

**Kingston Cemetery,  
Portsmouth, Hampshire  
War Grave**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**3853 CORPORAL**

**H. TOWNSING**

**4TH AUSTRALIAN PIONEERS**

**19TH AUGUST, 1916**

## Herbert TOWNSING

Herbert Valentine Townsing was born at Avoca, near Ampitheatre, Victoria on 17th November, 1885 to parents George Easmus Townsing & Ellenor Townsing (nee Webster). His birth was registered in 1886.

George Easmus Townsing, father of Herbert Townsing, died on 28th July, 1895 at Ampitheatre, Victoria.

Herbert V. Townsing married Mary A. K. Duncum in 1909 in the district of Murchison, Western Australia.

A birth was registered in 1910 in the district of Murchison, Western Australia for Vera L. Townsing, parents Herbert & Molly Townsing.

Herbert Townsing was a 29 year old, married Labourer from 61 Stirling Street, Perth, Western Australia when he enlisted at Black Boy Hill, Western Australia on 27th August, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 3853 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Molly Townsing of 61 Stirling Street, Perth, Western Australia.

Private Herbert Townsing was posted to 26th Depot on 27th August, 1915 for recruit training. He was transferred to 12th Reinforcements of 12th Infantry Battalion on 16th October, 1915.

Private Herbert Townsing embarked from Fremantle, Western Australia on HMAT *Ajana* (A31) on 17th December, 1915 with the 12th Infantry Battalion, 12th Reinforcements.

Private Herbert Townsing was allotted to and proceeded to join 52nd Battalion from Zeitoun on 3rd March, 1916.

Private Herbert Townsing was transferred to 4th Division Pioneer Battalion at Tel-el-Kebir on 16th March, 1916. He was taken on strength of 4th Pioneer Battalion on 16th March, 1916.

### 4th Pioneer Battalion

The 4th Pioneers were established on 10 March 1916, at Tel-el-Kebir in Egypt, and were subsequently assigned to the 4th Division. Trained as infantrymen, they were also tasked with some engineer functions, with a large number of personnel possessing trade qualifications from civilian life. As such, they were designated as pioneer units. In early 1916, the Australian Army was reorganised ahead of its transfer to the Western Front in Europe. A total of five pioneer battalions were raised by the A.I.F. at this time, with one being assigned to each of the five infantry divisions that the Australians deployed to the battlefield in France and Belgium. Tasked with digging trenches, labouring, constructing strong points and light railways, and undertaking battlefield clearance, the troops assigned to the pioneers required construction and engineering experience in addition to basic soldiering skills.

*(Pioneer Battalion information from Wikipedia)*

Private Herbert Townsing was to be Temporary Corporal from 14th April, 1916 while posted at Serapeum.

Temporary Corporal Herbert Townsing was promoted to Corporal on 27th May, 1916 while posted at Merris.

Corporal Herbert Townsing proceeded to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) from Alexandria on 4th June, 1916 on Troopship *Scotian*. He disembarked at Marseilles, France on 11th June, 1916.

Corporal Herbert Townsing was wounded in the back in France on 8th August, 1916\*. (\* Note - War Diary records that Corporal Townsing was wounded on 7th August, 1916, however the Casualty Form – Active Service incorrectly records the date as the 9th August, 1916). He was transferred & admitted to 2nd Australian General Hospital at Wimereux on 10th August, 1916. Corporal Townsing embarked for England on Hospital Ship St. Denis from Boulogne on 11th August, 1916 with shrapnel wounds to his back.

### War Diary – 4th Australian Pioneer Battalion

#### *List of Casualties*

*August 8 – 3853 Cpl. Townsing H., Wounded (H G) back.* (War Diary information from the Australian War Memorial)

Corporal Herbert Townsing was admitted to 5th Southern General Hospital, England on 12th August, 1916 with shrapnel wounds to back & was reported as serious.

Corporal Herbert Townsing died on 19th August, 1916 at General Hospital, Fratton Bridge, Portsmouth, Hampshire, England from gunshot wounds to back received in action in France. Form A. R. 93 in the Service Record file records Corporal Townsing as "Sergeant". Later, packages containing the personal effects despatched to his widow refer to "Sgt. H. Townsing". The Field Service form B. 2090A refers to "Corporal Herbert Townsing." Subsequently the District Paymaster for 5th Military District contacted Base Records in December, 1916 to enquire if there was any record of promotion to Sergeant for No. 3853 H. Townsing, 4th Pioneers. A reply was sent by Base Records in January, 1917 stating that the rank of Corporal was confirmed on 27th May, 1916 and "*the only record of his promotion to "Sergeant" is in cable dated London 18/8/16 reporting casualty.*"

A death for Herbert Townsing, aged 30, was registered in the September quarter, 1916 in the district of Portsmouth, Hampshire, England.

Corporal Herbert Townsing was buried in Kingston Cemetery, (also known as Portsea Cemetery or St. Marys Road Cemetery) Portsmouth, Hampshire, England – Reference – Good's 11. 8 1/2 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Base Records wrote to the Deputy Commissioner of Pensions, Perth, Western Australia in September, 1922 to obtain the latest address of the widow of 2853 Sergeant H. Townsing, 4th Pioneer Battalion as communications forwarded to her last known address at Frazer Street, Bunbury, Western Australian had been returned unclaimed. Base Records were enquiring into Mrs Townsing's new address in order to send her late husband's War Medals. A reply was sent from Deputy Commissioner stating that the last known address of Mrs Townsing was c/o Post Office, Wyalcatchem, Western Australia.

Corporal Herbert Townsing was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Corporal Townsing's widow – Mrs M. Townsing, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent December, 1922 & Plaque sent November, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Corporal Herbert Townsing – service number 3853, of 4th Australian Pioneers. No family details are listed.

Corporal H. Townsing is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 174.



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

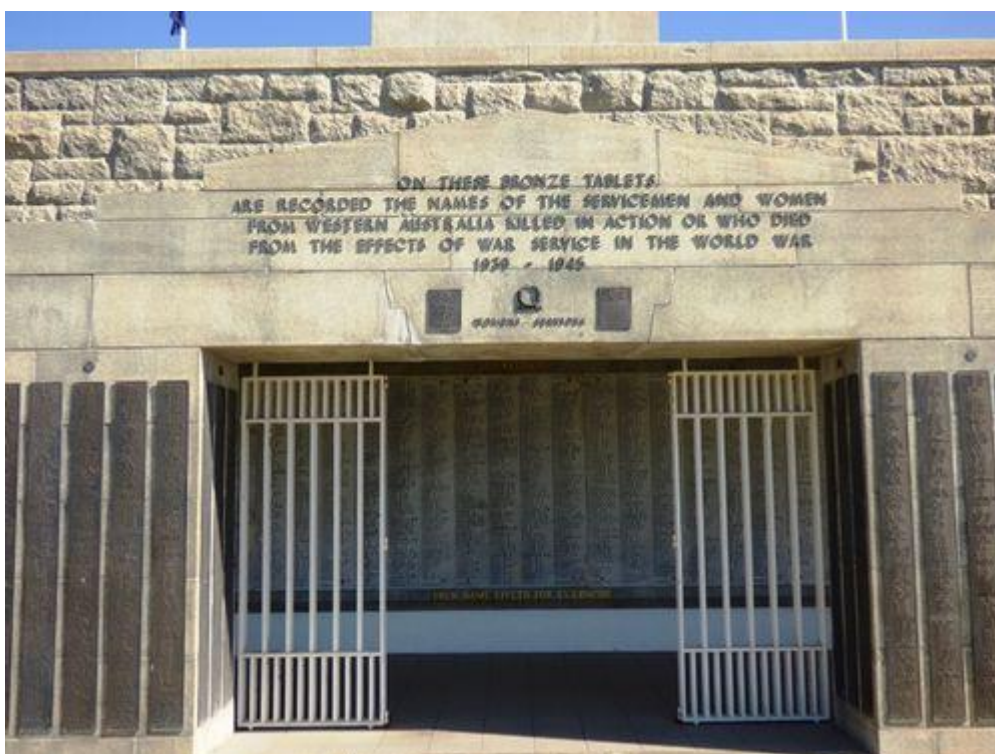
H. Townsing is remembered on the Western Australia State War Memorial which is located at the top of Kings Park and Botanic Garden escarpment, ANZAC Bluff, Fraser Avenue, Perth, Western Australia. The memorial was developed around an 18 metre tall obelisk as the principal feature, which is almost a replica of the Australian Imperial Force Memorials erected in France and Belgium.

The heavy concrete foundations are supplemented by heavy brick walls which enclose an inner chamber or crypt. The walls surrounding the crypt are covered with The Roll of Honour; marble tablets which list under their units the names of more than 7,000 members of the services killed in action or as a result of World War One.



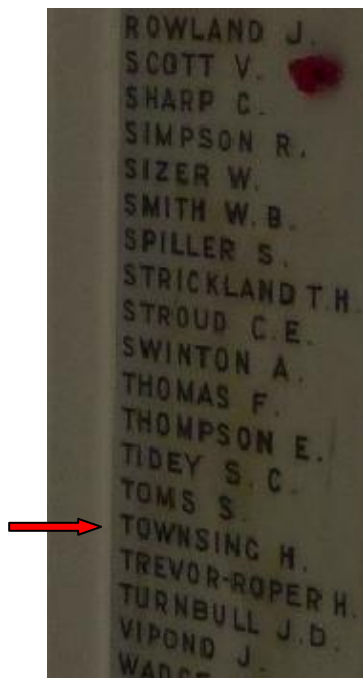
**Western Australia State War Memorial Cenotaph, Kings Park (above)  
& (below) The Crypt with the Roll of Honour names**

*(Photos from Monument Australia – Kent Watson/Sandra Tattersall/Graeme Saunders)*





**Pioneers Panel** (Photo courtesy of Gordon Stuart)



(62 pages of Corporal Herbert Townsing'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

## **Newspaper Notices**

### **KILLED IN ACTION**

TOWNSING – Died of wounds, at Portsmouth, England, on August 19, 1916, Sergeant H. Townsing (Tachape), loving husband of Mollie, and father of Vera Townsing, late of Dwellingup.

He gave up his life for his country.

What can a man do more ?

-Inserted by his sorrowing wife, Mollie Townsing, Bunbury.

(*Western Mail*, Perth, Western Australia – 8 September, 1916)

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### **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

#### **THE ROLL OF HONOUR**

##### **211th CASUALTY LIST**

##### **DIED OF WOUNDS**

Sergeant H. Townsing (Bunbury) previously reported dangerously ill.

(*The West Australian*, Perth, Western Australia – 15 September, 1916)

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### **IN MEMORIAM**

TOWNSING – A tribute of love to the memory of my dear husband and dear daddy, Sergeant H. Townsing, who died at Portsmouth, England, August 19, 1916. R.I.P.

-Inserted by his wife and little Vera, Bunbury.

(*The West Australian*, Perth, Western Australia – 20 August, 1917)

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### **IN MEMORIAM**

#### **Anzac Heroes**

TOWNSING – In loving memory of my dear husband and dear daddy, Sergeant Herbert Townsing, who died of wounds at Portsmouth, England, August 19, 1916.

Ever remembered.

Inserted by his loving wife and daughter, Molly and Vera Townsing.

(*The West Australian*, Perth, Western Australia – 19 August, 1918)

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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)*

Corporal H. Townsing does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

### **Kingston Cemetery, Portsmouth, Hampshire, England**

Kingston Cemetery, Portsmouth contains 569 identified War Graves. The 1914-1918 burials are in many different parts of this large burial ground. After the war a Cross of Sacrifice was erected on an island site facing the main entrance, in honour of all the servicemen buried in the cemetery. The 1939-1945 War graves, too, are widely distributed, but there is a group of 20 graves about 200 metres north-east of the chapel. Of the 1939-1945 burials, many were the result of enemy air raids on Portsmouth.

Of the First World War burials, 1 is an unidentified sailor of the Royal Navy. Of the Second World War burials, 2 are unidentified soldiers of the British Army and 1 is an unidentified Merchant Navy seaman.

There is 1 American Army war burial and 3 non world war service burials here.

There are 383 Commonwealth War Graves burials from World War 1 – only 1 being Australian.

*(Information from CWGC)*



**Gates at Kingston Cemetery** *(Photo by Basher Eyre)*

Photo of Corporal H. Townsing's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Kingston Cemetery, Portsmouth, Hampshire, England.

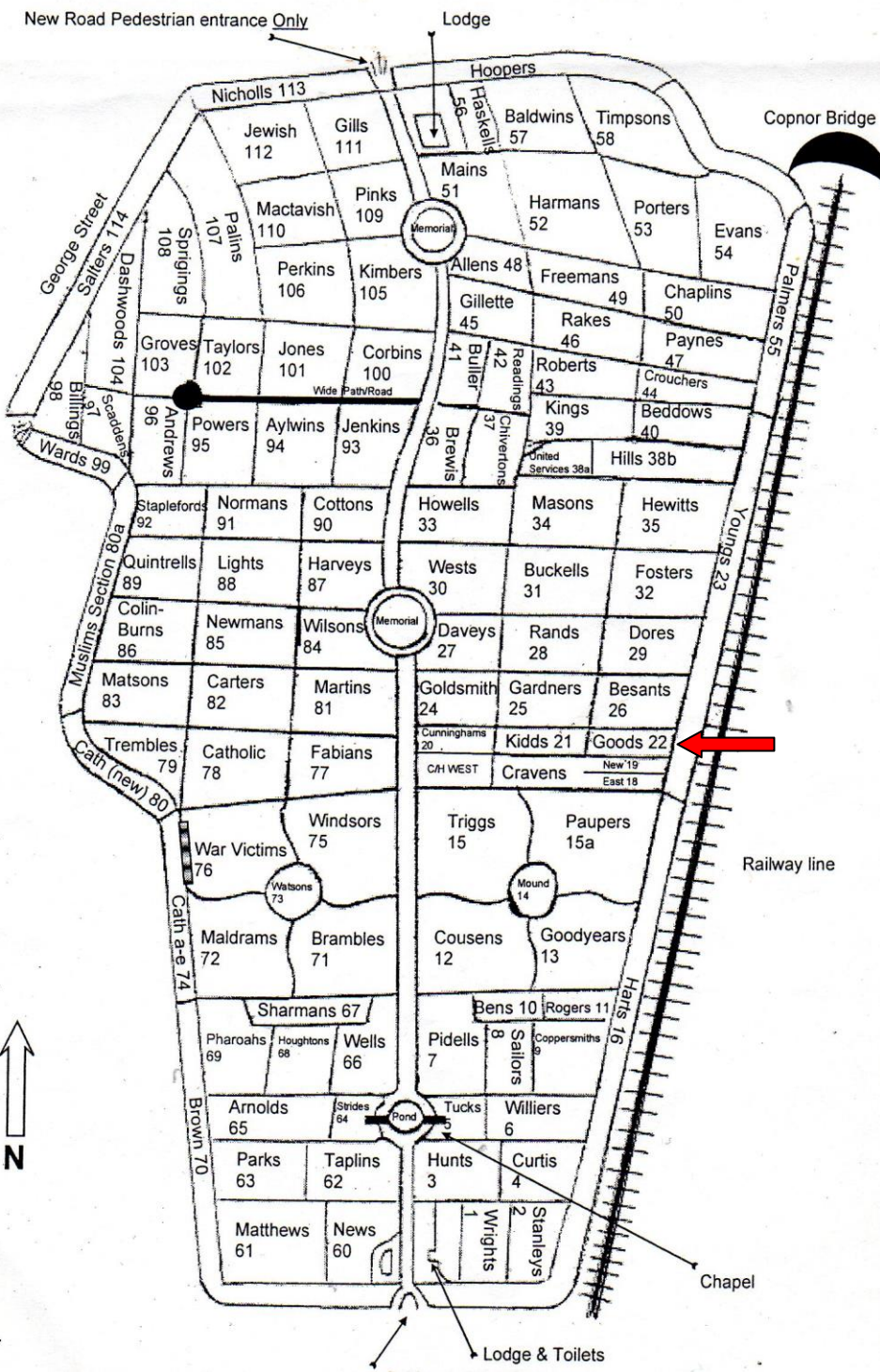


*(Photo by FrankGrant – Find a Grave)*





**Cross of Sacrifice at Kingston Cemetery** *(Photo from CWGC)*



Map of Kingston Cemetery, Portsmouth (Memorials & Monuments in Portsmouth)