

**Reading Cemetery,
Reading, Berkshire
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



2927 PRIVATE

T. E. LESTER

33RD BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

29TH APRIL, 1918 Age 41

Thomas Edwin LESTER

Thomas Edwin Lester was born at Oberon, near Bathurst, NSW in September, 1876 to parents Peter and Emma Lester.

The 1913 Australian Electoral Roll for the district of King, Plunkett Street Polling Place, New South Wales recorded Thomas Lester, Fireman & his wife Laura Lester, Domestic duties, living at 7 Burnell Lane.

A birth was registered in Sydney in 1913 for Sidney E. Lester, parents Thomas E. & Laura A. Lester. (No other births could be located for any other children of Thomas & Laura Lester.)

Thomas Edwin Lester was a 39 year old, married, Fireman from 7 Burnell Place, Hyde Park, Sydney, NSW when he enlisted on 16th May, 1916 with the 53rd Infantry Battalion, 7th Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 2927 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Laura Lester, of 7 Burnell Place, Hyde Park, Sydney, NSW.

Private Thomas Edwin Lester was posted to Dubbo Depot Battalion from 16th June, 1916. He was transferred to "B" Company of 53rd Battalion, 7th Reinforcements at Bathurst on 11th July, 1916.

Private Thomas Edwin Lester embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Ascanius (A11)* on 26th October, 1916 & disembarked at Devonport, England on 28th December, 1916.

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 Thomas Edwin Lester was marched out to H. S. Coy at Hurdcott on 28th February, 1917.

Private Thomas Edwin Lester was marched out to Weymouth from 14th Training Battalion at Hurdcott, Wiltshire on 10th March, 1917 & marched in to No. 2 Command Depot, Weymouth on 10th March, 1917. He was medically classified as C1 (Fit for Home Service only).

Private Thomas Edwin Lester was marched in to No. 3 Camp at Parkhouse, Wiltshire on 21st April, 1917.

Private Thomas Edwin Lester was marched out to No. 3 Command Depot at Tidworth, Wiltshire on 4th May, 1917.

Private Thomas Edwin Lester was attached for duty as a Guard with Admin. Headquarters, London from 53rd Battalion on 12th October, 1917. He was detached from duty on 4th December, 1917 & marched out to Hurdcott, Wiltshire.

Private Thomas Edwin Lester was marched in to No. 3 Command Depot at Hurdcott, Wiltshire on 4th December, 1917 & medically classified as B1 A2 (Fit for Overseas Training Camp in three to four weeks) on 5th December, 1917.

Private Thomas Edwin Lester was marched out to 3rd Training Brigade at Codford, Wiltshire on 22nd December, 1917 & marched in from No. 3 Command Depot at Hurdcott, Wiltshire on 23rd December, 1917.

Private Thomas Edwin Lester proceeded overseas to France from Codford via Southampton on 5th February, 1918. He was marched in to A.I.B.D. (Australian Infantry Base Depot) at Rouelles, France on 6th February, 1918.

Private Thomas Edwin Lester was marched out to the Front on 7th February, 1918. He was transferred & taken on strength with 33rd Battalion on 12th February, 1918.

Private Thomas Edwin Lester was wounded in action – gassed on 17th April, 1918. He was admitted to 55th Field Ambulance then transferred to Casualty Clearing Station. Pte Lester was admitted to 1st Australian General Hospital at Rouen, France on 18th April, 1918 & embarked for England on the Hospital Ship *Panama* on 20th April, 1918.

33rd Battalion

When the German Army launched its last great offensive in the spring of 1918, the Battalion was part of the force deployed to defend the approaches to Amiens around Villers-Bretonneux. It took part in a counter-attack at Hangard Wood on 30th March, and helped to defeat a major drive on Villers-Bretonneux on 4th April.

War Diary – 33rd Battalion – 17th April, 1918 Villers Bretonneux:

Dull day – visibility poor. The enemy commenced a very heavy bombardment of gas shells of all calibres up to 5.9s at 4 pm. paying most attention to the forward portion of the town. Direct hits were obtained on A. Cos. billets, penetrating into the cellars where the men were asleep, and gassing a number before respirators could be adjusted. The bombardment lasted the whole day but was most intense between 4am and 1 pm. No gas was detected in the region of the Posts until late in the afternoon when a number of shells fell short of the village. These ceased at 6 pm and the enemy gave his attention to dropping shells at intervals in different parts of the town. The enemy did not discontinue his usual shelling with H.E. although it was not so pronounced as previously. Our casualties through gas were heavy being 13 Officers, 26 N.C.O.'s and 268 men. The gas used seemed to be a mixture as the men were affected in the eyes, chest and stomach.

(Information from The Australian War Memorial)

Private Thomas Edwin Lester was admitted to Reading War Hospital, Reading, Berkshire, England on 21st April, 1918 suffering from Gas (Shell) Poisoning – severely ill.

Private Thomas Edwin Lester died at 9.55 pm on 29th April, 1918 at Section 3, Reading War Hospital, Reading, Berkshire, England from Wounds received in action – Shell Gas Poisoning.

A death for Thomas Lester, aged 42, was registered in the June quarter, 1918 in the district of Reading, Berkshire, England.

Private Thomas Edwin Lester was buried at 2 pm on 3rd May, 1918 in Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire – Screen Wall. 72. 16435. Those buried in Plot 72 & buried in other parts of the cemetery that do not have headstones marking their graves are named on the Memorial Screen Wall located near the Cross of Sacrifice. Their deaths are still acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. From the burial report of Pte Lester - *Coffin was good polished Elm. The deceased soldier was accorded a Military Funeral. A Military Band marched from the War Hospital to the Cemetery. Bearers and Gun Carriage were supplied by Transport Section. A service was conducted at the graveside by Chaplain the Rev. F. J. Kernan, C.F. The "Last Post" was sounded over the grave by two of the bandsmen. Wreaths were sent by Major Abrams, Officer i/c Reading War Hospital, and the Nursing Staff and Patients of "B" Ward. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral. An oak cross will be erected by the A.I.F. London.*

Pte Thomas Edwin Lester requested in his Will, dated 4th February, 1918 that in the event of his death the whole of his property & effects to be given to his wife – Laura Lester.

Pte Thomas Edwin Lester was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Lester's widow - Mrs L. Lester, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent December, 1921 & Plaque sent October, 1922).

A letter was written to Base Records on 21st March, 1952 from William Thomas Lester of 80A Boyce Rd, Maroubra, Sydney, NSW stating he was the eldest son of T. E. Lester who "died in England. I think it was in 1916, from Gas." William Lester was enquiring about obtaining a new set of Medals that his late mother received. William Lester was advised that "regulations will not permit issue of war medals to other than the soldier concerned".

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Thomas Edwin Lester – service number 2927, aged 41, of 33rd Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of Peter and Emma Lester; husband of Laura Lester, of Messines Crescent, Matraville, New South Wales. Born at Bathurst, New South Wales.

Private T. E. Lester is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 122.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

T. E. Lester is remembered on the Sydney Town Hall World War 1 Honour Roll located in the exterior entrance way to Sydney Town Hall, corner George and Druiit Streets, Sydney, NSW.



Sydney Town Hall (Photo by Greg O'Beirne)



Sydney Town Hall World War 1 Honour Roll

(Photos from NSW War Memorial Register – David Roden and Peter Levarre-Waters)



(61 pages of Pte Thomas Edwin Lester'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



Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire, England

Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire contains 248 War Graves, 17 of those being from Australian Forces – World War 1.

The War Graves Plot is situated at the back of the cemetery, in the right hand corner from the entrance. A Screen Wall Memorial commemorates those buried in Plot 72 and those buried in other parts of the cemetery whose graves are not marked by headstones. There are 207 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war and 41 of the 1939-1945 war. There is also 1 Serbian burial.

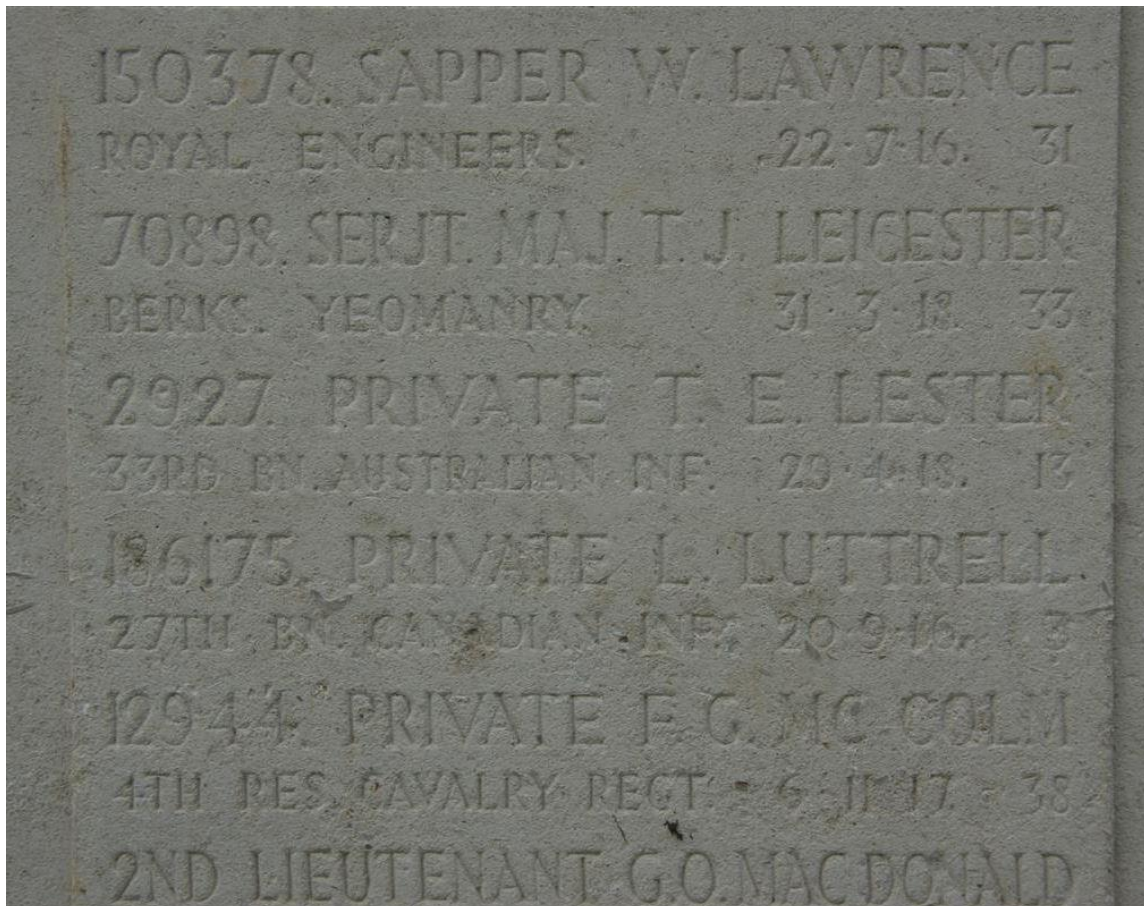
(Information & photos from CWGC)



Cross of Sacrifice & Memorial Screen Wall, Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire *(Photos from CWGC)*



Photo of Pte T. E. Lester's name on the Screen Wall Memorial in Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire, England.



(Photo courtesy of Phil Wood)