

Brookwood 1914-1918 Memorial

Surrey, England



Lest We Forget

World War 1



296A PRIVATE

V. ASSER

AUSTRALIAN ARMY SERVICE CORPS

5TH MARCH, 1918

Verney ASSER

Verney Asser stated he was born at Ballarat, Victoria, Australia in 1887.

(Note: Unable to locate a birth for "Verney Asser" in Victoria on Victorian BDM's website. At the Court of Criminal Appeal Asser stated his name was "James Nugent" & he had been a bugler boy on one of His Majesty's Ships who had been discharged 14 years prior for Dementia.)

Verney Asser was a 28 year old, single, Porter when he enlisted at Zeitoun, Egypt on 1st March, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 296 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his brother – No 5 Perry St, Ballarat, Victoria. Verney Asser stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served as Instructional Staff in Australia.

Private Verney Asser was posted to 1st Company, A.A.S.C. (Australian Army Service Corps) on 1st March, 1916 having stowed away on *Malwa*. (The Statement of Service form has 2 dates that Private Asser was posted to 1st Company A.A.S.C. – 1st March, 1916 & 24th March, 1916. The Casualty Form – Active Service has the following recorded: "*The above mentioned stowaway has been duly sworn in and is posted to the 1st Coy, A.A.S.C. Zeitoun 24/3/16*").

Private Verney Asser was admitted to 1st Australian General Hospital at Cairo with Influenza on 2nd March, 1916.

Private Verney Asser was admitted to No. 3 Auxiliary Hospital at Cairo with Follicula on 14th March, 1916. He was discharged to duty on 17th March, 1916.

Private Verney Asser was marched in and posted to Headquarters Miscellaneous Reinforcements at Garrison Camp, Cairo on 28th March, 1916.

Private Verney Asser was in Reinforcement Camp at Tel-el-Kebir on 17th April, 1916.

Private Verney Asser was discharged to duty from Red Cross Hospital at Montazah on 21st May 1916 having suffered from Rheumatism.

Private Verney Asser was admitted to Delhi Hospital, Wiltshire on 22nd July, 1916 from A.A.S.C. Training Depot with Mental Derangement. He was discharged from Hospital on 26th July, 1916 & marched in to A.S.C. Training Depot at Parkhouse on 28th July, 1916.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Private Verney Asser was taken on strength of A.A.S.C. (Australian Army Service Corps) Details in England on 26th July, 1916.

Private Verney Asser proceeded overseas to France from England on 12th September, 1916 as Reinforcements to 2nd Divisional Train.

Private Verney Asser was written up for a Crime while posted at 2nd Divisional Base Depot at Etaples – Being out of bounds on 24th September, 1916. He was awarded 7 days C.C. (confined to Camp) on 25th September, 1916.

Private Verney Asser was marched in to Australian General Base Depot at Etaples, France on 28th September, 1916 & marched out to Base Depot on 2nd October, 1916. He was marched in to A.H.T. Depot at Havre, France on 3rd October, 1916.

Private Verney Asser was sent to 281st Company at Havre on Command on 26th October, 1916.

Private Verney Asser was written up for a Crime on 31st October, 1916 – when on active service absent, returning off pass from 21.30 on 31st October, 1916 until apprehended at 06.00 on 1st November, 1916 (8 ½ hours). He was awarded a forfeiture of 16 days' pay

Private Verney Asser was marched in from 2nd Auxiliary H. T. Depot (on command) on 20th November, 1916.

Private Verney Asser was written up for a Crime on 22nd November, 1916 – absent off fatigue duty from 10.30 to 11.30. He was awarded 3 days C.C. (confined to camp) from 23rd November, 1916.

Private Verney Asser was written up for a Crime on 12th December, 1916 – when on active service – drunkenness. He was deprived of 14 days' pay on 15th December, 1916.

Private Verney Asser proceeded to 1st Anzac Entrenching Battalion on 16th December, 1916. He was attached for duty on 21st December, 1916 with 1st Anzac Entrenching Battalion.

1st Anzac Entrenching Battalion

The 1st Anzac Entrenching Battalion was a First Australian Imperial Force (AIF) battalion of World War I. It was formed in June 1916 with the role of preparing soldiers for combat with the AIF's infantry battalions. From September that year until the battalion's disbandment in October 1917 it was used as a tunnelling unit. (*Wikipedia*)

Private Verney Asser was sent sick to Hospital in France on 7th January, 1917. He was admitted to 1st Australian Field Ambulance on 7th January, 1917 with Gastritis then transferred the same day to 1st A.R.R.S. Private Asser embarked from Rouen, France for England on 17th January, 1917 on Hospital Ship *St. Patrick* suffering Gastritis & Debility.

Private Verney Asser was admitted to 3rd Australian General Hospital at Brighton, England on 19th January, 1917 with slight Bronchitis. He was discharged for furlough from 19th February, 1917 until 6th March, 1917 & was then to report to Perham Downs.

Private Verney Asser was marched in to No. 1 Command Depot at Perham Downs, Wiltshire from furlough on 5th March, 1917. He was medically classified as B1 A (fit for overseas Training Camp in a few weeks).

Private Verney Asser was marched in to A.A.S.C. Training Depot at Parkhouse, Wiltshire on 11th April, 1917 from No. 1 Command Depot at Perham Downs.

Private Verney Asser attended a course in the Lewis Gun at Tidworth, Wiltshire, England from 16th to 25th August, 1917 & classed 2nd Class.

Private Verney Asser was appointed as Acting Lance Corporal (no date).

Acting Lance Corporal Verney Asser was appointed as Acting Corporal from 24th October, 1917. (Note: Statement of Service form has date as 24th January, 1917 however Casualty Form – Active Service has date as 24th October, 1917.)

Acting Corporal Verney Asser was written up for an Offence while posted with 2nd Training Battalion, Sutton Veny, Wiltshire – “*Conduct to the prejudice of good order & Military discipline in that he made a false statement to his Commanding Officer.*” He reverted to the permanent grade of Private on 29th November, 1917 by Captain Guilfoyle (Acting C.O.).

Private Verney Asser was marched out from 2nd Training Battalion, Sutton Veny, Wiltshire to Warminster on 4th December, 1917 under escort.

A Murder Trial was held at the Wilts Assize on the 15th & 16th January, 1918. Private Verney Asser being charged with the murder of No. 5372 Acting Corporal Joseph Harold Durkin, 6th Battalion, at Sutton Veny Camp on the 27th November, 1917.

Jury's verdict – Guilty. Judges' Sentence – Death.

A memo written by T. Griffith, Brig-General, Commandant on 25th January, 1918 to Administrative Headquarters, London reads:

“re Murder by No. 296A, A/Cpl. Asser, V., A.A.S.C.

I have to report that a Jury at the Assizes at Devizes in England have brought in a verdict of “Guilty” on a charge of the murder of No. 5372 Corporal Joseph Harold Durkin by the above-named soldier, both of the 2nd Training Battalion, A.I.F.

At the inquest on Durkin a verdict of suicide was returned, but several days after a soldier in the adjoining hut made a report inculcating Asser.

There seemed some doubt as to whether the case came within the provision relating to the engagement of counsel at the expense of the Commonwealth, but under the special circumstances I arranged for counsel to conduct the defence. The prosecution showed by experiments made with the Lewis Gun that the deceased could not have shot himself, that it was discharged within five inches of deceased's head, and that as Asser was the only other occupant of the hut he must have shot him. The Jury believed this account and accused was sentenced to death."

Court of Criminal Appeal

MURDER BY A SOLDIER; APPLICATION DISMISSED.

REX v. ASSER.

(Before Mr. Justice Darling, Mr. Justice A.T. Lawrence and
Mr. Justice Shearman)

The Court refused an application for leave to appeal by Verney Asser, an Australian soldier who was convicted on January 16, at the Devizes Assizes of the murder of a comrade, named Joseph Harold Durkin. The applicant was sentenced to death.

MR. EMANUEL, who appeared for the applicant said that he had drafted his own notice of appeal which was based on the ground of insanity, a defence which had not been dealt with at the trial. The notice stated that the applicant had been subject to insanity and that it was in his family. His father had committed suicide at Bootle some years ago, and he (the applicant) had himself been in Asylums and in the Mental Wards of Hospitals. He said that if he committed the act for which he had been sentenced he could not have been responsible for his actions. Counsel said that at the trial the only material before him on which to found a defence of insanity was that the applicants Military Record Sheet contained an entry that in July 1916, he was admitted to Hospital "Mental Derangement" and was discharged to duty 4 days later.

Enquiries were made and a telegram was received from the Military Authorities confirming the entry and containing the words-" Diagnosis: Alcoholism!" After the trial enquiries were made which showed that a James Nugent a bugler boy on one of His Majesty's Ships was discharged from the service 14 years ago for Dementia. The applicant said that he was that boy, and that he had enlisted in this war under the name of Asser, so that the Military Authorities might not

know that he had been in a Lunatic Asylum. The applicants conduct on the evening of the crime was peculiar enough to suggest insanity. The applicant and Durkin occupied the same hut in camp. In the next hut was a man named Milne. Durkin was found on the information of the applicant shot through the head in bed. Milne stated that on three occasions between 9.30 and 11 O'clock the applicant came into his hut and went to some Lewis Gun Ammunition which was kept there and said that he was taking away empty magazines. After the crime two unused magazines each containing 48 cartridges were found in the applicants hut.

Mr. JUSTICE DARLING. In giving judgement said that the Court was asked to try the applicant on a defence which had never been set up at the trial and, if the Court was convinced that he was insane to squash the conviction and to enter a special verdict of insanity. The Court had never granted such an application. It had been explained many times that in such circumstances it was not for that Court to try the case, but that it was a matter with which the Home Secretary could much better deal. The Home Office could ascertain whether the applicant had ever been insane and whether he was insane at present. The application would, therefore, be refused.

Private Verney Asser was executed (hanged) at H.M. Prison Shepton Mallet , Somerset, England on 5th March, 1918 for the murder of Corporal Joseph Harold Durkin after conviction by a Civil Court.

A death for Verney Asser, aged 30, was registered in the March quarter, 1918 in the district of Shepton Mallet, Somerset, England.

Private Verney Asser was buried in an unmarked grave within the walls of H.M. Prison Shepton Mallet, as was customary following British executions.

A memo from Colonel, 3rd Military District, dated 6th June, 1918 to Base Records reads: *"With reference to your 84940 of 22/3/18, reporting No. 296A Private V. ASSER, 1st Divisional Train, A.A.S.C., Hanged 5/3/18 after conviction by Civil Court, for the murder of No. 5372 Acting Corporal J. H. Durkin, 6th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, on 27/11/17, please note that no trace of the next-of-kin can be found. Enquiries were instituted at the Office of the District Paymaster, and through the medium of the Press, but success in this regard has not been attained."*

Private Verney Asser is now remembered on the Brookwood 1914 – 1918 Memorial Panel 4, located in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England. He was accepted for commemoration as war dead on 7th March, 2010.

Private Verney Asser would have been entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal, however on conviction of Murder these were automatically forfeited. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also to be sent to Private Asser's next of kin but this was cancelled. A verbal order was given (written on a scrap piece of paper in the Service Record file) that the Booklet & Circular War Gratuities was not to be issued.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Verney Asser – service number 296A, of 1st Div. Train., Australian Army Service Corps. No family details are listed.

Private V. Asser is NOT commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

V. Asser is remembered on the Ballarat Memorial Wall & Rotunda located at Sturt Street and Learmonth Avenue, Ballarat, Victoria.



Ballarat Memorial Wall & Rotunda (Photo from Carol's Headstone Photos)

Verney Asser is also remembered on the Ballarat Avenue of Honour (1917-1919) where almost 4,000 trees were planted to represent the number of men and women from the Ballarat district who served in World War 1. The trees were planted at intervals of 12 metres along 22 kms of the Ballarat-Burrenbeet Road. The Ballarat Avenue of Honour is famous for being the first avenue of its kind in Australia. Plaque number 2188 planted by E. Bennett.



The Arch of Victory was built as an entrance to the Avenue of Honour (Photo from Monument Australia)



Ballarat Avenue of Honour (Photo from Victorian War Heritage Inventory)

(62 pages of Private Verney Asser's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives



The Sutton Veny Camp Murder

One of the earliest uses of an experiment in ballistics in the detection of a crime took place in Wiltshire in 1917 – after a murder was discovered at Sutton Veny Camp. In 1917 Britain was in the last painful throes of the First World War. Salisbury Plain was, for hundreds of thousands of doomed men, their last home on English soil. The Plain was then, as it is now, a huge training area. Hutted and canvass encampments were situated all around. From dawn till dusk the thunder of horses' hooves, rattle of machine gun fire and rumble of artillery could be heard. Thousands of miles from home, for thirty-one-year old Australian Verney Asser, the War consisted of training young Australians to use the Lewis machine gun at the Sutton Veny firing range. Asser shared a hut with another Australian, Corporal Durkin, also a Lewis Gun Instructor. Durkin and Asser were competing for the affections of a young widow. Durkin was the luckier of the two and, despite an engagement to an Australian girl, he began to see the widow on a regular basis. Towards the end of November 1917 he wrote to ask her to visit the camp on the 28th. The night before she was due to arrive, both men finished duty early and visited the canteen. Both appeared to be in good spirits. The two returned to their hut at about 9pm. During the evening, no doubt, Corporal Durkin informed Asser that he was expecting to see the woman on the following day. At 9.30pm Asser called at the musketry store almost next door to his hut, and told Corporal Milne, who was in charge, that he wanted some empty magazines. He was allowed to help himself. Five minutes later, as Corporal Milne was preparing to go to bed, he heard a shot from Asser's hut – a bullet came smashing through the wall, passing through a tunic and a haversack, before exiting through the other wall on the far side of the hut. Milne, believing the shot to be an accident, thought nothing more of it. He undressed and went to bed. Forty minutes later Asser was again at the musketry store. He rummaged around for a minute or so and left once more. When questioned afterwards Corporal Milne did not know what Asser had taken. Ten minutes later the Corporal heard another shot from the same direction and, at just after 11pm, Asser turned up with the Sergeant of the Guard to say that Durkin had shot himself. The body was found undressed and covered by bedclothes. Durkin's

body was lying on its right side, with the arms outstretched and a rifle lying across the wrists. There was a bullet wound on the left cheek and an exit wound on the opposite side of the head, just below the ear. Asser claimed that he had been woken by the shot at 10.45pm. Jumping out of bed, and by the light of a match, he saw that Durkin had shot himself. Before he had alerted the Sergeant, Asser claimed that he had snatched the rifle away, ejected the cartridge and replaced the rifle in the position in which it had been found. Asser's bed, however, was rolled up – so he couldn't have slept on it. When questioned further, Asser gave the unlikely explanation that he had slept on the floor! Furthermore when Asser had alerted the Sergeant, he had been fully dressed and was wearing both his puttees and his boots. He denied all knowledge of the shot which had penetrated Corporal Milne's hut. The facts were reported to the local police constable and, at the following day's inquest, Asser gave evidence that he believed Durkin had been depressed about his relationship with his fiancée and the young widow. The jury returned a verdict of suicide.

In the meantime Superintendent Scott visited the scene of the tragedy. After experimenting with the rifle, and hearing Corporal Milne's evidence, Scott concluded that Durkin had been murdered. The crime was reconstructed and it was proved beyond doubt that suicide was impossible. With the muzzle of the weapon pressed against the cheek, the trigger was too far for a man of Durkin's build to reach. When the fatal wound was examined it was noted that there were no signs of singeing at the point where the bullet had entered the face. The shot must have been fired at some distance from the cheek rather than from directly against it. In order to disprove the theory of suicide it was decided to conduct one of Wiltshire's first experiments in ballistics. The aim was to produce a wound that resembled the one causing Durkin's death. A leg and shoulder of newly skinned mutton was chosen as a target. By firing at the mutton from varying distances, with the same rifle and similar bullets, it was discovered that a very similar wound could be produced from a range of five inches. With Durkin's slight build and the muzzle of the rifle five inches away it would have been impossible for him to pull the trigger with his finger. Suicide could have been committed – but only if he had used his toe to pull the trigger, and then only if he had been uncovered. Accordingly Asser was arrested on 3rd December and committed for trial at the Devizes Assizes on the 18th January 1918. The only problem for the prosecution was in establishing a motive for the murder. There was evidence of quarrels in the past, and that the two men had both visited the same woman – but there was no proof that there had been jealousy over her affections. However, the jury's attention was drawn to the results of the experiments with the rifle, the significance of Asser's visit to the musketry store and the dress of the defendant at the time. The judge also asked why Asser took the gun from the deceased and ejected the cartridge. The defendant replied that he didn't know. He also denied that he had visited the musketry store. This, said the judge in summing up, was a question of either accepting the defendant's word or the Corporal's. Asser also denied firing the shot that penetrated the Corporal's hut. Asser was convicted of murder and leave to appeal on the grounds of insanity was refused. He was hanged. The Director of Public Prosecutions commended Superintendent Scott for his initiative.

(The History of Wiltshire Constabulary)



Newspaper Notices

THE WARMINSTER TRAGEDY

SOLDIER CHARGED WITH MURDER

Verky Asser, Lewis gun instructor to the Australian Force, was at Warminster yesterday and committed for trial, charged with the wilful murder of Joseph Harold Durkin, also an instructor.

Evidence was that the men occupied a hut together, and on the night of November 27, Asser went to the guardroom and reported that Durkin had shot himself.

Mr Sims, for the Public Prosecution, stated it was impossible for Durkin to have taken his own life. He had a bullet wound in the cheek and the rifle from which the cartridge had been extracted was lying across his body on a ___ bed.

(Western Daily Press, Bristol – Friday December 21, 1917)

HUT MYSTERY

Army Gun Instructor Sent for Trial on Charge of Murder

An Australian Lewis gun instructor named Verney Asser was sent for trial at Warminster yesterday on a charge of the wilful murder of Joseph Harold Durkin, also an instructor.

Durkin was found shot in the head, a bullet having entered his left cheek. He was lying in his bunk in a hut, the only other occupant of which was Asser. A rifle was lying by his side.

Asser reported that Durkin had shot himself, but the prosecution called evidence to show that this was impossible.

(The Daily Mirror – December 21, 1917)

WILTSHIRE CAMP MURDER

APPEAL COURT AND A PLEA FOR INSANITY

In the criminal Appeal Court on Monday, Verney Asser, a former member of the Australian Imperial Force, applied for leave to appeal against his conviction at Wiltshire Assize for the wilful murder of a comrade at a West of England camp.

Mr Emanuel, for the appellant, read a statement written by the appellant, in which he stated that insanity ran in his family, and that his father committed suicide at Bootle. The appellant also asserted that he had been detained at Haslar Hospital and other places for insanity.

Counsel stated that the actions of the appellant before he committed the crime were consistent with the theory that he was not responsible for his actions at the time.

Mr Justice Darling said that this case fell within the rules of the Court to the effect that where such a defence as this is put forward by an appellant as a reason for a re-trial they considered it was far more satisfactory, in the interests of justice and the prisoner himself, that the matter should be left in the hands of the Home Secretary to investigate. Under these circumstances the application would be disallowed.

(Bristol and Exeter Journal and Western Advertiser, Taunton and Bristol – Wednesday February 20, 1918)

EXECUTION AT SHEPTON MALLET

Verney Asser, late a member of the Australian Imperial Force, was hanged at Shepton Mallet Prison yesterday for the murder of a comrade named Dinkin, at a West of England camp.

(Western Daily Press, Bristol – Wednesday March 6, 1918)

EXECUTION AT SHEPTON MALLET

Verney Asser, late a member of the Australian Field Force, was hanged at Shepton Mallet on Tuesday morning for the murder of a comrade at a West of England Camp. It will be remembered that Asser was condemned to death on January 16th, and an appeal was lodged on the ground of insanity. This appeal was, however, dismissed.

Great secrecy was observed in regard to the execution, and there was no hoisting of the black flag or tolling the bell. The first intimation the inhabitants of Shepton Mallet had of the occurrence was the posting of the notice on the outside of the gaol.

A coroner's inquest was held on the body and the evidence of the governor of the gaol, as also the doctor in attendance, was to the effect that death had been instantaneous.

No statement was made by the prisoner as to his guilt or innocence.

(Somerset and West of England Advertiser – Friday March 8, 1918)

WILTSHIRE MURDER EXECUTED

London March 6

Cpl. Asser, otherwise known as Berney Asher, who was sentenced to death at the Wiltshire Assizes for the murder of a gun instructor on November 25, was executed at the Shepton Mallet Prison on Tuesday.

(The Register, Adelaide, Sth Australia – Friday 8 March, 1918)

SUTTON VENY

SOLDIER EXECUTED

SEQUEL TO CAMP TRAGEDY

Verny Asser, late a member of the Australian Field Force, was hanged at Shepton Mallet on Tuesday morning for the murder of a comrade, named Joseph Harold Durkin, who was found dead in the Camp, while two used cartridge cases were found among the Prisoners effects.

It will be remembered that Asser was condemned to death at the Wilts Assize on January 16th, but an appeal was lodged on the ground of insanity. This appeal was, however, dismissed. Great secrecy was taken in regard to the execution, and there was no hoisting of the black flag, of the tolling of the bell. The first intimation the inhabitants of Shepton Mallet had of the occurrence was the posting of the notice outside the gaol.

A Coroners Inquest was held on the body and the evidence of the governor of the gaol, as also the doctor in attendance was to the effect that death had been instantaneous.

No statement had been made by the Prisoner as to his guilt or innocence.

(Wiltshire Times, England – 9 March, 1918)

NEXT OF KIN

The undermentioned are requested to communicate with the officer in charge, base records, Victoria Barracks, Melbourne :-The next of kin of No. 296A Pte V. Asser, 1st Divisional Train, A.A.S.C, Australian Imperial Force, is requested to communicate with the chief clerk, 3rd Military District, Victoria Barracks.

(The Age, Melbourne, Victoria – Saturday 6 April, 1918)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for cemeteries and memorials in 23,000 locations, in 153 countries. In all 1.7 million men and women from the Commonwealth forces from WWI and WWII have been honoured and commemorated in perpetuity.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, as part of its mandate, is responsible for commemorating all Commonwealth war dead individually and equally. To this end, the war dead are commemorated by name on a headstone, at an identified site of a burial, or on a memorial. War dead are commemorated uniformly and equally, irrespective of military or civil rank, race or creed.

Not all service personnel have a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. In some instances the relative chose to have their own memorial/headstone placed on the deceased's grave. These private headstones are not maintained by the CWGC as they have no jurisdiction to maintain them.

Private Verney Asser is remembered on the Brookwood 1914-1918 Memorial located within Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England. He was accepted for commemoration as war dead on 7th March, 2010 by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission after his case was submitted.

Brookwood Memorial within Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England

Brookwood is 30 miles from London (M3 to Bagshot and then A322). The main entrance to Brookwood Military Cemetery is on the A324 from the village of Pirbright. There is a direct train service from Waterloo to Brookwood Station from which there is an entrance to the cemetery. The postcode for Brookwood is GU24 0JB. The 1914-1918 Memorial stands on St. Lawrence Avenue, north-east of the 1939-1945 Memorial.

BROOKWOOD MILITARY CEMETERY is owned by the Commission and is the largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the United Kingdom, covering approximately 37 acres. In 1917, an area of land in Brookwood Cemetery (The London Necropolis) was set aside for the burial of men and women of the forces of the Commonwealth and Americans, who had died, many of battle wounds, in the London district. This site was further extended to accommodate the Commonwealth casualties of the Second World War. There is a large Royal Air Forces section in the south-east corner of the cemetery (which also contains the graves of Czech and American airmen who served with the Royal Air Force) and the Air Forces shelter building nearby houses the register of the names of those buried in the section. A plot in the west corner of the cemetery contains approximately 2,400 Canadian graves of the Second World War including those of 43 men who died of wounds following the Dieppe Raid in August 1942. The Canadian Records building, which was a gift of the Canadian government, houses a reception room for visitors and other offices. In addition to the Commonwealth plots, the cemetery also contains French, Polish, Czech, Belgian and Italian sections, and a number of war graves of other nationalities all cared for by the Commission. The American Military Cemetery is the responsibility of the American Battle Monuments Commission. Brookwood Military Cemetery now contains 1,601 Commonwealth burials of the First World War and 3,476 from the Second World War. Of the Second World War burials 5 are unidentified, 3 being members of the R.A.F. and 2 being members of the R.C.A.F. The war graves of other nationalities in the Commission's care number 786 including 28 unidentified French.

THE BROOKWOOD 1914-1918 MEMORIAL was designed to commemorate Commonwealth casualties who died in the UK and Ireland who have no known grave. The majority of the casualties are servicemen and women from the land forces of the United Kingdom, who subsequently died in the care of their families. They were not commemorated by the Commission at the time but, through the efforts of relatives and research groups, including the "In From The Cold" Project, these casualties have since been found. There are still many cases to be resolved and the memorial therefore allows for further names to be added. Unusually and because of the varied circumstances surrounding many of these casualties, investigative work continues and this may lead to the identification of their burial locations. Whenever a casualty's grave is located and verified, commemoration will move to the burial site and thus some of the entries on the memorial will no longer be required. As a result and when memorial panels are replaced, these entries will be removed. In addition, the Brookwood 1914-18 Memorial commemorates some land and air forces casualties who were lost at sea. These casualties would normally be commemorated on the Hollybrook Memorial in Southampton, but the memorial panels there are now full and so their commemoration has been added to this memorial. 406 Names were listed on the Brookwood 1914-1918 Memorial in December 2019.

The BROOKWOOD 1939-1945 MEMORIAL stands at the southern end of the Canadian section of the cemetery and commemorates 3,500 men and women of the land forces of the Commonwealth who died during the Second World War and have no known grave, the circumstances of their death being such that they could not appropriately be commemorated on any of the campaign memorials in the various theatres of war. They died in the campaign in Norway in 1940, or in the various raids on enemy occupied territory in Europe such as Dieppe and St Nazaire. Others were special agents who died as prisoners or while working with Allied underground movements. Some died at sea, in hospital ships and troop transports, in waters not associated with the major campaigns, and a few were killed in flying accidents or in aerial combat. As an agency service on behalf of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, the Commission also maintains a plot of the graves of Chelsea Pensioners, which is situated adjacent to the Military Cemetery, and a small plot containing the graves of 12 members of the nursing services in the adjoining Brookwood Cemetery is also in the Commission's care.

(Information from CWGC)



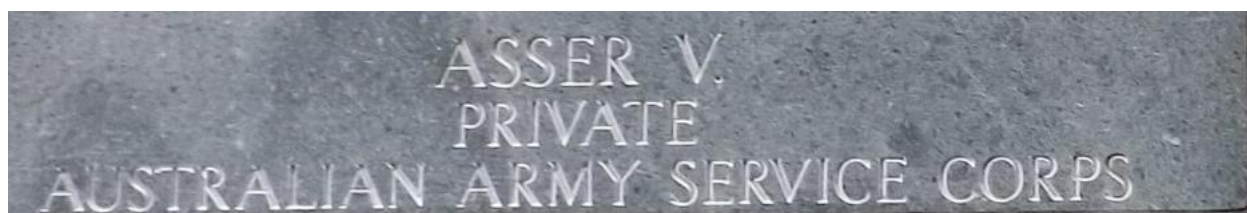
Brookwood 1914-1918 Memorial *(Photos from CWGC)*



Photo of Private V. Asser's name on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Brookwood 1914-1918 Memorial in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England.



(Photo by darealjolo – Find a Grave)



Corporal Joseph Harold Durkin was buried in St. John the Evangelist Churchyard, Sutton Veny, Wiltshire, England on 1st December, 1917.

