Melcombe Regis Cemetery, Weymouth, Dorset, England War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



130 PRIVATE

R. E. MITCHELL

34TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

30TH DECEMBER, 1916 Age 22

After Life's Fitful Fever
He Sleeps Well

Ralph Eric MITCHELL

Ralph Eric Mitchell was born at Clapham, London, England on 2nd May, 1893 to parents Brick (Herbert Leigh Mitchell) and Marion Alice Mitchell (nee Poulton). His birth was registered in June quarter, 1893 in the district of Wandsworth, London, England.

The 1901 England Census recorded Ralph E. Mitchell as a 7 year old living at Wellington Rd, St Mary in the Castle, Hastings, Sussex, England. Listed in the household - his mother Marion A. Mitchel (aged 28); sister Margaret R. Mitchell (aged 6) & brother Denis S. Mitchell (aged 3). Also listed were 2 visitors – Edith A. Austin (aged 22) & Ethel Liddle (age 21).

The 1911 England Census recorded Eric Ralph Leigh Mitchell, aged 18, attending University School, Hastings, Sussex, England.

According to information provided by his mother (Marion Alice Mitchell) for the Roll of Honour Ralph attended University School Hastings, England. He matriculated at the London University in January, 1911. He had served with Cadet Corps & gained a Commission in Citizen Forces, NSW. He was a "Scholastic Coach for Literature & Mathematics."

Ralph Eric Mitchell was a 26 year old, single, School Teacher when he enlisted on 9th November, 1915 at Walgett, New South Wales (As per Attestation Papers, however his Medical History form recorded he enlisted on 9th November, 1915 at Newcastle) with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Church of England & his next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs Leigh Mitchel, 17 St Saviour's Road, St Leonard's Sussex, England.

The Preliminary Medical Examination on 9th November, 1915 at Angledool reported: "Has small inguinal hernia on rt side. This has been present for many years & he was accepted for military service in England. Is prepared to undergo operation if necessary."

Private Ralph Eric Mitchell was posted to 34th Battalion on 9th November, 1915. He was posted to "A" Company, 34th Battalion on 1st April, 1916 at West Maitland, NSW. A "Record of Members of the A.I.F. in Australia" card for Private Ralph Eric Mitchell, 130, 34th Battalion has recorded he enlisted at Narrabri on 30th November, 1915. His postal address was Eurungie, New Angledool, N.S. Wales. His next of kin was recorded as Mrs Leigh Mitchell, 5 St. Helens Park Road, Hastings, Sussex, England. "Posted to following Camp" – West Maitland on 19th January, 1916.

Private Ralph Eric Mitchell, Service number 130, embarked from Sydney, New South Wales on HMAT *Hororata* (A20) on 2nd May, 1916 with the 9th Infantry Brigade, 34th Infantry Battalion "A" Company & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 23rd June, 1916.

34th Battalion

The 34th Battalion was formed in January 1916 at a camp established at the Maitland showground in New South Wales. It was planned that the bulk of the battalion's recruits would be drawn from the Maitland area and thus it was dubbed "Maitland's Own". The first recruits for the 34th, however, hailed from the far north-west of the state and arrived at Maitland after joining a recruiting march that began at Walgett. These men were known as the "Wallabies".

The 34th became part of the 9th Brigade of the 3rd Australian Division. It left Sydney, bound for the United Kingdom in May 1916. Arriving there in late June, the battalion spent the next five months training. It crossed to France on 22 November, and moved into the trenches of the Western Front for the first time on 27 November, just in time for the onset of the terrible winter of 1916-17.....

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

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.

A Medical Report was completed on Private Ralph Eric Mitchell on 1st September, 1916 while at Lark Hill, Wiltshire, England. His disability was listed as Asthma which had originated "years before enlisting, from childhood." "Has had difficulty & shortness of Breathing – increased on exertion, for a good many years. Also has an inguinal Hernia." The

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Officer in charge of the medical case recommended that Private Mitchell be discharged as permanently unfit. The Medical Board found that Private Mitchel was permanently unfit for general service but fit for home service

A Handwritten note in Service Record file for Private Ralph Eric Mitchell, stamped Central Register, Imperial Force Headquarters, reads: "Pte Mitchell, R. E. of 34 Battn was paraded before a Medical Board on September 4th 1916. The Board recommended him for Home Service as he was unfit for Active Service."

Private Ralph Eric Mitchell was admitted to Military Hospital Fargo, Wiltshire on 5th October, 1916 with Asthma & was discharged on 18th October, 1916.

Private Ralph Eric Mitchell was marched in to No. 2 Command Depot, Weymouth, Dorset from Fargo on 18th October, 1916.

A Medical Report was completed on Private Ralph Eric Mitchell on 21st October, 1916 at No. 2 Command Depot, Weymouth. His disability was listed as Asthma which had originated in England, prior to enlistment. "Went to Australia five years ago on account of Asthma. Was quite free from it while in Australia but as soon as he returned to England Asthma started again." The Officer in charge of the medical case recommended that Private Mitchell be discharged as permanently unfit & he have a change to Australia. The Medical Board found that Private Mitchel was permanently unfit for general service but fit for home service in Australia.

Private Ralph Eric Mitchell was transferred to Weymouth on 22nd October, 1916.

Private Ralph Eric Mitchell was admitted to Hut 80 Hospital on 27th October, 1916 until 1st November, 1916 then again from 22nd November, 1916 until 2nd December, 1916.

A Telegram was sent from No. 2 Command Depot, Weymouth to Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F., London on 29th December, 1916: "AAA To report that 130 Pte R. E. Mitchell 34th Battalion is lying in Camp Hospital seriously ill with Asthma and Bronchitis AAA Please advise next of Kin Mother Mrs M. L. Micthell 17, St. Saviours Road, St. Leonard's-on-Sea Sussex AAA Progress report will be wired you tomorrow morning..."

Private Ralph Eric Mitchell died at 12.57 am on 30th December, 1916 at Camp Hospital, No. 2 Australian Command Depot, Weymouth, Dorset, England from Asthma & Bronchitis. (Statement of Service form recorded he died at Hut Hospital, Monte Video which was part of No. 2 Australian Command Depot. The "Morning State of Sick" form (Army form A27) recorded he died of Acute Asthma, Bronchitis & Broncho Pneumonia at Hut 80 Monte Video.)

A death for Ralph E. Mitchell, aged 25, was registered in the March quarter, 1917in the district of Weymouth, Dorset, England.

Private Ralph Eric Mitchell was buried on 8th January, 1917 in Melcombe Regis Cemetery, Weymouth, Dorset, England – Section C Grave No. 268.

This is now recorded by CWGC as Plot number III. C. 2681 and he now has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Private Ralph Eric Mitchell requested in his Will, dated 17th July, 1916: "In the event of my death I give the whole of my property and effects to my mother & father Marion Alice Mitchell and Herbert Leigh Mitchell of 17 St. Saviour's Rd, St. Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex, England, with the exception of my papers relating to the theatre, my dramatic criticisms and plays which I give to Mrs H. Selden, c/o Mrs Ascher 45 – 47 MacLeay St., Pott's Point, Sydney, NSW."

Private Ralph Eric Mitchell 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 Mitchell's mother - Mrs L. Mitchell, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque issued in England in July, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Ralph Eric Mitchell – service number 130, aged 22, of 34th Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of Brick & Marion Alice Mitchell, of 9, Colville Gardens, Notting Hill Gate, London, England.

Private R. E. Mitchell is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 124.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(73 pages of Private Ralph Eric Mitchell'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



Ralph Eric Mitchell.

(De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour 1914 – 1918)

From De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour, 1914 – 1919 (Volume 5):

MITCHELL, RALPH ERIC, Private, No. 130, 34th Battn. Australian Infantry,



Ralph Eric Mitchell.

Australian Imperial Force, eldest s. of in-Corpl. Brick Mitchell, No. 745, 18th Battn. Australian Infantry, by his wife, Marion Alice (—) (17, St. Saviour's Road, West St. Leonards, co. Sussex); and brother to Private Denis Stuart Mitchell (q.v.); b. Clapham, London, S.W., 2 May, 1893; educ. Foyle College, Londonderry, and University School, Hastings, co. Sussex; Australia in 1912, and settled in Sydney as an Accountant, but owing to chest trouble was obliged to seek a change of climate, and proceeded 400 miles inland to the borders of New South Wales and Queensland; made many attempts to enlist, but failed to pass the medical examination; eventually was accepted as one of the first 150 of the "Wallabies," and took part in their famous recruiting march; served 12 months, and died at Monte Video Camp, Weymouth, 30 Dec. 1916, from acute asthma and bronchitis, which had been aggravated by military

service. Buried in the Melcombe Regis Cemetery, Weymouth, co. Dorset. Private Mitchell was a keen sportsman, and took part in golf, cricket and fishing, and was an excellent chess player; unm.

MITCHELL, RALPH ERIC, Private, No. 130, 34th Battn. Australian Infantry, Australian Imperial Force, eldest s. of L. Cpl Brick Mitchell, No. 745, 18th Battn, Australian Infantry, by his wife, Marion Alice (-----) (17, St. Saviour's Road, West ST. Leonards, co. Sussex); and brother to Private Denis Stuart Mitchell (q.v.); b. Clapham, London, S.W., 2 May, 1893; educ. Foyle College, Londonderry, and University School, Hastings, co. Sussex; went to Australia in 1912, and settle in Sydney as an Accountant, but owing to chest trouble was obliged to seek a change of climate, and proceeded 400 miles inland to the borders of New South Wales and Queensland; made many attempts to enlist; but failed to pass the medical examination; eventually was accepted as one of the first 150 of the "Wallabies," and took part in their famous recruiting march; served 12 months and died at Monte Video Camp, Weymouth, 30 Dec. 1916, from acute asthma and bronchitis, which had been aggravated by military service. Buried in the Melcombe Regis Cemetery, Weymouth, co. Dorset. Private Mithcell was a keen sportsman, and took part in golf, cricket and fishing, and was an excellent chess player; unm.

Newspaper Notices

COMMONWEALTH MILITARY CADET CORPS

2ND MILITARY DISTRICT

Senior Cadets

Appointments

.....RALPH ERIC MITCHELL.... To be Lieutenants (provisionally)

(Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, Australia – 31 October, 1914)

THE WAR

PRIVATE R. E. MITCHELL

We regret to record in our obituary column the death of Private R. E. (Eric) Mitchell, elder son of Mrs Leigh Mitchell, of 17, St. Saviours'-road, Qwest St. Leonards.

The deceased, who was in his 24th year, was educated at Foyle College, Londonderry, and University School, Hastings. Whilst there he studied for and passed the London Matriculation Examination. Indifferent health decided him to try the climate of Australia. Arriving in Sydney in 1912, he adopted accountancy as a profession, and served for a year with Yarwood, Vane and Company, but he was again compelled to seek a change of climate and proceeded 400 miles inland to the borders of New South Wales and Queensland.

When war was declared he returned to Sydney and made every effort to join the first Expeditionary Force, but was unsuccessful. He, however, would not be denied, and eventually enlisted at Collarenebri as one of the first 150 of the "Wallabies" taking part in their famous recruiting march. Asthma and bronchitis troubled him right through, and from these complaints he succumbed at Monte Video Camp, Weymouth, on December 30th.

The deceased took an active part in all sports, especially golf, cricket, and fishing, and was also more than an average good chess player. His only brother, Denis, was killed in France last June. His father was through Gallipoli and is still serving with the Australian Imperial Force.

(Hastings and St. Leonards Observer, Sussex, England – 13 January, 1917)

Australian Casualties

Lists Nos. 262 to 264

New South Wales

Died of Illness

Pte R. E. MITCHELL (England), 30/2/16

(Australian Town and Country Journal, Sydney, NSW – 17 January, 1917)

ROLL OF HONOR

MITCHELL – On June 11th, in France, from wounds, Denis Stuart Mitchell, B.E.F., younger son of Brick Mitchell, A.I.F., of David Jones, Limited, Sydney, and Marion Leigh Mitchell, of St. Leonards-on-Sea, England, aged 18 years.

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(The Daily Telegraph, Sydney, NSW – 31 March, 1917)

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(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 31 March, 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. E. Mitchell does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

After Life's Fitful Fever

He Sleeps Well

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.

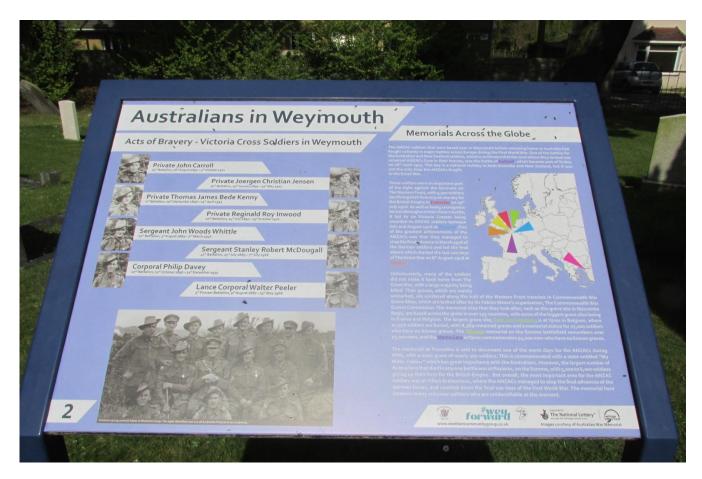


Some of the Australian graves in the cemetery at Melcombe Regis. March 1919

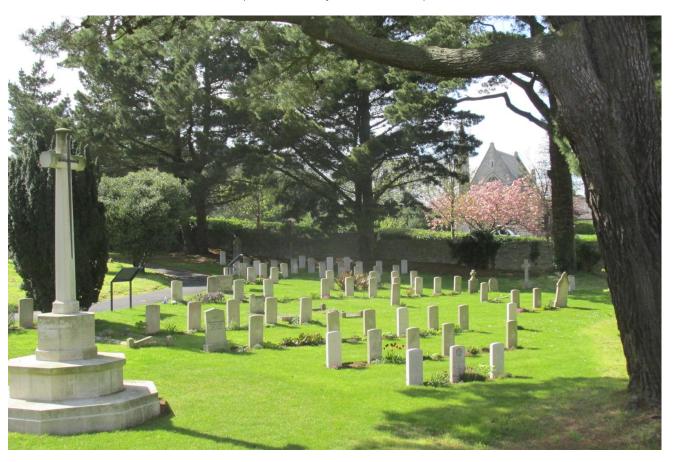
Identified, left to right: Captain Francis Arthur Deravin, Australian Army Medical Corps, died 8 July 1917 aged 41 years (large headstone); 138 Private Louis Nelson Matthews, 27th Battalion, 4 July 1917; 5082 Private Victor George Smith, 21st Battalion, died 13 November 1918.



(Photo courtesy of Steve Stewart)

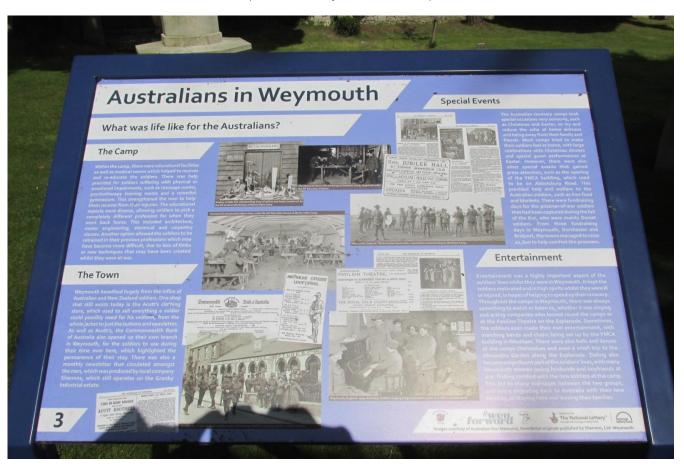


(Photos courtesy of Steve Stewart)





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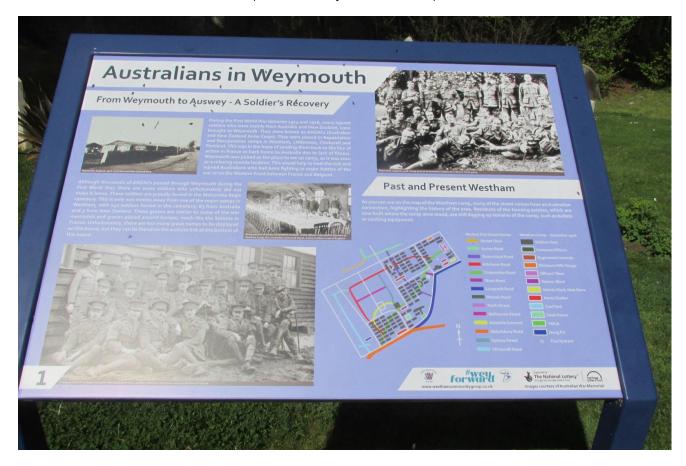


Photo of Private R. E. Mitchell's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Melcombe Regis Cemetery, Weymouth, Dorset, England.



(Photos courtesy of Allan Wood)

