

**St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard,  
Harefield, Middlesex, England  
War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**1931 PRIVATE**

**ROBERT SHOWERS SNADDEN**

**3RD AUSTRALIAN PIONEER BATTALION**

**30TH MAY, 1917 Age 24**

## Robert Showers SNADDEN

Robert Showers Snadden was born at Fitzroy, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia in 1893 to parents Joseph Lander Snadden and Jane Price Snadden (nee Showers).

Robert Showers Snadden attended Gold Street State School, Clifton Hill, Melbourne, Victoria. He then attended Melbourne Continuation School (renamed as Melbourne High School in 1912) from 1907 – 1909. Robert Showers Snadden matriculated from Melbourne University. According to information supplied by his father for the Roll of Honour - Robert Snadden gained a Government Scholarship at State School at the age of 13 years & 10 months.

The 1914, 1915 & 1916 Australian Electoral Rolls for the division of Batman, subdivision of Fitzroy Central, Victoria, recorded Robert Showers Snadden, Clerk from 365 Brunswick St., Fitzroy. Joseph Lander Snadden, Watchmaker & Jane Price Snadden, Home duties, were both listed at the same address.

Robert Showers Snadden was a 22 year old, single, Pay Clerk from 365 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria when he enlisted in Melbourne, Victoria on 26th July, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 1931 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his father – Joseph Snadden, 365 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria. According to information supplied by his father for the Roll of Honour - Robert Snadden was a Lieutenant in Senior Cadets.

Private Robert Showers Snadden was posted to 97 Company Depot on 2nd August, 1915 for recruit training. He was transferred to 105 Company Depot on 14th August, 1915 & promoted to Corporal on 16th August, 1915.

Corporal Robert Showers Snadden was transferred from "O" Company to "Z" Company, 4th Depot Battalion on 11th October, 1915. He was transferred to 5th Field Company Engineers on 11th October, 1915 with the rank of Sapper. Sapper Snadden was transferred to Engineers Reinforcements on 23rd November, 1915 with the rank of Corporal.

Corporal Robert Showers Snadden was promoted to Sergeant on 16th February, 1916 by Company Order 94.

Sergeant Corporal Robert Showers Snadden was to be Acting Company Sergeant Major with 2nd Reinforcements of 3rd Pioneer Battalion (no date recorded).

Private (rank as per Embarkation Roll) Robert Showers Snadden embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Themistocles* (A32) on 28th July, 1916 with the 3rd Pioneer Battalion, 2nd Reinforcements & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 11th September, 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.

### 3rd Pioneer Battalion

The 3rd Pioneer Battalion was an Australian infantry and light engineer unit raised for service during the First World War as part of the all volunteer Australian Imperial Force (AIF). Formed in Victoria in March 1916, the battalion subsequently undertook further training in the United Kingdom before arriving in France in late 1916. It later served on the Western Front in France and Belgium until the end of the war.

The 3rd Pioneers were raised in Victoria, in March 1916, from volunteers drawn from Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia and was subsequently assigned to the 3rd Division.

Trained as infantrymen, the pioneers were tasked with light combat engineer functions in the field, with a large number of personnel possessing trades from civilian life. The concept had existed within the British Indian Army before the war, but was adopted by the Australian Army in early 1916 to meet a need for troops with construction and engineering skills to assist with digging trenches, labouring, constructing strong points and undertaking battlefield clearance. As such, they were designated as pioneer units. At the same time, they could be pressed into the line to fight alongside regular infantry where required.

A total of five pioneer battalions were raised by the AIF during the war, with one being assigned to each of the five infantry divisions that the Australians deployed to the battlefield in France and Belgium. The battalions consisted of

four companies, under a headquarters company. To identify the 3rd Pioneer Battalion's personnel, they were issued with a purple and white Unit Colour Patch. The colours were in common with other Australian pioneer battalions, while the horizontal oval shape denoted that the unit was part of the 3rd Division.

The battalion's first commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel Robert Law, and upon establishment it was decided that the unit would be an "all States" unit, meaning that personnel would not just be drawn exclusively from one particular state, but would instead draw recruits from all around Australia. The headquarters and 'A' Company were recruited from Victoria, and was established at Ascot Vale, before moving to Campbellfield in March, while 'B' Company was composed of New South Welshmen, 'C' Company came from Queensland and 'D' Company was a composite sub-unit drawn from South Australia and Western Australia. After the sub-units had formed in their home locations – Liverpool, Bathurst, Brisbane, Blackboy Hill, and Adelaide – the battalion began concentrating at Campbellfield in April 1916.

Detailed training began at Campbellfield shortly after concentration and in May the battalion marched through the streets of Melbourne, before being presented with its unit colour. They were subsequently laid up at St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne prior to embarkation. They departed Australia on the transport Wandilla on 6 June 1916, and endured a seven-week voyage to the United Kingdom, sailing via Cape Town. After arriving in the United Kingdom, the battalion subsequently concentrated with the rest of the 3rd Division around Larkhill on Salisbury Plain, in Wiltshire. Between July and November 1916, the 3rd Pioneers carried out intensive training to prepare them for their arrival on the Western Front. Finally, on 25 November the battalion entrained at Amesbury bound for Southampton from where they were ferried across the English Channel to Le Havre.

*(Extract of Pioneer Battalion information from Wikipedia)*

Voyage only C.S.M. Robert Showers Snadden reverted to substantive grade of Private on disembarkation on 12th September, 1916.

Private Robert Showers Snadden received extra duty Pay as Acting Sergeant from 12th September, 1916 to 31st October, 1916 & reverted to rank of Private on 1st November, 1916.

Private Robert Showers Snadden was marched in to Pioneer Training Battalion at Larkhill, Wiltshire, England on 18th December, 1916 from No. 4 Command Depot at Weymouth.

Private Robert Showers Snadden was sent sick to Fargo Hospital, Wiltshire on 13th February, 1917 from Pioneer Training Battalion, No 26 Camp, Larkhill.

Private Robert Showers Snadden was admitted to No. Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield, Middlesex, England on 21st February, 1917 with Tubercle Lungs.

Private Robert Showers Snadden was reported to be seriously ill on 22nd February, 1917.

Private Robert Showers Snadden was classified C3 - "*Chronic Bronchitis & Cardiac insuf*" on 2nd March, 1917.

Base Records contacted Mr J. Snadden, 365 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria, on 13th March, 1917 to advise that his son, No. 1931 Company Sergeant Major R. S. Snadden, 3rd Pioneer Battalion had been admitted to the Fargo Military Hospital on 22nd February, 1917 suffering from tuberculosis of the lung – severe. Mr Snadden was advised on 17th March, 1917 that his son's condition was stationary & the same on 12th April, 1917.

Base Records advised Mr J. Snadden, 365 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria, on 25th April, 1917 that No. 1931 Company Sergeant Major R. S. Snadden, 3rd Pioneer Battalion, had been pronounced out of danger. Mr Snadden was advised again on 27th April that Company Sergeant Major R. S. Snadden was improving & again on 5th May, 1917 that he was still improving. He was advised on 9th May, 1917 that Company Sergeant Major R. S. Snadden was pronounced out of danger.

Mr J. Snadden, 365 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria, was advised by Base Records on 11th May, 1917 that No. 1931 A/Company Sergt. Major R. S. Snadden, 3rd Pioneers, was progressing favourably. He was advised again on 19th May, 1917 that A/Company Sergeant Major R. S. Snadden was seriously ill.

A Medical Report was completed on C.S.M. Robert Showers Snadden on 25th March, 1917 while a patient at No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield, England. His disability was listed as Tubercle Lungs which had first occurred in September, 1916 at Perham Downs, Salisbury where he was *"sick, with cold, on Sept 13th 1916. Sent to Delhi Hospital for 14 days. Sent to Wareham - there five weeks - thence to Lark Hill about 18th Decr 1916. Sent to Fargo Hosp Feb. 13th transferred to Harefield on Feb. 21st 1917."* The Medical Officer in charge of the case stated the disability was caused from Exposure & infection while on active service. C.S.M. Snadden's present condition was described as *"Very emaciated & tendency to a bed sore over \_\_\_\_\_. Very advanced signs off T.B. in both lungs with signs of a large cavity in left lung. T.B. in sputem."* The Medical Board found on 17th April, 1917 that C.S.M. Snadden's disability was permanent & that he was found to be permanently unfit for General & Home Service.

Private Robert Showers Snadden died at 8.30 pm on 30th May, 1917 at 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield Park, Harefield, Middlesex, England from Tubercle of Lung.

A death for Robert S. Snadden, aged 24, was registered in the June quarter, 1917 in the district of Uxbridge, Middlesex, England.

Private Robert Showers Snadden was buried on 2nd June, 1917 in St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England – Grave number 22. From the burial report of Private Snadden – Buried with military honours. Coffin draped with Union Jack and borne tin procession on Gun Carriage. Hospital Band in attendance, also Firing Party. Service in the Parish Church and at Graveside. *"Last Post" sounded by Australian Trumpeter. Funeral attended by Mr F. W. Showers (of Gt Western Railway) (his cousin). It is proposed to erect a permanent memorial to each patient or member of the Staff dying in this hospital from a fund established for this purpose with the 1st A.A.H.*

Base Records wrote to Mr J. Snadden, 365 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria on 23rd April, 1920 in regards to his son the late No. 1931 Private R. S. Snadden, 3rd Pioneer Battalion to advise that they were *"...in receipt of further advice which shows that his remains have been exhumed from former site, Parish Churchyard, Harefield, and re-interred in grave No. 28 in the Australian Section of the same Churchyard. This work is carried out with every measure of care and reverence in the presence of a Chaplain."*

Mr J. Snadden, 365 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria wrote to Base Records on 27th May, 1922 stating that he was in receipt of papers, Memorial Scroll & King's Message in regards to the death of his son. "What I wish to draw your attention to is that when he did Home Service he rose to the rank of Company Sergt. Major when he arrived home he was titled Act. Segrt. Major which is placed on his tomb stone at Harefield Cemetery by the papers received he is titled Private. Of course it makes no difference now he is gone but if was entitled to the term Act. Sergt. Major at his death I would like it to be placed on any papers that may follow...."

Base Records replied to Mr J. Snadden, 365 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria on 30th May, 1922, stating that *"according to the records, your son, the late No. 1931 R. S. Snadden, 3rd Pioneer Battalion, on embarkation for service abroad held the rank of "Company Sergeant Major" (for voyage only) and reverted to "Private" on disembarkation. The rank of "A/Company Sergeant Major" was later incorrectly quoted. For your information I would advise that the Memorial Scroll is inscribed with the rank held by your son at the date of death, namely :- "Private". This rank will also be engraved on the permanent headstone"*

Private Robert Showers Snadden 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 Snadden's father –Mr J. Snadden, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent May, 1922 & Plaque sent June, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Robert Showers Snadden – service number 1931, aged 24, of 3rd Australian Pioneers. He was the son of Joseph Lander Snadden and Jane Price Snadden, of Fitzroy, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

C.Sergeant-Major Robert Snadden is remembered in the Melbourne High School Honour Roll book which is on display in the foyer of the school. The Memorial Hall is behind & is a Memorial to the Old Boys and Staff who served in WWI (the school moved in 1927 to a new site).

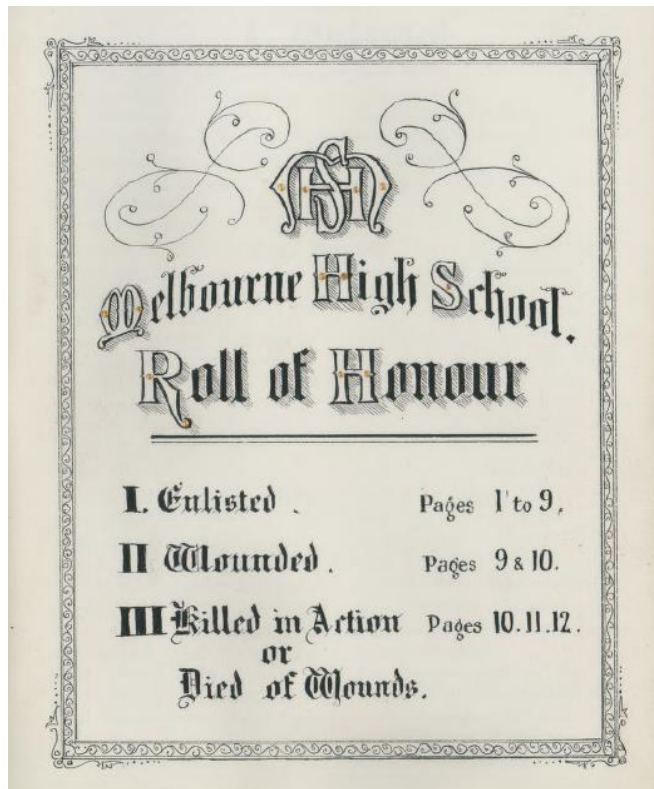
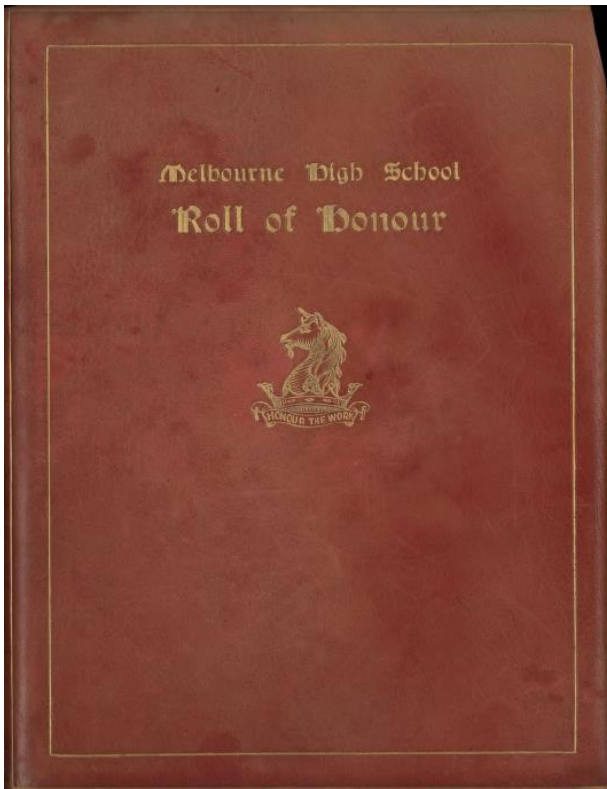
There are 9 former Students of Melbourne High School who served in World War 1 & who are buried in the UK.



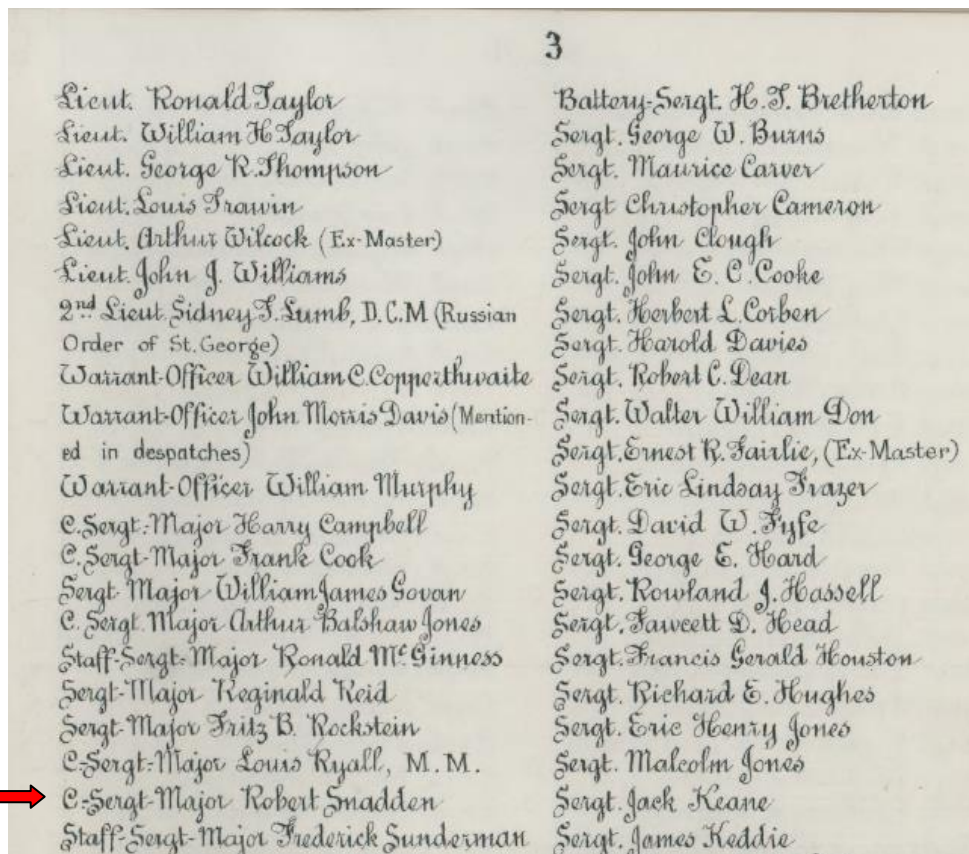
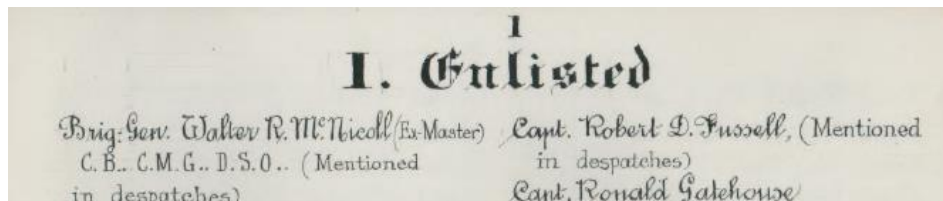
**Melbourne High School Honour Roll Book**



**Melbourne High School Memorial Hall**



C.-Sergt. Major Robert Snadden is named in the Melbourn High School Honour Roll Book – under those who I. Enlisted (page 3) & under those III. Killed in Action or Died of Wounds (page 11).



### III. Killed in Action or Died of Wounds.

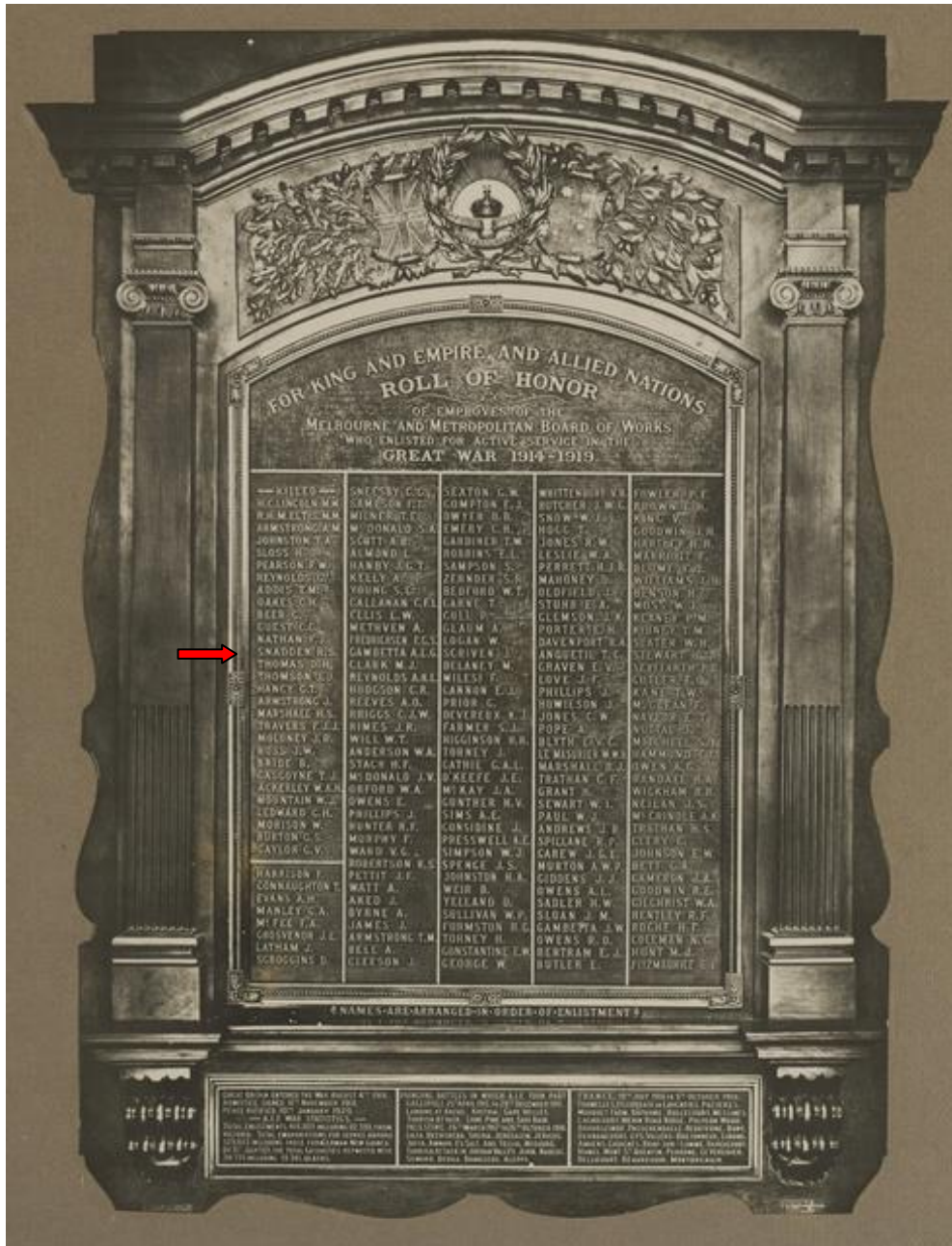
" They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old,  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn,  
At the going down of the Sun and in the morning,  
We will remember them "

Major William A Reginald Peart  
Capt. Charles Aibloster  
Capt. Arnold Bretherton  
Capt. Charles Lale  
Capt. Alfred Glendinning  
Capt. Eric C. Hogoath  
Capt. W. R. Hoggart, (Ex-Master)  
Capt. George E. James  
Capt. Aubrey Liddelow (Ex-Master)  
Capt. Howard Williamson  
Capt. Alfred Williamson (Ex-Master)  
Lieut. Ivon E. Bromilow

E. Sergt. Major Robert Snadden  
Staff-Sergt. William Pennington  
Sergt. Leo A. Conroy  
Sergt. Harold Davies  
Sergt. Ronald M. Doull  
Sergt. Ernest R. Fairlie (Ex-Master)  
Sergt. Francis Gerald Houston  
Sergt. Richard E. Hughes  
Sergt. Malcolm Jones  
Sergt. Herbert Jones  
Sergt. Ralph Leyland  
Sergt. Francis H. Sebire  
Sergt. Ernest Ralph Smith M.M.  
Sergt. William G. Spencer  
Capt. William John Armstrong  
Pte. Patrick J. Cunningham  
Pte. Harold Davies  
Pte. Marc Doyle  
Pte. Eric Gordon Drummond  
Pte. Victor Green  
Pte. Joshua Grigg  
Pte. Archibald Haddock  
Pte. Joseph A.G. Heritage  
Pte. Douglas G. Hunter  
Pte. Reginald Kelly  
Pte. W. Harold Ladd  
Pte. Stanley Lever  
Pte. Thomas W. Siddell  
Pte. Jack Maddern  
Pte. John Herbert Martin

(Melbourne High School information & photos courtesy of Luke Savage, Honorary School Archivist, Melbourne High School)

R. S. Snadden is remembered on the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Roll of Honour. The names are arranged in order of enlistment.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P01 222.001

Private R. S. Snadden is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 173.



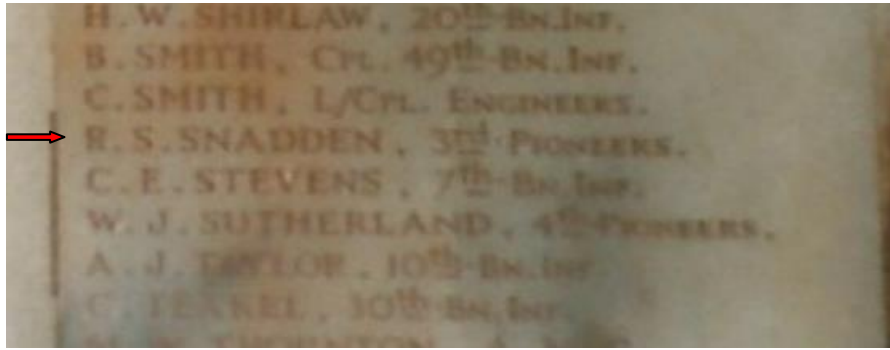
Roll of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

R. S. Snadden is remembered on the Australian Soldiers' Memorial in St. Mary the Virgin Church, Church Hill, Harefield, Middlesex, England.



Australian Soldiers' Memorial, Harefield (Photo from War Memorials Online – B. Wood)





**Australian Soldiers' Memorial, Harefield**

(77 pages of Private Robert Showers Snadden'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



**Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works c 1920**

(Photo from Museums Victoria - <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/2095631>)



R. S. Snadden

### **Newspaper Notices**

A Fitzroy enlistment – Robert Showers Snadden, 22, youngest son of Cr. J. L. Snadden, J.P. He has a good record in matters educational. At the age of 14 he obtained a scholarship under Mr Lumsden, Gold-street State School Clifton Hill, entitling him to a studentship at Melbourne University, where he matriculated. Passed Junior and Senior Public Service exams, and five years back joined the clerical branch of the Metropolitan Board of Works, where he has put in good work. Robert will doubtless make a fine soldier, and give a creditable account of himself when he starts in search of the killing Kaiser.

(*Fitzroy City Press*, Victoria – 28 August, 1915)

---

### **CASUALTIES ABROAD**

The military authorities have notified Mr and Mrs J. L. Snadden, Brunswick-street, Fitzroy, that their son, Sergeant-Major R. S. Snadden, has been admitted to the Fargo Military Hospital, Salisbury Plains, suffering from tuberculosis of the lung.

(*The Argus*, Melbourne, Victoria – 23 March, 1917)

---

### **AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES**

#### **287th CASUALTY LIST**

#### **DANGEROUSLY ILL**

Cpl. D. Stewart, Sunshine; C.S.M. R. S. Snadden, Fitzroy

(*Bendigo Advertiser*, Victoria – 17 April, 1917)

---

## **DIED ON SERVICE**

SNADDEN – On the 30th May, at 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, England, C.S.M. Robert Showers Snadden, youngest son of Joseph L. and J. P. Snadden, Brunswick street, Fitzroy; brother of J. L., Ballarat.

For King and country

His life was gentle, and the elements so mixed  
in him that Nature might stand up and say  
to all the world, "This was a man."

(*The Argus*, Melbourne, Victoria – 9 June, 1917) & (*The Age*, Melbourne, Victoria – 9 June, 1917)

---

## **FITZROY CITY COUNCIL**

The usual Fortnightly Meeting of this Council was held on Monday evening last.....

Letters of Sympathy

The late Private R. S. Snadden – Cr. Boell moved – That a letter of condolence be sent to ex-Cr. Snadden, whose son, Private Robert Showers Snadden, had died of illness in camp in England, while on active service. Seconded by Cr. Green, and carried.

.....

(*Fitzroy City Press*, Victoria – 16 June, 1917)

---

## **ON THE FIELD OF HONOR**

### **312TH OFFICIAL LIST**

#### **DIED OF ILLNESS**

Victoria – C.S.M. Snadden, R. S. Fitzroy

(*Bendigo Advertiser*, Victoria – 19 June, 1917)

---

## **DEATH OF SERGEANT-MAJOR SNADDEN**

Mrs. J. L. Snadden (wife of ex- Cr. Snadden, J.P., Brunswick-st., Fitzroy, one of our most respected public residents) has received a letter from her cousin in England, containing a few particulars relative to the burial of Sergt.-Major R. Showers Snadden, youngest son of the lady and gentleman named, who died from illness in England. Sergeant-Major Snadden was well known in Fitzroy, and when in Melbourne was an esteemed employee at the office of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. The letter says :

"I am very sorry that the cause of my writing to you should be such a sad one. Long before you receive this you will know that poor Rob passed away on Wednesday, 30th May, at Harefield Hospital, and was buried on Saturday, the 2nd inst., in the churchyard at Harefield. I was proud and glad to be able to attend the funeral as next of kin in England, and I only wish I could convey to you something of the impressiveness of the splendid last rites they gave him. It was a full military funeral; the coffin which was carried on a gun carriage, was wrapped in a Union Jack and covered with wreaths, one of which was from the High Commissioner and Mrs. Fisher, and another from the owner of Harefield Hall (the hospital), Mr. Billyan Leake, who is, I understand, an Australian. The church must be nearly a mile from the hospital, and the procession was headed by an English firing party, followed by an Australian band, which played the Dead March in Saul. Next came the chaplain, Capt. Gregor McGregor, D.S.C., then the coffin on a

gun carriage, with the bearers, Australian sergeants on either side. The head quarters' representative walked with me, and a detachment of Australian soldiers brought up the rear. There was a short service at the church, including an address by the Chaplain, which included appropriate references to Rob. I wish you could have heard them. The organ at church was played by an Australian soldier, and it was good to hear the fine singing of the hymn by your soldiers. The committal service at the grave was followed by three volleys and the Last Post played by an Australian bugler. This is a very bald description, but nothing less than the actual scene could impress one with the full force of the words we now so often hear, 'In glad and loving memory.' "

*(Fitzroy City Press, Victoria – 15 September, 1917)*

---

### 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)*

### **St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England**

St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield contains 126 Commonwealth War Graves.

During the two world wars, the United Kingdom became an island fortress used for training troops and launching land, sea and air operations around the globe. There are more than 170,000 Commonwealth war graves in the United Kingdom, many being those of servicemen and women killed on active service, or who later succumbed to wounds. Others died in training accidents, or because of sickness or disease. The graves, many of them privately owned and marked by private memorials, will be found in more than 12,000 cemeteries and churchyards.

Harefield (St. Mary) Churchyard contains war graves from both world wars. There are 120 First World War graves, mostly those of Australians who died in No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield Park. Uniquely, their graves are marked by scroll shaped headstones, chosen by the staff and patients at the hospital. In the centre of the Australian plot stands a memorial obelisk which was erected by Sir Francis Newdegate, late Governor of Tasmania and of Western Australia, and Mr. C.A.M. Billyard-Leake, of Harefield Park. The churchyard also contains six graves of the Second World War.

*(Information & photos from CWGC)*



**St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield**



**St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield**



St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield



Photo of Private Robert Showers Snadden's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England.

*(Note: The Headstone shows the rank of C.S.M. – a rank he held for Voyage only then on arriving in England he reverted to the rank of Private)*



*(Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)*



**St Mary the Virgin Church, Harefield** (Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)



**St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield** (Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)





St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield (Photos courtesy of Peter Bennett)

