

Lance Corporal John Septimus Prideaux

Regimental number: 3122

6th Battalion, Australian Infantry

born: 1880–died: 17 July 1916

John Septimus Prideaux was born in 1880 in Williamstown, Victoria, Australia, the son of John Prideaux Sr. and Fanny, née Cockerill.¹ He was the seventh of 13 children they had together. The others were George (b. 1872),² Arthur John (b. 1873),³ Walter Edwin (b. 1874),⁴ Alfred Ernest (b. 1875),⁵ Edgar (b. 1878),⁶ Frederick (b. 1879),⁷ Fanny Marian (b. 1882),⁸ Florence Maud (b. 1884),⁹ Leslie Walter (b. 1886),¹⁰ Elsie May (b. 1887),¹¹ Alice (b. 1888),¹² and Jessie (b. 1889).¹³ Of these, four died young: Walter Edwin (at age 3) in 1877,¹⁴ Frederick (aged about 6 months) in 1879,¹⁵ Edgar (aged about 1) also in 1879,¹⁶ and Alice (aged about 1) in 1889.¹⁷

John Prideaux Sr. had four other children, all born in England, from a first marriage in 1856¹⁸ to Ann Collings (born 1837 in Jersey, Channel Islands¹⁹). They were married in Stoke Damerel, Devon, and all four children were born there: Charles John in 1857,²⁰ William Henry in 1860,²¹ John George in 1862,²² and James Thomas in 1865.²³

The Prideaux name has been a fixture in Devon and Cornwall for many centuries.²⁴ John Sr. was born in 1835, the son of William Prideaux, a chair maker.²⁵ He did not follow in his father's footsteps: in the 1861 Census he is living in Stoke Damerel with his first wife Ann and the two eldest children, and his occupation is listed as Seaman, R.N.²⁶ He was following in the footsteps of his grandfather John, who was in charge of the guard on HMS *Bellerophon* when Napoleon was taken to St. Helena in 1815 following his defeat at the battle of Waterloo.²⁷

John Prideaux Sr. fought with the Royal Navy during the Crimean War in 1854–1855,²⁸ on board HMS *Albion*, for which he received the Crimea Medal in 1855.²⁹ His naval service was to last many more years.

In the late 1860s the Government of Victoria (Australia) asked Britain for a vessel on which it could train its naval volunteers, and the Admiralty made available HMS *Nelson*, a three-decker battleship launched in 1814 after the victory at Trafalgar, and named after the naval hero.³⁰ After refurbishment, the HMVS *Nelson* sailed from Portsmouth on 20 October 1867 and arrived in Melbourne, Australia, on 4 February 1868.³¹ John Prideaux was on board as Chief Gunner's Mate of the starboard watch, and he and a number of other crew members transferred to the colonial Victorian Naval Service along with the ship.³² John's wife Ann and the children also moved to Australia, but Ann died in Victoria in 1870.³³ He married Fanny Cockerill (born 1849 in Stepney, London³⁴) the following year.³⁵

John Prideaux Sr. served as a gunner and drill instructor on HMVS *Nelson* and subsequently on HMVS *Cerberus* until he retired in 1895 at age 60.³⁶ He died on 24 November 1899;³⁷ Fanny lived another 42 years, dying in 1941 at the age of 92.³⁸

John Septimus Prideaux would have been 19 when his father died. Four years later he was living with his mother (the only child listed with her) in Williamstown, Victoria and working as a packer.³⁹ By 1912 he was working as a railway labourer.⁴⁰ A year after the First World War began, in July 1915, he enlisted in the 6th Battalion, 10th Reinforcements, of the Australian Imperial Force.⁴¹ His occupation was listed as storeman and his age as 32, although he would have been 35. He was taken

on strength on 7 January 1916 at Tel El Kebir, Egypt, and promoted to lance corporal two months later.

Lance Corporal Prideaux's battalion proceeded to join the British Expeditionary Force and disembarked at Marseilles (France) on 30 March 1916. The battalion was deployed to the Somme, and in early July it was in the trenches at Messines.⁴² It was relieved on 8 July and moved back to Aldershot Camp. The following day, the battalion marched into Bailleul and was billeted there.⁴³ The next day, July 10, Lance Corporal Prideaux was taken ill with bronchitis; on 12 July he was transferred to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station at Bailleul. After lingering for five days, Lance Corporal Prideaux died on 17 July 1916 of pneumonia. He was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, Reference II. E. 14.⁴⁴ No personal message was added to his headstone.



Lance Corporal John Prideaux

Source: Australian War Memorial

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/R1653667>

The cemetery lies in the east end of the town of Bailleul, in the Nord department of the Hauts-de-France region, and contains the remains of 4344 soldiers from the two world wars.

Lance Corporal John Prideaux received the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) for his service. He also received the 1914–15 Star, for service in any theatre of the war in 1914–15.

George, John Septimus' oldest full brother, was a career military man. He enlisted in the Royal Victorian Navy as an armourer's apprentice in 1885 when only 12, well under the age limit of 15, apparently with the approval and assistance of his father.⁴⁵ He went on to a long and distinguished career in the Australian Navy, fighting in the Chinese Boxer Rebellion and in the First World War. He was appointed a member of the Order of the British Empire in 1928 and retired as a lieutenant commander in 1931 after 45 years of service.⁴⁶ George married three times⁴⁷⁴⁸⁴⁹ and had two sons from his first marriage.⁵⁰⁵¹ (His second marriage ended in divorce when his wife refused to move from Victoria to join him in Western Australia.)⁵² He lived to the age of 93, dying in 1965.⁵³

The second oldest full brother was Arthur John, who lived in Victoria his whole life. He was a butcher⁵⁴ and had two children with his wife Evelina; Arthur George, (b. 1899), who died young,⁵⁵ and Eva Mildred (b. abt 1903).⁵⁶ No evidence of military service by Arthur John was found.

Next was Alfred Ernest, who did join the Australian Imperial Force in March 1916 at the age of 41, though he gave his age as 39.⁵⁷ He was a labourer by trade and was assigned as a sapper to the 2nd Australian Tunnelling Company. He proceeded overseas to France at the end of August 1916. The 2nd Australian Tunnelling Company was stationed first in the Neuville-Saint-Vaast/Vimy area, then in 1917 moved to the Ypres Salient,⁵⁸ where they dug deep dugouts in preparation for the Battle of Messines. After about a year on the front lines, Alfred Ernest was in England on leave in September 1917 when he was admitted to hospital. He spent the rest of the war in London, recovering first from a bruised right side and subsequently from syphilis. He was still there at the beginning of 1919, when he married an English tailor's daughter, Charlotte Vidgin Parsons, on 1 January 1919. He returned to Australia with his wife in October 1919 and was discharged from the military on 25 January 1920. He died in 1941, at age 65.⁵⁹

There is no evidence that John Septimus' youngest brother, Leslie Walter, served in the military. He was a driver during the war years⁶⁰ and died in 1952 at the age of 66.⁶¹

With respect to John Septimus' half-brothers, no information was found about three of them: Charles, John and James. They would have been too old to serve in the Great War.

William Henry, the second oldest, was born in 1860.⁶² He had moved to Australia by 1883, when he married Bridget French,⁶³ but by 1904 he was in an asylum for the insane, and he died there in 1905.⁶⁴

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¹ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 November 2020), entry for John Septiaus [sic] Prideaux

² "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 November 2020), entry for George Prideaux

³ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 November 2020), entry for Frederick John Prideaux. He was subsequently renamed Arthur John (personal communication from Jim McGregor, a descendant)

⁴ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 November 2020), entry for Malter [sic] Edwin Prideaux

⁵ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 November 2020), entry for Alfred Ernest Prideaux

⁶ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 November 2020), entry for Edgar Prideaux

⁷ "Victoria, Australia, Birth Index, 1837–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 4 December 2020), entry for Frederick Prideaux

⁸ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 November 2020), entry for Fanny Marian Prideaux

⁹ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 November 2020), entry for Florence Maud Prideaux

¹⁰ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 November 2020), entry for Leslie Walter Prideaux

¹¹ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 November 2020), entry for Eisle [sic] May Prideaux

¹² "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 November 2020), entry for Alice Prideaux

¹³ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 November 2020), entry for Jessie Prideaux

¹⁴ "Australia, Death Index, 1787–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 30 November 2020), entry for Malter Edward [sic] Prideaux

¹⁵ "Victoria, Australia, Death Index, 1836–1928," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 30 November 2020), entry for Frederick Prideaux

¹⁶ "Australia, Death Index, 1787–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 30 November 2020), entry for Edgar Prideaux

¹⁷ "Australia, Death Index, 1787–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 30 November 2020), entry for Alice Prideaux

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- ¹⁸ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 November 2020), entry for John Prideaux, Registration district: Stoke Damerel, Inferred county: Devon, Volume: 5b, Page: 557
- ¹⁹ "Jersey, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 23 December 2020), entry for Ann Elizabeth Collings
- ²⁰ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 November 2020), entry for Charles John Prideaux, Registration district: Stoke Damerel, Inferred county: Devon, Volume: 5b, Page: 301
- ²¹ "England and Wales Births 1837–2006," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.com: accessed 25 November 2020), entry for William Henry Prideaux, District: Stoke Damerel, County: Devon, Volume: 5b, Page: 310
- ²² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 November 2020), entry for John George Prideaux, Registration district: Stoke Damerel, Inferred county: Devon, Volume: 5b, Page: 340
- ²³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 November 2020), entry for James Thomas Prideaux, Registration district: Stoke Damerel, Inferred county: Devon, Volume: 5b, Page: 298
- ²⁴ R.M. Prideaux, *Prideaux: A Westcountry Clan. History of Prideaux Family in Cornwall and Devonshire, England; 1066–1988*, Phillimore Book Publishing Co., 1989
- ²⁵ "1841 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 November 2020), entry for John Prideaux, Registration district: Stoke Damerel, Sub-registration district: Clowance, Piece: 272, Book: 1, Folio: 22, Page: 39
- ²⁶ "1861 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 1 December 2020), entry for John Prideaux, Registration district: Stoke Damerel, Sub-registration district: Morice, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 1, Piece: 1451, Folio: 4, Page: 2
- ²⁷ "John Prideaux, gunner, Victorian Naval Forces Muster, adapted from article in *The Argus*, 17 July 1930," *Cerberus* (http://www.cerberus.com.au/muster_dadabik/index.php?table_name=crew&function=details&where_field=ID&where_value=105: accessed 3 December 2020)
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ "UK, Naval Medal and Award Rolls, 1793–1972," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 3 December 2020), entry for Jno [sic] Prideaux
- ³⁰ "HMS/HMVS Nelson - 120 Gun Line-of-Battleship 1814", *Naval Historical Society of Australia* (<https://www.navyhistory.org.au/hmshmvs-nelson-120-gun-line-of-battleship-1814/>: accessed 4 December 2020)
- ³¹ *Ibid.*
- ³² "Joseph John William Frogley," *Victorian Naval Forces Muster* (http://www.cerberus.com.au/muster_dadabik/index.php?table_name=crew&function=details&where_field=ID&where_value=41: accessed 4 December 2020)
- ³³ "Australia, Death Index, 1787–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 30 November 2020), entry for Annie Prideaux
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- ³⁶ c.f. ref. 26
- ³⁷ "Australia, Death Index, 1787–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 30 November 2020), entry for Jno [sic] Prideaux
- ³⁸ "Australia, Death Index, 1787–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 30 November 2020), entry for Priscilla Fanny Prideaux

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- ³⁹ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 5 December 2020), Electoral Date 1903, entry for John Septimus Prideaux
- ⁴⁰ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 5 December 2020), Electoral Date 1912, entry for John Septimus Prideaux
- ⁴¹ "Australia, WW1 Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 5 December 2020), entry for John Prideaux. Unless otherwise specified, all information about his military service comes from this source.
- ⁴² "War Diary of the 6th Battalion, AIF, July 1916," (<https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1004624/large/4931101.JPG>: accessed 5 December 2020)
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 30 March 2020), entry for Prideaux, John, Service No:3122
- ⁴⁵ "A Navy is Born," by G. Prideaux, *The West Australian* 31 July 1937, page 2 (<http://www.cerberus.com.au/prideaux.pdf>: accessed 7 December 2020)
- ⁴⁶ "Naval Veteran Retires: Lieut.-Commander Prideaux", *The Argus*, 17 July 1930, Trove (<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/4100103?searchTerm=Lieut.-Commander%20Prideaux>: accessed 8 December 2020)
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- ⁴⁸ "Australia, Marriage Index, 1788–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 9 December 2020), entry for George Prideaux, Marriage date: 1919, Registration number: 11091
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- ⁵⁰ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 29 November 2020), entry for Clarence Victor Prideaux
- ⁵¹ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 November 2020), entry for John Stanley Prideaux
- ⁵² "Wife Wouldn't Come West," in *New Call*, 7 December 1933, Trove (<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/210849859?searchTerm=wife%20wouldn%27t%20come%20west>: accessed 9 December 2020)
- ⁵³ "Global, Find a Grave Index for Burials at Sea and other Select Burial Locations, 1300's–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 9 December 2020), entry for George Prideaux
- ⁵⁴ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 5 December 2020), Electoral Date 1913, entry for Arthur Prideaux
- ⁵⁵ "Australia, Death Index, 1787–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 30 November 2020), entry for Arth Geo [sic] Prideaux
- ⁵⁶ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 29 November 2020), entry for Eva Mildred Prideaux
- ⁵⁷ "Australia, WW1 Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 5 December 2020), entry for Alfred Ernest Prideaux. Unless otherwise specified, all information about his military service comes from this source.
- ⁵⁸ "2nd Australian Tunnelling Company," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Australian_Tunnelling_Company: accessed 12 December 2020)
- ⁵⁹ "Australia, Death Index, 1787–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 30 November 2020), entry for Alfred Ernest Prideaux
- ⁶⁰ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 5 December 2020), Electoral Date 1916, entry for Leslie Walter Prideaux
- ⁶¹ "Australia, Death Index, 1787–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 30 November 2020), entry for Leslie Walt Prideaux

⁶² "England and Wales Births 1837–2006," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.com: accessed 25 November 2020), entry for William Henry Prideaux, District: Stoke Damerel, County: Devon, Volume: 5b, Page: 310

⁶³ "Australia, Marriage Index, 1788–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 9 December 2020), entry for William Prideaux, Marriage date: 1883, Registration number: 3932

⁶⁴ "Victoria, Australia, Asylum Records, 1853–1940," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 13 December 2020), entry for William Henry Prideaux