

**St. James Churchyard,  
Quedgeley, Gloucestershire**

**War Grave**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**2873 LANCE CPL.**

**B. J. BROWNING**

**4TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**16TH AUGUST, 1916**

*Resting Where No Shadows Fall*

## Bernard John BROWNING

Bernard John Longney Browning was born at Malvern, near Worcester, Worcestershire, England to parents Albert James & Harriet Louisa Browning (nee Morris). His birth was registered in the March quarter, 1888 in the district of Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire.

The 1891 England Census listed Bernard J. L. Browning as a 3 year old living with his parents at 42 St. James St. Cheltenham (Malsters Arms). His parents were listed as Albert J. Browning (Pub Innkeeper, aged 31, born Quedgeley, Gloucestershire) & Harriet L. Browning (aged 27, born Gloucester, Gloucestershire). Also listed was George Whittom (Visitor, Inn – Hotel Porter, aged 47).

Bernard John Browning attended Sir Thomas Rich's School, Gloucester.

The 1901 England Census listed Bernard J. L. Browning as a 13 year old living with his family at Severn Farm, Quedgeley, Gloucestershire. His parents were listed as Albert Jas. Browning (Farmer, aged 41) & Harriet Louisa Browning (aged 37). Also listed was Bernard's younger sister – Florence A. Browning (aged 5, born Gloucester, Gloucestershire).

The 1911 England Census listed Bernard J. Browning as a 23 year old, Assisting on Farm living with his family at Severn Farm, Quedgeley in a 7 roomed dwelling. His parents were listed as Albert J. Browning (Farmer, aged 51) & H. Louise Browning (aged 47). Bernard's parents had been married for 24 years, having had 4 children, with 1 child deceased. Bernard was the eldest of 3 children listed on this Census – Florence B. Browning (Assisting at Home, aged 15) & Stanley A. J. Browning (At School, aged 7, born Quedgeley).

Bernard J. Browning, aged 23, was listed as a passenger on *Wakool* which departed from the port of London, England on 28th April, 1911 bound for Sydney, Australia.

The 1913 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Middle Harbour, subdivision of Manly listed Bernard John Browning, Tram Conductor, of 245 Pittwater Road.

Bernard John Browning was a 28 year old, single, Motor Driver from Rugby Hotel, Newtown, Sydney, New South Wales when he enlisted at Warwick Farm, Sydney, NSW on 9th August, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Church of England & his next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs H. L. Browning, of Severn Farm, Quedgeley, Gloucester, England.

Private Bernard John Browning, Service number 2873, embarked from Sydney, New South Wales on HMAT *Euripides (A14)* on 2nd November, 1915 with the 5th Infantry Brigade, 19th Infantry Battalion, 6th Reinforcements.

Private Bernard Browning was transferred to 4th Battalion on 14th February, 1916 at Tel-el-Kebir. He was promoted to Lance Corporal on 16th February, 1916

Lance Corporal Browning embarked from Alexandria on 23rd March, 1916 for Overseas on Troop Ship *Simla*. He disembarked at Marseilles, France on 30th March, 1916.

Lance Corporal Browning was taken to 3rd Australian Field Ambulance while in France then admitted to 1st Australian Casualty Clearing Station on 3rd June, 1916. He was invalided to England on Hospital Ship *St. Denis* from Anglo American Hospital, Wimereux, France suffering from sub-acute appendicitis on 9th June, 1916.

Lance Corporal Browning was admitted to County of London War Hospital, Epsom with sub-acute Appendicitis on 10th June, 1916 & discharged to Tidworth, Wiltshire on 12th July, 1916.

Lance Corporal Browning was on special sick leave from 11th August, 1916 to report back for duty on 24th August, 1916.

Lance Corporal Bernard John Browning died on 16th August, 1916 when the Taxi-cab he was a passenger in was accidentally driven into the Gloucester and Berkeley Canal at Rea Bridge, Quedgeley, England.



**Rea Bridge, Quedgeley**

A death for Bernard J. L. Browning, aged 28, was registered in the September quarter, 1916 in the district of Gloucester, Gloucestershire, England.

Lance Corporal Bernard John Browning was buried on 21st August, 1916 in St. James Churchyard, Quedgeley, Gloucestershire, England – North-west of Church and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. His Headstone is marked at the top *“Known To Be Buried In This Churchyard.”*

A Court of Enquiry was held on 23rd August, 1916 at Hut 4, No. 1 Camp, Perham Downs, Wiltshire for the purpose of enquiring into and expressing an opinion on the death of No. 2783, Corporal B. J. Browning, 4th Battalion, A.I.F. The Court declared that Corporal B. J. Browning was accidentally killed in the Gloucester and Berkeley Canal, Rea Bridge, Quedgeley on 16th August, 1916. He was not responsible for the accident and was absent from camp on special sick leave when it occurred.

Lance Corporal Bernard John Browning was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Lance Corporal Browning's mother – Mrs H. L. Browning (Scroll sent (date not recorded) & Plaque sent November, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Lance Corporal B. Browning – service number 2873, of 4th Bn., Australian Infantry. No family details are listed.

Lance Corporal B. J. Browning is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 39.



*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

L/Cpl. Bernard J. Browning is remembered on the Quedgeley War Memorial located in the grounds of St. James' Parish Church, School Lane, Quedgeley, Gloucestershire.

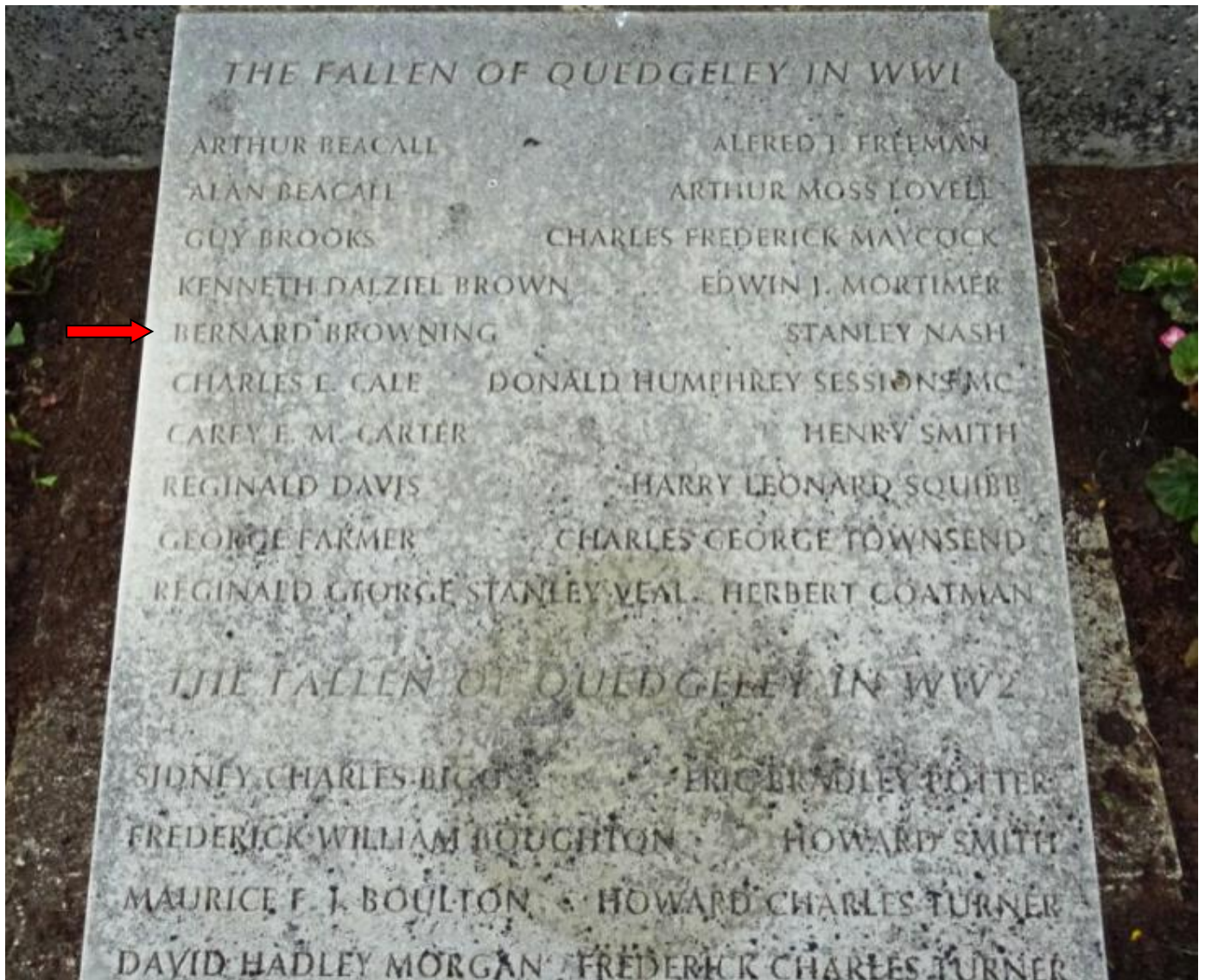


**Quedgeley War Memorial** (Photo from IWM – Mark Newton)





Quedgeley War Memorial (Photos from IWM – John Moore)

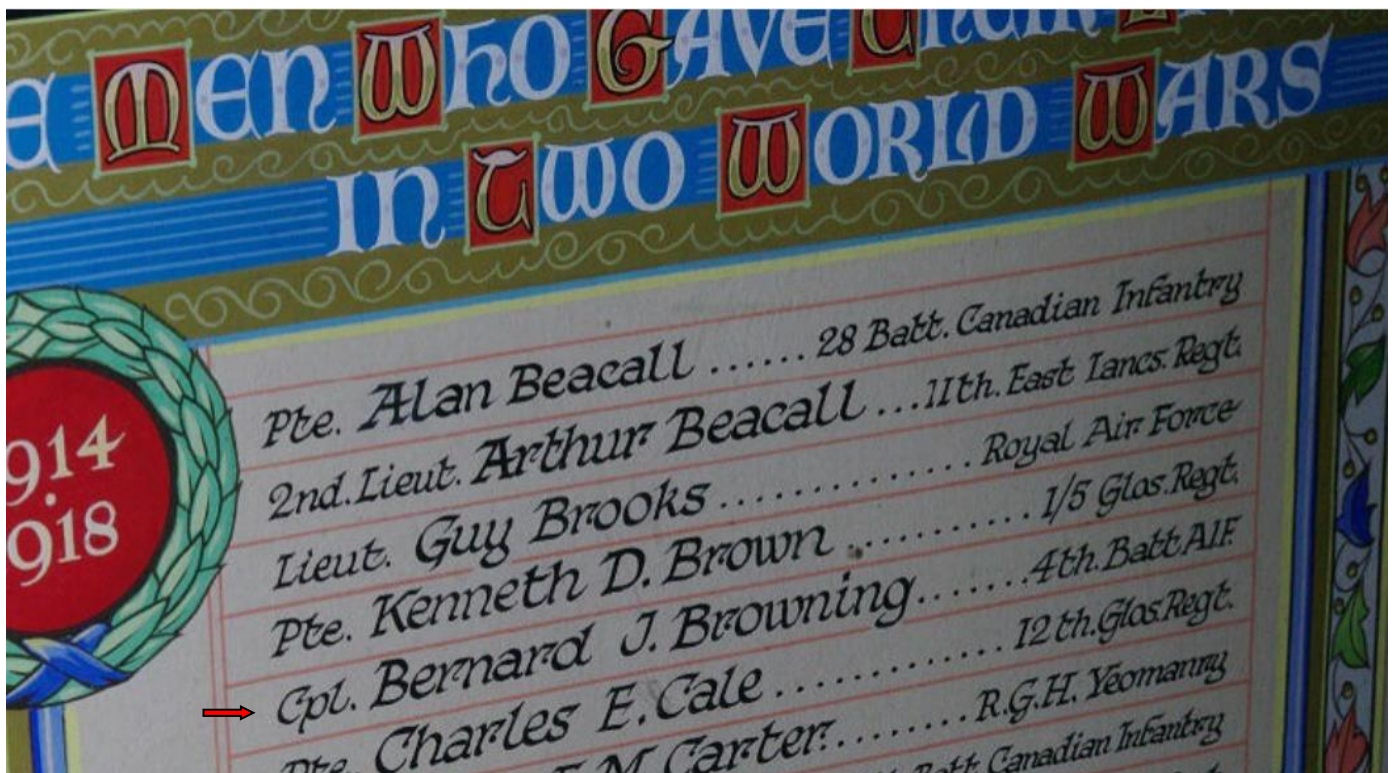




Bernard J. Browning is remembered on St. James the Apostle "In Grateful Memory" Memorial, located in St. James the Apostle Church, School Lane, Quedgeley, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, England.



St. James the Apostle "In Grateful Memory" Memorial (Photos from IWM – Mark Newton)



(43 pages of Lance Corporal Bernard John Browning'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) & National Archives*



**Lance Corporal Bernard John Browning**



Lance Corporal Bernard John Browning



### **Newspaper Notices**

#### **KILLED IN ACTION**

#### **To-day's Casualty List**

NEW SOUTH WALES

ILL

Corp. B. J. BROWNING, England

(*The Sun*, Sydney, NSW – 1 July, 1916)

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## **CAB FISHED FROM CANAL**

### **Bodied of Driver and an Anzac Found After Night Ride**

After dragging operation in the Gloucester and Berkeley Canal yesterday a taxicab with the dead body of the fare, an Australian soldier named Bernard Browning, and Frank Lippiatt were discovered.

The latter fell from the front of the cab as it was being hoisted from the water, and is still being sought for.

Late the previous night the soldier engaged the taxicab to convey him home, and in the dark the driver is believed to have driven into the canal instead of crossing Rea Bridge.

Marks of car wheels to the water indicated the direction the cab took.

Browning, the son of a farmer at Quedgeley, Gloucester, was on sick leave. He had been with the Australian forces in Gallipoli, Egypt and France.

*(Daily Mirror, London – 18 August, 1916)*

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## **GLOUCESTER TAXI-CAB TRAGEDY**

### **Soldier's and Chauffeur's Sad End**

#### **CORONER'S INQUIRY**

The shocking drowning tragedy which happened at the Rea Bridge, Quedgeley, on Wednesday night, resulting in the deaths of Bernard John Browning and Francis William Lippiatt, formed the subject of an inquest which was held by the Coroner for the Stroud district (Mr A. J. Morton Ball) at the Plough Inn, Quedgeley, on Saturday afternoon.

Mr Frank Treasure watched the proceedings on behalf of Mr Albert Browning, father of one of the victims; Mr J. Haines represented the Sharpness New Docks and Gloucester and Birmingham Navigation Company; whilst Mr Harold Langley-Smith (Messrs Langley-Smith and son) represented Mr Walter Colwell, the owner of the taxi-cab which ran into the canal. Captain Evans (Harbour Master) and Mr Morton Rowles, an Inspector employed by the Dock Company, were also present.

The Coroner before the inquest viewed the canal bridge.

Albert James Browning, of Severn Farm, Quedgeley, the father of Barnard John Longney Browning, said his son was unmarried. He had been in Australia for six years, being engaged in Sydney under the Government. He was a licensed motor driver and had driven cars a good deal in Australia. On the outbreak of war he enlisted in the 4th Battalion of the Australian Contingent, and had served in Gallipoli, Egypt and also in France. He was wounded in the stomach and had been in hospital. He had also been operated on for appendicitis. He returned home on August 11th on sick leave. On the afternoon of August 16th he went into Gloucester to see some friends, saying that he should return about midnight. Witness left a light burning for deceased, but in the morning the light was still burning, and as his son had not returned he concluded that he had remained in Gloucester. Early in the morning P.C. Edgington came to the Severn Farm and told witness that there had been a serious accident at the Rea Bridge and that he was afraid his (witness's) son had been drowned. Witness was present when the body was taken from the inside of the cab.

Asked by the Coroner whether he could suggest what could be done to make safety at the bridge, witness said he could not, other than the cutting down of the hedge on the right hand side of the road. Witness remarked that some years ago his wife and brother nearly went into the canal at the spot, but he had never heard of an accident there before.

Mr Walter Colwell, Spa Mews, Gloucester, cab proprietor, said Lippiatt had been in his employ for about three weeks. He was previously engaged at Messrs. Fielding and Platt's works, but previous to that he had been in a motor works at Ross. He was at the time of the accident living at 127, Seymour-road, Gloucester. He was a very careful driver. On the night of August 16th, Lippiatt had been to Quedgeley and had just returned when Browning came up to the Mews and asked to be driven to the Rea Bridge. The time was about 11.20, and the night was dry and fairly bright. Witness told Lippiatt to be careful and mentioned to Browning that he did not know the road very

well. Browning said he did not want to be shut up in the cab, and as he knew the road well and was a motorist, he would sit in the front with the driver and show him the way. He said he would get out on the Gloucester side of the bridge. The last witness saw of them was when the taxi started. They were sitting side by side in the front of the cab. Both were perfectly sober. In the morning witness found that the car had not returned, and was making enquiries when he saw Mr Rowles, who asked him whether he had missed a car. Witness said he had, and Mr Rowles then told him he thought the car was in the canal at Rea Bridge. Witness was present when the body of Browning was taken from the car. It was then inside the cab, but the cab had been raised and dropped a couple of times so that it might have got inside during the raising of the wreckage.

Asked whether he considered the spot a dangerous one, Mr Colwell said he did, and thought a red light of some kind should be placed near the bridge.

Questioned by Mr Langley-Smith, witness said Lippiatt was wearing his white motor coat over his ordinary coat.

By Mr Treasure: He was not aware that the driver was so incompetent that when driving a gentleman to the station he drove along the byways rather than drive through the main thoroughfares.

The Coroner said he did not like such statements made about a dead man unless there was evidence on oath to support it.

Mr Treasure said he knew the gentleman referred to.

Answering further questions, Mr Colwell said Lippiatt obtained his motor driver's license during the three weeks he was with him, but he (witness) considered him to be a competent driver and had found him to be so when he had been with him. Lippiatt was over 17 years of age – the youngest age at which a license was granted.

Joseph Priday, the keeper of the Rea Bridge, said he visited the bridge at about 11 o'clock on the night of August 16th and saw that the wire rope was up across the opening at the side of the bridge. He heard nothing during the night, but in the morning, when he visited the bridge, he saw that the upper rail of the bridge had been broken and that the stanchion had been torn away. A further investigation revealed some broken glass on the wall of the bridge, and later a soldier's cane and a driver's cap were seen floating on the water. Witness got the drags and ascertained that there was a motor car in the water. He then informed the Canal officials and the police of what he had found. The starting handle of the car was also found on the wall.

Mr Frederick Charles William Lippiatt, the father of the deceased driver, said his son, who was 17 years of age in March last, had been engaged in some cycle and motor works in Ross. During that time he was at work amongst cycles and motors, but so far as he knew he had not driven motors. After coming to Gloucester his son worked at Fielding and Platt's works for some five weeks, but left because it did not suit his health. He then went to work for Mr Colwell.

P.S. Davis, who with P.C. Edgington had charge of the case, said he was present when Browning's body was taken from the canal. Upon examining it he found a deep cut over the left eye and a piece of skin torn from his hand. There was blood running from the ears. Various letters and books were found upon him, as well as some money. When Lippiatt's body was found it was in shirt sleeves only, the coat being off. The light overcoat and also the under coat were later found by the bridgeman. Lippiatt had several lots of money on him. He was not in any way injured so far as he could see.

Asked by the Coroner whether he considered the bridge dangerous, witness said he had never had any complaint or heard of an accident. He could not see what could be done to make for safety, because the space round the bridge had to be kept clear for towing purposes. Lippiatt's motor driver's license was dated August 4th, 1916, and was issued at the Guildhall, Gloucester.

Questioned by Mr Treasure, he believed that Browning was stunned by a blow during the fall of the car.

P.C. Edgington corroborated. He said the car was partly raised three times before the body of Browning was recovered. During the operations the top of the car was wrenched off, and when it was raised the driver's light overcoat came up with it. Witness had, the night of the accident, seen Lippiatt driving the car with a wounded soldier and two girls. He was driving quite steadily and was quite sober.

This concluded the evidence, and the Coroner asked whether the jury considered a post-mortem examination was necessary. This was answered in the negative, and the Coroner said there was another question to be answered, and that was whether any steps should be taken for the further protection of the Rea Bridge. They had before them the fact that very good care was taken and that there had been no previous accident, but to his mind there was a

danger to a stranger driving along the road on a dark night. He had come to the conclusion that the proper course would be to ask the Canal Company to confer with the Highway authority to see whether anything could be done to minimise the danger at the junction of the road with the bridge.

The Foreman reminded the Coroner of a recommendation made at a previous inquest that a light should be placed at Hardwicke Bridge.

The Coroner said the recommendation had been forwarded to the Company.

Mr Haines said the recommendation had been received by the Company, but since the lighting restrictions had been enforced the light on the Hempsted Bridge had been extinguished by order of the police.

The jury returned a verdict of accidental death in each case, stating that no one was to blame, and included the Coroner's recommendation to the Canal Company and Highway authority.

Mr Langley-Smith, on behalf of Mr Colwell, and Mr Haines, on behalf of the Canal Company, expressed regret at the sad accident, and sympathy with the parents of both men.

Mr Treasure acknowledged these expressions, stating that Browing was a most dutiful son, and remarking upon the sad coincidence that he met with his death within a few yards of his father's farm, after having faced the terrible dangers of the trenches.



***The Rea Bridge***

*The spectators grouped to the right of the bridge occupy the approach from the lane (which curves away to the left in the direction of Gloucester) and indicate the course which would be taken by a vehicle driven towards Elmore, and bearing insufficiently to the right. The opening shown between the bridge rails and the fence on the extreme right is necessary to the swinging of the bridge, which is operated by a fixed pole, which is brought round through the opening and over the high wooden stage which forms a platform for the bridgeman. When the bridge is closed to the canal and open for road traffic this opening is protected by a stout wire rope, one end being fixed to the fence on the right and the other attached to a hook on one of the stanchions of the bridge rails. This stanchion was sprung by the force of the taxi's impact against the wire, which, thus released from its hook attachment, flew away to the high stage seen in the right of the picture. It will be observed that from the level of the roadway there is first a considerable drop to the platform of the bridge abutment, and the drop to the level of the water is fully ten feet.*

*Photo by H. E. Jones*

*(Gloucester Journal, Gloucester, England – 26 August, 1916)*





**Lance Corporal Bernard John Browning & Francis William Lippiatt**

*(Donated by David Drinkwater)*

*(Cheltenham Chronicle & Gloucestershire Graphic – 26 August, 1916)*

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## **FUNERAL OF CORPORAL BROWNING**

### **IMPRESSIVE CEREMONY AT QUEDGELEY**

The funeral of Corporal Browning took place with semi-military honours at Quedgeley Church on Monday afternoon, the Rector (the Rev. F. R. Grenside) officiating. The church was overflowing, and the number attending was considerably augmented at the graveside. At practically every residence in and around the village blinds were drawn, and on sides was evidence testifying to the respect and esteem entertained for the deceased and the members of the family, and to the genuine sympathy which the sad fatality has aroused in the locality. The funeral procession left the deceased's home shortly after 2 o'clock, being headed by a detachment of the Australian Imperial Forces (in command of Warrant Officer McKillop), the members of which, after the committal rites had been recited at the graveside, sound "Last Post" and fired the usual volleys. The coffin was draped with the Union Jack, and upon the lid were placed the deceased's hat and whip, while the inscription on the breastplate was: "H.M. Cpl. Aus. Forces Bernard J. Browning. Fell asleep, August 16th, 1916, aged 28 years."

The chief mourners were: Mr and Mrs Albert Browning (father and mother), Miss Flo Browning (sister), Master Stanley Browning (brother), Miss Winnie Jones (deceased fiancée), Mrs A. C. Morris (aunt), Mr and Mrs. Henry C. Morris (uncle and aunt), Mr and Mrs. T. Morris (uncle and aunt), Miss Browning (aunt), Mr W. F. Morris (uncle), Mr and Mrs Ralph Browning (great uncle and great aunt), Miss J. Morris (cousin), and Miss Marsh.

The bearers were six of deceased's chums, Messrs F. Vick, C. Harris. W. Longney, J. Guilding, D. Lovell and H. Browning.

Choice floral tributes were sent from the following : Mother, father, brother, and sister (a beautiful cross); Winnie; Mr and Mrs H. C. Morris and family; Mr and Mrs. T. Morris and family; Mr and Mrs W. F. Morris; Mrs A. C. Morris and family; Mr and Mrs T. Hobbs and family; Bessie, Katie, and Edith; Mr and Mrs R. Browning; Cousin Francis; Mr and Mrs Jones; Lady Guise; Colonel and the Misses Curtis-Hayward; C. Harris, F. Vick, P. Goulding, and D. Lovell; Mr and Mrs C. Browning; Nora ; a few of his friends at the Albion Hotel; Mr Walter Colwell; Mr and Mrs. Davies; Mr and Mrs Campion; Mrs and Miss Jennings; and Mr. C. Butler.

*(Gloucestershire Chronicle, Gloucester, England – 26 August, 1916)*

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## Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

*(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)*

Lance Corporal B. J. Browning does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*Resting Where No Shadows Fall*

## **St. James Churchyard, Quedgeley, Gloucestershire**

St. James Churchyard, Quedgeley contains 3 War Graves from World War 1 & only 1 War Grave from World War 2.



**St. James Churchyard, Quedgeley** *(Photo from CWGC)*





**Location of Lance Cpl. B. J. Browning's CWGC Headstone in St. James Churchyard, Quedgeley**





Photo of Lance Cpl. B. J. Browning's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St. James Churchyard, Quedgeley, Gloucestershire, England.



*(Photo courtesy of Simon Dew)*