

# Durrington War Graves



*Lest we Forget*

## World War I



6359 PRIVATE

**J. P. O'LEARY**

24TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

27TH FEBRUARY, 1917 Age 45

*May His Soul Rest In Peace*

*Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte J. P. O'Leary is located in Grave Plot # 214  
of Durrington War Graves Cemetery*

## John Patrick O'LEARY

John Patrick O'Leary was born at Coburg, Victoria. His birth was registered in 1872 to parents John & Annie O'Leary (nee Walsh).

The 1914 Electoral Roll for the Division of Batman, subdivision of Fitzroy South, Victoria lists John Patrick O'Leary, Labourer, of 26 Little Hanover St, Fitzroy. Emma Little, Home duties, was also recorded at the same address.

John Patrick O'Leary was a 43 year old, single, Labourer from Northcote, Victoria when he enlisted on 12<sup>th</sup> April, 1916 with the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, 18<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 6359 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his sister – Maria Clam of 73 Charles Street, Northcote, Victoria. John O'Leary had previously served in South Africa with Mounted Police for 18 months.

(Pte John Patrick O'Leary's Service Record file also contains Attestation Papers dated October, 1914 & March, 1915.)

Pte O'Leary had been admitted to Hospital at Langwarrin in Melbourne from 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1916 to 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1916. Pte O'Leary had been charged with being absent without leave from 24<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1916 at Langwarrin. His punishment was 7 days detention – detention remitted.

Pte John Patrick O'Leary embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Hororata (A20)* on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1916 & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 29<sup>th</sup> 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 John Patrick O'Leary was marched in to 6<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion at Larkhill, Wiltshire, from Australia on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1917.

Private John Patrick O'Leary was sent sick with Influenza to Fargo Military Hospital, Wiltshire on 11<sup>th</sup> February, 1917 & admitted the same day with Pharyngitis.

Private John Patrick O'Leary died at 2.15 p.m. on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1917 at Fargo Military Hospital, Wiltshire from Broncho Pneumonia.

A death for John P. O'Leary, aged 44, was registered in the March quarter, 1917 in the district of Amesbury, Wiltshire.

Private John Patrick O'Leary was buried on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1917 at Durrington Cemetery, Wiltshire – Plot number 214 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

In July, 1917 the personal effects of the late Pte J. P. O'Leary had been sent to Mrs M. Little of Fitzroy who had originally been nominated as the next-of-kin by Pte O'Leary. In November, 1917 it

was ascertained that the late Pte J. P. O'Leary had blood relations in Victoria & therefore were legally his next-of-kin & a letter was sent to Mrs M. Little requesting that the personal effects be returned. Mrs M. A. Clam of Northcote had claimed to be the deceased's sister & therefore legal next-of-kin. When handing over the personal effects Mrs Little had stated *"it was unfair and improper to take it from her for the reason that the soldier had been living with her for the past 9 years, and that the soldier was disowned and neglected by his brother and sister, and that because of the family having severed all relations with him the soldier left her as his next-of-kin."* A further package containing the effects of the late Pte O'Leary was sent & claimed by Mrs M. A. Clam, February, 1918.

A letter was sent on 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1921 from A.I.F. Base Records to Mrs Little of Fitzroy which reads *"It is proposed to hand War Medals etc. issuable on account of the service of the late No. 6359 Private J. P. O'Leary, 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion to his eldest surviving brother, but as you were recorded as next of kin I shall be glad to learn whether you have any objection to this procedure. If so, will you kindly embody any statement you may wish to make that would affect their disposal in the form of a Statutory Declaration signed before a Justice of the Peace."* Mrs M. Little replied with *"I have no objections to the brother above referred to receiving the medals of the late 6359 Pte J. P. O'Leary."*

Private J. P. O'Leary is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 102.



(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)



*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

Pte John Patrick O'Leary 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 O'Leary's elder brother – Mr Arthur E. O'Leary of St. Kilda (sent July, 1921 & June, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private John Patrick O'Leary – service number 6359 as being 45 years old & served with 24th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of John and Annie O'Leary. Born at Coburg, Victoria.

(88 pages of Pte John Patrick O'Leary'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*

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## Newspaper Reports

THE 279<sup>th</sup> CASUALTY LIST

Victorian Names – DIED OF ILLNESS

Private J. P. O'Leary, Fitzroy

*(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – Saturday 17 March, 1917)*

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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 Durrington 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. P. O'Leary does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*May His Soul Rest In Peace*

Photo of Pte J. P. O'Leary's Headstone at Durrington War Graves Cemetery, Wiltshire.



(Photo By Andrea Charlesworth 2012)