

Sutton Veny War Graves

World War 1



Lest We Forget



4230A LANCE CPL.

G. R. LEACH

1ST AUSTRALIAN PIONEERS

29TH APRIL, 1919

Our Beloved Son

Abide With Me

*CWGC Headstone for Lance Cpl. G. R. Leach is located in
Grave Plot # 88. M. 1. of St. John the Evangelist Churchyard, Sutton Veny*

George Richard LEACH

George Richard Leach was born at Maldon, Victoria in 1897 to parents George Thomas & Alice Maude Leach (nee Grigg). He was an 18 year old single, Miner from Long Gully, Maldon, Victoria when he enlisted at Melbourne, Victoria on 27th July, 1915 with the 5th Infantry Battalion, 13th Reinforcements of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 4230 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr George Thomas Leach of Long Gully, Maldon, Victoria. As George Leach was under the age of 21, both parents signed their consent on 27th July, 1915 for their son to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force for active service abroad.

Private Richard George Leach embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Demosthenes (A64)* on 29th December, 1915.

Pte Leach was taken on Strength with 1st Pioneer Battalion at Serapeum, Egypt on 17th March, 1916.

Pte Leach embarked from Alexandria on 27th March, 1916 to join British Expeditionary Force & disembarked at Marseille, France on 3rd April, 1916.

Pte Leach was appointed Lance Corporal on 1st August, 1916.

Lance Corporal Leach was written up for the Crime – “When on Active Service, Drunkenness in the Field 19/9/16”. This was admonished on 25th September, 1916.

Lance Corporal Leach was re-allotted the service number of 4230A on 16th April, 1917.

Lance Cpl. Leach was attached to Anzac Corps School for duty as Lewis Gun Instructor on 20th July, 1917 & promoted to Temporary Sergeant on same day – AIF order 213. He was attached as Assisting Lewis Gun Instruction on 21st July, 1917.

Temporary Sergeant Leach was on leave to UK from 14th to 26th September, 1917.

On 27th March, 1918 Leach's rank reverted back to Lance Corporal – Aust. Corps School.

L/Cpl. Leach rejoined his Battalion in the Field on 28th March, 1918.

L/Cpl. Leach's Casualty Form – Active Service has this noted for 18th April, 1918 – “L/Cpl – Casualty is classified injured accidentally (sprained R/Ankle)”. L/Cpl. Leach was sent to Hospital on 20th April, 1918 with a sprained ankle. He was taken to 3rd Australian Field Ambulance & transferred and admitted to 13th Casualty Clearing Station. L/Cpl. Leach was transferred on 22nd April, 1918 to 14th General Hospital. L/Cpl. Leach was transferred to No. 1 Con. Dep. on 12th May, 1918 at Boulogne & admitted sick. On 17th May, 1918 L/Cpl. Leach was transferred to No. 5 Rest Camp with a sprained ankle. He was discharged at Havre on 19th May, 1918 & proceeded to join his Unit on 22nd May, 1918. L/Cpl. Leach rejoined his Battalion in France on 27th May, 1918.

L/Cpl. Leach was granted leave to UK on 6th October, 1918 & rejoined his Battalion on 14th October, 1918.

L/Cpl. Leach was reported to be with his Unit on 26th February, 1919.

L/Cpl. Leach was marched out while in France for return to Australia on 10th April, 1919. He was marched out to England on 17th April, 1919 & marched in to No. 1 Group from France at Longbridge Deverill, Wiltshire on 18th April, 1919.

Lance Corporal George Richard Leach was admitted & died at 12.30 a.m. on 29th April, 1919 at the 1st Australian General Hospital, Sutton Veny of Accidental Injuries – (Fall down a bank).

A death for George R. Leach, aged 21, was registered in the June quarter, 1919 in the district of Warminster, Wiltshire.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for L/Cpl. George Richard Leach contains a letter from Sister A. L. Bennett for Matron of No. 1 Australian General Hospital, Sutton Veny, Wiltshire which reads:

"In reply to your letter of inquiry regarding the late L/Cpl. G. R. Leach No. 4230, 1st Pioneers A.I.F., I regret I can give you little or no information other than that already supplied in a letter written by Miss Gray (Matron) May 1st/19 to the lads Father – G. T. Leach Esq., Long Gully, Maldon, Victoria., as follows.

The patient was admitted into the Reception Room at 12.30 A.m. 28.4.19 suffering from a fall. He was then quite unconscious and died two (2) minutes after admission. An examination of the body disclosed dislocation of the neck at the 3rd vertebrae and fracture of left jaw.

The friend who accompanied the patient left whilst he (the patient) was being examined by the Medical Officer without having given any name. All enquiries failed to discover his whereabouts.

The body was interred in the Church of England portion of the grave yard attached to St. John the Evangelist Church Sutton Veny with full Military Honours.

We deeply regret the unfortunate occurrence, it was very sad indeed."

Lance Corporal George Richard Leach was buried on 3rd May, 1919 in St. John the Evangelist Churchyard at Sutton Veny - Grave no. 88. From the burial report of L/Cpl. Leach - *Coffin was Elm with Brass Mounts – Deceased was buried with full Military Honours, the coffin draped with the Australian flag being borne to the graveside on a Gun Carriage preceded by a Firing Party from No. 1 Australian Command Depot, Sutton Veny. Six of Deceased's late Unit comrades supported the Pall. A large number of Australians followed the remains and were present at the graveside ceremony. The "Last Post" was sounded and volleys fired over the grave. Headquarters A.I.F. Depots in United Kingdom were represented at the funeral.*

L/Cpl/ Leach's Service Record file contains a Minute Paper from Department of Defence to the O/C Base Records which was date stamped 5th August, 1919 & reads:

"The subjoined extract from a letter addressed to the Acting Minister by Mr G. Leach, 8 Railway Street, Seddon, is referred for your attention:-

"We were notified about 13 or 14 weeks ago of the death of our boy L. Cpl. G. R. Leach. We have not had a word from War Authorities since. I want to ask you if we can get some particulars of his death and if there was any enquiry concerning him, and he must have had some things that we as parents would like to have. Our boy took part in all the principal Battles in France and has been away for nearly four years. We have been told from mates of his that he would have been home long ago but he was asked to take charge of the Australian Band in England. One of his letters states that his Band headed the 1st Australian Div in the Anzac march in England. He was killed two or three days after."

A reply from Base Records was sent on 12th August, 1919 stating "...I have to state the only information yet available regarding the report of the regrettable loss of your son, the late No. 4230A Lance-Corporal G. R. Leach, 1st Pioneers Battalion, is to the effect that he died on 29/4/1919 at Sutton Veny Military Hospital, Wiltshire, from accidental injuries (fall down bank). It is anticipated that the proceedings of the Enquiry held in connexion with this casualty will come to hand by mail shortly, and any additional information contained therein will be promptly transmitted to you...."

Lance Corporal George Richard Leach was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to L/Cpl. Leach's father – Mr G. T. Leach (sent November, 1921 & October, 1922)

The CWGC lists Lance Corporal George Richard Leach, 4230A, of 1st Australian Pioneers, A.I.F., as the son of George and Alice Maud Leach of 16 Railway St., Seddon, Victoria.

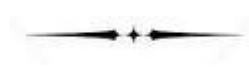
Lance Corporal G. R. Leach is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 171.



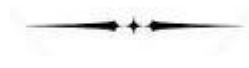
Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(51 pages of Lance Corporal George Richard Leach's 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.



****Information for the Roll of Honour supplied by George Leach, father of late Lance Corporal George Richard Leach, reads "I have heard from Officers over my son that he improved with ideas of his own the Machine Gun. He invented and put certain _____ of the gun that was fixed to every Machine Gun afterwards."**



Newspaper Reports

IN MEMORIAM

On Active Service

LEACH – In loving memory of my dear brother, George Richard Leach (Dick), who was accidentally killed at Salisbury Plain, England, on 29th April, 1919.

Loved and remembered.

- (Ivy)

(*The Argus*, Melbourne, Victoria - Friday 29 April, 1921)

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 St. John the Evangelist Churchyard at Sutton Veny. 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 to Mr G. T. Leach of 8 Railway Street, Seddon, Victoria, dated 20th July, 1921, advised that a communication from the Defence Department concerning an inscription that could be placed on Lance Corporal G. R. Leach's Headstone in the Churchyard of Sutton Veny had not yet been replied to. The letter advised that if no reply was received within 21 days, it would be taken as indicating that no further action was required.

Lance Corporal George Richard Leach does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Our Beloved Son Abide With Me



War Graves at Sutton Veny *(Photo from CWGC)*

Photo of Lance Corporal G. R. Leach's CWGC headstone in St. John the Evangelist's Churchyard, Sutton Veny, Wiltshire.



(Photo courtesy of David Milborrow)



War Graves at Sutton Veny *(Photo from CWGC)*