

Andover Cemetery, Hampshire

War Grave



Lest We Forget

World War 1



J. MARTIN

AUSTRALIAN MUNITION WORKER

16TH NOVEMBER, 1918

James MARTIN

James Martin was born in London, England around 1860.

James Martin married Ada.

James Martin stated he was a 49 year old, married, Furnace Builder from 163 Royal Parade, Parkville, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia when he enrolled as a Volunteer for Manufacture of Munitions in Great Britain on 20th November, 1917. On his enrolment form he stated his apprenticeship "was half in London & half in Midlands, England & about 16 years in America and Canada & about 12 years in Australia." James Martin had been engaged by Cordite Works, Maribyrnong and Australian Explosives, Deer Park, Queensland, Victoria, W.A., S.A., West coast of Tasmania, General Furnace Building. James Martin stated on his enrolment form that his choice of work in England was "general Fire Brick Work, or foreman or supervisor for same" and was prepared to embark in about six weeks from 20th November, 1917.

The Personal file for Munition Workers & Navvies Despatched to Great Britain records James Martin, number - 3695 (Vic), Bricklayer. He embarked from Australia on 19th January, 1918 on *Beltana* & arrived at Royal Albert Docks, London on 22nd March, 1918.

James Martin, number 3695, started work at Messrs John Mowlem & Co. . Andover Aerodrome, as a Bricklayer from 24th March, 1918.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00110

Front view of the general service sheds under construction at the Andover Aerodrome, 1918

(Photo from Australian War Memorial)



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00101

Group portrait of unidentified Australian munition workers in the general service shed at the Andover aerodrome. Some of the men are holding their tools. 1918

(Photo from Australian War Memorial)

Australian Munitions Worker James Martin was found dead at 7 pm on 16th November, 1918 at Railway Tavern, Andover, Hampshire. The cause of death from the Death Certificate reads: "died of a gunshot wound purposely inflicted by himself, while of unsound mind."

An Inquest was held into his death on 18th November, 1918 at Andover.

Article on the Inquest in *Andover Advertiser* 22nd November, 1918:

A SAD EVENING

At the Town Hall on Monday evening, the borough coroner, Mr P. E. J. Talbot, held an inquest, without a jury, on the body of James martin, an Australian, who was found dead with a bullet wound in his head, at the Railway Tavern Inn on Saturday. – The Coroner and Dr Farr having viewed the body at the mortuary, Dr Farr said he had attended the deceased on two previous occasions for trivial ailments. On Saturday night he was called to the Railway tavern and found the deceased lying on his back in a bed sitting room. He was dead, and there was a bullet entry wound in his right cheek with an exit wound on the left side of the head. The cause of death was a gunshot wound in the head, probably self-inflicted. – Charles Natt, a carpenter, lodging at 127, South Street, Andover, stated that he belonged to Australia, and came over with the deceased, arriving in England on March 22 last. He had been in his company for seven years; deceased was a bricklayer at the local aerodrome, and was 55 years old and married. He had never known a stronger man in his life, and was surprised to hear what had happened. In Victoria deceased was a furnace builder, and was disappointed when he got to England to find that he had not been put at his job, and that Messrs Mowlem and Co. could not release him for work elsewhere. In Australia he was about to float a company for the

working of a patent of his in connection with boilers, when war broke out, and he lost the chance of making money for his patent. – Phyllis Rushent, general help at the Railway Tavern, said she had not seen anything peculiar with deceased since he went there in May. On Saturday she took up his tea between 4.30 pm and 5 o'clock. He was reading his paper then. At 7 o'clock she knocked at the door, but not getting an answer she opened the door and saw him lying on the floor with his hands covered with blood. – P.C. Corbin (Longparish) said he went to the Railway tavern on Saturday evening and found deceased lying on his back dead, with a wound in the head and an automatic pistol full of blood dropped in between his coat and waistcoat. One cartridge had been discharged, and there were six loaded ones still in the chamber. He also found on a table the papers produced, also a second loaded firearm in his right hand trouser pockets. There was a bullet in the ceiling. – The Coroner pointed out that although the deceased was a very intelligent man yet this writing was almost indecipherable. He was able to make out the following words:- "To Mrs Sawford, - I am sorry to make any noise with this gun..... forgive me." – Mr Natt, said he knew deceased had firearms with him, which he said he would use to save himself in case he was submarined on the voyage over. – The Coroner said he should call no more evidence as the cause of death was perfectly clear. He found "that the man died from a gunshot wound in the head which he purposely inflicted on himself, being at the time insane." In all his experience of 30 years Mr Talbot said that was the first inquest he had held without a jury.

A death for James Martin, aged 55, was registered in the December quarter, 1918 in the district of Andover, Hampshire.

Australian Munitions Worker James Martin was buried on 20th November, 1918 in Andover Cemetery, Hampshire, England – Plot number D. 530.

Mrs A. Martin, widow of the late Munitions Worker James Martin, of 89 Rathmines Road, Auburn, wrote to the Department of Defence on 15th April, 1919 which reads in part: *"..... I asked at the time I was notified of the death of my husband and heard the request made on the telephone form the Department at Little Burke St., that the cause of death should not be published, for which I was very thankful.*

I have since learned that information has been given to inquirers, who have no interest whatever. Mr Martin & myself having no relatives in Australia. Therefor I would like to have my wishes respected in the matter for I am thoroughly convinced it was an accident on his part & not premeditated, having known him all my life. I knew he possessed the revolvers and don't believe he really knew how to use the one.

He was most anxious to "do his bit" he tried three times to enlist by being over age 58 years at the time of his death. If you would kindly reply to this personally I would esteem it a great favour.

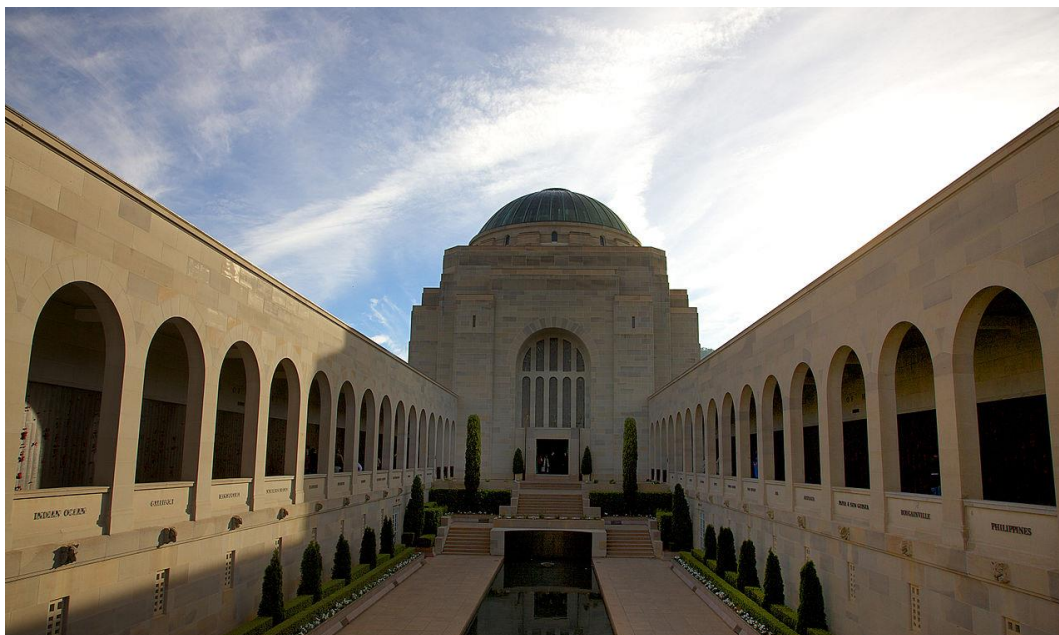
A reply from Secretary, Defence, Central Administration was sent to Mrs A. Martin, dated 28th April, 1919 which reads in part: *".....desire to inform you that no particulars concerning the above have been furnished to any person other than yourself.*

Instructions are, however, being issued to the Officials of the Department who are concerned with this matter, that strict secrecy is to be maintained in connection with the death of this worker....."

The Finance Dept had overpaid an amount into the account of Munitions Worker James Martin (deceased) & money was owed by Mrs Martin in return for a gold watch & chain belonging to the late James Martin, which was redeemed from a pawn shop, on her behalf – the difference being of £4-18-6d to be owed by Mrs Martin. They had talked to Mrs Martin & found out she was aged 57 years & was employed as a housekeeper at a wage of 25/- per week & she had no other source of income. After several letters the Minister & the Treasurer, in view of the circumstances of the case, approved that the debt could be written off in 1920.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists James Martin, Worker – service number 3695, Australian Muniton Worker. No family details are listed.

Australian Munitions Worker James Martin 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)



(100 pages of Australian Munitions Worker James Martin's file is available for viewing on-line at the National Archives of Australia)



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.



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.

Andover Cemetery, Hampshire

Andover Cemetery contains around 90 War Graves, 37 of them from World War 1.



Andover Cemetery, Hampshire (Photo from CWGC)

Photo of J. Martin's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone located in Andover Cemetery, Hampshire, England.



(Photo by ColinA 2013)