Colchester Cemetery,

Colchester, Essex

War Graves

Lest We Forget

World War 1

1384   PRIVATE

W. J. MACKENZIE

51ST BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

5TH AUGUST, 1916   Age 27

Gone But Not Forgotten

William John MACKENZIE

William John Mackenzie was born at Inveravon, Ballindalloch, Scotland around 1889 to parents William and Elizabeth Grant Mackenzie.

According to information provided by his father for the Roll of Honour – William came to Australian when he was 22 years old.

[Note: The Attestation Papers, Embarkation Roll & the Western Australian War Memorial have the surname as McKenzie, whereas the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour, the Scottish Roll of Honour & the Inveravon War Memorial have the surname as Mackenzie.]

William John McKenzie (name listed as per Embarkation Roll) was a 25 year old, single, Farm Hand when he enlisted at Black Boy Camp, Western Australia on 30th October, 1914 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 1384 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr William McKenzie, of Glenlivet, Banffshire, Scotland.

Private William John McKenzie was posted to Depot Company on 30th October, 1914 for recruit training.

Private William John McKenzie embarked from Fremantle, Western Australia on HMAT *Itonus (A50)* on 22nd February, 1915 with the 11th Infantry Battalion, 2nd Reinforcements.

Private William John McKenzie was taken on strength on 11th Battalion from Reinforcements at the Dardanelles on 28th April, 1915.

Private William John McKenzie was wounded in action on 28th June, 1915. He was admitted to 1st Australian Casualty Clearing Station at Dardanelles on 28th June, 1915 then transferred to Hospital Ship *Sicilia* with shrapnel wounds to left forearm. Private McKenzie was admitted to No. 2 General Hospital at Ghezireh on 8th July, 1915. He was transferred to No. 2 Convalescent Depot at Mena on 10th August, 1915.

War Diary – 11th Battalion

ANZAC Cove – 28th June, 1915

For the purpose of preventing the Enemy from sending reinforcements from our position to the Southern zone, two Coys of the 9th Bn (A.I.F.) made a demonstrations (?) against the Trenches of the Enemy opposite the front occupied by the 3 Inf Bde. The 11th Bn was detailed to assist the advance by covering fire from our front.

Fire opened at 1 pm. Owing to our forward line of Trenches on "BOULDER DUMP Ridge" now under construction not having been completed, it was necessary that the Garrison should be advanced from the Support Trench to the top of the Ridge to obtain Fire effect on the Enemy's Trenches in front. It was also necessary to ___the ___from the Trenches at "TURKEY Knoll" to the forward slope to obtain fire effect. The Enemy opened heavy shrapnel fire & the men being extended in the open a considerable number of casualties occurred. On the left of our __ Section the fire of the left half of "D" Coy together with a machine gun concentrated their fire on the Enemy Trenches on "LONE PINE RIDGE" thus reducing the effect of their Enfilade Fire. Owing to the very heavy shrapnel fire the men occupying the forward slope of "TURKEY Knoll" found it necessary to retire. Those on "BOULDER DUMP Ridge" maintained their ___fire unto the 9th Bn withdrew. The engagement lasted until about 5.30 pm but the Enemy maintained a desultory fire for a considerable time after.

Our Casualties were

Killed   Officers 3   OR 18   TOTAL 21

Wounded   Officers 1   OR 41   "   42

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Private William John McKenzie proceeded to join M.E.F. (Mediterranean Expeditionary Force) from Alexandria on 11th September, 1915 on H.M.T. *Kingstonian*. He rejoined 11th Battalion at Gallipoli Peninsula on 17th September, 1915.

Private William John McKenzie disembarked at Alexandria on 6th January, 1916 on H.M.T. *Lake Michigan* (The Australians having evacuated from the Gallipoli Peninsula).

11th Battalion

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

The battalion was raised within weeks of the declaration of war in August 1914 and embarked for overseas after just two weeks of preliminary training. It arrived in Egypt to continue its training in early December. The 3rd Brigade was the covering force for the ANZAC landing on 25 April 1915 and so was the first ashore at around 4:30 am. Ten days after the landing, a company from the 11th Battalion mounted the AIF's first raid of the war against Turkish positions at Gaba Tepe. Subsequently, the battalion was heavily involved in defending the front line of the ANZAC beachhead. In August, it made preparatory attacks at the southern end of the ANZAC position before the battle of Lone Pine. The 11th Battalion continued to serve at ANZAC until the evacuation in December.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private William John McKenzie was transferred to 51st Battalion at Serapeum on 29th February, 1916 & was posted to "A" Coy., 51st Battalion on 1st March, 1916 at Tel-el-Kebir.

Private William John McKenzie proceeded to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) from Alexandria on 5th June, 1916 on *Ivernia* & disembarked at Marseilles, France on 12th June, 1916.

Private William John McKenzie was wounded in action (2nd occasion) on 10th July, 1916. He was admitted to 15th Field Ambulance on 10th July, 1916 having been bombed – both legs & arms. He was transferred to 1st Australian Casualty Clearing Station on 11th July, 1916. Private McKenzie was transferred & admitted to 13th General Hospital at Wimereux, France on 12th July, 1916 with multiple gunshot wounds. He was transferred to Boulogne, France & embarked for England on 15th July, 1916 on Hospital Ship *Jan Breydel*.

War Diary – 51st Battalion

10th July, 1916: Trenches cleaned & stores handed over to advanced details of incoming Bn (57th Bn Vth Div).
Intermittent bombardment during afternoon.

10/11th July, 1916: HQ details exchanged during daylight, Companies exchanged between 10.30 pm & 4 am in couples flank coys first, then the two central companies. Six casualties were incurred just before handing-over, but none actually during the hand-over. Artillery & neighbouring units were notified, Observers were left with incoming Bn until daylight.

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

51st Battalion

The 51st Battalion was raised in Egypt in the first week of March 1916, as part of the "doubling" of the AIF. Approximately half of its recruits were Gallipoli veterans from the 11th Battalion, and the other half, fresh reinforcements from Australia. Reflecting the composition of the 11th, the 51st was predominantly composed of men from Western Australia. The battalion became part of the 13th Brigade of the newly-formed 4th Australian Division.

Arriving in France on 12 June 1916, the 51st moved into the trenches of the Western Front within a fortnight. It fought in its first major battle at Mouquet Farm in August and September, and suffered casualties equivalent to a third of its strength in both of the attacks (14 August and 3 September) it launched.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

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Private William John McKenzie was admitted to the General Military Hospital, Colchester, Essex, England (no date recorded).

Private William John McKenzie died on 5th August, 1916 at General Military Hospital, Colchester, Essex, England from wounds received in action in France – compound fracture radius & shell wound to leg.

A death for William McKenzie, aged 27, was registered in the September quarter, 1916 in the district of Colchester, Essex, England.

Private William John McKenzie was buried on 8th August, 1916 in Colchester Cemetery, Colchester, Essex, England – Grave number 51, Section 2.

[*Note – Other Australian Soldiers buried in Colchester Cemetery have a letter in their Service Record file that was sent to the next-of-kin advising that the remains had been exhumed & re-interred. There is no such letter in the Record file for the late Private William John McKenzie, however his remains would have been re-interred as the current information by the CWGC of the location of his grave is 87. T. 5.]*

Private William John McKenzie has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Private William John McKenzie requested in his Will, dated 2nd July, 1916, that in the event of his death all his pay due to him from the Australian Government be given to Elsie Jane McKenzie, Faemore, Ballindalloch, Banffshire, Scotland and the remaining part of his property was to be given to William McKenzie, Marypark, Ballindalloch, Banffshire, Scotland.

Private William John McKenzie was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private McKenzie's father – Mr W. McKenzie, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque issued in England in April, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private William John Mackenzie – service number 1384, aged 27, of 51st Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of William and Elizabeth Grant Mackenzie, of Marypark Cottages, Blacksboat, Morayshire, Scotland.

Private W. J. Mackenzie is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 153.

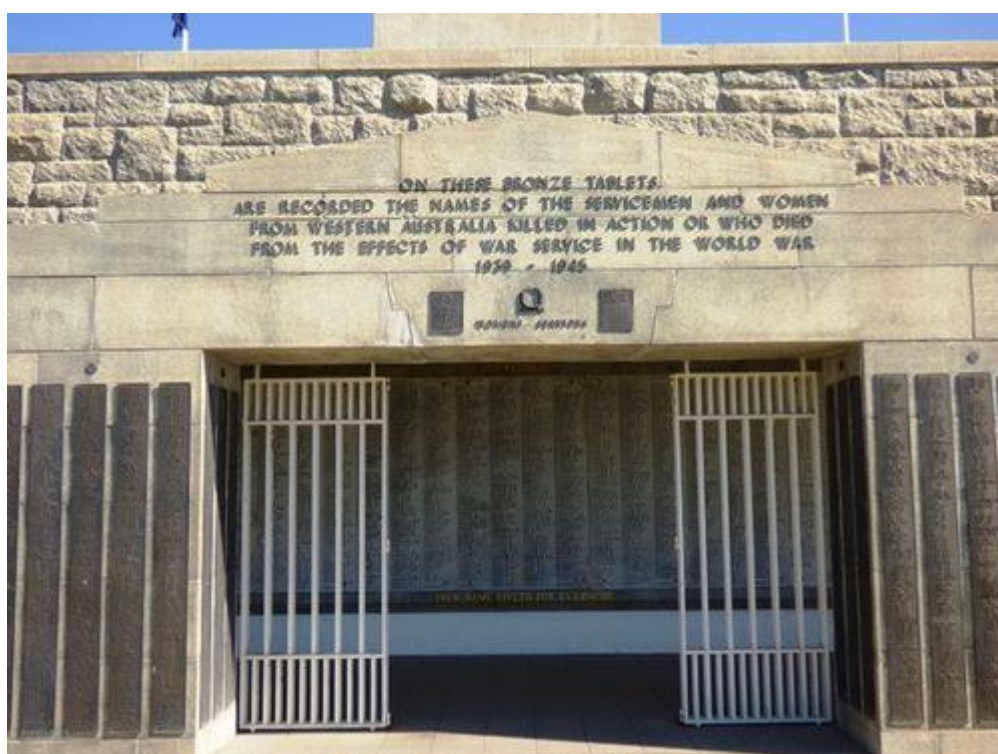*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

W. J. Mckenzie is remembered on the Western Australia State War Memorial which is located at the top of Kings Park and Botanic Garden escarpment, ANZAC Bluff, Fraser Avenue, Perth, Western Australia. The memorial was developed around an 18 metre tall obelisk as the principal feature, which is almost a replica of the Australian Imperial Force Memorials erected in France and Belgium.

The heavy concrete foundations are supplemented by heavy brick walls which enclose an inner chamber or crypt. The walls surrounding the crypt are covered with The Roll of Honour; marble tablets which list under their units the names of more than 7,000 members of the services killed in action or as a result of World War One.

Western Australia State War Memorial Cenotaph, Kings Park (above)

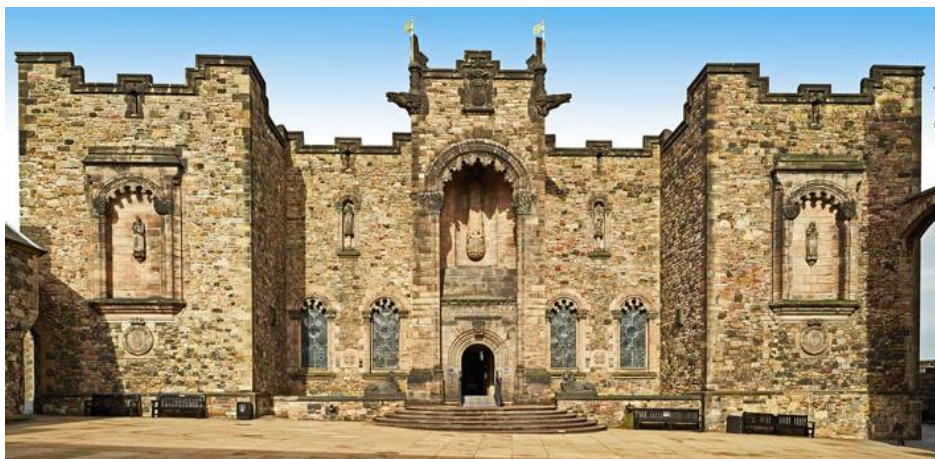**& (below) The Crypt with the Roll of Honour names**

(Photos from Monument Australia – Kent Watson/Sandra Tattersall/Graeme Saunders)

51st Battalion Panel *(Photo courtesy of Gordon Stuart)*

William John Mackenzie is remembered in the Roll of Honour books held in the Hall of Honour inside The Scottish National War Memorial. The north side of the Hall of Honour is divided by columns into bays, each dedicated to a different regiment and enhanced with battle honours and consecrated colours. On the broad shelf in front of each of the bays, the names of the dead are listed in leather-bound books.

The Scottish National War Memorial

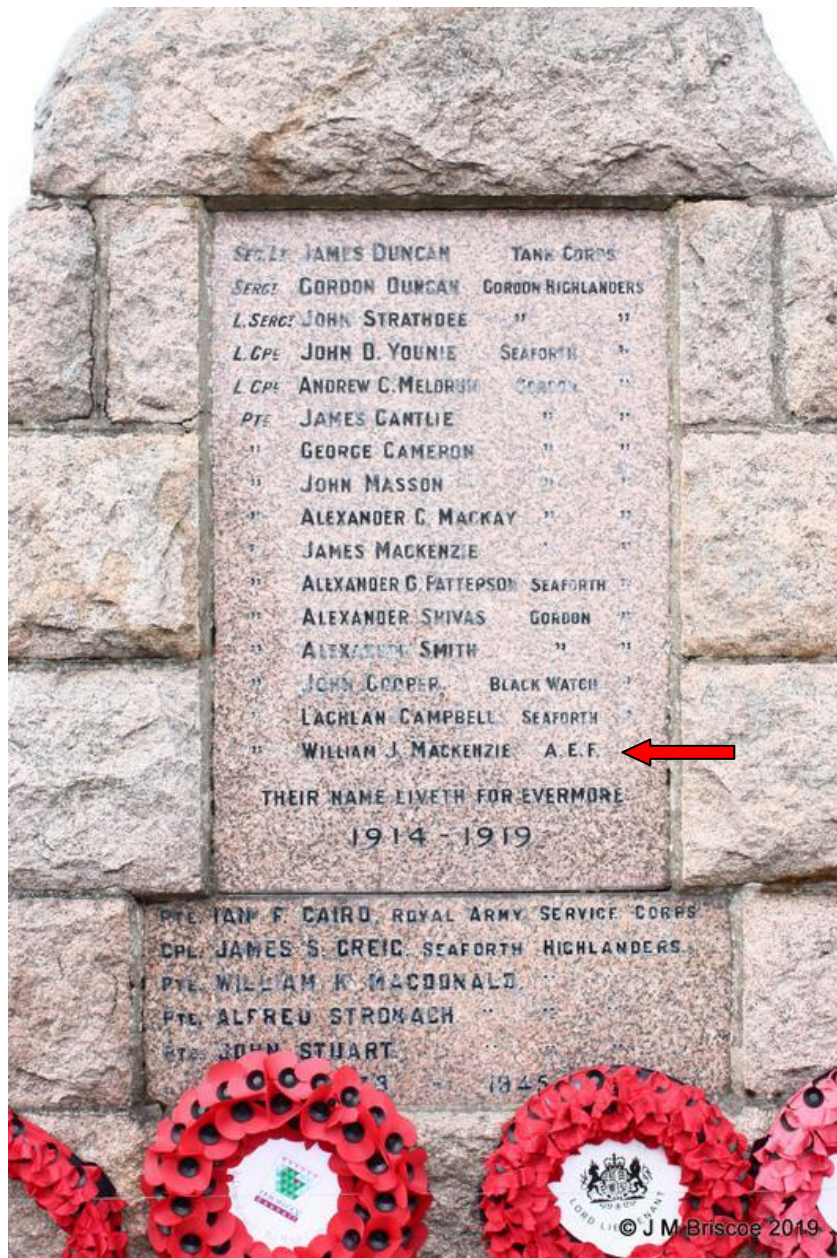*(Photos from The Scottish National War Memorial)*

The Hall of Honour & the Roll of Honour books.

W. J. Mackenzie is remembered on the Inveravon War Memorial, lcoated at Hairpin Bend on A95 ABerlour-Grantown Road, Ballindalloch, Scotland.

Inveravon War Memorial *(Photos by J. M. Briscoe)*

(30 pages of Private William John McKenzie'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

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Newspaper Notices

AUSTRALIANS IN ACTION

THE ROLL OF HONOUR

FIFTY-SIXTH LIST

WEST AUSTRALIA

Wounded

11th Battalion – Private W. J. McKenzie

(*Kalgoorlie Miner*, Western Australia – 27 July, 1915)

THE GREAT WAR IN EUROPE

The 181st Casualty List was issued to-day as follows:-

RETURNED TO DUTY (Previously Reported Wounded)

W. J. McKenzie, Scotland

(*Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, Western Australia – 4 July, 1916)

191st CASUALTY LIST

WOUNDED

W. J. McKenzie (Scotland), severely, previously reported wounded

(*Western Mail*, Perth, Western Australia – 11 August, 1916)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

THE ROLL OF HONOUR

202nd AND 203rd CASUALTY LISTS

DIED OF WOUNDS
W. J. McKenzie (Scotland), previously reported severely wounded.

(*The West Australian*, Perth, Western Australia – 1 September, 1916)

MEMORIAL SERVICE AT COLCHESTER

GRAVES CAREFULLY TENDED

Prominent Englishmen and women were quick to spring to the defence of Australian soldiers when they were libelled recently in one of the flood of belated war books on the market. The abiding sense of gratitude felt by the English people towards the men from overseas who rallied to the defence of the Empire, is typified in the action of the members of the women's section of the British Legion at Colchester. Mrs. Florence T. Towsey, chairman of the Colchester section, has sent a message to the Australian relatives of the men of the A.I.F. who were laid to rest in the cemetery at Colchester, the quaint old Essex town, which was established in the time of the Saxons, and was once a stronghold of the Danes in the days when they ravaged the coasts of England. It was strongly fortified by the Romans, and the great Roman walls remain almost entire to this day. The countryside must have seen much fighting, and the frowning Norman keep is one of the largest in England, and there is something singularly touching in the fact that the soldiers of the younger countries rest here, amid the brotherhood of warriors of long ago.

Impressive Ceremony

Mrs. Towsey says on Anzac Day, 1929, the members of the British Legion (Women's Section), Colchester Branch, assembled at the cemetery to pay a tribute to the memory of the men of the overseas Dominions, who came to fight for the British Empire in the Great War, and who lie buried there. A simple but impressive little service was held, and then flowers were placed on each grave. It is proposed to hold this service annually. The graves are carefully tended. The following are the names of the Australians who rest in Colchester Cemetery, and the simple inscriptions on their graves: —

38 651. Gunner C. C. Willcock, Field Artillery. Dec. 25, 1918. Age 38. 'Happy in my lot.'

2 182. Corporal J. P. Byrne, 58th B.N., Australian T.N.F. Jan. 5, 1918. Age 29.

3370. Private H. M. C. D. Mclntosh, 3rd B.N., Australian I.N.F. July 12, 1916. Age 18. 'My son, your memory we will cherish, until we follow you.'

1100. Driver R. C. Hendry, Australian Field Artillery. August 9, 1918. Age 25. ' 'Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.'

6035. Private J. Hought, 6th Bn., Australian Infantry. Nov. 17, 1917. Age 31. 'Thy purpose, Lord, we cannot see; He gave his life that we might live.'

<u>1384. Private W. I. Mackenzie, 51st Bn., Australian Infantry, Aug. 5, 1916. Age 27. 'Gone, but not forgotten.'</u>

10973. Driver W. R. Bennett. Australian Engineers, Nov. 23, 1918.

1906. Private S. E. Barclay, 45th Bn., Australian Inf. April 11, 1918. Age 24.

493. Private F. R. Rankin, 21st Bn. Australian Inf., Sept. 10, 1916. Age 21 'God has saved from weary strife, In its dawn this young, fresh life.'

2413. Driver C. S. McKellar, Australian Engineers, June 18, 1918. Age 25. The dearly-loved son of Mr. and Mrs. McKellar, of Sydney, late of Glasgow.

19477. Sapper H. F. Smith, Australian Engineers, Nov. 5, 1918. Age 31.

Getting in Touch with Relatives

Mrs. Towsey asked Mrs. Florence Muriel Paxman, a member of the Colchester branch, who is visiting Sydney on a holiday trip, to try and get in touch with the Australian relatives of any of these men. In a letter to 'The Chronicle,' Mrs. Paxman says— 'I visited all the graves the day before I left England, and I shall be most happy to give any relatives any further information, or to get them photographs of any particular grave if they will write to me at my address, Winton, New South Head-road, Rose Bay, Sydney.'

Mrs. Towsey's address is Tollgate House, Shrub End, Colchester, and many Australians will remember with gratitude the hospitality that was extended to them there during the war.

(*Chronicle*, Adelaide, South Australia – 13 March, 1930)

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 W. J. Mackenzie does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Gone But Not Forgotten

Colchester Cemetery, Colchester, Essex, England

Colchester Cemetery was opened in 1856 and now belongs to the Corporation. It originally covered about 30 acres, but was enlarged in 1940 to 67 acres. The newer part is on the western side of the original burial ground, and behind it is the site of a Roman Way. There are 267 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war, 1 being unidentified, of which 50 are in the War Plot, while 11 Australian graves are together in a group nearby, the remainder being scattered. After the war a Cross of Sacrifice was erected on a site overlooking both the plot and the group of war graves, in honour of all the servicemen buried here. There are also 114 Commonwealth burials of the 1939-1945 war here, 1 of which is unidentified. In the early months of the 1939-1945 War, shortly after the enlargement of the cemetery, land was set aside in the newer part for service war burials. This is now the War Graves Plot. Among these casualties are men who were killed at sea after being evacuated from Dunkirk. The non-war graves are those of a man of the Merchant Navy and two ex-servicemen who were buried in the War Graves Plot although their deaths were not due to war service. There are also 7 Foreign National burials. The plot is enclosed by a hedge of cotoneaster frigida and a Cross of Sacrifice stands on the western side. The graves are set in level mown turf, with continuous flower borders along the rows of headstones in which are polyantha roses and other seasonal flowers.
(Information from CWGC)

Colchester Cemetery Entrance *(Photo by Iain MacFarlane – Find a Grave)*

Cross of Sacrifice, Colchester Cemetery *(Photo from CWGC)*

Australian Plot of World War 1 War Graves, Colchester Cemetery *(Photo from CWGC)*

Private W. J. Mackenzie's CWGC Headstone (marked with red arrow)

Photo of Private W. J. Mackenzie's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Colchester Cemetery, Colchester, Essex, England

(Photo by Andrea Charlesworth)

(Photo by Andrea Charlesworth – Find a Grave)