

**London Road Cemetery,
Salisbury, Wiltshire, England**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



3344 PRIVATE

JOHN WILLIAM LYONS

53RD BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

3RD MAY, 1918 Age 26

In Loving Memory

John William (Jack) LYONS

John William Lyons was born at Surry Hills, Sydney, NSW on 26th May, 1891 to parents William and Mary Lyons.

John William Lyons attended St. Peter's School, Surry Hills, Sydney, NSW.

John William Lyons was employed by the NSW Government Railways in the Traffic Branch from 1st April, 1908 as a Night Gate Keeper at Fairfield, Sydney, NSW. In 1910 he was a Junior Porter in the Metropolitan District & became an (adult) Porter on 26th May, 1912.

John William Lyons was a 24 year old, single, Railway Porter from Eastbourne Avenue, Little Coogee, NSW when he enlisted at Warwick Farm, Sydney, NSW on 4th August, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). (John William Lyons' Application to Enlist in the Australian Imperial Force at Victoria Barracks, NSW stated his postal address as 559 Crown St, Surry Hills, Sydney.) His service number was 3344 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his Uncle – Mr T. Lyons, His brother – Reginald Amand Lyons & cousin – Thomas Denis Lyons had both enlisted the day before Eastbourne Avenue, Little Coogee, NSW.

Private John William Lyons was posted to 11th Reinforcements of 2nd Battalion (no date recorded).

Private John William Lyons embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Euripides (A14)* on 2nd November, 1915 with the 2nd Infantry Battalion, 11th Reinforcements & disembarked at Egypt (no date recorded).

Private John William Lyons was allotted to and proceeded to join 53rd Infantry Battalion from Zeitoun on 16th February, 1916 from 1st Training Battalion (ex 11th Reinforcements of 2nd Battalion). He was taken on strength of 53rd Battalion at Tel-el Kebir on 16th February, 1916.

Private John William Lyons embarked from Alexandria on 19th June, 1916 on *Royal George* to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force). He disembarked at Marseilles, France on 28th June, 1916.

Private John William Lyons was detached for duty with 4th Divisional Signal Service in France on 11th July, 1916. He rejoined 53rd Battalion in France from detachment on 11th January, 1917.

Private John William Lyons was On Leave to England from 29th May, 1917 & rejoined 53rd Battalion from Leave on 11th June, 1917.

[Note: There is no record in the Service Record file of Private John William Lyons of his movements between 12th June, 1917 & 27th February, 1918.]

Private John William Lyons proceeded On Leave to UK from 28th February, 1918 & rejoined from Leave on 20th March, 1918.

Private John William Lyons was wounded in action (Gas) on 17th April, 1918. He was admitted to 55th Field Ambulance on 17th April, 1918 - Gassed Shell then transferred the same day & admitted to 12th Casualty Clearing Station. Private Lyons was transferred to Ambulance Train on 18th April, 1918 & admitted to 9th General Hospital, Rouen, France on 19th April, 1918. He was transferred to England on 21st April, 1918.

53rd Battalion

The 53rd Battalion was raised in Egypt on 14 February 1916 as part of the "doubling" of the AIF. Half of its recruits were Gallipoli veterans from the 1st Battalion, and the other half, fresh reinforcements from Australia. Reflecting the composition of the 1st, the 53rd was predominantly composed of men from the suburbs of Sydney. The battalion became part of the 14th Brigade of the 5th Australian Division.

The battalion arrived in France on 27 June 1916, entered the front line for the first time on 10 July, and became embroiled in its first major battle on the Western Front, at Fromelles, on 19 July. The battle of Fromelles was a disaster. The 53rd was part of the initial assault and suffered grievously, incurring 625 casualties, including its commanding officer, amounting to over three-quarters of its attacking strength. Casualty rates among the rest of the 5th Division were similarly high, but despite these losses it continued to man the front in the Fromelles sector for a further two months.

The 53rd spent the freezing winter of 1916-17 rotating in and out of trenches in the Somme Valley. During this period the battalion earned the nickname "the Whale Oil Guards" after the CO, Lieutenant Colonel Oswald Croshaw, ordered the troops to polish their helmets with whale oil (issued to rub into feet as a trench foot preventative) for a smart turn out on parade. In March 1917, the 53rd participated in the advance that followed the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line. It was spared the assault but did, however, defend gains made during the second battle of Bullecourt. Later in the year, the AIF's focus of operations switched to the Ypres sector in Belgium. The 53rd's major battle here was at Polygon Wood on 26 September.

With the collapse of Russia in October 1917, a major German offensive on the Western Front was expected in early 1918. This came in late March and the 5th Division moved to defend the sector around Corbie. The 14th Brigade took up positions to the north of Villers-Bretonneux and held these even when the village fell, threatening their flanks.

Once the German offensive had been defeated, the Allies launched their own offensive in August 1918. The 14th Brigade did not play a major role in these operations until late in the month, but its actions, including those of the 53rd Battalion at Anvil Wood, were critical to the capture of Peronne, which fell on 2 September. For a succession of courageous actions during the Peronne fighting, Private William Currey was awarded the Victoria Cross.

The 53rd Battalion entered its last major battle of the war on 29 September 1918. This operation was mounted by the 5th and 3rd Australian Divisions, in co-operation with American forces, to break through the formidable German defences along the St Quentin Canal. The battalion withdrew to rest on 2 October and was still doing so when the war ended. The progressive return of troops to Australia for discharge resulted in the 53rd merging with the 55th Battalion on 10 March 1919. The combined 53/55th Battalion, in turn, disbanded on 11 April.

(Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

War Diary – 53rd Battalion

Front Line – 17th April, 1918:

At 4.30 am the enemy artillery bombarded VILLERS-BRETONNEUX and vicinity with gas shells and continued until about 9 am. Our support and reserve lines were also shelled very heavily with gas shells, and in all about 8,00 gas shells including YELLOW, BLUE and GREEN +. of calibre from 77mm to 8 inch were used by the enemy in this intense bombardment. The wind was very favourable to enemy. All ranks wore their respirators for five hours. The following officers became gas casualties:- [9 Officers named] and 155 O/R s.....

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Private John William Lyons was admitted to Military Hospital, Fovant, Wiltshire, England on 22nd April, 1918 – Gassed (wounded).

Mr T. Lyons, 119 Phillip Street, Sydney, NSW was advised by Base Records on 30th April, 1918 that Private J. W. Lyons had been “Gassed – classed as wounded.”

Private John William Lyons died at 9.45 am on 3rd May, 1918 at Military Hospital, Fovant, Wiltshire, England from Broncho Pneumonia (following Gas Poisoning).

A death for John W. Lyons, aged 28, was registered in the June quarter, 1918 in the district of Wilton, Wiltshire, England.

Private John William Lyons was buried at 2.30 pm on 7th May, 1918 in London Road Cemetery, Salisbury, Wiltshire, England – Plot number R. 17 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Private John William Lyons - *Coffin was good. Polished Elm. Brass mountings. The deceased soldier was buried with full Military Honours. The Band of a Training Brigade preceded the funeral which was attended by a Firing Party, Pallbearers and two Officers also a Platoon of me from an Australian Training Battalion. A wreath from deceased's comrades and a cross of flowers from his late ward mates were placed on the grave. The grave was blessed by the*

Chaplain according to the Roman Catholic Church. Deceased was very popular with both Officers and men and his loss as a soldier and comrade is very keenly felt.

Names of relatives or friends present at funeral – Brother – 3345 Sgt Lyons, R, 53rd Bn; Cousin – 3405 Pte Rossiter, W. L. 2nd Bn.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Private John William Lyons contains a letter on behalf of the Matron, Military Hospital, Fovant, Salisbury which reads: *“Died of Wounds. Re your enquiry for particulars of Pte J. W. Lyons 3344, 53rd Battn. Pte Lyons was admitted to the hospital one of a convoy of wounded admitted 22-4-18. He was suffering from broncho pneumonia, following gas-poisoning. He was very ill from time of admittance and was put on the seriously ill List at once, He seemed to recover a little the first few days after admittance but the improvement did not last and he became gradually worse and died on the 3rd May 1918. The Sister who had charge of him tells me [he] did not express any wish with regard to his relatives – except the one so often expressed by our poor overseas lads, that they were only nearer “Aussie” and the dear friends there. He suffered very much at times, but bore the suffering patiently. He was very much liked by his nurses, one of whom a little night nurse he named “little fairy”. Any little remark of those gone is valued, and I often wish we could keep in memory for friends the remarks one so often hears in the course of nursing. He lies in Salisbury Cemetery – The R.C. Cemetery – (there is not an R.C. one in Fovant) and the R.C. Priest attended him in his last moments. If there is anything else you wish to ask me about him, I will try to answer it if I can.”*

Private J. W. Lyons stated (no date) *“I do not intend making a new Will as I made one previous to leaving Australia and same is in the hand of Thos. Lyons & Co, 37 Elizabeth St City, Sydney, NSW.”*

The Public Trust Office, 67 Castlereagh St., Sydney, NSW wrote to Base Records on 22nd July, 1918 requesting a Certificate in duplicate relating to the death of Private J. W. Lyons, No. 3344, 53rd Battalion. They also requested his address prior to enlistment & the name & address of the person nominated as his next of kin. Base Records replied on 5th August, 1918 with the information & enclosed a certificate in duplicate of the report of death of the late Private J. W. Lyons.

Base Records contacted Mr T. Lyons, 119 Phillip Street, Sydney, NSW, on 4th August, 1920 stating that he was noted as the registered next-of-kin on the records for the late No. 3344 Private J. W. Lyons, 53rd Battalion, but desired to know if there were any nearer blood relatives due to the “Deceased Soldiers Estates Act 1918” which stated that the War Medals & Mementoes of a deceased soldier were to be handed in the following order of relationship – Widow, eldest surviving son, eldest surviving daughter, father, mother, eldest surviving brother, eldest surviving sister etc. Base Records sent a list of questions – is the soldier’s father alive; if not, is his mother alive; if not has he any brothers living etc & stated *“if any of the above relatives are alive, kindly furnish me with their names and addresses.”*

Mr Thomas Lyons replied to Base Records on 10th August, 1920 answering “No” to questions “a” & “b” –meaning both parents were deceased. He stated that the late Private J. W. Lyons had a brother – Reginald Lyons – Sergeant, No. 3345, 53rd Battalion, discharged. Mr Lyons continued stating *“I may say both these boys are children of my eldest brother – Wm. Lyons – They were orphans from childhood and I reared them and acted as father and guardian to both. Reginald Lyons is still living with me.”*

Private John William Lyons was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Lyons’ uncle – Mr Thomas Lyons. (Scroll sent October, 1921 & Plaque sent October, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private John William Lyons – service number 3344, aged 26, of 53rd Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of William and Mary Lyons.

Private J. W. Lyons is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 157.



Roll of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

John W. Lyons is remembered on the NSW Government Railways & Tramways Roll of Honour, located at Country Trains Concourse, Eddy Avenue, Haymarket, Sydney, NSW.



NSW Government Railways & Tramways Roll of Honour (Photo from AWM – Places of Pride – Peter F. Williams)



(Photo by Jennifer Edmonds)



(52 pages of Private John William Lyons' Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

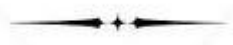
Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives



Connected to Private John William Lyons:

Younger brother – Reginald Amand Lyons – Enlisted 3rd August, 1915. No. 3345. Labourer, aged 22. Embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Euripides (A14)* on 2nd November, 1915 with the 2nd Infantry Battalion, 11th Reinforcements. Wounded in action in France on 19th July, 1916. Appointed Lance Corporal 19th September, 1916. Wounded in action 13th March, 1917. Promoted Corporal 19th February, 1918. Appointed Acting Sergeant 11th April, 1918. Appointed Sergeant 1st February, 1918. Awarded Military Medal. Returned to Australia 7th April, 1919. Entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal.

Younger cousin – Thomas Denis Lyons - Enlisted 3rd August, 1915. No. 3346. Plumber, aged 21. Embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Euripides (A14)* on 2nd November, 1915 with the 2nd Infantry Battalion, 11th Reinforcements. Killed in action 1st September, 1918. Buried Peronne Communal Cemetery Extension, France. Entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal.



Newspaper Notices

ROLL OF HONOUR

LYONS – Died in France (gassed), May 3, 1918, J. W. Lyons. Inserted by his uncle, Thos. Lyons, 119 Phillip-street.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 10 May, 1918)

ROLL OF HONOR

LYONS – J. W., died in France May 3rd, 1918 (gassed). Inserted by his uncle, Thos. Lyons, 119 Phillip St.

(The Daily Telegraph, Sydney, NSW – 10 May, 1918)

Mr Thos. Lyons, of 119 Phillip-street, city, has been officially informed that his nephew, Pte J. W. Lyons, died on May 3, 1918, after being gassed.

(Sunday Times, Sydney, NSW – 12 May, 1918)

RETURN THANKS

Mr and Mrs THOS. LYONS, of 119 Phillip-street, desire to return THANKS to their many kind friends and relatives for their sympathy in their recent sad bereavement, of their nephew, John W. Lyons, died of gas poisoning in France, May 3, 1918.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 18 May, 1918)

MEN WHO FELL

KILLED

Pte J. W. LYONS – Mr Thomas Lyons, of 119 Phillip Street, city, has been officially informed that his nephew, Pte J. W. Lyons, died on May 3, from the effects of gas.

(The Daily Telegraph, Sydney, NSW – 20 May, 1918)

WAR CASUALTIES

DIED OF GAS POISONING

Mr Thos. Lyons, of 119 Phillip-street, city, has been informed that his nephew, Pte J. W. Lyons, died on May 3 from gas-poisoning.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 4 June, 1918)

On Active Service

LYONS – A tribute of love to the memory of Private J. W. (Jack) Lyons, died at Fovant Hospital, England, of gas poisoning, received in France, after two years and 10 months' service. Inserted by his loving uncle and aunt and family, also his brother Reg. (on active service).

LYONS – In loving remembrance of my dear friend, Pte J. W. Lyons, 53rd Batt., died Fovant Military Hospital, from pneumonia following gas poisoning, May 3, 1918. Deeply regretted. Inserted by M.S.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 3 May, 1919)

On Active Service

LYONS – In loving memory of my dear brother, Private J. W. Lyons, 53rd Battalion, died of illness in England, May 3, 1918. Inserted by his loving brother, Reg. (returned).

LYONS – In loving memory of our dear nephew, Private J. W. Jack Lyons, 53rd Battalion, died of illness, May 3, 1918. Duty done. Inserted by aunt and uncle, T. and E. Lyons and family.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 3 May, 1920)

On Active Service

LYONS – In loving memory of J. W. Lyons, 3344, 53rd Batt., died of gas-poisoning, May 3, 1918. Inserted by his brother, R. Lyons, and F. and D. Pedersen.

LYONS - In loving memory of J. W. Lyons, 3344, 53rd Batt., died of gas-poisoning, May 3, 1918. Inserted by his uncle and auntie, T. and E. Lyons.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 3 May, 1921)

On Active Service

LYONS – In loving memory of J. W. Lyons, died of gas poisoning in France, May 3, 1918. Inserted by his aunt and brother.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 6 May, 1922)

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 John William Lyons does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

In Loving Memory

London Road Cemetery, Salisbury, Wiltshire, England

London Road Cemetery, Salisbury contains 52 World War 1 burials & 52 World War 2 burials. There are 9 Australian WW1 War Graves & 1 WW2 Australian War Grave in this Cemetery.



(Photos by julia&keld – Find a Grave)





(Photos from CWGC)



Photo of Private John William Lyons' Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in London Road Cemetery, Salisbury, Wiltshire, England.



(Photo courtesy of Helen Roberts 2020)



Private John William Lyons' headstone marked with red arrow

(Photo courtesy of Helen Roberts 2020)



(Photo courtesy of Helen Roberts 2020)