

**Hollybrook Memorial,
Southampton, Hampshire, England
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



1231 SAPPER

P. LAWRANCE

AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS

21ST FEBRUARY, 1916

Peter LAWRENCE

Peter Lawrance was born at Blackwood, Victoria in 1878 to parents James & Mary Lawrance (nee Welsh).

Peter Lawrance was a 36 year old, single, Miner from 184 Charles Street, Perth, Western Australia when he enlisted on 1st December, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Roman Catholic & his next of kin was listed as his brother – John Lawrance (on active service) & sister Mrs Margaret Weir, 184 Charles St, North Perth, Western Australia (parents deceased).

Peter Lawrance was posted to Miners Unit on 1st December, 1915 with the rank of Sapper.

Sapper Peter Lawrance (note: named on Embarkation Roll as "Lawrence"), Service number 1231, embarked from Sydney, New South Wales on HMAT *Ulysses* (A38) on 20th February, 1916 with the No. 1 Mining Corps, No. 3 Company.

The Australian Mining Corps

The Australian Mining Corps was formed during WWI as a suggestion of Prof T.W. Edgeworth from the University of Sydney, who at the time urged that the exceptional skills of the Australian mining industry should be utilised at the front.

The Corps was formed in Australia in 1915 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Albert Cecil Fewtrell. Fewtrell had started his career as a cadet mechanical engineer with the Queensland Government Railway Department in Brisbane, and began his military training at Ipswich, before relocating to Sydney where he became a commissioned officer in the 5th Field Company, Australian Engineers. Under his command 1000 miners were assembled.

The initial intention was deployment to Gallipoli, where miners had already been used to construct tunnels at the battlefield, but instead the battalion split into three Tunnelling Companies along with the Australian Electrical Mechanical Boring Company and dispatched to France in May 1915.

(Mining Corps information by David Lees)

Sapper Peter Lawrance died on 21st February, 1916 while at Sea on board HMAT *Ulysses* (A38).

A Court of Inquiry was held on 21st February, 1916 on HMA Troopship A38 at Sea by order of Officer Commanding Troopship A38 for the purpose of inquiring into the cause and the circumstances surrounding the death of No. 1231 Sapper Peter Lawrance.

The Officer Commanding, Troopship A38 "Ulysses" wrote to Major J. M. C. MacTaggart, Mining Corps, on 21st February, 1916 with the following (Page1): "*you are hereby appointed President of a Court of which the following Officers are appointed members:-* Lieut C. W. Whyte

" J. D. Henry

To enquire into and report on the circumstances connected with the death of No. 1231, Peter Lawrance of the Mining Corps which occurred this day on Board Transport A38 "Ulysses" on a voyage from Sydney to Melbourne.

Exhaustive enquiry is to be made with a view to eliciting all facts in connection therewith and if possible to ascertain

(1) Under what circumstances deceased was placed in cells when and by whom ?

(2) How he became possessed of facilities for doing injury to himself ?

(3) If when placed in cells he was searched, if so by whom ?

(4) At what hour was he last seen alive, and what was his condition at that time ?

(5) What steps were taken to have him under supervision

(6) If at anytime during his confinement indications were given that he was of suicidal tendency ?

(7) How long after he was discovered was it that the matter was reported to the Medical Officer."

The Officer Commanding, Troopship A38 "Ulysses" wrote to The President, Court of Enquiry on 22nd February, 1916 (Page 4): "*Referred to Court to please furnish replies to queries as set out on Memorandum of Instructions also to say if culpability attaches to any person, if so, whom?"*

Proceedings of Court of Inquiry:

The Court having assembled pursuant to order, proceeded to visit the cells and call evidence. In the cell the Court found a pipe running across one cell to which a piece of 1 ½ " rope was tied, the coarse end being frayed. Also a piece of rope with a loop at one end and the other end frayed. Placing the frayed ends together a man of average height with a noose around his neck would be suspended in the air. Evidence on oath was given by:-

on oath was given by:-

Lieut Alexander Laurens Kennedy	7-8
William Weylandt Grainger	9-10
John Osborn Oldfield Mc Ardell	11
James Alexander Reid	12
Capt Rupert Duffly Haggaton	13-14
Supt Chas Macklem Sheriff	15-16
Sapper Robert Muir	17
Joseph Thomas Smithheram	18
Lieut Henry Edward Trusselot	19-20
Supt Albert Alexander Brooks	21
Cpl Wm Norman Seale	22
Cpl Roy Curzon Deaton	23
Sapper Herbert Charles Woollock	24-25

and their signed declarations are attached hereto; also report by Squad Commander. (6)

Reports:

[Note: several witnesses made statements – not all of them have been transcribed here & those that have been transcribed are not in order as per Service Record file]

Report by Sapper Herbert Charles Woollock:

"I came from Western Australia with Sapper Lawrance and have known him for about 4 months. He sometimes drank a little more than ordinary and when he did so he grew a little noisy. We were together in the reinforcements having been removed from the 9th W.A. Relief and he seemed always on the best of terms with his mates. He had never spoken to me before yesterday of anyone bearing ill will and I think he would have spoken to me because we were chums. The idea of any ill will occurring to him. Yesterday in my opinion was purely imaginary.

About a month ago he had a fall from a train at Liverpool; he fell on the side of his face when he came into camp. I advised him to visit the doctor who told him that the ___ in his face, the result of his fall would in all probability not come out. This seemed to pray on his mind because he said to me on the boat that his mother would ask me how he got the marks on his face and he would have to tell her he had been drunk. He had lately complained of having a pain at the back of his neck. They had given him some stuff at Casula while in the Reinforcements to rub on the back of his neck. He seemed in a good humour this morning because he said this is a rumour (?) sent of a boat you cant get a cigarette on it. I said you can make yourself a cigarette from my tobacco and he did and we sat down and had a yarn together."

Report by Lieutenant Harry Edward Trousselot:

"At 11 am yesterday Sapper Lawrance came to me and asked to be placed in some place of safety as his mates in the section to which he was attached (No 4) had threatened to "dump" him (sic) I asked him what he meant and he said "dump him over the side" I put him off by ridiculing the idea and in the meantime and I ___enquired as to whether there was any truth in his statement. As a result of these enquiries I considered them imaginary and took no further action. Later on in the day I noticed Sapper Lawrance speaking to Lieut Col Fewtrell and guessing that he was talking about I suggested to Lieut Col Fewtrell that he be placed under the care of the guard. The Lt Col agreed and Lawrance was promptly placed in care of the guard and later, at his own request, was placed in the cell. The man appeared to have been drinking previously; he seemed to me to be suffering "a recovery". This morning at 8.30 am I visited the Guard and enquired and was ___ and questioned Spr Lawrance to see if he was in any better state than on the previous day. He answered all questions coherently and seemed to be in quite a contented frame of mind. I then went and asked the Guard Commander to release him, which was done. In the meantime I suggested to Lt Coulter that Lawrance be transferred to another section. This was done in case there might have been some real ground for his belief in an ill feeling on his old section which I could not ascertain on enquiring. On his being released I told him to report to his new section Commander and at the 10 am Parade I noticed that he "fell in" with his new section. At approximately 4.30 pm I was informed the man had hanged himself. He had been in the section (No 40) since the re-organisation and his demeanour was perfectly rational. He had never previously complained of bullying. There was nothing as far as I could see to warrant one in the belief that any ill feeling was being shown toward him."

Account by Lieutenant Alexander Lorimer Kennedy:

Sapper Peter Lawrance's name was put on a Roll to attend Sweeper's Parade on 21st February, 1916. Lieutenant Alexander L. Kennedy noticed that Sapper Lawrance wasn't on Parade & asked him why. He stated he wanted to see Coulter. When asked by Lieutenant Kennedy why he wanted to see Coulter he replied *"the men wanted to make an end of him."* Sapper Lawrance was taken to Coulter who told him to *"pull himself together."* Sapper Lawrance was taken to Sergeant Goodman to put him on duty – Sweeper's Parade & *"to keep an eye on him to see that he didn't get into mischief."* Sergeant Goodman returned Sapper Lawrance to Lieutenant Kennedy & told Kennedy that Sapper Lawrance had said he was *"in trouble and the men were going to make an end of him."* Lieutenant Kennedy told Sapper Lawrance that he would take him to the doctor when he had finished issuing rifles. Sapper Lawrance was taken to see Captain Heggaton in the hospital between 3 & 3.15. *"Captain Heggaton spoke to him, felt his pulse, looked at his tongue; asked him what he had been drinking. He said he had been drinking spirits. An injection was made in the man's arm. The doctor said he could not keep him there and that he had better go to the Guard room."* Sapper Lawrance was taken immediately to Guard Room & the Sergeant of the Guard *"opened the door and put him in."*

Lieutenant Kennedy then went immediately & informed Lieutenant Grainger of the occurrence. Lieutenant Grainger made a note in his book & Lieutenant Kennedy left.

Report by 2nd Lieutenant John Orson Oldfield McArdell:

"I am Subaltern of the Guard on duty today, and went into the cells with the Officer of the day Lt Reid at 4.30 pm. The cells were to be cleaned out by order of the O.C. Troopship and my visit was a special one to see that order carried out, I found deceased hanging from the ceiling of the cells. I cut him down immediately. I and Lt Granger carried him out of the cells and started artificial respiration which was proceeded with until the arrival of the doctor, Capt Keggarton. I then returned to my own duties."

Report by 2nd Lieutenant William Wayland Grainger:

"At 3.30 pm today Lt Kennedy came to me being Subaltern of the Guard, and reported he had placed Sapper Peter Lawrance in the Guard room. He had handed him over to Sergt Sheriff. I saw the man immediately in the cells. I went in with Sergeant Sheriff and I spoke to the deceased, asked his name and how he felt. He told me his name. I didn't say much to him and went out. The sentry told me the deceased wanted a drink of water which I sent for and gave to him. The time ___ be about 3.35 pm. The next time I saw Lawrance was at 4 pm, while in company of Col Courtney, who was inspecting the cell. On instructions from Col Courtney requested the orderly officer to have the cell cleaned. The man was there then. His hand shook, but otherwise he seemed ____ . I saw no articles that called specially for ___ there being a few ___ in the cells. I saw no reason for the man being searched. On the contrary I

asked Lt Kennedy if the man would be likely to be troublesome and Lt Kennedy said no. Next I saw the deceased after Lt McArdell had cut him down. Lt McArdell and I both instructed the orderly officer to instantly bring the doctor. Lt McArdell and I lifted him out of the man's cell and at this moment the doctor arrived. I assisted doctor in artificial respiration until an ambulance man arrived."

Report by Lieutenant A. J. Hillman, Guard Commander, Ulysses 21-2-16:

At 4.30 pm Sapper Lawrance Peter of No 3 Company Mining Corps died by his own hand in the guard cells. Particulars are as follows:-

At 3.30 pm Lt Kennedy placed Sapper Lawrance in the cells of the advice of the M.O. who had previously given a hypodermic injection.

The detained man was received by Sergt Sheriff, Lt McArdell being at the time on the rounds of the sentries. At 4 pm Lt Grainger came on duty & visited Sapper Lawrance with O.C. Troop Ship who ordered cell to be cleaned. Lts Grainger & McArdell changed the ___ jointly at 4 pm. Lt Grainger having previously got into touch with Orderly Officer re cleaning cell. At 4.30 Lt McArdell with Orderly Officer & latter's fatigue men entered cell to clean it & found Lawrance hanging on a short piece of thin rope. Guard cell has been left intact & kept so since the occurrence.

Report by Captain Rupert Heggaton (Doctor):

"I saw this man Lawrance yesterday evening in the Guard Room about 8 o'clock pm. He said the men threatened to throw him overboard. He was very frightened, trembling, and was apparently suffering from the effects of drink. As the Guard room was very hot I got him put outside with 3 men to watch him. Before I left him there he attempted to run across to the railing. I left instructions that after he had had a spell in the cool he was to be returned to the Guard soon. I didn't see him again until this afternoon when Lieut Kennedy brought him to the hospital. He had asked Lieut Kennedy to join him in the Guard Rook, again; at about 3 o'clock pm. For that reason Lieut Kennedy brought him to me. He still said they were threatening to throw him overboard and _____. He admitted having had a large amount of drink on Saturday night and said he had had no sleep. I ordered him ¼ _____ hypodermica and ordered him removed to the Guard room. I was called to the Guard room at half past 4 and found him lying on the floor, almost asphyxiated. I performed artificial respiration and injected Strychnine but without avail. The patient died at about 5 o'clock pm. The cause of death in my opinion was asphyxiation. I saw the rope hanging from the beam from which he had been cut down. He was not quite in his right mind. The delusion that the men threatened to throw him overboard was evidence that he was in a state of Delirium Tremens."

[Several more witness reports were provided & are located in Service Record file of the late Sapper Peter Lawrance – all hand written.]

Mining Corps A.I.F.

Court of Inquiry into the death of Sapper Peter Lawrance, Broadmeadows 24/2/16

In response to questions on pages 1 and 4 the Court begs to submit the following answers:-

- 1:- Deceased was placed in the cells, at his own request, by Lieut. Kennedy at 3.35 pm on the 21/2/16.*
- 2:- No evidence could be obtained as to how deceased became possessed of the rope.*
- 3:- Deceased was not searched as he was not a prisoner.*
- 4:- Seen at 4 pm by inspecting rounds; condition apparently normal.*
- 5:- No special steps were taken to have him under supervision as deceased was not a prisoner.*
- 6:- No indications were given at any time during his confinement that he was of a suicidal tendency.*
- 7:- Medical Officer was informed immediately the body was cut down.*
- 8:- In the judgement of the Court the officers and men concerned carried out their duties correctly and no one could be stated to be blameworthy.*

The Court finds that Sapper Peter Lawrance came by his death at his own hands by asphyxiation by hanging by the neck in a cell, where he was confined at his own request and that his action was due to a mental depression caused by excessive drinking.

Colonel (signature illegible), O.C. Troops "Ulysses" A 38 wrote to Headquarters 3rd Military District on 25th February, 1916 with the following: *"Forwarded. This appears to be clearly a case of suicide and to the man's mental condition brought on by excessive drinking prior to embarkation. I visited the cells about 4 pm on the date in question but saw nothing in or about them with which deceased could inflict injury upon himself, I also saw and spoke to Lawrence; he appeared to be rational and was very quiet. I concur in finding of Court."*

A telegram was sent on 21st February, 1916 from "Ulysses" to Navy Office advising that *"Sapper LAWRENCE died carrying body on arrange burial on arrival five a.m. Tuesday."* The telegram was forwarded to The Secretary, Department of Defence by George L. Macandie, Naval Secretary.

A Secret Telegram was sent from Navy Office on 22nd February, 1916 via radio to Transport "Ulysses": *"You are to commit body of Lawrence to deep before entering port and berth at Railway Pier, Port Melbourne, at 7.30."*

Sapper Peter Lawrance is commemorated on the Hollybrook Memorial, Southampton, Hampshire, England as he has no grave. His death is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

A letter was prepared by Base Records on 15th February, 1923 for Mrs M. Weir, 184 Charles St, North Perth, West Australia (sister of the late Sapper Peter Lawrance) which reads: *"In order that I may be in a position to rightly dispose of certain war mementos issuable in respect of the late No. 1231 Sapper P. Lawrance, Mining Corps, I should be glad if you would advise me whether his parents are living, and if so, their present address. If they are deceased, please furnish the name and address of the soldier's eldest brother..."* Marked in pencil on this letter is *"Plaque not to be issued 16/2/23"*

Sapper Peter Lawrance was not eligible for any War Medals on account of his suicide. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also normally sent to the next of kin but in this case the Memorial Plaque stamp has *"Pending – application from NOK."* There is no reference to the Memorial Scroll.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Sapper Peter Lawrance – service number 1231, of Australian Engineers. No family details are listed.

Sapper P. Lawrance is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 27.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

P. Lawrance is remembered on the Western Australia State War Memorial which is located at the top of Kings Park and Botanic Garden escarpment, ANZAC Bluff, Fraser Avenue, Perth, Western Australia. The memorial was developed around an 18 metre tall obelisk as the principal feature, which is almost a replica of the Australian Imperial Force Memorials erected in France and Belgium.

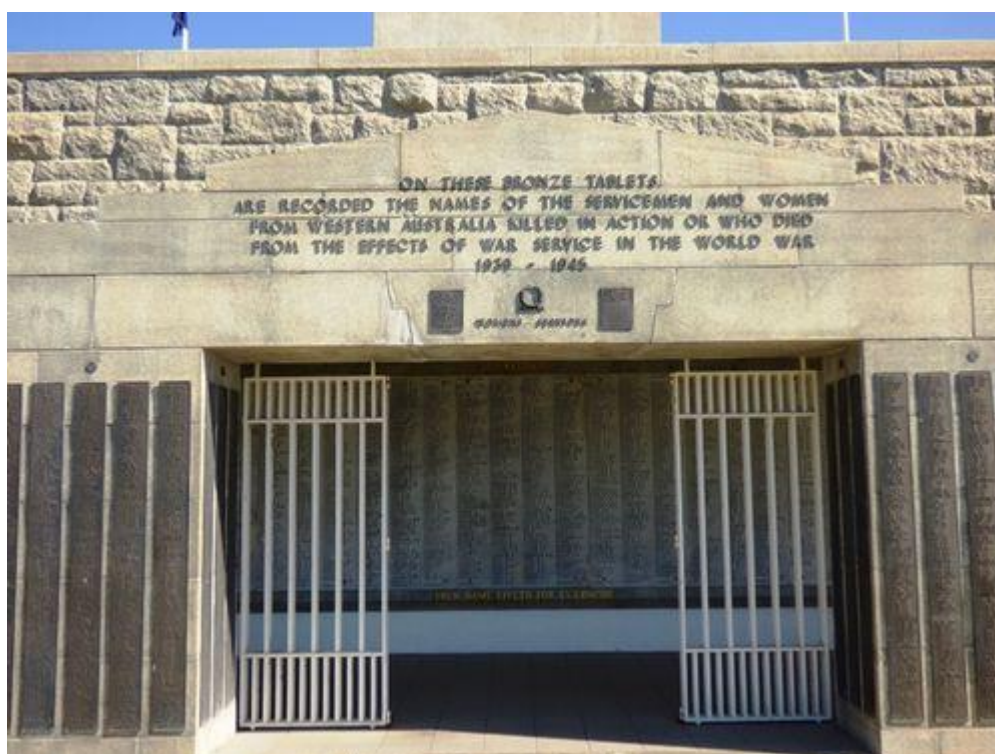
The heavy concrete foundations are supplemented by heavy brick walls which enclose an inner chamber or crypt. The walls surrounding the crypt are covered with The Roll of Honour; marble tablets which list under their units the names of more than 7,000 members of the services killed in action or as a result of World War One.



Western Australia State War Memorial Cenotaph, Kings Park (above)

& (below) The Crypt with the Roll of Honour names

(Photos from Monument Australia – Kent Watson/Sandra Tattersall/Graeme Saunders)

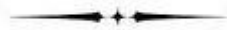




Corps of Engineers Panel (Photo courtesy of Gordon Stuart)

(48 pages of Sapper Peter Lawrance'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



Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for cemeteries and memorials in 23,000 locations, in 153 countries. In all 1.7 million men and women from the Commonwealth forces from WWI and WWII have been honoured and commemorated in perpetuity.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, as part of its mandate, is responsible for commemorating all Commonwealth war dead individually and equally. To this end, the war dead are commemorated by name on a headstone, at an identified site of a burial, or on a memorial. War dead are commemorated uniformly and equally, irrespective of military or civil rank, race or creed.

Not all service personnel have a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. In some instances the relative chose to have their own memorial/headstone placed on the deceased's grave. These private headstones are not maintained by the CWGC as they have no jurisdiction to maintain them.

Hollybrook Memorial, Southampton, Hampshire, England

The Hollybrook Memorial is situated in Southampton (Hollybrook) Cemetery behind the plot of First World War graves near the main entrance.

The Hollybrook Memorial commemorates by name almost 1,900 servicemen and women of the Commonwealth land and air forces* whose graves are not known, many of whom were lost in transports or other vessels torpedoed or mined in home waters (*Officers and men of the Commonwealth's navies who have no grave but the sea are commemorated on memorials elsewhere). The memorial also bears the names of those who were lost or buried at sea, or who died at home but whose bodies could not be recovered for burial. Almost one third of the names on the memorial are those of officers and men of the South African Native Labour Corps, who died when the troop transport Mendi sank in the Channel following a collision on 21 February 1917. Other vessels sunk with significant loss of life were: HS Anglia, a hospital ship sunk by mine off Dover on 17 November 1915. SS Citta Di Palermo, an Italian transport carrying Commonwealth troops, sunk by mine off Brindisi on 8 January 1916. In rescuing survivors, two Royal Naval Otranto drifters were themselves mined and blown up. HMTs Donegal and Warilda, ambulance transports torpedoed and sunk between Le Havre and Southampton on 17 April 1917 and 3 August 1918. HS Glenart Castle, a hospital ship torpedoed and sunk off Lundy on 26 February 1918. SS Galway Castle, torpedoed and sunk in the Atlantic on 12 September 1918. RMS Leinster, the Irish mail boat, torpedoed and sunk in the Irish Sea on 10 October 1918. Among those commemorated on the Hollybrook Memorial is Field Marshall Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, who died when the battle cruiser HMS Hampshire was mined and sunk off Scapa Flow on 5 June 1916.

The memorial was designed by T. Newham and unveiled by Sir William Robertson on 10 December 1930.

There are approximately 162 Australian World War 1 Service Personnel commemorated on the Hollybrook Memorial, Southampton, Hampshire, England.

(Information & photos from CWGC)





Cross of Sacrifice



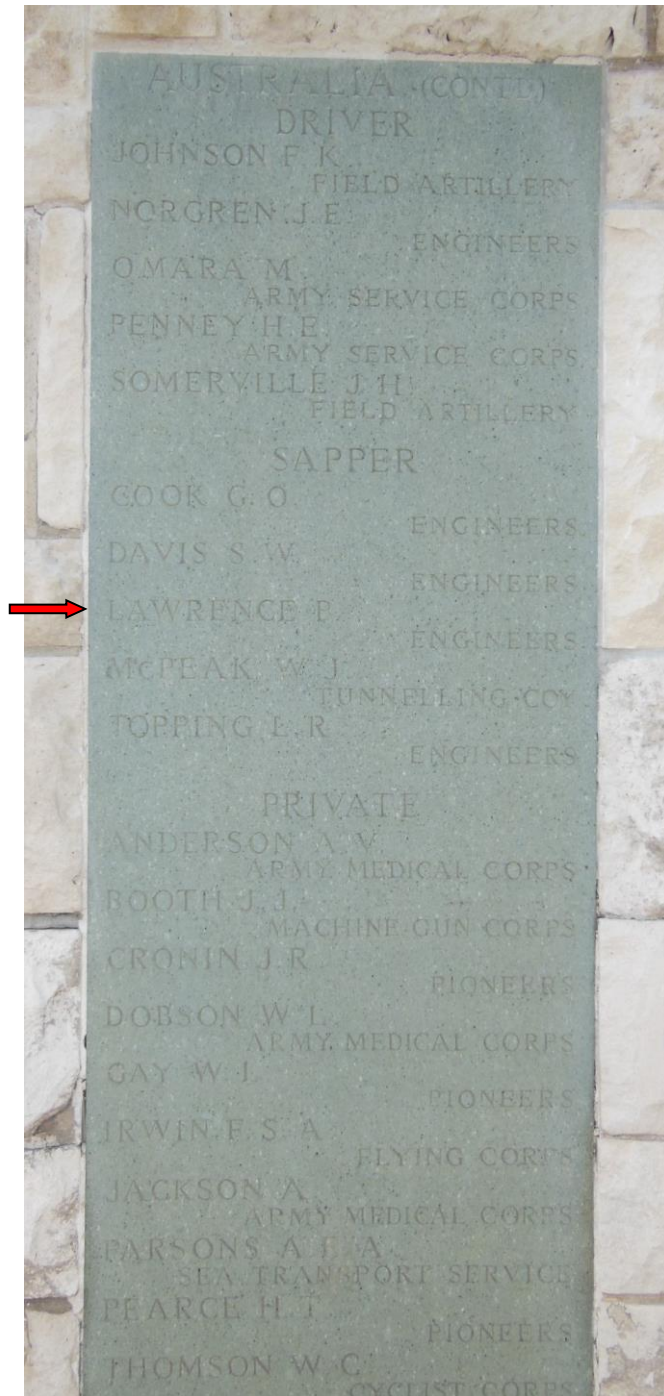
Name Panels behind Cross of Sacrifice



CWGC Graves in Hollybrook Cemetery with Cross of Sacrifice & Hollybrook Memorial

(Photo from CWGC)

Photo of Sapper P. Lawrence's name (note the incorrect spelling on the Panel) on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Hollybrook Memorial, Southampton, Hampshire, England.



(Photo by julia&keld – Find a Grave)

