

**Reading Cemetery,  
Reading, Berkshire  
War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**2078 CORPORAL**

**C. J. BURTON**

**4TH AUSTRALIAN PIONEERS**

**3RD OCTOBER, 1916**

## Caleb James BURTON

Caleb James Burton was born at Wigan, Lancashire, England on 6th April, 1878 to parents John Thomas & Ellen Buron. He was baptised on 15th June, 1878 at Standishgate Methodist Chapel, Wigan, Manchester, England.

Caleb James Burton stated he was a 27\* year old, single, Labourer from Avondale, N.C.R., Queensland when he enlisted on 2nd February, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Roman Catholic & his next of kin was listed as his step brother – William Arnold Roberts, of Main Street, Kangaroo Point, Brisbane, Queensland. Caleb Burton stated on his Attestation Papers that he had previously served for 18 months with NSW Mounted Rifles during the South African War. (A copy of one of the Attestation Papers has a correction to Caleb Burton's age – 27 years & 9 months altered to 36 years & 9 months).

Private Caleb James Burton was posted to 11th Depot Battalion on 9th February, 1916. He was transferred to 3 Reinforcements, 4th Pioneers on 4th April, 1916.

Private Caleb James Burton, Service number 2078, embarked from Brisbane, Queensland on HMAT *Clan McGillivray (A46)* on 1st May, 1916 with the 4th Pioneer Battalion, 3rd Reinforcements.

Private Caleb James Burton embarked for Marseilles, France (as listed on Casualty Form – Active Service) from Alexandria on 8th August, 1916 on *Franconia*. Private Burton disembarked at Southampton, England on 19th August, 1916.

Private Caleb James Burton was appointed Acting Corporal from 19th August, 1916 & was to draw extra duty pay while posted at Perham Downs, Wiltshire, England.

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.

Acting Corporal Caleb James Burton was taken on strength of Pioneer Training Battalion in England on 21st August, 1916. He had been encamped at Coley Recreation Ground.

Acting Corporal Caleb James Burton was admitted to Reading War Hospital, Reading, Berkshire, England on 2nd October, 1916 seriously ill suffering from Pneumonia & Bronchial Asthma. His rank reverted to Private on admission to Hospital. (as listed on Casualty form – Active service, however some forms in the Service Record file refer to his rank at death as Private other forms refer to him as Corporal)

### 4<sup>th</sup> Pioneer Battalion

The 4th Pioneer Battalion was an Australian infantry and light engineer unit raised for service during the First World War as part of the all volunteer Australian Imperial Force (AIF). Formed in Egypt in March 1916, the battalion subsequently served on the Western Front in France and Belgium, after being transferred to the European battlefields shortly after its establishment. Assigned to the 4th Division, the 4th Pioneer Battalion fought in most of the major battles that the AIF participated in between mid-1916 and the end of the war in November 1918. It was subsequently disbanded in early 1919.

The 4th Pioneers were established on 16 March 1916, at Tel-el-Kebir in Egypt, and were subsequently assigned to the 4th Division. The battalion was formed in the aftermath of the failed Gallipoli campaign when the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was expanded as part of plans to transfer it from the Middle East to Europe for service in the trenches along the Western Front. This expansion saw several new infantry divisions raised in Egypt and Australia, as well as specialist support units such as machine gun companies, engineer companies, artillery batteries and pioneer battalions, which were needed to meet the conditions prevalent on the Western Front.

Trained as infantrymen, they were also tasked with some engineer functions, with a large number of personnel possessing trade qualifications from civilian life. As such, they were designated as pioneer units. The pioneer concept had existed within the British Indian Army before the war, but had not initially been adopted in other British Empire forces. In early 1916, the Australian Army was reorganised ahead of its transfer to the Western Front in Europe. A total of five pioneer battalions were raised by the AIF at this time, with one being assigned to each of the five infantry divisions that the Australians deployed to the battlefield in France and Belgium. Tasked with digging

trenches, labouring, constructing strong points and light railways, and undertaking battlefield clearance, the troops assigned to the pioneers required construction and engineering experience in addition to basic soldiering skills.

Consisting largely of volunteers drawn from Queensland, the battalion consisted of four companies, under a headquarters company. The battalion subsequently served on the Western Front from mid-1916 until the end of the war. To identify the battalion's personnel, they were issued with a purple and white unit colour patch. The colours were in common with other Australian pioneer battalions, while the circle shape denoted that the unit was part of the 4th Division.

*(Extract of Pioneer Battalion information from Wikipedia)*

Corporal Caleb James Burton died on 3rd October, 1916 at No. 5 Section, Reading War Hospital, Reading, Berkshire, England from Bronchial Pneumonia.

A death for Caleb J. Burton, aged 36, was registered in the December quarter, 1916 in the district of Reading, Berkshire, England.

Corporal Caleb James Burton was buried on 7th October, 1916 in South East Cemetery, Reading, Grave No. 16429, Division 72.

Newspaper report in *Reading Mercury*, Reading, Berkshire, England – 14 October, 1916:

#### **SOLDIER'S DEATH FROM PNEUMONIA**

*An imposing a military funeral was accorded on Saturday to Corporal Burton of the Australian Imperial Forces. The funeral was attended by the whole Pioneer School of Instruction from Coley Recreation, consisting of members of various regiments, numbering forty officers and 206 non-commissioned officers and men, in the following formation: A firing party of Australians, the band of the Royal Berkshire Depot, Reading, the Australian officers, the bearers, composed of Australian units, under Lieutenant Harper, Australian Imperial Force, the Scottish Highlanders, a platoon of Military Foot Police and various units of Irish, Scottish and Welsh regiments. The body was drawn on a gun carriage covered with the Union Jack, Lieutenant Spencer, of the 11th Dragoons, was in charge of the procession. The committal service at the graveside (at which the Commandant of the Pioneers, Colonel J. H. S. Grant Gordon, was present) was conducted by the Rev. R. W. Morley, curate of St. John's. There were numerous floral tributes from the officers, sergeants and men. Corporal Burton had been in camp at the Australian Headquarters, Tidworth, but recently he was transferred to the Pioneer School of Instruction in Coley Park. Here he was taken ill, and died from bronchial pneumonia on Tuesday, October 3rd, three days after admission to No. 5 War Hospital.*

A letter was sent to Mr W. A. Roberts, of Norman Avenue, Norman Park, Sth Brisbane, Queensland, in April, 1920 from Base Records which reads "*With reference to my communication of 11th January, 1918 regarding the regrettable loss of your step-brother the late No. 2078 Private C. J. Burton, 4th Pioneer Battalion, I am now in receipt of further advice which shows that his remains have been exhumed from former site and re-interred in Grave No. 16609, division 72, Reading Cemetery, Reading. This work is carried out with every measure of care and reverence in the presence of a Chaplain...*"

Corporal Caleb James Burton was buried in Reading Cemetery, Berkshire – Screen Wall. 72. 16609. Those buried in Plot 72 & buried in other parts of the cemetery that do not have headstones marking their graves are named on the Memorial Screen Wall located near the Cross of Sacrifice. Their deaths are still acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Base Records contacted Mr W. A. Roberts, of Norman Avenue, Norman Park, Brisbane in December, 1921 & again in May, 1923 asking if there were any nearer blood relatives – brothers or sisters as it was understood that Corporal Burton's parents were deceased & 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.

A notice in *The Queenslander* newspaper was placed on 30th December, 1922:

### ***THE SOLDIERS' NEXT OF KIN WANTED***

*The next of kin or persons knowing the whereabouts of the next of kin of the undermentioned deceased soldiers are requested to communicate with the Officer in Charge, Base Records, Melbourne, as early as possible, giving full regimental particulars of the deceased soldier in such communication...2078, Cpl. C. J. Burton, 4th Pnr Battn;.....*

No response was received from the newspaper notice. Records showed that the War Gratuity was paid to Miss Doris Roberts (half-sister) of Norman Avenue, Norman Park, South Brisbane – the same address for Mr W. A. Roberts listed as the next-of-kin. William A. Roberts of Norman Avenue, Norman Park, East Brisbane, replied to Base Records in May, 1923 advising that the parents of the late No. 2078 Corporal C. J. Burton were deceased & there were no brother or sisters. Mr Roberts stated he was the eldest half-brother.

A War Pension was granted to Doris Roberts, Wolloongabba, half sister of late Private Caleb James Burton, 2078, 4th Pioneers in the sum of £1 per fortnight as from 10th December, 1916. Trustee listed as William Arnold Roberts, Wolloongabba.

Mrs Doris Stevens (nee Doris Ann Roberts) wrote to Base Records in November, 1937 regarding her half-brother Corporal Caleb James Burton. She stated that she was dependent upon him while he was away. Mrs Stevens stated she had received his Gratuity Bond in two instalments, one when she was sixteen and the remainder when she was twenty one. Mrs Stevens was enquiring if Corporal Burton's deferred pay was included in the money she had received & was she entitled to a pension through his death. She stated all the affairs concerning Cpl. Burton were attended to by her brother William Arnold Roberts. She stated she had no knowledge of what was done & was recently told that she may be entitled to some Pensions as she was Corporal Burton's dependant. Mrs D. Stevens was advised by reply letter that War Pensions were not administered by Base Records & that her enquiry should be addressed to the Repatriation Department.

Corporal Caleb James Burton was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Corporal Burton's eldest half-brother – William Arnold Roberts, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque both sent May, 1923).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Corporal C. J. Burton – service number 2078, of 4th Australian Pioneers. No family details are listed.

Corporal C. J. Burton is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 173.



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

J. Burton is remembered on the Tegege Hall Honour Board located in Tegege Hall, Bush's Road, Tegege, Queensland.



**Tegege Hall Honour Board** (Photo from Queensland War Memorials Register – Shirley & Trevor McIvor)

(60 pages of Corporal Caleb James Burton'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

### COUNTRY VOLUNTEERS

#### BUNDABERG, January 31

The following recruits were accepted for active service during the week, making a total of 212 accepted for the month: - Messrs Leonard Lester, Norman Downey, **Caleb Burton**, Henry Munckton.....

(*The Brisbane Courier*, Queensland – 1 February, 1916)

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### AUSTRALIAN CASUALTIES

#### LIST NO. 236

The Queenslanders mentioned are:-

Died of Illness

Corporal C. J. Burton (Kangaroo Point)

(*Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia – 20 October, 1916)

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### Commonwealth War Graves Commission

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.

Corporal C. J. Burton does not have a headstone & is instead remembered on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Screen Wall in Reading Cemetery.



## Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire, England

Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire contains 248 War Graves, 17 of those being from Australian Forces – World War 1.

The War Graves Plot is situated at the back of the cemetery, in the right hand corner from the entrance. A Screen Wall Memorial commemorates those buried in Plot 72 and those buried in other parts of the cemetery whose graves are not marked by headstones. There are 207 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war and 41 of the 1939-1945 war. There is also 1 Serbian burial.

*(Information & photos from CWGC)*

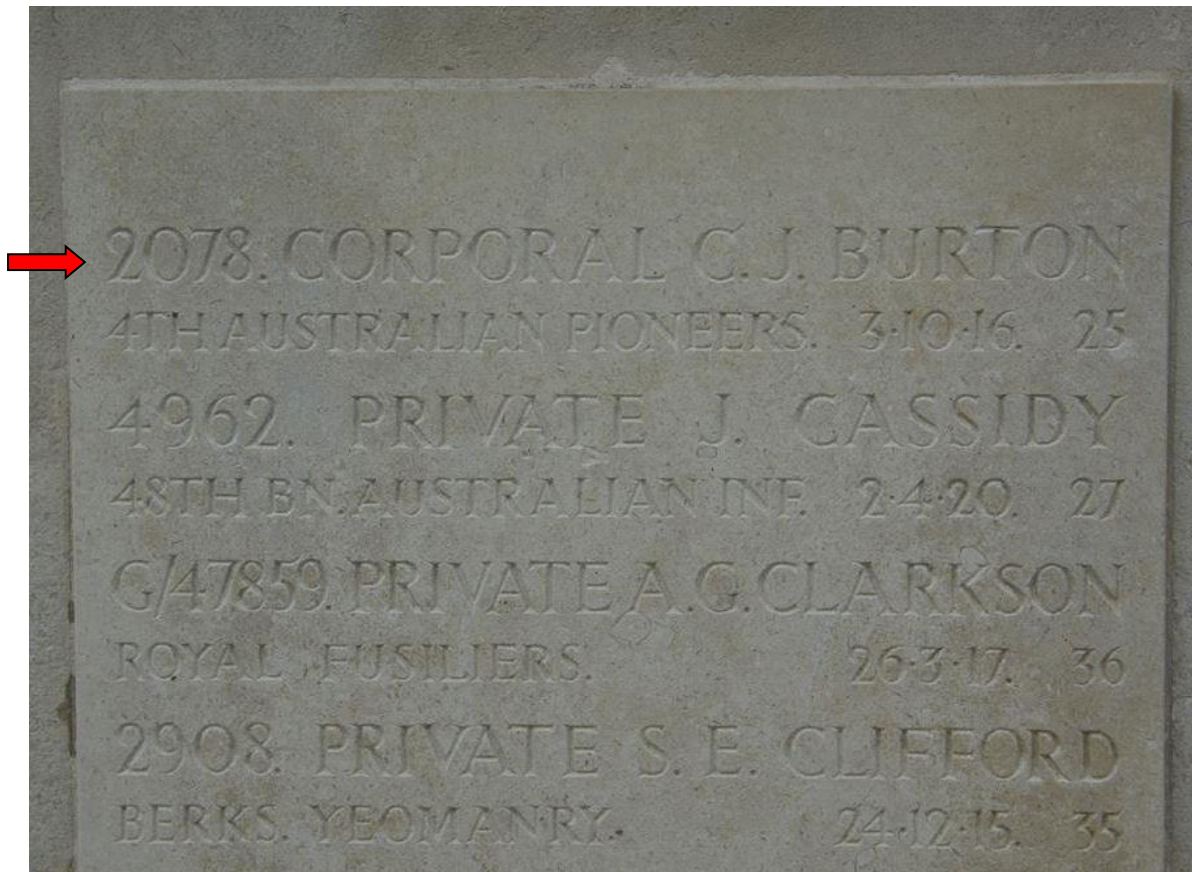


**Cross of Sacrifice & Memorial Screen Wall, Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire** *(Photos from CWGC)*





Photo of Corporal C. J. Burton's name on the Screen Wall Memorial in Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire, England.



(Photo courtesy of Phil Wood)