

Codford War Graves



Lest we Forget

World War I



6809 PRIVATE

J. MORTON

15TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

19TH FEBRUARY, 1917

Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte J. Morton is located in Main Front Row (Right hand side)

Grave Plot # 8 of Codford War Graves Cemetery (Using Map by Brian Marshall)

(CWGC Reference - Grave # 86)

John Macintosh Adamson Lessells (alias Morton) was born in Dunfermline, Fifeshire, Scotland in 1896. John enlisted with the Australian Imperial Force under the name of John Morton. He was a 20 year old, single farmer from Harrisville, Queensland when he enlisted on 4th September, 1916 with the 4th Infantry Brigade, 15th Infantry Battalion, 22nd Reinforcements of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 6809 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his brother – W. Morton of Hunt's Buildings, James' Place, Fifeshire, Dunfermline, Scotland.

Pte John Morton embarked from Brisbane on HMAT *Kyarra (A55)* on 17th November, 1916 & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 30th January, 1917. Whilst at sea, Pte Morton was admitted to the Ship's Hospital on 26th November & discharged on 2nd December, 1916. On 18th December, 1916, whilst on board, Pte John Morton was reported for "Disobedience of a reasonable order given by his superior officer" – result was "Admonished".

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. These were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Pte John Morton was marched in to 4th Training Battalion at Codford on 30th January, 1917.

Pte John Morton was admitted sick to Group Hospital at Codford on 14th February, 1917 with influenza. He was then admitted to the Sutton Veny Military Hospital on 16th February, 1917.

Pte John Morton died at 9.50 p.m. on 19th February, 1917 at Military Hospital at Sutton Veny, England from pneumonia.

A death for John Morton, aged 20, was registered in the March quarter, 1917 in the district of Warminster, Wiltshire.

From the burial report of Pte John Morton – he was buried in Codford Cemetery on 23rd February, 1917, Grave No. 86.

A communication, dated 21st April, 1920, located in Pte John Morton's Service Record file, from Australian Imperial Force, Headquarters in London to Officer in charge of Base Records, Melbourne, Australia reads:

*No. 6809 Pte Morton, J, 15th Btn. A.I.F. (deceased)
Statutory Declaration has now been received in this Office from William Lessells, 34, Baldridgeburn Street, Dunfermline, Scotland brother of the above named soldier stating that he enlisted in the A. I. F. under an assumed name. His correct name is given as John Macintosh Adamson Lessells.
Records held by this Office have been amended accordingly. For your information and necessary action please.*

As a result of the above letter, Pte John Morton is remembered under his correct name on the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour for World War 1. Private J. M. A. Lessells is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 76.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia



(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)

Pte John Morton – stated to be Lessells, J. M. A. 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 Pte Morton/Lessell's brother – Mr W. Lessells (April, 1922 & March, 1922). A note next to the Memorial Plaque notification in Service Record states "*Plaque issued as Lessells, J. M. A. Nom. Roll has shown Morton, J.*"

(29 pages of Pte John Morton's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website. His Service Record is filed under the name Morton.)

Information obtained from the Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll) & National Archives

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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 at Codford War Graves Cemetery. 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 J. Morton does not have a personal inscription on his headstone. His headstone is under his alias rather than his correct name of John Macintosh Adamson Lessells

Photo of Pte J. Morton's Headstone at Codford War Graves Cemetery (below)



(Photo courtesy of Romy Wyeth)