

**Brookwood Military Cemetery,
Brookwood, Surrey**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



4139 PRIVATE

J. J. BYRNE

6TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

22ND NOVEMBER, 1917 Age 25

In Memory Of

Our Dearly Loved Brother

R.I.P.

James Joseph BYRNE

James Joseph Byrne was born on 20th June, 1892 at Tolmie, Victoria to parents John & Honorah Byrne (nee Reardon).

James Joseph Byrne attended school at Tolmie, Victoria.

The 1914, 1915, 1916 & 1917 Australian Electoral Rolls for the division of Indi, subdivision of Mansfield, Victoria listed James Joseph Byrne, Labourer from Tolmie.

James Joseph Byrne was a 23 year old, single, Labourer from Tolmie P.O., via Mansfield, Victoria when he enlisted in Melbourne, Victoria on 9th August, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 4139 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his sister – Mrs Dora Walsh, Tolmie P.O., via Mansfield, Victoria.

Private James Joseph Byrne was posted to 9th Depot Battalion on 23rd August, 1915 for recruit training. He was transferred to 12th Reinforcements of 6th Battalion on 23rd October, 1915 then transferred to A/10th Battalion at Ascot Vale on 3rd November, 1915. Private Byrne was transferred on 24th November, 1915 to 13th Reinforcements of 6th Battalion.

Private James Joseph Byrne embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Demosthenes (A64)* on 29th December, 1915 with the 6th Infantry Battalion, 13th Reinforcements.

Private James Joseph Byrne joined 6th Battalion from Reinforcements at Serapeum on 17th March, 1916.

Private James Joseph Byrne proceeded from Alexandria on 26th March, 1916 on *Ballarat* to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force). He disembarked at Marseilles, France on 2nd April, 1916.

Private James Joseph Byrne was wounded in action in France on 15th August, 1916. He was admitted to No. 2 Australian Field Ambulance on 15th August, 1916 with G.S.W. (gunshot wound/s) to Back then transferred & admitted to No. 44 Casualty Clearing Station on 16th August, 1916. Private Byrne was transferred to No. 24 Ambulance Train on 16th August, 1916 & admitted to No. 26 General Hospital at Etaples, France on the same day. Private Byrne embarked from Calais for England on 21st August, 1916 on Hospital Ship *Brighton* with G.S.W. to Left Shoulder.

6th Battalion

The 6th Battalion was among the first infantry units raised for the AIF during the First World War. Like the 5th, 7th and 8th Battalions, it was recruited from Victoria and, together with these battalions, formed the 2nd Brigade.....

In March 1916, it sailed for France and the Western Front. From then until 1918 the battalion was heavily involved in operations against the German Army. The battalion's first major action in France was at Pozieres in the Somme valley in July 1916. After Pozieres the battalion fought near Ypres, in Flanders, returning to the Somme for winter.....

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

War Diary – 6th Battalion

15th August, 1916:

Battn moves up and takes over from 48th Bn. Frontline trenches were OG1 & OG2 founded on right by BAPAUME ROAD & on the left by point R.35.C 4.8. These trenches were badly knocked about.

One platoon each of C & D Coys occupied OG1 with Lewis Guns and standing patrols out in & in front of OG2.

A & B Coys as reserve were in SUNKEN RAOD TRENCH about 1 11 A 0 3. Bn H.Q. at X.4.B 9.6

Throughout the day our trenches were heavily shelled – probably due to the fact that commun trenches were practically non-existent & all ration & working parties could be observed. 3 Officers wounded.

Throughout the night improvements were carried out on all these trenches. Enemy's barraged most intense along TRAMWAY TRENCH.

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Private James Joseph Byrne was admitted to County of London War Hospital, Epsom, Surrey, England on 22nd July, 1916 with G.S.W. to Left Shoulder. He was discharged from County of London War Hospital, England on 20th October, 1916 to Tidworth.

Mrs Walsh, Post Office, Tolmie, Victoria, sister of Private James Joseph Byrne, was advised by Base Records on 11th September, 1916 that Private J. J. Byrne had been reported wounded. She was advised again on 21st September, 1916 that Private James J. Byrne was progressing favourably.

Mrs Walsh was advised by Base Records on 27th September, 1916 that her brother Private James J. Byrne had been admitted to County London War Hospital on 22nd August with gunshot wound to shoulder severe. She was advised again on 13th October, 1916 that her brother Private James. J. Byrne was still progressing favourably.

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. Later Training & Convalescing Units were combined under the one Command Depot.

Private James Joseph Byrne proceeded overseas to France via Folkestone per S.S. *Victoria* from 2nd Training Battalion in England on 16th November, 1916. He was marched in to 1st A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 17th November, 1916.

Mrs Walsh, Post Office, Tolmie, Victoria, sister of Private James Joseph Byrne, was advised by Base Records on 18th November, 1916 that Private J. J. Byrne was convalescent.

Private James Joseph Byrne rejoined his Battalion from wounded on 15th December, 1916. (another entry recorded on Casualty Form – Active Service & Statement of Service form both recorded “rejoined Bn from Hospital 26-12-16.”)

Private James Joseph Byrne was wounded in action (2nd occasion) on 30th October, 1917. He was admitted to No. 3 Casualty Clearing Station on 31st October, 1917 with G.S.W. (gunshot wound/s) to Leg & Chest. Private Byrne was transferred to Ambulance Train on 2nd November, 1917. He embarked for England on Hospital Ship *St. Patrick* on 11th November, 1917 with G.S.W. to Arm & Chest.

6th Battalion

... In 1917, the battalion participated in the operations that followed-up the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line, and then returned to Belgium to join the great offensive launched to the east of Ypres. During the battle of Menin Road in September 1917, Lieutenant Frederick Birks earned the 6th Battalion's only Victoria Cross. Birks was killed by a shell burst the next day while trying to rescue men buried during a bombardment....

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

War Diary – 6th Battalion

27 – 30th October, 1917:

Narrative of tour of line from night of 27/28 to night of 30/31, attached – Appendix III.

Appendix III

In anticipation of heavy shelling from the enemy owing to the Canadian attack, “B” Coy sent one each of their two remaining Lewis Guns to “A” and “C” Coys, and the front line was thinned out during the night, so that it was held solely by Lewis Guns.

Enemy shelling was normal from 1800 on 29 Oct to 0550 on 30 Oct. which was zero hour for the Canadian attack; from that time until about 1900 that evening, it was intense, and the thinning out of the front line undoubtedly saved

us many casualties. After a very useful and successful tour of the line, the Bn. Was relieved by the 11th Bn., A.I.F. on night of 30/31 Oct, the relief being complete at 2020.

1 – 31 Casualties - Battle 17 Off. 366 o.r. Other causes 24 o.r
- Drafts 5 Off. 85 o.r.

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Private James Joseph Byrne was admitted to 5th London General Hospital, Lambeth, England on 13th November, 1917 with G.S.W. to Shoulder, Chest & Right Leg.

Mrs Walsh, Post Office, Tolmie, Victoria, sister of Private James Joseph Byrne, was advised by Base Records on 20th November, 1917 that Private J. J. Byrne had been wounded, 2nd occasion.

Private James Joseph Byrne died at 5.30 pm on 22nd November, 1917 at 5th London General Hospital, Lambeth, England from Tetanus following wounds received in action.

A death for James Byrne, aged 25, was registered in the December quarter, 1917 in the district of Lambeth, London, England.

Private James Joseph Byrne was buried on 27th November, 1917 in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England – Australian Military Burial Ground - Plot number 180096.

From the burial report of Private James Joseph Byrne - Coffin was good polished Elm brass fittings. The deceased soldier was accorded a full Military Funeral. The coffin was draped with the Australian Flag. Bagpipe Band, Firing Party, Bugler and Pallbearers were supplied by the 2nd South African Regiment stationed at Woking (under the command of Lieut Wheeland). A floral tribute was placed in the coffin by friends. The grave will be turfed immediately and an oak cross will be erected by the A.I.F. London. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral.

Base Records wrote to Mr M. Byrne, 74 Abbotsford St, Abbotsford, Victoria, brother of the late Private James Joseph Byrne, on 24th March, 1923 stating that the site of the late No. 4139, Private J. J. Byrne's grave in Brookwood Military Cemetery was officially registered as Plot 11 Row B Grave 24.

This is now recorded by CWGC as Memorial reference – XI. B. 24. Private James Joseph Byrne has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Private James Joseph Byrne contains a letter from Matron, St. Thomas' Hospital which reads: "*Re Pte Byrne, 6th A.I.F. I am sorry that the 2 sisters of the Wards in which he was treated are away on leave just now, so that it is a little more difficult than it would otherwise be to supply you with full details. Pte Byrne was admitted to this Hospital from France on Nov. 13th suffering from such extensive wounds of legs and chest, that unfortunately little could be done for him, and he only lived till Nov. 22nd. The Australian lady visitor saw him several times, and the R.C. Priest also saw him, but towards the end he was unconscious a large part of the time. A military funeral was arranged and some of the convalescent patients from the same Ward asked permission to attend. His grave is amongst those of other members of the Australian Forces. We understand that he had only one sister, whose address we were not able to obtain, and we are glad now to let her know that everything we could do, was done for him.*"

A package of the personal effects of the late Private James Joseph Byrne were sent to Dora Walsh, Tolmie P.O., Victoria & she signed as receipt of receiving the package on 29th May, 1918.

Base Records contacted Mrs Walsh, Post Office, Tolmie, Victoria on 19th October, 1921 stating that she was registered on the records of the late No. 4139 Private J. J. Byrne as the next of kin but were enquiring if there were

any nearer blood relatives than herself – are his father & mother living, and has he any brothers and any sisters older than herself (and requested their names and addresses) 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.

Base Records wrote to Mrs Walsh again on 5th December, 1922 stating “*I wrote to you on 19.10.21 asking whether the parents, any brother (stating the eldest) and any sisters, (stating the eldest) of the late No. 4139 Private J. J. Byrne, 6th Battalion still survive, if so their names and addresses, but so far no reply has been received. The information is desired in order that the deceased soldier’s War Medals etc., may be disposed of in keeping with the Deceased Soldiers’ Estates Act of 1918. I am holding the matter open for 21 days from this date when if no reply is received these items must be placed on the untraceable list.*”

Dora Walsh replied to Base Records on 20th December, 1922 stating that “*mother and father dead. Eldest Brother Mathew Byrne resides in Abbotsford don’t know the No. or the name of street. Eldest sister Mrs Bridget Comerford, “Willow Vale” _____ Post Office via Mansfield.*”

Base Records then wrote to Mrs Comerford on 13th January, 1923 asking for the “*present address of Mr Mathew Byrne, the eldest surviving brother of the late No. 4139 Private J. J. Byrne, 6th Battalion, in order that I may communicate with him on the subject of the disposal of the late soldier’s war medals, etc.*”

Mrs Comerford replied to Base Records on 18th January, 1923 advising that the address of Mr Mathew Byrne was 74 Abbotsford St, Abbotsford, Victoria.

Base Records wrote to Mr M. Byrne on 31st January, 1923 with the following: “*I understand that you are the eldest surviving brother of the late No. 4139 Private J. J. Byrne, 6th Battalion, and shall be glad to learn whether you have any objections to the War Medals, etc., issuable on account of the late soldier’s service being handed over to your sister, Mrs Walsh, who was nominated as next-of-kin, or whether you desire the items in question to be forwarded to you.*”

Mr M. Byrne replied to base Records on 5th February, 1923 stating “*I desire the War Medals etc to be forwarded to me.*”

Private James Joseph Byrne was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Byrne’s eldest brother – Mr M. Byrne (74 Abbotsford St, Abbotsford, Victoria), as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque sent February, 1923).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private James Joseph Byrne – service number 4139, aged 25, of 6th Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of John and Honorah Byrne.

Private J. J. Byrne is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 46.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

J. J. Byrne & his brother J. Byrne are both remembered on the Mansfield Memorial Arch & Gates at Mansfield Recreation Reserve, Highett Street, Mansfield, Victoria.

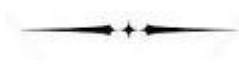


Mansfield Memorial Arch (Photos from Monument Australia)



(61 pages of Private James Joseph Byrne'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



Connected to Private James Joseph Byrne:

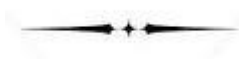
Older brother – John Byrne: Enlisted 28th August, 1914, Bushman, aged 24. Private John Byrne, 1511, embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT Euripides (A14) on 20th October, 1914 with 3rd Infantry Battalion "H" Company.

Died of wounds 14th April, 1917 & was buried in Grevillers British Cemetery, France.

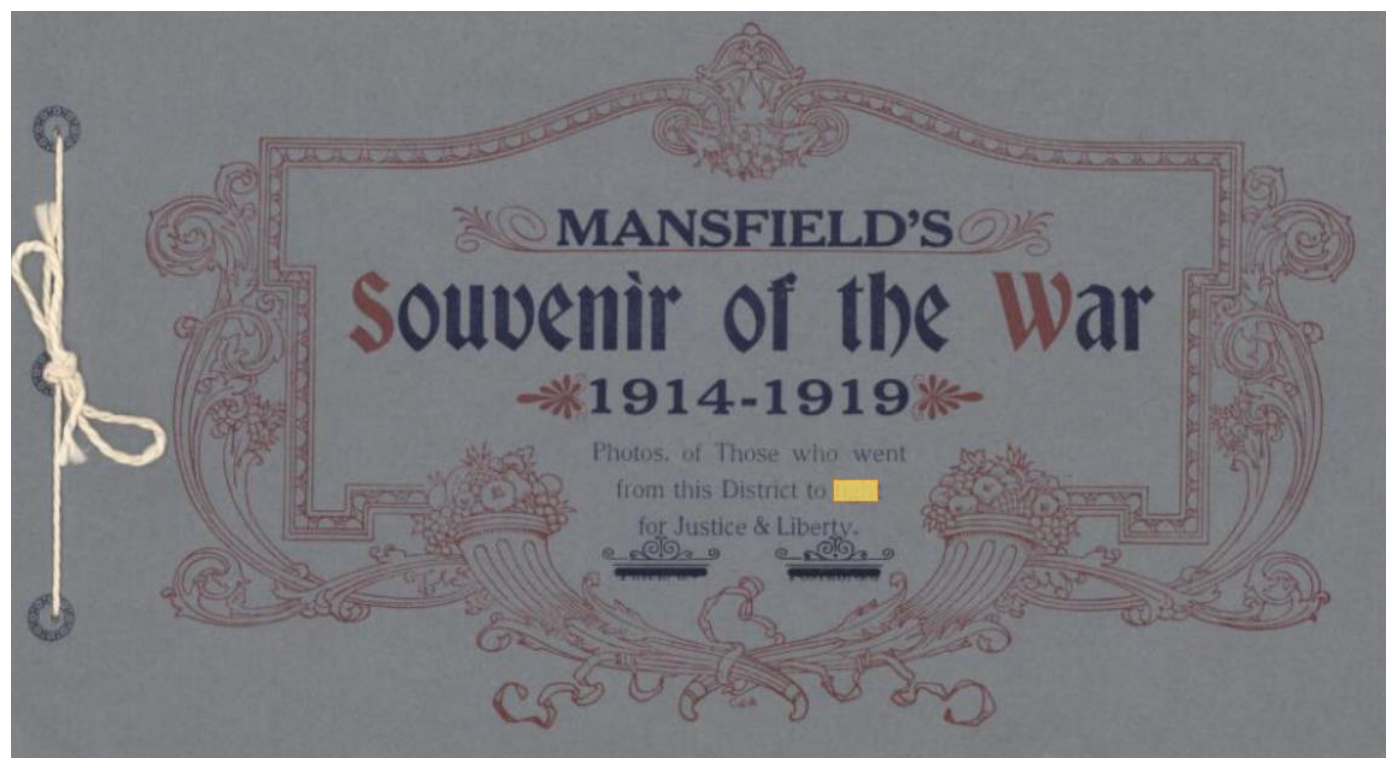
Lance Sergeant John Byrne was awarded Military Medal. He was recommended for Distinguished Conduct Medal & French Medaille Militaire.



Sergeant John Byrne (*Mansfield's Souvenir of the War 1914 – 1919*)



From Mansfield's Souvenir of the War 1914 – 1919



SERGT. JOHN BYRNE

3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade.
Born at Tolmie, 9th December, 1889. Enlisted at Sydney on 8th August, 1914. Served at Gallipoli, Egypt and France. Wounded at Gallipoli. Died of wounds at the battle of Bapaume, on 13th April, 1917. Awarded Military and Distinguished Conduct Medals.

Stchr-Br. J. J. BYRNE

6th Battalion, 2nd Brigade.
Born at Tolmie 20th June, 1892. Enlisted at Mansfield on 9th August, 1915. Served in Egypt and France. Wounded on 12th November, 1917, at Polygon Wood. Died of wounds on 22nd November, 1917, in St. Thomas' Hospital, England.

Stchr-Br. J. J. BYRNE

6th Battalion, 2nd Brigade.

Born at Tolmie 20th June, 1892. Enlisted at Mansfield on 9th August, 1915.

Served in Egypt and France. Wounded on 12th November, 1917 at Polygon Wood.

Died of wounds on 22nd November, 1917, in St. Thomas' Hospital, England.



Private James Joseph Byrne



Newspaper Notices

1,796 CASUALTIES

220th AND 221st LISTS

Wounded

Pte J. J. Byrne, Tolmie

(The Bendigo Independent, Victoria – 26 September, 1916)

AUSTRALIAN CASUALTIES

LISTS Nos. 371 and 372

Wounded

J. J. Byrne, Tolmie

(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria – 18 December, 1917)

THE 375th CASUALTY LIST

DIED OF WOUNDS

Private J. J. Byrne, Tolmie

(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – 29 December, 1917)

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 J. J. Byrne does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

In Memory Of Our Dearly Beloved Brother R.I.P.

Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England

Located 30 miles from London in Surrey, Brookwood Military Cemetery is the largest CWGC cemetery in the United Kingdom. The cemetery contains the graves of more than 1,600 servicemen of the British Empire in the First World War and over 3,470 from the Second World War.

Brookwood Military Cemetery lies adjacent to Brookwood Cemetery (The London Necropolis), a vast space which covers 500 acres. In 1917, an area to the north of the cemetery was set aside as Brookwood Military Cemetery for men and women of Commonwealth forces who died, many of battle wounds, in the London district. This site was further extended to accommodate Commonwealth casualties of the Second World War. *(Information from CWGC)*

There are 446 Australian War Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery – 351 from World War 1 & 95 from World War 2.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00185

A large crowd attends an A.I.F. military funeral at Brookwood Cemetery. In the foreground wooden crosses mark rows of graves. (Photo c1919)

Identified: Front row, left to right: Second Lieutenant Douglas Abbott Ferguson, Australian Flying Corps, died of accidental injuries 18 August 1918; Lieutenant (Lt) Francis John Smedley MC, 7th Battalion, died of wounds 20 August 1918.

Second row: 6860 Private (Pte) James Alexander McKeown, 21st Battalion, died of wounds 20 June 1918; 3622 Pte S T Wilson, 2nd Australian Pioneers, died of wounds 4 July 1918; 2390 Sergeant Frederick Charles Stronell, 21st Battalion, died of wounds 9 July 1918; Lt Arthur Melville Lilburne MC, 6th Brigade Australian Field Artillery, died of disease 11 July 1918.



Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photo from CWGC)



Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)



Australian Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)





(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)



Australian War Graves *(Photo courtesy of Neil Bright 2020)*

Photo of Private J. J. Byrne's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England.



(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)



(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher – Jan 2021)

