

**LIEUTENANT VYVYAN CHRISTOPHER BENNETT**  
**3rd Tunnelling Company**

Born on 6 October 1881 in Sydney, NSW, Vyvyan was the son of Christopher and Margaret Anne, nee Moesch, Bennett. [BDM records as 'Vyryan C']

*The Sydney Morning Herald* - NSW - Saturday 29 September 1894:

**SCHOOL CONCERT AT DOUBLE BAY.**

The pupils at the Double Bay Public School gave an entertainment in the Mission Hall, Double Bay, last night, before a crowded audience. The programme was a most enjoyable one, and reflected credit on those responsible for the tuition of the pupils. The pupils contributed some vocal numbers. The junior pupils gave several pretty action songs. Dumbbell and Indian club exercises and a physical drill were also gone through to the appreciation of the audience. Miss May Hellings and Master George Evennett sang "List to the Convent Bells" and Masters Hopkin, Evennett, Shearston and Shaw "Four Jolly Smiths" (in character) Miss Vera and Master Vyvyan Bennett contributed "Fannie Grey," and Masters V. Bennett, Shearston, and Evennett "Three Jolly Sailor Boys". A number of young ladies, headed by Misses S. Oates and L. Thomson, gave an effective floral march, and Misses May and Amy Hellings and Lily Blair sang "Fairies". Mr G. Hellings also sang a comic song, and Miss L. Thomson played a pianoforte solo. A drama, "Three Fairy Gifts", was given with success, the characters being sustained by Miss May Hellings (Fairy Queen Titania) Miss Amy Hellings (Fairy Elfin) Miss Lily Blair (Fairy Mopsa), Miss Florre Banks (Cynthia), Miss Ethel Shearston (Violet), Miss Vera Bennett (Vera) Masters S. Richardson and C. Clark (Brigand Chiefs) The Wollahra School Band under Bandmaster W. Norris played several selections during the evening. The accompanists were Miss Pearce and Mr Charles Robinson. Mr H. G. Shaw, M.A. (headmaster of the school), conducted the entertainment.

After attending Sydney Grammar School, he graduated from Sydney University as a bachelor of Engineering in Mining and Metallurgy with honours in various subjects. He gained practical experience in all branches of underground mining work in the service of Broken Hill Propriety Company, subsequently obtaining his Mine Manager's Certificate of Competency, NSW.

He proceeded to Mexico where he remained for six years in the service of El Oro Mining Company and the Mexico Mines of El Oro. There were exciting times during the Madero Rebellion, and tiring of the unsettled conditions, he returned to Australia and joined Messrs. Know, Schlapp and Company of Melbourne.

*The Brisbane Courier* – Saturday 26 June 1915:

**MARRIAGES**

BENNETT — BRIDGES. — June 9th, at St. John's Church, Toorak, by the Rev. J. H. Allen, Vyvyan C., eldest son of the late Christopher Bennett, of Sydney, to Natalie M., only daughter of F. T. Bridges, of Melbourne.

Vyvyan Bennett completed an 'Application for a Commission in the Mining Corps A.I.F.' on 21 December 1915. A medical examination recorded that he was 5ft 11¾ins tall and weighed 175 pounds.

He stated he had been educated at Sydney Grammar School and held a Bachelor of Engineering (Mining & Metallurgy) from Sydney University

Vyvyan recorded previous military experience as over one year with the Sydney University Scouts and about 8 months with the City of Melbourne Rifle Club.

He was at the time employed as the Mining Manager in the General Engineering Department of Messrs. Knox, Schlapp & Co., 31 Queen Street, Melbourne.

He named as his Next-of-Kin his wife Mrs. Natalie Margaret Bennett, recording her address as c/o F.T. Bridges Esq., AMP Society, Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria.

*Sydney Morning Herald* - Saturday February 19, 1916:

#### NEW APPOINTMENTS

The following appointments to the Australian Imperial Forces have been made:-

To be Captains:- James Arthur Pollock, Lieutenant (provisional) R.V. Morse, Senior Cadets.

To be Second Lieutenants:- Corporal James Alexander Reid, Corporal William Thomas Anderson.

To be Second Lieutenants (provisionally):- Alexander Sanderson, Vyvyan Christopher Bennett.

*Article Abridged*

6th Tunnelling Company Historical Record:

On February 28th 1916 Capt. F. W. LAWSON then attending the Engineers Officers School of Instruction at Sydney was instructed from Headquarters to proceed to Perth and recruit No.6 Company entirely in West Australia. Incidentally it may be recorded that a unique distinction was thus placed on West Australia in that although she had already supplied the greatest share of one of the earlier Companies (No.3) she was now being asked to supply a whole Company while the other Companies (Nos.4 & 5) were to be divided amongst the remaining States.

Proceeding overland to Melbourne Capt. Lawson joined H.M.A.T. "ULYSSES" which was still taking further cargo in that port; and sailed for the West on March 1st. Joined with him at that time were 2/Lieuts. H.P. WALLMAN, V.C. BENNETT, D. WENTWORTH, and J.W. ALLEN, while Lieutenant A.J. HILLMAN who was afterwards to become second in command was also on board the "ULYSSES" with No.3 Company.

Vyvyan completed a second 'Application for a Commission in the Australian Imperial Force' on 11 May 1916, adding to previous information that he now held a N.S.W. Mine Managers certificate and was a member of M.A.I.M.E. (Australia) and Associate member of M.I.M.M. (England), and that he had attended the Engineer Officers School, Sydney for 2 months. He signed the 'Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad' also on 11 May 1916.

*The West Australian* Wednesday May 31, 1916:

#### THE TUNNELLING COMPANY PARADE THROUGH CITY STREETS

Although the numerical strength of the troops which paraded the city streets yesterday morning was considerably less than that of previous parades, and despite the fact that citizens have become accustomed to the sight of khaki-clad warriors, the men of the No.6 Tunnelling Company and the Claremont N.C.O. school met with a hearty reception as they swung along to the inspiring music of the Blackboy Hill band. The line of route was freely bedecked with flags, whilst the large crowds, if somewhat undemonstrated denoted none the less by their presence their keen appreciation of that sense of patriotism which found its highest expression in the long line of soldiers answering to the call of Empire. In physique and general bearing the men were equal to their comrades who have gone before. Leaving James-street well on appointed time, the column swung into Beaufort-street and over the bridge in to Barrack-street. The members of the N.C.O. school, about 113 strong, under Captain Thompson, followed the band, the No.6 Tunnelling Company, with its first reinforcements, totalling nearly 400 men, under Captain Lawson, bringing up the rear. At the head of the Tunnellers was borne the flag recently presented to the company.

After traversing Barrack and Hay streets the column entered St George's-terrace via Victoria-avenue. Opposite Government House his Excellency (Sir Harry Barron), with whom were the State Commandant (Colonel J.H. Bruche), Major P.H. Meeks and Major Wilkinson, A.D.C., took the salute. Passing along the Terrace the route was via William and Wellington streets to the station. The men paraded in full fighting equipment.



The No.6 Tunnelling Company - Photograph taken at the W.A.T.C. Course, Belmont, where the men have been in training

*The West Australian* June 1, 1916:

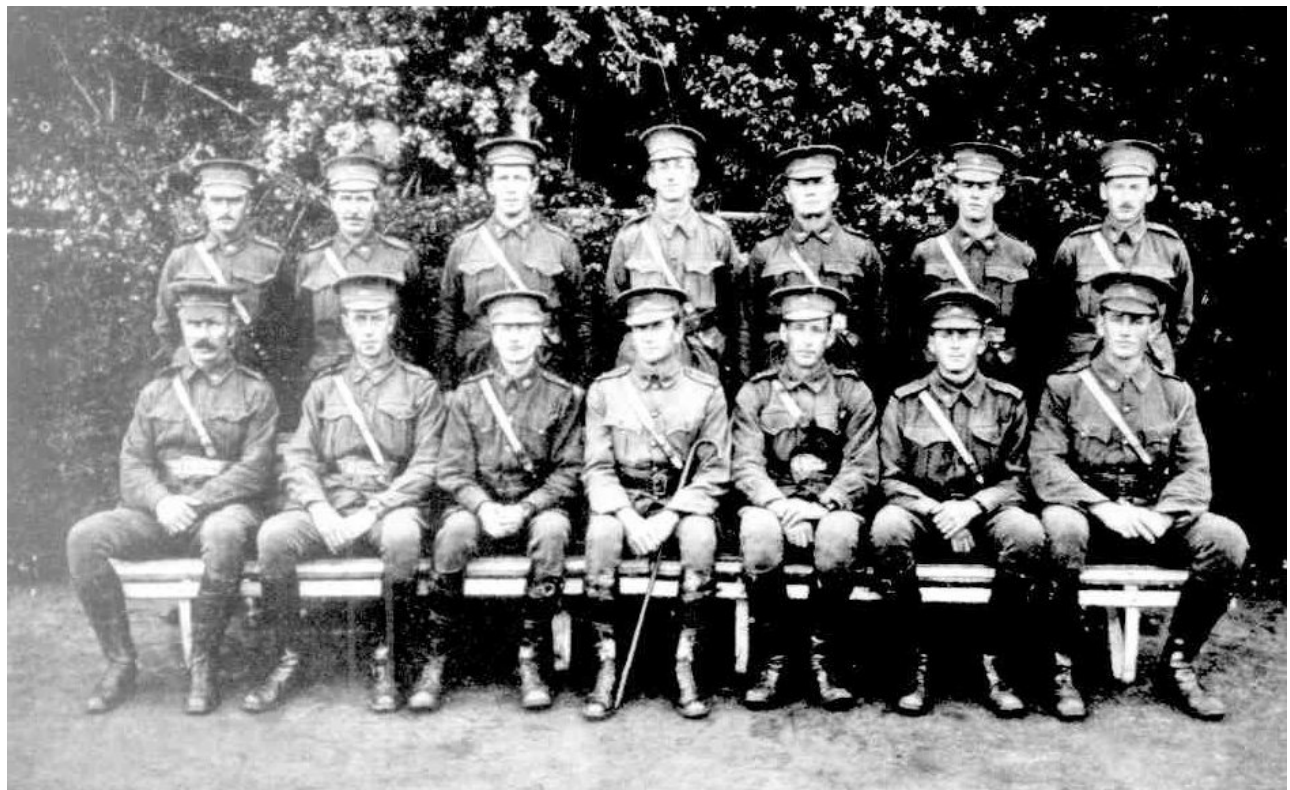
#### THE WESTERN MAIL

The war pictures appearing in this week's issue of the Western Mail:

In addition, the "Mail" contains a fine photograph of the No.6 Tunnelling Company, as well as an illustration of their march through the streets of the city on Tuesday last, and a photograph of the officers who have been appointed to command the men.



Tuesday's parade of troops. The No.6 Tunnelling Company and the members of the N.C.O. School, Claremont, marching through the city.



Officers of the No. 6 Tunnelling Company - Standing: Second Lieutenants Tylor, Taylor, Sander, Logie, Cavanagh, Shaw. Sitting: Second Lieutenant Russel, Lieut Bennett, Lieut Wentworth, Capt Lawson (O.C.), Capt Hillman (Adj.), Lieut Wallman, Lieut. Allen.

Vyvyan embarked at Fremantle on 1 June 1916 on board *Warilda*.

Two Sections of the Northern recruits to form the No.4 Company had embarked from Brisbane, Queensland early in May, 1916 aboard HMAT A69 *Warilda* for Sydney, New South Wales (NSW). Six officers and 152 other ranks together with the 1st Reinforcements of fifteen other ranks made up the two sections.

At Rosebery Park, Sydney, NSW they joined their Headquarters and two sections (8 officers & 153 O.Rs.) plus 1st Reinforcements consisting of one officer and seventeen other ranks for final training.

*Sydney Morning Herald* Monday May 22, 1916:

**THE TROOPS  
INSPECTION AT MOORE PARK**

“In the presence of a crowd of 10,000 people the District Commandant, Brigadier-General Ramaciotti, V.D., held an inspection of troops at Moore Park, on Saturday afternoon. The troops consisted of Field Artillery, Tunnelling Section (including Queenslanders), under Major Vincent; Infantry, under Lieutenant Owen Gibbs, under Captain Brosnan, the whole parade being under the command of Major Holman, D.S.O.

Prior to arrival of the commandant and his staff, the men were drawn up in columns of companies on the Dowling-street side of the ground, facing the tramline. The bands of Liverpool Headquarters and the Engineers played selections of music.

Brigadier-General Ramaciotti, V.D. made a close inspection of the lines. Returning to the saluting base the Commandant took the salute as the various units marched past in columns of companies, and again as they returned headed by the band in columns of fours.

One company had with it a small kangaroo as a mascot. The animal was held on a ribbon, but when it drew level with the saluting base it bobbed up and down as if anxious to do its share in the saluting lines as its male friends were doing. Its antics were so ludicrous that the crowd roared.

At the conclusion of the inspection the men were marched across to the Royal Agricultural Ground, where they were provided with temporary quarters.”

*Abridged*

The 7713 ton transport departed Sydney, NSW on May 22, 1916 and collected in Melbourne, Victoria the No.5 Company recruited from Victoria, South Australia & Tasmania consisting of a Headquarters and 2 Sections (8 officers & 173 men) (3 M.D.). 1 Section from Tasmania (3 officers & 76 O.Rs); also 1st Reinforcements for No.5 Company (17 men from Vic. & 8 men Tas.) The ship departed on May 25, 1916 for Adelaide, S.A. to collect one Section of 3 officers & 76 O.Rs with 1st Reinforcements of 8 O.Rs.

Docking at Fremantle, W.A. on June 1, 1916, No.6 Company recruited from W.A. of 14 officers and 325 O.Rs along with 1st Reinforcements of 1 Officer & 32 O.Rs embarked and *Warilda* departed the same day for the European theatre.

Durban, South Africa was reached on June 16, 1916 and Cape Town on June 21, 1916 while St Vincent completed the African ports of call on July 7, 1916.

*‘On the arrival of our troop ship in Alexandria in April 16, a party of some 120 out of our 1200 miners, with the wanderlust strong upon them, broke loose suddenly from our troop ship (Ulysses) as she lay at the wharf, rushed the sentries, and went careering like a lot of released school boys up the main street of Alexandria, making for the heart of the city.*

*Some bad sport, perhaps one should rather say, one sound disciplinarian, telephoned to the military police. And in due course the sappers were met by some charabancs driven by genial gentlemen, who offered them a lift.*

*The offer was of course accepted, and presently the vehicle swung into a courtyard, the gates of which were promptly closed, and the sappers then realised that they were prisoners. One hundred and twenty of them were locked up in a building designed for a maximum of 60. The sappers called it the ‘boob’. The night was very hot and the “boob” threatened to become a veritable Black Hole of Calcutta.*

*In the early dawn, an agonized SOS came from the military police to our ship to say that the sappers were tunnelling under the walls of the boob, and that it was tottering to its foundations, and would we send up a strong-armed party at once to hold and remove the prisoners.’*

Major T.W. Edgeworth David

Discipline was fairly good except at intermediate ports where soldiers going Absent Without Leave caused concern. The fifty-eight day voyage experienced remarkable pleasant weather and terminated at Plymouth, England on July 18, 1916. Four, Five and Six Companies comprising of 1064 officers and other ranks were detrained to Amesbury and Tidworth to begin training for the front.

Vyvyan proceeded overseas to France on 30 August and marched in to the 2nd Australian Divisional Base Depot (ADBDD) the same day.

He reported for duty with the 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company (3ATC) on 25 September and was taken on strength of that unit.

3ATC End-of-War Report:				
The officers personnel of the company from 26/9/16 was as follows: -				
Hd Qrs	No.1 Section	No.2 Section	No.3 Section	No.4 Section
Mjr Coulter	Lt Langdon	Lt Brown	Lt Morris	Lt McArdell
Capt Sanderson	Lt Grainger	Lt Howie	Lt Wentworth	Lt Bennett
Capt West	2/Lt Buley	Lt Allen	2/Lt Shaw, C.C.	2/Lt Robertson
Capt Hillman	2/Lt Russell	2/Lt Gourley	2/Lt Tyler	2/Lt Cavavagh

3ATC End-of-War Report:

Company Order 167: 4510 Spr Williams, G.E.C. killed in action 28/10/16; 1300 Spr Cassin W.F. & 4275 Spr Bird, E. wounded. 1123 2/Cpl Perry, W. accidentally wounded 28/10/16 & died 30/10/16.

Report to the Controller of Mines, 1st Army & General Staff, 56th Division:

Herewith find report of intensive bombardment and enemy raid on the Red Lamp Salient on the 28/10/16, with regard to Mining Operations. After several hours desultory shelling "C.Ts" and frontline the bombardment proper began at 3.30 p.m. with shrapnel and H.E. on Rotten Row, and Rifleman's Avenue, C.Ts. Then a very intense T.M. and Artillery bombardment of the front line between the old Rotten Row and Northumberland Avenue C.Ts. This persisted until 4.30 p.m. then eased and stopped until 4.15 p.m. From 4.15 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. heavy Minenwerfer bombardment.

Shelling ceased finally about 7 p.m., a barrage having been put up while the enemy were in the lines.

The enemy raiding party entered our trenches at N.13.D 9.8-9.9 at about 6 p.m., and at 6.10 bombed an officer and several O.R. in a shaft dugout wounding two Sappers. A number of men were ascending the ladders at the same time, but were able to go back and come up No. 3 Shaft at the southern end of the salient.

Four German bombs and a tape across No Man's Land were found. There were three or four bombs thrown into No. 1a Shaft dugout.

The shafts were inspected last night and were found to be undamaged with the exception of the head cover of No. 2 Shaft which was slightly broken. The workings were inspected this morning and beyond a few sets of timber cracked, and a set displaced, there was no damage.

Casualties among Miners, one killed by a collapse of a dugout and two wounded by bomb.

*Australia's Fighting Sons of the Empire:*

Sapper GEORGE EDWARD CHARLES WILLIAMS

Sapper George Edward Charles Williams (4510), son of Charles and Julia Williams, Quarry-street, Coolgardie, was born at Broken Hill, NSW, and educated at Coolgardie, W.A. He enlisted in March, 1916, and embarked for England on the 1st June, 1916. He crossed to France, and went direct to the firing line. He was acting as batsman for Lieutenant Bennett, and was in his office when a shell exploded, killing him instantaneously. He was buried for sixteen hours before he was recovered.

Vyvyan reported sick on 25 December 1916 and was admitted to the 33rd Casualty Clearing Station on 26 December. He was transferred to the 26th General Hospital at Camiers on 31 December. Evacuated to England on 5 January 1917 he was admitted to the 3rd London General Hospital.

On 3 February Vyvyan was transferred from the 3rd London General Hospital to 5th Auxiliary Hospital and on 12 March discharged to No.1 Command Depot, Perham Downs.

He marched in to the Draft Depot, Perham Downs on 15 March and on 4 April 1917 he proceeded overseas to France, marching in to the Australian General Base Depot (AGBD) at Etaples on 6 April and rejoining his unit on 28 April 1917.

On 26 September 1917 Vyvyan reported sick and was admitted to the 22nd Casualty Clearing Station with dental caries, rejoining his unit on 7 October.

3ATC End-of-War Report:

On 26.9.17, Lieut. V.C. Bennett was admitted to hospital at Noeux-les-Mines on account of sickness and evacuated to England.

He was due his Blue Chevrons about this time. Each blue Service Chevron denoted one year's service from 1 January 1915. A red Chevron denoted service before 31 December 1914.

Reporting sick on 5 February 1918, he was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with debility. On 9 February he was transferred to Ambulance Train 35 and admitted to hospital at Le Touquet.

On 11 February 1918 Vyvyan embarked for England on Hospital Ship *Princess Elizabeth* and admitted to the 4th London General Hospital. He was transferred to the 6th Auxiliary Hospital on 7 March and on 12 March 1918 embarked on *Kenilworth Castle* for return to Australia.

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V. C. Bennett (Lieut.) was invalided home and is now in Melbourne. He is making good recovery.

Vyvyan Bennett was a member of 3ATC from May 1916 until his return to Australia in May 1918. 3ATC first saw action at Boars Head in the lead up the Fromelles diversion 'stunt' of July 1916. The Company was allocated to the First Army and were engaged variously at Laventie-Fauquissart, Givenchy, Loos, Lens, Double Crassiers and Vermelles and other places on the Western Front.

On 27 November 1916 at the 'Black Watch Sap', Hill 70, an enemy camouflet (or a premature explosion, depending on different accounts) killed 20 members of the company. The next day 2 more members were killed in the same area by an enemy camouflet. The 22 members of 3ATC were buried in 14 adjacent graves at the Hersin Communal Cemetery Extension.

The Companies major effort was at Hill 70 where they constructed the extensive Hythe Tunnel system. The company was also heavily involved in road and bridge construction and the locating and clearing of enemy mines and booby traps. This continued for the company for some months after the Armistice.

Vyvyan left England on 12 March 1918 on board *Kenilworth Castle*, transferring to *Field Marshall* at Durban on 23 April. He was transferred to the *Kanowna* at Fremantle, WA and disembarked in Melbourne, Victoria on 24 May 1918

His appointment as an Officer in the A.I.F. was terminated on 28 June 1918, and he was deemed to be 'medically unfit'. He was entitled to wear the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The 1919 Electoral Roll for Toorak, Victoria records Vyvyan Christopher Bennett, Surveyor, and Natalie Margaret Bennett, home duties, living at 'Norwood', Grange Road

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MEMBERS

Bennett, V.C. Electrolytic Zinc Co. of Australasia Ltd, Collins House, 360 Collins-street, Melbourne, Vic 1914

In July 1923 he wrote to Base Records requesting that his medals be collected by his agent.

*Sydney Morning Herald* – Tuesday 25 September 1923:

MRS. CHRISTOPHER BENNETT.

The death took place on Sunday, at Roseville, of Mrs. Christopher Bennett, sen., widow of Mr. Christopher Bennett, who was a brother of the late Mr. Samuel Bennett, the founder of the "Evening News." The deceased lady, who was of a very charitable disposition, has left a family of two sons (Mr. Vyvyan C. Bennett, of Melbourne, and Mr. Lynton C. Bennett, of this city) and one daughter (Mrs H. G. Edwards, of Roseville).

The 1924 Electoral Roll records Vyvyan, Metallurgist, and Natalie living at "Firle", Power Avenue, Malvern, Victoria.

In the 1930 Electoral Roll, Vyvyan, Metallurgist, and Natalie, home duties, are living at Marne Street, Port Kembla, NSW. In 1936 their address is 20 Suvla Street, Port Kembla.

### Reunions

Past members of the Australian Electrical & Mechanical Mining & Boring Company and Tunnelling Companies gathered on or about Anzac Day for a reunion luncheon. We have had access to some of their records, which were very well kept and are quite detailed.

Vyvyan first appears on the list in 1934 giving his address as Metal Manufacturers, Port Kembla. His home address is recorded as 10 Carmmel Street, Wollongong. In 1968 he is recorded as living at 10 Caronoise Street, Wollongong.

Tunnellers Circular - 30th June 1949:

Dear Tunneller,

"Best show we ever had", or at least it was for me. There is no doubt about you all, and all the curses and epithets I have hurled at you during the last few years for failing to answer circulars are hereby revoked. The gift you made me is something super-doooper a magnificent (yes, that's the word) pair of field glasses, and I'll bet I could not get full on the little change there would be left out of £50.

Anyhow I am not often at a loss for words but I was the other night, after the presentation.

What surprised me most was some of the far away Tunnellers whom I have reviled so much for not answering circulars and who for all I knew were dead, came forward with subscriptions.

Well, since you have all written saying how much you have enjoyed receiving my circulars with news of the old Tunnellers, I will make this a bumper circular and tell you what I can of all the old boys, living and dead.

Well, the dinner was held at the usual place, Sydney Legacy Club, 188 George Street, on one of the foulest nights Sydney has known for years, and I was very despondent as to whether we could get a quorum (we had, I might mention, a jorum). In spite of the weather 39 Tunnellers, near Tunnellers and visitors, arrived, there being only one absentee from the list of those accepting and that was Archie Thomson who was down with the dogs disease.

The following were present:

Viv Bennett – also retired and living at Wollongong.

*Abridged*

The 1943 Roll records their move to 7 Eastern Avenue, Wollongong.

Vyvyan Christopher Bennet died on 22 September 1951.

*Sydney Morning Herald* - Monday September 24, 1951:

DEATHS

BENNETT, Vyvyan Christopher—September 22, 1951, at Wollongong, husband of Natalie Margaret, and father of Christopher and Hanet. Private cremation.

His ashes were scattered at Woronora Cemetery.

*Sydney Morning Herald* – Saturday 6 October 1951:

LEGAL NOTICES

IN the Will of VYVYAN CHRISTOPHER BENNETT late of Wollongong in the State of New South Wales Retired Metallurgist deceased.

- Application will be made after 14 days from the publication here-of that probate of the last Will and Testament dated the 14th September 1945 of the abovenamed deceased may be granted to Natalie Margaret Bennett and Christopher Frederick Bennett the Executors and Trustees named in the said Will, and all notices may be served at the undermentioned address. All creditors in the Estate of the deceased are hereby required to send in particulars of their claims to the undersigned R. J. ATKINS, OWEN & SON Proctors for Executors, Wollongong. By their Agents, HERALD, BRUCE, BRIERLEY & ENGLAND, 109 Pitt Street Sydney.

On 19 February 1952 his death was recorded on Imperial War Graves List (110).

Natalie continued to live at Eastern Avenue after Vyvyans' death.

Natalie Margaret Bennett, daughter of Frederick Thomas and Margaret Mary Bridges, died in 1964 at St Leonards, NSW.

His brother, Lynton Carthew Bennett, born 1891 at Woollahra served in WW1 as 13199 Artificer Bennett, 5th Australian Motor Transport Corps. Enlisting on 25 September 1916, he returned to Australia on 1 August 1919. Lynton died in 1977.

His son, Christopher Frederick Bennett served in WW2 as N339342.