

Sutton Veny War Graves

World War 1



Lest We Forget



4217 PRIVATE

J. R. OWENS

1ST AUSTRALIAN PIONEERS

27TH OCTOBER, 1917 AGE 43

Nearer My God To Thee

Nearer To Thee

CWGC Headstone for Pte J. R. Owens is located in
Grave Plot # 291A. C. 17. of St. John the Evangelist Churchyard, Sutton Veny

James Richard OWENS

James Richard Owens was born in the registration district of Glebe on 4th January, 1874 to parents James & Charlotte Owens (nee Whitton).

James Richard Owens married Caroline Simpson Smith in 1906 in Sydney, NSW.

James Richard Owens was a 43 year old, married, Labourer from 35 Mount Vernon Street, Forest Lodge, Sydney, NSW when he enlisted at Sydney, NSW on 4th April, 1917 with the 1st Pioneer Battalion, 11th Reinforcements of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 4217 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Caroline S. Owens of 35 Mount Vernon Street, Forest Lodge, Sydney, NSW.

Pte Owens was written up for being absent from Piquet at noon on 27th May, 1917 while at Camp in Liverpool, NSW. He was punished by being given one extra piquet. (Piquet – was typically a soldier who is on watch or guard.)

Private James Richard Owens embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Beltana* (A72) on 16th June, 1917 & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 25th August, 1917. Pte Owens had been admitted to the Ship's Hospital for Observation from 23rd June, 1917 and was discharged on 10th July, 1917 (with cystitis).

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 Owens was marched in to Pioneer Training Battalion at Fovant, Wiltshire on 25th August, 1917.

Private James Richard Owens was admitted to the Military Hospital at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire on 25th October, 1917 with Pneumonia.

Private James Richard Owens died at 12.35 p.m. on 27th October, 1917 at the Military Hospital, Sutton Veny of Broncho Pneumonia.

A death for James R. Owens, aged 43, was registered in the December quarter, 1917 in the district of Warminster, Wiltshire.

Private James Richard Owens was buried on 31st October, 1917 in St. John the Evangelist Churchyard at Sutton Veny. From the burial report of Pte Owens - *Coffin was polished Elm mounted and names inscribed. – The funeral was attended by a large number of men of his own Unit, with whom he was very popular, always willing to do his share of the work, and his mates always respected him and knew him as a friend worth having and are consoled by the fact that he was willing to give his life for his country. An oak cross will be erected by A.I.F.*

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Private James Richard Owens contains a letter from the Assistant Matron, Military Hospital at Sutton Veny which reads: "*Pte J. R. Owens died in this Hospital on the 27.11.17. He was only admitted two days before for Pneumonia. I am afraid I cannot tell you very much about him, except that he did not appear to suffer much pain, talked very little, and that the Sister of the Ward did write to his people.*"

Pte James Richard Owens requested in his Will that all his real & personal Estate be left to his wife – Caroline Simpson Owens.

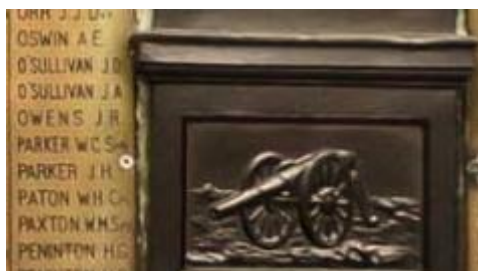
Pte James Richard Owens was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Owens' widow – Mrs C. Owens (Scroll sent June, 1921 & Plaque sent September, 1922). Mrs Caroline Owens had written to Base Records in September, 1923 asking about the Victory medal due to her husband – Pte J. R. Owens. Base Records replied stating that her husband "was not eligible for the issue of the Victory Medal owing to the fact that he did not serve of the strength of a unit in a theatre of war."

Private J. R. Owens is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 172.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

J. R. Owens is remembered on the Glebe Town Hall Honour Roll located in Glebe Town Hall at 160 St. Johns Rd, Glebe, Sydney, NSW.



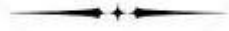
Glebe Town Hall Honour Roll (Photo from War Memorials Register, NSW)

The CWGC lists Private James Richard Owens, 4217, of 1st Australian Pioneers, A.I.F., as the son of James and Charlotte Owens of 8 North Street, Leichhardt, Sydney.

A War Pension was granted to Caroline Simpson Owens, widow of late Pte James Richard Owens, in the sum of £2 per fortnight from 5th January, 1918.

(75 pages of Pte James Richard Owens' Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

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



Newspaper Reports

ROLL OF HONOUR

OWENS – At Salisbury Plain, England, October 27, 1917, of pneumonia, Private James Richard Owens, dearly loved brother of Mr and Mrs B. P. Redding, Yarrunga, Northbridge, North Sydney.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Friday 9 November, 1917)

ROLL OF HONOUR

OWENS – October 27, 1917, Salisbury Plains, England, Private James Richard Owens, of pneumonia, loved brother of Mr and Mrs Owens, Brogo, Roberts Avenue, Randwick.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Saturday 10 November, 1917)

LATEST CASUALTIES

360th and 361st LISTS

NEW SOUTH WALES

Died of Illness

Pte J. R. Owens, Forest Lodge

(The Land, Sydney, NSW – Friday 7 December, 1917)

On Active Service

OWENS – In fond memory of Private James Richard Owens, 4217, 1st Pioneers, who went west October 27, 1917, at Sutton Veny, England. Sadly missed by his wife, Carrie S. Owens.

A long, long night of rest
And with the morning bright,
Reveille with the blest,
Lights out, good night.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Saturday 26 October, 1918)

On Active Service

OWENS – In fond memory of James Richard (Jim) Owens, A.I.F., who lies in the garden of sleep, Sutton Veny, England, passed over October 27, 1917. Gone west. He is not dead; he is just away. Inserted by his sorrowing wife, C.S. Owens.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Monday 27 October, 1919)

On Active Service

OWENS – In loving memory of James Richard (Jim) Owens, who died on service, October 27, 1917, dearly loved husband of Carrie. S. Owens.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Thursday 27 October, 1921)

On Active Service

OWENS – In fond memory of James Richard (Jim) Owens, who gave his life for Empire, October 27, 1917. Still in our hearts we keep those loved ones who have gone the Pilot's road. Inserted by his wife,

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Friday 27 October, 1922)

On Active Service

OWENS – In loving memory of James Richard (Jim) Owens, who reported to his Great Commander, October 27, 1917.

At going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember thee.

Inserted by his wife and mother.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Saturday 27 October, 1923)

On Active Service

OWENS – In loving memory of James Richard (Jim) Owens, who gave his life at the call of duty October 27, 1917.

If his dust is one day lying
In an unfamiliar land.
England, he went for you,
England, sometimes think of him.
Of thousands only one,
At the dawning, and the noonday,
And the setting of the sun,
As once he thought of you.

Inserted by his wife and mother.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Monday 27 October, 1924)

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 at St. John the Evangelist Churchyard at Sutton Veny. 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)

Pte James Richard Owens does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Nearer My God To Thee Nearer To Thee



War Graves at Sutton Veny (Photos from CWGC)



Photo of Private J. R. Owens' CWGC headstone in St. John the Evangelist's Churchyard, Sutton Veny, Wiltshire.



(Photo courtesy of David Milborrow)