



Captain Robert Alexander COWLEY

[1899 – 1944]



Name: Robert Alexander **COWLEY**

Rank: Captain

Service Number: Q30757

Unit: United States Army Small Ships Section

Service: detached to United States Army

Born: 17 June 1899; Liverpool, England

Enlisted: 18 December 1941; Townsville, Qld

Date of Death: 16 February 1944 (aged 44 years)

Place of Death: New Britain

Cause of Death: Disease

Buried / Commemorated: Lae War Cemetery, Papua New Guinea [grave JJ.D.16]
Australian War Memorial [Commemorative Roll]

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

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Next of Kin: Son of Robert Charles and Catherine Maud Cowley
Husband of Phyllis Clare Cowley of Clayfield, Qld.

In Civilian Life:

At enlistment lived at Hughenden, Qld and worked as a Land Ranger.

Military Service:

July 1939	26 Australian Infantry Battalion (5'10" tall, fair complexion, red hair, blue eyes)
August 1939	Lieutenant
December 1940	Temporary Captain
October 1941	Full Time Duty, 115 Reserve Motor Transport Company AASC, Townsville
March 1942	101 Reserve Motor Transport Company, Enoggera
March 1943	Captain, Appointment terminated "Medically unfit for Military Service", posted to Reserve of Officers
circa April 1943	United States Army Small Ships Section
16 February 1944	Died of disease, New Britain

Circumstances of Death:

Many Australians served with the US Army Small Ships Section of the US Army Services of Supply (USASOS) in the South West Pacific Area (SWPA) during WWII. They generally signed contracts which lasted for typically 6 - 12 months.

Many of the Australian crew members of the US Small Ships were aged as young as 15 years old. And some were as old as seventy years old.

In May 1944, HQ USAFFE reported that "Captain Robert A. Cowley, serial number Q30757, Headquarters Australian Army Engineers, died on 16 February 1944 as a result of scrub typhus fever. Internment was made in the United States Armed Forces Temporary Cemetery No.1 Cape Gloucester New Britain – grave no. 151". His body was re-interred at the Lae War Cemetery.

Sources included:

- Australian War Memorial
- National Archives of Australia
- Sundry web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents