

Sutton Veny War Graves



Lest we Forget

World War I



5773 PRIVATE

G. H. FLETCHER

1ST AUSTRALIAN PIONEERS

31ST OCTOBER, 1918 Age 20

*Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte G. H. Fletcher is located in
Grave Plot # 20. H. 6. of St. John the Evangelist Churchyard, Sutton Veny*

George Henry FLETCHER

George Henry Fletcher was born at Cowra, NSW on 7th March, 1898 to parents Richard William and Mary Ann Fletcher (nee Donovan). He was a 19 year old, single, Carpenter from Lachlan View, Cowra, NSW when he enlisted at Sydney, NSW on 15th December, 1917 with the 1st Pioneer Battalion, 15th Reinforcements of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 5773 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr R. W. Fletcher of Lachlan View, Cowra, NSW. George Fletcher had previously served 4 years with Cadets & was currently serving with Militia. George Fletcher's father – Richard William Fletcher had signed his consent for his son to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force for Active Serve abroad, as he was under the age of 21 years. George Fletcher's mother was deceased.

Pte George Henry Fletcher embarked from Sydney on RMS *Osterley* on 8th May, 1918. He was admitted to Ship's Hospital from 2nd June, to 7th June, 1918 (bleeding piles). Pte Fletcher disembarked at Liverpool, England on 10th July, 1918.

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 George Henry Fletcher was marched in to Pioneer Training Battalion at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire on 10th July, 1918.

Private George Henry Fletcher was sent sick to the Group Clearing Hospital at Sutton Veny on 19th October, 1918 & then admitted to Military Hospital at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire on 21st October, 1918 with Influenza.

Private George Henry Fletcher died at 03.00 on 31st October, 1918 at the Military Hospital, Sutton Veny of Influenza & Pneumonia.

A death for George Fletcher, aged 20, was registered in the December quarter, 1918 in the district of Warminster, Wiltshire.

Private George Henry Fletcher was buried at 3 p.m. on 6th November, 1918 in St. John the Evangelist Churchyard at Sutton Veny - Grave no. 20. From the burial report of Pte Fletcher - *Coffin was polished elm with Brass Mounts – Deceased was buried with full Military Honours. The funeral was preceded by a Firing Party and Band from the Australian Pioneer Training Battalion. Six of deceased's comrades acted as pall bearers. 2 Officers and 80 N.C.O.'s and Men of the deceased's late Unit followed the remains and were present at the graveside ceremony. Headquarters A.I.F. Depots in United Kingdom were represented at the funeral.*

Pte George Henry Fletcher requested in his Will, dated 3rd April, 1918, that Executor of his Will & all of his Estate to go to his father – Richard William Fletcher.

Pte George Henry Fletcher 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 Fletcher's father – Mr R. W. Fletcher (sent July, 1921 & November, 1922).

The CWGC lists Private George Henry Fletcher, 5773, of 1st Australian Pioneers, A.I.F., as the son of Richard William and Mary Ann Fletcher. Born at Cowra, New South Wales.

Private G. H. Fletcher is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 171.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

G. H. Fletcher is also remembered on the Cowra and District Memorial Honor Roll which is located outside the RSL Club.



Cowra and District Memorial Honor Roll

(Photos from War Memorials Register NSW – Peter Levarre-Waters)

(45 pages of Pte George Henry Fletcher's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

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



** Connected to Pte George Henry Fletcher – his older brother:

Company Quartermaster Sergeant John Kitching Fletcher, 1660, awarded Meritorious Service Medal, January, 1919 "in recognition of valuable services rendered with the Armies in France and Flanders." He was also entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. Company Quartermaster Sergeant John Kitching Fletcher returned to Australia & disembarked 4th September, 1919.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P04870.001

Pte George Henry Fletcher



Newspaper Reports

The Roll of Honour

The Late Signaller George Fletcher

The extremely sad news reached Rev. H. H. Polkinghorne on Thursday from the Base Records Office that Signaller George Fletcher, a popular young Cowraite, had died "somewhere in France" from influenza and pneumonia. The deceased soldier was a son of Mr. Richard Fletcher, of Mulyan, who has the sincere sympathy of many friends in the great loss he and his family have sustained. Prior to enlisting the late Signaller Fletcher was employed by Mr. J R. McDonald and was very popular among a large circle of acquaintances. He was rejected on one occasion, but was determined to do his " bit " and on going up a second time passed the prescribed test. A brother of the deceased (Pte Jack Fletcher) has been some years in the firing line.

(*Cowra Free Press*, NSW - Saturday 9 November, 1918)

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 St. John the Evangelist Churchyard at Sutton Veny. 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 George Henry Fletcher does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.



Photo of Pte G. H. Fletcher's Headstone in St. John the Evangelist's Churchyard, Sutton Veny, Wiltshire.



(Photo courtesy of David Milborrow)



War Graves at Sutton Veny *(Photos from CWGC)*