

William was born in Tamworth, the son of Philip and Amelia Besson. He enlisted in D Company AN&MEF stating that he was a Woodwork Machinist, single and gave an Arthur John Ryan of 91 Spring St, Waverley, as his next of kin.

On 14th April 1915 he enlisted in C Company, 20th Battalion as a bugler, regimental number 1027, on this occasion giving his father at Currabubula near Tamworth as his next of kin. On 25th June he sailed for Egypt aboard the BERRIMA but was returned to Australia on 1st July 1916 with chronic illness. He was hospitalised from 7th August 1916 till 19th September and again from 6th December till 22nd December 1916. On 23rd December he transferred to the 3rd battalion as part of the 24th Reinforcements and had his regimental number changed to R1027. He departed for the UK aboard the CLAN MACGILLIVRAY on 10th May 1917, arriving in Plymouth on 28th July.

Between 10th September and 22nd October 1917, he was illegally absent and sentenced to 98 days detention with 40 days being subsequently remitted. He again went absent without leave between 6th Jan and 23rd Jan and was sentenced to 70 days detention. On 20th June 1918, William was killed in action. In a report of the action, Pte Sparkes, #7549 reported – “He was in A.Coy. and I saw him killed at Merris when death was instantaneous, he being hit in the back of the head. He was bombing a German post and turned round to pick up a fresh supply of bombs when he was sniped by the enemy. Casualty happened about 10 a.m. on 20-6-18. I did not know him very well, but he came from N.S.W. I cannot give any details of his burial. He was left at place of casualty, and was sure to be buried, as he was dead at their post.”

Williams body was not recovered and he is remembered on the wall at the Australian War Memorial at Villers- Bretonneux and on panel 35 at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.