

**Hastings Cemetery,
Hastings, Sussex
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



1528 PRIVATE

J. W. CHRISTENSEN

31ST BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

12TH AUGUST, 1916

James Walter CHRISTENSEN

James Walter Christensen was born at Mackay, Queensland on 5th September, 1877 to parents Ingvert Wilhelm Christensen & Maren Christensen (nee Johansen).

James Walter Christensen attended School at Homebush, Mackay, Queensland.

Private James Walter Christensen was in the 1st Queensland Mounted Infantry "A" Company in the South Africa conflict (Boer War). His service number was 225.

The 1908 & 1909 Australian Electoral Rolls for the division of Herbert, subdivision of Mackay, Queensland recorded James Walter Christensen, Labourer, of Homebush.

The 1912 & 1913 Australian Electoral Rolls for the division of Herbert, subdivision of Mackay, Queensland recorded James Walter Christensen, Miner, of Milton Street.

James Walter Christensen was a 37 year old, single, Miner from Mount Carbine, via Cairns, Queensland when he enlisted in Brisbane, Queensland on 21st July, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Presbyterian & his next of kin was listed as his father – Mr J. W. Christensen, of Milton Street, Mackay, Queensland.

Private James Walter Christensen was posted to camp on 21st July, 1915 with 31st Battalion Reinforcements.

Private James Walter Christensen, Service number 1528, embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Bakara (A41)* on 5th November, 1915 with the 8th Infantry Brigade, 31st Infantry Battalion, 1st Reinforcements. Private Christensen's Active Service form records that he disembarked at Suez on 7th December, 1915 on HMAT *Wandilla*.

Private James Walter Christensen was admitted to 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Heliopolis on 7th December, 1915 suffering from indigestion. He was discharged to Base Details on 18th December, 1915.

Private James Walter Christensen was taken on strength with 31st Battalion & transferred to "A" Company on 1st February, 1916.

Private James Walter Christensen embarked from Alexandria on *Hororata* on 16th June, 1916 to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) & disembarked at Marseilles, France on 23rd June, 1916.

Private James Walter Christensen was wounded in action in France on 20th July, 1916. He was admitted to 1st Australian Casualty Clearing Station then transferred to 30th General Hospital at Calais, France on 22nd July, 1916 with gunshot wounds to spine. Private Christensen was reported as being dangerously ill on 27th July, 1916. He embarked from Calais on Hospital Ship *Brighton* for England on 30th July, 1916.

Private James Walter Christensen's parents received advice by wire on 29th July, 1916 that their son had been wounded & was dangerously ill with shrapnel wounds to back. They sent a telegram to Military Records Office, Melbourne on 11th August, 1916 requesting if there was any further information.

31st Battalion

The 31st Battalion was raised as part of the 8th Brigade at Enoggera, on the outskirts of Brisbane, in August 1915. Some of the battalion's companies, however, were also raised at Broadmeadows Camp in Victoria. In early October, these two elements were united at Broadmeadows, and the battalion sailed from Melbourne the following month.

The 8th Brigade joined the newly raised 5th Australian Division in Egypt, and proceeded to France, destined for the Western Front, in June 1916. The 31st Battalion fought its first major battle at Fromelles on 19 July 1916, having only entered the front-line trenches 3 days previously. The attack was a disastrous introduction to battle for the 31st - it suffered 572 casualties, over half of its strength. Although it still spent periods in the front line, the 31st played no major offensive role for the rest of the year.

(Battalion information from The Australian War Memorial)

War Diary – 31st Battalion in France:

19th July 1916 – Bombardment on both sides during the day. Assault launched at 6 pm. Enemy's position captured & an attempt made to consolidate during the night. (Additional operation order)

20th July 1916 – Both flanks were broken & a general retirement to our original lines necessary. Casualties very heavy. Bn withdrawn from front line & rebilleted in FLEURBAIX. Casualties amongst Officers 1 Killed 10 wounded 6 missing.

21st July 1916 – Despatches & detailed summary of operations covering period of attack 19th & 20th inst prepared & forwarded to G.O.C. 8th Inf. Bde.

<i>Casualty return</i>	<i>Killed</i>	<i>Wounded</i>	<i>Missing</i>
<i>Officers</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Other ranks</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>410</i>	<i>80</i>

Estimated Germans killed in Bn. Sector 500 Captured 120.

Bn moved & billeted in BAC St MAUR

(War Diary information from The Australian War Memorial)

Private James Walter Christensen was admitted to the Buchanan Hospital, St. Leonards-on-Sea, Hastings, East Sussex, England on 31st July, 1916 with gunshot wounds to the Spine (severe) & Paralysis.

Private James Walter Christensen died on 12th August, 1916 at the Buchanan Hospital, St. Leonards, Hastings, Sussex, England from wounds received in action in France – gunshot wounds to spine.

A death for James W. Christensen, aged 39, was registered in the September quarter, 1916 in the district of Hastings, Sussex, England.

Private James Walter Christensen was buried in Hastings Cemetery, Hastings, Sussex, England – Plot number L.D.020. and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Newspaper article on Funeral of Pte Christensen –

MILITARY FUNERAL

FOR AN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Some very pathetic incidents were witnessed, and at the same time a spontaneous outburst of kindly feeling towards the Buchanan Hospital, on the occasion of the funeral of an Australian soldier, on Wednesday, he having died in that institution last Saturday.

He was Private James Walter Christensen, 31st Australian Battalion, of Melton-street, Mackay, Queensland, Australia, aged 28. He was wounded in Flanders early in July. By the kindness of the Colonel Commanding the 6th Royal Sussex Regiment, military bearers and a firing party were provided at the Borough Cemetery, A service, conducted by the Rev. C. A. Weeks, was held in St. Peter's Church. About twenty-five wounded, mainly Australians, and a few Canadians, were subsequently conveyed to the Cemetery in carriages. Mr H. Gilbert Henderson represented the Hospital, and Sister Florence and two nurses who had nursed the deceased were present. The service was solemn and impressive, the soldiers joining heartily in the singing. Several of the Australians expressed their sincere thanks to Mr Henderson for the treatment accorded their fallen comrade. Very beautiful wreaths were received from the Board of Management of the Buchanan Hospital, the nursing staff, his fellow wounded in the Buchanan Hospital, the Countess of Lauderdale, Mr F. W. Jepson, Mrs Morris, Mrs Rogers, Mrs Morgan and Eileen, Mrs Hoar, Mrs Gibbs, Mrs Fielding, Mr Packwood, Miss Laurence, Miss Cook and many others.

(Hastings and St. Leonards Observer, Hastings, East Sussex, England – 19 August, 1916)

Private James Walter Christensen was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Christensen's father – Mr I. W. Christensen, as the closest next-of-kin. Base Records were advised that Mr I. W. Christensen had died on 21st January, 1920. The items were signed for & received by Mrs Christensen. (Scroll sent October, 1921 & Plaque sent July, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private James Walter Christensen – service number 1528, aged 37, of 31st Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of I. W. and Maren Christensen. Born at Mackay, Queensland.

Private J. W. Christensen is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 118.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

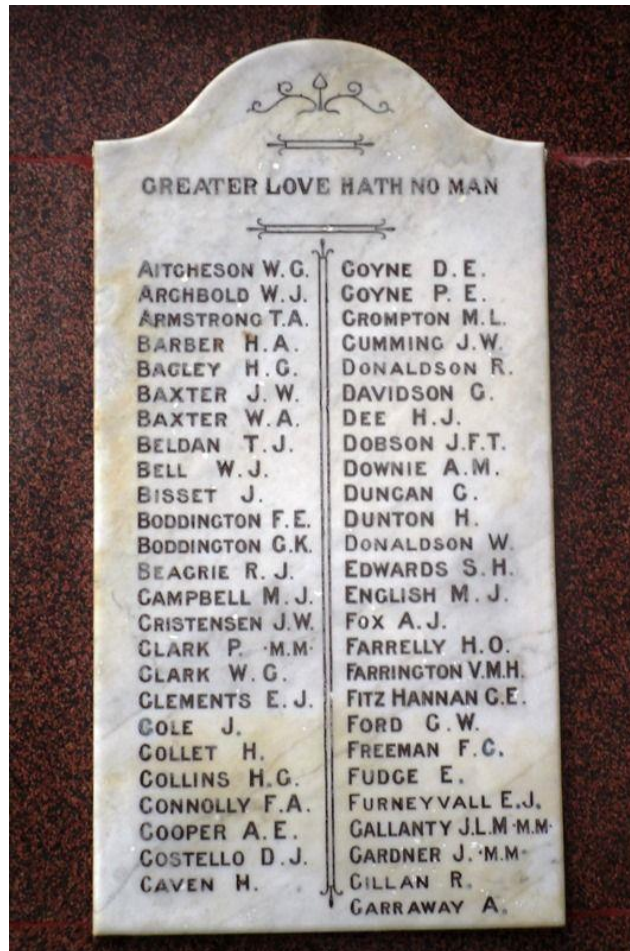
Wal. J. Christensen is also remembered on the Homebush and District Honour Board 1914 – 1919 which is located at Homebush State School, 1181 Homebush Road, Homebush, Queensland.



Homebush and District Honour Board 1914 – 1919

(Photo from Queensland War Memorial Register – Glen Hall, Mackay Historical Society)

J. W. Cristensen is remembered on the Mackay Cenotaph, located in Jubilee Park, Alfred Street, Mackay, Queensland.



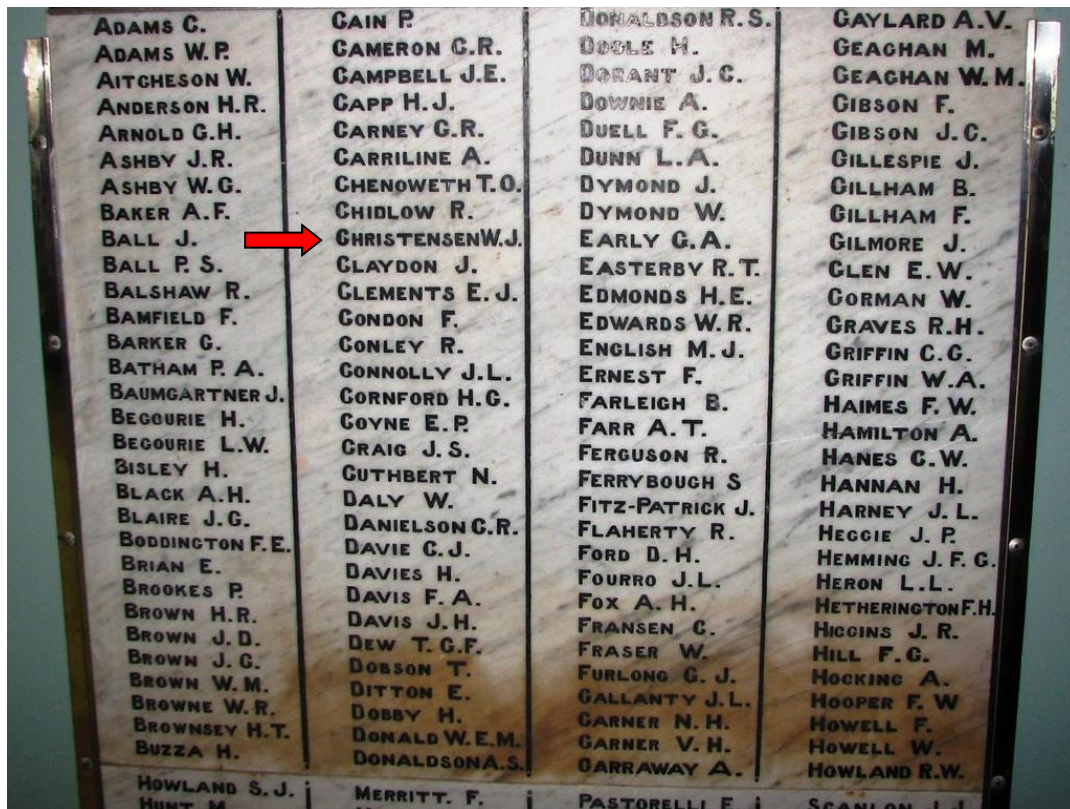
Mackay Cenotaph (Photos from Monument Australia – Donald Gibbs/John Huth)

J. W. Christensen is also remembered on the Mackay Old Town Hall Honour Board located in the Old Mackay Town Hall foyer, Sydney Street, Mackay, Queensland.



Mackay Old Town Hall Honour Board

(Photos from Queensland War Memorial Register – Glen Hall, Mackay Historical Society)



(36 pages of Private James Walter Christensen'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



Private James Walter Christensen

Newspaper Notices

AUSTRALIAN CASUALTIES

LIST No. 190

WOUNDED

Private J. W. Christensen (Mackay – also dangerously ill)

(*Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton, Queensland – 5 August, 1916)

PERSONAL

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The Acting-Mayor received a similar message announcing the death of Private J. W. Christensen, 31st Battalion, son of Mr and Mrs Christensen, Milton Street, who died on 12th August in the Pavilion Hospital, Brighton, from a gunshot wound in the spine. Private Christensen volunteered last year.

(*Daily Mercury*, Mackay, Queensland – 24 August, 1916)

ROLL OF HONOUR

QUEENSLAND LISTS

The 205th casualty list.....

DIED OF WOUNDS

Private J. W. Christensen, Mackay, Q., 12/8/16

(*The Week*, Brisbane, Queensland – 8 September, 1916)

ROLL OF HONOUR

CHRISTENSEN – In loving memory of our dear Son and Brother, Pte J. W. Christensen, who died of wounds, Hastings Hospital, St. Leonards-on-Sea, August 12, 1916.

He gave his life for his country,

For honour, faith and right,

With us his memory ever lives,

He fought a noble fight.

(Inserted by his loving Father and Mother, M and W. Christensen, and Sister and Brother-in-Law, M. and F. Claire.)

(*Daily Mercury*, Mackay, Queensland – 14 August, 1917)

ROLL OF HONOUR

CHRISTENSEN – In loving memory of our dear Son and Brother, Pte J. W. Christensen, who died of wounds, Hastings Hospital, St. Leonards-on-Sea, August 12, 1916.

(*Daily Mercury*, Mackay, Queensland – 13 August, 1918)

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. W. Christensen does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

A letter sent to *Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, Hastings, East Sussex - Saturday 02 September 1916

HOW WE BURY OUR HEROES

HASTINGS CORPORATION METHODS CONDEMNED.

We received the following letter on Tuesday:-

Some few weeks ago a young Australian hero died at the Buchanan Hospital from wounds received while fighting at the front. Several ladies interested in this young soldier promised his friends at the Hospital that they would look after his grave. To show the kindly interest taken in this young fellow, some of the flowers were cut from the wreaths, and sent to his parents in Australia with a detailed account of his funeral.

Upon visiting the cemetery a few days after, these ladies failed to find the grave. Eventually they found a grave-digger who took them to what is called the 'Common Part', and left them with the remark "This is how we treat our heroes, one has been buried there now, and two more will go on top." You can imagine the disgust of these ladies to find that the Town Authorities should allow one of our Over Sea Heroes to be laid to rest in a 'pauper grave'.

Upon making enquiries at one of our Town Councillors he informed me that they had no other choice but to bury our Heroes (without friends) in this way. He said if these ladies objected to this kind of burial why hadn't they thought of it before, and bought the ground.

Now, Sir, to me it seems disgraceful that no provision has been made by the Town Authorities to grant land at the cemetery, so that lads from over sea can be buried as we would bury our own; and if as years go on their friends from the Colonies wish to see where they are buried they will have no difficulty in finding out. If the Town will grant the ground I know quite well there are plenty of residents here who would only be too glad to bear the expense of Headstones and to see that the graves are kept in order.

T.POVEY

"Springfield", Vale-road, St. Leonards.

Hastings Cemetery, Hastings, Sussex, England

Hastings Cemetery, Hastings, Sussex contains 243 Commonwealth War Graves.

There are 176 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-18 war here, 2 being unidentified sailors of the Royal Navy. There are a further 69 burials of the 1939-45 war here. Those whose graves are not marked by headstones are named on a Screen Wall Memorial. There are 9 Foreign National war burials and 4 non-war service burials here.

(Information from CWGC)



Entrance to Hastings Cemetery *(Photo by N. Chadwick)*



War Graves in Hastings Cemetery *(Photo by Robin Webster)*

Photo of Private J. W. Christensen's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Hastings Cemetery, Hastings, Sussex, England.



(Photo courtesy of julia&keld)



(Photo courtesy of Martin Barry – December 2022)

