

**Ann's Hill Cemetery,
Gosport, Hampshire, England
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



C. F. DOWNES

AUSTRALIAN MUNITIONS WORKER

3RD AUGUST, 1917

*In Loving Memory
Beloved Husband Of Ruth
And Father Of Hilda
Ruth And Naomi*

Charles Frederick DOWNES

Charles Frederick Downes was born in October, 1870 in Salford, Lancashire, England to parents Charles Frederick & Margaret/Martha Downes.

The 1871 England Census listed Charles Downs as a 5 month old living with his family at 49 Sidworth Street, Salford, Lancashire, England. His parents were listed as Frederick Downs (Iron Plainer, aged 25, born Manchester, Lancashire) & Margaret Ann Downs (aged 23, born Manchester, Lancashire). Charles was the youngest of three children listed on this Census (all born Salford, Lancashire) - Ann Jane (aged 3), Walter (aged 1) & Charles.

The 1881 England Census listed Charles Downes as a 10 year old Scholar, living with his family at 64 Derby Street, Salford, Lancashire, England. His parents were listed as Charles F. Downes ("Mettle Plainer", aged 35, born Manchester, Lancashire) & Martha A. Downes (aged 32, born Manchester, Lancashire). Charles was one of five children listed on this Census (all born Salford, Lancashire) – Ann J. Downes (Scholar, aged 13), Walter Downes (Scholar, aged 11), then Charles, Nellie Downes (Scholar, aged 7) & Miller (aged 1).

Charles Frederick Downes, aged 24, married Ruth Shaw, aged 21 on 10th January, 1894 in Christ Church, Salford, Lancashire, England. Charles & Ruth both listed their residence as 24 Lord Duncan Street. Charles' father was listed as Charles Frederick Downes, Iron Planer & Ruth's father was listed as James Shaw, Engineman.

Charles & Ruth Downes had the following children - Hilda Margaret Downes was born in 1896 in Pennsylvania, United States & Ruth Rowena Downes was born in 1898 in Pennsylvania, United States.

The 1900 United States Federal Census listed Charles F. Downes, Paper Hanger, aged 29 & his family living at North 56th Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States. His wife was listed as Ruth Downes, aged 25) & their 2 daughters (both born Pennsylvania) – Hilda Downes (aged 3) & Ruth R. Downes (aged 2). Charles Downes had emigrated to the United States in 1882, according to the Census & his wife had emigrated in 1894.

The Downes family, consisting of Charles, Ruth, Hilda & Ruth were passengers on the S.S. Mauritania which sailed from Liverpool, England on 21st March, 1908 for New York, United States.

Charles Downes (Joiner, aged 41), his wife Ruth Downes (aged 39) & their daughter Ruth Downes (aged 11) were passengers on Dominion which arrived at the port of Liverpool, England from Philadelphia, United States on 19th September, 1912.

Mr C. Downes (Farm Labourer, age 40), Mrs R. Downes (aged 39) & Miss R. Downes (aged 11) were passengers on *Port Macquarie* which arrived at the port of Melbourne, Australia on 25th November, 1912 from London, England.

Charles & Ruth Downes had another daughter - Naomi Dolores Downes was born in 1914 in Shepparton, Victoria

The 1914, 1915 & 1916 Australian Electoral Rolls for the division of Echuca, subdivision of Shepparton, Victoria recorded Charles Frederick Downes, Nurseryman, High Street, Shepparton & his wife Ruth Downes, Home Duties.

Charles Frederick Downes enrolled to become an Australian Mmunition Worker. He was given a service number of 2228.

Newspaper article from Shepparton News, Victoria – 19 July, 1917:

LETTERS FROM SOLDIERS

LIFE ON BOARD A TROOPSHIP

Pte C. F. Downes, of High street, Shepparton, has written from "somewhere at sea," under date June 9th:-

On the 12th May we embarked at Port Melbourne pier on a tug and proceeded to the Heads to meet the transport, ___, which was to carry us all to England. Just before we cast off they allowed the women and children to come alongside, when they threw us rolls of paper which they held at one end and we at the other end, until the boat got too far away, when they broke, and that was the final parting til we return home again. Our first move was to select a number of men to act as a committee to look after our interests on board, in the way of sports, settle arguments, etc. After a very stormy week we arrived at Fremantle where we had a two hours' run ashore, where, I am sorry to say, a number of the men returned drunk. Fourteen never returned at all, but we have their luggage in safe keeping. After leaving Fremantle we had splendid weather for three weeks, so we have had lots of amusements in the open air in the daytime and concerts at night. One night we had an exclusive Scotch concert which was excellent. Another night we had a mock trial, which was a glorious success, till a man asked the prisoner to talk English. The prisoner, a Swede, lost his temper and after the fellow's scalp. That ended the mock trial. Another night we had a very fine concert at which the nurses and officers contributed various items, which were very good. After two weeks from Fremantle we sighted an island, but we expect to see and feel land in a few days, when it will be very acceptable, after a few weeks aboard. One day is much the same as another, but it is surprising that not one fight has occurred since we have been on board, which speaks very well for the men. Nobody can realise, except those who experience it, what it means for a large body of men to be together for weeks and have nothing only games to occupy their minds. They get so fed up looking at the same faces day after day. Every Sunday we have church service in the morning conducted by the chaplain, Bible class in the afternoon and song service at night. We arrived at Durban on Tuesday, June 12, where we received a royal welcome from the mayor, councillors and citizens, who gave us the freedom of the city. It is a grand place, with the most beautiful harbour and town which I have ever seen or been in, which is saying some. They have some very fine buildings of the Corinthian order. They also have a fine zoo here, and while I was there they were cutting up an elephant which had gone mad and killed his keeper. They shot it and fed it to the lions etc. They had free light lunch and rest rooms all over the town where they gave you of their best. They have richshas here to transport you around, and they are pulled by natives, who are dressed most gorgeously in firs, feathers and horns, but very little clothes. They whitewash their legs to the knees to represent white stockings, but the women look simply awful, with little more than a loin cloth on, in which their babies are carried. The best of them don't wear shoes or hats. There are thousands of blacks here that never work. Some work till they have enough to buy five wives, then they take life easy, and the wives work for them. Their code of morals is a lesson to the whites. Well, I must close for the present, with kind regard to Shepparton folks.

Munitions Worker Charles Frederick Downes died on 3rd August, 1917 from typhoid in the Gosport Isolation Hospital, Hampshire, England (Information from the *Shepparton Advertiser*, Victoria – 13 August, 1917).

A death for Charles F. Downes, aged 47, was registered in the September quarter, 1917 in the district of Alverstoke, Hampshire, England.

Munitions Worker Charles Frederick Downes was buried at Ann's Hill Cemetery, Gosport, Hampshire, England – Plot number 50.23387 & has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Worker C. F. Downes, Australian Muniton Worker. No family details are listed.

Australian Munitions Worker Charles Frederick Downes is remembered on the Commemorative Roll Book, located in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The Commemorative Roll records the names of those Australians who died during or as a result of wars in which Australians served, but who were not serving in the Australian Armed Forces and therefore not eligible for inclusion on the Roll of Honour.



Commemorative Area of the Australian War Memorial (*Capital Photographer*)

Australian Munitions Workers

Men enlisted under a joint Australian Commonwealth - Imperial Government scheme for providing skilled Australian workers to British war industries during the First World War. Under this scheme the volunteers would receive free passage to Great Britain, an allowance for travel time, a special allowance for the duration of service, and eventual repatriation to Australia. Married men also received a separation allowance, but were required to allot a portion of all their earnings to dependants. The men were expected to work in whatever industries they were directed to by the British Board of Trade, and under the prevailing conditions and wages for the duration of hostilities.

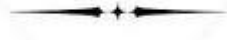
Government newspaper adverts appeared in August, 1916, and the first party of 76 workers departed Australia in September. Groups continued to be recruited and sent at intervals, with the eventual number of workers under the scheme totalling just over 5,000. Almost 1,000 of these had already been working in Britain under private agreements with large firms such as Vickers, and were brought under the conditions of the scheme. An additional 200 former AIF soldiers were also recruited in Britain. Initially only skilled workers were sought, however at the request of the British Government later groups included large numbers of navvies for general labouring.

These men were not members of the Australian Imperial Forces and did not serve in combat units, but were recruited to meet the shortfall in skilled labour that threatened many of Britain's key wartime industries including munitions.

(Source: Australian War Memorial)



*** Note – The Service Record file for Charles Frederick Downes, Australian Munition Worker No. 2228 had not been purchased at the time of researching from National Archives, Australia. Once the file is purchased it is then open for all to view on-line.*



Newspaper Notices

The newspapers at the time were encouraged not to report munition explosions or deaths through TNT poisoning as it would affect the morale of the civilian population and so reports in newspapers are virtually non-existent. When the war ended the Australians returned home and life moved on.

MUNITION WORKERS

AUSTRALIANS IN GREAT BRITAIN

Melbourne, Thursday.

The Minister for Defence (Senator Pearce) announces that during the period from the inception of the schemes for the despatch of munition workers and navvies to Great Britain up to June 30 last, 2662 munition workers had been disembarked in England for employment on munition and war work. There had also been enrolled under the munition workers' scheme 124 men who had been discharged from the A.I.F. in England for that purpose, and two discharged A.I.F. men had enrolled under the navvies' agreement, making the total number of men engaged in work in Great Britain under both these schemes 4,998. Of this number 384 men had returned to Australia – the majority on account of ill-health. There had been 23 deaths. The agreement of 38 men had been cancelled for disciplinary and other reasons. Six of the men had enlisted in the A.I.F., in England, five men had enlisted in the Royal Navy, and nine men had enlisted in the British Army, leaving the total number of men still in England under the Commonwealth agreement as 4,533. In addition these men were registered on the index held in Australia House 674 Australian munition workers who proceeded to Great Britain under private contract prior to the inauguration of the Commonwealth scheme. Of the men still in England on June 30, 1918, 87 were waiting return up to that date, 152 men had proceeded to France to engage in special work, and 107 of them had returned again to England. Australian munition workers were employed at 409 different firms or centres, and navvies at 192, and the value of the output produced by the labour of these men was estimated at £6,000,000.

Provision for the payment of munition workers and navvies who proceeded to Great Britain on war work under the agreement with the Commonwealth Government is made in an amendment to the war financial regulations issued today. Munition workers and navvies are to be provided with a free passage from Australia to Great Britain and back. In the case of munition workers a dependants' allowance of 25s a week, with allowances for children, will be made for the first eight weeks after embarkation. Subsequently the allowance will be 20s. Separation allowances equal to that paid in the case of a private in the A.I.F. will be paid to dependants.

(Examiner, Launceston, Tasmania – 30 August, 1918)

FAREWELL TO SOLDIERS

MR CHAS. F. DOWNES

Mr Charles F. Downes, of High street, Shepparton, who, a few months ago, enlisted with the Australian Imperial Forces, left Shepparton by Friday morning's train for Melbourne, where he will embark for England, It is understood that as a result of his all-round knowledge of the handling of tools, and his quick adaptability for all classes of labor, Mr Downes will be employed in the manufacture of munitions. During the few years of residence in Shepparton Mr and Mrs Downes have created friendships which they value very highly, and the warmth of friendliness and interest has been marked in more ways than one, which is a source of great comfort to Mr Downes when he remembers that his wife and family will have a kindly interest taken in them by residents of Shepparton during the time he is abroad. Mr Downes' departure was suitably recognised by several friends on Thursday night when they gathered at his home to wish him bon voyage and a safe return. Songs were rendered by Messrs W. Walsh, Bartells and Downes.

Mr Bartells made a touching speech, in which he expressed admiration of the guest for his patriotic action. Mr Downes, in relying, was much moved by the warmth of good feeling displayed. It was most gratifying to him to know that his wife and family would receive the support of so many friends during his absence from Australia. Whilst he was the recipient of many useful presents, he valued the true friendship of friends better than gold and he felt that his confidence would not be misplaced.

After a light repast the company sang "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," and concluded an enjoyable evening with the singing of "Auld Land Syne."

(Shepparton News, Victoria – 14 May, 1917)

The intimation will be received with regret that Mr Charles Frederick Downes, who left Shepparton some three months ago to do ammunition work in Great Britain, died on August 3rd from typhoid in the Gosport Isolation Hospital, Hampshire. The sad news was conveyed to the family by the Defence department through the Rev. N. D. Herring. Mr Downes (who was a much-travelled Englishman), leaves a widow and two daughters, who reside in High-street; and a married daughter in the United States.

(Shepparton Advertiser, Victoria – 13 August, 1917)

BEREAVEMENT NOTICE

MRS DOWNES and Family wish to THANK their numerous friends for kind sympathy in their recent sad bereavement.

(Shepparton News, Victoria – 23 August, 1917)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) honours the 1,700,000 men and women of the forces of the Commonwealth who died in the two world wars and ensures that their memory is never forgotten. The applicable periods of consideration are 4 August 1914 to 31 August 1921 for the First World War and 3 September 1939 to 31 December 1947 for the Second World War.

The Commission's principles:

- Each of the dead should be commemorated by name on the headstone or memorial
- Headstones and memorials should be permanent
- Headstones should be uniform
- There should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed

During both WW1 (& WW2) a number of Commonwealth civilian organisations were accepted by the military as qualifying for war grave status.

Members of the Recognised Civilian Organisations had to meet two additional criteria not required by military casualties.

1. Their death had to be caused by war actions or the increased threat caused by war and
2. They had to be on duty at the time of their death - being posted overseas counted as 'being on duty'.

The Australian government deemed that their War and Munitions Workers (men and women) qualified for war grave treatment as they were recruited as a body and were posted overseas for the war effort. Some of their CWGC entries show a 'service number' indicating that they were an organised body. All but one of these casualties are buried in the UK - the other being in France.

Ann's Hill Cemetery, Gosport, Hampshire, England

During both wars, Gosport was a significant sea port and Naval depot, with many government factories and installations based there, as well as the Haslar Naval Hospital. No 5 Squadron Royal Flying Corps were based at Gosport just before the outbreak of the First World War and during the Second World War the town acted as base to No 17 Group Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy Light Coastal Forces.

Gosport (Ann's Hill) Cemetery contains 104 scattered graves from the First World War. A number of the 144 Second World War burials form a plot at the western end of the cemetery. 1 of these is an unidentified Merchant seaman. There are also 31 German burials, including 2 unidentified, and 1 Belgian burial in the cemetery.

There are 3 Australians buried in this cemetery.

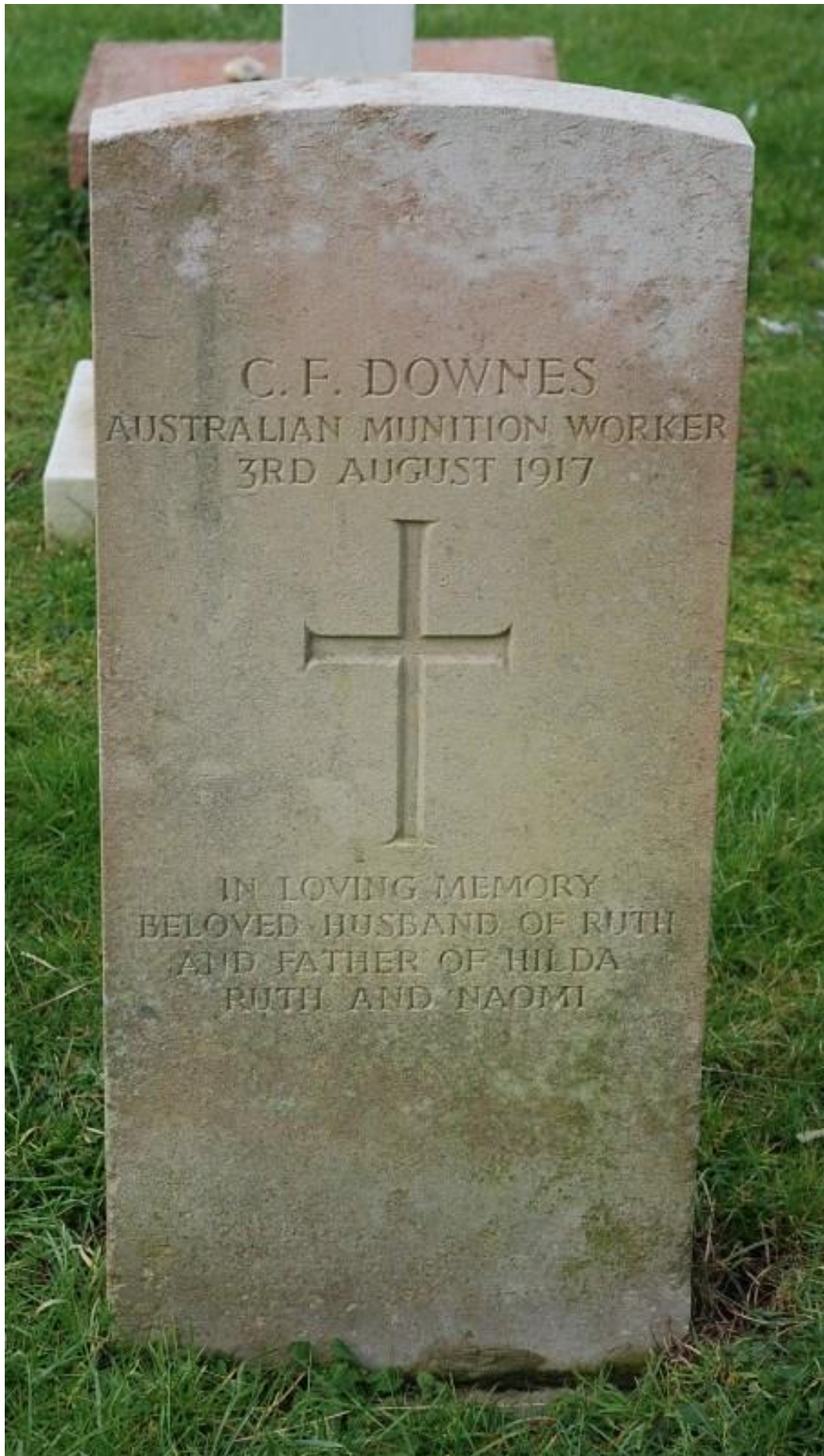
(Information from CWGC)



Ann's Hill Cemetery, Gosport, Hampshire (Photo above by soilsister; below from CWGC)



Photo of Munition Worker C. F. Downes' Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Ann's Hill Cemetery, Gosport, Hampshire, England.



(Photo by soilsister)