

**Melcombe Regis Cemetery,
Weymouth, Dorset, England**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



2486 PRIVATE

G. WELSH

24TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

4TH MARCH, 1917

George WELSH

George Welsh was born at Bradford, England around 1878.

(There is insufficient information to correctly identify the parents of George Welsh. He had a brother – Thomas Welsh)

George Welsh was a 30 year old, single, Salesman (as listed on Embarkation Roll, however he listed "Seaman" on his Attestation Papers) when he enlisted on 5th July, 1915 in Melbourne, Victoria with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Roman Catholic & his next of kin was listed as Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Broadmeadows Branch, Victoria. (Note: Commonwealth Bank was listed under next of kin column on the Embarkation Roll, however George Welsh listed his brother Mr Thomas Welsh, 36 Jowett Street, Bradford, England as his next of kin. "Parents dead" was recorded on Attestation Papers.)

Private George Welsh was posted to Depot on 7th July, 1915 for recruit training. He was transferred to 9th Reinforcements of 7th Battalion on 19th July, 1915. Private Welsh was A.W.L. (Absent without Leave) at embarkation of 9th Reinforcements of 7th Battalion on 10th September, 1915. He was transferred to Reserves on 10th September, 1915 then on 27th September, 1915 he was transferred to 5th Reinforcements of 24th Battalion.

Private George Welsh, Service number 2486, embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on RMS *Osterley* on 29th September, 1915 with the 6th Infantry Brigade, 24th Infantry Battalion, 5th Reinforcements.

Private George Welsh embarked from Alexandria for Overseas on HT *Oriana* on 21st March, 1916. He disembarked at Marseilles, France on 29th (? Date covered by ink splotch) March, 1916.

Private George Welsh was admitted to 26th General Hospital, Etaples, France on 16th April, 1916 with Pneumonia. He was reported to be seriously ill with Pneumonia on 16th April, 1916. Private Welsh embarked from Calais, France on 15th May, 1916 on Hospital Ship *Stad Antwerpen*.

Private George Welsh was admitted to 1st Auxiliary Hospital, England on 30th May, 1916 with Pneumonia. He was discharged from Woodcote Park on 19th June, 1916 for furlough.

Private George Welsh was admitted to Bulford Military Hospital, Wiltshire on 8th July, 1916 with Gonorrhoea. He was discharged on 8th August, 1916. Total 32 days V.D.

Private George Welsh was marched out to 6th Training Battalion on 1st September, 1916 from Command Depot at Perham Downs, Wiltshire.

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 & Dorset.

Private George Welsh proceeded overseas on 8th October, 1916 from 6th Training Battalion. He was marched in to 2nd A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 9th October, 1916. Private Welsh was taken on strength of 24th Battalion in France on 17th November, 1916.

The following letter was written by Private George Welsh on Tuesday October 17/16 at "Etaples", France (Note: the letter is typewritten & at the bottom is typed "Certified to be a true copy of the Will of No. 2486 Pte Welsh G. 2nd Battalion A.I.F.": *" Dear Janey I now take the pleasure of writing these few lines to you hoping to find you in good health as this leaves me at present. Dear Janey I got back to camp and was sent to France next day straight up to Pozieres and we did have a lively time and now I am having a spell from the front but I expect to go up again next week. Dear Janey I wrote one letter to you before I went up an a field post card when I came down but I did not expect an answer because we were not allowed & did not know what address to tell you to write to but I will send it this time 2486 Pte G. Welsh 24 Batt 2nd A D B D C/O APO s/17 France Dear Janey I am making my will in my pay book & if anything should happen to me everything I possess will go to you I will send you a copy of sane Dear Janey give my kind love & regards to your father & mother Mary & Teddy & all enquiring friends. Dear Janey I have still got that little photo you gave and I shall keep until we meet again if we ever have the chance to meet again Dear Janey let me know how every things stands between you & Paddy Welsh & let me know if I have to alter my mode of addressing you So I think that is al this time and answer this as quickly as possible I remain === G. Welsh If I may just a few x x x x x x x x x "*

Private George Welsh reported sick on 28th December, 1916 & was admitted to 5th Australian Field Ambulance in France. A note was signed by Colonel, A.D.M.S., 2nd Australian Division on 27th December, 1916 at Headquarters stating "*I have personally examined No 2486 Pte WELSH, G. 24th Aust. Inf. BN and find that he is unfit for Active Service. Please evacuate this man with the attached certificate that he may be boarded at the Base. Reason: Old Pneumonia – signs at R. Base. Dyspnoea.*" He was transferred & admitted to 38th Casualty Clearing Station with Pneumonia on 28th December, 1916 & transferred to Ambulance Train on 30th December, 1916. Private Welsh was admitted to 3rd Stationary Hospital at Rouen, France on 30th December, 1916 with Pneumonia. He embarked for England on 1st January, 1917 from Rouen on Hospital Ship *Western Australia*.

Private George Welsh was admitted to Lewisham Military Hospital, London on 2nd January, 1917. He was transferred to 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Dartford, Kent on 29th January, 1917 with Pneumonia & was discharged to Furlo from 31st January, 1917. Private Welsh was then to report to Perham Downs at the completion of his furlough.

Private George Welsh was marched in to No. 1 Command Depot at Perham Downs, Wiltshire on 16th February, 1917 from Furlough. A Medical Report was completed on Private George Welsh on 26th February, 1917 while posted as Perham Down. His disability was recorded as Senility which had originated "*prior to enlistment.*" The following details were recorded "*he developed Pneumonia in France & was sent back to England May 1916. Returned France Sept. Sent back to England in January 1917. Medical History shows:- Admitted 3rd London General Hospital Pneumonia 15/5/16. Transferred 1st A.A.H. Harefield 20/5/16. Transferred convalescent Hosp Epsom 30/5/16. Discharged Furlough 19/6/16.*" The causation of the disability was aggravated by Active Service due to exposure & Infection. His present condition was recorded as "*Senility & Liability to Pneumonia. Scattered coarse crepitations Right base.*" The Officer in charge of the medical case recommended that Private Welsh be discharged as permanently unfit. The Medical Board found that the disability was not a result of active service but they found that he was permanently unfit for General & Home Service

Private George Welsh was transferred to No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth, Dorset on 27th February, 1917.

Private George Welsh proceeded overseas via Folkestone on 1st March, 1917 to rejoin his Unit from furlough.

24th Battalion

The 24th Battalion was raised in a hurry. The original intent was to raise the fourth battalion of the 6th Brigade from the "outer states", but a surplus of recruits at Broadmeadows Camp in Victoria lead to a decision being made to raise it there. The battalion was formed during the first week of May 1915, and sailed from Melbourne at the end of that week.

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It took part in its first major offensive around Pozieres and Mouquet Farm in July and August 1916. The Battalion got little rest during the bleak winter of 1916-17 alternating between the front and labouring tasks. When patrolling no-man's land the men of the 24th adopted a unique form of snow camouflage - large white nighties bought in Amiens.....

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private George Welsh was found drowned in Weymouth Harbour, Dorset, England on 4th March, 1917 between 8.30 pm & 9 pm.

A Coroner's Court was held into the death of Private George Welsh on 6th March, 1917. Extract from Coroner's Court as listed on Casualty Form - Active Service: "*Death of Soldier from misadventure it appears that he accidentally fell from the Eastern Quay into Weymouth Harbour & was drowned as the result thereof. The Court commended the action of AB McArthur HMML 311 who made a gallant attempt to save deceased. President Lieut S. H. Beck 8th Batt.*"

A death for George Welsh, aged 39, was registered in the March quarter, 1917 in the district of Weymouth, Dorset, England.

Newspaper article – *The Western Gazette*, Yeovil, Somerset, England – 9 March, 1917:

AUSTRALIAN DROWNED IN THE HARBOUR – DEATH BY MISADVENTURE

The Coroner (Mr G. P. Symes), on Tuesday afternoon held an inquest, at the Guildhall, on the body of Private George Welsh, of the Australian Light Infantry, who was drowned in the Weymouth Harbour on Sunday night. – Corporal A. Hampshire stated that the deceased had been in the same hut as himself for about three weeks. Deceased told witness that he was married and had a son 23 years of age. – The Coroner pointed out that in the deceased's pay book his next-of-kin was his mother, who resided at Bradford, Yorkshire. – Witness added that he had never seen the deceased the worse for liquor. He last saw him at 5.50 on Sunday evening on the quay. As they passed some remarks were passed about some launches lying in the harbour. – The Coroner said it was singular that nothing had been heard more definite of the deceased being married. Amongst the belongings found on the deceased were four one pound notes, and these he should not part with until he had some definite information as to deceased's relations. – A deck hand from a launch lying in the harbour, named Jones, who was on sentry at about 8.30 on Sunday evening, said he saw a man approach the edge of the harbour. He appeared to slip, and then witness heard a splash. Another hand from the launch, named McArthur, jumped into the water to the rescue. Other men also went to the rescue, but when mans was got out of the water he appeared to be dead. Witness saw no one near the deceased at the time that he fell into the water, and whether it was an accident, of whether deceased jumped into the water on purpose, he could not tell. It was dark and raining at the time. – Angus McArthur, a motor-launch deck hand, stated that when he heard the splash he jumped into the water just as he was, and got to the deceased, who was splashing about with his hands, and got him to the side. Someone threw a life line, which witness seized, and deceased was got out. Artificial respiration was resorted to, but life was extinct, - The Coroner: It was a jolly plucky thing for you to do, jump into the harbour on a dark and stormy night like this, and seize hold if a heavy man like the deceased, If he had clutched hold of you you might both have gone down together. Are you a good swimmer ? – Witness: Fairly good, sir. – The Coroner (to a Navy Officer in attendance): I think you will agree with me that your man performed a very plucky act in jumping into the water on such a night. – The officer addressed endorsed the Coroner's remarks, and added that a strong ebb tide was running at the time, which made the attempt all the more difficult. – P.C. Blandamer stated that he searched the clothing of the deceased, and, in addition to papers, found 9s 7 ½ d in coin and £4 in Treasury notes. – The Coroner pointed out that amongst the papers was an application, no doubt made out for presentation to the Commanding Officer, for the deceased to visit his mother, 86 years of age, living at 6, Eva-place, Porter-street, Hull, Yorkshire, and he suggested that she be at once communicated with. – An Australian officer stated that, as far as could be ascertained, the deceased was not married. – The jury returned a verdict that the deceased met his death by misadventure. – The Foreman of the Jury (Mr H. Dennis) said they wished to commend the plucky act of the witness, McArthur, and also the straight forward way in which the other witness, Jones, had given his evidence.

Private George Welsh was buried on 8th March, 1917 in Melcombe Regis Cemetery, Weymouth, Dorset, England – R. C. section Grave no. 2785

This is now recorded by Commonwealth War Graves Commission as Plot number III. C. 2785 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Private George Welsh requested in his Will, extracted form his pay-book, that “*in the event of my death I leave all belonging to me Pte George Welsh Reg. No. 2486, 24th Batt. A.I.F. to Mrs Jane Welsh, No. 6 Ebor Place, Porter Street, Hull, Yorkshire.*”

Base Records wrote to Mrs J. Welsh, 6 Ebor Place, Porter Street, Hull, England on 3rd August, 1920 with the following: “*I would be obliged if you would furnish me with the name and address of the eldest brother of the late No. 2486 Private G. Welsh, 24th Battalion, in order that same may be noted on the records. Attached hereto are circulars in connexion with memorial inscriptions etc., which should be completed and returned to this office.*”

The Federated Seamen's Union of Australasia, Sydney, wrote to Base Records on 11th February, 1920 on behalf of Mrs Margaret McAdam (17 Heriot St, off Stanley Rd, Liverpool) & was the sister of the named Joseph Welsh in the letter. “*Enclosed you will find letter received from England for the whereabouts of Josph Welsh. Our members*

inform me that as far as they can find, he was a member of the Australian forces and was killed in action in France, If you will kindly look your records up for verification or otherwise I will feel greatly obliged."

Base Records replied to The Secretary, The Federated Seamen's Union of Australia on 27th February, 1920 advising "...I am unable to trace the Joseph Welsh referred to. There is on the records a No 2486, Private George Wels, 24th Battalion, (an examination of whose records discloses the signature J. Welsh) who enlisted at Melbourne 5/7/15, and stated his age at that date to be thirty-six years nine months. His next of kin is shown as brother Mr Thomas Welsh and his legatee id Mrs Jane Welsh, both resident in England, He stated his parents were deceased. This soldier was found drowned in Weymouth Harbor, England on 4/3/17 (misadventure). If Mrs M. McAdam, will furnish full particulars of her brother, such as birth place, aged, occupation, personal description and the name and address of the person she thinks would probably be nominated as next-of-kin, a further search of the records will be made and the result communicated to her...."

Private George Welsh was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Welsh's next of kin. The Memorial Plaque was returned to London for issue to his father – Mr J. Welsh on 15th June, 1922. The Memorial Scroll "for return to London for issue NOK" – no date recorded.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private George Welsh – service number 2486, of 24th Battalion, Australian Infantry. No family details are listed.

Private G. Welsh is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 103.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(56 pages of Private George Welsh'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



Newspaper Notices

AUSTRALIAN CASUALTIES

167th LIST ISSUED

SERIOUSLY ILL

VICTORIA

Pte G. WELSH, England

(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria – 8 May, 1916)

The 280th CASUALTY LIST

The Victorian names are:-

DROWNED

Private G. Welsh, England

(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – 21 March, 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)

Private G. Welsh does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Melcombe Regis Cemetery, Weymouth, Dorset, England

Weymouth became a depot for Australian forces in 1916 and 83 of the 147 First World War burials in Melcombe Regis Cemetery are of Australian servicemen; most of these graves are scattered in the old part. The 36 Second World War burials are in the extension. The cemetery also contains seven war graves of other nationalities and one non-war burial.

(Information from CWGC)



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00333

Australian graves in the cemetery at Melcombe Regis. March 1919

Identified, front row, left to right: unidentified; Butler; 5917 Private Edgar Allan Thornell, 22nd Battalion (Bn), died 9 August 1918; 1207 Corporal Jesse Adams Davis, 12th Bn, died 15 November 1918.

Back row: 5329 Private Frederick Albert Archer, Anzac Provost Company, died 6 November 1918; 5990 Private Albert Robert Blackmore, 12th Bn, died 2 November 1918; 11099 Driver Matthew Charles Percival Nettle, 6th Australian Field Artillery Brigade, died 22 October 1918; 3942 Private Walter Alick Weckman, 51st Bn, died 9 November 1918.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00332

Some of the Australian graves in the cemetery at Melcombe Regis. March 1919

Identified, left to right: Captain Francis Arthur Deravin, Australian Army Medical Corps, died 8 July 1917 aged 41 years (large headstone); 138 Private Louis Nelson Matthews, 27th Battalion, 4 July 1917; 5082 Private Victor George Smith, 21st Battalion, died 13 November 1918.



(Photo courtesy of Steve Stewart)



(Photos courtesy of Steve Stewart)





(Photos courtesy of Steve Stewart)

Australians in Weymouth

What was life like for the Australians?

The Camp

Within the camp, there were educational facilities as well as medical rooms which helped to recover and re-educate the soldiers. There was help provided for soldiers suffering with physical or emotional impairments, such as massage rooms, psychotherapy training rooms and a remedial gymnasium. This strengthened the men to help them recover from their injuries. The educational aspects were diverse, allowing soldiers to pick a completely different profession for when they went back home. This included architecture, motor engineering, electrical and carpentry classes. Another option allowed the soldiers to be retrained in their previous professions which may have become more difficult, due to loss of limbs or new techniques that may have been created whilst they were at war.

The Town

Weymouth benefited hugely from the influx of Australian and New Zealand soldiers. One shop that still exists today is the Acutt's clothing store, which used to sell everything a soldier could possibly need for his uniform, from the whole jacket to just the buttons and epaulettes. As well as Acutt's, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia also opened up their own branch in Weymouth, for the soldiers to use during their time over here, which highlighted the permanence of their stay. There was also a monthly newsletter that circulated amongst the men, which was produced by local company Sherrers, which still operates on the Granby Industrial estate.

Special Events

The Australian recovery camps took special occasions very seriously, such as Christmas and Easter, to try and reduce the ache of home sickness and being away from their family and friends. Most camps tried to make their soldiers feel at home, with large celebrations with Christmas dinners and special guest performances at Easter. However, there were also other special events that gained press attention, such as the opening of the YMCA building, which used to be on Abbotshay Road. This provided help and welfare to the Australian soldiers, such as free food and blankets. There were fundraising days for the prisoner-of-war soldiers that had been captured during the fall of the Kut, who were mainly Dorset soldiers. From these fundraising days in Weymouth, Dorchester and Biddport, the towns managed to raise £3,600 to help comfort the prisoners.

Entertainment

Entertainment was a highly important aspect of the soldiers' lives whilst they were in Weymouth. It kept the soldiers motivated and in high spirits whilst they were ill or injured, in hopes of helping to speed up their recovery. Throughout the camps in Weymouth, there was always something to watch or listen to, whether it was singing and acting companies who toured round the camps or at the Pavilion Theatre on the Esplanade. Sometimes, the soldiers even made their own entertainment, with marching bands and choirs being set up by the YMCA building in Weymouth. There were also balls and dances at the camps themselves and even a small trip to the Alexandra Garden along the Esplanade. Dating also became a significant part of the soldiers' lives, with many Weymouth women losing husbands and boyfriends at war. Finding comfort with the new soldiers at the camp, this led to many marriages between the two groups, and some migrating back to Australia with their new families, or staying here and leaving their families.

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Images courtesy of Australian War Memorial, Newsletter originals published by Sherrers, Ltd. Weymouth



(Photos courtesy of Steve Stewart)

Australians in Weymouth

From Weymouth to Auswey - A Soldier's Récovery



During the First World War between 1914 and 1918, many injured soldiers who were mostly from Australia and New Zealand, were brought to Weymouth. They were known as ANZACS (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps). They were placed in Repatriation and Rehabilitation camps in Westham, Littleton, Chickerell and Portland. This was in the hope of sending them back to the line of action in France or back home to Australia due to lack of fitness. Weymouth was picked as the place to set up camp, as it was seen as a relaxing seaside location. This would help to heal the sick and injured Australians who had been fighting in major battles of the war or on the Western Front between France and Belgium.



Although thousands of ANZACS passed through Weymouth during the First World War, there are some soldiers who unfortunately did not make it home. These soldiers are proudly buried in the Melcombe Regis cemetery. This is only 100 metres away from one of the major camps in Westham, with 142 soldiers buried in the cemetery, 83 from Australia and 59 from New Zealand. These graves are similar to some of the war memorials and graves placed around Europe, much like the Somme in France. Unfortunately, there are too many grave names to be displayed on this board, but they can be found on the website link at the bottom of this board.



Past and Present Westham

As you can see on the map of the Westham camp, many of the street names have an Australian connection, highlighting the history of the area. Residents of the housing estates, which are now built where the camp once stood, are still digging up remains of the camp, such as bullets or cooking equipment.



Modern Day Street Names	Westham Camp - December 1916
Cheset Close	Soldiers Huts
Sussex Road	Company Officers
Queensland Road	Regimental Institute
Kitchener Road	Ministers Rifle Range
Corporation Road	Officers' Mess
Shorn Road	Shower Block
Longcroft Road	Vehicle Shed, Mob Store
Wessex Road	Home Shelter
Parth Street	Cool Yard
Melcombe Street	Cook House
Adelaide Crescent	YMCA
Abbotsbury Road	Dung Pit
Sydney Street	Fire Hydrant
Shirecroft Road	





www.westhamcommunitygroup.co.uk

Images courtesy of Australian War Memorial

Photo of Private G. Welsh's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Melcombe Regis Cemetery, Weymouth, Dorset, England.



(Photo courtesy of Allan Wood)