

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

**War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**10543 SAPPER**

**G. V. D. PETSCHLER**

**AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS**

**13TH JUNE, 1917 Age 20**

*As You Lie In Peaceful Sleep*

*Your Memory*

*I Will Always Keep*

## Gordon Victor Davidson PETSCHLER

Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler was born in 1899 at Rockdale, Sydney, New South Wales to parents Charles Talbot Petschler & Florence Jane Eliza Petschler (nee Wilson).

Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler attended Rockdale Public School, Rockdale, Sydney, NSW.

Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler married Doris May Whitaker on 20th December, 1915 at St David's Church, Surry Hills, Sydney, NSW. Both fathers consented to the marriage in writing – Charles Talbot Petschler & Samuel John Whitaker.

Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler stated he was aged 18 years & 4 months, married & a Storeman from "St. Elmo," Wollstonecraft, South Sydney, NSW when he enlisted at Liverpool, Sydney, NSW on 4th January, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 10543 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Doris May Petschler, "St. Elmo," Wollstonecraft, South Sydney, NSW. (Note: Wollstonecraft is near North Sydney).

As Gordon Petschler was under the age of 21 his parents were required to sign their consent for their son to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force for Active Service abroad. C. T. Petschler & Mrs C. T. Petschler both signed their names to a letter written on 31st December, 1915: "*I hereby consent to let my son Gordon V D Petschler to enlist in the A I forces for active service.*"

Private Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler was posted to "D" Company, 3rd Battalion on 17th January, 1916 for recruit training. He was transferred to Signal School on 8th February, 1916 then transferred to 3rd Divisional Signal Company on 15th March, 1916 with the rank of Sapper.

Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Ascanius (A11)* on 25th May, 1916 with the 3rd Divisional Signal Company & disembarked on 18th July, 1916.

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.

Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler proceeded overseas to France from England on 22nd November, 1916.

Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler was wounded in action on 7th June, 1917. He was admitted to 56th General Hospital at Etaples, France on 8th June, 1917. Sapper Petschler was transferred to Havre on 9th June, 1917 & embarked for England on 10th June, 1917 on Hospital Ship *Grantully Castle* with G.S.W. (Gunshot wound/s) to Legs – right & left & Head.

### 3rd Divisional Signal Company

Division Signals Companies belonged to the Royal Australian Engineers during WW 1. Later, the Royal Australian Signals Corps was created. The Division Signals Company was tasked with providing communications from the Headquarters to those of subordinate formations. In the case of 2nd Division, this meant the 9th (NSW) 10th (VIC) and 11th (outer states) Brigades and Division units (Artillery, Engineers, Pioneers, MG Battalions and Services etc).

Communications in 1916-18 was largely achieved by a combination of field telephone (requiring the laying of line) and limited radio towards the end of WW1.

At various times homing pigeons and motorcycle despatch riders were also used. On Gallipoli, horses were also used for this high risk task.

Field telephones connected by line were the most usual means of electronic communication. Line was buried where possible but it would often be cut or broken by artillery fire or road traffic. Then it would have to be surface laid to maintain communications. Laying line was one of the most hazardous jobs in the front line. The "Linies" had to move above ground carrying a reel of wire. They could often be the only moving thing on the battlefield and thus attracted fire - both small arms and even artillery fire. Hence the task was often performed at night, with the added risk of

getting disorientated on the battlefield. The "linies" also had the unenviable task of locating and repairing breaks in the line.

"Power buzzers" were also deployed forward to boost the signal being borne by the line. Later when radio began to appear, signallers would have to erect antennas / aerials, often exposing themselves to enemy observation and fire in the process. As antennas are invariably associated with Headquarters they would also attract the unwelcome attention of enemy artillery Forward Observers unless concealed

*(Information compiled by Steve Larkins)*

#### War Diary – 3rd Australian Division Signals Company

*STEENWERCK – 7th June Thursday:*

*Messines Ridge Offensive .....*

*.....*

*BAILLEUL 15th June Friday:*

*Artillery communications in U. 26 area very badly cut by enemy counter battery work. Records as per B.213:- Taken on strength.....*

*From Signal Depot, ABBEVILLE 13/6/17 Spr Earnshaw W.J., Anderson V.R., Singleton G.H.*

*Struck off strength -.....Spr Scull J.S. to C.C.S. wounded 7/6/17, Spr Petschler G.V.D. to C.C.S. wounded 7/6/17, Spr Cox H.E. to C.C.S. wounded 8/6/17.....*

*(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)*

Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler was admitted to Fulham Military Hospital, London, England on 11th June, 1917 with Shrapnel wounds to left Arm, both Legs & Head (slight).

Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler died at 6.20 am on 13th June, 1917 at Fulham Military Hospital, Hammersmith, London, England from wounds received in action in France – multiple & Tetanus. A notification of the death of Sapper Petschler was also sent to Miss A Palmer, Cutrician Street, Croydon (a friend).

A death for Gordon V. D. Petschler, aged 19, was registered in the June quarter, 1917 in the district of Fulham, London, England.

Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler was buried at 1.30 pm on 15th June, 1917 in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England – Australian Military Burial Ground - Plot number 179 415.

*From the burial report of Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler - Coffin was good. Polished Elm. The deceased soldier was buried with Military honours. Firing party furnished by the South African Regt were in attendance. The "Last Post" was sounded at the graveside by a member of the A.I.F. The coffin was shrouded with the Australian flag. The coffin was borne to the graveside by members attached to the Administrative Headquarters, Staff, A.I.F. Chaplain Richard of the A.I.F. officiated at the graveside. No relatives were present at the funeral. Temporary oak cross to be erected by the Commonwealth Military Authorities.*

Base Records wrote to Mrs D. M. Petschler, "Ascanius" 18 Sinclair St., Wollstonecraft, Nth Sydney, NSW on 3rd April, 1923 stating that the site of the late No. 10543 Sapper G. V. D. Petschler's grave in Brookwood Military Cemetery had been officially registered as Plot 11 Row E Grave 2.

This is now recorded by CWGC as Memorial reference – XI. E. 11. Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler now has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The Public Trust Office, Sydney, NSW wrote to Base Records on 3rd July, 1917 requesting a certificate in duplicate of the late 10543 Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler, the address of the deceased prior to enlistment & the name & address of the person nominated as his next of kin.

Base Records replied to the Public Trustee, Sydney, NSW on 28th September, 1917 enclosing a certificate in duplicate of report of death of the late Sapper G.V.D. Petschler & his address prior to enlistment was the same as next-of-kin being "St Almo", King Street Wollstonecraft, North Sydney, NSW.

A War Pension was granted to Doris May Petschler, "Ascanius" Hazelbank Rd, Wollstonecraft, widow of the late Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler in the sum of £2 per fortnight from 16th August, 1917.

A package containing the personal effects of the late Sapper G. V. D. Petschler were posted to Mrs D. M. Petschler, "St Almo", King Street Woolstoncraft, North Sydney, NSW on 8th March, 1918. The inventory list had been addressed to Mrs Doris May Petschler, "Harrington" Ivy Street, Woolstonecroft, Nth Sydney, NSW.

D. M. Petschler, Ascanius, Wyatt Avenue, Burwood, NSW, wrote to Base Records on 20th August, 1921 "*Re- your adv; for next-of-kin of the late Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler No. 10543, 3rd Div Signal Coy. Kindly not I am the widow of the above deceased and my address is as above.*"

Base Records replied to Mrs D. M. Petschler on 22nd August, 1921 advising "the attached sealed envelope was forwarded to this office by the overseas authorities for transmission to you as next-of-kin of the late No. 10543 Sapper G. V. D. Petschler, 3rd Divisional Signal Company. This was previously despatched to your former address and returned unclaimed."

Mrs C. T. Petschler, "Wanganui" No. 58 Gibbs St, Rockdale, Sydney, NSW, wrote to Base Records on 22nd August, 1921 "In response to a recent "*Next of kin*" advert, *I hereby wish to state that I am the mother of the late Sapr G. V. D. Petschler who was wounded at Messines, on the 7th June, 1917 & died in England on the 3 June, 1917.*"

Communications sent to Mrs D. M. Petschler at Ascanius, Wyatt Avenue, Burwood, NSW in April, 1922 were returned to Base Records unclaimed. The King's Message, Brochure & Memorial Scroll were returned to Base Records.

Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Sapper Petschler's widow – Mrs D. M. Petschler, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent April, 1922 was returned & re-despatched May, 1922 & Plaque sent December, 1921).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler – service number 10543, aged 19, of 3rd Signal Coy, Australian Engineers. He was the son of Charles Talbot Petschler and Florence Petschler; husband of D. M. Petschler, of "Ascanius," 18 Sinclair Street, Wollstonecraft, New South Wales.

Sapper G. V. D. Petschler is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 26.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

G. V. D. Petschler is remembered on the North Sydney War Memorial, located in St Leonards Park, Miller Street, North Sydney, NSW.

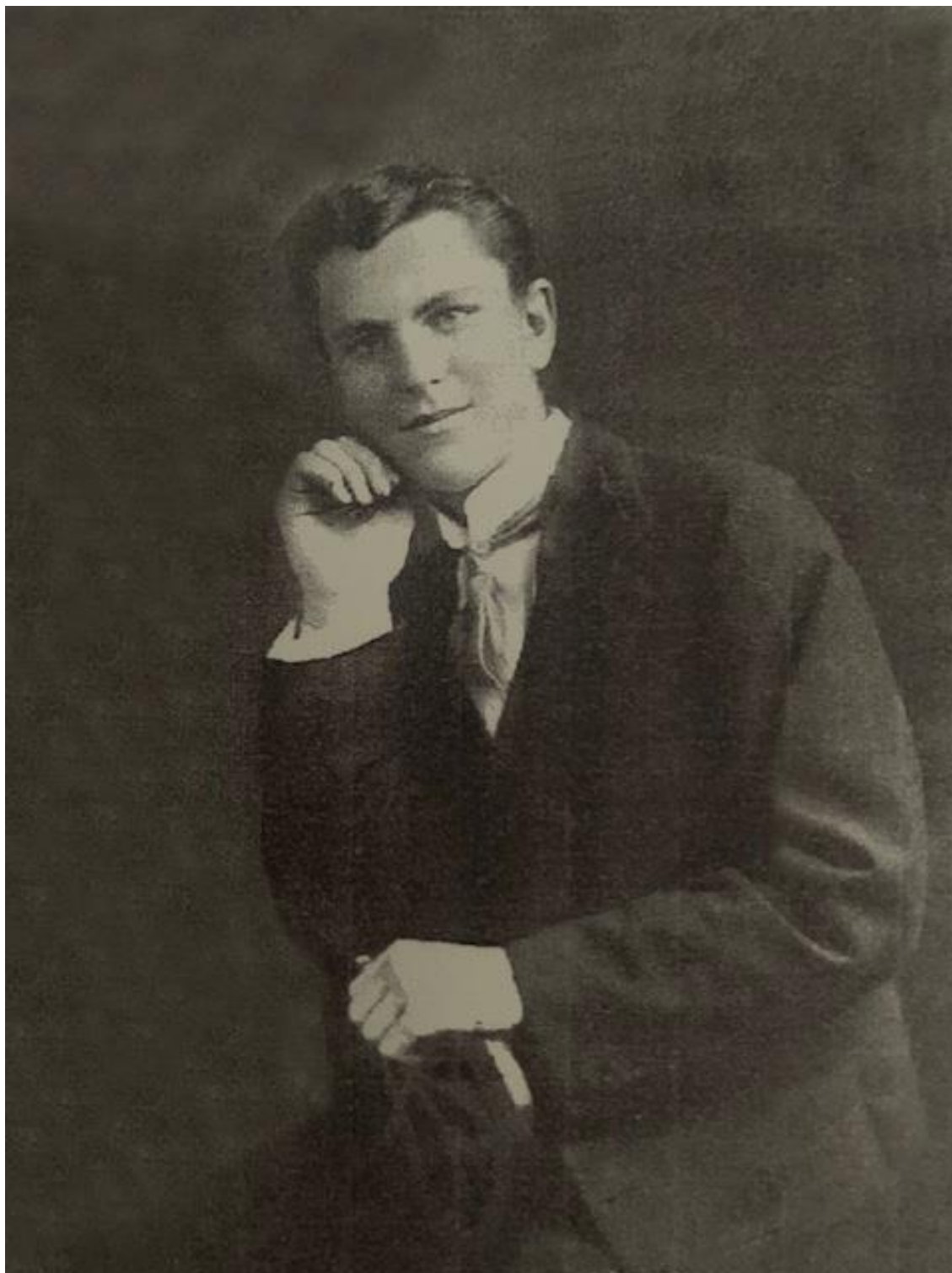


North Sydney War Memorial (Photos from War Memorials Register NSW)



(60 pages of Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler'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, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives*



**Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler**



**Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler**





*Sapper Gordon V. D. Petschler,*

NO. 2 SECTION. 3RD DIVISION SIGNAL COMPANY,  
3RD AUSTRALIAN DIVISION.

*Died of wounds, Fulham Hospital, London.*

*Jan 13th, 1917.*

AGED 17 YEARS.

*Mr. and Mrs. C. F. Petschler and  
Family deeply appreciate your sympathy  
in their sad bereavement.*

"WANGANUL"  
GIBBON STREET,  
ROCHDALE.

Family Bereavement Card for Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler



**Connected to Sapper Gordon Victor Davidson Petschler:**

Older brother – Norman Leslie Petschler – Embarked from Melbourne, on HMAT Ulysses (A38) on 25th October, 1916 as Lieutenant with 2nd Australian Flying Squadron “A” Flight. He was a 24 year old, married, Indentor from “Brabourne,” Ramsgate Road, Kogarah, Sydney, NSW. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs G. E. Petschler.

Appointed Flight Commander & Captain from 21st October, 1917.

Recommended for return to Australia due to Neurasthenia – Flying Stress from 26th May, 1918 due to prolonged flying under active service conditions. Unfit as a Pilot or Observer for more than 6 months. Convalescent treatment required.

Embarked for Australia on 20th October, 1918 & disembarked in Australia on 19th December, 1918.

Entitled to British War Medal & Victory Medal.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

DAAV00041



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **ROLL OF HONOR**

PETSCHLER – Sapper Gordon (Kiddie), of Divisional Signal Company, died in England, June 13th, 1917, multiple gunshot wounds, tenth and youngest son of Mr and Mrs C. T. Petschler, Gibbes St., Rockdale.

At the Gateway of Eternity,

Through the ranks of heroes,

Silently passes the soul of a clear-eyed, laughing lad.

For he was brave – but ah! So young.

*(The Daily Telegraph, Sydney, NSW – 30 June, 1917)*

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### **Australian Casualties**

#### **Lists Nos. 316 and 317**

New South Wales

Died of Wounds

Spr G. V. D. PETCHLER (Wollstonecraft), 13/6/17

*(Australian Town and Country Journal, Sydney, NSW – 4 July, 1917)*

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### **On Active Service**

PETSCHLER – In loving remembrance of Sapper Gordon Petschler (Kiddie), who died of wounds in Fulham Hospital, England, June 13, 1917. Inserted by his loving friends, Mrs and Mr Matthews, Sid, and his pal, Ernie.

*(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 13 June, 1918)*

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### **ROLL OF HONOR**

PETSCHLER – In sad memory of our dear son, Gordon, who died at Fulham Military Hospital, England, June 13th, 1917, from wounds received at Messines, June 7th, aged 17 ½ years, youngest son of Mr and Mrs Petschler, “Wanganui,” Rockdale.

One by one their seats are emptied;

One by one they went away;

Now the dear ones all are scatted

Will they meet again some day ?

PETSCHLER – In loving memory of our dear brother, Sapper G.V.D. Petschler, 2nd Scction, 3rd Divisional Signalling Co., 3rd Australia Division, wounded at Messines, 6th June, 1917. Died, Fulham Hospital, London, 13th June, 1917. Inserted by his loving brother and sister-in-law, Walter Bartley and Jessie Petschler, Helensburgh.

*(The Daily Telegraph, Sydney, NSW – 13 June, 1918)*

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## ROLL OF HONOR

PETSCHLER, Sapper G. V. D. – In loving memory of our dear brother and uncle “Kid,” 2nd Section, 3rd Divisional Signal Co., 3rd Australian Division, wounded at Messines, June 7th, died Fulham Hospital June 13th, 1917. Interred at Brookwood Cemetery, England. Inserted by his loving brother and sister-in-law and little nephew, Bart, Jessie and Gordon.

*(The Daily Telegraph, Sydney, NSW – 13 June, 1919)*

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## ROLL OF HONOR

PETCHLER – In loving memory of our dear son, Gordon Victor Davidson, who died in Fulham Hospital, London, from wounds received at Messines, June 7th, 1917.

He left his home and county, gave his life  
For those whom he had never seen, to save  
In danger's hour from evil's power;  
His brief career is o'er, his course is run.

Inserted by his loving parents.

*(The Daily Telegraph, Sydney, NSW – 14 June, 1919)*

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## 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)*

Sapper G. V. D. Petschler does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*As You Lie In Peaceful Sleep*

*Your Memory I Will Always Keep*

## 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 Sapper G. V. D. Petschler's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England.



*(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)*





(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher – Jan 2021)

