

**Brookwood Military Cemetery,
Brookwood, Surrey, England**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



6860 PRIVATE

J. A. MC KEOWN

21ST BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

20TH JUNE, 1918 Age 22

In God We Trust

James Alexander McKEOWN

James Alexander McKeown was born at Springhurst, Victoria in 1895 to parents Robert & Martha Maria McKeown (nee Diffey).

James Alexander McKeown attended Wangaratta High School & Working Mens' College, Melbourne, Victoria.

The 1917 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Fawkner, subdivision of Albert Park, Victoria recorded James Alexander McKeown, Draftsman, 35 Kerferd Rd, Albert Park.

James Alexander McKeown was a 21 year old, single, Draftsman with Victorian Railways from Gapsted P.O., Victoria when he enlisted on 31st January, 1917 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 6860 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr Robert McKeown, Gapsted P.O., Victoria. James McKeown stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served with Senior Cadets for 2 years & with Citizen Forces for 4 years & was still serving.

Private James Alexander McKeown was posted to Recruits Battalion at Royal Park on 14th February, 1917. He was transferred to "A" Company, 2nd Battalion from 19th February, 1917 then transferred to 19th Reinforcements of 21st Battalion from 15th March, 1917.

(Voyage Only) Corporal James Alexander McKeown embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Ascanius (A11)* on 11th May, 1917 with the 21st Infantry Battalion, 19th Reinforcements & disembarked at Devonport, England on 20th July, 1917.

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.

(Voyage Only) Corporal James Alexander McKeown was marched in to 6th Training Battalion at Rollestone, Wiltshire, England on 20th July, 1917. He reverted to rank of Private on marching in from Australia.

Private James Alexander McKeown was appointed Acting Lance Corporal on 29th September, 1917 while posted at 6th Training Battalion. He reverted to ranks on the same day.

Private James Alexander McKeown proceeded overseas to France via Southampton on 4th December, 1917 from 6th Training Battalion. He was marched in to 2nd A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Havre on 5th December, 1917 & joined 21st Battalion in the Field on 11th December, 1917.

Private James Alexander McKeown was wounded in action on 18th May, 1918. He was admitted to 5th Australian Field Ambulance on 18th May, 1918 with shrapnel wound/s to thigh. Private McKeown was transferred & admitted to 1st Canadian General Hospital at Etaples, France on 19th May, 1918 with shrapnel wound/s to both thighs. He embarked for England on 2nd June, 1918 on Hospital Ship *Stad Antwerpen*.

21st Battalion

The 21st Battalion was raised, as part of the 6th Brigade, at Broadmeadows in Victoria in February 1915. Its recruits hailed from all over the state. The later enlistment of these men, and their average age of 29, would seem to indicate a more considered decision to enlist that set them apart from those who did so amidst the heady enthusiasm of late 1914.....

In early May 1917, the battalion fought at Bullecourt, and then in October participated in the 3-kilometre advance that captured Broodseinde Ridge, east of Ypres. Like the rest of the AIF the battalion saw out the year recuperating from the trials of the Ypres sector.

After helping to blunt the German spring offensive of April 1918, the 21st battalion participated in the battles that would mark the beginning of Germany's defeat ' Hamel, Amiens and Mont St. Quentin. The fighting for Mont St Quentin resulted in the battalion's only Victoria Cross, awarded to Sergeant Albert Lowerson.

Like many Australian battalions, the 21st could barely muster a company after the 1918 offensive. It was ordered to disband and reinforce its sister battalions.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

War Diary – 21st Battalion

Line opposite Ville Sur Ancre – 18th May, 1918:

Battalion in Line. No change in Dispositions.

2 O.R. left for Officers' Training Battalion, England.

Intelligence Summary for 6am 17.5.18 to 6am 18.5.18 Appendix 36. Works Report for 24 hours ending 6am 18.5.18 Appendix No. 37.

11 am – Bn Order No, 141 Issued Appendix No. 38

1.10 pm – Bn Order No. 142 Issued Appendix No. 39

Situation Wires to Brigade by Fullerphone, Visual and Message Dog. Appendix No. 40.

3.15 to 4.30 pm – Thunderstorm and heavy fall of rain.

8 pm – Signal Code to be used in attack issued, Appendix No. 41

10 pm – Inter-Company Relief as per Para. 7 of Bn Order No. 141

11.15 pm – Relief Completed. Map 62D.N.E. 1/20,000 marked showing trenches and posts, etc up to 11.30 pm. 18th inst. Appendix No. 42.

11.35 pm – Jumping Off Tape laid out.

Weather – Fina and warm. Heavy thunderstorm during afternoon.

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Private James Alexander McKeown was admitted to 1st London General Hospital, Camberwell, England on 2nd June, 1918 with bullet wounds to both thighs. The Hospital Admissions form recorded "*Fracture of Lt femur in__ction of upper & mid 1/3 with large wound in abductor region on inner side of thigh. 3 secondary haemorrhages. Ligature of common femoral. Commencing gangrene of foot & leg. Septicaemia amputation at site of fracture. Death 18 hours later.*"

Base Records notified Mr R. McKeown, Gapsted P.O., Victoria, father of Private James Alexander McKeown, on 10th June, 1918 that Private J. A. McKeown had been wounded. Mr R. McKeown was notified on 20th June, 1918 that Private James McKeown was reported to be dangerously ill.

Private James Alexander McKeown died at 4. 5 pm on 20th June, 1918 at 1st London General Hospital, Camberwell, England from wounds received in action - bullet wounds to both Legs.

A death for James A. McKeown, aged 22, was registered in the June quarter, 1918 in the district of Lambeth, Greater London, England.

Base Records notified Mr R. McKeown, Gapsted P.O., Victoria, father of Private James Alexander McKeown, on 24th June, 1918 that Private J. A. McKeown had been admitted to 1st London General Hospital, London, England on 2nd June, 1918 suffering from gunshot wound left femur.

Private James Alexander McKeown was buried at 1.30 pm on 25th June, 1918 in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England – Australian Military Burial Ground - Plot number 181, 179.

From the burial report of Private James Alexander McKeown - *Coffin was good polished Elm. The deceased soldier was accorded a Military funeral. The coffin was draped with the Australian Flag and surmounted by several wreaths. Firing Party, Bugler and Pallbearers, were in attendance. The "Last Post" was sounded at the graveside. The grave will be turfed and an oak cross erected by the A.I.F. London. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral.*

Names of relatives & friends present at the Funeral – Cousins – Misses S. & G. Watson, No. 4 Mount Royal, Bangor, Co. Down, Ireland. Mrs Vardy, 40 Leicester Square, London. Mrs T. S Pulford, 41 Hill Street, Berley Square, London.

Base Records wrote to Mr R. McKeown, Boralma, via Springhurst, Victoria on 6th April, 1923 stating that the site of his son's grave in Brookwood Military Cemetery had been officially registered as Plot 4 Row C Grave 9.

This is now recorded by CWGC as Memorial reference – IV. C. 9. Private James Alexander McKeown now has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Notcutt & Purbick, Solicitors, Wangaratta, Victoria wrote to Base Records on 17th August, 1918 requesting, on behalf of the father & mother of the late No. 6860 Private J. A. McKeown, 21st Battalion, an official certificate of death to enable the to prove his Will.

Base Records replied to Notcutt & Purbick, Solicitors, Wangaratta on 3rd September, 1918, enclosing a Certificate of report of death of the late No. 6860 Private James Alexander McKeown, 21st Battalion.

Marth McKeown, Palmerston Railway Station, Gapsted P.O., wrote to Base Records on 8th October, 1918 regarding her son: *"... On behalf of my husband, family & self I desire to sincerely thank you for your kind thoughtfulness in sending full particulars of burial etc. In our natural grief at losing such a fine son – it is a comfort to us to know that every thing possible was done for him. We had letter from the relatives who were at the funeral & they write most highly of the courtesy & kindness extended to them by the Defence Dept. And also of the treatment of Hospital Staff. Again thanking you."*

Probate was granted in Melbourne, Victoria on 27th November, 1918 covering the Will of No 6860 Private James Alexander McKeown, 21st Battalion. His sister – Elizabeth Rose McKeown was bequeathed a gold wristlet watch & the rest & residue of his real & personal estate was bequeathed to his father – Robert McKeown & his mother – Marth McKeown, both of Gapsted, Victoria.

Mr R. McKeown, Boralma, via Springhurst, Victoria, wrote to Base Records in April, 1919 thanking them for the photographs & information regarding the grave of his late son. *".....All through our sorrow the Defence has treated us with kindness & courtesy for which we are sincerely grateful. After my son was buried I received a memo with full particulars of the funeral, giving names & addresses of those who had attended. You will see by above address that we have left Gapsted & are now residing at Boralma. In moving the paper with funeral was lost or mislaid & I am so sorry not to have it. So I would ask as a favor if you could let me have a copy."*

Base Records replied to Mr R. McKeown on 2nd May, 1919 enclosing a report of burial of his son, the late No. 6860 Private J. A. McKeown, 21st Battalion & also noted the change of address.

Private James Alexander McKeown was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private McKeown's father – Mr R. McKeown, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent November, 1922 & Plaque sent December, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private James Alexander McKeown – service number 6860, aged 22, of 21st Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of Robert & Martha Maria McKeown, of Boralma, Springhurst, Victoria, Australia.

Private J. A. McKeown is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 94.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

A. McKeown is remembered on the Gapsted State School Roll of Honour, located in Gapsted Hall, Great Alpine Road, Gapsted, Victoria.

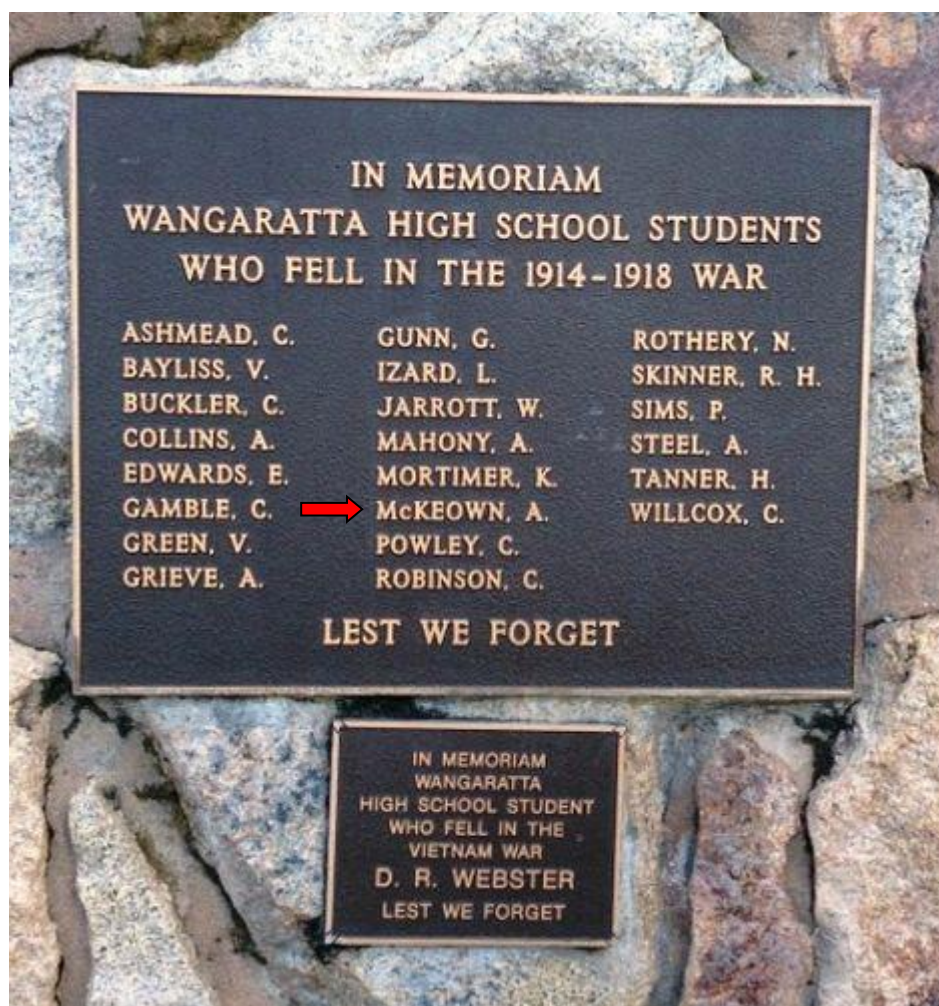


Gapsted State School Roll of Honour (Photo from Monument Australia)

A. McKeown is remembered on the Wangaratta High School Memorial Gates, located at Wangaratta High School, Edwards Street, Wangaratta, Victoria.



Wangaratta High School Memorial Gates (Photos from Monument Australia)



A. McKeown is remembered on the Myrtleford War Memorial, located at Ovens Highway & Clyde Street, Myrtleford, Victoria.



Myrtleford War Memorial (Photo from Monument Australia; panel photo by Tony Ledger)

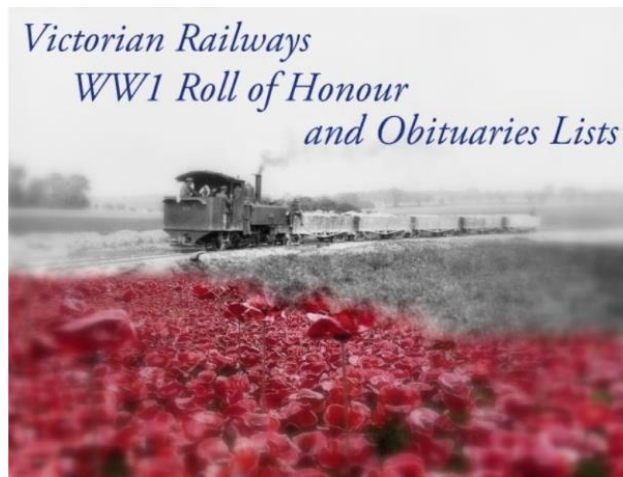
A. McKeown is remembered on the Beechworth Shire Honour Roll, located in Town Hall, Ford Street, Beechworth, Victoria.





Beechworth Shire Honour Roll (Photos from Monument Australia)

James Alexander McKeown is remembered on the Victorian Railways WW1 Roll of Honour and Obituaries Lists.





James Alexander McKEOWN

V.R Employee no: 16059 Way and Works Branch - Apprentice electrical fitter / Draughtsman
Date of Entry into Railways: 3.2 1913

Served in the 21st Battalion, 19th Reinforcement

Regimental number: 6860

Enlistment date: 31 January 1917 [Railway Enlistment list - 1917](#)

Rank on enlistment: Private

Fate: Died of wounds 20 May 1918

Place of death: Surrey, England

Age at death: 22

Place of burial: Brookwood Military Cemetery (Plot IV, Row C, Grave No. 9), Surrey, England

Commemoration details: Panel number, Roll of Honour, Australian War Memorial 94

[Name 1st appears on the Railway Obituary Lists - 1919 McKeown J. A.](#)

Victorian Railways WW1 Roll of Honour and Obituaries Lists

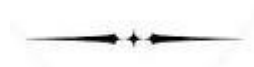
(73 pages of Private James Alexander McKeown's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

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





Private James Alexander McKeown



Newspaper Notices

VICTORIA'S ROLL OF HONOR

411th CASUALTY LIST

WOUNDED

J. A. McKeown, Gapsted

(*The Age*, Melbourne, Victoria – 25 June, 1918)

DIED OF WOUNDS

McKEOWN – On June 20th, 1918, in Hospital, London, from wounds received in France, Pte J. A. McKeown, eldest son of R. and M. McKeown, Palmerston, and brother of Bert, Rob (on active service), and Bessie – aged 22 ½ years.

(Wangaratta Chronicle, Victoria – 29 June, 1918)

DIED ON SERVICE

McKEOWN – James Alexander, officially reported died of wounds on the 20th June, at 1st General Hospital, London, dearly loved eldest son of Robert and Martha, loved brother of Bert, Rob (abroad), and Bessie, grandson of Mrs Diffy, sen.

Sadly missed.

(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria – 12 July, 1918)

THE 415th CASUALTY LIST

VICTORIAN NAMES

DIED OF WOUNDS

Pte J. A. McKeown, Gapsted

(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – 10 July, 1918)

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. A. McKeown does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

In God We Trust

Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England

Located 30 miles from London in Surrey, Brookwood Military Cemetery is the largest CWGC cemetery in the United Kingdom. The cemetery contains the graves of more than 1,600 servicemen of the British Empire in the First World War and over 3,470 from the Second World War.

Brookwood Military Cemetery lies adjacent to Brookwood Cemetery (The London Necropolis), a vast space which covers 500 acres. In 1917, an area to the north of the cemetery was set aside as Brookwood Military Cemetery for men and women of Commonwealth forces who died, many of battle wounds, in the London district. This site was further extended to accommodate Commonwealth casualties of the Second World War. *(Information from CWGC)*

There are 446 Australian War Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery – 351 from World War 1 & 95 from World War 2.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00185

A large crowd attends an A.I.F. military funeral at Brookwood Cemetery. In the foreground wooden crosses mark rows of graves. (Photo c1919)

Identified: Front row, left to right: Second Lieutenant Douglas Abbott Ferguson, Australian Flying Corps, died of accidental injuries 18 August 1918; Lieutenant (Lt) Francis John Smedley MC, 7th Battalion, died of wounds 20 August 1918.

*Second row: **6860 Private (Pte) James Alexander McKeown, 21st Battalion, died of wounds 20 June 1918;** 3622 Pte S T Wilson, 2nd Australian Pioneers, died of wounds 4 July 1918; 2390 Sergeant Frederick Charles Stronell, 21st Battalion, died of wounds 9 July 1918; Lt Arthur Melville Lilburne MC, 6th Brigade Australian Field Artillery, died of disease 11 July 1918.*



Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photo from CWGC)



Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)



Australian Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)





(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)



Australian War Graves *(Photo courtesy of Neil Bright 2020)*

Photo of Private J. A. McKeown's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England.



(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)



(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher – Jan 2021)

