

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



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**1629 PRIVATE**

**J. P. CANAVAN**

**2ND AUSTRALIAN PIONEERS**

**20TH AUGUST, 1917**

## James Peter (Jim) CANAVAN

James Peter Canavan was born at Tyrone, Northern Ireland between 1870 & 1875 (Conflicting ages on enlisting & death).

The 1903 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Capricornia, subdivision of Rockhampton North, Queensland listed James Canavan, Labourer of Kalka. Other Canavan's listed at Kalka were Elizabeth Canavan, Tailoress, Maria Canavan, Shop Assistant & Rose Canavan, Tailoress.

The 1905, 1906 & 1908 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Capricornia, subdivision of Rockhampton North, Queensland listed James Canavan, Labourer of Kalka. Other Canavan's listed at Kalka were Elizabeth Canavan, Tailoress & Rose Canavan, Tailoress.

James Peter Canavan stated he was a 40 year old, single, Labourer from (care of James Stewart & Co.) Rockhampton, Queensland when he enlisted at Cloncurry, Queensland on 7th May, 1915 with the 7th Infantry Brigade, 25th Infantry Battalion, 1st Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 1629 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his sister – Miss Rose Canavan (care of James Stewart & Co.) Rockhampton, Queensland. James Peter Canavan answered on his Attestation Papers to the question – Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? - "es for drunkenness".

Private James Peter Canavan was posted to Camp with 1st Reinforcements of 25th Battalion on 7th May, 1915.

Private James Peter Canavan embarked from Brisbane, Queensland on HMAT *Aeneas* (A60) on 29th June, 1915.

Private James Peter Canavan embarked from Alexandria on 4th September, 1915 to join M.E.F. (Mediterranean Expeditionary Force) at Gallipoli Peninsula.

Private James Peter Canavan disembarked at Alexandria from Mudros on H.T. *Hororata* on 9th January, 1916.

Private James Peter Canavan was taken on strength of 2nd Pioneer Battalion from 25th Battalion on 14th March, 1916.

Private James Peter Canavan proceeded to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) from Alexandria on 19th March, 1916 & disembarked at Marseilles, France on 26th March, 1916.

A letter as written to Base Records on 23rd December, 1916 by Marie Ferricks, of Mason Street, North Rockampton, Queensland stating that there had been mention in the *Rockhampton Bulletin* of some Australian Prisoners of war who had been exchanged from Germany & among the list was Private Canavan. "*As that is my brother's name & the last news we have had from him was the 1st August. I would be pleased if you would supply particulars*". Base Records replied that no official report to any effect has been received & there was no record in this office of an Australian of that name being a Prisoner of War.

Private James Peter Canavan was admitted to Hospital on 5th February, 1917. He was admitted to 7th Australian Field Ambulance on 5th February, 1917 with frequency micturition & a septic sore right ankle. He was transferred & admitted to Casualty Clearing Station on 7th February, 1917 with Renal Colic & transferred on 8th February, 1917. Pte Canavan was admitted to 5th General Hospital at Rouen, France on 9th February, 1917. He was transferred to Havre ready for transfer to England on 13th February, 1917 & embarked for England on Hospital Ship *Lanfranc* from Havre, France on 14th February, 1917.

Private James Peter Canavan was admitted to V.A.D. Hospital Cheltenham on 16th February, 1917.

Private James Peter Canavan was admitted to 3rd Auxiliary Hospital on 16th April, 1917 from V.A.D. Hospital, Cheltenham. Pte Canavan was discharged to furlough on 7th May, 1917 & was to report to Perham Downs, Wiltshire on 22nd May, 1917.

Private James Peter Canavan was marched in from furlo to No. 1 Command Depot at Perham Downs, Wiltshire on 23rd May, 1917. He was medically classified as A3.

Private James Peter Canavan was marched in to Pioneer Training Battalion at Fovant, Wiltshire from No. 1 Command Depot at Perham Downs on 26th May, 1917.

Private James Peter Canavan was marched out to Dinton, Wiltshire on 28th May, 1917.

Private James Peter Canavan was sent sick to Military Hospital, Fovant on 12th August, 1917 from Pioneer Training Battalion.

## **2nd Pioneer Battalion**

The 2nd Pioneers were established on 10 March 1916, at Tel-el-Kebir in Egypt, and were subsequently assigned to the 2nd Division. 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. 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.

*(Pioneer Battalion information from Wikipedia)*

Private James Peter Canavan died at 9.10 am on 20th August, 1917 at Military Hospital, Fovant, Wiltshire, England from Ulceration of Stomach.

A death for James P. Canavan, aged 47, was registered in the September quarter, 1917 in the district of Wilton, Wiltshire, England.

Private James Peter Canavan was buried on 21st August, 1917 in St George's Churchyard, Fovant, Wiltshire, England – Plot number II. A. 1. and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Pte Canavan - *Coffin was Beech. Pte Canavan was seriously ill for one week, and appeared to know that he was dying. He served under me in France for over 12 months and proved himself to be a good and brave soldier. I visited him several times in Hospital, and know that everything possible was done to make him comfortable and to save his life. Captain A. H. Sinclair, No. 4 Command Depot, Fovant.* Pte Canavan was given a Military Funeral officiated by Father Manning, 8th Training Battalion, Hurdcott (R.C.)

Private James Peter Canavan requested in his Will dated 18th April, 1917 (a previous Will dated 11th June, 1916 had the same bequest) that in the event of his death all his property & effects be given to his sister – Miss Rose Canavan, c/o Mrs J. Ferricks, via Lakes Creek, North Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia.

Base Records contacted Miss R. Canavan, sister of the late Private James Peter Canavan, at the address of c/o Mrs J. Ferricks, via Lakes Creek, North Rockhampton in October, 1920 regarding the awarding of War Medals on account of the service of her brother. Miss R. Canavan was asked of there any nearer blood relatives than herself. Miss R. Canavan replied that both parents were dead & she was the eldest surviving relative. Base Records replied in November, 1920 stating that the information supplied was not sufficient for them to dispose of the War Medals to her. Base Records required a definite answer on whether there were any brothers living.

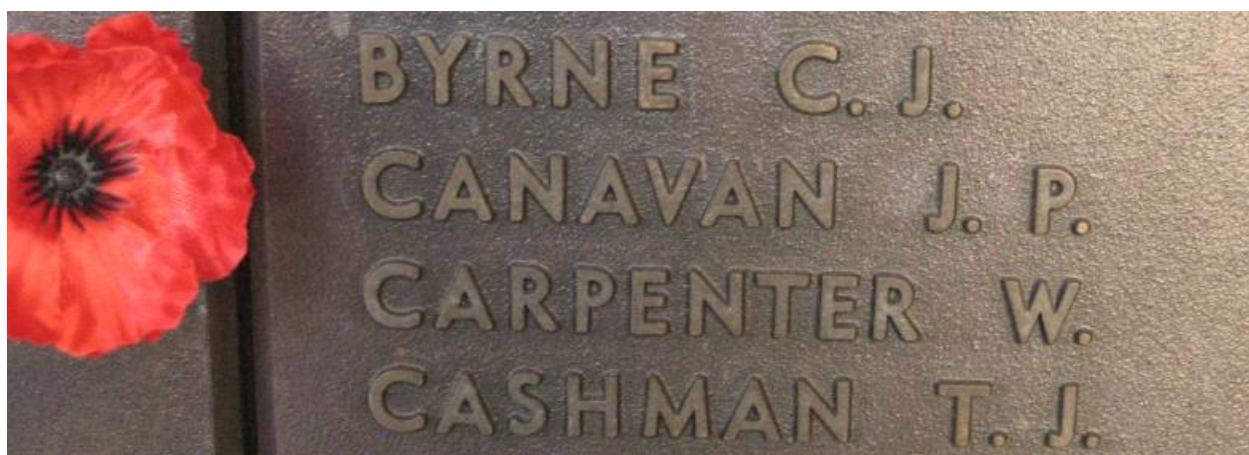
Base Records contacted Miss R. Canavan, sister of the late Private James Peter Canavan, at the address of c/o Mrs J. Ferricks, via Lakes Creek, North Rockhampton in January, 1921 regarding the war medals of her brother as a previous letter had gone unanswered. Base Records were asking for a definite statement as to whether the deceased has any surviving brothers & the name & address of the eldest as the claims of a brother must be considered before those of a sister, unless there are good and sufficient reasons for varying the procedure in keeping with the instructions under the "Deceased Soldiers Estates Act 1918". Miss R. Canavan replied with "*I told you distinctly in my first letter that my brother had no other relatives living who have any claim on him except myself. However once again allow me to state: His father & mother are both dead also his brother & sister, I am his only*

*living relative except one young sister who has no claim on his medals & has no wish for them. Trusting you will find this explicit enough.”*

Private James Peter Canavan was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Canavan’s eldest sister (Parents & brother deceased) – Miss Rose Canavan, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent August, 1921 & Plaque sent September, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private James Peter Canavan – service number 1629, of 2nd Australian Pioneers. No family details are listed.

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



*(Photos Cathy Sedgwick)*



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

The Rockhampton War Memorial, located in Botanic Gardens, 100 Spencer Street, Rockhampton, Queensland does not list individual names.



**Rockhampton War Memorial** (*Photo from Monument Australia – Diane Watson*)

(59 pages of Pte James Peter Canavan'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**

### **AUSTRALIAN CASUALTIES**

#### **List No. 277**

ILL

Private J. P. Canavan (Rockhampton)

(*The Capricornian*, Rockhampton, Queensland – 17 March, 1917)

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### **Roll of Honour**

#### **338th Casualty List**

#### **210 Queenslanders**

DIED OF ILLNESS

J. P. Canavan, Rockhampton, 20/8/17, p.r.s. ill

(*The Telegraph*, Brisbane, Queensland – 17 March, 1917)

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### **ROLL OF HONOUR**

CANAVAN – Sacred to the memory of Private J. P. (Jim), youngest son of the late J. P. Canavan, who died on active service 20th August, 1917.

It were better to die, since death comes surely,

    In the full noontide of an honoured name,

Than to lie, at the end of years, obscurely,

    A handful of dust in a shroud of shame.

(*Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton, Queensland – 20 August, 1918) & (*The Capricornian*, Rockhampton, Queensland – 24 August, 1918)

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## 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 J. P. Canavan's Private Headstone in St George's Churchyard, Fovant, Wiltshire, England, which was erected by Officers and Men of his Battalion.





*Pray*

*For The Soul*

*Of*

***JAMES PETER CANAVAN***

*2nd Pioneer Battalion A. I. F.*

*Died August 20th 1917. Aged 47 Years*

*After Long Active Service in France.*

*R.I.P.*

*This Cross Was Erected To His Memory*

*By The*

*Officers And Men Of His Battalion*



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