

**Camberwell Old Cemetery,
London, England
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



2642 PRIVATE

C. LAWRENCE

9TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

22ND SEPTEMBER, 1917

Conrad LAWRENCE

Conrad Lawrence was born on 26th November, 1876 at Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, England to parents George & Emma Lawrence (nee Sparks). He was baptised on 21st January, 1877 at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, England.

The 1881 England Census recorded Conrad Lawrence as a 3 year old son-in-law (should be step-son as Conrad's mother Emma Lawrence had married Henry Sage in March quarter, 1881 in Birmingham, Warwickshire) living with his remarried mother – Emma Sage (aged 39, born Cross Hands, Gloucester) & her new husband – Henry Sage (Cooper, aged 28, born London, Middlesex). Conrad was the youngest of five (siblings) son-in-laws/daughter-in-laws of Henry Sage – George F. Lawrence (Late Scholar, aged 12, born Burton on Trent, Staffs), Edgar Lawrence (Scholar, aged 10, born Birmingham, Warwick), Gertrude Lawrence (Scholar, aged 7, born Four Oaks, Warwick), Rose Grace Lawrence (Scholar, aged 5, born Stratford-on-Avon, Warwick) then Conrad.

The 1891 England Census recorded Conrad Lawrence as a 14 year old Errand Boy, living with his stepfather, mother & family at 58 Musfid Rd, West Battersea, London, England. His stepfather was listed as Henry Sage (Brewer's Cooper, aged 38) & his mother as Emma Sage (aged 51). Conrad was one of three children listed in this household – Thomas E. Lawrence (General Labourer, aged 20, born Goster Green, Birmingham) then Conrad & Mary Ann Sage (Half sister to Conrad, Scholar, aged 5, born Battersea, Surrey).

Conrad Lawrence joined Gordon Highlanders when he was 18 years of age. He was issued a service number of 4244.

The 1911 England Census recorded Conrad Lawrence as a 33 year old, Stoker boarding at 7A Treport Street, Wandsworth, London, England which was a 4 roomed dwelling. Head of the house was John Henry Emmerson (Stoker, aged 54, born Battersea) & his wife Catherine Ann Emmerson (aged 44, born Camberwell). Catherine & John Emmerson had been married for 29 years & had seven children (one who had since died). Only one of their children was listed in this household – James Emmerson (At School, aged 13, born Battersea). Also listed was John Welch (At school, aged 6, born Chelsea) – grandson of John Henry Emmerson. (**From information provided by Conrad Lawrence when he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in 1914 – Catherine Ann Emmerson was Conrad's sister).

Conrad Lawrence stated he was aged 36 years & 11 months, single, & a Sail Maker when he enlisted in Sydney, New South Wales on 21st October, 1914 (date as per Attestation Papers) with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Roman Catholic & his next of kin was listed as his sister – Mrs C. A. Emerson, 7A Treport Street, Garret Lane, Wandsworth, London, England. Conrad Lawrence was 5 feet 8 inches, 10 stone 2 lb & his chest measurement was 35 – 37 ½ inches. He had a fresh complexion, brown eyes & dark brown hair. His distinctive Marks were listed as: vaccinated. Tattoos – dancing girl & flags right forearm. Dancing girl on left forearm. Scar on right bicep. Conrad Lawrence stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served 12 years with Ordnance Corps in England.

Private Conrad Lawrence was posted to 8th A.A.S.C. (Australian Army Service Corps) from 24th September, 1914.

[Note: There is no further information in the Service Record file as to the outcome of this enlistment]

Conrad Lawrence stated he was aged 36 years & 2 months, single & a Platelayer when he enlisted at Enogerra (as per Attestation Papers), Queensland on 13th April, 1915 (date as per Embarkation Roll, however Attestation Papers have date as 13th August, 1915) with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Roman Catholic & his next of kin was listed as his sister – Mrs C. A. Emerson, 7A Treport Street, Garret Lane, Wandsworth, London, England. Conrad Lawrence was 5 feet 9 inches, 11 stone & his chest measurement was 39 inches. He had a fresh complexion, brown eyes & dark brown hair. His distinctive Marks were listed as: Shrapnel wound right upper arm. Tattoo marks right forearm. Rifle shot wound left Thigh. 7 vaccination scars left arm 3 vaccination scars right arm. Conrad Lawrence stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served 12 years with Gordon Highlanders (time expired).

Private Conrad Lawrence was posted to 8th Reinforcements of 9th Battalion (no date recorded).

M. McGrath, Hazelbrook, Clifton St, Petrie Terrace, Brisbane, wrote to the "Commander of the 8th of the 9th" on 12th July, 1915 advising "I am sorry to inform you that Sgt Lawrance is unable to return to Camp, on account of illness, you will find enclosed Doctor's certificate." The Certificate stated that "Sergeant C. Lawrence" was suffering from Influenza.

Private Conrad Lawrence was written up for a Charge on 3rd August, 1915 while posted at Frazer's Hill for being Absent without Leave from 17th July, 1915 to 1st August, 1915 – 16 days. He was awarded a forfeiture of pay of 8 days.

Private Conrad Lawrence, Service number 2642, embarked from Brisbane, Queensland on HMAT *Kyarra (A55)* on 16th August, 1915 with the 9th Infantry Battalion, 8th Reinforcements. He was written up on 1st September, 1915 while on board HMAT *Kyarra (A55)* for "Conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline in that he at about 9.30 pm was found helplessly drunk on the after deck." Private Lawrence was awarded 3 days Detention.

Private Conrad Lawrence joined 9th Battalion at Gallipoli on 18th November, 1915 (refer information sheet for Medal Board).

Private Conrad Lawrence was transferred to Hospital at Malta on 29th November, 1915 on Hospital Ship *Gloucester Castle* due to an old wound on right Arm & paralysis of right hand. He was admitted to Tigne Hospital, Malta the same day. Private Lawrence was discharged to duty from Hospital on 6th March, 1916.

9th Battalion

The 9th Battalion was among the first infantry units raised for the AIF during the First World War. It was the first battalion recruited in Queensland, and with the 10th, 11th and 12th Battalions it formed the 3rd Brigade.

.....

After the withdrawal from Gallipoli, the battalion returned to Egypt. It was split to help form the 49th Battalion and bought up to strength with reinforcements. In March 1916 the battalion sailed for France and the Western Front.....

(Battalion information from The Australian War Memorial)

Private Conrad Lawrence reported for duty in dockyard at Malta from 6th March, 1916. He was taken on strength as Hammerman in Dockyard at Malta on 28th March, 1916. He ceased to be employed in Dockyard on 16th April, 1916 & was discharged to Detention.

Private Conrad Lawrence was written up for a Crime on 17th April, 1916 while at Malta: "1. Insubordinate conduct towards a R.S.M. when appearing before his C.O. 2. Escaping from confinement by breaking out of Guard Detention Room at about 7.40 pm and being found in the canteen at 8.30 pm drunk." He was awarded 28 days detention by Commanding Officer on 19th April, 1916.

Private Conrad Lawrence was charged on 20th May, 1916 while at Malta: "1. Absent from Tattoo to 6.30 am on 13th May, 1916 (8 hours 50 mins). 2. Being on licensed premises – viz the Victoria Music Hall Public House, Strada Stretta Valletta about 4.50 pm contrary to Fortress Order No 154 D/20/1/16 on 17th May, 1916." He was awarded 14 days Field Punishment No 2 & "forfeited 1 days pay under R.W. & 4 days close arrest awaiting trial from 15/5/16 to 19/5/16"

Private Conrad Lawrence embarked from Malta on 28th May, 1916 for Egypt per *Franconia*. He disembarked at Alexandria from Malta on 31st May, 1916 & was posted to 13th Training Battalion at Tel-el-Kebir on 3rd June, 1916 from Details Camp.

Private Conrad Lawrence was transferred to 3rd Training Battalion at Rollestone, Wiltshire, England on 29th June, 1916 from 13th Training Battalion.

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 Conrad Lawrence was written up while posted at 3rd Training Battalion for "Punishment. Disobedience of orders. 21 days Detention, Forfeits 14 days pay..." (no date recorded)

Private Conrad Lawrence was reported as a Deserter from 24th August, 1916.

Private Conrad Lawrence was struck off strength Malta Dockyards on 3rd September, 1916.

Private Conrad Lawrence was marched in to 3rd Training Battalion, Durrington Camp No. 3, Wiltshire, England on 6th December, 1916 under escort – Deserter.

A District Court Martial was held at 3rd Training Battalion, Larkhill, Wiltshire, England on 23rd December, 1916: Crime - Perham Downs on 26th July, 1916 A.W.L. (Absent without Leave) *“in that he at Perham Downs on the morning of 26th July, 1916 absented himself without leave until apprehended by Civil Police at Wandsworth on 1st December, 1916.*

Pleading – Guilty. Finding – Guilty. Sentence – 12 months Detention 23.12.16. Confirmation 23.12.16. I confirm the sentence & finding of the Court and remit 6 months of the sentence, Sgd Newton J. Moore, Brig. Gen. G.O.C. A.I.F. Dept in UK. 26.12.16. In Custody – Awaiting trial 21 days. Total forfeiture 332 days.”

Private Conrad Lawrence was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment with hard labour from 23rd December, 1916 & forfeited 152 days' pay,

Private Conrad Lawrence was reported A.W.L. (Absent without Leave) on 23rd February, 1917 from Durrington Camp having escaped escort. *“Investigations being made re AWL”* from 23rd February, 1917.

Administrative Headquarters, London wrote to The Chief Paymaster regarding No. 2642 Private C. Lawrence, 9th Battalion on 27th October, 1917: *“File passed to you for notation:-*

- (1) That Lawrence was employed with Naval Authorities at His Majesty's Dockyard, Malta, from 28.3.16 to 16.4.16.*
- (2) That Lawrence escaped from escort, 3rd Training Battalion, on 23.2.17, and is still absent, according to Records.*

Action has been taken by this Office to have this soldier declared an illegal absentee by Court of Enquiry.”

The Pay Department, Victoria Barracks, Brisbane, Queensland wrote to Base Records on 6th November, 1917 regarding No. 2642 Private Conrad Lawrence, 8th Reinforcements, 9th Battalion: *“With reference to the abovenamed soldier who was awarded 28 days' detention on 19.4.16, vide B.R. List No. 61/42 and posted as a deserter on 24.8.16, vide B.R.L. No. 75/29, I shall be glad to know if you can furnish any further particulars regarding this man.”*

Base Records replied on 15th November, 1917, on the original letter stating *“...abovenamed soldier was sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labour and forfeits 152 days' pay on 23.12.16; no later information has been received.”*

Private Conrad Lawrence was declared an illegal absentee by Court of Inquiry held at Laiden on 11th July, 1918.

“On receipt of later information recall file 5639/1/8 for action. Sworn statement made by his brother on 2/12/19 that Pte Lawrence died at the Constance Rd Workhouse Camberwell about the latter end of September 1917.”

Private Conrad Lawrence died on 22nd September, 1917 at Camberwell Workhouse, Constance Road, London, England from Heart failure due to excessive Alcoholism.

[NOTE: The Australian War Memorial & the Commonwealth War Graves Commission both have the date of death of Private Conrad Lawrence incorrectly listed as 29th September, 1917. Both AWM & CWGC were advised with proof of date of death of 22nd September, 1917 at the time of researching – September, 2023]

***[Update: The Australian War Memorial have confirmed that the correct date of death is 22 September, 1917]*

A death for Conrad Lawrence, aged 42, was registered in the September quarter, 1917 in the district of Camberwell, London, England.

Base Records wrote to The Master, Camberwell Workhouse, Constance Road, London on 15th March, 1920 regarding No. 2642 Private Conrad Lawrence, 9th Battalion, A.I.F. (deceased): *"The above named soldier is reported as an illegal absentee from the A.I.F. since 23.2.17. It has recently come to notice that he died at your workhouse on 22.9.17 from heart failure due to excessive alcoholism. It would be appreciated if this Office could be advised as to the cemetery and number of grave in which this soldier is buried. Please state whether this soldier is buried in a common grave or a separate single grave."*


Mr W. A. Flint, Master, Parish of St. Giles, Camberwell, Constance Road Institution replied to Base Records on 19th March, 1920 advising *"...this soldier was interred at Forest Hill Cemetery in a Common grave, No. 24666 – Sq.100."*

Base Records wrote to the Officer in Charge, Australia Graves Services, Australia House, Strand, W.C.2 (London) in March, 1920 regarding No. 2642 Private Conrad Lawrence, 9th Battalion, A.I.F. (deceased) : *"The above named soldier was reported as an illegal absentee as from 23.2.17. It has since been brought to notice that Pte Lawrence died from heart failure due to excessive alcoholism on 22.9.17 at the Camberwell Workhouse, Constance Road, London, S.E. He is reported to be buried in a common grave – No. 24666, square 100 – at Forest Hill Cemetery. The Commandant has directed that this body shall be exhumed and reburied in a separate single grave. For your information and necessary action please."*

The letter below was located in the Service Record file for Private William Tower, 2772, 29th Battalion, but also relates to Private Conrad Lawrence explaining that his body, which had been buried in a common grave, had been exhumed & was buried in Grave No. 26558 in Camberwell Borough Cemetery.

P/NRE.

Tel. No. City 1740. Ext. _____
Telegraphic Address:
"GROTONATE, ESTRAND, LONDON,"



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Any further communication should
be addressed to
OFFICER IN CHARGE,
AUSTRALIAN GRAVES SERVICES,
and the following No. quoted:
A.G.S. U.K. Section.


COMMONWEALTH OFFICES,
AUSTRALIA HOUSE,
STRAND,
LONDON, W.C.2

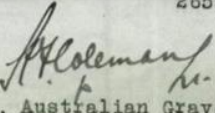
17th November, 1920.

O.C., Records,
A.I.F. Headquarters,
Australia House.

I have to inform you that the late No. 2772. Pte.
W. Tower, 29th Battalion, and No. 2642. Pte. C. Lawrence,
9th Battalion, were declared illegal absentees and particulars
were received at this Office that these two soldiers were
buried in Hammersmith and Camberwell Borough Cemeteries
respectively, in common graves.
These remains have now been exhumed and
particulars are given herewith.

No. 2772. Pte. W. Tower. 29th Bn.	Hammersmith Cemetery. Grave No. 30. Section N.58.
No. 2642. Pte. C. Lawrence. 9th Bn.	Camberwell Borough Cemetery. Grave No. 26558.




Major.
G.O., Australian Graves Services.

Private Conrad Lawrence was originally buried in Forest Hill Cemetery in a common Grave. His body was exhumed & reinterred in Camberwell Borough Cemetery.

His place of burial is now recorded by the CWGC as Camberwell Old Cemetery, London, England & he is remembered on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Screen Wall – 85. 26558 as he does not have a headstone.

Mrs L. Gray, "Bellevue" Mable Street, Sth Brisbane, wrote to Base Records on 2nd January, 1918 with the following letter: *"Would you kindly forward me any news there is of No 2642 Pte C. Lawrence 8th Rfts 9th Battalion as I have had letters returned saying that he was not with his Battalion & I am very anxious to know what has become of him & to get his correct address if possible, trusting you will be able to let me have same & an early reply."*

Base Records replied to Mrs L. Gray on 9th January, 1918 stating *"...no recent report of casualty ahs been received in connection with No. 2642 Private C. Lawrence, 9th Battalion, and in the absence of same it can only be assumed he is with his Unit. There appears to be no reason why letters should not reach him safely if addressed as under:- No. 2642 Private C. Larence, 9th Battalion, Australia Imperial Force, ABROAD."*

Mrs L. Gray, "Bellevue" Mable Street, Sth Brisbane, replied to Base Records on 15th January, 1918 advising *"I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 9th instant. And since last writing, I have had 18teen letters returned with the correct address on, I am enclosing one, so that you can see such is the case & I hope that you will be able to solve the mystery which seems to be about him. The last letter I received from Pte Lawrence was from Perham Downs Camp, England, dated June 10th, 1916, when he was waiting to be sent to France & since then nothing seem's to have been heard or seen of him. It may seem very forward of me, but could you find out who the Australian Lieutenant C. Lawrence is, who has been awarded the Military Cross in the New Year's Honours of January the 3rd, I myself think it is Pte Lawrence as he has not been with his Battalion & used to be an Imperial Sgt-Major drill instructor & was a Sgt-Major here for a long while before he went away. I will be much obliged if you could let me have an reply at an early date & if the information I require is not to be had at Melbourne Headquarters, then would you kindly forward Head-quarter's address London."*

Base Records replied to Mrs L. Gray on 18th January, 1918 advising *".. the envelope enclosed by you has been forwarded to A.I.F. Headquarters, London, for investigation regarding the whereabouts of No. 2642 Private C. Lawrence, 9th Battalion. The letter enclosed in the envelope is returned herewith. The Officer referred to in the newspapers of 3rd instant as having been awarded the Military Cross is apparently Lieutenant Cyril Lawrence, 2nd Field Company Engineers."*

Base Records wrote to Officer in Charge of Records, A.I.F. Headquarters, London, on 21st January, 1918: *"The attached envelope which, according to the records, is correctly addressed to No. 2642 Private C. Lawrence, 9th Battalion, is forwarded for favour of investigation, and with a view to ensuring the safe delivery of future mail matter."*

The Director Army Postal Service, A.I.F., London, replied to Base Records on 20th March, 1918 advising *"With reference to your V.E.B of the 21st January last, regarding mail addressed to No. 2642 Private C. Lawrence, 9th Battalion, which had been returned to the sender, I have to inform you that enquiries have been made and it has been ascertained that Private Lawrence is an illegal absentee and has been so since the 23rd February 1917. His mail being undeliverable, was therefore in due course returned to the senders."*

Miss E. Black, c/o Mrs A. Blomfield, Bariveloe, Miriam Cale, Queensland, wrote to Base Records on 14th May, 1919 advising: *"Last January 12 months, you forwarded to Headquarters England, an envelope addressed to No 2642 Pte C. Larence, 8th Reinforcements of 9th Battalion, which had been returned to me unclaimed & as he had not been reported missing, wounded, or killed, you promised to find out his whereabouts & to let me know & as I have not heard from you. I make the request again, that you forward me any information you have concerning Pte Lawrence or I shall have to write to Headquarters England."*

Base Records replied to Miss E. Black on 23rd May, 1919 with the following letter: *"I have to acknowledge receipt of your communication of the 14th instant, concerning No. 2642 Private C. Lawrence, 9th Battalion, and to inform you*

the Military authorities abroad advise that this soldier has been illegally absent since 23rd February, 1917, and is still so. This was the reason why his mails were returned to the senders."

Thomas Lawrence signed the statement below on 2nd December, 1919 concerning his brother - Private Conrad Lawrence (witnessed by J Rook (?) S/ Sgt):

STATEMENT RE DEATH OF No. 2642 Pte Conrad Lawrence, 9th Battalion, A.I.F.

I, Thomas _____ Sydney Lawrence of 36 Tanswell Street, Waterloo Road, Waterloo, S.E.1. am the brother of No. 2642 Pte Conrad Lawrence who served in the 9th Battalion, of the Australian Imperial Force. I last saw him alive about February, 1917. He was then wearing the uniform of a soldier of the Australian Imperial Force. I did not hear of or see my brother from that time until one Sunday morning about the latter end of September 1917, when my wife showed me a copy of the South London press newspaper where I read that he had died at the Constance Road Workhouse, Camberwell. The Newspaper announcement read as follows:

- *"Shocking Story from Camberwell*

On Friday Mr G. P. Wyatt held an inquest on Conrad Lawrence (42) of no occupation lately living at 45 Vestry Road, Camberwell.

Isabella Wilson Cowdery, said that she had lived with deceased 7 months. He had been drinking very heavily. On Monday morning September 17, when she returned from her work at the Arsenal she was told that he had been taken to Constance Road Workhouse.

Ada Scarsbrook, the landlady said that latterly she had been afraid of her life owing to deceased ravings. Bottles and bottles of rum were brought into the house for the man's consumption. He had threatened to set the house on fire, and would fight imaginary men under the bed with a poker. He was also under the delusion that there was a knife in his cup of tea. He was getting nearly blind and would crawl about the place on all fours. On the morning in question he fell downstairs, she became so terrified that she went to the Relieving Officer and had him removed. Dr E. H. Cott the Medical Officer at the Institution stated that deceased on admission was suffering from Delirium Tremens and was in a collapsed state. He gradually became worse and died on Saturday for Syncope consequent upon chronic alcoholism. The Coroner commented of the terrible nature of the case and the Jury returned a verdict according to the Medical evidence."

Next day Monday I went to the address given there and saw his landlady. On showing her a photograph of my brother and asking if she knew who it was she said "yes! It is Mr Lawrence who has just died and who was buried on the previous Saturday." I was then shown to the room he was living in and there saw the woman with whom he had been living. I also saw his South African war medals there, which I had framed for him. I am sure that the Conrad Lawrence named in the South London Press Newspaper is my brother and that he is identical with No.2642 Pte Conrad Lawrence, 9th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, whom I now understand has been an illegal absentee from the Australian Imperial Force since 23.2.17.

The Death Section sent a memo on 2nd December, 1919 (assuming it was sent to Base Records) advising that the Pay Book of No. 2642 Private Conrad Lawrence, 9th Battalion, A.I.F. (deceased) had been received from Thomas Edgar Sydney Lawrence, 38 Tanswell Street, Waterloo Road, Waterloo, S.E.1, London.

Base Records wrote to His Majesty's Coroner, Camberwell, London on 27th February, 1920 regarding No. 2642 Private Conrad Lawrence, 9th Battalion, A.I.F. (deceased) : *"The above named soldier has been an illegal absentee from the A.I.F. since 23.2.17. It has recently come to notice that he died at 45, Vestry Road, Camberwell, about September, 1917, and that an inquest was held to consider the circumstances surrounding his death. In order that the records held by this Office may be amended, it would be appreciated if a copy of the depositions taken at the inquest could be forwarded please. If you also have any information as to the burial place of Private Lawrence, will you kindly advise this Office."*

G. P Wyatt, H.M. Coroner, 56 Tulse Hill, S.W.2. replied to Base Records on 5th March, 1920 advising that their letter of 28th February had been sent on to him. *"As it is not my practice to furnish copies or notes taken at an Inquest I am*

sorry I cannot oblige you. I have had the papers looked up & find that deceased died at Camberwell Workhouse, Constance Road, S.E. on 22nd Sept, 1917 from "Heart failure due to excessive alcoholism" he had been taken to the workhouse from 45 Vestry Road under a Lunacy order. I am unable to inform you where he was buried, probably the Master of the Workhouse might be able to tell you."

Base Records replied to G. P Wyatt, H.M. Coroner, on 15th March, 1920: *"Receipt is acknowledged of your letter on the 5th inst., with regard to the above named deceased member of the A.I.F. It is desired to thank you for the information supplied. It is pointed out that in the case of a Coroner's Inquest being held on any deceased member of the A.I.F. it is customary for a copy of the depositions taken as such inquest to be forwarded to these headquarters. A copy of same is absolutely essential in order to complete the records of the soldier concerned. Under these circumstances it is again requested that a copy of the depositions be now forwarded."*

G. P Wyatt, H.M. Coroner, 56 Tulse Hill, S.W.2. replied to Base Records on 17th March, 1920 regarding Conrad Lawrence: *"I am in receipt of your letter of yesterday herein and under the circumstances will deviate from my usual practice and have a copy of the Depositions made for you. On receipt of P. Order for 21/- I will have the papers looked up and a copy made."*

Base Records replied to G. P Wyatt, H.M. Coroner, on 20th March, 1920 advising: *"Receipt is acknowledged of your letter of the 17th inst., stating that you will prepare a copy of the depositions taken at the inquest of the above-named deceased member of the A.I.F. on receipt of the sum of £1.1.0. A cheque for this amount is being forwarded to you under separate cover..."*

G. P Wyatt, H.M. Coroner, replied to Base Records on 23rd March, 1920 advising that the letter of 20th had been received & a cheque had also been received *"...and herewith send you copy of the deposition taken at the Inquest on 28th September, 1917."*

Base Records wrote to Chief Paymaster, A.I.F. Headquarters, London on 15th March, 1920 regarding No. 2642 Private Conrad Lawrence, 9th Battalion, A.I.F. (deceased) : *"Information has now been received that the above named soldier who was reported as an illegal absentee on 23.2.17 died at Camberwell Workhouse on 22.9.17. The attached pay book received in this Office is passed to you please."*

Private Conrad Lawrence was discharged from the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.) in England on 1st April, 1920 have been illegally absent from London since 23rd February, 1917. He died whilst illegally absent on 22nd September, 1917.

The District Accounts Office, Victoria Barracks, Brisbane, Queensland, wrote to Base Records on 23rd August, 1920 requesting that a Certificate in connection with the death of the late No. 2642, Private C. Lawrence, 9th Battalion be furnished to the Public Curator, Brisbane.

Base Records replied to The Public Curator, Brisbane, on 31st August, 1920 enclosing a Certificate of Report of Death of the late No. 2642 Private Conrad Lawrence.

Private Conrad Lawrence would normally have been entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal, however due to him being declared an illegal absentee he automatically forfeited his right to receive the medals.

PRECIS OF SERVICE OF NO. 2642 Pte. C. LAWRENCE. 9/Battalion.

For the information of the Medal Board

16. 8.15 Embarked for active service. *MALTA.*
18.11.15 Joined unit, Gallipoli.
29.11.15 To hospital (old wound R. arm & paralysed R. hand).
19. 4.16 Awarded 28 days detention for (1). Insubordinate conduct. (2). Escaping from confinement. (3). Drunk.
28. 5.16 Embarked for Egypt.
31. 5.16 Dis-embarked Alexandria.
3. 6.16 Awarded 14 days F. P. No. 2. for (1). A. W. L. on 20.5.16 (2). Disobeying orders.
29. 6.16 Transferred to England.
23.12.16 D. C. M/ Charge:- A. W. L. from 26.7-1.12.16 Found Guilty and sentenced to 12 months detention. Sentence confirmed but 6 months remitted.
23. 2.17 Escaped from escort. Declared an illegal absentee. Sworn statement made by his brother on 2.12.19 that Pte. LAWRENCE died at the Constance Road, Workhouse Camberwell, about the latter end of September 1917, from heart failure due to excessive alcoholism.

AUTOMATICALLY FORFEITS

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Conrad Lawrence – service number 2642, of 9th Battalion, Australian Infantry. No family details are listed.

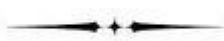
Private C. Lawrence is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 56.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(83 pages of Private Conrad Lawrence'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

SHOCKING STORY FROM VESTRY ROAD, CAMBERWELL

At Newington, Mr G. P. Wyatt, Coroner, held an inquest on the body of Conrad Lawrence, aged 42 years, of no occupation, lately living at 45, Vestry-road, Camberwell.

Isabella Wilson Cowdery said that she had lived with deceased seven months; he had been drinking very heavily. On Monday morning, the 17th ult., when she returned from her work at the Arsenal, she was told that he had been taken to Constance-road Workhouse.

Ada Scarsbrook, the landlady, said that lately she had been afraid of her life owing to deceased's ravings. Bottles and bottles of rum were brought into the house for the man's consumption. He had threatened to set the house on fire, and would fight imaginary men under the bed with a poker. He was also under the delusion that there was a knife in his cup of tea.

The Coroner: Raving mad, eh?

Witness: He was getting nearly blind and would crawl about the place on all fours. On the Monday in question he fell downstairs. She became so terrified that she went to the relieving officer and had deceased removed.

Dr E. H. Gott, medical officer at the above institution, stated that deceased on admission was suffering from delirium tremens consequent upon chronic alcoholism.

By the Coroner: Deceased told witness that he had been drinking heavily for some considerable time.

The Coroner commented upon the terrible nature of the case, and the jury returned a verdict according to the medical evidence.

(The Southwark & Bermondsey Recorder And South London Gazette, England – Friday 5 October, 1917)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

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.

Private C. Lawrence does not have a headstone but is instead named on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Screen Wall.

Camberwell Old Cemetery, London, England

This cemetery contains 291 First World War burials. The war graves plot is in the north-east corner of the cemetery and contains two screen walls. One commemorates almost 160 casualties buried in the plot, the other bears the names of those buried in the remaining war graves scattered throughout the cemetery that could not be individually marked.

The war graves plot also contains a group of special memorials to the 14 casualties of the Second World War buried in the cemetery.

(Information from CWGC)



Entrance to Camberwell Old Cemetery (above) & **CWGC Screen Wall** (below) (Photos from Find a Grave – Julia&keld)



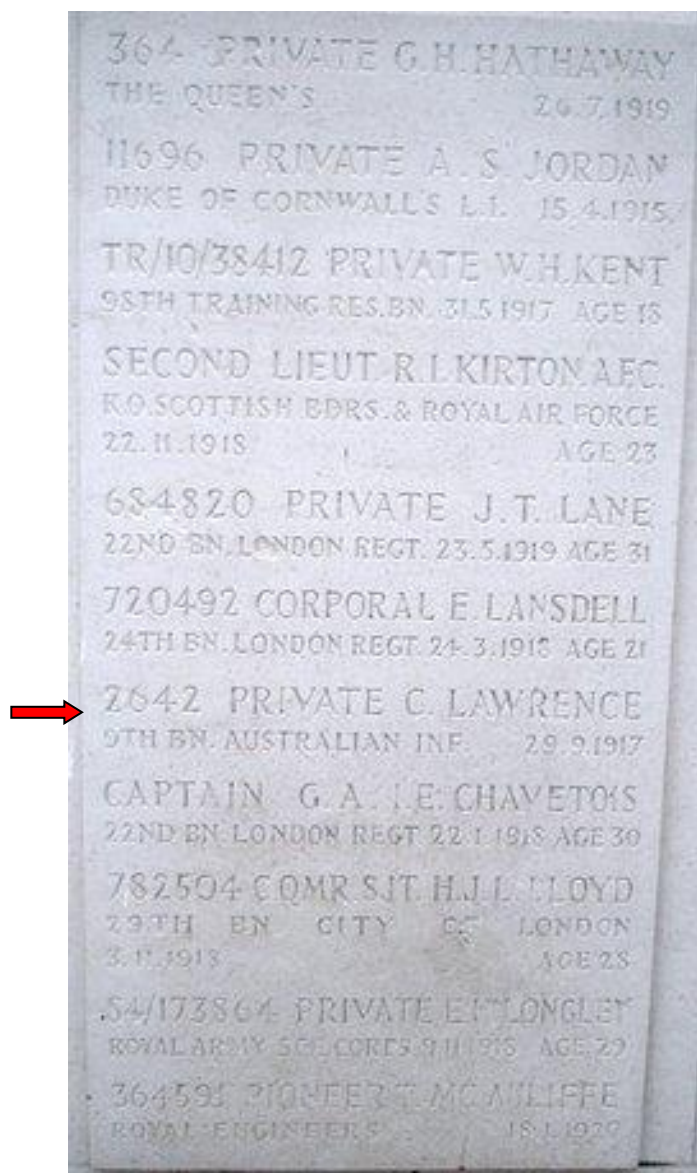


(Photos from CWGC)



Photo of Private C. Lawrence's name on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Screen Wall in Camberwell Old Cemetery, London, England.

(NOTE: The date of death inscribed on the CWGC Screen Wall is incorrect. His correct date of death is 22nd September, 1917. CWGC were advised of the error at the time of research – September, 2023)



(Photo from VWMA)

