

**St. Mary's Churchyard,  
Alne, North Yorkshire War Grave**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**1630 DRIVER**

**ROBERT HENRY ALLEN CROSBY**

**AUSTRALIAN MACHINE GUN CORPS**

**15TH OCTOBER, 1918 Age 27**

*Just When His Life Was Brightest*

*Just When His Hopes Were Best;*

*His Country Called – He Answered.*

*Now In God's Hands He Rests.*

## Robert Henry Allen CROSBY

Robert Henry Allen Crosby was born on 15th July, 1891 near Laidley, Queensland to parents James & Mary Jane Crosby (nee Evans).

Robert Henry Allen Crosby attended Townson State School, near Laidley, Queensland.

The Australian Electoral Rolls for 1913, 1915 & 1917 for the division of Moreton, subdivision of Laidley listed Robert Henry Allan Crosby, Farmer of Townson.

Robert Henry Allen Crosby was a 24 year old, single, Farmer from Townson, via Laidley, Queensland when he enlisted at Brisbane, Queensland, on 22nd January, 1916 with the 42nd Infantry Battalion, 1st Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 1630 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs Mary Jane Crosby of Townson, via Laidley, Queensland.

Private Robert Henry Allen Crosby embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Borda* (A30) on 5th June, 1916 & disembarked at Southampton, England on 23rd July, 1916.

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.

Private Crosby was taken on strength with 11th Training Battalion, Larkhill, Wiltshire on 7th August, 1916.

Private Crosby was marched to Machine Gun Training Depot at Parkhouse Camp, Wiltshire on 10th August, 1916.

Private Crosby was transferred to Grantham from Machine Gun Training Depot on 21st August, 1916.

Private Crosby was appointed Driver on 30th October, 1916.

Driver Crosby proceeded overseas to France on SS *Princess Henrietta* from Folkestone, Kent on 14th November, 1916.

Driver Crosby was taken on strength with 12th Machine Gun Company in France on 26th November, 1916.

Driver Crosby was on leave from France from 1st September, 1917 to 11th September, 1917.

Driver Crosby was designation changed to 4th Machine Gun Battalion – A.I.F. Order 1151 & was with his Unit in France on 2nd June, 1918.

Driver Crosby was on leave to UK from 30th September, 1918.

Driver Robert Henry Allen Crosby was sent sick to Hospital whilst on leave in UK on 14th October, 1918. The Medical Case Sheet records that Driver Crosby had complained of short & painful breathing. This had been coming on for the last fortnight.

Driver Robert Henry Allen Crosby died at 6.40 pm on 15th October, 1918 at The Military Hospital, York from Influenza & Pneumonia.

A death for Robert H. A. Crosby, aged 27, was registered in the December quarter, 1918 in the district of York, Yorkshire.

A letter in the Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Driver Robert H. A. Crosby, 1630, 4th M.G. Btn., A.I.F. reads:  
*“Adm. M. Hpl Sulford Rd Work – suff; from pneumonia due to Influenza  
“I deeply regret to report that he died about 6.45 pm. last evening, Oct: 15th. He was home on leave from France and was staying with some cousins at Tollerton, near York. He was taken ill with influenza last Thursday, but was not brought to the Hospital until Monday. I was with him all yesterday afternoon. He was suffering greatly. As his cousin came over from Tollerton I left him about six-thirty, not knowing the end would come so soon. Had he been alone I should have stayed with him until the end, as I do with all my boys. He was conscious until the last, but quite unable to talk. All the nurses and doctors were most kind to him. Everything was done that could possibly be done, but he*

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*should have been sent to the hospital sooner. I have seen the body this afternoon in the beautiful little mortuary of the hospital and covered it with my Australian Flag. The funeral is to be at 2 pm. on Saturday. Of course I shall be there, and see he has some flowers. There is a beautiful smile on his face. I am going to write to his father in Australia after the funeral. His cousin is going to send me the address. She could not remember what town he lived in, but he comes from somewhere in Queensland. If there is anything you especially wish done for the funeral, will you please wire me at once. Do you wish me to order flowers from the Red Cross and is the grave to be photographed later and sent home to his family? It is the first Australian funeral I have had, so I do not know quite what you wish. Of course the military arrangements are not in my hands, but anything else I can do, I will do with pleasure.*

*Cert. Letter from Red X Visitor 16/10/18."*

The body of Driver Robert Henry Allen Crosby was claimed by the next-of-kin – Aunt – Mrs Crosby & sent to her at Mill House, Tollerton, Yorks on 19th October, 1918.

Driver Robert Henry Allen Crosby was buried on 19th October, 1918 in St. Mary's Churchyard, Alne, North Yorkshire – West end. He has a Private Headstone but his death is still acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. From the burial report of Driver Crosby - *Coffin was Polished Elm with Brass Mountings. The deceased soldier was accorded a Military funeral, Bugler and Pallbearers being in attendance. He was buried by his relatives in a private family grave, and many were in attendance. The coffin was draped with the Union Jack, and surmounted by several beautiful wreaths sent from:- Miss Derby, Red Cross Visitor; Florence Nellie Jeannie (Cousin); Mr & Mrs Robinson, Mr Mintoft, Francis Benson, Aunts and Cousins, and others. The Last Post was sounded at the graveside and the burial service conducted by the Rev. Keyes. Administrative Headquarters A.I.F. London were represented.*

*Relatives and Friends present at the Funeral – Misses Crosby, Mr & Mrs Daniells, Mr T Mintoft, Mr Robinson, Mr & Mrs Wrigghels, Mr & Mrs Taylor, Misses Walker, Mrs Barker.*

Robert Henry Allen Crosby requested in his Will, dated 2nd June, 1917 that all his personal estate he bequeathed to his mother – Mrs Mary Jane Crosby.

Driver Robert Henry Allen Crosby was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Driver Crosby's closest next-of kin – his eldest brother – Mr S. W. Crosby, of Townson, via Laidley, Queensland. Driver Crosby's mother had died on 4th May, 1917 & his father had died on 20th January, 1920. (Scroll sent May, 1922 & Plaque sent November, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Driver R. H. A. Crosby – service number 1630, of Australian Machine Gun Corps. No family details are listed.

Driver R. H. A. Crosby is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 176.



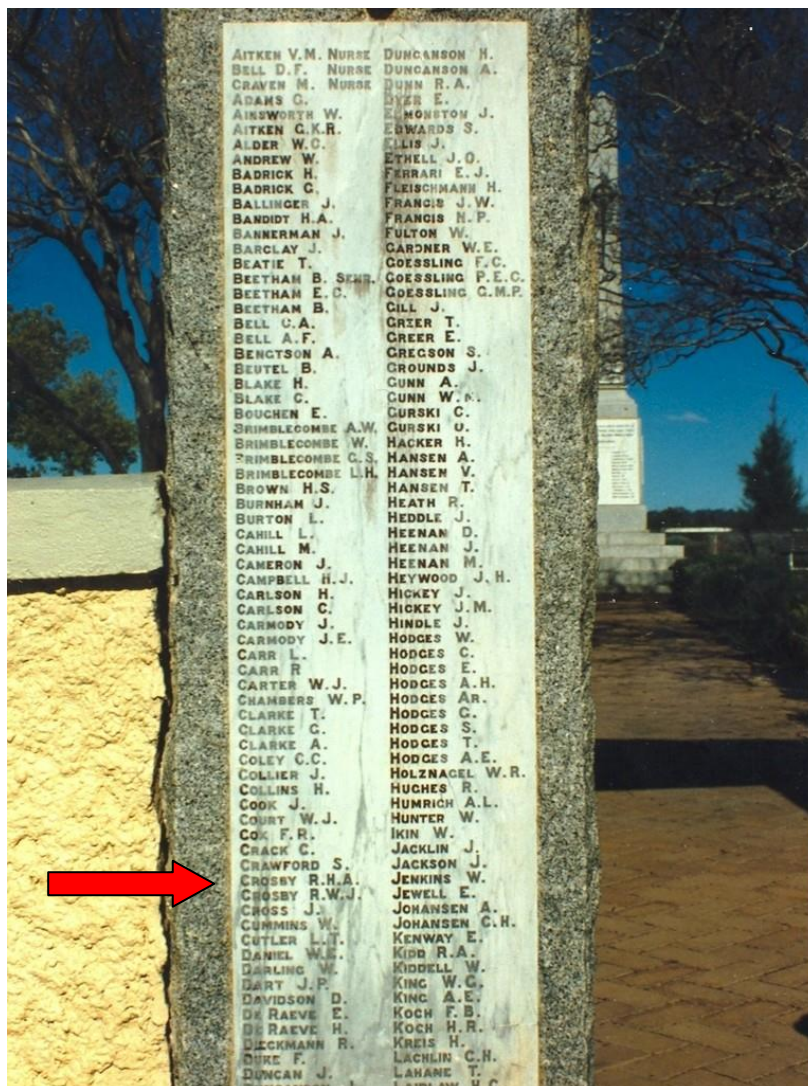
Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

R. H. A. Crosby is remembered on the Laidley Memorial Park Gates Roll of Honour located at Patrick Street & Whites Road, Laidley, Queensland.



**Laidley Memorial Park Gates**

*(Photo above from Monument Australia – Diane Watson. Photo below from Qld War Memorial Register – Shirley & Trevor McIvor)*



R. H. A. Crosby is remembered on the Laidley War Memorial located at Patrick Street & Whites Road, Laidley, Queensland.



**Laidley War Memorial** (Photos from Monument Australia – Diane Watson)

R. Crosby is remembered on the Laidley Honour Board located in Laidley Cultural Centre, Laidley-Plainland Road, Laidley, Queensland.

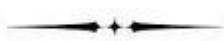


**Laidley Honour Board**

(Photo from Qld War Memorial Register – Rex Admas, Lockyer Valley Regional Council)

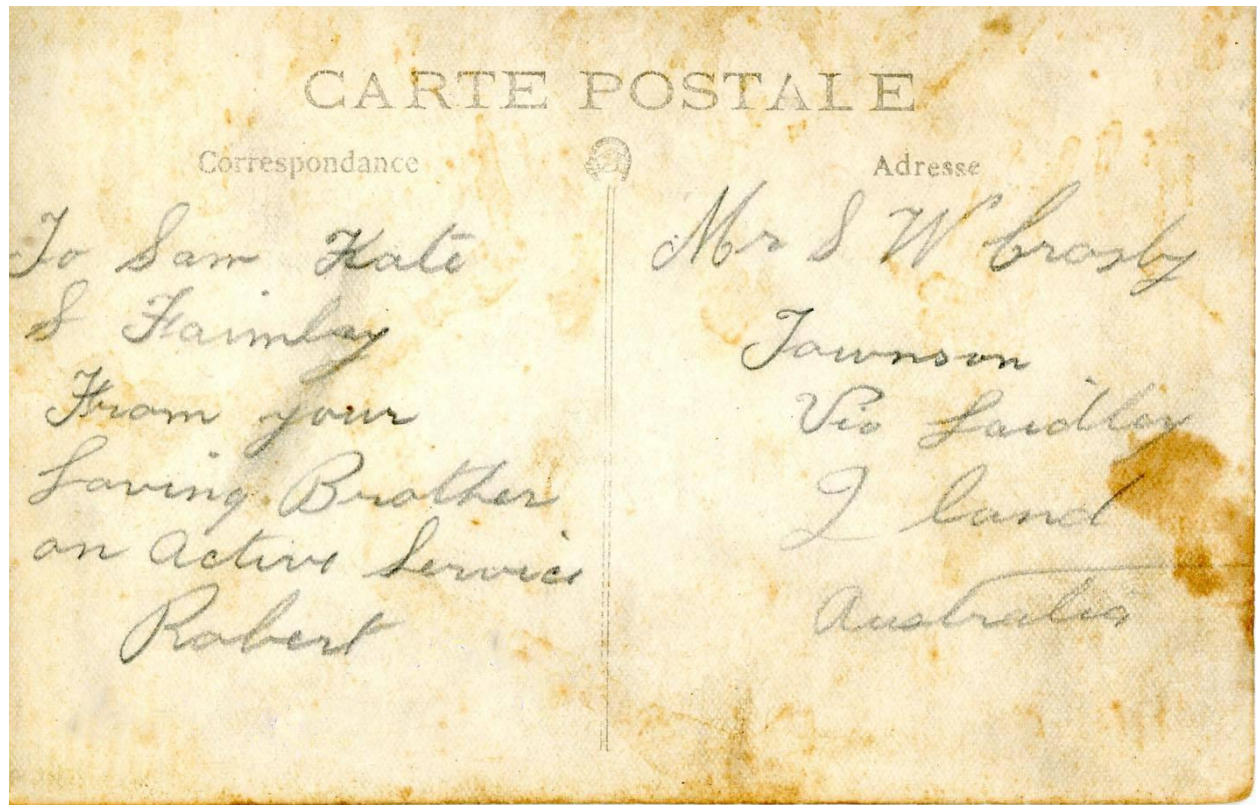
(42 pages of Driver Robert Henry Allen Crosby's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

*Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives*



**A picture postcard home to Australia  
from Driver Robert Henry Allen Crosby**





To Sam Kate

& Family

From your

Loving Brother

On Active Service

Robert

Mr S W Crosby

Townson

Via Laidley

Q land

Australia

\*\*\*The above picture postcard image was kindly provided by Adele Reilly (2nd Great Niece) of Robert Henry Allen Crosby & her Grandmother Edith Catherine Bambling (nee Crosby). Edith was the daughter of Samuel Watson Crosby to whom the postcard was sent & the niece of Robert Crosby.

## **Newspaper Notices**

### **Letters from the FRONT**

#### **LETTER FROM PTE CROSBY**

Mrs. Wm. Draney, Townson, via Laidley, has received the following letter from her brother, Pte R. H. A. Crosby, Belton Park, Grantham, Lincoln, England:- "A few lines to let you know that I am well. This is not a bad camp to be in. The officers are not too strict with us, and we can get out to dances, moving pictures, &c. every night as long as we turn up for morning parade. The girls in the town get up dances in aid of the soldiers - two or three, a week - and they do all in their power to make them enjoyable. A lot of the chaps from my camp, myself included, were in town last night, and were just going into a moving picture show when the electric gongs suddenly signalled all lights out. There was a Zeppelin raid on England, but we have not heard yet where it was. In five minutes the city was in total darkness. All cars stopped running, and every one was making for shelter as fast as possible. The women got a great scare. They were rushing through the crowded streets on their way home to get cover from the bombs they were expecting to fall at any moment, and the darkness was intense. We had sports here last week, tilting at the ring, tent pegging, machine gun work, and a tug of war. I was in the winning team at the pull and a few nights after we saw it all again in the moving pictures. They were well taken, and they brought out every little thing true to life. There were 180 men in my section, and last night 100 of them were sent away to France. I should have been with them but had applied for two days leave just before, and it was granted to me, so I was left. I don't think it will be long before the rest of us get our marching orders. I guess it will be cold when we get over and start trench work. Phil McGrath and Norman Petersen went away with the draft last night. Dooley Wilson was taken ill and could not go, so he, J. McCusker, Jack Shine, and I are still left of the old mates that came out together. I got two days leave to go to Yorkshire. I left camp at 8 o'clock on Tuesday night, and reached York at 10.30, but could not get a train for Tollerton, until half past 5 next morning. All the Tollerton folk combined to give me a good time, and I thoroughly enjoyed myself, but the time was far too short to go about and see all the sights they wished to show me. Uncle is very much cut up over his grandson. He was posted missing at Gallipoli, and they can't find out whether he is dead or a prisoner of war in Turkey. I went into a hotel at Tollerton and found out it was kept by a Queenslander. He used to live at Plainland. We had quite a Laidley yarn. He knew most of the people in the district."

*(Queensland Times, Australia – 24 November, 1916)*

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#### **LAIDLEY LETTER**

Military - Word was received in Laidley yesterday of the death from pneumonia of Pte Robert Henry Allen Crosby and the sad news was conveyed to the relatives by the Rev. A. W. Ethell, of the Anglican Church, Laidley. The late soldier, who was the fourth son of Mr J. W. and the late Mrs Crosby, of Mount Mistake, Laidley. Crosby enlisted early in 1916 and had been on active service ever since.  
October 24.

*(Queensland Times, Australia – 25 October, 1918)*

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#### **LAIDLEY LETTER**

The following letter has been received by Mrs Jas. W. Crosby. of Townson, with reference to Dvr. Robert Crosby, who recently died of pneumonia in England: "To-day we received information of the death of your son, R. H. A. Crosby, of the 1st Aux. Aust. Hospital, Harefield, England, of pneumonia, He was a driver with us, and I can speak on behalf of all the drivers; in fact, the whole company, officers and men, that the news was received with extreme regret, and we all wish to send to you our greatest sympathy in your sad loss. Dvr. Crosby had been with us for a long time, and, on account of his sterling and manly qualities, was held in high esteem by all. It is such men as he who have made the A.I.F. what it is to-day, and we feel we can hardly bear his loss. He proceeded on English leave on the 14th of October, and our information states that he died on the 15th of October. Anything ,of a personal nature he left behind him here I will see is sent onto you. It is a pleasure to have such men as Dvr. Crosby to fight with, work



with, and play with. He was one of our best football players, besides taking an interest in all round sport, and it is with extreme regret that I find it my painful duty to write and offer to you and all Dvr. Crosby's relatives and friends our most sincere sympathy in your sad loss,- E. M. CULLIMORE, Lt., Transport Officer, 11th M.G. Coy., A.I.F."

The following refers to the death of Dvr. Robert Crosby, and is written by an English cousin of the deceased, to relatives at Townson: "It is my painful duty, and with much regret, that I have to send you this sad news about our dear cousin, Robert, who died of pneumonia last Tuesday night at 6.45 at the Military Hospital, York. He came on leave, and had a very bad cold, on the Thursday, and on Friday he came down here to Alne Lowhall, where I live, about a mile and a half from mother's, and I walked back with him, and he went to bed. He got up on Saturday morning, and said he would go to York Military Hospital, and report sick, but he was too ill, and had to go back to bed. My mother sent for the doctor, who said cousin Robert was too ill to go out, and that he must stay in bed. On Monday afternoon the doctor sent a Red Cross Ambulance, and word to say that Robert was to go to the hospital, on Tuesday morning. They wired from there to say that if we wished to visit our cousin we were to go at once. I stayed with him until he died. He asked that we might bring him to Alne to be buried, because we all wished to have him near us, and knew you would also like us to do so. I am enclosing cutting, and also the telegrams so that they may help you to realise what happened." The cutting above referred to is an account of the funeral of Dvr. R. H. A. Cosby, as published in an English paper and reads: "Military Funeral. "The funeral took place in the Churchyard of Dvr. Robert Crosby, of the Australian Imperial Forces, a son of Mr James Crosby, Townson, Queensland (formerly of Alne). The deceased, who was 27 years of age, responded to his country's call on the outbreak of war, and came over with the Australian Imperial Forces. He took part in a number of engagements, and had three horses shot from under him on different occasions. When on leave he always visited the native village of his ancestors. As recently as 10 days ago he visited relatives at Alne, and there appeared to be ill. On his return to York he developed pneumonia, and death came at the Military Hospital, Fulford. The deceased's relatives at Alne expressed a desire that the remains should be buried in the village churchyard, and through the efforts of Cr. T. Mintoft (Lowhall) the wish was gratified.

Heading the funeral cortege was a detachment of the Alne B Company, 3rd Vol. Batt, A.P.W.O., Yorks Regt., under the command of Sergt. Craven, Sergt. Cromack was also present. The coffin, which was carried by the Volunteers, was covered with the Australian flag, and, in the centre, was a beautiful wreath of yellow wattle flowers sent by Miss Derby (the Australian lady at York). The funeral service, both in the church and at the graveside, was conducted by the Rev. H. E. Keyes M.A. (Vicar). At the graveside the 'Last Post.' was sounded by Bugler Riley. The chief mourners were Mr T. Crosby (Barton-le-Willows), Mr G. Crosby (Welburn, near Castle Howard), Miss L. Crosby, Miss R. Crosby, Mr Crosby, and Mrs Gilbertson (Church Fenton), Mrs Daniels and Mrs Dunhill (Tollerton). Several relatives were unable to attend on account of illness, including Mrs W. Crosby (aunt), Sergt. Tinsley, of the Australian Imperial Forces, was present, as were also Cr. T. Mintoft, Mrs J. Taylor, Mr Robinson, and a number of others. There were wreaths from aunt and cousins: Florrie, Nellie, and Jimmy; Mr T. Mintoft, Mr and Mrs Robinson, Miss Benson, and a bunch of flowers from Tollerton." Mr Crosby also received a letter from Miss Caroline A. Derby, Australian Red Cross visitor in York, giving detailed particulars of the death of Dvr. R. H. A. Crosby, and also particulars of his funeral. January 2.

*(Queensland Times, Australia – 4 January, 1919)*

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## **ROLL OF HONOUR**

CROSBY - In sad but loving memory of my dear son Driver Robert Henry Allen who died in York Military Hospital, on October 15, 1918, aged 27 years.

A father's heart is sad and lonely,

For the son he loved so dear;

As a hero he died for freedom and right,

With none of his loved ones near.

(Inserted by his sorrowing father, James Crosby.)

CROSBY - In loving memory of our brother, Driver Robert Henry Allen, who died in York Military Hospital on October 15, 1918, aged 27 years.

We mourn his loss, but his actions,

Sweet balm to his loved ones bring;

For he is ever a hero, the man who dies

For his Country, his God, and King.

(Inserted by his loving sister and brother-in-law, Lill and Will.)

(*Queensland Times*, Australia – 15 October, 1919)

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## **IN MEMORIAM**

CROSBY - In loving memory of our dear brother, Driver Robert, who died in York Military Hospital on October 15th, 1918.

As long as life and memory lasts

We will remember thee.

(Inserted by his loving brother and sister)

(*Queensland Times*, Australia – 15 October, 1921)

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Driver Robert Henry Allen Crosby has a personal inscription on his private headstone.

*Just When His Life Was Brightest*

*Just When His Hopes Were Best*

*His Country Called – He Answered.*

*Now In God's Hands He Rests*

Photo of Driver Robert Henry Allen Crosby's Private Headstone at St. Mary's Churchyard, Alne, North Yorkshire, England.



*(Photo by Dimitrios Corcodilos 2015)*