

**St. George's Churchyard,
Fovant, Wiltshire
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



263 SAPPER

L. ROBERTS

AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS

11TH FEBRUARY, 1919 Age 28

Not Forgotten

By His Loved Ones At Home

Lewis ROBERTS

Lewis Roberts was born at Austinmer, NSW in 1888 to parents Lewis and Mary Roberts (nee Keane/Heane).

Lewis Roberts attended School at Thirroul, NSW.

Lewis Roberts was a 26 year old, single, Miner from Main Road, Thirroul, NSW when he enlisted at Liverpool, Sydney, NSW on 9th April, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 263 & his religion was Methodist. His next of kin was listed as his brother – Mr R. Roberts, of Main Road, Thirroul, NSW. Lewis Roberts stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served 4 years with Militia.

Lewis Roberts was posted with 20th Battalion for recruit training (no date recorded).

Private Lewis Roberts embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Berrima* (A35) on 25th June, 1915 with the 5th Infantry Brigade, 20th Infantry Battalion, "A" Company.

Private Lewis Roberts proceeded to join M.E.F. (Mediterranean Expeditionary Force) at Gallipoli on 16th August, 1915.

Private Lewis Roberts disembarked at Alexandria from Mudros on 9th January, 1916 (after the evacuation from Gallipoli).

Private Lewis Roberts was written up for an Offence – Absent from 7 am on 16th January, 1916 to 7 am on 17th January, 1916 while posted at Tel-el-Kebir. He was awarded 2 days Confined to Barracks & forfeited 1 days' pay.

Private Lewis Roberts was written up for an Offence – Absent from Camp without leave from 10 pm on 12th February, 1916 to 10 pm on 14th February, 1916 while posted at Australia Hill. He was absent for 48 hours & awarded 28 days' Field Punishment No. 2 on 15th February, 1916.

Private Lewis Roberts was transferred to 5th Field Company, Australian Engineers as Sapper on 10th March, 1916 at Moascar & taken on strength from 20th Battalion in France on 11th March, 1916.

Australian Engineers in the First World War

Engineers, also known as sappers, were essential to the running of the war. Without them, other branches of the Allied Forces would have found it difficult to cross the muddy and shell-ravaged ground of the Western Front. Their responsibilities included constructing the lines of defence, temporary bridges, tunnels and trenches, observation posts, roads, railways, communication lines, buildings of all kinds, showers and bathing facilities, and other material and mechanical solutions to the problems associated with fighting in all theatres.

(Description of Engineers Information from The Australian War Memorial)

Sapper Lewis Roberts embarked for Overseas from Alexandria on *Arcadian* on 17th March, 1916 & disembarked at Marseilles, France on 23rd March, 1916.

Sapper Lewis Roberts was sent sick to Hospital on 16th August, 1916. He was admitted to 5th Australian Field Ambulance with Diarrhoea & mental observation on 16th August, 1916. He was transferred to Corps Rest Station & discharged to duty on 21st August, 1916.

Sapper Lewis Roberts was sent sick to Hospital on 12th February, 1917. He was admitted to 6th Australian Field Ambulance with Mumps & transferred to Casualty Mumps Station. He was discharged to duty on 11th May, 1917 & rejoined his Unit in France on 18th May, 1917.

Sapper Lewis Roberts was sent sick to Hospital on 5th January, 1918 in Belgium. He was admitted to 7th Australian Field Ambulance with Diarrhoea & was discharged to duty on 9th January, 1918.

Sapper Lewis Roberts was on leave to England from 13th February, 1918 & rejoined from leave on 28th February, 1918.

Sapper Lewis Roberts was detached for duty as Batman to 4th Army Infantry Coy. Commanders School of Instruction in France on 26th July, 1918.

[Batman - The official term used by the British Army in the First World War was "soldier-servant". Every officer was assigned a servant, usually chosen by the officer from among his men. *Wikipedia*]

Sapper Lewis Roberts was reported to be with his Unit on 19th August, 1918.

Sapper Lewis Roberts rejoined his Unit from detachment in France on 26th August, 1918.

Sapper Lewis Roberts was marched out to A.G.B.D. in France on 24th January, 1919 & was marched in from his Unit to A.G.B.D. (Australian General Base Depot) at Havre, France on 27th January, 1919 for return to Australia. Sapper Roberts was marched out to England on 29th January, 1919.

Sapper Lewis Roberts was admitted to No. 2 Group Hospital at Hurdcott, Wiltshire, England on 2nd February, 1919 with Influenza from Training Brigade Camp. He was transferred to Military Hospital, Fovant, Wiltshire, England on 3rd February, 1919.

Sapper Lewis Roberts died at 17.30 hrs on 11th February, 1919 at Military Hospital, Fovant, Wiltshire, England from Influenza & Broncho Pneumonia.

A death for Lewis Roberts, aged 30, was registered in the March quarter, 1919 in the district of Wilton, Wiltshire, England.

Sapper Lewis Roberts was buried on 15th February, 1919 in St George's Churchyard, Fovant, Wiltshire, England – Plot number I. A. 5. and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Sapper Lewis Roberts - *Coffin was Elm with brass mounts. Deceased was buried with full Military honours the coffin draped with the Australian Flag being borne to the graveside on a Gun-carriage preceded by a Firing Party and Band from No. 4 Command Depot Hurdcott. Six of deceased's late Unit comrades supported the Pall. A large number of Australians followed the remains and were present at the graveside ceremony. Headquarters A.I.F. Depots in United Kingdom were represented at the funeral.*

Sapper Lewis Roberts requested in his Will, dated 10th June, 1917, that all his real estate & personal estate be bequeathed to his dear brother – Robert Roberts, of Thirroul, NSW.

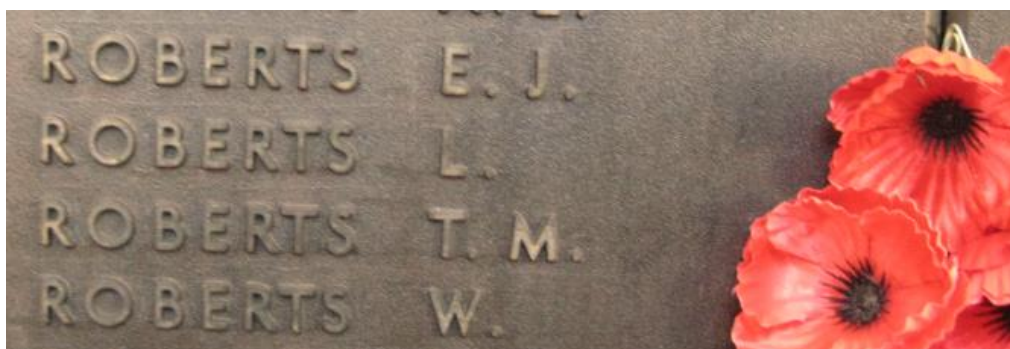
Miss Blanche Symons of 51 Pitt Street, Sydney, wrote to Base Records on 27th February, 1919 enquiring if Sapper Lewis Roberts, 5th Field Engineers, No. 263 had been officially reported "*Died of Influenza*" as she was in receipt of advice stating that but not officially. Miss Symons stated that "*seeing I am his young lady, I would like to know of its true, as I received a number of letters from him yesterday.*" Base Records replied that Sapper L. Roberts had died on 11th February, 1919 at Fovant Camp Military Hospital, England from Broncho-pneumonia.

Base Records contacted Mr Robert Roberts, listed as the brother & next-of-kin of the late Sapper Lewis Roberts, in October, 1920 enquiring if his father & mother were living & if not were there any brothers older than himself due to the "Deceased Soldiers Estates Act 1918" which stated that the War Medals & Mementoes of a deceased soldier were to be handed in the following order of relationship – Widow, eldest surviving son, eldest surviving daughter, father, mother, eldest surviving brother, eldest surviving sister etc. Mr Roberts replied that he was the eldest brother & his parents were both deceased & that he would be "*very pleased to receive medals and other things to which he may be entitled to.*"

Sapper Lewis Roberts was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Sapper Roberts' eldest brother – Mr R. Roberts, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent August, 1921 & Plaque sent October, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Sapper Lewis Roberts – service number 263, aged 28, of 5th Field Coy., Australian Engineers. He was the son of Lewis and Mary Roberts.

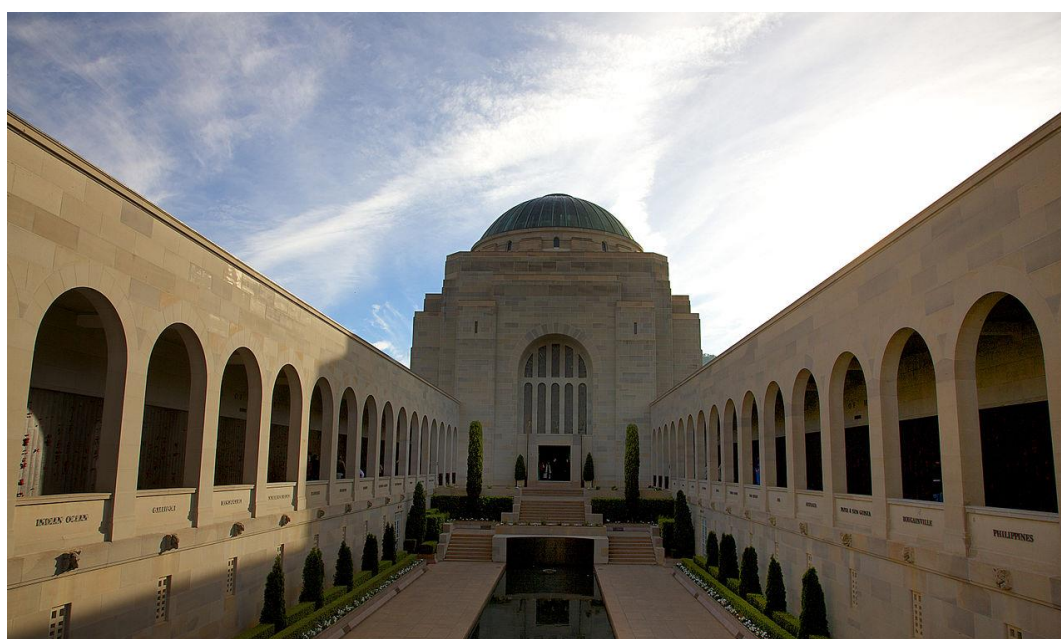
Sapper L. Roberts is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 24.



(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia



Commemorative Area of the Australian War Memorial *(Capital Photographer)*

L. Roberts & his brother - D. Roberts, are both remembered on the Thirroul War Memorial, located in Woodward Memorial Park, Lawrence Hargrave Drive, Thirroul, NSW.



Thirroul War Memorial (Photos from Monument Australia)



Thirroul War Memorial

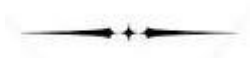
(50 pages of Sapper Lewis Roberts' Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

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



Connected to Sapper Lewis Roberts:

Brother – Private David Roberts, 772, 13th Australian Infantry Battalion – Killed in action on 14th August, 1915 at Gallipoli, Dardanelles, Turkey. Embarked from Melbourne on 22nd December, 1914. Remembered on the Lone Pine Memorial, Turkey as he has no known grave.



Newspaper Notices

SICK SOLDIERS

CASUALTY LIST No. 461

DIED – OTHER CAUSES

Spr. L. ROBERTS, Thirroul (illness)

(The Sun, Sydney, NSW – 18 March, 1919)

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 L. Roberts does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Not Forgotten By His Loved Ones At Home

St George's Churchyard, Fovant, Wiltshire, England

There was a 600 bed hutted military hospital at Fovant during the First World War, and the concentration of Australian depots and training camps in the area is reflected in the 63 First World War burials in this churchyard. The war graves form two groups, one west of the church and the other at the east end. There is also one burial of the Second World War. There are 44 War Graves belonging to those who served with the Australian Imperial Force in World War 1. *(Information from CWGC)*



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00299

(Photo c 1919)



St George's Churchyard, Fovant – War Graves at front *(Churchyard photos courtesy of Andrew Stacey)*



St George's Churchyard, Fovant – War Graves at rear *(Churchyard photos courtesy of Andrew Stacey)*

Photo of Sapper L. Roberts' Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St George's Churchyard, Fovant, Wiltshire, England.



(Photo courtesy of Andrew Stacey)



Cross of Sacrifice (Photo courtesy of Andrew Stacey)