

**St. George's Churchyard,  
Fovant, Wiltshire  
War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**4449 PRIVATE**

**R. F. BURDEN**

**46TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**14TH FEBRUARY, 1919 Age 25**

*We Have Lost  
And Heaven Has Gained  
One Of The Best  
The World Contained*

## Robert Francis BURDEN

Robert Francis Burden was born at Beechworth, Victoria in 1895 to parents James and Maria Agnes Burden (nee Simmons/ Simmonds).

Robert Francis Burden attended State School at Beechworth, Victoria.

Robert Francis Burden was a 22 year old, single, Farm Hand from Spring Vale, Victoria when he enlisted in Melbourne, Victoria on 26th August, 1915 with the 5th Infantry Battalion, 14th Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 4449 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs M. S. Burden of Spring Vale P.O., Victoria. (Father's address was unknown).

Private Robert Francis Burden was posted to 20th Depot Battalion at Castlemaine on 27th August, 1915. He was posted to 14th Reinforcements of 5th Battalion on 10th December, 1915.

Private Robert Francis Burden embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Themistocles* (A32) on 28th January, 1916 & disembarked at Alexandria on 28th February, 1916.

Private Robert Francis Burden was allotted & proceeded to join 46th Battalion from Zeitoun on 2nd April, 1916. He was taken on strength of 46th Battalion at Serapeum on 2nd April, 1916.

Private Robert Francis Burden was absent off Parade on 6th May, 1916. He was deprived of 2 days' pay.

Private Robert Francis Burden proceeded to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) from Alexandria on *Kinfauns Castle* & disembarked at Marseilles, France on 8th June, 1916.

Private Robert Francis Burden was written up for a crime – "In the Field - Smoking whilst on Field march 15th July, 1916". He was deprived of 2 days' pay.

Private Robert Francis Burden was written up for a crime – "In the field – A.W.L. (Absent without leave) from 0630 roll call on 25th July, 1916". He was deprived of 1 days' pay.

Private Robert Francis Burden was sent sick to Hospital on 16th September, 1916. He was admitted to 12th Field Ambulance with Paratititis then transferred to 3rd Casualty Clearing Station. Pte Burden was transferred to 7th General Hospital at St. Omer on 18th September, 1916 with mumps. He was discharged to Details on 30th September, 1916 & rejoined his Unit from Hospital on 10th October, 1916.

Private Robert Francis Burden was written up for a crime – "In the field – Using obscene language on 27th October, 1916." He was deprived of 5 days' pay.

Private Robert Francis Burden was sent sick to Hospital on 18th November, 1916. He was admitted to 36th Casualty Clearing Station with Influenza & was discharged on 20th November, 1916. He returned to 46th Battalion in the field on 22nd November, 1916.

Private Robert Francis Burden was written up for a crime – "A.W.L. (Absent without leave) from 14.00 Parade." He forfeited 1 days' pay.

Private Robert Francis Burden was wounded in action on 11th April, 1917. He was admitted to 3rd Australian Casualty Clearing Station with gunshot wounds to right shoulder. Pte Burden was transferred to Ambulance Train No. 27 on 12th April, 1917. He was admitted to 6th General Hospital at Rouen, France on 13th April, 1917. Pte Burden was transferred on 12th May, 1917 to England.

## War Diary – 46th Battalion

11th April, 1918:

Orders having been received to carry out the operation abandoned the previous day the Battalion moved up over night and re-occupied the jumpin off trench ready to move at 4.30 am. This operation was to be supported on the 12th Brigade front by Four Tanks – other operating on the 4th Infantry Brigade front.

46th Battalion preceded by 4 Tanks was to attack the first objective (U 29 a 7 7) to (U 28 b 5 9). The Tanks were to move on to the second line of trenches which was the objective of the 48th Battalion. Two Tanks were then to manoeuvre to U 28 b 5 9 and proceed along a line of trenches skirting the East of the village of BULLECOURT and thence along the South of the village to the South Western corner thereof. The 46th Battalion was to move along the trench as a mopping up party behind these tanks. None of the Tanks on the 12th Inf, Bde front succeeded in reaching the wire in front of the first objective – hence the 46th Battalion having entered the objective were unable to carry out the latter part of this Programme – both objectives were successfully taken by the 12th Inf. Bde, but owing to the overwhelming counter attack about 11.30 am both objectives had to be abandoned – 46th Battalion withdrawing to the railway cutting C 4 b (vide attached orders and report). at 9.30 pm the Battalion moved back to VRAUCOURT.

### Casualties

KILLED	2 Officers	41 O/R
MISSING	2 “	98 “
WOUNDED & MISSING		38”
WOUNDED	5 “	201”

(War Diary information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private Robert Francis Burden was admitted to 1st Southern General Hospital at Stirchley, Birmingham, England on 14th May, 1917 with shrapnel wounds to right shoulder – severe. Pte Burden was discharged from Hospital & granted furlough from 21st May, 1917 to 5th June, 1917. He was then to report to No. 4 Command Depot at Wareham, Dorset.

Private Robert Francis Burden was reported A.W.L. from No. 4 Command Depot at Wareham, Dorset on 5th June, 1917.

Private Robert Francis Burden was reported as having returned from being absent on 12th June, 1917.

Private Robert Francis Burden was written up for a crime on 14th June, 1917 while posted at Wareham – “A.W.L. (Absent without leave) from 3.30 pm on 5th June, 1917 till 8.30 pm on 11th June, 1917”. He was awarded 7 days Field Punishment No. 2. Time in custody awaiting trial 2 days. Total forfeiture 16 days’ pay.

Private Robert Francis Burden was medically classified on several occasions while posted at No. 4 Australian Command Depot, Wareham. He was classified as B1 A3 (Fit for overseas training Camp in two or three weeks) on 14th June, 1917, 30th June, 1917, 9th July, 1917, 16th July, 1917 & 23rd July, 1917. Pte Burden was classified as B1 A4 (Fit for Overseas training camp when passed dentally fit) on 30th July, 1917. He was passed dentally fit on 2nd August, 1917.

Private Robert Francis Burden was marched in to Overseas Training Depot at Perham Downs, Wiltshire from No. 4 Command Depot at Wareham on 2nd August, 1917.

Private Robert Francis Burden proceeded overseas to France from Overseas Training Depot at Perham Downs via Southampton on 15th August, 1917. He was marched in to 4th A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Havre, France on 16th August, 1917.

Private Robert Francis Burden was marched out from 4th A.D.B.D. at Havre on 29th August, 1917 to rejoin his Unit. He rejoined his Unit from being wounded on 1st September, 1917.

Private Robert Francis Burden was wounded in action in France (2nd occasion) on 3rd April, 1918 but remained on duty.

#### War Diary – 46th Battalion

*3rd April, 1918:*

*At 8.10 am the enemy opened a heavy bombardment on our lines and followed it up by a spirited infantry attack. At first it was direct against both flanks, but afterwards converged to the centre. As usual our men rushed eagerly into it and in 10 minutes the attack was completely broken, Lieut. J. W. H. Marshall, O.C. "B" Company was wounded, Lieut. W. H. Jennings was killed, about 50 other casualties occurred chiefly from the preliminary bombardment and from enfilade M.G. fire which caught our men when on top of the embankment. The remainder of the day was quiet. We were relieved by the 48th Battalion, the relief being completed by 11.30 pm and we returned to our bivouac near MILLENCOURT, "D" Company being left as reserve for the 48th Battn. Rain was falling and mud was thick making the going very heavy.*

(War Diary information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private Robert Francis Burden was charged with being absent without leave from 19th May, 1918 to 5th June, 1918. A Court Martial was convened on 11th June, 1918. Pte Burden was found guilty & sentenced to 90 days Field Punishment No. 2. Thirty days of his sentence was remitted by Corps Commander.

Private Robert Francis Burden rejoined his Unit from Field Punishment Compound on 23rd August, 1918.

Private Robert Francis Burden was marched out ready for return to England (then Australia) on 30th January, 1919. He was transferred to England on 10th February, 1919 & was marched in to 3rd Training Brigade on 11th February, 1919.

#### **46th Battalion**

The 46th Battalion was raised in Egypt on 24 February 1916 as part of the "doubling" of the AIF. Approximately half of its new recruits were Gallipoli veterans from the 14th Battalion, and the other half, fresh reinforcements from Australia. Reflecting the composition of the 14th, the new battalion was composed mostly of men from Victoria, although some of the reinforcements hailed from New South Wales and Western Australia.

As part of the 12th Brigade of the 4th Australian Division, the 46th Battalion arrived in France on 8 June 1916, destined for the Western Front. It participated in its first major battle at Pozieres. Initially, the battalion provided carrying parties for supplies and ammunition during the 2nd Division's attack on 4 August, and then, with its own division, defended the ground that had been captured. The 46th endured two stints in the heavily contested trenches of Pozieres, as well as a period in reserve.

After Pozieres, the battalion spent the period up until March 1917 alternating between duty in the trenches and training and rest behind the lines. On 11 April it took part in the attack mounted against the heavily defended village of Bullecourt - part of the formidable Hindenburg Line to which the Germans had retreated during February and March. Devoid of surprise, and dependent upon the support of unreliable tanks, the attack had little chance of success; after managing to fight through to its objectives, the 46th was forced to withdraw with heavy casualties. Later in the year, the focus of the AIF's operations switched to the Ypres sector in Belgium where the 46th took part in the battles of Messines and Passchendaele.

The 46th rotated in and out of the front line throughout the winter of 1917-18. In the spring of 1918, it played a role in turning the great German offensive by defeating attacks around Dernancourt in the first days of April. During the Allied offensive that commenced in August, the 46th also played an active part, fighting in the battle of Amiens on 8

August and in the battle to secure the Hindenburg "outpost line" on 18 September. The battalion was out of the line when the war ended on 11 November, and disbanded in April 1919.

*(Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)*

Private Robert Francis Burden was admitted to Military Hospital, Fovant, Wiltshire, England on 13th February, 1919 seriously ill with Pneumonia.

Private Robert Francis Burden died at 11.40 am on 14th February, 1919 at Military Hospital, Fovant, Wiltshire, England from Pneumonia.

A death for Robert F. Burden, aged 25, was registered in the March quarter, 1919 in the district of Wilton, Wiltshire, England.

Private Robert Francis Burden was buried on 18th February, 1919 in St George's Churchyard, Fovant, Wiltshire, England – Plot number I. E. 2. and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Pte Burden - *Coffin was Elm with brass mounts. Deceased was buried with full Military Honors. The coffin draped with the Australian flag being borne to the graveside on a Gun-carriage preceded by a Firing Party and Band from No. 4 Australian Command Depot, Hurdcott. Six of deceased's late Unit comrades supported the Pall. The "Last Post" was sounded and volleys fired over the grave. A number of Australian followed the remains and were present at the graveside ceremony. Headquarters A.I.F. Depots in United Kingdom were represented at the funeral.* Private Robert Francis Burden requested in his Will, dated 27th July, 1917, that all his personal & real estate be bequeathed to his mother – Mrs J. Burden of Kilmore, Victoria.

Base Records contacted Mrs M. S. Burden, Hart Street, Euroa, Victoria, mother of the late Pte R. F. Burden, in October, 1921 asking if there were any nearer blood relatives than herself due to the "Deceased Soldiers Estates Act 1918" which stated that the War Medals & Mementoes of a deceased soldier were to be handed in the following order of relationship – Widow, eldest surviving son, eldest surviving daughter, father, mother, eldest surviving brother, eldest surviving sister etc. Mrs Burden replied that she was the mother of the late Pte R. F. Burden & advised a contact address for her son's father & left it for the Officer in Charge to consider the next-of-kin.

Base Records contacted Mr James Burden, Post Office Springvale, Victoria, father of the late Pte R. F. Burden, in November, 1921 stating that it *"was proposed to hand over the war medals etc of your son, the late No. 4449 Private R. F. Burden, 46th Battalion, to his mother who was nominated as next-of-kin and made the sole beneficiary under his Will. If you have any objections to this procedure the full facts must be submitted for consideration..."*

Mr James Burden replied that he no objections to the War Medals being sent to his son's mother.

Private Robert Francis Burden was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Burden's mother – Mrs M. S. Burden (Scroll sent December, 1921 & Plaque sent November, 1922). The Victory Medal, British War Medal & the Memorial Scroll were signed for by Mrs M.S. Burden. The Memorial Plaque was signed for by Mr James Burden, father of the late Pte R. F. Burden.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Robert Francis Burden – service number 4449, aged 25, of 46th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of James and Maria S. Burden, of Euroa, Victoria. Born at Beechworth, Victoria.

Private R. F. Burden is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 141.



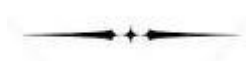
*(Photos Cathy Sedgwick)*



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

(79 pages of Pte Robert Francis Burden'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*



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **295th and 296th CASUALTY LISTS**

The Victorian names are:-

WOUNDED

Private R. F. Burden, Springvale

*(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – 16 May, 1917)*

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### **ROLL OF HONOUR**

#### **CASUALTY LIST NO 461**

DIED OTHER CAUSES

R. F. BURDEN, Springvale, 14/2/19, illness (P.R.W.)

*(Weekly Times, Melbourne, Victoria – 22 March, 1919)*

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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)*

Private R. F. Burden does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*We Have Lost And Heaven Has Gained One Of The Best The World Contained*

## St George's Churchyard, Fovant, Wiltshire, England

There was a 600 bed hutted military hospital at Fovant during the First World War, and the concentration of Australian depots and training camps in the area is reflected in the 63 First World War burials in this churchyard. The war graves form two groups, one west of the church and the other at the east end. There is also one burial of the Second World War. There are 44 War Graves belonging to those who served with the Australian Imperial Force in World War 1.  
*(Information from CWGC)*



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00299

*(Photo c 1919)*







**St George's Churchyard, Fovant – War Graves at front & rear** (*Churchyard photos courtesy of Andrew Stacey*)



Photo of Private R. F. Burden's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St George's Churchyard, Fovant, Wiltshire, England.





**Cross of Sacrifice** (Photo courtesy of Andrew Stacey)