

**St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard,
Harefield, Middlesex, England**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



498 PRIVATE

RODERICK JAMES KEEGAN

39TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

20TH NOVEMBER, 1917 Age 21

Roderick (Rod) James KEEGAN

Roderick James Keegan was born at Yulecart, Hamilton, Victoria in 1896 to parents John & Anne Keegan (nee McInnes).

Roderick James Keegan was a 19 year old, single, Coachbuilder from Mill Road, Hamilton, Victoria when he enlisted on 27th March, 1916 at Hamilton, Victoria with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Presbyterian & his next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs John Keegan, Tyres Street, Hamilton, Victoria. He stated on his Attestation Papers that he had been an Apprentice at Reid & Price at Hamilton for 5 years. Roderick Keegan also state he had served with Senior Cadets for 3 years – Citizen Force Infantry.

As Roderick James Keegan was under the age of 21 – his parents were required to sign their consent for their son to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force for active service abroad. On 2nd March, 1916 John Keegan & Anne Keegan signed their names to the following letter: "*We undersigned Father & Mother of our son R. J. Keegan give our consent to him enlisting in the A.I.F. forces.*"

Private Roderick James Keegan joined recruit training on 27th March, 1916. He was given Leave on 28th March, 1916 & was posted to 39th Battalion at Ballarat, Victoria on 29th March, 1916.

Private Roderick James Keegan, Service number 498, embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Ascanius (A11)* on 27th May, 1916 with the 10th Infantry Brigade, 39th Infantry Battalion, "B" Company & disembarked at Devonport, England on 18th 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 Roderick James Keegan proceeded overseas to France via Southampton on 23rd November, 1916.

Private Roderick James Keegan was wounded in action on 7th June, 1917. He was admitted to 12th Australian Field Ambulance on 7th June, 1917 – Gassed then transferred to same day to 9th Australian Field Ambulance. Private Keegan was discharged to duty on 14th June, 1917 & rejoined 39th Battalion in the Field on 15th June, 1917.

39th Battalion

The 39th Battalion was formed on 21 February 1916 at the Ballarat Showgrounds in Victoria and drew most of its recruits from the state's Western District. It became part of the 10th Brigade of the 3rd Australian Division. Sailing from Melbourne on 27 May, the battalion arrived in Britain on 18 July and commenced four months of training. It crossed to France in late November and moved into the trenches of the Western Front for the first time on 9 December, just in time for the onset of the terrible winter of 1916-17.

The 39th fought in its first major battle at Messines, in Belgium, between 7-9 June 1917. During its march to the start-line for this operation the battalion suffered heavily from a German gas bombardment and less than a third of the troops earmarked to attack actually did so. The battalion, however, captured all of its objectives.....

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

War Diary – 39th Battalion

7th June, 1917 – Sheet Ref Ploegsteert:

MAGNUM OPUS ZERO HOUR 3.10 am. Attacked enemy & gained objectives although badly gassed.

8th June, 1917

Bn consolidating. Casualties heavy in wounded (Killed light)

14 Officers wounded. 285 OR. 24 Killed OR 145 missing

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Base Records advised Mr J. Keegan, Tyres Street, Hamilton, Victoria on 2nd July, 1917 that Private R. J. Keegan had been wounded.

Private Roderick James Keegan was admitted to 11th Australian Field Ambulance on 17th July, 1917 with Pleurisy. He was transferred to 2nd Australian Casualty Clearing Station on 17th July, 1917 then transferred to Ambulance Train 12 on 19th July, 1917. Private Keegan was admitted to 1st South African General Hospital at Abbeville, France on 19th July, 1917. He was marked for transfer to England on 15th August, 1917 & embarked on Hospital Ship *St. Patrick* on 16th August, 1917.

Base Records advised Mr J. Keegan, Tyres Street, Hamilton, Victoria on 7th August, 1917 that Private R. J. Keegan had been admitted to 1st South African General Hospital on 26th July, 1917 suffering from tuberculosis – severe.

Private Roderick James Keegan was admitted to Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, England on 16th August, 1917. He was transferred to Military Hospital at Richmond on 6th November, 1917 then on 9th November, 1917 he was transferred to 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield, Middlesex.

Base Records advised Mr J. Keegan, Tyres Street, Hamilton, Victoria on 27th August, 1917 that Private R. J. Keegan's condition was stationary. He was advised again on 29th August, 1917 that Private R. J. Keegan had been transferred to Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, England on 16th August, 1917.

Base Records advised Mr J. Keegan, Tyres Street, Hamilton, Victoria on 5th October that Private R. J. Keegan's condition was improved. Mr J. Keegan was advised again on 27th October, 1917 that Private R. J. Keegan was still improving.

On 16th October, 1917 Base Records wrote to The General Secretary, Australian Natives' Association, Melbourne, listing: *"...according to the records, No. 498, Private Roderick James Keegan, 39th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, was wounded in action on a date prior to 29th June, 1917; admitted to 1st South African General Hospital on 26th July, 1917, suffering with Tuberculosis; transferred to Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, on 16th August, 1917; reported Improving – cable dated London 28th September, 1917; no further record available."* (Note: a previous listed was sent on 1st September, 1917 up to 16th August, 1917)

Private Roderick James Keegan died at 7.05 pm on 20th November, 1917 at 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield Park, Harefield, Middlesex, England from Tuberculosis of Lungs & (secondary) Exhaustion.

A death for Roderick J. Keegan, aged 21, was registered in the December quarter, 1917 in the district of Uxbridge, Middlesex, England.

Private Roderick James Keegan was buried at 3 pm on 23rd November, 1917 in St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England – Plot number Aust. 38 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

From the burial report of Private Roderick James Keegan - *Coffin was good, polished Elm. The deceased soldier was accorded a Military Funeral. The Firing Party was supplied by Headquarters, A.I.F. London, and the bearers by Staff of Harefield Hospital. A service was conducted in the Church, and at the graveside by Chaplain Rev. Terry of Harefield Hospital. The "Last Post" was sounded by a bugler of A.I.F. Headquarters, London. Captain Renwick A.M.C. represented Harefield Hospital, and a party of about 50 patients followed the procession. A wreath was sent by Mr & Mrs Billyard Leake.*

Base Records wrote to Mr J. Keegan, Tyres Street, Hamilton, Victoria on 19th April, 1920 regarding his son the late No. 498 Private R. J. Keegan, 39th Battalion stating *"... I am now in receipt of further advice which shows that his remains have been exhumed from grave No. 38, Parish Churchyard, Harefield, and re-interred in grave No. 37 in the Australian Section of the same Churchyard. This work is carried out with every measure of care and reverence in the presence of a Chaplain."*

This is now recorded by CWGC as Memorial reference – Aust 37.

A War Pension was granted to Annie Keegan, Hamilton, mother of the late Private Roderick James Keegan, 498, 39th Battalion, in the sum of 14/- per fortnight from 24th January, 1918.

Base Records wrote to The General Secretary, Australian Natives' Association, Melbourne on 22nd July, 1918 regarding their communication of 11th July, 1918 "...enclosed herewith is certificate in duplicate, regarding the incapacitation of No. 498 Private R. J. Keegan, 39th Battalion." Also enclosed was a list of when Private Keegan had been wounded & the subsequent hospitals he had been admitted to until his death on 20th November, 1917 at 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital. A previous letter had been sent on 7th January, 1918 listing Private Keegan's admissions to hospital from being wounded "prior to 29th June, 1917" until his death.

Private Roderick James Keegan was entitled to British War Medal & Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Keegan's father – Mr J. Keegan, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent February, 1922 & Plaque sent October, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Roderick James Keegan – service number 498, aged 21, of 39th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of John & Anne Keegan, of Tyers St., Hamilton, Victoria, Australia.

Private R. J. Keegan is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 131.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

On 28th June, 1918 a tree was planted on the Avenue of Honour, Hamilton, Victoria for Private Roderick James Keegan – Tree No. 57 (Oriental Plane tree).



R. Keegan is remembered on the Yulecart War Memorial, located at Yulecart Hall, Dartmoor-Hamilton Road, Yulecart, Victoria.



Yulecart War Memorial (Photos from Monument Australia – Graeme Saunders)

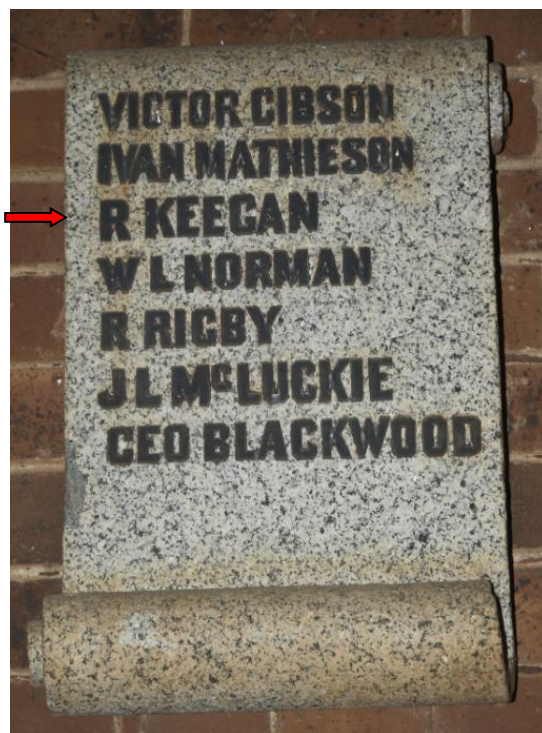


R. Keegan is remembered on Hamilton Primary School Roll of Honour (Old Scholars), located in Hamilton Primary School, 42 Gray Street, Hamilton, Victoria.



Hamilton Primary School Roll of Honour (Photo from AWM Places of Pride – Arthur Garland)

R. Keegan is remembered on Hamilton State School Honour Roll, located in Gray Street, Hamilton, Victoria.



Hamilton State School Honour Roll (Photo from AWM Places of Pride – Arthur Garland)

R. J. Keegan is remembered on St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Enduring Remembrance of Our Brave Men Roll of Honor, located in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Gray Street, Hamilton, Victoria.



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Enduring Remembrance of Our Brave Men Roll of Honor, Hamilton

(Photo from AWM Places of Pride – Arthur Garland)

R. J. Keegan is remembered on St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Roll of Honor, located in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Gray Street, Hamilton, Victoria.

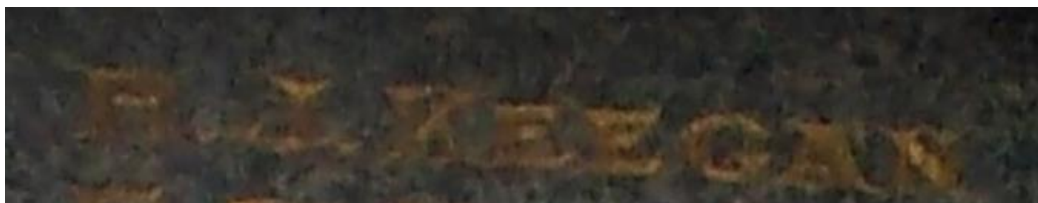


St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Roll of Honor, Hamilton (Photo from AWM Places of Pride – Arthur Garland)

R. J. Keegan is remembered on the Hamilton War Memorial, located in Melville Oval, Glenelg Highway & Lonsdale Street, Hamilton, Victoria.



Hamilton War Memorial



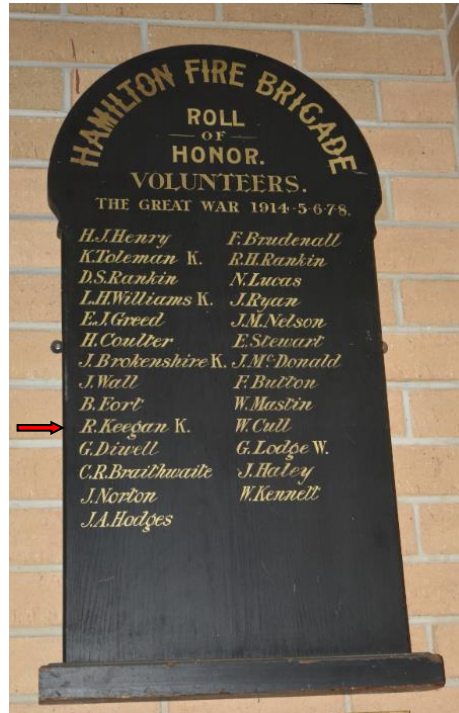
R. J. Keegan is remembered on the Borough of Hamilton Roll of Honour, located in Ted Kenna V.C. Room, Performing Arts Centre, 113 Brown Street, Hamilton, Victoria.



Borough of Hamilton Roll of Honour (Photos from Monument Australia)



R. Keegan is remembered on the Hamilton Fire Brigade Volunteers Roll of Honor, located in C.F.A. Station, 104 Cox Street, Hamilton, Victoria.



Hamilton Fire Brigade Volunteers Roll of Honor (Photo from Monument Australia – Arthur Garland)

Rod Keegan is remembered on the Hamilton Fire Brigade Honour Roll for the Fallen (Pictorial), located in C.F.A. Station, 104 Cox Street, Hamilton, Victoria.



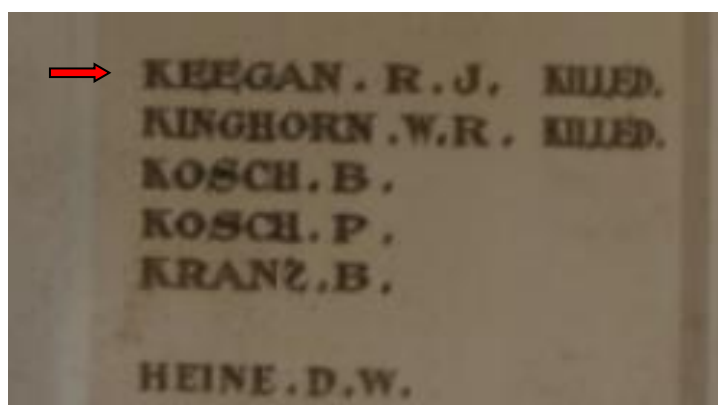
Hamilton Fire Brigade Honour Roll for the Fallen (Pictorial) (Photo from Monument Australia – Arthur Garland)

R. J. Keegan is remembered on the Shire of Dundas Roll of Honor, located in Council Chambers, 5 Market Place, Hamilton, Victoria.



Shire of Dundas Roll of Honor

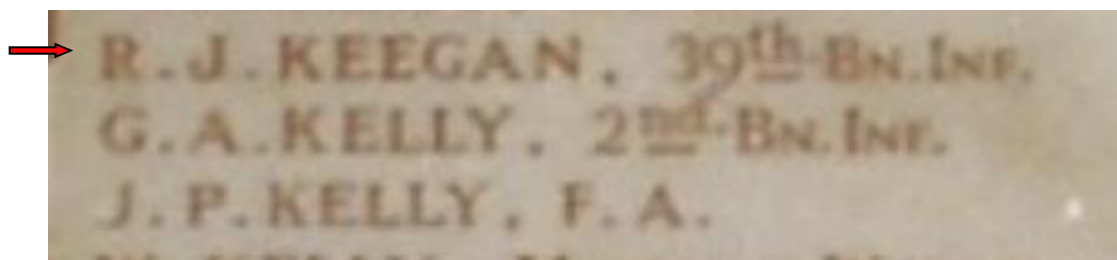
(Photo from AWM Places of Pride – Arthur Garland)



R. J. Keegan is remembered on the Australian Soldiers' Memorial in St. Mary the Virgin Church, Church Hill, Harefield, Middlesex, England.



Australian Soldiers' Memorial, Harefield (Photo from War Memorials Online – B. Wood)



(59 pages of Private Roderick James Keegan'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



Private Roderick James Keegan



Newspaper Notices

DEPARTURE OF SOLDIERS – Another batch of twenty-seven recruits for Australia's new army left Hamilton on Tuesday in charge of Recruiting-Sergeant Donald Campbell for the Ballarat training camp. Their names and addresses are as follows:-.....R. J. Keegan, Hamilton.....

(*Portland Guardian*, Victoria – 31 March, 1916)

FAREWELL TO YULECART SOLDIERS

The residents of Yulecart district met in the school room on Monday evening to say farewell to Private J. R. Palmer. Private Rod Keegan an old Yulecart school boy, who happened to be in the district was also invited to attend.

Mr E. R. Waters who was voted to the chair, said that since the war commenced nothing had so brought home to them, the grim reality of the struggle as the gathering that night. Many young men had gone from the district, and had nobly upheld the honour of the flag, but in no case had there been the same obstacles, in the way of enlisting as was the case with Private Palmer, and it was only, the sternest resolution and clearest sense of duty, that enabled him to persevere till he accomplished his purpose. He was giving up all the pleasures and prospects of a happy life and was going to suffer the privations and dangers of that of a soldier for those of us who were staying at home as much as for himself. The war had set up a standard of manhood that admitted of no counterfeits. A man was no longer judged by the height of his collar or the cut of his coat. In fact to an able bodied man a civilian's dress was almost a reproach. If the youth of the neighbourhood needed an object lesson in patriotism Private and Mrs. Palmer had given them one that they would never forget. He trusted that Private Palmer would come home again to them safe and sound, and that he and Mrs. Palmer would live to enjoy a life made sweeter by the consciousness of having done their duty to their country in the hour of her need.

Mr. W. J. Addinsall, in presenting Private Palmer with a money belt and metal pocket mirror, remarked that they were all proud of the young men who were offering their lives in defence of the Empire. They were going to do their duty wherever they were sent, and were prepared to pay the supreme sacrifice if needs be. The pity of it all was that only the pick of the country were going. The moral and physical degenerates were remaining behind. He trusted that when the war was over they would have the pleasure of welcoming home Privates Palmer and Keegan. He regretted that owing to the short notice they were unable to procure a suitable present for the latter, but they intended to forward to him in camp the same as had been given to Private Palmer.

Mr. G. Ford said that now when the married men of the district were enlisting the question for himself and others like him, to consider was why were they not also going.

Mr. L. M'Innes also spoke in a similar strain, and expressed the opinion that before the war over all men of military age would be required.

Kindly references to the bravery and devotion of Mrs. Palmer, in the sacrifice she was making, were made by Messrs. Loats and Francis.

Miss A. Stewart and Mrs. Ford spoke the feelings of the ladies, and wished the departing soldiers God speed and a safe return.

Messrs Freeman, Muncey and W. Loats junr.. also made eulogistic references to the soldier guests.

Privates Palmer and Keegan suitably responded, the former remarking that if he reached the firing line before the war was over, he would try to do his duty. He hoped to come back and see them all again when peace was proclaimed. He thanked them all sincerely for the useful present, and for the kind things they had said about Mrs. Palmer and himself.

During the evening songs and recitations were given by Misses A Stewart and O. Muncey, and Messers H. Morris, B. and J. Kirkwood and Muncey. The National Anthem and a coffee supper terminated the proceedings.

(Hamilton Spectator, Victoria – 27 April, 1916)

AUSTRALIA'S HEROES

Mr and Mrs J. Keegan, of Tyers-street, have been informed by Base Records that their son, Private R. J. Keegan, was wounded in France. In a letter dated France, April 13, Corporal T. D. White, writing to Mrs Keegan, said:- "Rod is still going strong, I am pleased to say, and is in the best of health. I congratulate you in having a good son, for, honestly, Rod is one of the best chaps in our battalion, and as for trench life, he is as cool headed as any man here, and I must say he is as brave as any man in the battalion, He has proved it on more than one occasion."

(Hamilton Spectator, Victoria – 6 July, 1917)

CASUALTIES

The 321st and 322nd list of Australian casualties were issued last night.

VICTORIA

Wounded

.....Roderick James Keegan.....

(The Daily Telegraph, Sydney, NSW – 12 July, 1917)

AUSTRALIA'S HEROES

The sad news was received on Monday last by Mr. and Mrs. J. Keegan, of Tyers-street, Hamilton. that their son, Private Rod Keegan, had died in the First Australian Auxiliary Hospital, England, on November 20.

A few months ago, Private Keegan had received injuries from a German gas attack, and although hope of his recovery was held out the deadly fumes had evidently done their work, and he died as stated. He had just completed his twenty-first year, and had been on active service for about eighteen months. Previous to enlisting he was employed by Messrs. Reid and Price, but the whole of his early life was spent at Yulecart, where he lived with his grandfather. Mr. D. McInnes. His manly and up right life caused him to be widely respected and much sympathy is felt for his bereaved relatives.

(Hamilton Spectator, Victoria – 29 November, 1917)

DIED ON SERVICE

KEEGAN – Roderick James, died of wounds received in France on 20th November, at Harefield Hospital, England, second son of Mr and Mrs John Keegan, Hamilton, and brother of Harold and Ivy (Blackburn) and Katleen, Keith and Edgar, Hamilton.

For right and home.

(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria – 30 November, 1917)

THE LATE PRIVATE R. KEEGAN

At the Free Presbyterian Church last Sabbath forenoon the congregation was visibly affected when the Rev. W. N. Wilson expressed the heartfelt sympathy of the congregation for Mr. and Mrs. Keegan, in the great loss they had sustained by the death of their son Roderick upon the battlefield. He said our times are in God's hands, and so the call had not come by accident or chance, and God says, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shall know hereafter." The beloved young man whose loss they mourned gave his life. It was a great sacrifice for one so young and bright and dutiful to make, and his parents in consenting for him to go had given what was more precious to them than the whole world, for their life was bound up with his life. They had comfort in remembering him as a good affectionate son, and for this reason he would be sadly missed. The prayer of a great covenanter, in a time of grave peril was, "Oh Lord take the ripe and spare the green," and this seems to be what God is now doing in many instances. The ready are taken and the careless remain. He was thankful to be able to testify regarding Roderick Keegan that when called upon to defend his country he voluntarily offered himself, counting not his life dear unto him, that he might finish his course with honour, preferring to die, rather than be found among the disloyal and selfish, who refuse, to deny themselves to preserve the priceless liberties gained for us by the martyrs and patriots of the past. He had died for our nation, and if he and other noble, young men of the British Empire had not been willing

to face danger and death for our sake of our women, sisters and children would now be at the mercy of inhuman men, who have shocked the world by their cruel, devilish and repulsive conduct, showing themselves to be the enemies of God and man. A bitter curse was pronounced by God in the days of the prophetess Deborah against those who refused to assist their brethren against a similar enemy, to the one we are now contending with. This implies a blessing for those who from a sense of duty went to the help of the Lord against a mighty and a ruthless foe. The body of our late young friend, who heroically did his part, now rests in a foreign land, but his grave needs no perishing memorial, for the memory of his heroism and patriotism will live not only in the minds of those who loved him, but in the esteem of all who prize the civil and religious liberty enjoyed under the British flag. It is another, call to earnestly do the work given us to do, before the night of death cometh, when no one can work. For the Christian to die is gain, and so we may congratulate all Christians who are about to lay down the burden of life, and thinking of beloved Christian friends who have gone into the unseen world we are moved to say : "Oh that we were in heaven too, safe landed on the peaceful shore, where pilgrims meet to part no more."

(Hamilton Spectator, Victoria – 8 December, 1917)

THE 371st and 372nd CASUALTY LISTS

The Victorian names are:-

DIED OF ILLNESS

Private R. J. Keegan, Hamilton

(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – 22 December, 1917)

IN MEMORIAM

KEEGAN – In loving memory of our dear son and brother \, Private R. J. Keegan, who died on the 20th November, 1917, from the effects of gas poisoning received at the battle of Messines Ridge, aged 21 years.

To Memory Ever Dear.

KEEGAN – In loving memory of our dear nephew and cousin, Private R. J. Keegan, died of wounds on the 20th November, 1917, at the 1st Australian Hospital, England,

None knew him but to love him,

none mentioned his name but with praise.

Inserted by Mr and Mrs R. Eales and family, Peshurst.

(Hamilton Spectator, Victoria – 21 November, 1918)

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 16th July, 1921, to Mr J. Keegan, Tyres Street, Hamilton, Victoria, advised that a letter from the Defence Dept. concerning an inscription on the headstone of his son, the late No. 498 Private R. J. Keegan, 39th Battalion, 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 Roderick James Keegan does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England

St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield contains 126 Commonwealth War Graves.

During the two world wars, the United Kingdom became an island fortress used for training troops and launching land, sea and air operations around the globe. There are more than 170,000 Commonwealth war graves in the United Kingdom, many being those of servicemen and women killed on active service, or who later succumbed to wounds. Others died in training accidents, or because of sickness or disease. The graves, many of them privately owned and marked by private memorials, will be found in more than 12,000 cemeteries and churchyards.

Harefield (St. Mary) Churchyard contains war graves from both world wars. There are 120 First World War graves, mostly those of Australians who died in No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield Park. Uniquely, their graves are marked by scroll shaped headstones, chosen by the staff and patients at the hospital. In the centre of the Australian plot stands a memorial obelisk which was erected by Sir Francis Newdegate, late Governor of Tasmania and of Western Australia, and Mr. C.A.M. Billyard-Leake, of Harefield Park. The churchyard also contains six graves of the Second World War.

(Information & photos from CWGC)

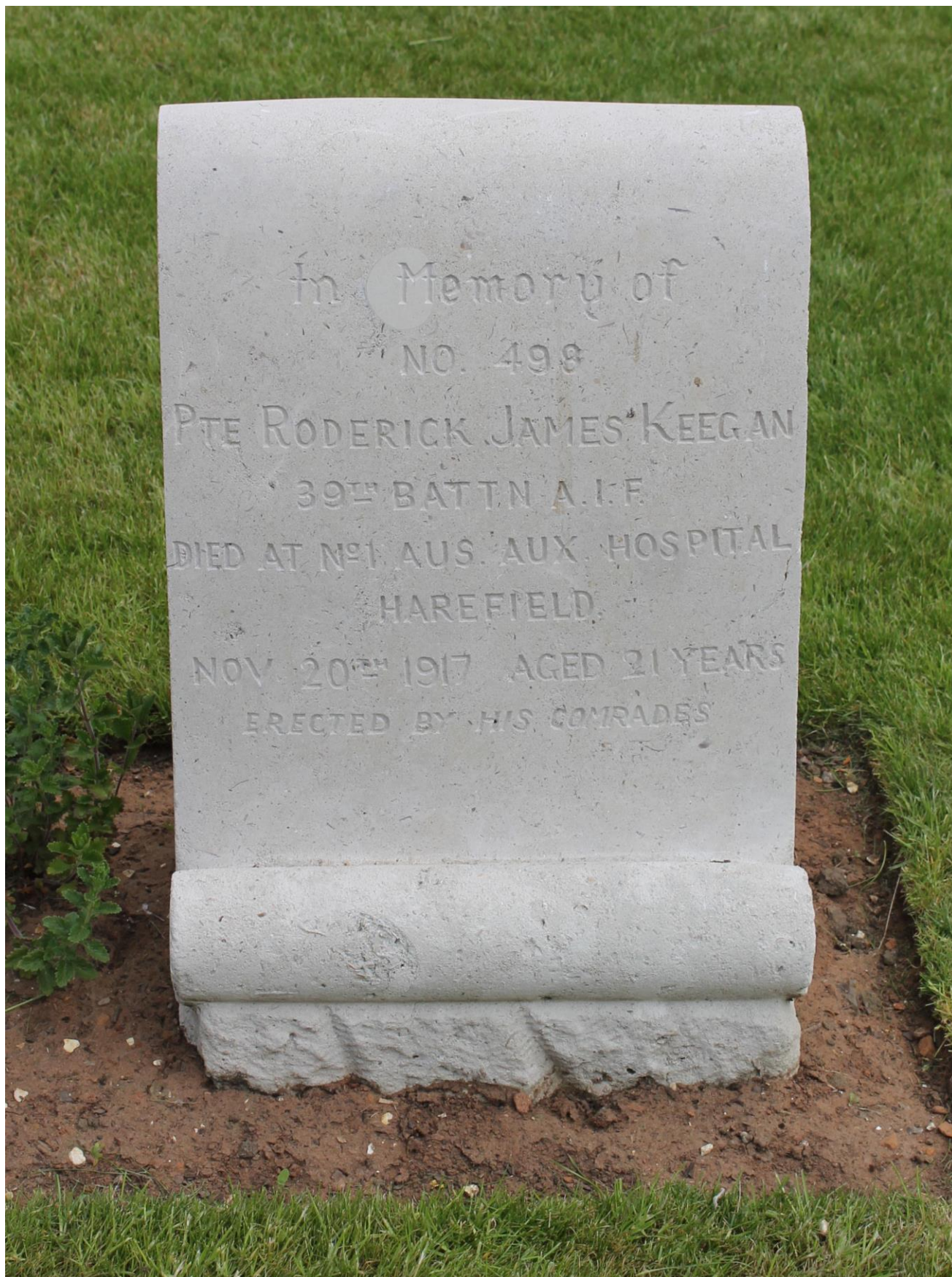




St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield



Photo of Private Roderick James Keegan's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England.



(Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)



St Mary the Virgin Church, Harefield (Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)



St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield (Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)



St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield (Photos courtesy of Peter Bennett)

