

Compton Chamberlayne War Graves



Lest we Forget

World War I



1666 SERJEANT

P. R. KNOWLES

AUSTRALIAN T. M. BATTERY

30th JANUARY, 1918 Age 23

THY WILL BE DONE

*Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte P R Knowles is located in Middle Row
Grave Plot # 2 of Compton Chamberlayne Cemetery*

Percy Robert Knowles was born in 1894 at Arncliffe, Sydney, NSW to parents Robert Walter & Alice Knowles (nee Yeend). Percy was the second of four children born to Robert & Alice Knowles. He was a Carpenter, married & aged 22 years from Lindfield, Sydney, NSW when he enlisted on 10th April, 1916 with the 9th Infantry Brigade, 36th Infantry Battalion, 1st Reinforcements of the Australian Army. His service number was 1666 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Gladys May Knowles of Middle Harbour Road, Lindfield, Sydney, NSW. Percy Robert Knowles had married Gladys May Hammond in the district of Chatswood, Sydney in 1913.

Pte Knowles embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Beltana* (A72) on 13th May, 1916 & disembarked at Devonport, England on 9th July, 1916.

On 2nd August, 1916 Pte Knowles transferred to 9th Light Trench Mortar Battery Unit.

On 21st November, 1916, Pte Knowles proceeded overseas to France for active duty. He was promoted to Corporal on 26th December, 1916.

In April, 1917 Cpl Knowles was detached for duty to 3rd Div. Sch as Instructor.

On 30th June, 1917, Knowles was promoted to Sergeant.

On 19th November, 1917 Sgt Knowles was admitted to hospital sick while on leave in England. He was admitted to the Military Hospital at Fovant, Wiltshire – “seriously ill” on 4th December, 1917.

Sgt Percy R Knowles died at 3.55 a.m. on 30th January, 1918 at the Military Hospital at Fovant. Cause of death was listed as Pneumonia & Nephritis. A death for Percy R Knowles, aged 24, was registered in the March quarter, 1918 in the district of Wilton, Wiltshire. (Fovant was a parish in the district of Wilton).

Letter from the Matron at Fovant Military Hospital states – (P R Knowles – 1666) “was admitted suffering from Pneumonia – he got over the acute stage and only made slow progress towards convalescence. Nephritis set in and he died of heart failure 30-1-18. His wife was here at the time and had been with him for some days.” A telegram from Military Hospital at Fovant to Administrative Headquarters, A. I. F. London, advising the death of Sgt Knowles states “Next of kin Wife Mrs Knowles at present staying Y. M. C. A. Fovant.”

Sgt Percy Robert Knowles was buried on 2nd February, 1918 at Compton Chamberlayne cemetery. From the burial report of Sgt Knowles – Coffin was Elm (polished) with Brass Furniture – Sgt Knowles was given a Military Funeral.

Sgt Knowles requested in his Will, dated 10th July, 1917 that he bequests all his real estate & personal belongings to his wife – Mrs Gladys M Knowles of “Risdon Farm” Beaworthy, Devonshire, England.

Sgt P R Knowles is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 20.



(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

Sgt P R Knowles is also remembered on the Lindfield Soldiers Memorial Park Gates on Tryon St, Lindfield, NSW. The Memorial consists of 2 sandstone arches, one on each side of the entrance to the Lindfield Soldiers Memorial Park, with wrought iron gates and 4 long brass plaques with the names of 186 locals who fought in World War 1. It was established in 1922.



Linfield Soldiers Memorial Park Gates

Sgt P R Knowles was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were sent to Sgt Knowles' wife – Mrs G M Knowles in England.

(48 pages of Sgt P R Knowles' 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, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives

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377th CASUALTY LIST

New South Wales - III

Cpl Percy Robert Knowles, Lindfield (seriously)

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Tuesday 8th January, 1918)

DEATHS

KNOWLES- January 30, 1918 at Fovant Hospital, England, Corporal Percy Robert Knowles, eldest son of Robert Knowles, of Middle Harbour Road, Lindfield and grandson of Mrs Yeend, Roach Street, Arncliffe, aged 23 years.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Saturday 23rd March, 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 Compton Chamberlayne 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)

Sgt Knowles does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Photo of Sgt P R Knowles's Headstone at Compton Chamberlayne War Graves Cemetery



Photo courtesy of Andrew Stacey