# Woodlands Cemetery, Gillingham, Kent

# War Graves



*Lest We Forget*

## World War 1



## J. McCLURE

**WARRANT MECHANIC**

**ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY**

**H.M.A.S. "SYDNEY"**

**1ST FEBRUARY, 1919**

# John McCLURE

John Cubitt McClure was born at Collingwood, Victoria on 17th April, 1885, according to his birthdate given for the Australian Naval Forces, however his birth was registered in 1886 in Victoria to parents Isaac James and Annie McClure (nee Didrick).

John McClure enlisted in the Australian Naval Forces (A.N.F.) on 8th June, 1904.

The 1911 England Census recorded John McClure as a part of the Crew of H.M.S. *St. Vincent* Battleship which was docked at Portland Harbour, Weymouth, Dorset, England. He was a 25 year old, single, Acting Mechanician in Engine Room Branch, born Collingwood, Victoria, Australia.

John McClure was transferred to the Royal Australian Navy on 14th February, 1913 for a period of 5 years, with an official number of 7846. He was 5ft 6 inches with brown hair, brown eyes & a fresh complexion. No marks, wounds or scars.

Mechanician John McCLure was transferred to H.M.A.S. *Sydney* on 27th June, 1913 from London Depot.

Newspaper article – *The Argus*, Melbourne, Victoria – 2 July, 1915:

### H.M.A.S. Sydney

*Mr John McClure, son of Mr I. J. McClure, of Charles street, Fitzroy, is in the engine-room of H.M.A.S. Sydney, and, writing on May 5, states that the vessel was then on her way after being 57 days at sea searching for the Kron Prinz Wilhelm, which had escaped and taken refuge at Newport, in the United States. He could give no information concerning the future movements of the vessel.*

*Mr McClure was one of those who had the honour of being mentioned in despatches for work in the sinking of the Emden, and is recommended for the post of warrant-engineer.*

*Stoker Claude Howarth, of Fenwick-street, North Carlton, in a letter to his mother, written from --------, mentions that on arrival there they found 78 bags of mails awaiting them.*

John McClure was appointed provisional to the acting rank of Warrant Mechanician on H.M.A.S. *Sydney* on 1st April, 1916.
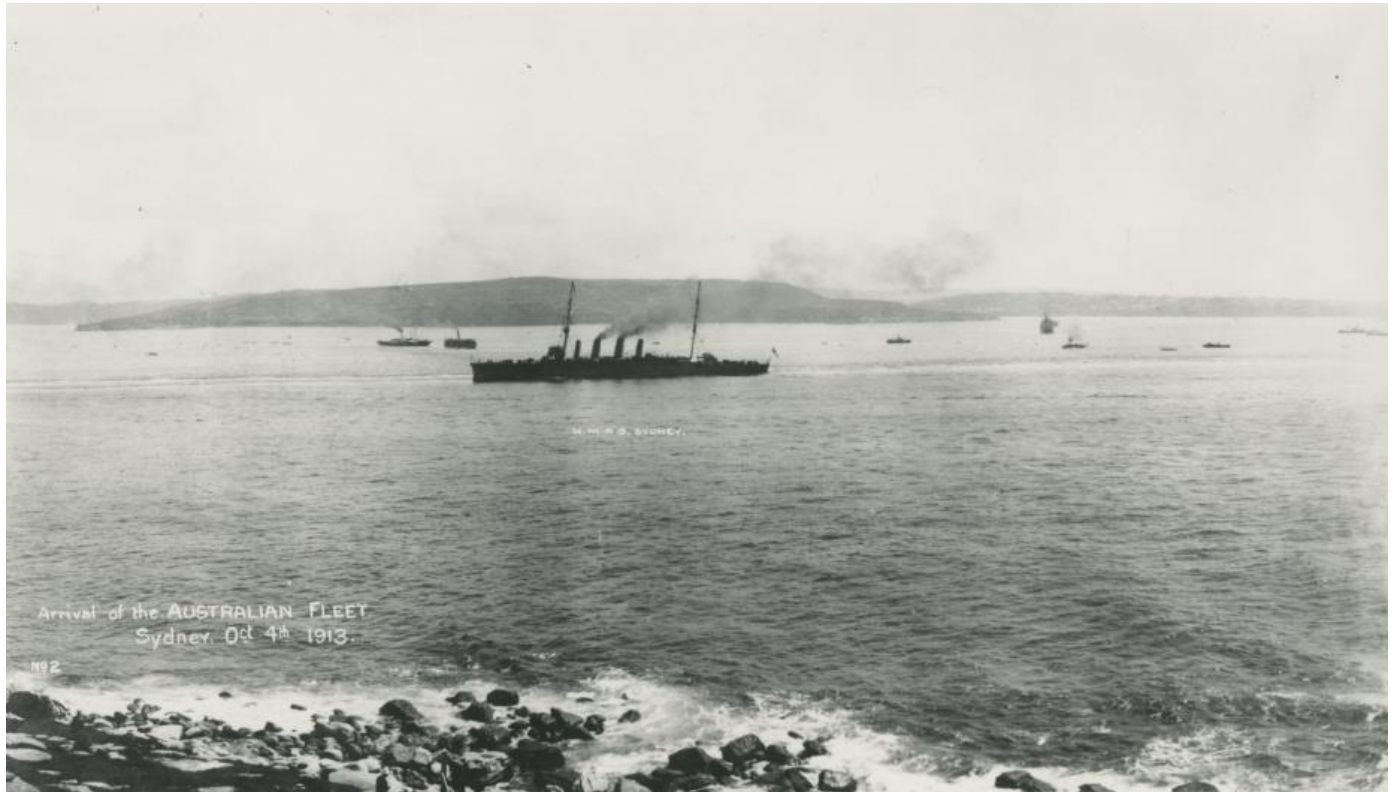
John C. McClure married Doris H. Condon in 1919. Their marriage was registered in the March quarter, 1919 in the district of Wandsworth, London, England.

### H.M.A.S. *Sydney*

The light cruiser HMAS Sydney was built in the United Kingdom and commissioned in June 1913. On 4 October 1913 she entered Sydney Harbour with other ships of the fleet unit.

Following the outbreak of war in August 1914, Sydney was engaged in operations against Germany's Pacific colonies and destroyed a radio station in the Pelew Islands. Returning to Australian waters, Sydney joined the escort of the first troop convoy from Australia to the Middle East, which left Albany on 1 November 1914.

On 9 November, Sydney was detailed to leave the convoy to investigate reports of an unknown vessel off the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. This vessel turned out to be the German cruiser SMS Emden. In the resulting engagement, Sydney was hit early by the long-ranging 10.5 cm guns of Emden, which resulted in four dead and twelve wounded. However, the superior firepower of the Australian cruiser's broadside soon told and Emden was left "beached and done for" on North Keeling Island.

**H.M.A.S. *Sydney* entering Sydney Harbour in 1913** *(Photo from The Royal Australian Navy)*

Sydney briefly rejoined the convoy at Colombo before proceeding to the Atlantic Ocean, via the Mediterranean Sea. In December 1914, Sydney was deployed to the Caribbean and based at Bermuda. For the next 18 months, she carried out patrol duties between the islands of the West Indies and along the east coast of North America, in concert with HMAS Melbourne. Both ships were also detailed for occasional special patrols along the north coast of South America.

In September 1916, Sydney and Melbourne were transferred to the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron for duties with the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet in the North Sea. In company with HMS Southampton and Dublin, they undertook patrol, escort and screening duties. While on patrol on 4 May 1917, Sydney and the other vessels accompanying her were attacked by the German zeppelin "L43". The "L43" dropped ten to twelve bombs on the Sydney, none of which hit the ship, which responded with a heavy barrage of anti-aircraft fire. The "L43" escaped undamaged.

Later in 1917, Sydney was fitted with an aircraft launching platform and equipped with a Sopwith Ships Pup fighter. On 1 June 1918, while patrolling in the Heligoland Bight, Sydney and Melbourne launched their aircraft to engage two German reconnaissance aircraft. Sydney's fighter destroyed one of the enemy aircraft.

Sydney was present at the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet on 21 November 1918. She returned to Australia on 19 July 1919. After the war, Sydney carried out routine fleet duties until paid off in 1928. She was broken up the next year.

(H.M.A.S. *Sydney information from the Australian War Memorial*)

Warrant Mechanic John McClure died on 1st February, 1919 at Chatham Naval Hospital from Pneumonic Influenza.

A death for John McClure, aged 32, was registered in the March quarter, 1919 in the district of Medway, Kent, England.

Warrant Mechanic John McClure was buried in Woodlands Cemetery, Gillingham Kent, England – Plot number Nava. 5. 254 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

From the *Victoria Government Gazette* – 21 April, 1920:

***NOTICE***

*A Rule to administer the estate of each of the undermentioned deceased persons has been granted to me, and creditors, next of kin, and all others having claims against the estate of any of the persons so mentioned are required to send particulars of their claims to the Curator of the Estates of Deceased Persons, No. 483 Collins-street, Melbourne, on or before the 24th May, 190, or they may be excluded from the distribution of the estate when the assets are being distributed:-*

*.....*

*JOHN CUBITT McCLURE, known as John McCLure, late of H.M.A.S. Sydney, warrant mechanician, former address unknown, died 1st February, 1919, intestate.*

UK Probate details:

McCLURE John Cubitt, of 36 Tonsley-hill, East Hill, Wandsworth, Surrey, died 1s February, 1919 at Chatham Naval Hospital, Kent. Administration London 15th November, to Doris Hilda McClure, widow. Effects £274. 12s. 2d.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Warrant Mechanician John McClure, of H.M.A.S. Sydney, Royal Australian Navy. No family details are listed.

Warrant Mechanician J. McClure is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 1.
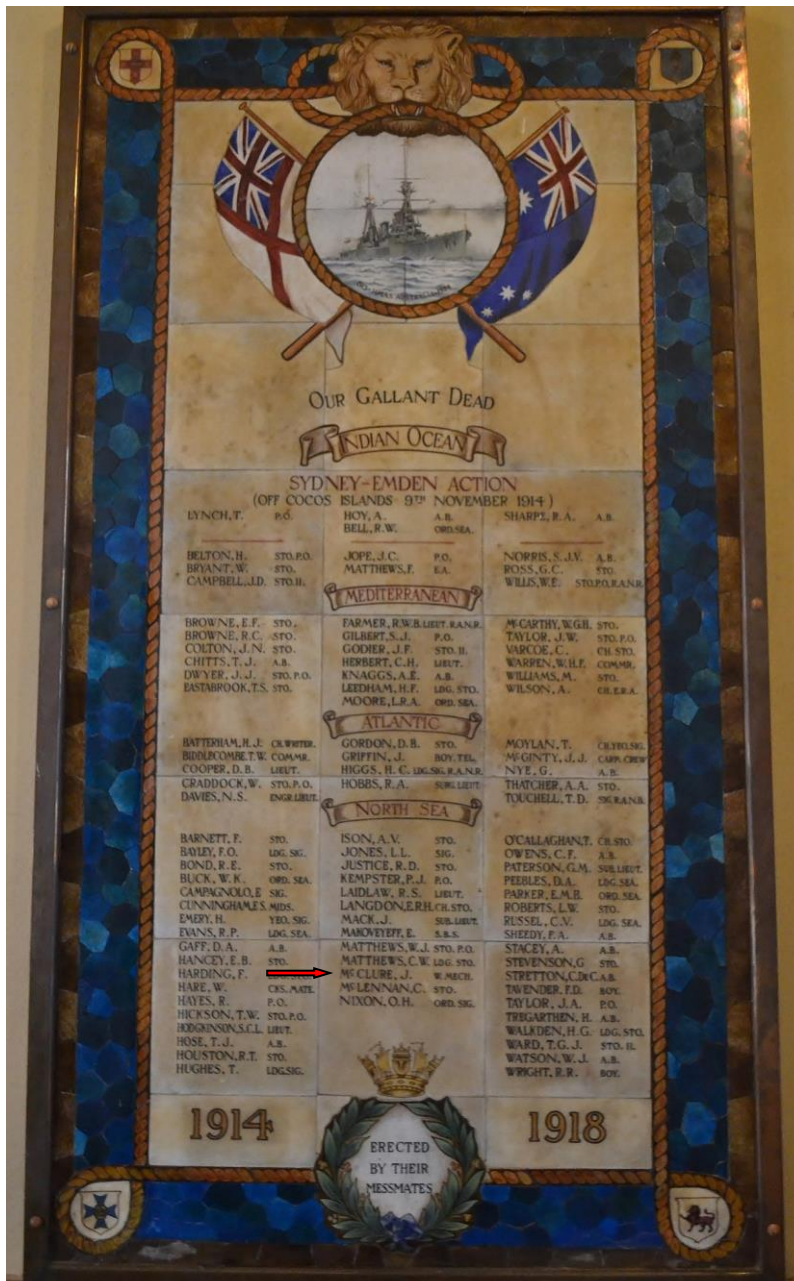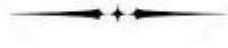


*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

Warrant Mechanic J. McClure is remembered on Royal Australian Navy WW1 Memorial, located at HMAS Cerberus Protestant Chapel of St Mark, Nelson Road, Crib Point, Victoria.



**HMAS** *Cerberus* **Protestant Chapel of St Mark, Crib Point, Victoria** *(Photos courtesy of Karen Standen)*

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## **Newspaper Notices**

**DEATHS**

**On Active Service**

McCLURE – On the 1st February, at Naval Hospital, Chatham, England, from pneumonia following influenza, John C. McClure (Jack), Warrant Mechanician H.M.A.S. Sydney, eldest son of Mrs A. McClure, 88 Barkly-street, East Brunswick, brother of Mabel (Mrs J. Higginbottom, West Brunswick), Eva (Mrs A. Cairns), Florrie (Mrs L. de Herville, Adelaide), Chris, late Ernie (killed in action), Harold and Olive, aged 32 years and 10 months. An honourable ending to a perfect life.

McCLURE – On the 1st February, at Naval Hospital, Chatham, England, from pneumonia following influenza, John C. McClure, Warrant Mechanician, H.M.A.S. Sydney, loving nephew of Mrs C. McLeod, 43 Robertson-street, Kensington, and cousin of Mrs H. Squirrell, Jack (returned), Mrs J. Molloy, Mrs G. Hall, Mrs C. Leith, Tom and Teenie.

One of Australia's best.

McCLURE – On the 1st February, at Naval Hospital, Chatham, England, from pneumonia following influenza, John C. (Jack), warrant officer H.M.A.S. Sydney, fond brother-in-law of Mr and Mrs Woodman, Ascot Vale, aged 32 years.

One of the best.

(*The Age*, Melbourne, Victoria – 15 February, 1919)

**IN MEMORIAM**

**On Active Service**

McCLURE – In loving memory of my dear husband, John Cubitt McClure, late warrant mechanician, H.M.A.S. Sydney, who passed away at Chatham Hospital, 1st February, 1918.

Dead, did you day? Nay, only heaven sped,
        Just safe in God's home port.
Lost, did you think? How can such lives be lost ?
        Just gathered up His jewels rare of cost.
Gone ! Nay, just waiting on God's wide shore line,
        The coming of life's vessels, yours and mine,

-Inserted by his loving wife and little son, Jack, Warner-street, Essendon.

(*The Age*, Melbourne, Victoria – 2 February, 1921)
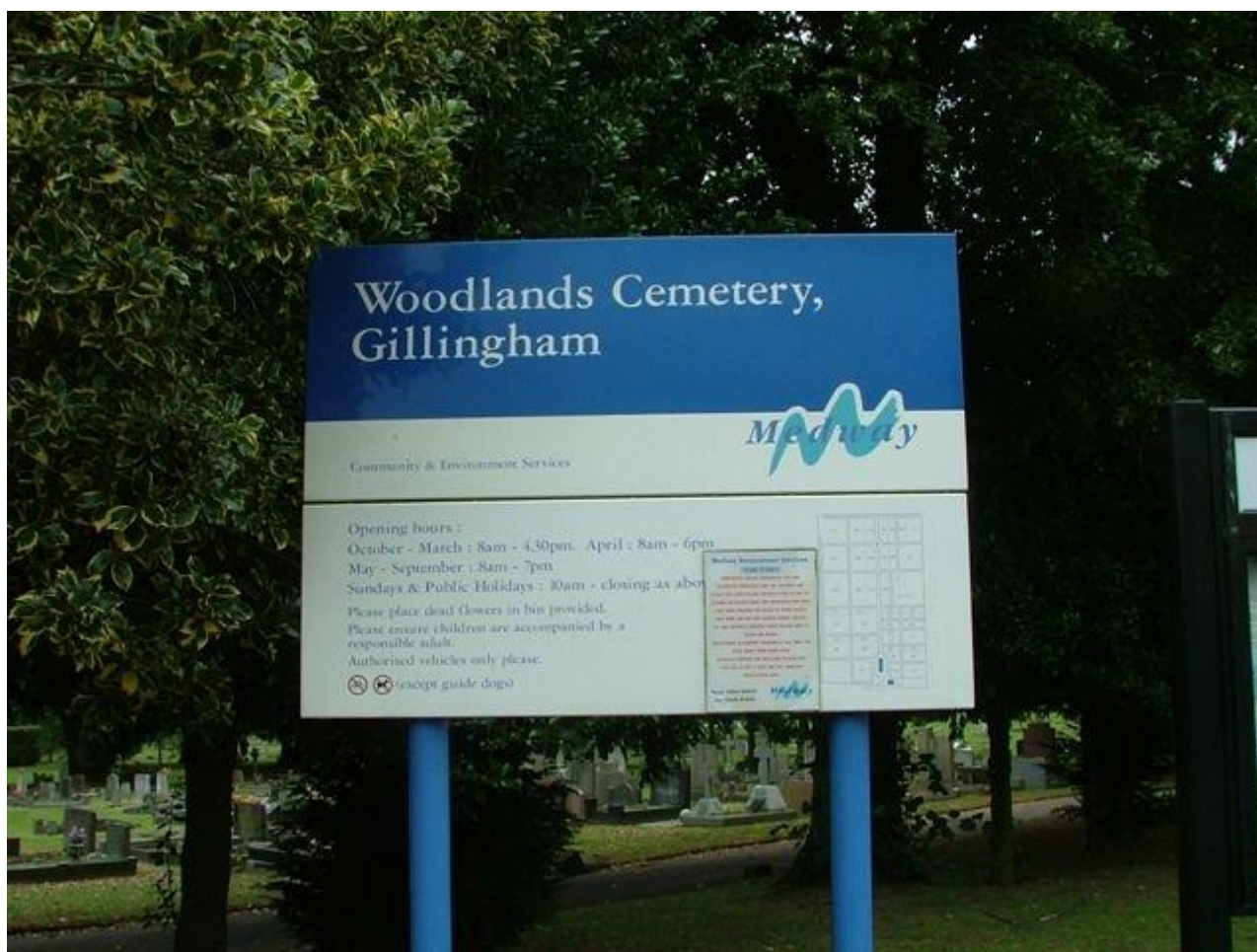
**Woodlands Cemetery, Gillingham Kent, England**

There is a large naval section in Gillingham (Woodlands) Cemetery which was reserved by the Admiralty and served the Royal Naval Hospital in Windmill Road. The section contains most of the war graves as well as burials of the pre-war and inter-war years.

Among the First World War burials in the naval section are those from HMS 'Bulwark', blown up in Sheerness Harbour in November 1914, HMS 'Princess Irene' which suffered an internal explosion in May 1915 and HMS 'Glatton' which suffered the same fate in Dover Harbour in September 1918 (the bodies were not recovered until March 1930). The plot also contains a number of graves resulting from the air raid on Chatham Naval Barracks on 3 September 1917.

In all, Gillingham (Woodlands) Cemetery contains 837 burials and commemorations of the First World War. 82 of the burials are unidentified and there are special memorials commemorating a number of casualties buried in other cemeteries in the area whose graves could not be maintained. Second World War burials number 385, 21 of these burials are unidentified. Most are in the naval section. There are 2 Foreign National war burials and 2 non war service burials.

There are six Australian burials here – two from World War 1 & four from World War 2.

*(Information from CWGC)*



*(Photo from Geoffrey Gillon)*

*(Photos from CWGC)*

Photo of Warrant Mechanic J. McClure's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Woodlands Cemetery, Gillingham Kent, England.

GILLINGHAM (WOODLANDS) CEMETERY

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