

**Brookwood Military Cemetery,  
Brookwood, Surrey  
War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**59168 PRIVATE**

**A. W. ROBERTS**

**AUSTRALIAN REINFORCEMENT**

**29TH SEPTEMBER, 1918    Age 28**

*Thy Will Be Done*

## Albert Whatman ROBERTS

Albert Whatman Roberts was born at Parramatta, New South Wales on 3rd June, 1890 to parents John and Sarah Roberts (nee Whatman).

Albert Whatman Roberts married Ruby Cooke at Charlestown, New South Wales on 28th February, 1911.

A son - Keith Albert Roberts was born on 17th March, 1912 to parents Albert & Ruby Roberts. Keith Albert Roberts was baptised on 7th May, 1912 at St. Michael's Anglican Church, Wollongong, NSW. Keith Albert Roberts died at Kurri Kurri, New South Wales on 16th May, 1913.

A daughter – Joyce Roberts was born on 10th May, 1914 at Wollongong, NSW to parents Albert & Ruby Roberts. Joyce Roberts was baptised on 7th October, 1914.

A daughter – Neita Roberts was born on 12th October, 1916 at Wollongong, NSW to parents Albert & Ruby Roberts. Nita (name on Baptismal Record Book) Roberts was baptised on 6th December, 1916 at St. Michael's Anglican Church, Wollongong, NSW.

Albert Whatman Roberts joined New South Wales Government Railways & Tramways on 23rd August, 1917 as a Fitter in the Tramways based at Ultimo, Sydney, NSW. He was released on 16th May, 1918 to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force.

Albert Whatman Roberts was a 28 year old, married, Fitter from Annadale, NSW when he enlisted on 11th May, 1918 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 59168 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs R. Roberts, 141 Young Street, Annadale, NSW. Albert Roberts stated he had been an Apprentice with William Davies & Son at Wollongong, NSW for 5 years.

Private Albert Whatman Roberts was posted to Recruits M. & D. Depot on 20th May, 1918. He was transferred to 1st Infantry Depot Battalion – “H” Company at Liverpool, Sydney, NSW on 11th June, 1918.

Private Albert Whatman Roberts embarked from Sydney, New South Wales on HMAT *Borda* (A30) on 17th July, 1918 with the 11th N. (New South Wales) Reinforcements. He was admitted to Ship's Hospital while At Sea on 28th August, 1918 with Febricula (slight & short fever) & was discharged on 31st August, 1918. Private Roberts was admitted to Ship's Hospital on 3rd September, 1918 with Tonsillitis & discharged on 5th September, 1918. Private Roberts was admitted to Ship's Hospital again on 23rd September, 1918 with Bronchitis. He disembarked to Hospital in England on 27th September, 1918 with Bronchitis.

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 Albert Whatman Roberts was admitted to Military Hospital, Gravesend, Kent, England on 27th September, 1918 with Tonsillitis.

Private Albert Whatman Roberts died at 6 pm on 29th September, 1918 at Military Hospital, Gravesend, Kent England from Enteric Fever. The “Morning State of Sick” – Army form A 27 was marked “*No Post Mortem now required - diagnosis “Enteric Fever.”*” A Telegram was sent to Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. on 30th September, 1918 from O. C. Military Hospital, Gravesend stating that “*Private Roberts, A. W. died 29.9.18 at 6 pm obscure Haemorrhage.*”

(Note: A message to be Cabled on 24th October, 1918 regarding the death of Private Roberts, 59168, 11th Rfts General Service reads “*Reference C.I.B.L. 2870 Now Reported Died Rheumatic Fever.*”)

Advice was sent to Mrs R. Roberts, 11 Murray Street, Hamilton, Newcastle, NSW from Base Records on 20th February, 1919 advising “... *I am now in receipt of advice which shows that he died at Military Hospital, Gravesend, England, on 29.9.18 of enteric fever, and was buried on 3.10.18 at Brookwood Cemetery...*” The letter continued with a brief description of the Funeral service.

A death for Albert W. Roberts, aged 28, was registered in the December quarter, 1918 in the district of Gravesend, Kent, England.

Private Albert Whatman Roberts was buried on 3rd October, 1918 in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England – Australian Military Burial Ground - Plot number 181612.

*From the burial report of Private Albert Whatman Roberts - Coffin was good, Polished Elm. The deceased soldier was accorded a Military funeral, Firing Party, Bugler and Pallbearers being in attendance. The coffin was draped with the Australian Flag and the "Last Post" sounded at the graveside. The Rev: S. A. Beveridge C.F. A.I.F. London, conducted the burial service 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.*

Base Records wrote to Mrs R. Roberts, Ida Street, Charlestown, NSW on 3rd April, 1923 stating that the site of Private A. W. Roberts' grave in Brookwood Military Cemetery had been officially registered as Plot 4 Row G Grave 12.

This is now recorded by CWGC as Memorial reference - IV. G. 12.

Private Albert Whatman Roberts has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Private Albert Whatman Roberts contains a letter from E. B. Hill, Matron, Military Hospital, Gravesend which reads: *"Re Pte A. W. Roberts 59168 – Illness and Death. Pte Roberts was admitted to this Hospital from S.S. Borda, on 27-9-18, suffering from Tonsillitis. He had great difficulty swallowing. On the 29-9-18 he suddenly had internal haemorrhage (severe) and died in 5 hours in spite of all our efforts to save him (Enteric Fever). Pte Roberts was buried by the Australian Authorities. I wrote details of illness and death to nearest relation at the time."*

Private Albert Whatman Roberts requested in his Will, dated 9th July, 1918, that in the event of his death the whole of his property & effects be given to his wife – Ruby Roberts, 141 Young St, Annandale, Sydney, NSW.

Mr J. A. Beatson, Wollongong, wrote to Base Records on 10th October, 1918 regarding the death of 59168 Private A. W. Roberts *"The Father of the above named Soldier called at my Office this morning and would feel very grateful if you would kindly forward as soon as possible full particulars of the death of his Son. The Mother is very anxious – the only particulars the Family have received is that the Soldier is dead."*

Base Records replied to Mr Beatson on 18th October, 1918 that *"... the only information received at this Office to date..... is that contained in a brief cable message "died at Gravesend Military Hospital on 29.9.18, haemorrhage. Notification of this casualty was forwarded to the next-of-kin, shown on the records as wife, to whom any further information coming to hand will also be transmitted and will be available to you on enquiry."*

The 2nd Military District, Victoria Barracks, Sydney wrote to Base Records on 11th October, 1918 stating *"With reference to your List BR. 2/498 page two relative to No. 59168 Private Albert Whatman Roberts, 11th (N.S.W.) General Service Refts., for U.K. I desire to inform you the next of kin is untraceable at the address given, please delete from the Press pending an advertisement."*

Base Records replied to 2nd Military District on 25th October, 1918 stating *"...I have to inform you his name has been withheld from press copies of casualty list No. 442 and will appear in official copies only."*

A letter was sent to Base Records on 15th November, 1918 from No. 11 Murray St, Hamilton, Newcastle stating *"Mrs Roberts wrote some time ago for the death certificate of her husband Pte Albert Whatman Roberts, No. 15968 N.11 G.S.R. As she never received an answer we think it may have gone astray. Kindly forward it as soon as possible and oblige yours sincerely Mrs Ruby Roberts c/o per Ethel Newton"*

Private Albert Whatman Roberts 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 Private Roberts' widow – Mrs R. Roberts, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent August, 1922 & Plaque sent November, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Albert Whatman Roberts – service number 59168, aged 28, of Australian General Service Reinforcements. He was the son of John and Sarah Roberts; husband of Ruby Roberts, of Ida St., Charlestown, New South Wales.

A. W. Roberts is remembered on the Wollongong War Memorial Arch, located in Mc Cabe Park, Church Street, Wollongong, NSW.



**Wollongong War Memorial Arch** (Photos from Monument Australia – Graeme Saunders)



A. Roberts is remembered on the NSW Government Railways & Tramways Roll of Honour, located at Country Trains Concourse, Eddy Avenue, Haymarket, Sydney, NSW.



**NSW Government Railways & Tramways Roll of Honour**

*(Photo from AWM – Places of Pride – Peter F. Williams)*





(Photo by Jennifer Edmonds)

A. Roberts is remembered on the Rozelle Tramsheds WW1 Memorial, located at Dalgal Way, Forest Lodge, NSW (side Plaque).



**Rozelle Tramsheds WW1 Memorial** (Photos from The Glebe Society)

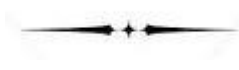
Private A. W. Roberts is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 185.



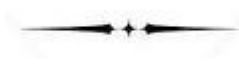
*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

(60 pages of Private Albert Whatman Roberts' 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*



**Private Albert Whatman Roberts**





## **Newspaper Notices**

### **Wedding Bells**

A very pretty wedding took place on February 28th at the residence of Mrs. Cooke, of Charlestown, when Ruby, fifth daughter of Mrs Cooke, and Albert Whatman Roberts, sixth son of ex Constable Roberts, of Wollongong, were united in the holy bonds of matrimony. The Rev. Mr. Stevens was the officiating clergyman. The bride, who was given away by her brother (Mr Fred Cooke), was attended by Miss Florence Roberts, sister of the bridegroom, and Miss Ethel Cooke, sister of the bride. Mr. Cecil Robson, of Rosedale, was best man. The bride was attired in a pretty dress of cream silk, trimmed with silk insertion, and a cream hat to match. The bridesmaids were attired in cream voile, with hats to match. The bridesmaids' presents from the bridegroom were a gold pendant, set with rubies, and a gold brooch. About 40 sat down to break fast, and after the usual toasts were honored, dancing and games were indulged in till morning. The presents were numerous and costly

*(Illawarra Mercury, Wollongong, NSW – 17 March, 1911)*

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### **Roll of Honour**

ROBERTS – In loving memory of my dear husband and our father, Private Albert Roberts, died of sickness abroad September 29, 1918.

When last I saw his smiling face,  
He looked so strong and brave,  
I little thought how soon he'd be  
Laid in a soldier's grave.

Inserted by his loving wife and children, Ruby Roberts, Sydney papers please copy.

*(Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate, NSW – 30 September, 1919)*

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### **ON ACTIVE SERVICE**

ROBERTS – In loving memory of our dear son, Private D. W. Roberts, who died in Gravesend Military Hospital, September 29th, 1918.

Far away from all who loved him,  
    In a hero's grave he lies;  
And although his body resteth,  
    His memory never dies.

Inserted by his loving father and mother John and Sarah Roberts.

ROBERTS - In loving memory of our dear brother, Private A. W. Roberts, who died in Gravesend Military Hospital, September 29th, 1918.

Too far away for sight or speech,  
But not too far for thoughts to reach.

Inserted by his sister and brother-in-law, J. and T. Stevenson, also niece and nephew Edna and Albert, of Leichhardt.

*(South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus, NSW – 1 October, 1920)*

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## **ON ACTIVE SERVICE**

ROBERTS – In loving memory of our dear son, Private Albert Whatman Roberts, who died in Gravesend Military Hospital, on 29th September, 1918.

To-day recalls sad memories

Of our dear one laid to rest.

Inserted by his loving parents, J. and S. Roberts, and sisters and brothers, Flinders street, Wollongong.

*(South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus, NSW – 30 September, 1921)*

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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)*

Private Albert Whatman Roberts does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*Thy Will Be Done*

### **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.

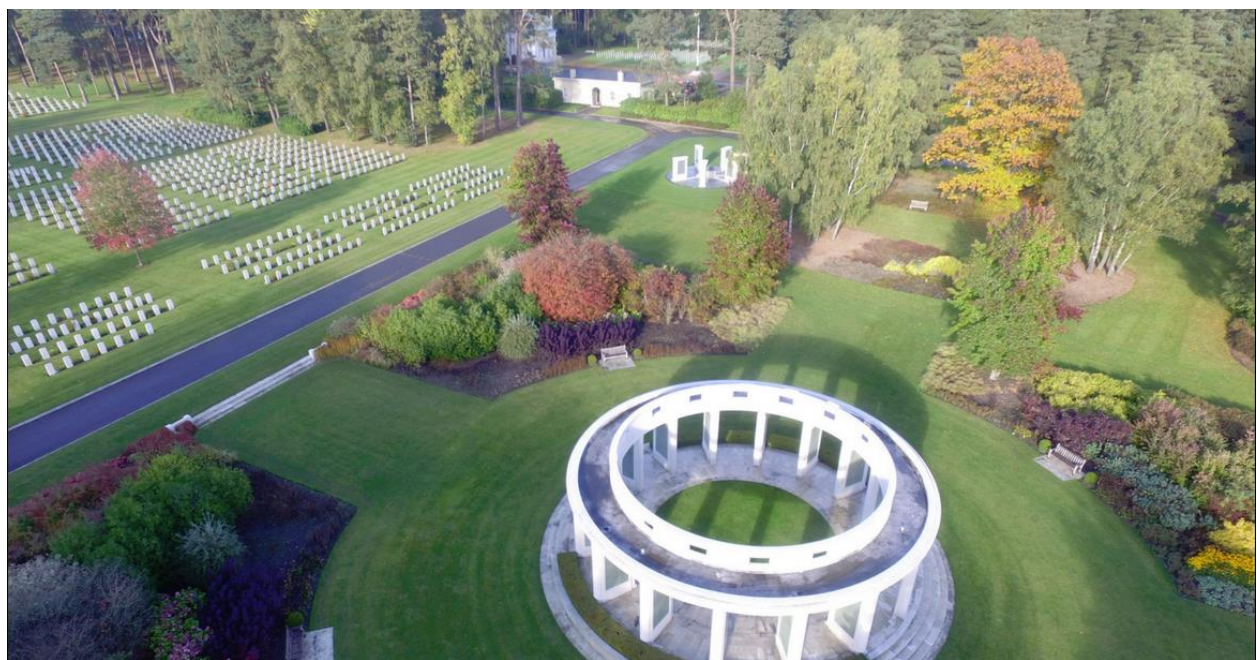


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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*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** (Photo by Magicfingers)



**Australian Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery** (Photo by Magicfingers)



*(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)*



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

Photo of Private A. W. Roberts' Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England.



*(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)*



*(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)*



*(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher – Jan 2021)*

