

**Compton Chamberlayne**  
**War Graves Cemetery,**  
**Wiltshire, England**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**1666 SERJEANT**

**P. R. KNOWLES**

**AUSTRALIAN T. M. BATTERY**

**30TH JANUARY, 1918 Age 23**

*THY WILL BE DONE*

## Percy Robert KNOWLES

Percy Robert Knowles was born on 5th April, 1894 at Arncliffe, Sydney, NSW to parents Robert Walker Knowles & Alice Knowles (nee Yeend). Percy was the second of four children born to Robert & Alice Knowles.

Percy Robert Knowles married Gladys Mary Hammond in the district of Chatswood, Sydney, NSW on 15th November, 1913.

A son, Robert James Knowles, was born in August, 1914 at Chatswood, NSW.

Percy Robert Knowles was a 22 year old, married, Carpenter from Middle Harbour Road, Lindfield, Sydney, NSW when he enlisted on 10th April, 1916 at Royal Agricultural Showgrounds, Sydney, NSW with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 1666 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Gladys May Knowles of Middle Harbour Road, Lindfield, Sydney, NSW. Percy Knowles stated on his Attestation Papers that he had been an apprentice Carpenter to Mr Johnson, Kent Street, for 5 years.

Private Percy Robert Knowles was posted to "A" Company of 2nd Depot Battalion, A.I.F. Armidale, NSW on 10th April, 1916 for recruit training. He was transferred to 1st Reinforcements of 36th Battalion on 27th April, 1916.

Private Percy Robert Knowles embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Beltana* (A72) on 13th May, 1916 with the 9th Infantry Brigade, 36th Infantry Battalion, 1st Reinforcements & disembarked at Devonport, England on 9th July, 1916.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. These were located in the Salisbury Plain area in the county of Wiltshire.

Private Percy Robert Knowles was transferred to 9th Light Trench Mortar Battery Unit on 2nd August, 1916 in England.

Private Percy Robert Knowles rejoined 9th Light Trench Mortar Battery from Detachment on 9th September, 1916 in England.

Private Percy Robert Knowles proceeded overseas to France for active duty on 21st November, 1916.

Private Percy Robert Knowles was promoted to Corporal on 26th December, 1916, vice Corporal Gearty killed.

Corporal Percy Robert Knowles was at Divisional School from 15th January, 1917. He was reported at School on 5th February, 1917 on detachment from 9th Light Trench Mortar Battery.

Corporal Percy Robert Knowles joined Base Depot (School) at Etaples on 2nd April, 1917. He was detached to duty to 3rd Divisional School as Instructor from 15th April, 1917.

Corporal Percy Robert Knowles was transferred to 9th L.T.M. Bty (Light Trench Mortar Battery) at Morbecue on 13th June, 1917.

Corporal Percy Robert Knowles was promoted to Sergeant from 30th June, 1917 vice Sergeant Gray commissioned.

Sergeant Percy Robert Knowles proceeded on leave to England from 5th November, 1917.

Sergeant Percy Robert Knowles was admitted to hospital sick on 19th November, 1917 while on leave in England. He was marched in from Australian Headquarters London from France on 19th November, 1917 to No. 3 Command Depot at Hurdcott, Depot. Sergeant Knowles was admitted to the Military Hospital at Fovant, Wiltshire on 3rd December, 1917 "seriously ill" - cause - N.Y.D. (not yet determined)

Advice was sent from Base Records, Melbourne to Mrs G. Knowles, Middle Harbour Road, Lindfield, NSW, wife of Sergeant Percy Robert Knowles, on 12th December, 1917 that "*Corporal P. R. Knowles admitted to Fovant Military Hospital, Salisbury, England, 4/12/17, suffering from a severe illness the nature of which, has not yet been diagnosed.*" Advice was sent again on 20th December, 1917 that "*No. 1666 Corporal P. R. Knowles condition*

*improving.*” She was notified on 14th January, 1918 that “*Corporal Percy Knowles condition unsatisfactory.*” Mrs G. Knowles was notified on 25th January, 1918 that “*Corporal Percy Knowles progressing favourably.*”

A Telegram was sent to Base Records from Post Master Lindfield on 16th January, 1918 stating “*re your wire yesterday to Mrs G. Knowles middle harbour rd Lindfield nsw is undelivered owing to addressee having returned to England.*”

Sergeant Percy R. Knowles died at 3.55 a.m. on 30th January, 1918 at the Military Hospital at Fovant. Cause of death was listed as Pneumonia & Nephritis.

A death for Percy R. Knowles, aged 24, was registered in the March quarter, 1918 in the district of Wilton, Wiltshire, England.

Sergeant Percy Robert Knowles was buried on 2nd February, 1918 in Compton Chamberlayne War Graves Cemetery, Wiltshire, England – Middle Row, Plot Grave # 2. From the burial report of Sergeant Knowles – Coffin was Elm (polished) with Brass Furniture – Sergeant Knowles was given a Military Funeral.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Sergeant Percy Robert Knowles contains a letter from the Matron at Fovant Military Hospital which reads: (P. R. Knowles – 1666) “*was admitted suffering from Pneumonia – he got over the acute stage and only made slow progress towards convalescence. Nephritis set in and he died of heart failure 30-1-18. His wife was here at the time and had been with him for some days.*” A telegram from Military Hospital at Fovant to Administrative Headquarters, A. I. F. London, advising the death of Sergeant Knowles states “*Next of kin Wife Mrs Knowles at present staying Y. M. C. A. Fovant.*”

Sergeant Percy Robert Knowles requested in his Will, dated 10th July, 1917 that he bequests all his real estate & personal belongings to his wife – Mrs Gladys M. Knowles of “Risdon Farm” Beaworthy, Devonshire, England.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission listed Sergeant Percy Robert Knowles – service number 166, aged 23, of the 9th Australian Light Trench Mortar Battery. He was the son of Robert Walter and Alice Knowles; husband of Gladys Mary Knowles, of Risdon Farm, Beaworthy, Devon, England.

Sergeant Percy Robert Knowles was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were sent to Sergeant Knowles’ wife – Mrs G. M. Knowles in England.

Sergeant P. R. Knowles is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 20.



(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)



Sergeant P. R. Knowles is remembered on the Lindfield Soldiers Memorial Park Gates on Tryon St, Lindfield, NSW. The Memorial consists of 2 sandstone arches, one on each side of the entrance to the Lindfield Soldiers Memorial Park, with wrought iron gates and 4 long brass plaques with the names of 186 locals who fought in World War 1. It was established in 1922.



**Lindfield Soldiers Memorial Park Gates** (Photo below from Daily Telegraph, Sydney)



**Lindfield Soldiers Memorial Park Gates**

(48 pages of Sergeant Percy Robert Knowles' 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, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives*



## **Newspaper Reports**

### **377th CASUALTY LIST**

#### **New South Wales - III**

Cpl Percy Robert Knowles, Lindfield (seriously)

*(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Tuesday 8th January, 1918)*

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### **DEATHS**

KNOWLES - January 30, 1918 at Fovant Hospital, England, Corporal Percy Robert Knowles, eldest son of Robert Knowles, of Middle Harbour Road, Lindfield and grandson of Mrs Yeend, Roach Street, Arncliffe, aged 23 years.

*(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Saturday 23rd March, 1918)*

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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 Compton Chamberlayne Cemetery. 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)*

Sergeant P. R. Knowles does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*THY WILL BE DONE*

## Compton Chamberlayne War Graves Cemetery, Wiltshire, England

Compton Chamberlayne War Graves Cemetery contains 34 Commonwealth War Graves all from World War 1. Of these 28 are of Australian Soldiers.



*(Photo courtesy of Andrew Stacey)*



**Compton Chamberlayne War Graves** *(Photo from CWGC)*



**Left & right of Cemetery with central Plinth** (Photos courtesy of Andrew Stacey 2012)



**Photo taken from back of Cemetery looking towards the Entrance** (Photo courtesy of Andrew Stacey)

Photo of Serjeant P. R. Knowles's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone at Compton Chamberlayne War Graves Cemetery, Wiltshire, England.



*(Photo courtesy of Andrew Stacey)*



## Compton Chamberlayne War Grave Locations



British Soldier



Irish Soldier



Australian Soldier

Front Row	Grave		Middle Row	Grave		Back Row	Grave
<i>Public</i>	1		Oliver	1			1
<i>Public</i>	2		Knowles	2		<i>Public</i>	2
	Haywood	3		Skipper	3		Turner
	Gilbert	4		Wehrmann	4		Evans
	Le Tisser	5		Park	5		Dreckow
	Jones	6		Riley	6		Cass
	Cook	7		Turnbull	7		Arnold
	Pairman	8		White	8		Sillar
		9		Howard	9		Ross
	Norris	10		Tull	10		Finn
	Lintott	11		Snell	11		McCarthy
	Redman	12		Ferrow	12		Trengove
<i>Public</i>			<i>Public</i>				13
<i>Public</i>			<i>Public</i>				14
<i>Public</i>						Walsh	15
							16
						Hooper	17
							18
						Larkin	19



*(Photo taken c March, 1919)*

Graves of Australian soldiers in the cemetery at Compton-Chamberlyne, each marked by a cross.

*Back row, left to right:* 55821 Private (Pte) Alfred Alwin Dreckow, 32nd Battalion (Bn), died 19 October 1918; 3712 Pte Thomas Cass, 10th Bn, died 17 August 1918; 3764 Pte William Joseph Arnold, 31st Bn, died 2 July 1918; Captain Roy Allan Sillar, Australian Army Medical Corps, died 30 June 1918; 1993A Pte Sydney Ross, 18th Bn, died 31 May 1918.

*Front row:* **1666 Sergeant Percy Robert Knowles, 9th Australian Light TM Battery, died 30 January 1918;** 1995 Pte Thomas James Skipper, 51st Bn, died Fovant Military Hospital 7 January 1918; 687 Pte John Thomas Wehrmann, 32nd Bn, died 3 November 1917; 3462 Pte William Joseph Park, 60th Bn, died 23rd September 1917; 1725 Pte William Ernest Riley, 60th Bn, died 22 May 1917.