

**Overleigh Cemetery,
Chester, Cheshire
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



M. CLAYSON

AUSTRALIAN MUNITION WORKER

1ST DECEMBER, 1916

Matthew CLAYSON

Matthew Clayson was born in Manchester, England to parents Matthew & Mary Ann Clayson (nee Ward). His birth was registered in the March quarter, 1887 in the district of Prestwich, Lancashire, England.

The 1891 England Census recorded Matthew Clayson as a 4 year old, living with his family at 274 Mill Street, Bradford cum Beswick, Lancashire, England, a four roomed dwelling. His parents were listed as Matthew Clayson (Soap Mixer, aged 26, born Manchester, Lancashire) & Mary A. Clayson (aged 28, born Quebec, Canada). Matthew Clayson was one of three children listed on this Census (all born Manchester, Lancashire) – Edith Clayson (Scholar, aged 6) then Matthew & Annie Clayson (aged 1).

The 1901 England Census recorded Matthew Clayson as a 14 year old Iron Turner – Fitter (Mechanic) living with his family at 110 Gorton Lane, Ardwick, South Manchester, Lancashire, England. His parents were listed as Matthew Clayson (Labourer in Soap Works, aged 37) & Mary Ann Clayson (aged 38). Matthew Clayson was one of three children listed on this Census – Edith Clayson (Milliner, aged 15) then Matthew & Annie Clayson (aged 11).

The 1911 England Census recorded Matthew Clayson as a 24 year old, Engineering Fitter, living at 13 Turner Street, Gorton, Ardwick, South Manchester with his mother & sisters. His mother was listed as Mary Ann Clayson (House holder, married, aged 48). She stated she had been married for 27 years & had 3 children – all still living & all listed on this Census – Edith Clayson (Mantle Maker, aged 26), then Matthew & Annie Clayson (Mantle Maker, aged 21). Matthew's father – Matthew Clayson was listed as a 46 year old, Soap Maker Pensioned, living at 31 Wellesley Street, Manchester. He was listed as "totally blind". Matthew Clayson had 3 people boarding with him – George William Dillon (Photographer, aged 39, born Malta), George's wife – Annie Maria Dillon (aged 37) & their 1 year old son – George Henry Dillon.

Matthew Clayson (senior), father of Matthew Clayson, died in August, 1911 & was buried in Gorton Cemetery, Manchester on 26th August, 1911.

Matthew Clayson, aged 24 & William Linney, aged 27, both Fitters, were passengers on the *Ophir* which departed from the port of London, England on 10th May, 1912 bound for Australia. They had both listed their country of intended future residence as Australia. They arrived in Sydney, New South Wales on 20th June, 1912.

Mrs M. A. Clayson, Tailoress, aged 48, widowed mother of Matthew Clayson, & his sisters – Edith Clayson, Tailoress, aged 27 & Annie Clayson, aged 34, along with Miss Jennie McCormick, Tailoress, aged 24, were passengers on the *Suevic*, which departed from the port of Liverpool, England on 25th October, 1913 bound for Australia. They had all listed their country of intended future residence as Australia.

Matthew Clayson married Jennie McCormick on 17th December, 1913 in St. Augustine's Church, Balmain North, New South Wales, Australia. Matthew's sister Annie Clayson was married on the same day & in the same church to William Linney.

A birth was registered in Cowra, NSW in 1915 for Mary Clayson, daughter of Matthew & Jennie Clayson.

A birth was registered in Waverley, NSW in 1917 for Ann Clayson, daughter of Matthew & Jennie Clayson.

Matthew Clayson, aged 29, married, of "Sylvania," Varna Street, Waverley, Sydney, NSW, applied for enrolment as a Volunteer for Manufacture of Munitions in Great Britain on 30th August, 1916. He was a Tool & Gauge Maker, & had previously worked for 2 ½ years for the NSW Government Railways on general engineering work. Matthew Clayson stated he had worked for 6 months (and was still employed) at Commonwealth Naval Dockyard, Cockatoo Island as a Tool & Gauge maker. He stated he had served his apprenticeship at Sir W. G. Armstrong, Whitworth & Co. Ltd in Manchester as an apprentice journeyman, fitter in gun mounting department and tool room & had worked there for 8 ½ years. He had also attended Technical School at Manchester.

Matthew Clayson was accepted & given a Muniton Worker number of 22.

Australian Muniton Worker Matthew Clayson embarked from Australia on 10th November, 1916 on *Osterley* & arrived at Tilbury, England on 10th November, 1916.

Australian Munition Worker Matthew Clayson commenced work with H. M. Factory, Queensferry on 22nd November, 1916.

Australian Munition Worker Matthew Clayson died at 1 am on 1st December, 1916 at 23 Cherry Road, Chester, Cheshire, England from Lobar Pneumonia. (Note – the “Summary of Particulars Required for Personal File” form in the Record file for Munition Worker Matthew Clayson records his date of death as 30th November, 1916. A copy of the death certificate is included in the Record file & the date on the death certificate is 1st December, 1916.) The informant on the death certificate was listed as A. S. Carlon, sister-in-law, 14 Robert Street, West Gorton, Manchester.

A death for Matthew Clayson, aged 29, was registered in the December quarter, 1916 in the district of Chester, Cheshire, England.

Australian Munition Worker Matthew Clayson was buried at 2.30 pm on 4th December, 1916 at Overleigh Cemetery, Chester, Cheshire, England – Plot – Old cem. 107 (Private Grave) & has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone. (According to Find a Grave Matthew Clayson is buried in Overleigh Old Cemetery)

The following report into the death of Matthew Clayson was completed by Mr J. H. Wrigley:

“As instructed, I reported to Mr. Leighton at Chester on Saturday morning, December 16th 1916. Later that morning I proceeded with Mr. Leighton to Queensferry when I was enabled to interview A. Chambers, an Australian Munitions Worker. Chambers was friendly with Clayson during the voyage from Australia, and after arrival in England they lived together until the time of Clayson’s death.

From Chambers I obtained particulars as to the movements of Clayson prior to his illness, also as to the attention, etc., which Clayson received during his illness.

At Cape Town, during the voyage from Australia, Clayson contracted a cold. The ship arrived at Cape Town in the early morning of 21st October 1916, and left at 2.0.p.m. on the same day. During the stay at Cape Town the weather was very wet and cold. The cold continued with Clayson during the remaining three weeks of the voyage and though urged by Chambers to consult the ship’s doctor, Clayson did not do so.

With the rest of the Munitions Workers Clayson arrived in London on November 10th.

He and Chambers were placed together in a position at Queensferry, and left London on the night of November 20th. During their stay in London they lived at the Counties Hotel, Tottenham Court Road, and Clayson, although he still had the cold, showed no sign of being in any way ill.

They arrived at Chester in the early morning of Tuesday, November 21st, and later reported at Queensferry. There they went through the usual formalities of signing on and were examined by the Factory doctor (Dr. Roberts). Chambers informed the doctor of Clayson’s long continued cold and Dr. Roberts gave a prescription which Clayson subsequently used. They returned to Chester that day and obtained lodging with Mrs Atkinson at 23, Cherry Road Chester. The lodgings were clean, very comfortable, and in a good neighbourhood.

They commenced work the following morning Wednesday, November 22nd. Towards the end of the week Clayson appeared to get worse but continued at work. The weather during that week was most miserable.

On Saturday night November 25th, the two went into the City of Chester, and at 8.30, as Clayson complained of being ill, they returned home, Clayson going straight to bed. At midnight he was delirious and Chambers sought the assistance of the Landlady, who poulticed the patient’s chest.

The next morning Dr. Brown was sent for and he pronounced the patient to be seriously ill with pneumonia and advised his removal to the Hospital. Clayson refused to be moved until he had consulted Chambers, who was at work that day. When Chambers arrived home from work at 4.30.p.m. he advised that Clayson should go to the hospital, but Clayson was then too ill to be moved.

Father Hayes was sent for and he visited the patient and immediately sent for the nursing Sisters. The Sisters were trained nurses and undertook to nurse Clayson, one during the day and the other during the night. They were assisted by Clayson’s sister-in-law who went there from Manchester.

Despite the continual attention Clayson got worse and died at 1.0.a.m. on Friday, December 1st, 1916. The funeral took place at 2.30.p.m. on the following Monday at the Chester Cemetery, the funeral arrangements being undertaken by Father Hayes.

The grave is situated about 100 yards from the main gate, on the right hand side of the main walk. Chambers is of the opinion that everything possible was done for Clayson. He had continuous nursing and did not want for anything. Father Hayes was in constant attendance and took more than an ordinary interest in Clayson. The authorities at Queensferry were most kind and considerate to Chambers in all matters relating to Clayson.

On Sunday morning I saw Father Hayes. He was with Clayson at every opportunity he had, and he saw that everything possible was being done for him.

He intends when the grave is settled to erect a cross bearing Clayson's name and to see that the grave is well kept. Later, in the summer, he intends to have a photograph of the grave taken and to send it to Mrs. Clayson. He wrote two letters to Mrs Clayson, one when Clayson died and the other after the funeral. He also wrote to the Priest at Waverley, Sydney, where Mrs Clayson resides, asking him to see that she was looked after. Father Hayes described the weather during the week Clayson arrived at Chester, as most vile.

On Sunday after interviewing Father Hayes I went to the Chester Cemetery and saw the grave. It is situated in a nice portion of the Cemetery. I also saw Mrs. Atkinson's house and found everything to be as Chambers stated."

Mr Chas. A. Le M. Walker, of The Citizens War Chest Fund, wrote to The Secretary of Munitions Committee, Wynyard Square, Sydney in March, 1918: *"The case of Mrs Matthew Clayson, "Sylvania," Varna Street, Waverley, has been brought before my notice. It seems that Mrs Clayson's husband, a Munition Worker who sailed by the "Osterley" on the 23rd of September 1916, died in England on the 1st December following. I understand Mrs Clayson's allowance allotment ceased after the 29th January, 1917, and that she has failed to obtain any pension on account of the fact that her husband was not a member of the A.I.F. I am very anxious to do something if possible to procure some assistance for Mrs Clayson and should like to know if you have already approached the Pensions Office in the matter and what you advise I should do in order to assist her case."*

Mr T. Trumble, Secretary, Department of Defence, wrote to the Secretary to the Treasury in July, 1919, stating: *"Representations have been made on behalf of Mrs Clayson for free passages to England for herself and two children. Mrs Clayson is the widow of Munition Worker No. 22 M. Clayson, who died in England whilst under Agreement with the Commonwealth. As the Worker's death was due to natural causes no compensation was payable. It is stated that Mrs Clayson has a sister and other relatives in England with whom she would feel more at home, her only relative in Australia being her late husband's sister. Mrs Clayson also states that her financial position will not enable her to pay her own and the children's passages. The cost of 3rd class passages Sydney to London would be - Adult ... £41.0.0; Child 4 years ...£20.10.0 The child of two years will be carried free. The case is submitted for consideration, and advice is desired as to whether the Treasurer is prepared to approve the expenditure involved."*

The Secretary to the Treasury replied to The Secretary, Department of Defence in August, 1919 stating that *"The Treasurer has approved of the expenditure of £61/10/-, in connection with the granting of free passages to England of Mrs Clayson and her two children, being charged to Division 141 – War Services – Defence."*

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Worker M. Clayson, Australian Munition Worker. No family details are listed.

Australian Munitions Worker Matthew Clayson 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*)

M. Clayson is remembered on the Cowra & District Honour Roll, located at Cowra Service Club, 101 Brisbane Street, Cowra.

(Mary Ann Clayson, mother of Matthew Clayson, died in Cowra, NSW in 1924)



Cowra & District Honour Roll (*Photos from Monument Australia*)



Cowra & District Honour Roll

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)



(75 pages of Mmunition Worker Matthew Clayson's Mmunition records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial & 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 existant. 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)

A.H.C. Guild

On Saturday last the relatives of Bro. M. Clayson, of Waverley, a member of St. Charles' branch, received a cable, announcing his death in Chester (England). It is only about six months since the deceased member accepted an engagement with the military for munition work abroad. He leaves a young wife and family, to whom sincere sympathy is extended. – R.I.P.

(The Catholic Press, Sydney, NSW – 14 December, 1916)

A.H.C. Guild

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

On Saturday week the relatives of Bro. M. Clayson, of Waverley, a member of St. Charles' branch, received a cable announcing his death in Chester, England. It is only about six months since the deceased member accepted an engagement with the military for munition work abroad. He leaves a young wife and family, to whom sincere sympathy is extended. – R.I.P.

(Freeman's Journal, Sydney, NSW – 21 December, 1916)



Matthew Clayson

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.

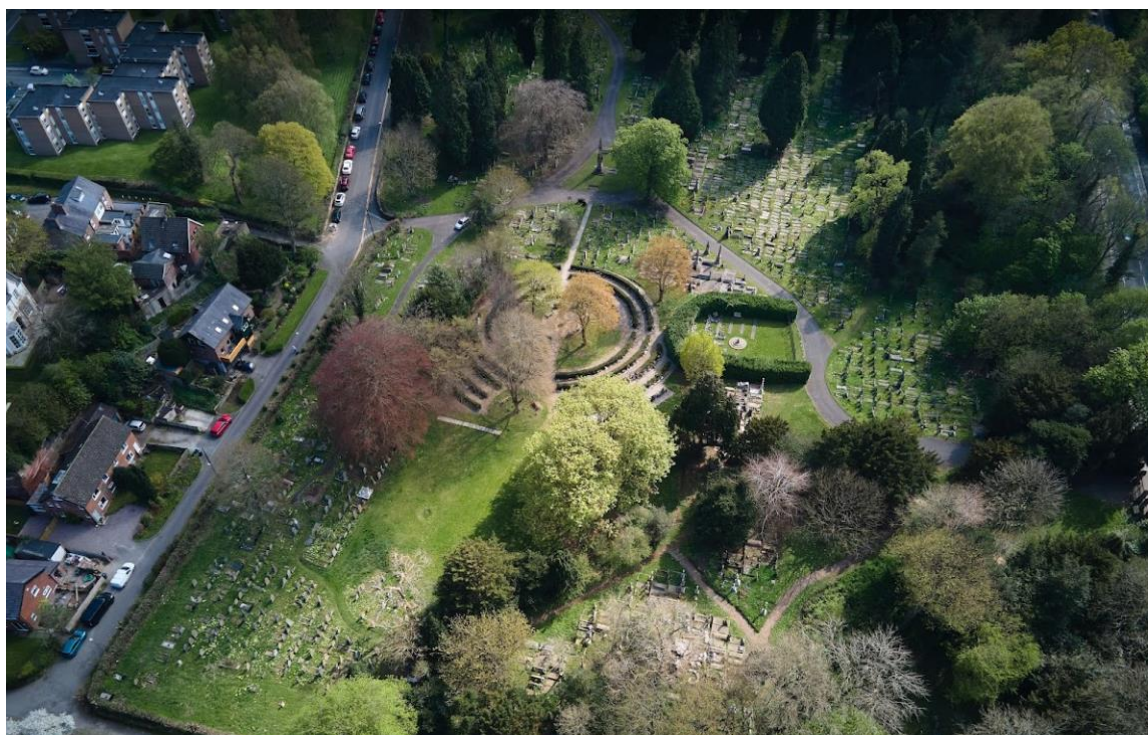
1. Their death had to be caused by war actions or the increased threat caused by war and
2. They had to be on duty at the time of their death - being posted overseas counted as 'being on duty'.

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.

Overleigh Cemetery, Chester, Cheshire, England

Chester (Overleigh) Cemetery contains 129 First World War burials, about half of them made from local hospitals including the Chester War hospital which was housed in the Infirmary building. Second World War burials number 69. The majority of the burials are scattered throughout the cemetery but there is a small war graves plot made up of 32 graves from both wars.

(Information from CWGC)



(Photo by Paul lai 2022)



Overleigh Old Cemetery, Chester (Photos from *Find a Grave* – Chris Kemp – above 2014; below 2020)



Photo of Australian Munition Worker M. Clayson's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Overleigh Old Cemetery, Chester, Cheshire, England.



(Photo by Chris Kemp – Find a Grave 2015)



(Photo by Chris Kemp – Find a Grave 2018)

The following photos show Matthew Clayson's original headstone along with his Commonwealth War Graves Headstone.



Matthew Clayson's original Grave Marker with CWGC Headstone in background

(Photos from Find a Grave – Dandy Lion 2019)



___ for the Repose
'of the Soul of
BERTHA KREBBS and
EMILY JANE WHITEHOUSE
R. I. P.



And for

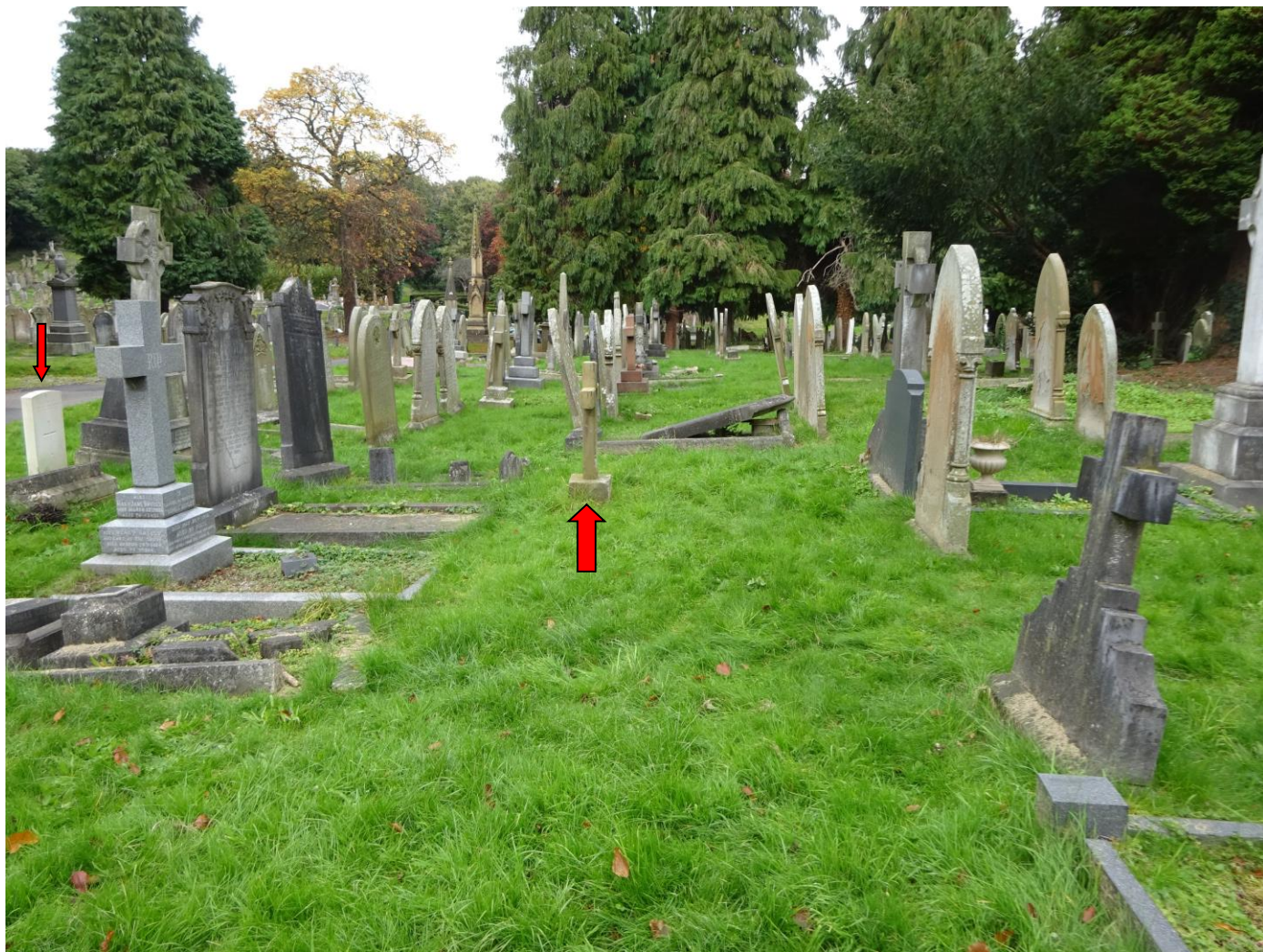
MATTHEW CLAYSON

(of Sydney, Australia)

Who died on Dec [4th 1916]

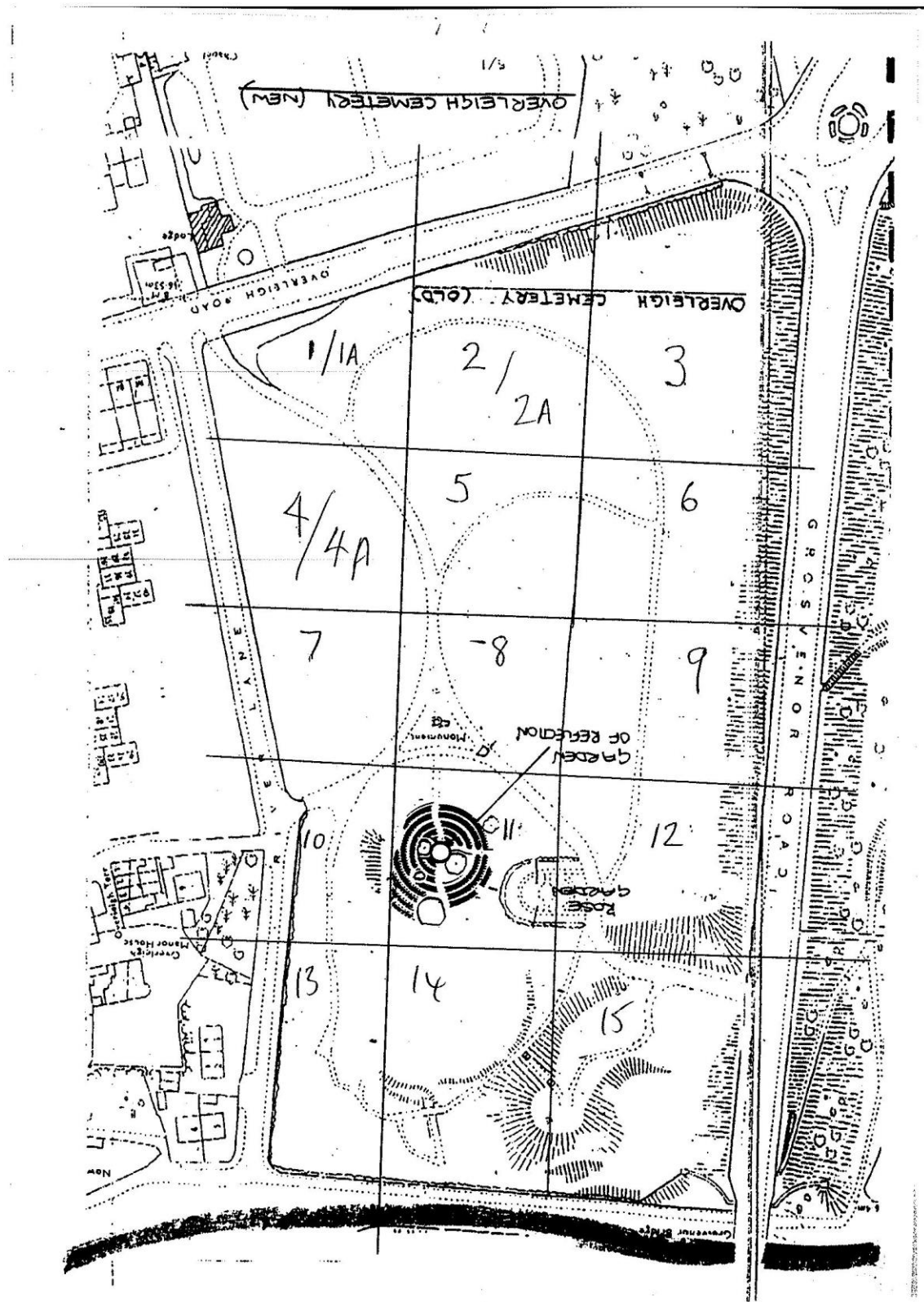
Aged 29 Years

R. I. P.



Matthew Clayson's original Cross Grave Marker (up arrow) with CWGC Headstone (down arrow)

(Photo from Find a Grave – Dandyllion 2019)



Map showing Overleigh Cemetery – Old & New (Find a Grave – Ribley1)