

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

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



4721 PRIVATE

R. C. LITTLE

24TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

15TH MARCH, 1917 Age 38

R.I.P.

Robert Clark LITTLE

Robert Clark Little was born at Horsham, Victoria on 4th March, 1878 to parents James Charles and Susan Little (nee Clark). (Note: according to information provided by his wife for the Roll of Honour – Robert Little was born at Rutherglen, Victoria).

The 1903 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Coolgardie, subdivision of Erlistoun, Western Australian recorded Robert Clark Little, Storekeeper from Duketon.

The 1906 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Coolgardie, subdivision of Duketon, Western Australian recorded Robert Clark Little, Storekeeper from Duketon.

Robert Clark Little married Madge Callanan in Perth, Western Australia in 1907.

The 1910 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Coolgardie, subdivision of Mount Magnet, Western Australian recorded Robert Clark Little, Storekeeper & his wife Madge Little, from Laverton.

The 1917 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Yarra, subdivision of Richmond Central, Victoria recorded Robert Clark Little, Grocer & his wife Madge Little, from 217 Lennox Street, Richmond.

Robert Clark Little was aged 38 years & 11 months, married & a Grocer from 217 Lennox Street, Richmond, Melbourne, Victoria when he enlisted on 26th February, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 4721 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Madge Little, of 217 Lennox Street, Richmond, Melbourne, Victoria. According to information provided by his wife for the Roll of Honour – Robert Clark Little was an Electrical Engineer.

Private Robert Clark Little was posted to “B” Company, 23rd (Depot) Battalion, Royal Park on 13th March, 1916 for recruit training. He was transferred to 12th Reinforcements of 24th Battalion at Broadmeadows on 31st March, 1916.

Private Robert Clark Little embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Euripides* (A14) on 4th April, 1916 with the 6th Infantry Brigade, 24th Infantry Battalion, 12th Reinforcements.

[Note: There is no record in the Service Record file of Private Robert Clark Little of where & when he disembarked. The first entry on his Casualty Form – Active Service is dated 30th November, 1916]

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.

Private Robert Clark Little was sent sick to Fargo Military Hospital, Wiltshire from 6th Training Battalion, No. 5 Camp at Rolleston on 30th November, 1916 with Influenza. He was transferred from Fargo Military Hospital on 6th December, 1916 to Tidworth Military Hospital with Influenza – serious.

Private Robert Clark Little was admitted to Tidworth Military Hospital, Wiltshire on 6th December, 1916 with Cerebro Spinal Meningitis – dangerous. The Medical Case Sheet recorded “*Cerebro Spinal Fever followed by Paraplegia – Admitted Hospital 6.12.16 with cerebro spinal fever. Recovered under treatment. Developed incontinence of urine & bowel also cystitis. Bladder washed out twice a day. Urine drawn up every 6 hours. Lies sleepless in bed & can scarcely move.*”

Mrs M. Little, 217 Lennox St., Richmond, Victoria, wife of Private Robert Clark Little, was advised by Base Records on 12th December, 1916 that Private R. C. Little was dangerously ill, suffering from cerebro spinal meningitis. She was advised on 13th December, 1916 that Signaller R. C. Little had been admitted to the Tidworth Military Hospital on 6th December, 1916. Communications addressed to Mrs M. Little in December, 1916 at 217 Lennox Street, Richmond were returned marked “Not known” & “Gone away”.

Mrs Little was advised on 30th December, 1916 that No. 4721 Signaller R. C. Little was improving. Advice was sent to Mrs M. Little at 2 Lorraine Street, Essendon, Victoria.

Private Robert Clark Little was sent sick to Fargo Hospital from 6th Training Battalion, Larkhill, Wiltshire on 28th February, 1917. (Note: According to the Hospital Admissions form in the Service Record file of Private Little – he was admitted to Military Hospital, Tidworth from 6th December, 1917 until 29th January, 1917 with Cerebro Spinal Fever. The Hospital Admissions form reported he had Paraplegia from 29th January, 1917 till 3rd March, 1917 – “*Transferred from Medical side with incontinence of urine cystitis & incontinence of faeces - quite helpless.*”)

Private Robert Clark Little was discharged from Military Hospital at Tidworth, Wiltshire on 3rd March, 1917 to Depot. He was marched in to No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth on 4th March, 1917.

Private Robert Clark Little was sent sick to Sidney Hall Hospital at Weymouth, Dorset on 6th March, 1917. The Hospital Admissions form recorded “*Patient was admitted with complete paralysis of arms & partial paralysis of lower limbs, also incontinence of bladder & rectum. Paralysis spread to _____ involving speech & pharynx.*”



Sidney Hall Military Hospital, Weymouth

Mrs M. Little, 2 Lorraine Street, Essendon, Victoria, was advised by Base Records on 9th January, 1917 that Signaller R. C. Little was progressing favourably. She was advised again on 30th January, 1917 that Signaller R. C. Little was improving.

Mrs M. Little, 2 Lorraine Street, Essendon, Victoria, was advised by Base Records on 6th March, 1917 that Signaller R. C. Little was reported to be pronounced out of danger.

Private Robert Clark Little died at 3.40 am on 15th March, 1917 at Sidney Hall Military Hospital, Weymouth, England from Meningo Myelitis following Cerebro Spinal Fever. The Hospital Admissions form recorded “*Patient died apparently from Respiratory failure.*”

A death for Robert C. Little, aged 41, was registered in the March quarter, 1917 in the district of Weymouth, Dorset, England.

Private Robert Clark Little was buried on 17th March, 1917 in Melcombe Regis Cemetery, Weymouth, Dorset, England – Plot number III. C. 2683 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Private Robert Clark Little requested in his Will, extracted from his Pay Book, that in the event of his death the whole of his property & effects be given to his wife Madge Little, No. 2 Lorraine St, Essendon, Victoria, Australia.

A War Pension was granted to Madge Little, 2 Lorraine St, Essendon, widow of the late Private Robert Clark Little, in the sum of £2 per fortnight from 23rd May, 1917. A Pension was also granted to Marjorie Kathleen Little, daughter of Signaller Robert Clark Little & Madge Little in the sum of 20/- per fortnight from 23rd May, 1917.

Madge Little, 2 Lorraine St, Essendon, widow of the late Private Robert Clark Little, wrote to Base Records on 11th July, 1917 requesting a Death Certificate for No. 4721 Signaller R. C. Little, 24th Battalion. Base Records replied on 16th July, 1917 enclosing a copy of the certificate of death of the late No. 4721 Private R. C. Little, 24th Battalion.

Private Robert Clark Little was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Little's widow – Mrs M. Little, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent January, 1922 & Plaque sent June, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Robert Clark Little – service number 4721, aged 38, of 24th Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of James Charles and Susan Clark Little; husband of Madge Little, of 2 Lorraine St., Essendon, Victoria, Australia.

Private R. C. Little is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 102.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

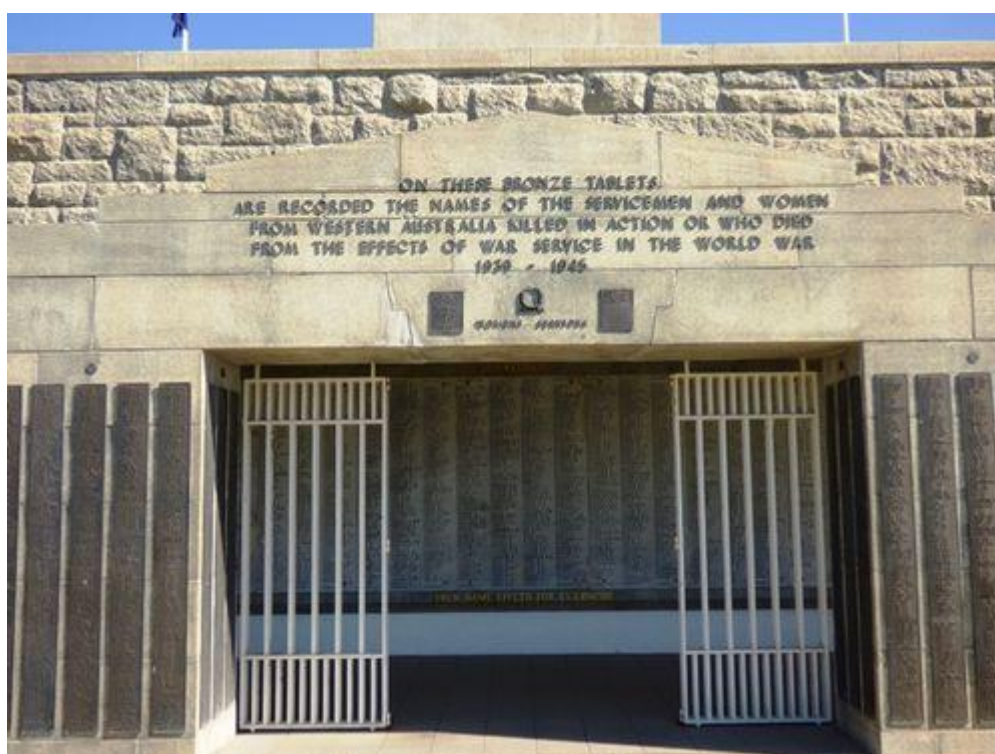
R. C. Little is remembered on the Western Australia State War Memorial which is located at the top of Kings Park and Botanic Garden escarpment, ANZAC Bluff, Fraser Avenue, Perth, Western Australia. The memorial was developed around an 18 metre tall obelisk as the principal feature, which is almost a replica of the Australian Imperial Force Memorials erected in France and Belgium.

The heavy concrete foundations are supplemented by heavy brick walls which enclose an inner chamber or crypt. The walls surrounding the crypt are covered with The Roll of Honour; marble tablets which list under their units the names of more than 7,000 members of the services killed in action or as a result of World War One.



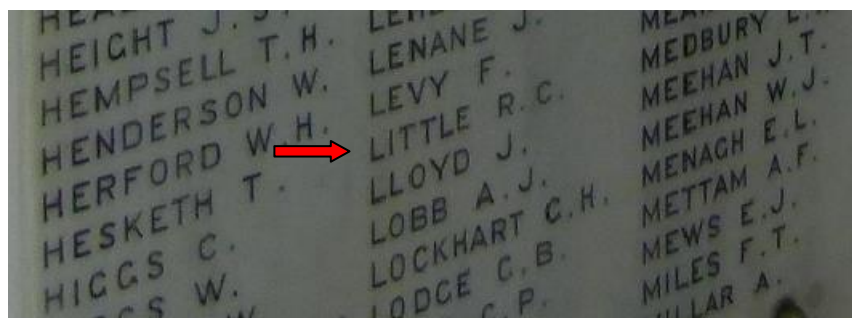
**Western Australia State War Memorial Cenotaph, Kings Park (above)
& (below) The Crypt with the Roll of Honour names**

(Photos from Monument Australia – Kent Watson/Sandra Tattersall/Graeme Saunders)





Other Corps Panel (Photo courtesy of Gordon Stuart)



(63 pages of Private Robert Clark Little'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

DIED ON SERVICE

LITTLE – On the 15th March, at Military Hospital, Tidworth, England, Robert Clark (Bert) Little, dearly loved husband of Madge, and loving father of Marjorie.

So dearly loved, so deeply mourned.

(*The Argus*, Melbourne, Victoria – 26 March, 1917)

THE TOLL OF WAR

285TH LIST

VICTORIANS

DIED (OTHER CAUSES)

Pte R. C. Little, Essendon (cause not stated)

(*The Evening Echo*, Ballarat, Victoria – 5 April, 1917)

285th CASUALTY LIST

The Victorian names are:-

ACCIDENTALLY KILLED

Private R. C. Little, Essendon

(*The Mildura Cultivator*, Victoria – 11 April, 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 R. C. Little does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

R.I.P.

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

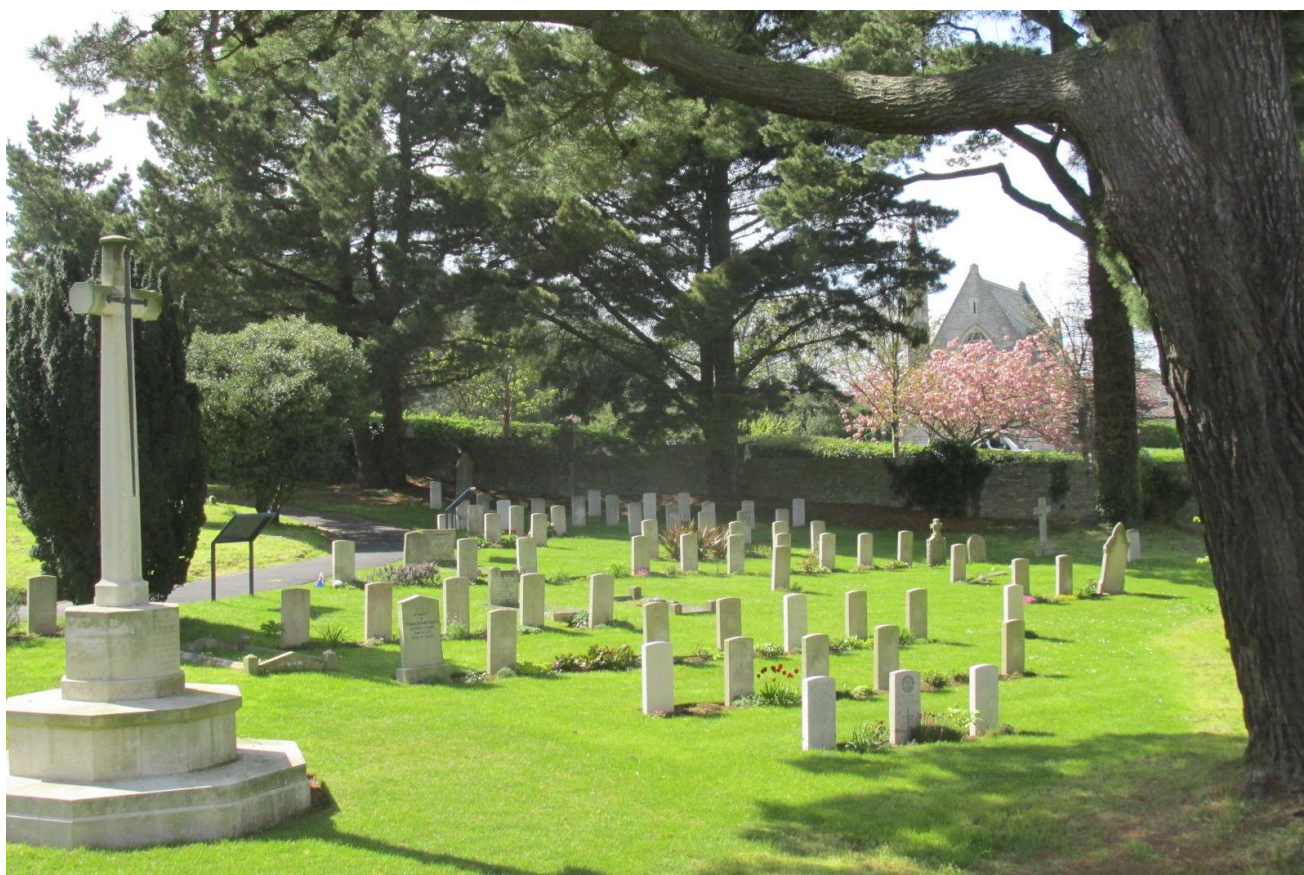
Identified, left to right: Captain Francis Arthur Deravin, Australian Army Medical Corps, died 8 July 1917 aged 41 years (large headstone); 138 Private Louis Nelson Matthews, 27th Battalion, 4 July 1917; 5082 Private Victor George Smith, 21st Battalion, died 13 November 1918.



(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 Kout'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 Sherrins, 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 prisoners-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 Bridport, 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 Westham. 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 Sherrins, Ltd. Weymouth



(Photos courtesy of Steve Stewart)

Australians in Weymouth

From Weymouth to Auswey - A Soldier's Recovery



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 placed in Repatriation and Recuperation camps in Westham, Littlebrook, 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 122 soldiers buried in the cemetery, 83 from Australia and 39 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: Dorset Close Sussex Road Queensland Road Kitchener Road Corporation Road Short Road Longcroft Road Wessex Road Perth Street Melbourne Street Adelaide Crescent Abbotsbury Road Sydney Street Shirecroft Road	Westham Camp - December 1916 Soldiers Huts Company Officers Regimental Institute Miniature Rifle Range Officers' Mess Shower Block Vehicle Shed, Mob Store Horse Shelter Coal Yard Cook House YMCA Dining Pit Fire Hydrant
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www.westhamcommunitygroup.co.uk

Photo of Private R. C. Little's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Melcombe Regis Cemetery, Weymouth, Dorset, England.





(Photo courtesy of Allan Wood)