

**Bedford Cemetery (Foster Hill Cemetery),  
Bedford, Bedfordshire**

**War Grave**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**H. G. FIELD**

**AUSTRALIAN MUNITION WORKER**

**5TH APRIL, 1919**

## Henry George FIELD

Henry George Field was born at Aldershot, Hampshire, England on 1st October, 1858 to parents James & Frances Field (nee Brown).

The 1861 England Census recorded Henry Field as a 2 year old, living with his family at Winchester Street, Overton, Hampshire, England. His parents were listed as James Field (Agricultural Labourer, aged 44, born Hungerford, Berks) & Frances Field (aged 43, born Overton, Hants). Henry was the youngest of six children listed on this Census (all born Overton, Hants) – William Field (Agricultural Labourer, aged 21), Catharine Field (Agricultural Labourer, aged 15), John Field (Plough Boy, aged 12), Ellen Field (Scholar, aged 7), James (Scholar, aged 5) then Henry.

The 1871 England Census recorded Henry Field as a 12 year old Brickmaker's Labourer living with his parents at Red Lion Lane, Overton, Hampshire. His parents were listed as James Field (Brickmaker, aged 55) & Francis Field (aged 53). No other children were listed at home.

Henry George Field married Martha Ellen Johnson (nee Wright), widow, on 21st January, 1895 at "Pavilion", Greenmount, Queensland. Henry George & Martha Field had the following children: Ellen Caroline Field (born 1895), Frances Field (born 1897), Sarah Elsie Field (born 1898), Edward James Field (born 1901) & Mary Ann Field (born 1901; died 1901).

Harry George Field stated he was a 54 year old, married, Farm Labourer (no children) from Denotion Lane, Toowoomba, Queensland when he enlisted at Toowoomba, Queensland on 8th November, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 2309 & his religion was Congregational. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Martha Field on the Attestation Papers but his daughter – Mrs Annie Sowden, Denotion Lane, Toowoomba, Queensland was listed as next-of-kin for the Embarkation Roll.

Harry George Field was posted to No. 8 Squadron, 2nd Remount Unit.

Private Harry George Field embarked from Sydney, NSW on RMS *Orontes* on 10th November, 1915 with the 2nd Australian Remount Unit – 8th Squadron.

Private Harry George Field was returned to Australia on *Seang Bee* from Suez on 29th April, 1916 & arrived in Australia on 31st May, 1916 as his Unit had been demobilised.

Private Harry George Field was discharged from the Australian Imperial Force at 1st Military District on 19th June, 1916.

Private Harry George Field was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal for his service with the Australian Imperial Force.

Henry George Field, aged 51, of Toowoomba, Queensland, widower with no dependants, applied for enrolment as a Volunteer for Manufacture of Munitions in Great Britain on 30th May, 1917. His present occupation was listed as Home Service in A.I.F., 1st Dst Guard, Enoggera & his religion was Congregational. Henry Field stated in the last 3 years he was engaged as Flower Gardener at Gatton College, at present Home Service, Returned Soldier. The earliest date he was prepared to embark was "at once" & he wished to sail with Joseph Harris.

Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field was given a Muniton Worker number of 1214 & embarked from Australia on 29th July, 1917 on *Medic* & arrived at Liverpool, England on 12th October, 1917.

Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field commenced work in England on 15th October, 1917 at R.M.A.T. Sleeford as a Labourer.

Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field had a Doctor's Certificate dated 31st January, 1918 stating he was incapable of work due to Bronchitis.

On 5th February, 1918 Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field requested a transfer from Messrs Holloway Bros., Cardington as the climate did not agree with him. Another letter was sent to Officer-in-Charge, Australian

Munitions Workers, Liverpool, England stating that the climate at Bedford was undermining his health. A Medical Certificate dated 15th February, 1918 stating Australian War Worker Henry George Field was incapable of work but no cause was listed.

Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field had a Doctor's Certificate dated 19th April, 1918 stating he was suffering Dysentery.

Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field had a Doctor's Certificate dated 2nd July, 1918 stating he was incapable of work due to Colitis (Dysenteric).

On 19th November, 1918 Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field called in to the office of Australian Munitions Workers, Liverpool, England asking when his application might be terminated. A Memo from Mr Patten with references to an interview with Henry Field stating since coming to England he had married a lady in Bedford. He and his wife were middle aged (previous minutes show Henry Field was over the age of 60 years) and had no ties in Australia. "*They dreaded the voyage across and F. (Field) desired a friendly termination of his agreement.*"

An entry for 23rd December, 1918 in the records for Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field show how was shifted from Bedford to Spondon for Interic and worked at Spondon until the Termination of the War. His period of sickness was one month & was unemployed for six weeks.

On 30th December, 1918 details recorded in Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field's file show that he was going back to Australia himself & would be pleased to sail in about 2 months. He was now in work again & had been moved from Bedford on account of illness.

Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field had a Doctor's Certificate dated 14th January, 1919 stating he was incapable of work due to Lumago (Fibrositis). Another certificate dated 17th January, 1919 stated he was suffering Bronchitis – Lumbago.

A Doctor's Certificate date 25th January, 1919 stated Henry George Field was incapable of work due to Lumbago-Rheumatism.

Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field had Doctor's Certificates as being unfit for work due to Lumbago, dated 31st January, 1919, 7th February, 1919, 14th February, 1919, 28th February, 1919, 7th March, 1919 & 14th March, 1919. Certificates dated 21st March, 1919 & 27th March, 1919 stated he was incapable of work due to Lumbago and Bronchitis.

On 3rd April, 1919 details recorded in Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field's file show that he was in Hospital in account of Bronchitis. Later information shows he had been admitted on 29th March, 1919.

Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field had a Doctor's Certificate as being unfit for work due to Bronchitis dated 4th April, 1919.

Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field died on 5th April, 1919 at Bedford Infirmary, Bedfordshire, England from Tuberculosis/Phthisis. The Death Certificate recorded his age at death as 62 years & his address as 3 Groyn (?) Street, Bedford, England.

A death for Henry G. Field, aged 62, was registered in the June quarter, 1919 in the district of Bedford, Bedfordshire, England.

Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field was buried on 9th April, 1919 in Bedford Infirmary, Bedfordshire, England – Plot number H/2. 174 & has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

According to information in the file for Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field, he was last employed with Howard's Engineering Firm, Bedford.

T. R. Roberts, M.L.A., wrote to Munitions Advisory Committee, Brisbane, Queensland in September, 1919 stating "*you advised me Percy George Field left Queensland on the 30th July, 1917 as a War Worker and had since died. I am writing you as his widow is in Toowoomba and would like to know what has been done with any estate he may have had.*" The letter was forwarded to The Secretary, Defence Department, Melbourne, Victoria & they replied that  
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the “next of kin at the time of enlistment of the deceased to be Mrs Sowden (daughter), Windmill Street, Toowoomba. The cablegram received from London reporting the death of the late Worker stated that his widow was resident in England and had made arrangements regarding the funeral of the deceased. The District Finance Officer, Brisbane writing under date 15th May last advised that the deceased made a Statutory Declaration to the effect that he was a widower without dependents. It would seem therefore that the late worker married in England and I shall be glad if you will advise me whether the person at Toowoomba who claims to be the widow of the deceased is identical with the person who arranged the funeral in England...”

Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field had possibly married Charlotte Lawson in the district of Bedford, Bedfordshire, England in the September quarter, 1918.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Worker Henry George Field – service number 1214, Australian Munition Worker. No family details are listed.

Australian Munitions Worker Henry George Field 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.

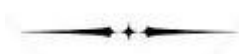
These men were not members of the Australian Imperial Forces and did not serve in combat units, but were recruited to meet the shortfall in skilled labour that threatened many of Britain's key wartime industries including munitions. (Source: Australian War Memorial)



(23 pages of Private Harry George Field's A.I.F. Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

(121 pages of Munition Worker Henry George Field's Munition 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*





*Back row left to right - Henry Field, Silas Johnson, Martha Field  
Middle row left to right - Frances Field, Ellen Caroline Field, Sarah Elsie Field  
Front - Anne Johnson*

## **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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### **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.

### **Bedford Cemetery, Bedfordshire, England**

Bedford is the county town of Bedfordshire and is bisected by the River Ouse. It lies about 50 miles north-west of London, from which it is easily reached by road or rail. The cemetery is owned by the Bedford Corporation, and is a mile-and-a-half north-west of the railway station. It contains war graves of both world wars, some in a combined 1914-1918 and 1939-1945 War graves plot and the rest widely distributed throughout the cemetery. The 1914-1918 burials number 151, of which 41 are in the plot. There are in all 70 burials of the 1939-1945 War, and this total is made up by 8 sailors, 32 soldiers, and 25 airmen belonging to the forces of the United Kingdom; 1 airman of the Royal Canadian Air Force; 1 soldier belonging to the army of undivided India and 3 Polish soldiers. Only twelve of the graves are in the plot, which is enclosed on three sides by a retaining wall, with the Cross of Sacrifice standing between two groups of graves. The continuous flower borders which run along the lines of headstones are set off by the level mown turf in which the graves lie.

*(Information from CWGC)*



*(Photo by Jones the Steam – Find a Grave)*





**Bedford Cemetery, Bedfordshire** (Photo above by Richard – Find a Grave; below from CWGC)

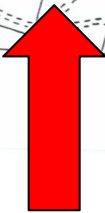
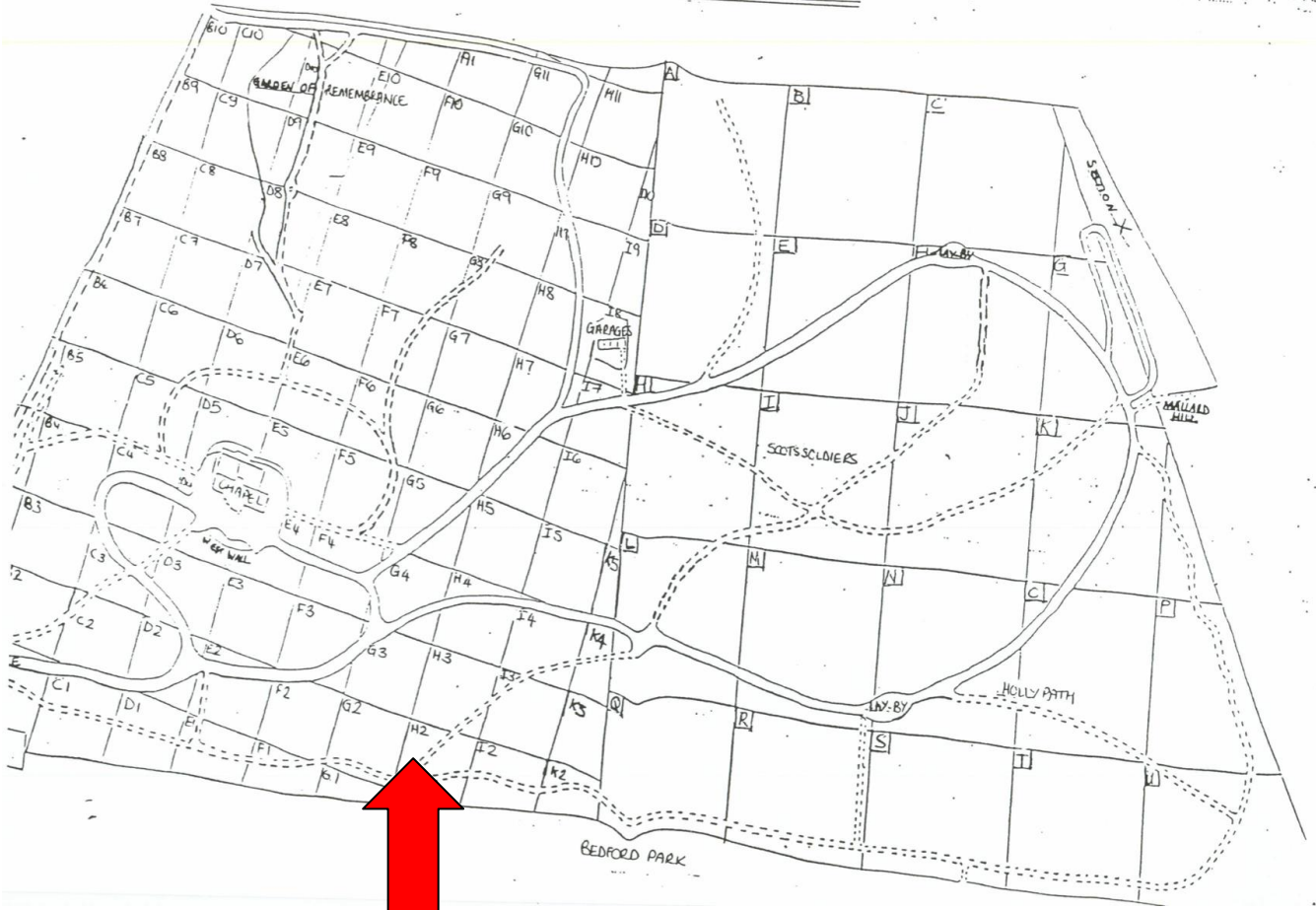


Photo of Australian Munition Worker Henry George Field's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Bedford Cemetery, Bedfordshire, England.



*(Photo by nettlyne – Find a Grave)*

A PLAN OF FOSTER HILL ROAD CEMETERY



(Photo by dbyram – Find a Grave)