

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



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**2816 PRIVATE**

**B. GOWER**

**40TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**28TH MARCH, 1917 Age 21**

## Bernard GOWER

Bernard Gower was born on 21st February, 1895 at Devonport, Tasmania to parents Charles James & Bridget Louisa Gower (nee Kennedy). His birth was registered in the district of Port Frederick, Tasmania.

Bernard Gower was a 21 year old, single, Sawmill Hand from Strahan, Tasmania (permanent address listed as Waratah, Tasmania) when he enlisted on 9th October, 1916 with the 40th Infantry Battalion, 6th Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 2816 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr Charles Gower, of West Strahan, Tasmania. Bernard Gower stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served with Cadets for 1 year & with Citizen Forces for 2 years).

Private Bernard Gower embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Orsova* (A67) on 6th December, 1916 & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 17th February, 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 Bernard Gower was marched in to Camp Details at Sutton Mandeville, Wiltshire from 14th Training Battalion on 7th March, 1917

Private Bernard Gower was sent sick to Military Hospital Fovant from Details at Fovant on 25th March, 1917. The Hospital Report states "*This man was admitted into Hospital on 26.3.17, seriously ill with Influenzal Bronchitis; he had been ill for 1 week before admission he stated; he developed Broncho Pneumonia.*"

Private Bernard Gower died at 10.20 am on 28th March, 1917 at Military Hospital, Fovant, England from Broncho Pneumonia.

A death for Bernard Gower, aged 22, was registered in the March quarter, 1917 in the district of Wilton, Wiltshire, England.

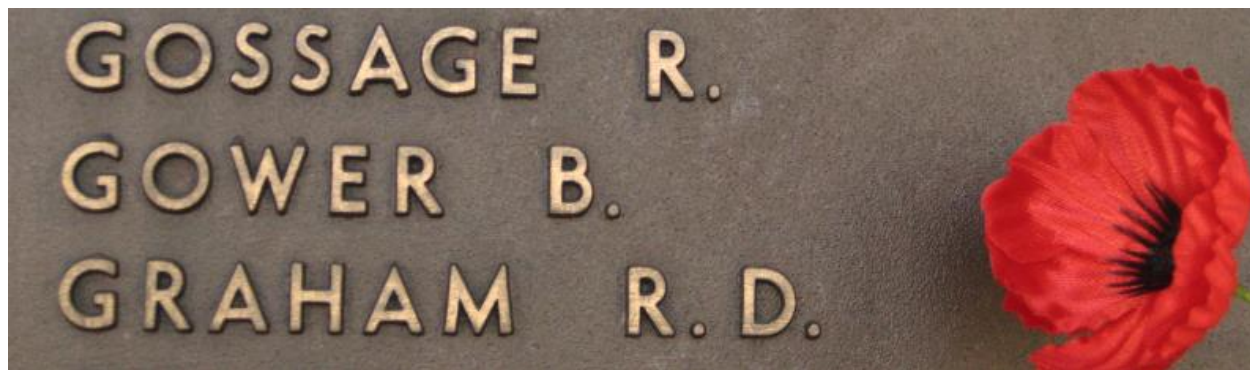
Private Bernard Gower was buried on 30th March, 1917 in St George's Churchyard, Fovant, Wiltshire, England – Plot number II. B. 2. and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Pte Gower – *This man was both liked & admired by members of 6/40 Reinforcements. He was keen on his work & painstaking. Always willing & never grumbled. His character was an example to other soldiers. The Gun Carriage was drawn by members of 6/40 Battalion. The Pall bearers his own friends.*

Private Bernard Gower was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Gower's father – Mr C. Gower, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent March, 1923 & Plaque sent July, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Bernard Gower – service number 2816, aged 21, of 40th Battalion Australian Infantry. No family details are listed.

The 1919 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Darwin, subdivision of Zeehan, Tasmania still listed Bernard Gower, Mill-hand, of Renison Bell.

Private B. Gower is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 132.



*(Photos Cathy Sedgwick)*



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

(35 pages of Pte Bernard Gower'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**

### **PERSONAL**

News has been received that Private B. J. Gower, a son of Mr and Mrs C. J. Gower, of Zeehan, has been killed in action in France. The family were formerly resident at Devonport, where Mr Gower was engaged in the railway goods shed. Private Gower, who enlisted only a short time ago, was a member of the choir at the Star of the Sea church, Devonport, and a young man who was respected by all who knew him. Much sympathy will be extended to the family in their loss. He was a native of Devonport, and had recently turned 21 years of age.

*(The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times, Tasmania – 7 April, 1917)*

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News has been received that Private B. J. Gower, eldest son of Guard Chas. J. Gower, of the Zeehan-Strahan railway service, has been killed in action in France. He was a quiet, unassuming young fellow, and had for some time resided in Zeehan before his parents took up their residence at Strahan. Private Gower, who was a native of Devonport, was 21 years of age. He enlisted only a short time ago, and was but a brief period in France when he made the great patriotic and supreme sacrifice with his young life. Much sympathy will be felt by many local and district friends for Mr and Mrs Gower in their loss, but the bereaved ones will have the added consolation that their eldest boy died in a deathless cause, and for principles for which his and many another name will long be held in affectionate regard by a grateful country.

*(Zeehan and Dundas Herald, Tasmania – 9 April, 1917)*

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### **AUSTRALIA'S**

#### **ROLL OF HONOUR**

#### **CASUALTY LIST No. 286**

#### **TASMANIAN CASUALTIES**

#### **DIED OF ILLNESS**

GOWER, Private B., West Strahan, 28/3/17

*(Daily Telegraph, Launceston, Tasmania – 10 April, 1917)*

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### **ON SALISBURY PLAIN**

#### **THE ROYAL REVIEW**

Mr W. Jeffrey, of Devonport, recently received a letter from his son, Pte Dave Jeffrey, from which the following are extracts:-

"I don't think that this will last very much longer. We had a big day last Monday. The King came out to see us, and there were \_\_\_ Australian soldiers present. It was one of the grandest sights I ever saw, and that I am ever likely to see.

The King was riding one of the loveliest horses I ever saw. It is still cold here; one of the coldest winters ever experiences. I was standing up to my knees in snow on Good Friday morning down at the range. I have passed in all my training. I went through the gas chamber last week; it is not too nice. It gives a fellow a bit of a fright before he goes through, but as long as you put your helmet on properly, you are quite safe. There is a minster always there, and a doctor, when you go into it. Dan Sheedy's brother is here at present. He was presented with a medal by the King here on Monday for bravery at the front. Sheedy is a Sergt.-Major now. I suppose the next letter you get from me will be written from the trenches. There are some fine fellows going with this lot; 5,000 left here the other night, and they all went past our hut, so we had a good look at them. Our hut is on the side of the main road. It was a great

sight to see them going; there must have been about 20 bands altogether, so you can guess that there was some excitement. They all seem to be pleased when they leave the place. The weather has been a lot better lately. The two boys that came with me are not going, so I will have to make mates with some of the other boys now. **The \_\_\_ reinforcements came in the other day, and poor little Bernard Gower came with them, and died a few days after they landed. I did not see him, but they all say he looked terrible ill. He should never have come.**"

Since receiving this letter, word has come through that Pte Jeffrey has been wounded.

*(The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times, Tasmania – 21 July, 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. 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 13th July, 1921, to Mr C. Gower, West Strahan, Tasmania, advised that a letter from the Defence Dept. concerning an inscription on the headstone of his son, the late Pte B. Gower, in Fovant Cemetery 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 B. Gower does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.



## 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 B. Gower's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St George's Churchyard, Fovant, Wiltshire, England.







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