

**Seafield Cemetery,  
Edinburgh, Scotland,  
War Grave**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**998218 STEWARD**

**A. H. BIRCH**

**MERCANTILE MARINE RESERVE**

**H.M.S. MARCHIONESS OF BUTE**

**25TH OCTOBER, 1919 Age 29**

## Augustus Hardy BIRCH

Augustus Hardy Birch was born in 1890 in Melbourne, Victoria to parents Augustus Hardy Birch & Clara Birch (nee Lawson). [According to the Births Deaths & Marriages Victoria – three births were registered in 1903 with parents Augustus Hardy Birch & Clara Birch (nee Lawson) – Augustus Hardy Birch, Eva Maud Birch & Louisa Clara Birch. Eva Maud Birch was born in 1903 & Louisa Clara Birch was born in 1895.]

Augustus Hardy Birch, father of Augustus Hardy Birch (Jnr), died on 20th October, 1919 at his residence at 72 Princess Street, Flemington, Victoria. He was aged 70 years.

Augustus Hardy Birch joined Mercantile Marine Reserve & was given a service number of 998218.

Augustus Hardy Birch served on H.M.S. *Marchioness of Bute*.

### **Mercantile Marine Reserve**

Many merchant seamen and fishermen were in the Royal Naval Reserve (R.N.R.) during wartime. For example, they served on trawlers employed in anti-submarine and minesweeping duties, drifters engaged in boom defence, or on the armed merchant cruisers used to enforce the British naval blockade.

During 1916-1920 the Mercantile Marine Reserve (M.M.R.) was used to engage officers and seamen on board vessels employed on government service. The crews of vessels commissioned as auxiliaries by the Admiralty were signed on under a T.124 agreement, whereby they agreed to serve in any commissioned vessel, but retained aspects of their civilian pay and benefits.

### **H.M.S. *Marchioness of Bute***

H.M.S. *Marchioness of Bute* was launched in 1890 as a Passenger vessel on 27th October, 1915 she was requisitioned by the Admiralty for use as a Minesweeper & was based at Portsmouth, England. On 23rd October, 1917 H.M.S. *Marchioness of Bute* was purchased by the Admiralty. In January, 1919 she was reportedly used as a Trooper and as a Hospital Carrier.



**H.M.S. *Marchioness of Bute***

Augustus Hardy Birch married Bessie Pinney in the registration district of Pancras, Middlesex. Their marriage was registered in the March quarter, 1919.

Steward Augustus Hardy Birch, aged 29, died on 25th October, 1919. According to the Royal Navy and Royal Marine War Graves Roll 1914 – 1919 he was ‘*killed or died by means other than disease, accident or enemy action.*’ Steward Augustus Hardy Birch is listed in the Naval Casualties, Indexes, War Graves Rolls and Statistics Book, First World War & his cause of death is listed as “2.”

*[Key to Numerals in Column 9 (cause of death) – “2” – “Killed, died of injuries or exposure, Died of disease following injuries or exposure, drowned, missing and subsequently presumed killed or drowned following the accidental loss of a ship (wreck, collision, internal explosion etc.) or where the actual cause of a vessel’s loss is not known. Accidental deaths (killed, drowned, etc). Deaths due to injuries or disease following injuries.”]*

Newspaper item – *The Scotsman*, Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scotland – 27 October, 1919:

### **FATAL ACCIDENT AT LEITH DOCKS**

*G. Birch, chief steward on board the steamer Marchioness of Bute, at present at Leith, was killed yesterday by falling into the engine-room of the new steamer Lormont, which he was crossing in the dark to reach his own vessel.*

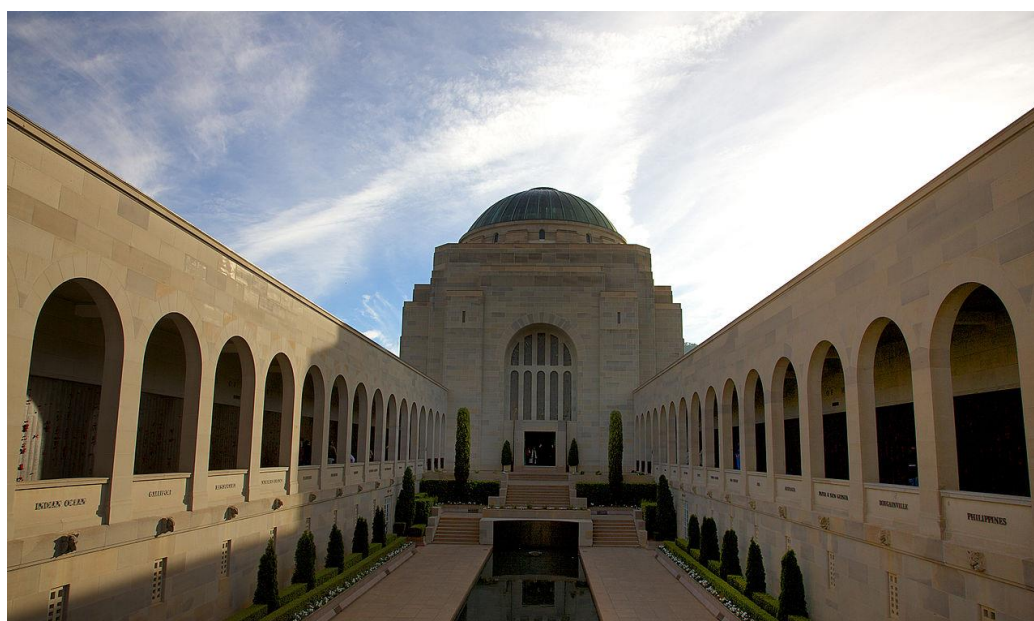
Steward Augustus Hardy Birch was buried in Seafield Cemetery, Leith, Edinburgh, Scotland – Screen Wall M. 49. The Admiralty plot is located in Section M (marked by a screen wall bearing the names of those buried there or unmarked in other parts of the cemetery), the rest are scattered. He does not have a headstone but his death is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Steward A. H. Birch – service number 998218, of H.M.S. “*Marchioness of Bute*”, Mercantile Marine Reserve. He was the son of Augustus Birch; husband of Bessie Birch, of 41 Rochester Rd., Kentish Town, London. Born at Melbourne, Australia.

### Wills & Probate Records

*“In the estate of Augustus Hardy Birch, late of 104 Victoria Street, Flemington in the State of Victoria, Chief Petty Officer deceased intestate.”*

Steward Augustus Hardy Birch is remembered on the Commemorative Roll Book, located in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The Commemorative Roll records the names of those Australians who died during or as a result of wars in which Australians served, but who were not serving in the Australian Armed Forces and therefore not eligible for inclusion on the Roll of Honour.



**Commemorative Area of the Australian War Memorial** (*Capital Photographer*)

## **Newspaper Notices**

### **DIED ON SERVICE**

BIRCH – Chief Petty Officer Augustus Hardy Birch, R.N. (North Atlantic Squadron, Archangel, Russia), dearly loved husband of Bess Birch, and son-in-law of the late J. de Pinney, Esq., Bath, England, and beloved son of Clara and the late A. H. Birch, "Birch Grove", Flemington, and much loved brother of Deri and Nurse Claire Birch.

Over five years on active service.

Duty Nobly done.

*(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria – 20 December, 1919)*

---

### **Seafield Cemetery, Edinburgh, Scotland**

Seafield Cemetery, Edinburgh contains 184 First World War burials, some of them in the military plot in Section B, others in the admiralty plot in Section M (marked by a screen wall bearing the names of those buried there or unmarked in other parts of the cemetery), the rest scattered. There are also 103 Second World War burials in the cemetery, most of them forming a plot in Section P, five of these are unidentified seamen.

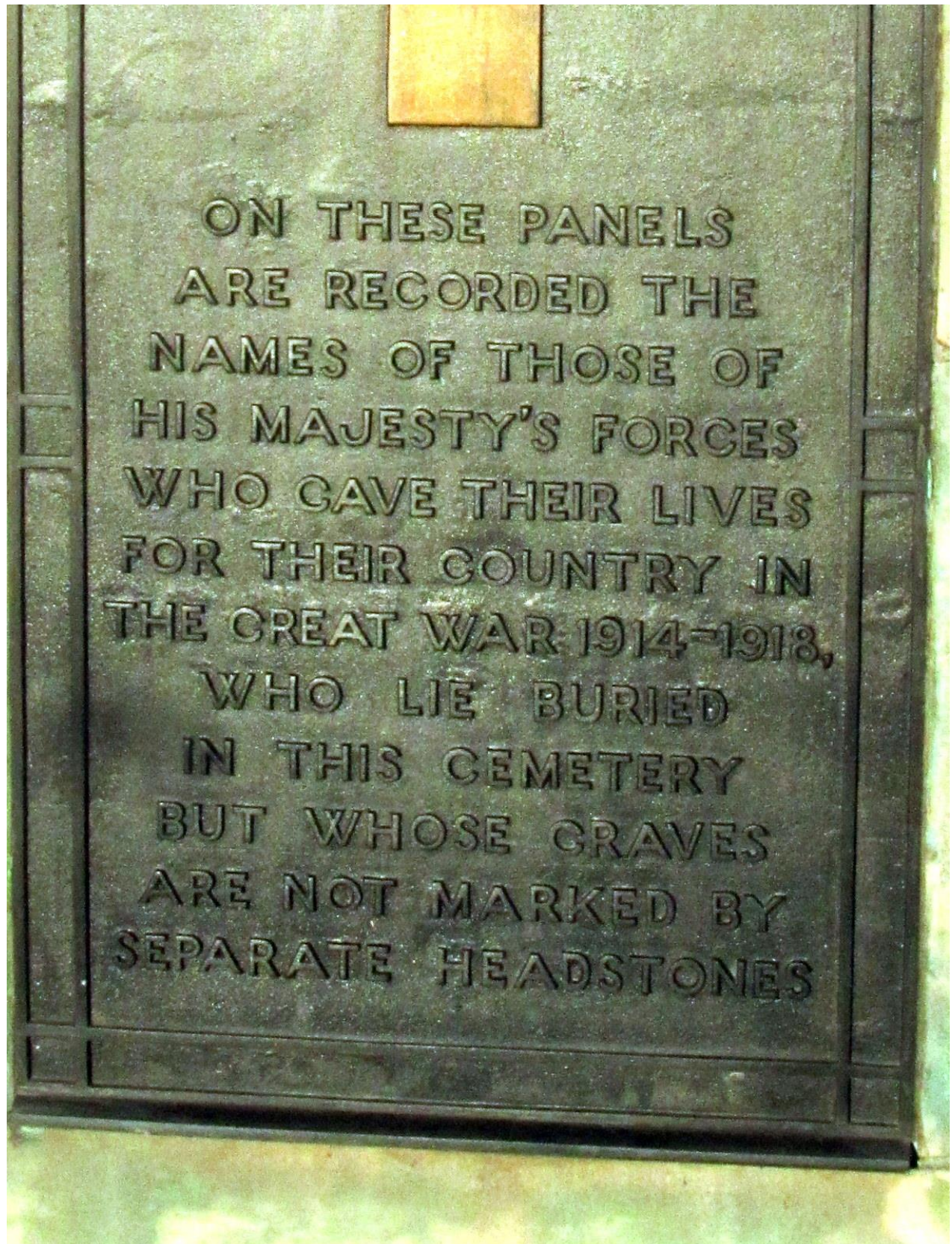
There are also two war graves of other nationalities and one non-war service burial. There is only one Australian burial.

Seafield Crematorium, Edinburgh stands within the cemetery and 21 servicemen and women of the Second World War whose remains were cremated there are commemorated on a screen wall opposite the war graves plot in Section P.

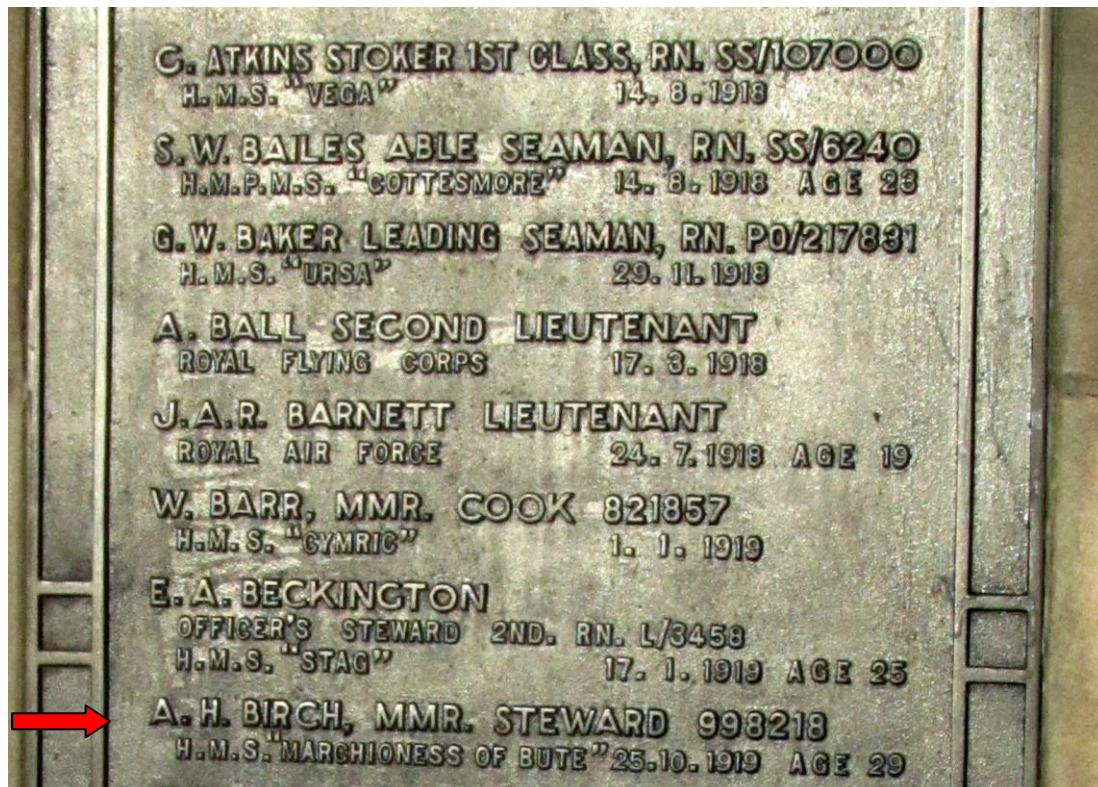
*(Information & Photo from CWGC)*



Photo of Steward A. H. Birch's name on Panel M in Seafield Cemetery, Edinburgh, Scotland.



*(Photos by Peter Drysdale – Find a Grave)*



One of the Screen Walls in Seafield Cemetery bearing the names of those who died but were buried without an individual headstone (Photo by Graham Robson)

# Seafield Cemetery & Crematorium

## LEGEND

1. CREMATORIUM CHAPEL
2. WAITING ROOM
3. BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE
4. TOILETS
5. GARDEN OF REST
6. FLORAL TRIBUTES
7. CAR PARK
8. SECONDARY CAR PARK
9. CEMETERY LODGE (OFFICE)
10. WAR MEMORIALS
11. BABY MEMORIAL
12. LITTER BINS
13. WATER TAPS

