

**St. Edith's Churchyard,  
Baverstock, Wiltshire, England**

**War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**4033 PRIVATE**

**M. CUMMINGS**

**31ST BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**13TH APRIL, 1917    Age 24**

*Thy Will Be Done*

## Michael CUMMINGS

Michael James Cummings was born at Irvinebank, Queensland on 16th January, 1893 to parents Patrick & Mary Annie Cummings (nee Foley).

Michael Cummings was educated at Irvinebank State School, Queensland.

Michael Cummings was a 23 year old, single, Miner from Irvinebank, Queensland when he enlisted on 1st July, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 4033 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his father – Patrick Cummings of Irvinebank, Queensland.

On the Attestation Papers completed by Michael Cummings on 6th June, 1916 – he stated he had previously served in 2nd Infantry (Demobilised). According to other paperwork included in Private Michael Cummings' Service Record File – He was mobilised for War Service in August, 1914 & embarked at Cairns, Queensland on 8th August, 1914 for Thursday Island (War Station) Garrison Duty. He enlisted on 14th August, 1914 for service outside Australia. He re-embarked at Thursday Island on 16th August, 1914 on troopship *Kanowna* to take part in the capture of German New Guinea & was taken on strength of the A. N. & M. E. F. dated 6th September, 1914. He returned to Townsville on 18th September, 1914 on account of the trouble caused by the fireman on the troopship. He did not participate in the capture of German New Guinea & was discharged on 18th September, 1914. He was classified as eligible for British War Medal.

[The Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (A.N. & M.E.F.) was a small volunteer force of approximately 2,000 men, raised in Australia shortly after the outbreak of the First World War to seize and destroy German wireless stations in German New Guinea in the south-west Pacific. Britain required the German wireless installations to be destroyed because they were used by Vice-Admiral Maximilian von Spee's German East Asian Cruiser Squadron, which threatened merchant shipping in the region. Following the capture of German possessions in the region, the A. N. & M. E. F. provided occupation forces for the duration of the war. New Zealand provided a similar force for the occupation of German Samoa.

Under the command of Colonel William Holmes, the A.N. & M. E.F. departed Sydney aboard HMAS *Berrima* and halted at Palm Island off Townsville until the New Zealand force, escorted by the battlecruiser HMAS *Australia*, cruiser HMAS *Melbourne*, and the French cruiser *Montcalm*, occupied Samoa on 30 August. The A.N. & M. E. F. then moved to Port Moresby where it met the Queensland contingent aboard the transport TSS *Kanowna*. The force then sailed for German New Guinea on 7 September but the *Kanowna* was left behind when her stokers refused to work. The soldiers from the Kennedy Regiment were also left in Port Moresby as Holmes felt that they were not trained or equipped well enough to be committed to the fighting that was expected.]

Private Michael Cummings was posted to 11th Depot Battalion on 8th July, 1916 for recruit training. He was transferred to 10th Reinforcements of 31st Battalion on 9th August, 1916.

Private Michael Cummings embarked from Brisbane on HMAT *Boonah* (A36) on 21st October, 1916 with the 8th Infantry Brigade, 31st Infantry Battalion, 10th Reinforcements & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 10th January, 1917.

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 Michael Cummings was admitted sick to Park House Hospital, Wiltshire on 5th March, 1917 from 8th Training Battalion at Hurdcott, Wiltshire with mumps. He was released from hospital back to 8th Training Battalion on 25th March, 1917.

Private Michael Cummings was admitted sick to Fovant Military Hospital from "A" Company, 8th Training Battalion on 4th April, 1917.

Private Michael Cummings died at 2.40 a.m. on 13th April, 1917 at Military Hospital, Fovant, Wiltshire from Broncho Pneumonia.

A death for Michael Cummings, aged 24, was registered in the June quarter, 1917 in the district of Wilton, Wiltshire, England.

Private Michael Cummings was buried on 17th April, 1917, in the churchyard of St. Edith's at Baverstock, Wiltshire and has a Commonwealth War Graves Headstone.

From the burial report of Pte Michael Cummings – *The above named soldier was buried at Baverstock Cemetery with full Military Honours at 3.30 p.m. 17-4-1917.*

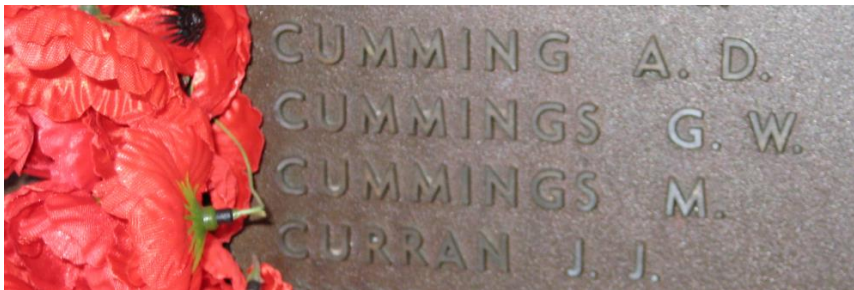
A War Pension was granted to Mary Ann Cummings, mother of late Private Michael Cummings, in the sum of £2 per fortnight from 20th June, 1917.

Private M. Cummings was entitled to British War Medal only. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Cummings' father – Patrick Cummings (December, 1921 & August, 1922)

Private Michael Cummings served more than one period of Service – as Private Michael James Cummings, 1883 with the A. N. & M. E. F. & again as Private Michael Cummings, 4033 with 31st Battalion.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Michael Cummings – service number 4033, as being 24 years old & served with 31st Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of Patrick and Mary Ann Cummings, of Irvinebank, Queensland.

Private M. Cummings is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 118.



(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

M. Cummings is also remembered on the Irvinebank Roll of Honour, Queensland.



**Irvinebank Roll of Honour**

*(Photo from Queensland War Memorial Register – Dennis Stocks/Doug Tanner)*



(47 pages of Pte Michael Cummings' Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

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



*(The Queenslander Pictorial, supplement to The Queenslander 24 March, 1917)*

## **Newspaper Reports**

### **NORTHERN MOBILISATION**

#### **THE ROLL OF RIFLEMEN**

The following riflemen embarked on the Kanowna last Sunday:-

Atherton Rifle Club.....Cairns Rifle Club..... Chillagore Rifle Club.....Irvinebank Rifle Club – Alex Cummings, Michael Cummings.....

(*Cairns Post*, Queensland – Thursday 13 August, 1914)

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### **AUSTRALIAN CASUALTIES**

Casualty List No. 290 was issued last night and it contains 278 names....

The list includes 185 Queenslanders killed in action, 37 died of wounds, 18 died of illness, 9 died of cause not stated, 1 missing, 8 prisoners of war, 7 injured, 9 wounded, 89 ill. The names include.... Pte M. Cummings (Irvinebank), died of illness.

(*Cairns Post*, Queensland – Wednesday 2 May, 1917)

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### **DEATHS**

CUMMINGS – On the 13th April, on active service, of pneumonia, Michael James, the beloved son of Pat and M. A. Cummings, of Irvinebank, aged 24 years.

May he rest in peace.

(*The Northern Herald*, Cairns, Queensland – 4 May, 1917)

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### **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 at St. Edith's Churchyard, Baverstock. 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*)

A letter from Base Records, dated 28th June, 1921, to Mr P. Cummings advises that a letter from the Defence Dept. concerning an inscription for the headstone of the late Private M. Cummings had not been answered & non-receipt of a reply within 21 days would have to be accepted as indicating that no further action was to be taken.

Private M. Cummings does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*Thy Will Be Done*

## St. Edith's Churchyard, Baverstock, Wiltshire, England

St. Edith's Churchyard, Baverstock contains 32 World War 1 War Graves – 3 London Regiment Graves in the south-west corner & 29 Australian War Graves.



**St. Edith's Churchyard, Baverstock** (Photo courtesy of Helen Roberts)





**St. Edith's Churchyard, Baverstock** (Photos courtesy of Helen Roberts)





Photo of Private M. Cummings' Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone at St. Edith's Churchyard, Baverstock, Wiltshire, England.



*(Photo courtesy of Andrew Stacey 2012)*