

Cheltenham Cemetery
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



3005 SERJEANT

W. R. B. JOHNSON

AUST. ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

20TH NOVEMBER, 1918 Age 28

Thy Will Be Done

Walter Richmond Buchanan JOHNSON

Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson was born at Ultimo (Crown Street), Sydney, NSW in early 1890 to parents William Harvey Johnson and Mary Johnson (nee Buchanan).

Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson attended Dumbleton Public School.

Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson was a 25 year old, single, Farmer (occupation of Farmer was listed on Embarkation Roll & the Attestation Papers, however information submitted by his mother for the Roll of Honour records his occupation as Baker) from Millett Street, Hurstville when he enlisted at Liverpool, Sydney, NSW on 25th March, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Presbyterian & his next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs Mary Johnson, of Millett Street, Hurstville, NSW.

Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson was posted as Private to 5th Field Ambulance on 25th March, 1915 for recruit training.

Private Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson, Service number 3005, embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Ajana* (A31) on 31st May, 1915 with the 5th Infantry Brigade, 5th Field Ambulance "A" Section. He was promoted to the rank of Driver for embarkation.

Driver Walter Johnson proceeded to join the M.E.F. (Mediterranean Expeditionary Force) at Gallipoli on 16th August, 1915.

Driver Walter Johnson was transferred to Maadi on 25th November, 1915.

Driver Walter Johnson was transferred from 5th Field Ambulance to 15th Field Ambulance at Tel el Kebir on 24th February, 1916 & was taken on strength of 15th Field Ambulance on the same day.

Driver Walter Johnson was to be Transport Sergeant from 6th May, 1916 while posted at Ferry Post.

Sergeant Walter Johnson embarked for overseas from Alexandria on 18th June, 1916 on Troopship *Georgian* & disembarked at Marseilles, France on 27th June, 1916.

Sergeant Walter Johnson of 15th Australian Field Ambulance, was recommended for a Distinguished Conduct Medal on 6th April, 1917 by Lieut.-Col. A. Horn, C.O., 15th Australian Field Ambulance, for the following action: "*This N.C.O. was in charge of the transport of "A" Section, 15th Australian Field Ambulance, which evacuated casualties from the "Advanced Guard" of the 5th Australian Division, from 18th March, '17 till 5th April, '17.*

The roads near FREMICOURT and BEUGNY had been so interfered with by enemy mines that they were quite impassable to motor ambulance wagons. As the long line of evacuation rendered it necessary to push the cars as far forward as possible, the successful evacuation of wounded and sick from the front line would have been most difficult and even impossible without large reinforcements of bearers, had not SGT. JOHNSON carried out with conspicuous success the construction of roads around the craters. By the thoroughness of his work, the transport of all arms was enabled to pass the obstacles for the first week of the advance, during which period no working parties for the repair of roads were available. It was entirely due to the skill and splendid example."

Sergeant Walter Johnson was severely reprimanded on 14th April, 1917 "*when on active service allowing horses to break away from Parade.*"

Sergeant Walter Johnson was detached from 15th Field Ambulance to 23rd Veterinary Hospital on 1st January, 1918. He rejoined his Unit on 11th January, 1918.

Sergeant Walter Johnson was on furlough to UK from 12th February, 1918 & rejoined his Unit from furlough on 28th February, 1918.

Sergeant Walter Johnson was sent to A.C. Gas School (Instruction) from 30th June, 1918 & rejoined his Unit on 6th July, 1918.

Sergeant Walter Johnson was sent to 4th Army Rest Camp from 26th July, 1918 & was to rejoin his Unit on 12th August, 1918.

A Charge was placed against Sergeant W. R. B. Johnson, 3005, 15th Australian Field Ambulance: – *“Place: Paris; Date of Offence: 3.8.18; Offence: When on Active Service Absent from until apprehended by Mil. Police about 8.5 pm. Names of Witnesses: L/Cpl Overthrow, M.F.P.”*

Statement of evidence against Sergeant W. R. B. Johnson: *“At Paris, about 8-5pm on the 3rd Aug. 1918 I was on duty at Gare du Nord when I saw the above named N.C.O. He was not in possession of authority to be in Paris. I arrested him and conducted him to Police Headquarters, Caseine de la Pepiniere, where I handed him over to the N.C.O. i/c to be detained. He was released by A.P.M. on 4-8-18 to return to his Unit by 8.15 pm train. – (Signed) C. Overthrow, L/Cpl. M.F.P.”* A memo was sent to Commandant Fourth Army Rest Camp, Le Treport, France from Lieutenant-Colonel R. Whiston Walsh, C.O. 15th Australian Field Ambulance dated 17th August, 1918 which reads: *“Reference – No. 3005, Sgt. W.R.B. Johnson, 15th Aust. Fld. Amblice – Herewith copy of charge sheet, minutes and statement by Sergeant Johnson reference his absence from your Rest Camp and being in Paris without authority, May Sgt. Johnson’s statement be corroborated or otherwise by you please. Kindly treat the matter as URGENT.”*

Statement of evidence by No. 3005 Sgt. W. R. B. Johnson, 15th Australia Field Ambulance reads: *“On 26th July I left the 15th Aus Field Ambulance to proceed to the fourth army rest camp at Le Treport, arriving there about 9 pm on same day. On the evening of 28th I paraded before the C.O. 4th Army Rest Camp for permission to visit Paris which he refused I then asked if I was away from camp did it matter to him. The C.O. said as long as I was back to move out of the rest camp on the proper date that is all that mattered to him. I proceeded to the station and saw the N.C.O. in the R.T.O. office and told him I was going to Paris he told me what time the train left and accompanied me to the window to purchase a ticket but the window was closed. I spoke also t the Military Police, and he told me they weren’t so bad as they were painted and that I would find no difficulty in getting to Paris. I purchased a first class ticket the train left Le Treport at 12.45 am arriving in Paris about 7 o’clock on the 30th. On the 3rd Aug I was passing though the Barrier to catch the 8.15 train back to Le Treport when I was apprehended by a lance corporal of the Military Police and escorted to the Barracks. I tried to see the A.P.M. that night but the corporal in charge said he was out. I returned on the 4th to Le Treport and marched out with the party.”*

Sergeant Walter Johnson reported sick on 22nd August, 1918. He was admitted to 55th Casualty Clearing Station on 22nd August, 1918 & transferred & admitted to 10th General Hospital in France on 23rd August, 1918 with an abdominal Tumour.

A Medical Board was assembled at No. 10 General Hospital, France on 29th August, 1918 *“for the purpose of investigating and reporting upon the health of No. 3005 Sergeant W. R. B. Johnson, 15th Australian Field Ambulance.....The Board having assembled pursuant to order, proceed to examine the above named soldier, who is a prisoner awaiting trial, and find that he is suffering from a large Abdominal Tumour involving the Right Kidney. He is unfit to stand his trial and unlikely to be fit for active service again. Recommendation – The Board recommend that he be evacuated to England for further treatment and subsequent probable invaliding.”*

Sergeant Walter Johnson was transferred to England on Hospital Ship *Grantully Castle* on 23rd September, 1918.

Sergeant Walter Johnson was admitted to V.A. Hospital, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England on 24th September, 1918 with an abdominal Tumor – slight.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Sergeant Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson contains a letter, dated 1st October, 1918, to The Secretary, Australian Red Cross from Miss Harland, Official Red Cross Visitor, Leckhampton Court Red Cross Hospital, Cheltenham which reads: *“I am extremely sorry to have to tell you that No. 3055 Sergt. Walter R. Johnson, 15th Ausn. Field Ambulance, who was admitted to this hospital a week ago, is found to be suffering from malignant cancer of rapid growth. He was removed to the General Hospital on Sunday Sept 29th & was under operation yesterday afternoon but the surgeon found it was impossible to operate with the slightest hope of success & his opinion & that of his colleague at Leckhampton Court is that Sergt. Johnson cannot live much longer. He will receive every attention, needless to say & will be regularly visited by our much-liked Chaplain & others interested in him, including, of course, myself. The mother’s address is “Glenalla”, Millett Street, Hurstville, Sidney, NSW. Will you kindly cable to her such details as you think necessary?”*

Mrs Mary Johnson, of Millett Street, Hurstville, mother of Sergeant Walter Johnson, was advised by Base Records on 8th October, 1918 that Sergeant Johnson had been admitted to Cheltenham Voluntary Aid Detachment,

Cheltenham, England on 24th September, 1918 suffering from abdominal tumor, mild. She was advised on 31st October, 1918 that his condition was dangerously ill.

Mrs Mary Johnson, of Millett Street, Hurstville, mother of Sergeant Walter Johnson, was advised by Base Records on 4th November, 1918 that his condition was critical "*Thirtieth September operation cancer no avail.*" She was advised on 11th November, 1918 that his condition was stationary.

Sergeant Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson died at 3.30 am on 20th November, 1918 at General Hospital, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England from Carcinoma – Abdominal Tumour.

A death for Walter Johnson, aged 28, was registered in the December quarter, 1918 in the district of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England.

Sergeant Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson was buried on 23rd November, 1918 in Cheltenham Cemetery, Gloucestershire, England – Plot number M. 9222 (Section M – Soldiers Plot) and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Sergeant Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson - *Coffin was Elm with brass fittings. The deceased soldier was buried privately in Cheltenham Cemetery. Beautiful wreaths were sent from the Staff of Lockhampton Hospital, Miss Harland, Nursing Staff of General Hospital Cheltenham, Mrs P. M. Biggs, and Lady Babington. The burial service was conducted by the Rev: P. M. M. C. Johnstone of Cheltenham. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral.*

Names of Relatives and Friends present at the Funeral – Mrs Ward, Commd V.A.D. Hospital, Miss Harland, Aust. Red Cross, Miss Wishaw, Miss Greenslade, Sister Hill, Supt Hospital.

Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson requested in his Will dated 24th May, 1915 that all his estate real & personal be given to his mother Mary Johnson & he appointed his mother as sole Executrix of his Will.

Base Records contacted Mrs M. Johnson, Millett Street, Hurstville, NSW on 25th October, 1920 stating that she was the registered next of kin of the late Sergeant W. R. B. Johnson then asked if there were any nearer blood relatives than herself & specifically if his father was still alive due to the "Deceased Soldiers Estates Act 1918" which stated that the War Medals & Mementoes of a deceased soldier were to be handed in the following order of relationship – Widow, eldest surviving son, eldest surviving daughter, father, mother, eldest surviving brother, eldest surviving sister etc. Mrs Mary Johnson replied on 3rd November, 1920 stating "*there is no one that have a better claim than me his mother he was a single man.*"

Base Records replied on 9th November, 1920 stating "*.....regret that it [her reply] does not contain sufficient information to enable me to properly dispose of the war medals of your son.... Will you kindly favour me with definite information as to whether deceased's father is living, and if so his present address.*" Mrs Mary Johnson replied to Base Records on 12th November, 1920 stating that "*....yes his father is alive and lives here William Harvey Johnson also I have a son Robert Buchanan Johnson 16 years of age one son 12 and 2 married daughters one living at Goulburn and the other at Woolwich. I hope this will do...*"

Sergeant Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Sergeant Johnson's father - Mr W. H. Johnson, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent August, 1921 & Plaque sent December, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Sergeant Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson – service number 3005, aged 28, of 15th Field Ambulance, Australian Army Medical Corps. He was the son of William Harry and Mary Johnson, of "Glenella," Millett St., Hurstville, New South Wales.

W. R. B. Johnson is remembered on the Hurstville War Memorial, located in Memorial Square, Forrest Road, Hurstville, NSW.



Hurstville War Memorial (Photos from Monument Australia – Peter F. Williams)



W. B. Johnson is remembered on the Municipality of Hurstville Honour Roll No. 1 which is located in Hurstville City Museum and Gallery, MacMahon Street, Hurstville, NSW.



Municipality of Hurstville Honour Roll No. 1 (Photos from War Memorials Register of NSW)



116 – W. B. Johnson

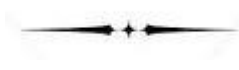
Sergeant W. R. B. Johnson is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 183.



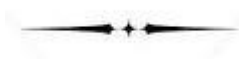
Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(73 pages of Sergeant Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson'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



Sergeant Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson



Newspaper Notices

OUR SOLDIERS AT THE FRONT

Mr and Mrs W. H. Johnson, of Millett Street, Hurstville, have received a cable stating that their son, Sergeant Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson, died at Lexhampton Cour, Cheltenham, England, on November 20, 1918, after three and a half years of active service. Sergeant Johnson was 28 years of age.

(The Propeller, Hurstville, NSW – 29 November, 1918)

ROLL OF HONOUR

JOHNSON – Died on November 20, 1918, at Lexhampton Court, Cheltenham, England after 3 ½ years of active service. Sergeant Walter Richmond Buchanan Johnson, beloved son of Mr and Mrs W. H. Johnson, of Glenella, Millett-street, Hurstville, and grandson of the late Robt. Buchanan, Normaville, South Australia, in his 29th year. Life nobly ended. South Australian papers please copy.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 7 December, 1918)

OUR SOLDIERS AT THE FRONT

Latest Casualty Lists

DIED OF ILLNESS

Sgt. W. R. B. Johnson, Hurstville

(The Propeller, Hurstville, NSW – 20 December, 1918)

TRIBUTE TO “AUSSIES”

Anzac Day in Gloucester

The Gloucestershire Echo of May. 1 devotes a column to reports of the Anzac Day demonstrations, which were held the day before at Cheltenham, and in which Boy Scouts and Girl Guides took a prominent part. Beautiful wreaths were placed by the Scouts and Guides on the well-kept graves of 10 Australian soldiers, after the Deputy-Mayor gave a fervent address. The names of the 10 Australian were:— Pte. J. Warren, 5th Pioneer Battalion; Pte. S. G. Turner, 53rd Battalion; Pte. J. H. Fenton, 15th Field Ambulance; **Sgt. W. R. B. Johnson, 15th Field Ambulance**; Pte. A. R. Callaghan, 54th Battalion; Pte. W. R. Jerrom, 3rd Machine Gun Battalion; Pte. A. W. Stevens, 7th Battalion; Pte. R. W. Resso, 54th Battalion; Pte H. C. Vale, 3rd Pioneer Battalion; Lce.-Cpl. P. J. Penketh, 17th Battalion (the wreath of the last named was deposited by Miss Hattersley Smith). The following is a copy of a letter sent to the next-of-kin to those Australian soldiers by the Cheltenham Remembrance Day committee (represented in the signatures by Aid. C. H. Margret, Acting Mayor and Mr. T. H. Packer, acting Secretary: — We fell sure that you will be pleased to know that on Cheltenham's Anzac Day, the graves of the 10 Australian soldiers who died in Cheltenham from wounds and other, injuries received, in battle, and were buried in our beautiful cemetery, were visited and wreaths and flowers deposited thereon. In this way the memory of those sons of the Empire who have found a last resting place far from their homes, at the foot of the historic Cotswold Hills, will be kept fresh in the minds of Cheltonians. From our charmingly placed cemetery there are beautiful views of a long stretch of the hills and of the wide expanse of the vale of the Severn— indeed, there is no more charming or picturesque spot in the whole of the Western Shires. And bordering the cemetery are: — “A rise steeply sloping, a fence with stone coping,

the last - we diverged round the base or the hill.”— The scene of Adam Lindsay Gordon's (a Cheltonion) famous poem "How We Beat the Favourite." Within sound are the "Chimes of sweet St. Mary's On far English ground," and can be seen from it – "the mist of the Cotswold Hills Where I once heard the blast of the huntsman's horn, Not far from, the Seven rills." —the source of the River Thames. The proceedings arranged by the Remembrance Day Committee commenced at the War Memorial — erected in memory of 1,400 men of Cheltenham, who, like their Australian comrades, "died that we might live." To this spot were brought many wreaths and bouquets of flowers, which were conveyed to the cemetery — two miles away— by over 500 Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, a selected number of whom proudly carried large bouquets of red, white, and blue flowers— the national colours— and both wreaths and flowers were garnished with ribbons of the same colour, while a wreath sent by an Australian mother bore the black and green colours of the battalion to which her dead son belonged. The long procession headed by the bugle band of the scouts had a striking effect as it passed along the principal streets and timbered avenues, crowded by townsfolk, on its way to the cemetery. ... At the close of the proceedings the beautiful hymn, "Fight the good fight" was sung by the whole audience—more than 2,000 – the "Last Post" was sounded, and scarcely had its rallying echoes along the hillside died away when "God save the King" had been sung, and the simple, effective, yet reverent ceremony had come to an end, and the dead soldiers were "left alone in their glory."

(*The Register*, Adelaide, South Australia – 19 July, 1922)

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*)

Serjeant W. R. B. Johnson does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Thy Will Be Done

Cheltenham Cemetery, Gloucestershire, England

(Also known as Bouncer's Lance Cemetery and Prestbury Cemetery)

This cemetery contains burials of both wars. The 110 First World War graves are mainly of men who died in the local voluntary hospitals. The burials are scattered except for a small plot of 10 Australian graves. The Second World War burials number 71, half of them forming a war graves plot in the eastern part of the cemetery. There are 2 Polish war burials and a further 4 Non World War service burials within C.W.G.C. care in this cemetery. Cheltenham Crematorium is situated within the cemetery and 28 servicemen and women of the Second World War whose remains were cremated there are commemorated on bronze panels within the crematorium cloisters.

(Information from CWGC)



Entrance to Cheltenham Cemetery, Gloucestershire *(Photo by julia&keld – Find a Grave)*



War Graves in Cheltenham Cemetery, Gloucestershire *(Photo from CWGC)*



Cross of Sacrifice in Cheltenham Cemetery, Gloucestershire (Photo by Philip Halling)

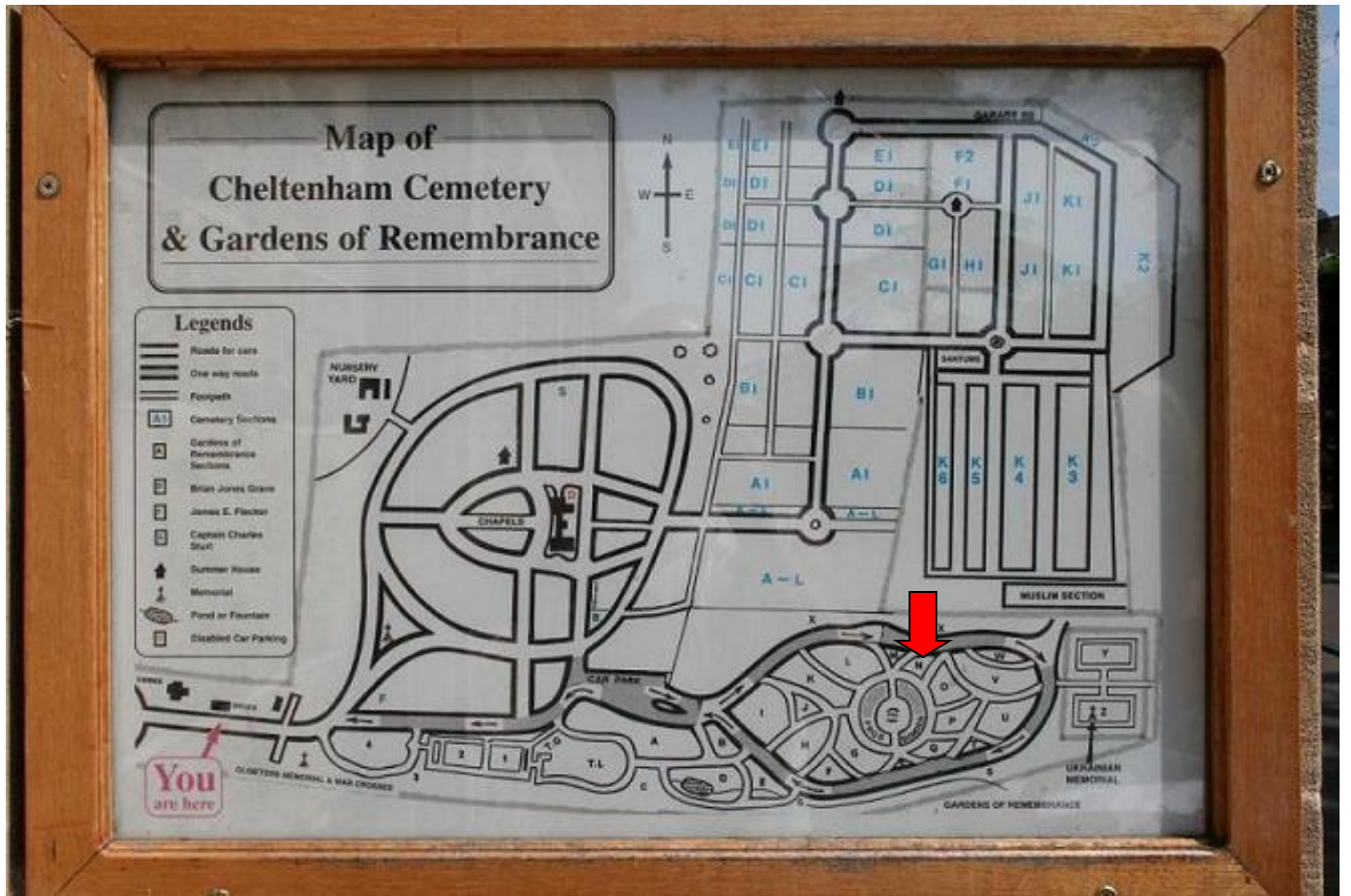


Australian Plot (Photo courtesy of Ian Spelman)

Photo of Serjeant W. R. B. Johnson's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Cheltenham Cemetery, Gloucestershire, England.



(Photo by ColinA – Find a Grave)



Map of Cheltenham Cemetery, Gloucestershire (Photo by julia&keld – Find a Grave)