

**St. Laurence Churchyard,
Alvechurch, Worcestershire**

War Grave



Lest We Forget

World War 1



6865 PRIVATE

R. J. MATTHEWS

13TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

2ND JANUARY, 1918 Age 27

Blessed Are The Dead

Which Die In The Lord

He Did His Duty

Roland John MATTHEWS

Roland John Matthews was born around April, 1890 at Lea End, Alvechurch, Birmingham, Worcestershire to parents Richard and Mary Ann Matthews. His birth was registered in the June quarter, 1890 in the district of Bromsgrove, Worcestershire.

The 1891 England Census recorded Roland J. Matthews as an 11 month old living with his family at Lea End, Firtree Cottage, Alvechurch, Worcestershire. His parents were listed as Richard Matthews (Bricklayer & Farmer, aged 40, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire) & Mary A. Matthews (aged 33, born Bromsgrove, Worcestershire). Roland was the youngest of nine children listed on this Census – Richard W. (Bricklayer's Labourer, aged 14, born Birmingham, Warwickshire), Herbert H. (Scholar, aged 11, born Birmingham, Warwickshire), Frederick E. (Scholar, aged 11, born Birmingham, Warwickshire), Edith M. (Scholar, aged 9, born Alvechurch, Worcestershire), Arthur P. (Scholar, aged 7, born Alvechurch, Worcestershire), Ethel M. (aged 5, born Alvechurch, Worcestershire), Robert R. Matthews (aged 4, born Alvechurch, Worcestershire), Frank L. Matthews (aged 2, born Alvechurch, Worcestershire) then Roland.

The 1901 England Census recorded Roland John Matthews as a 10 year old living with his family at Cofton Common, Cofton Hackett, Worcestershire. His parents were listed as Richard Matthews (Builder, Contractor & Farmer, aged 50) & Mary Anne Matthews (aged 43). Roland was one of nine children listed on this Census – Richard West Matthews (Bricklayer, aged 24), Herbert Harold Matthews (Bricklayer, aged 21), Frederick Ernest Matthews (Carpenter & Joiner, aged 21), Edith Maud Matthews (aged 19), Arthur Percy Matthews (Carpenter & Joiner, aged 17), Robert Ronald Matthews (Stockman on Farm, aged 14), Frank Leonard Matthews (aged 12), then Roland & Margaret Alice Matthews (aged 7, born Cofton Hackett, Worcestershire).

Roland John Matthews attend the National School, Northfield, Birmingham, England.

The 1911 England Census recorded Roland John Matthews as a 20 year old Carpenter, living with his family in an 8 roomed dwelling at The Beeches, Cofton Common, Northfield, near Birmingham, Worcestershire. His parents were listed as Richard Matthews (Builder, aged 60) & Mary Ann Matthews (aged 54). Richard & Mary Anne Matthews had been married for 36 years & had 12 children, 3 having died. Roland was one of five children listed on this Census – Frederick Ernest Matthews (Carpenter, aged 31), Robert Ronald Matthews (Bricklayer, aged 24), Frank Leonard Matthews (Bricklayer, aged 22) then Roland & Margaret Alice Matthews (aged 17).

Roland J. Matthews, Joiner, & his brother Frank L. Matthews, Bricklayer, were listed as passengers on *Themistocles* which departed for the port of London & arrived at the port of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia on 6th June, 1912.

Roland John Matthews was a 26 year old, single, Joiner from Junee Road, Temora, NSW when he enlisted on 11th July, 1916 with the 13th Infantry Battalion, 22nd Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 6865 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs M. A. Matthews, Pool Bank, Cofton, North Fields, Birmingham, England. His next-of-kin in Australia was his brother – Frederick Ernest Matthews of Junee Rd, Temora. Roland Matthews stated on his Attestation Papers that he had previously been rejected for serving in His Majesty's Force due to his height (Roland Matthews was 5 feet 2 ½ inches tall).

Private Roland John Matthews was sent to Dubbo Depot Battalion for training on 15th July, 1916 then transferred to Victoria Barracks, Sydney on 16th August, 1916.

Private Roland John Matthews embarked from Sydney on SS *Port Nicholson* on 8th November, 1916 & disembarked at Devonport, England on 10th January, 1917.

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 Roland John Matthews was marched on to 4th Training Battalion at Codford, Wiltshire on 10th January, 1917.

Pte Matthews proceeded overseas to France via Folkestone on 28th February, 1917. He was marched in from England at 4th A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 1st March, 1917. Pte Matthews was

marched out to join his Unit on 5th March, 1917 & taken on strength with the 13th Battalion in the field on 6th March, 1917.

Pte Matthews was with his Unit on 26th September, 1917.

Private Roland John Matthews was wounded in action on 17th October, 1917 in Belgium. He was taken to 3rd Australian Field Ambulance with shrapnel wounds to right thigh & left Buttock. He was transferred to 3rd Can. Casualty Clearing Station then to Ambulance Train on 20th October, 1917. Private Matthews was admitted to 7 Canadian General Hospital at Etaples, France on 20th October, 1917 then embarked for England on 24th October, 1917 on Hospital Ship *Stad Antwerpen*.

Private Roland John Matthews was admitted to Garrison Tankerton Hospital, Whitstable (under the command of Shorncliffe Military) on 24th October, 1917. (Pte Matthews' Hospital sheet states that he was in the same Hospital from 16th August, 1916 to 12th September, 1916 with a Hernia – during this time he was in Camp at Victoria Barracks, Sydney).

Private Roland John Matthews died of wounds at 4 pm on 2nd January, 1918 at Tankerton Hospital, Whitstable, Kent, England.

A death for Roland J. Matthews, aged 27, was registered in the March quarter, 1918 in the district of Blean, Kent.

Private Roland John Matthews was buried at 3 pm on 8th January, 1918 at St Laurence's Churchyard, Alvechurch, Worcestershire. He was laid to rest by the side of his ancestors of four generations in the Churchyard. Pte Matthews' death is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission & as such he has a CWGC headstone. From the burial report of Pte Matthews - *Coffin was good, Polished Elm. The deceased soldier was interred privately at Alvechurch Parish Churchyard, the funeral starting from the house of the Father of deceased. The remains were followed to the Church by relatives in mourning coaches. A service was conducted in the Church and at the graveside by Archdeacon Peile. A few wreaths from relatives were placed on the grave. An oak cross will be erected by the A.I.F. London. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral. Relatives present at the funeral – Father & Mother – Mr & Mrs Matthews Senr; Brother – Mr & Mrs H. Matthews; Sister – Miss Matthews; Brothers – Messrs Arthur & Richard Matthews; Cousin – Miss Burman.*

Pte Roland John Matthews requested in his Will, dated 4th June, 1917, that all his property be bequeathed to his father – Richard Matthews of Poolbank, Cofton, Northfield, Birmingham, England. His brother – Frederick Ernest Matthews of Junee Road, Temora, NSW, Australia was appointed as Executor & trustee of the Will.

Pte Roland John Matthews was entitled to British War Medal & Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Matthews's mother – Mrs M. A. Matthews, in England (Scroll & Plaque sent October, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Roland John Matthews – service number 6865, aged 27, of 13th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of Richard and Mary Ann Matthews, of Poolbank, Cofton, Northfield, Birmingham. Born at Alvechurch.

Private R. J. Matthews is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 70.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

R. J. Matthews is remembered on the Temora & District War Memorial located at Loftus Street, opposite Aurora Street, Temora.



Temora & District War Memorial

(Photo from War Memorial Register NSW – David Roden, Peter Levarre-Waters & Roger Johnson)



Roland John Matthews is remembered on the Roll of Honour located in St. Michael and All Angels Church, Cofton Hackett.



Roll of Honour Cofton Hackett (Photo courtesy of Jill Harvey)

(36 pages of Pte Roland John Matthews'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, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives



Newspaper Notices

TEMORA

Pte R. J. Matthews died of wounds on January 1. The deceased soldier was a brother of Messrs F. E. and R. Matthews and enlisted from this town shortly after the outbreak of war.

(Albury Banner and Wodonga Express, NSW – 18 January, 1918)

FOR AUSTRALIA

CASUALTY LIST No. 380

NEW SOUTH WALES

DIED OF WOUNDS

Pte ROLAND JOHN MATTHEWS, England (previously reported wounded)

(The Sun, Sydney, NSW – 21 January, 1918)



Private Roland John Matthews



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)

Pte R. J. Matthews does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Blessed Are The Dead

Which Die In The Lord

He Did His Duty

Photo of Pte R. J. Matthews' Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St. Laurence's Churchyard, Alvechurch, Worcestershire, England.



(Photo courtesy of cresser – Great War Forum)



St Laurence's Church, Alvechurch, Worcestershire *(Photo from CWGC)*