 4 months

Trade/Calling: Farmer

Regiment: 14th Australian Field Ambulance,

Australian Army Medical Corp

Served: Middle East, France

Honour Rolls/Boards: Yarragon State School, Drouin East State

School, Warragul Shire Honour Board and Monument,

Australian War Memorial, Catholic Church Warragul.

Medals: British War Medal, Victory Medal

Memorial Plaque and scroll

Died: 21/09/1917, 3rd Australian Field Ambulance "in the field" B.E.F.,

Belgium near Ypres

Buried: Belgium, 72 Menin Road South Military Cemetery, Panel 183



Inscription: IN LOVING MEMORY R.I.P.

Warragul Cemetery, Roman Catholic, Row 3C, Grave 171

KEATING/in / loving/ memory/ of /ELLEN / the beloved wife of /JOHN F KEATING / born at Warnambool 28 th March 1860 / died at Darnum 5th Decr 1914 / also JOHN. F. KEATING / died 1st Sept 1945 / aged 85 years/ R. I. P. /

Also WILLIAM / her beloved son / died of wounds received /in action in France / 21st Sept 1917 aged 27 years / R. I.P. /

William Keating was born in 1889 at Euroa, the third child and first son of John Francis KEATING and Ellen, nee KENNEDY. This couple married in 1886 and raised an impressive twelve children. The family lived at Euroa when their first children were born; Bridget b1887, Alice b1888, William b1889, James Andrew b1891, then moved to the Buln Buln/Warragul area where the subsequent children were born; Ellen Angela b1893, John Thomas b1895, Mary Magdalen b1896, Susan Veronica b1897, Gregory Joseph b1898, Ann b 1900, Michael Vincent b1901 and Patrick Leonard Francis b 1903. William and siblings attended local schools as children and the family were known for their Catholic faith and their involvement and interest in community activities, particularly in the Darnum area.

William was a farmer after leaving school and he served 18 months in the 8th Light Horse before leaving the district around 1910 when he went to NSW and for three years prior to enlisting he was engaged in farming pursuits in Finley.

Answering the call to serve, William enlisted at Warragul on the 15th of April 1915 when he was 24 years and 4 months of age, his description was 5 feet 8 3/4 inches tall, weighing 136 lbs and described as having a florid complexion with grey eyes and reddish hair, religion Roman Catholic. His mother had passed away in 1914 so wasn't witness to her son signing up for war.

On the 26th of November 1915, William embarked at Melbourne on HMAT "Commonwealth" with the 6th Field Ambulance Corps. From Egypt, William wrote letters home describing the work he was doing, the heat, the fellows from his home district he had met or heard about and his craving for news from home, all with an upbeat tone.

On the 19th of June 1916 William boarded the "Royal George" at Alexandria, his brother Tom was on the same ship, they disembarked at Marseilles on the 26th of June. Assigned to the 14th Field Ambulance, he saw heavy fighting at Pozieres, where he performed his duty as a stretcher bearer and with his fellow stretcher bearers, received great praise from his chief. Struck down with appendicitis on the 29th of July 1916, he was hospitalized and on the 9th of August, embarked on the "Dieppe" at Calais for England, finally admitted to the General Hospital at Colchester. On the 15th June 1917 William was returned to France. On the 28th of June he made his Will, leaving all of his real estate to his father and his personal estate to his sister Ellen.

On the 6th of August he committed the 'crime' of 'Neglect to the prejudice of good order and military discipline in that when ordered to parade in full marching order he did leave his greatcoat behind him in billets.' And for that offence he was made to forfeit 7 days pay. On the 20th of September he was wounded and on the 21st of September he died from those wounds.

A year later, his sister Ellen endeavoured to find out the nature of his wounds and to obtain a photo of his grave and the whereabouts of his personal belongings. In October 1918 she received his personal effects; fountain pen, 50 centimes note, 4 coins, belt, diary, 2 wallets, photos, cards, letters and a pencil. The total sum of a man at war.

A letter to William's father from his Lieut-Colonel describes the loss; 'He died most gallantly. The enemy were shelling very heavily, when he and some of his mates were carrying a comrade down from the line. A large shell burst quite close, killing or wounding most of the squad. He was very popular amongst his comrades. His great companion (Sweeney) was hit alongside him. I can assure you that one and all will miss him very, very much and I can assure you, sir, that he died in the act of endeavouring to give a comrade the chance to live and he is an example to us all.'

Submitted by: Ann & John Keating - Compiled from War Records, and local histories family knowledge and newspaper reports