

**Wakefield Cemetery,  
Wakefield, West Yorkshire**

**War Grave**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**B/2772**

**R. WEEKS**

**AUSTRALIAN MUNITION WORKER**

**2ND MARCH, 1919**

## Robert WEEKS

Robert Weeks was born on 2nd October, 1868 at East Kempsey, NSW to parents William & Mary Theresa Weeks (nee Slattery).

William Weeks, father of Robert Weeks, died on 13th June, 1884 in Sydney, New South Wales.

Mary Theresa Weeks, mother of Robert Weeks, died on 22nd July, 1890 in Sydney, New South Wales.

Robert Weeks married Ada Jane Hargraves on 29th October, 1890 at Christ Church St. Laurence, George Street, Sydney.

The following births were registered in Sydney, NSW with parents Robert & Ada J. Weeks – Mary (birth registered in 1890, death registered in 1890), Frederick A. (birth registered in 1891), William (birth registered in 1893, death registered in 1893), Ethel M. (birth registered in 1894), Robert E. (birth registered in 1897), Reginald R. (birth registered in 1899), Ivy G. (birth registered in 1902) & Florence (birth registered in 1904).

From the *New South Wales Police Gazette* –3 July, 1912:

### **Apprehensions**

*James Lucas (26), Bert Davis (26) and Robert Weeks (43), charged with stealing twenty-one magnetos, value £150, the property of Bennett and Wood, Limited, have been arrested by Constables Farley and Lynch, Sydney Police. Committed for trial at Quarters Sessions. Admitted to bail.*

The NSW Gaol Description & Entrance Book has the following details for Robert Weeks:

Born 2nd October, 1868; religion – Church of England; Occupation – Engine Driver; Height – 5ft 5 1/8 inches, fair hair, blue eyes; Minus the tip of right forefinger, 1st joint of right ring finger enlarged. Robert Weeks was convicted with James Lucas & Bert Davis. He was sentenced to 18 months Hard Labour. “*Sentence to be suspended under 1st Offenders Act on rec. of Self in £50 and one surety in £50 for good behaviour for a period of 18th mths to pay the Clerk of Peace £30-6-8 compensation – precedent to release.*”



*(Photo taken 16th August, 1912)*

From the New South Wales Police Gazette – 4 September, 1912:

**First Offenders Discharged under Crimes Act of 1900**

*The following offenders have been released under the provisions of the above Act:-*

*Robert Weeks (43), tried at the Sydney Quarter Sessions in 16th August, 1912, stealing; sentence, eighteen months' hard labour. To be of good behaviour for eighteen months.*

Robert Weeks stated he was a 44 year old, married, Fitter from 71 Addison Rd, Manly, NSW when he enlisted on 20th December, 1915 at Liverpool, NSW. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Ada Jane Weeks, of 71 Addison Rd, Manly, NSW.

Private Robert Weeks was posted to Depot Company – Staff Cook on 20th December, 1915. He was discharged in 8th June, 1916 at his own request.

Robert Weeks stated he was a 44 year old, married (wife living apart), Fitter from 2 Belvoir Street, Sydney, NSW when he re-enlisted on 10th July, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 6154 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his niece – Mrs Pearl Turner, of 2 Belvoir Street, Sydney, NSW. Robert Weeks stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served for 6 months with the Forces & was discharged at his own request. He had served Home Service at Liverpool (NSW). Robert Weeks was 5ft 6 inches with medium complexion, blue eyes and fair hair.

Private Robert Weeks was posted to Dubbo Depot Battalion on 10th July, 1916 for recruit training. He was transferred to 18th Reinforcements of 18th Battalion at Liverpool, NSW on 20th September, 1916. Pte Weeks was transferred again on 16th October, 1916 to 17th Reinforcements of 23rd Battalion.

Private Robert Weeks embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Argyllshire (A8)* on 31st October, 1916 with the 6th Infantry Brigade, 23rd Infantry Battalion, 17th Reinforcements & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 10th January, 1917.

Private Robert Weeks was marched in to 6th Training Battalion at Larkhill, Wiltshire from Australia on 11th January, 1917.

Private Robert Weeks was written up for a crime on 26th January, 1917 – 1. AWL (Absent without leave) from midnight on 22nd January, 1917 to 11 pm on 24th January, 1917 from Larkhill, Wiltshire 2. Neglecting to obey standing orders – out of bounds without a pass. He was awarded 7 days confined to Camp & forfeited a total of 8 days' pay.

Private Robert Weeks proceeded overseas to France via Folkestone on 9th May, 1917 from 6th Training Battalion at Larkhill, Wiltshire.

Private Robert Weeks was marched in to 2nd Australian Divisional Base Depot at Etaples, France from England on 10th May, 1917.

Private Robert Weeks was taken on strength of Australia Veterinary Hospital from 23rd Battalion on 15th May, 1917 at Calais, France.

Private Robert Weeks was admitted to 30th General Hospital at Calais, France on 4th August, 1917 – cause N.Y.D. (Not yet determined). He embarked for England on Hospital Ship *Pieter de Coninck* on 6th August, 1917 with incontinence.

Private Robert Weeks was admitted to 3rd London General Hospital at Wandsworth, England on 6th August, 1917 with incontinence of urine. He was transferred to 3rd Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford, Kent, England on 8th October, 1917 with stricture of Urethra.

Private Robert Weeks was on furlo from 11th October, 1917 to 25th October, 1917 & was then to report to Command Depot at Hurdcott, Wiltshire.

Private Robert Weeks was written up for an Offence while posted at No.3 Command Depot, Hurdcott, Wiltshire – A.W.L. from 3.30 pm on 25th October, 1917 until 7 pm on 26th October, 1917. This was admonished by Lt. C. Ellis. He forfeited 2 days' pay.

Private Robert Weeks was medically classified on 1st November, 1917 at No.3 Command Depot, Hurdcott, Wiltshire as B1 A2 – fit for overseas training camp in three to four weeks.

Private Robert Weeks was medically classified on 8th November, 1917 at No.3 Command Depot, Hurdcott, Wiltshire as C1 – fit for Home Service only.

Private Robert Weeks was marched out of No. 3 Command Depot at Hurdcott & was marched in to No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth, Dorset on 24th November, 1917.

A report was made by the Medical Office, No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth on 31st January, 1918 stating that Private Robert Weeks was "*perfectly sound in the chest & heart and fit for his age 49. He has no rheumatism and I should think he was quite able to do munition work.*"

A letter was sent on 14th February, 1918 from O i/c Australian Munitions Workers, Australia House, Strand, London to The Commandant, A.I.F. Headquarters, Westminster, London advising that the application for Munitions Work for Private R. Weeks had been received. The letter stated that he would be "*prepared to enrol Weeks as an Australian Munitions Worker and should therefore be obliged if you would make all arrangements for his discharge and instruct him to report to Australia House when he receives it.*"

Private Robert Weeks was marched out from No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth on 21st February, 1918 to Administrative Headquarters, London, pending discharge from A.I.F. in England.

Private Robert Weeks was discharged from the Australian Imperial Force in England & in consequence of taking up employment as an Australian Muniton Worker, being medically unfit for service, on 21st February, 1918. He had served for 1 year & 230 days in the Australian Imperial Force.

A Silver War Badge (A.13652) was issued to Robert Weeks on 22nd February, 1918 in respect of his military service as Private.

Robert Weeks, aged 45, took up employment as an Australian Muniton Worker with effect from 21st February, 1918.

Munitons Worker Robert Weeks died on 2nd March, 1919 at 79 Northgate Street, Wakefield, Yorkshire, England from Influenza & pneumonia.

A death for Robert Weeks, aged 47, was registered in the March quarter, 1919 in the district of Wakefield, West Riding of Yorkshire, England.

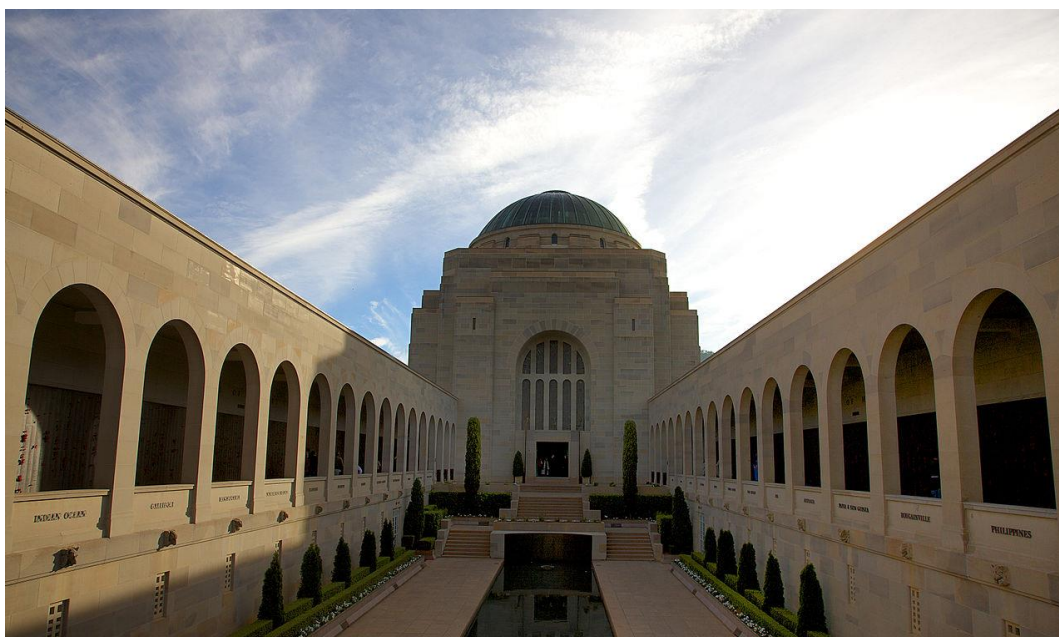
Australian Munitions Worker Robert Weeks was buried at Wakefield Cemetery, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, England – Plot number J. "C". 528 & has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone.

Base Records contacted Miss I. M. Weeks, of 194 Melbourne Road, Melbourne, Victoria, daughter of the late Private R. Weeks, 6154, in September, 1922, asking if there were any nearer blood relatives than herself 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.& specifically if his widow was still living & has he any sons (stating the eldest) and any daughters older than yourself. The letter was returned undeliverable.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Worker R. Weeks - service number B/2772, aged 47, Australian Munition Worker. No family details are listed.

Robert Weeks was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal on account of his service with the Australian Imperial Force. The medals were awarded to his daughter – Ivy M. Weeks in March, 1924. Miss I. Weeks, of “Oakbank” 194 Sydenham Road, Marrickville, Sydney, NSW, daughter of the late Robert Weeks, was advised in March, 1924 that the Memorial Plaque and Scroll were only issued in respect of soldiers who died on active service, or who died subsequent to discharged from causes attributable to war service.

Australian Munitions Worker Robert Weeks 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 Area of the Australian War Memorial** (*Capital Photographer*)

## **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 Robert Weeks, Australian Munition Worker No.2772 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.*

(95 pages of Private Robert Weeks' Service records with the Australian Imperial Force 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*



## **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.*

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## **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)*

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### **N.S.W. HONOR ROLL**



**PTE ROBERT WEEKS  
(OF MANLY)**

died of pneumonic-influenza in England.

*(Evening News, Sydney, NSW – 7 April, 1919)*

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## 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. All but one of these casualties are buried in the UK – the other being in France.

### **Wakefield Cemetery, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, England**

Wakefield Cemetery, Wakefield, West Yorkshire contains 112 Commonwealth War Graves – 59 from World War 1 & 53 from World War 2.



*(Photo from CWGC)*



Photo of Australian Munition Worker R. Weeks' Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone in Wakefield Cemetery, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, England.

