

**Lurgan New Cemetery,  
Lurgan, County Armagh,  
Northern Ireland  
War Grave**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**410 PRIVATE**

**J. LEATHEM**

**42ND BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**26TH NOVEMBER, 1916    Age 23**

## James Balfour LEATHAM

James Balfour Leatham was born in 1893 at Lurgan, County Armagh, Northern Ireland to parents Joseph and Ellen Leatham.

The 1901 Ireland Census recorded James Leatham as a 7 year old Scholar, living with his family at Albert Street, Lurgan, Co. Armagh, Ireland. His father was listed as Joseph Leatham (Tenter, aged 38, born Armagh). James was one of seven children listed on this Census (all born at Armagh) – Robert (Clerk, aged 14), George (Scholar, aged 11), Joseph (Scholar, aged 9) then James, William (Scholar, aged 6), Fred (aged 2) & Anna (Scholar, aged 13). Also listed was a visitor – Jane Knox (House-keeper, aged 45, born England).

James Leatham arrived in Queensland, Australia on 18th September, 1914 on the *Otway*.

James Leatham was a 21 year old, single, Carpenter when he enlisted at Brisbane, Queensland on 8th November, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Methodist & his next of kin was listed as his father – Joseph Leatham, Garland Avenue, Lurgan, Ireland. James Leatham stated on his Attestation Papers that he had previously been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service due to being "Under Standard."

Private James Leatham was posted to 8th Depot Battalion on 11th November, 1915 for recruit training. He was transferred to 36th Battalion on 16th January, 1916. Private Leatham was transferred to "B" Company of 42nd Battalion on 16th February, 1916 then transferred to "C" Company of 42nd Battalion on 21st April, 1916.

Private James Leatham, Service number 410, embarked from Sydney, New South Wales on HMAT *Borda (A30)* on 5th June, 1916 with the 42nd Infantry Battalion "C" Company.

Private James Leatham was transferred to Hospital at Suez from 42nd Battalion. He was admitted to Government Hospital – cause N.Y.D. (not yet determined) on 6th July, 1916. Private Leatham was transferred to Hospital at Cairo on 19th July, 1916 & admitted to No. 3 Australian General Hospital at Abbassia the same day with Debility. He was admitted to B. R. C. Hospital at Alexandria on 20th July, 1916. Private Leatham was sent to Montazah Convalescent Depot for convalescence from debility on 16th August, 1916.

Private James Leatham embarked from Alexandria on 27th August, 1916 for UK on HT *Megantic*. He was marched in to Larkhill, Wiltshire, England on 9th September, 1916 from Egypt.

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 James Leatham was admitted to Military Hospital at Belfast with Debility on 4th November, 1916. He was transferred to Holywood Convalescent Hospital, Belfast on 6th November, 1916 for further treatment.

Private James Leatham was transferred to Purdysburn Fever Hospital at Belfast on 20th November, 1916. The Hospital Admissions form states "*admitted with chronic history of vomiting, weakness of limbs & severe headache.*"

Private James Leatham was transferred back to Military Hospital at Belfast on 24th November, 1916. The Hospital Admission form reports "*condition got worse on admission to this hospital. ... Heart very irregular & sounds weak. Coma set in on 25th Nov. He died the same evening.*"

Private James Leatham died at 12.35 am on 26th November, 1916 at Military Hospital, Belfast, Ireland from Meningitis.

The body of the late Private James Leatham was sent to his parents' residence at Lurgan, Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland from Military Hospital, Belfast for burial. He was buried by his family on 28th November, 1916 in Lurgan New Cemetery, County Armagh, Northern Ireland – Plot number F. 111 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Private James Balfour Leathem contains a request from the Red Cross on behalf of the relatives in Brisbane to obtain any details of his death. Matron M. Flynn, Military Hospital, Victoria Barracks, Belfast replied: *“He was admitted to this hospital on 24th Nov. 1916 and died on the morning of 26th. He had been at Holywood Convalescent Hospital for some time previously. The onset of his illness was very sudden. On admission he was semi-conscious, but was able to take fluid nourishment. His relatives were sent for a lady who told me she was his step-mother came to see him and remained with him to the end. He suffered no pain but sank into deeper unconsciousness and departed peacefully on the morning of 26th November. The Sister whom I appointed as special nurse was most devoted in her attentions to him and is now on active service in Mesopotamia. I regret that I cannot give further details as he was only about 30 hours under my charge. He had the best medical Officer in Hospital looking after him but the case was hopeless and nothing that we could do could save him. I watched by his bed for some time before he died and he looked as peaceful as a sleeping child.”*

Private James Leathem was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Leathem's father - Mr J. Leathem, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque issued in England in July, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private James Leathem – service number 410, aged 23, of 42nd Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of Joseph and Ellen Leathem, of Galan Avenue, Lurgan, Co. Armagh, Ireland.

J. B. Leathem is remembered on the Lurgan War Memorial, located at Church Place & Market Street, Lurgan, Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland (Panel 3).



**Lurgan War Memorial**

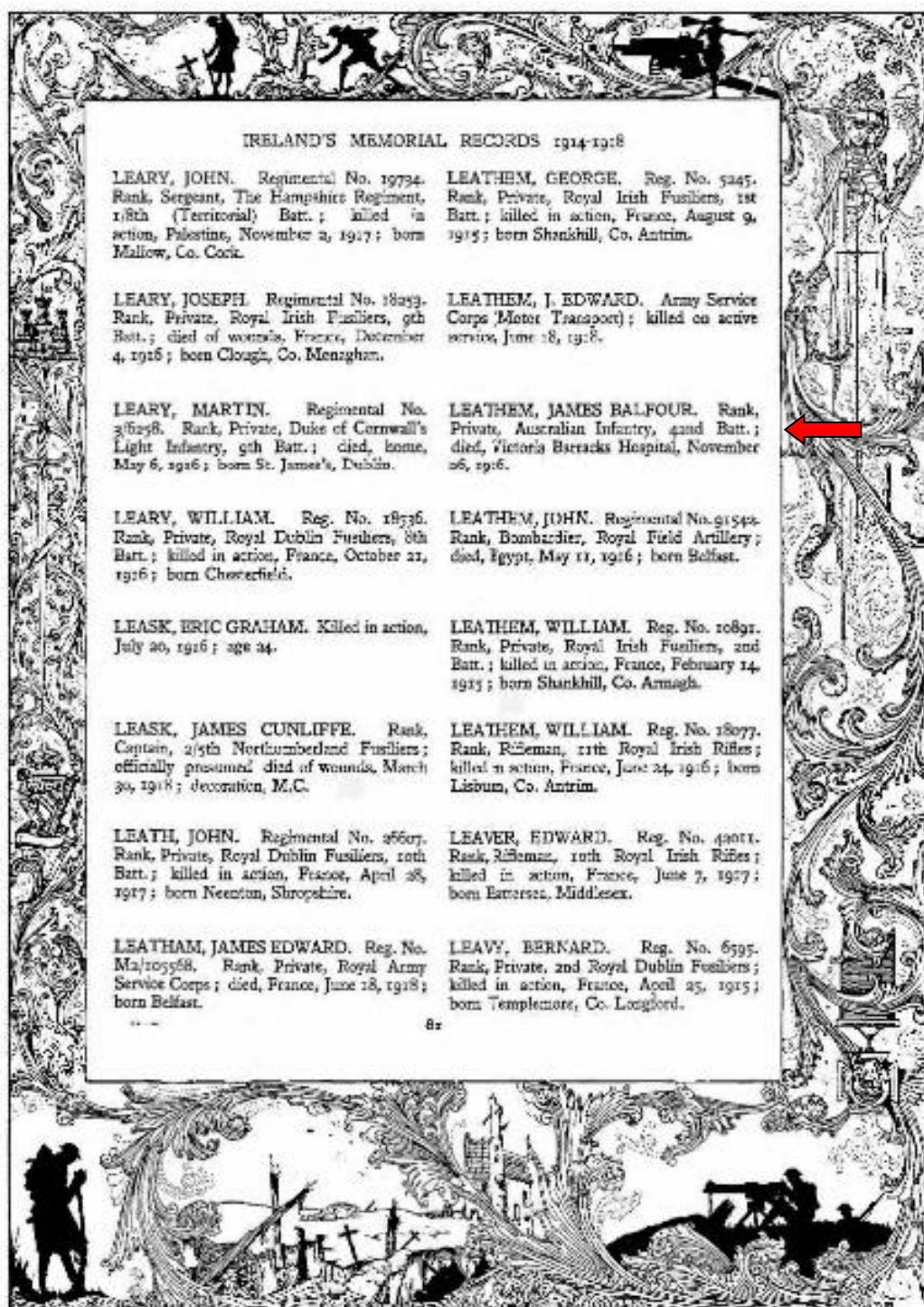


Last name on Panel 3 of Lurgan War Memorial





James Balfour Leathem is remembered in Ireland's Memorial Records which is an 8 volume set compiled by The Committee of the Irish National War Memorial, originally published in 1923. These volumes provide information on over 49,000 Irish men and women who died in the Great War. (Volume 5 Ker to M'gil - page 84)



**LEATHAM, JAMES BALFOUR.** Rank, Private, Australian Infantry, 42nd Batt.; died, Victoria Barracks Hospital, November 26, 1916.



Private J. B. Leathem is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 135.



*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

(36 pages of Private James Leathem'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*



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **ROLL OF HONOUR**

The 251st Australian casualty list was released by the censor on Saturday morning.

#### **DIED OF ILLNESS**

Pte J. Leathem, Ireland, 26/11/16, p.r. ill

*(The Week, Brisbane, Queensland – 22 December, 1916)*

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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. 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)*

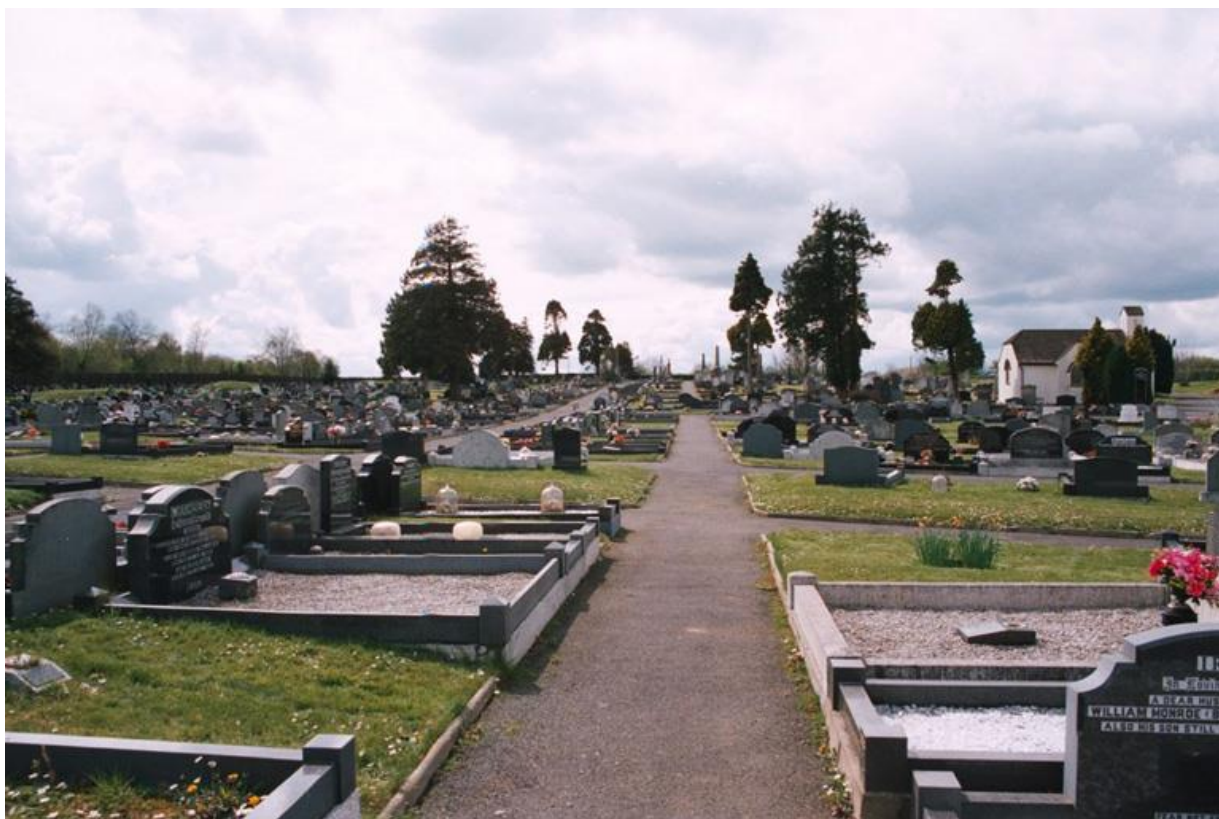
Private J. Leathem does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.



## Lurgan Cemetery, County Armagh, Northern Ireland

The Pioneer Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles and the 10th Royal Irish Fusiliers were formed at Lurgan. There are 4 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war and 14 of the 1939-1945 war here.

*(Photo & information from CWGC)*



**Entrance to Lurgan Cemetery** *(Photo by P. Flannagan)*



Photo of Private J. Leathem's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Lurgan Cemetery, County Armagh, Northern Ireland.







*(Photo by Christine Armstrong – Find a Grave)*