

**Bromsgrove Cemetery,
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, England
War Grave**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



J. WEBLEY

AUSTRALIAN MUNITION WORKER

5TH AUGUST, 1917

James WEBLEY

James Webley was born on 18th December, 1857 at Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, England to parents George & Myra Webley (nee Jones).

The 1861 England Census recorded James Webley as a 4 year old Scholar, living with his family at High Street, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, England. His parents were listed as George Webley (Clock and Watch Maker, aged 42, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire) & Mara Webley (aged 44, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire). James was the youngest of seven children (all born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire) – Frederick Webley (Clock and Watch Maker, aged 20) Eliza Webley (Milner and Dress Maker, aged 18), Jeremiah Webley (apprenticed to Boot & Shoe Maker, aged 16), Abraham Webley (aged 14), Mary Ann Webley (Scholar, aged 11), David Webley (Scholar, aged 8) then James.

The 1871 England Census recorded James Webley as a 14 year old, living with his family at High Street Court 20, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, England. His parents were listed as George Webley (Watchmaker, aged 52) & Mara Webley (aged 54). James was the youngest of four children listed on this Census (all born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire) – Jeremiah Webley (Shoemaker, aged 26), Abraham Webley (Watch Maker, aged 24), Mary Ann Webley (aged 22) then James. Also listed was George Webley's nephew – Y. G. Webley (aged 8).

The 1881 England Census recorded James Webley as a 24 year old Bootmaker, living with his parents at Birmingham Road (New Buildings), Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, England. His parents were listed as George Webley (Jeweller (retired), aged 61, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire) & Myra Webley (aged 64, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire).

James Webley married Kate Crawford on 27th November, 1882 at Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, England.

The 1891 England Census recorded James Webley as a 33 year old Shoemaker, boarding at 12 Curzon Street, St. Margaret, Leicestershire, England. Susanna Mason (widow) was the head of the House & Housekeeper. There were 3 other Boarders living at that address.

The 1901 England Census recorded James Webley as a 44 year old, married, Bootmaker - Shopkeeper living with his family at 35 High Street, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, England. His wife was listed as Kate Webley (aged 40, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire). Their children were listed as Kate Webley (Dressmaker, aged 16, born Birmingham, Warwickshire), Draxie Webley (aged 14, born Leicester), Hugh Webley (aged 12, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire), Rolfe Webley (aged 9, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire), Hilda Webley (aged 7, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire), Lillie (aged 5, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire), Doris (aged 2, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire) & Eva (aged 11 months, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire).

The 1911 England Census recorded James Webley as a 54 year old, married, Bootmaker (own account) living at 1 New Buildings, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire in a 3 roomed dwelling. His wife was listed as Kate Webley (aged 50). Kate & James Webley had been married for 28 years & had 10 children. 4 children were listed on this Census – Doris Webley (at School, aged 12), Kathleen Webley (at School, aged 10, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire), Winifred Webley (at School, aged 7, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire) & Lucy Webley (aged 4, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire).

James Webley (Bootmaker, aged 55), his wife Kate (aged 51) & family were passengers on *Roscommon* which departed from the port of London, England on 22nd January, 1913 bound for Australia. Their family were listed as Hilda (aged 18), Lily (aged 17), Doris (aged 13), Kathleen (aged 12), Winifred (aged 8) & Lucy (aged 5).

James Webley applied for enrolment as a Volunteer for Manufacture of Munitions in Great Britain. His passport was issued on 5th May, 1917 & shows his address as Waterworks Road, Red Hill, Brisbane, Queensland.

James Webley was issued a Munitions Worker number of 872.

(Note: - little information is known regarding James Webley's time as a Munition Worker as his file had not been purchased at the time of researching & is therefore closed.)

Australian Munitions Worker James Webley died on 5th August, 1917 at Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, England from a cerebral haemorrhage.

A death for James Webley, aged 59, was registered in the September quarter, 1917 in the district of Bromsgrove. Worcestershire, England.

Australian Munitions Worker James Webley was buried at Bromsgrove Cemetery, Worcestershire, England – Plot number M. 38 & has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Newspaper item – *The Telegraph*, Brisbane, Queensland – 31 August, 1917:

Mrs J. Webley received official notification last Monday, that her husband, James Webley, who left here on 7th May last, as a war worker, died in Bromsgrove, England on Sunday, 5th August, from cerebral haemorrhage. Their only two sons are at present on active service “somewhere in France.”

Probate Details:

Webley, James of 2 Worcester-street, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, Bookmaker, died 5 August 1917. Administration (with Will) Worcester 3 February to Rolfe Arden Webley, shoemaker. Effects £277 9s.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Worker James Webley – service number 872, aged 60, Australian Muniton Worker. No family details are listed.

Australian Munitions Worker James Webley is remembered on the Commemorative Roll Book, located in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The Commemorative Roll records the names of those Australians who died during or as a result of wars in which Australians served, but who were not serving in the Australian Armed Forces and therefore not eligible for inclusion on the Roll of Honour.



Commemorative Roll (Photo from AWM)

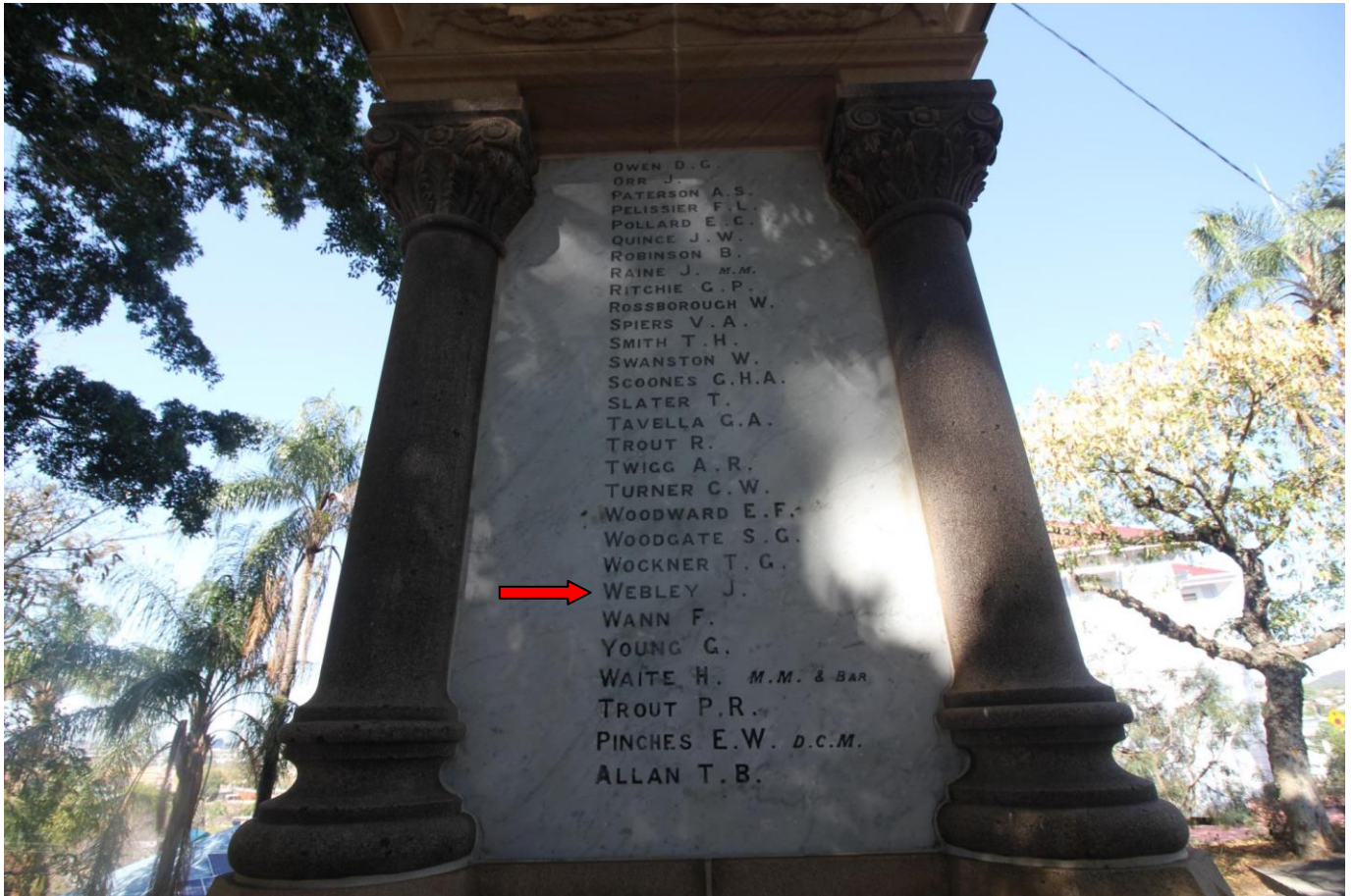


Commemorative Area of the Australian War Memorial (*Capital Photographer*)

J. Webley is remembered on the Ithaca War Memorial, located in Memorial Park, Enoggera Terrace, Paddington, Brisbane, Queensland.



Ithaca War Memorial (*Photos from AWM – Places of Pride – Brendan Downs*)



Australian Munitions Workers

Men enlisted under a joint Australian Commonwealth - Imperial Government scheme for providing skilled Australian workers to British war industries during the First World War. Under this scheme the volunteers would receive free passage to Great Britain, an allowance for travel time, a special allowance for the duration of service, and eventual repatriation to Australia. Married men also received a separation allowance, but were required to allot a portion of all their earnings to dependants. The men were expected to work in whatever industries they were directed to by the British Board of Trade, and under the prevailing conditions and wages for the duration of hostilities.

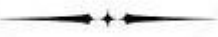
Government newspaper adverts appeared in August, 1916, and the first party of 76 workers departed Australia in September. Groups continued to be recruited and sent at intervals, with the eventual number of workers under the scheme totalling just over 5,000. Almost 1,000 of these had already been working in Britain under private agreements with large firms such as Vickers, and were brought under the conditions of the scheme. An additional 200 former AIF soldiers were also recruited in Britain. Initially only skilled workers were sought, however at the request of the British Government later groups included large numbers of navvies for general labouring.

These men were not members of the Australian Imperial Forces and did not serve in combat units, but were recruited to meet the shortfall in skilled labour that threatened many of Britain's key wartime industries including munitions.

(Source: Australian War Memorial)



**** Note – The Service Record file for James Webley - Australian Munition Worker No.872 had not been purchased at the time of researching from National Archives, Australia. Once the file is purchased it is then open for all to view on-line.**



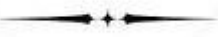
Connected to James Webley:

Son – Hugh Bourne Webley. Boot Repairer, aged 27. Enlisted 24th September, 1916. Next of kin – mother Mrs Kate Webley, Grove Estate, Red Hill, Brisbane, Queensland. Embarked with 26th Infantry Battalion, 17th Reinforcements from Brisbane on 27th October, 1916 on HMAT *Marathon* Service number 6176. Returned to Australia 16th March, 1919.

Newspaper item – *The Telegraph*, Brisbane, Queensland – 19 September, 1918:

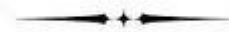
Mrs James Webley, of Grove Estate, has been notified that her eldest son, Private Hugh Webley, of a Queensland battalion, has been admitted to the third southern general hospital, Oxford, England, suffering from gunshot wounds in right leg, left arm, and left leg (amputated). The case is marked as severe.

Son – Rolfe Arden Webley – Service Number 1616 of Royal Field Artillery – Gunner. Service number changed to 835599. He entered a Theatre of War in France on 1st April, 1915.





James and Kate Webley on their Wedding Day



Newspaper Notices

The newspapers at the time were encouraged not to report munition explosions or deaths through TNT poisoning as it would affect the morale of the civilian population and so reports in newspapers are virtually non-existent. When the war ended the Australians returned home and life moved on.

MUNITION WORKERS

AUSTRALIANS IN GREAT BRITAIN

Melbourne, Thursday.

The Minister for Defence (Senator Pearce) announces that during the period from the inception of the schemes for the despatch of munition workers and navvies to Great Britain up to June 30 last, 2662 munition workers had been disembarked in England for employment on munition and war work. There had also been enrolled under the munition workers' scheme 124 men who had been discharged from the A.I.F. in England for that purpose, and two discharged A.I.F. men had enrolled under the navvies' agreement, making the total number of men engaged in work in Great Britain under both these schemes 4,998. Of this number 384 men had returned to Australia – the majority on account of ill-health. There had been 23 deaths. The agreement of 38 men had been cancelled for disciplinary and other reasons. Six of the men had enlisted in the A.I.F., in England, five men had enlisted in the Royal Navy, and nine men had enlisted in the British Army, leaving the total number of men still in England under the Commonwealth agreement as 4,533. In addition these men were registered on the index held in Australia House 674 Australian munition workers who proceeded to Great Britain under private contract prior to the inauguration of the Commonwealth scheme. Of the men still in England on June 30, 1918, 87 were waiting return up to that date, 152 men had proceeded to France to engage in special work, and 107 of them had returned again to England. Australian munition workers were employed at 409 different firms or centres, and navvies at 192, and the value of the output produced by the labour of these men was estimated at £6,000,000.

Provision for the payment of munition workers and navvies who proceeded to Great Britain on war work under the agreement with the Commonwealth Government is made in an amendment to the war financial regulations issued today. Munition workers and navvies are to be provided with a free passage from Australia to Great Britain and back. In the case of munition workers a dependants' allowance of 25s a week, with allowances for children, will be made for the first eight weeks after embarkation. Subsequently the allowance will be 20s. Separation allowances equal to that paid in the case of a private in the A.I.F. will be paid to dependants.

(Examiner, Launceston, Tasmania – 30 August, 1918)

Personal Notes

Mrs J. Webley received official notification last Monday, that her husband, James Webley, who left here on 7th May last, as a war worker, died in Bromsgrove, England on Sunday, 5th August, from cerebral haemorrhage. Their only two sons are at present on active service "somewhere in France."

(The Telegraph, Brisbane, Queensland – 31 August, 1917 & 1 September, 1917) &

(The Week, Brisbane, Queensland – 7 September, 1917)

IN MEMORIAM

WEBLEY – In loving memory of James Webley, who died at Bromsgrove, England, August 5, 1917.

Not forgotten by his wife, daughters, and two sons in France.

(The Brisbane Courier, Queensland – 5 August, 1918)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) honours the 1,700,000 men and women of the forces of the Commonwealth who died in the two world wars and ensures that their memory is never forgotten. The applicable periods of consideration are 4 August 1914 to 31 August 1921 for the First World War and 3 September 1939 to 31 December 1947 for the Second World War.

The Commission's principles:

- Each of the dead should be commemorated by name on the headstone or memorial
- Headstones and memorials should be permanent
- Headstones should be uniform
- There should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed

During both WW1 (& WW2) a number of Commonwealth civilian organisations were accepted by the military as qualifying for war grave status.

Members of the Recognised Civilian Organisations had to meet two additional criteria not required by military casualties.

1. Their death had to be caused by war actions or the increased threat caused by war and
2. They had to be on duty at the time of their death - being posted overseas counted as 'being on duty'.

The Australian government deemed that their War and Munitions Workers (men and women) qualified for war grave treatment as they were recruited as a body and were posted overseas for the war effort. Some of their CWGC entries show a 'service number' indicating that they were an organised body.

Bromsgrove Cemetery, Worcestershire, England

Bromsgrove Cemetery contains 37 Commonwealth War Graves – 24 from World War 1 & 13 from World War 2.



Entrance to Bromsgrove Cemetery (Photo by JRT – Find a Grave)

Photo of Australian Munition Worker J. Webley's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Bromsgrove Cemetery, Worcestershire, England.



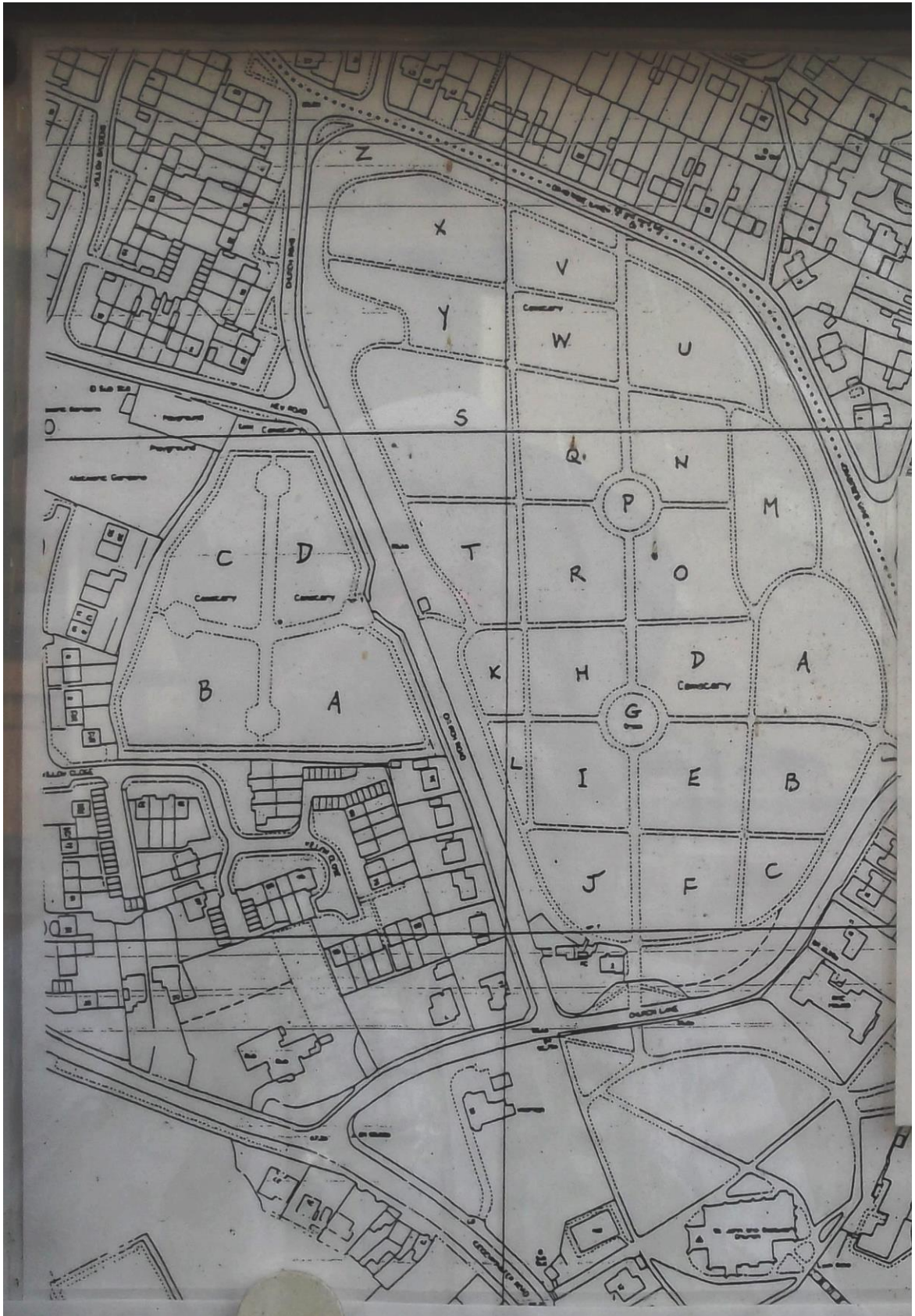
(Photo by PicturePrince)



(Photo by Geoffrey Gillon – Find a Grave)



(Photo by Colin Wood – Find a Grave August, 2019)



(Photo by ColinA – Find a Grave)