

Biography



William Arkle (1875 – 1919)

Boer War veteran

#861, Private, right wing of the 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles

On 15 February 1901, thirty-two year old William Arkle sailed out of Melbourne on board the *Orient*. He was bound for Capetown and the war in South Africa. Just over a thousand other men who made up the 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles sailed that day and from March 1901 to March 1902 those men served under Major T. F. Umphelby in east Transvaal and on the Natal frontier.

Arkle's war ended in January 1902 when he was invalided to Australia. He arrived in Melbourne on 29 January 1902 on board the *Manchester Merchant*. On board were 170 soldiers, most of whom had served their time with South African irregular corps.

On the afternoon of his arrival home he and his fellow soldiers were 'entertained at luncheon at the Victoria Barracks.' (*Argus*, 30 January 1902) Four months later, on 29 May, he joined thirty other Brunswick soldiers when they were entertained at a 'smoke social and welcome home' at the Brunswick Town Hall. (*Coburg Leader*, 31 May 1902)

After his return from South Africa, Arkle remained in Brunswick, living at 23 Albion Street west between 1903 and 1914. He worked firstly as a labourer and then as a pastry chef. He died in January 1919 aged 50 and is buried in the Salvation Army section of Coburg Cemetery (Compartment P, Grave 084) with his sister Mary's infant son Henry Clarke. He never married.

Family background:

William Arkle was the son of Joseph and Catherine (Bain) Arkle and was born at Ballan in 1869.

His father Joseph was born in Northumberland in 1823 and at the time of the 1841 Census Joseph was living with his parents at Bonwell in the Newcastle upon Tyne area. His father and brother were masons and he was an apprentice mason. His parents remained in the area, but Joseph emigrated to Victoria in 1857 and went straight to the goldfields.

In 1863, Joseph Arkle married the widowed Catherine McLean (nee Bain) at Ballan and eight children were born to them over the following twelve years. Catherine already had at least one son, Roderick, from her first marriage. William was the first son and third surviving child of her second marriage.

By the time of his death at Ballan in 1887, Joseph Arkle had returned to his trade of stonemason. His wife died of cancer in 1893, after being treated unsuccessfully by an unregistered practitioner who styled himself 'Professor' Davis. (*Argus*, 10 August 1893) 'Professor' Davis went on trial for his involvement in the deaths of a number of his patients over the following five years, was found guilty of manslaughter twice and served at least six months in prison.

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Although their parents remained in Ballan, William and a number of his siblings settled in Brunswick and nearby Coburg.



His eldest sister Annie married James Chisholm, a baker. In 1903 they were living with William at 23 Albion Street west, but soon after the family moved to Sydney Road, Brunswick where they remained. Their three children William, John and Catherine (married name Strack) were born and raised in Brunswick.

Another sister, Sarah (known as Alice), was the second wife of the much older Harry Milward, who died in 1912. In 1903 she lived in Coburg, but by 1914 she was the licensee of the Crown Hotel in Victoria Street, Abbotsford. She later married William Frederick Viney, hotel keeper of South Yarra. She died at Moonee Ponds in 1946.

William's brother Edward, a butcher, lived with their sister Mary Clark and her family at 7 Goodman Street, Brunswick in 1903. He married Flora Crellin in 1908 and moved to West Melbourne where he lived until his death in 1921. He and his wife are both buried in the Salvation Army section (Compartment P, Grave 117) of Coburg Cemetery.

His sister Mary married Herbert Clark, a Brunswick clerk who worked for the railways. They lived firstly at Goodman Street, then Charles Street then by 1914 they were at the Gatehouse in Albion Street west. By 1919 they were at the Gatehouse, 6 Dawson Street where Mary died in 1930. Herbert remained in Brunswick until his death in 1936. Herbert and Mary are buried in the Presbyterian section of Fawkner Cemetery. Their infant son Henry is buried with his uncle William Arkle at Coburg.

Sources:

Anglo-Boer War database
Wilcox
Argus
Coburg Leader
Victorian Outward Shipping, Public Record Office of Victoria
Victorian electoral rolls
Victorian births, deaths and marriages indexes
English census records
GMCT Deceased Search
Ballarat Hospital Admissions Register

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