

As the Boat Broke Away

the WWI diary of William John Armstrong

by Paul & Janita O'Neill



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Front cover: Departure of HMAT Hororata, Port Melbourne, 23 November, 1916.

Back cover: "The boys of Hut 4" Larkhill, England, 1917. William Armstrong is 4th from the right, second front row.



The WWI Diary of William John Armstrong (6276)
24th Battalion
6th Brigade
2nd Division
AIF
1916-1918

William Armstrong kept a handwritten diary of his experiences during service in England, Belgium and France. The original of his diary is held by the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. It was donated to the Memorial by William's father, Donald Armstrong, in 1928, on the tenth anniversary of William's death at the battle of Mont St. Quentin in France.

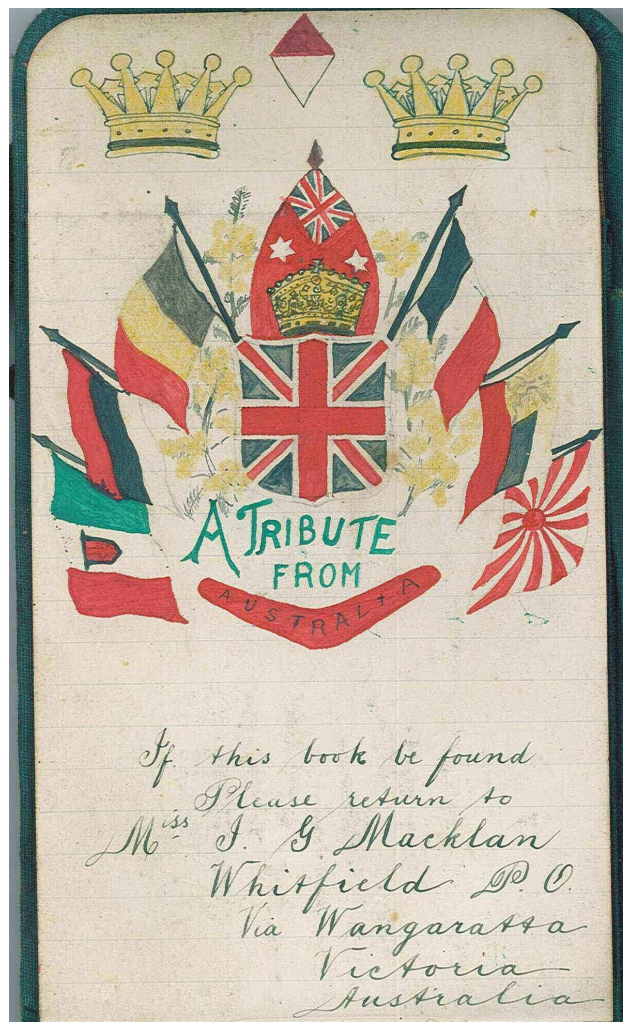
This transcript has been made with no editorial changes. Every effort has been made to reproduce the document as written. Detailed notes of explanation and additional information found during our research are provided alongside William's original text.

Reproductions of the cover and dedication pages of the diary are included as are copies of several news clippings and photographs that were contained within it.

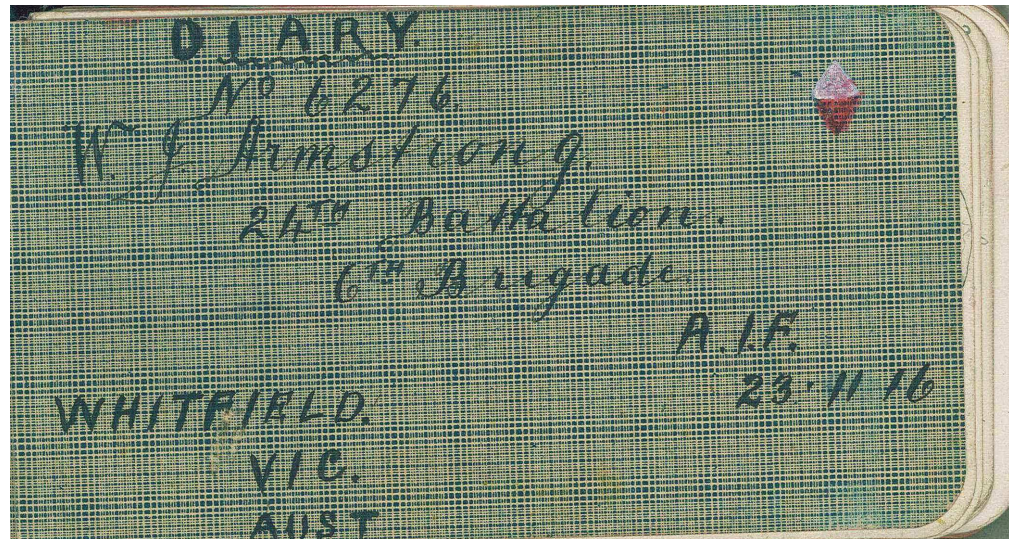
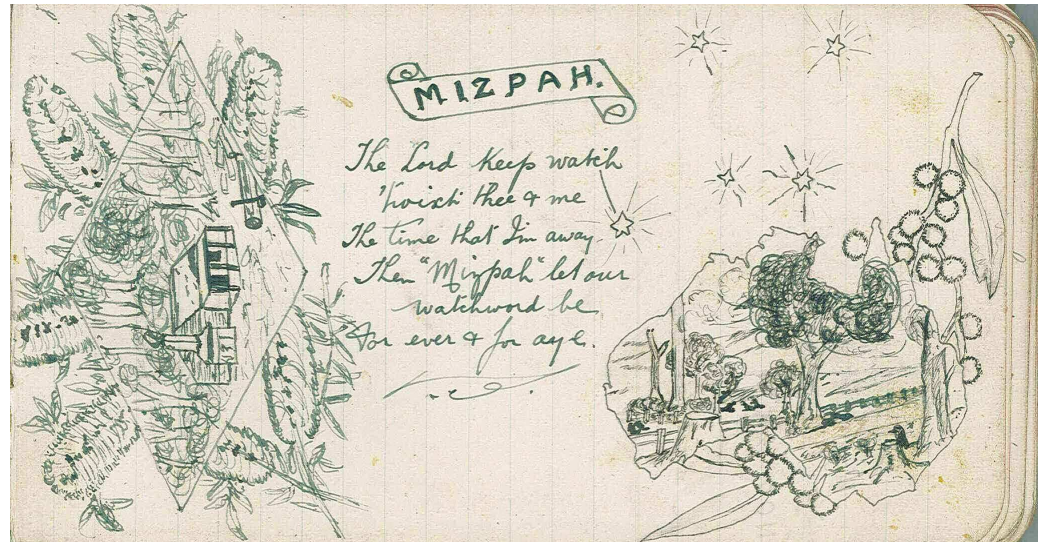
More detail regarding William's background and his wartime experiences can be found in our two earlier works:

William John Armstrong, *"Uncle Willie Who Died in the War"*
Mont St Quentin, *where three paths crossed.*

Paul & Janita O'Neill
March 2015



The cover and dedication pages of the Diary of William Armstrong.





Reference details for the original of William's diary, held by the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.



Whitfield is a small town in rural Victoria. William was living in or near Whitfield when he enlisted on 24 October 1916.

Irene Gladis Macklan was William's girlfriend, possibly fiancée. Irene was born in 1897. She died in Melbourne in 1997 aged 100.



Private Record:1DRL/0060
Folder Number: 1 of 1
DPI:300

1DRL/060
Original Diary of Private William John Armstrong
(1 of 1)

DIARY
No 6276
W.J. Armstrong
24th Battalion
6th Brigade
AIF 23.11.16

WHITFIELD

VIC

AUST

If this book be found

Please return to

Miss J.G. Macklan

Whitfield P. O.

Via Wangaratta

Victoria

Australia

MIZPAH
The Lord keep watch
'twixt thee & me
The time that I'm away
Then "Mizpah" let our
Watchword be.
For ever & for aye.

Diary

NOV 23rd 1916. At Sea.

Reveille at 4.30. Marched out Royal Park camp at 7.30. I was in charge of transport of 24th Kits so went down on the motor transport.

We arrived at the wharf about ½ past nine. Then came a long wait while the troops embarked. I wrote letters to Irene Dad & Ettie while on the wharf. We were aboard at 12 am. and when the troops were all aboard and the boat had pulled out a little, the crowds of relatives and friends were allowed to come on the wharf.

We pulled out a little after 12 and then came the break-away from home friends and most of all from Irene. I often think what it must be to those who are left behind. We have plenty of changes of scenes and events and our minds are not always in one state of anxiety like those who are waiting & longing for us at home in Ausie.

Lt. Col Pope is O.C. of the boat (H.M.T.S. Hororata). Lt Wilcox and Lt. Stuart were i/c of our battalion. About 1760 men were on board. Soon we were all busy arranging belongings and having our first meal aboard. That night we were at sea O.H.M.S.

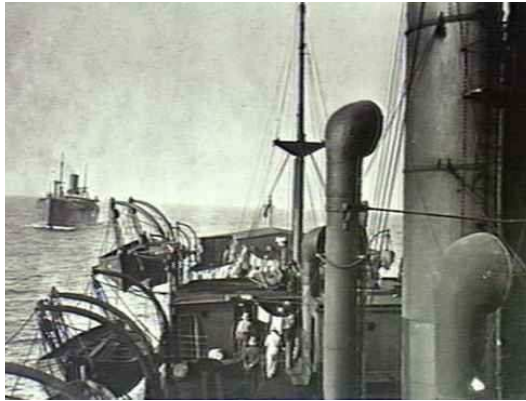
"Mizpah" denotes an emotional bond between people who are separated (either physically or by death). Mizpah jewellery is often made in the form of a coin-shaped pendant cut in two with a zig-zag line and bearing the words "The LORD watch between me and thee."

By late 1916 reinforcement troops were desperately needed by the AIF battalions in Belgium and France. William received some basic training at Royal Park in Melbourne through October and November 1916.

"Dad" was William's father, Donald. "Ettie" was his sister, Donetta. The cover photo of this book shows crowds on the wharf farewelling the *Hororata*, 23 November 1916. We believe Irene, Donald and Ettie, as well as brother Alex (Janita's grandfather), are somewhere in this crowd.



HMAT *Hororata* (above left) was chartered by the Commonwealth for troop transport and given the designation A20. She ferried troops between Australia and Europe until late 1919. The *Hororata* also saw service in the Second World War. She was sunk by a German submarine in 1943.



HMAT A20, Hororata off the South Australian coast, 1916.

Troop convoys were assembled at Albany in preparation for the voyage to Egypt and England. The convoys then gathered in the South African ports of Durban and Cape Town, where they picked up escort ships, usually British Navy destroyers or cruisers.



The Australian officer aboard a Durban rickshaw in 1916, is **Captain Percy SMYTHE**, 24th Battalion. Captain Smythe was one of the first to attempt to rescue men from the trench where 15-20 soldiers, including William Armstrong, were killed by a German shell, 31 August 1918. This description can be found in: **Mont St Quentin**, where three paths crossed.

Nov 28th 1916. Albany.

We arrived here after a quiet voyage 7 o'clock this morning. Cool & posted a couple of letters to Irene. Left in afternoon.

Dec 14th 1916. Durban.

We arrived at Durban this morning. Lovely view when entering the harbour. Pulled past the Bluff early & alongside the coaling wharf at 12. on opposite side to town. Got off at one & went over in a tramp steamer. marched through the town and & off from 4 o'clock.

Dec 22nd 1916. At Sea.

We left Durban this evening. We stopped at Durban 8 days & had a real good time. Wrote several times home to Ausie Travelling done by trains, electric trams & rickshaws which are pulled by niggers done up in all kinds of weird fashions. 3 kinds of niggers Kaffirs Coolies & Indians. Treated well at Wesley Hut & Y.M.C.A. There were some fine sights at Durban. Trip around Breara, & view from Hill very fine. Beach & esplanades & gardens well kept. Good meals at Savoy.

Left here with Port Napier & Kyara.

Dec 25th 1916 Xmas Day. At Sea.

Very quiet till dinner & owing to very poor dinner a riot was started. but eventually stopped by using the alarm signal. Tea provided by the Y.M.C.A. which was very good. Boxing & a concert wound up the day.

Dec 26th 1916 Boxing Day. Cape Town.

Arrived here this morning in a thick haze which obliterated the view with the exception of Mt Tabletop. Pulled in about 10 & and off at 2. Had a good time & back to boat at 11.30.

Jan 14th 1917. At Sea.

8 days since we left the Cape. 8 Transports & a cruiser. Horata, Kyara, Beltana Britain Port Napier Suevic, Tahiti & Wanganui. & HMS Glasgow.

We arrived at St Helena 3/1/17. It is a great rocky island about 40 sq mls. In hospital there with influenza. 1st fight the day after Sports on board. Harry Porter on board, also Allan Martin & RR Miller 2 old MHS boys. We arrived at Sierra Leon on 14/1/17 & departed 20/1/17. 2 chap died here with meningitis & arranged to have tombstones erected. I went ashore with same complaint. Niggers came alongside with fruit etc. Cruiser left & auxiliary cruiser stayed. Took submarine gun on board.

Jan 21st 1917. At Sea

Week out from Sierra Leon. Chap died one night while in a fit. Sports finished today. Our company won Heavy weight boxing & 2nd in Lightweight C Tillig & J Miller.

Jan 24th 1917 At Sea

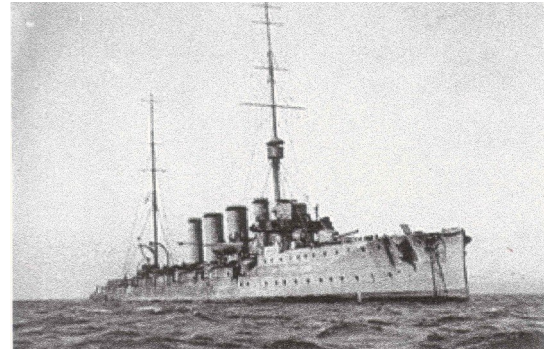
Submarine guard now on & guard stricter. In Danger Zone. Have been sleeping on deck with Andy Wylie Chas Tillig & Stan Weatherill. but turned too cold so are now below.

Jan 26th 1917 At Sea

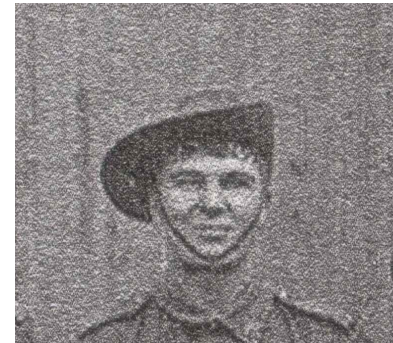
5 torpedo boats met us this evening to escort us in. Convoy split up & making for England.

Jan 29th 1917 Plymouth.

Disembarked. Very cold. 68 days at sea. Took train to Amesbury on Salisbury Plain. Tea and Buns at Exeter provided by the Mayoress & ladies.



HMS Glasgow, 1917.



Charles (Chas) TILLIG (6408). Wood Wood, Victoria. Single carpenter, aged 26 at embarkation. Next of kin: Father, Frederick William Tillig, Wood Wood near Swan Hill, Victoria. Enlisted 18 October 1916. Rank on enlistment: Private, 24th Battalion, 18th Reinforcement. Embarkation Roll number 23/41/4. Embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, on board HMAT A20 Hororata 23 November 1916. Returned to Australia 12 May 1919.

As the Boat Broke Away



Andrew WYLIE, (6446), Durham Lead, Vic. Single farmer aged 37 on enlistment. Next of kin: Mother, Mrs Joanna Wylie, Durham Lead PO, Durham Lead, Victoria. Enlisted 29 September 1916. Rank on enlistment: Private, 24th Battalion, 18th Reinforcement. Embarkation Roll number 23/41/4. Embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, on board HMAT A20 *Hororata* 23 November 1916. Returned to Australia 1 November 1917.



Hut 4, Larkhill, March, 1917. (See back cover) All these men travelled to England together on the *Hororata*. Many of them are mentioned by William in his diary. William is fourth from the right, second row from front.

ASC. Australian Service Corp.

Jan 30th 1917. Amesbury. Lark Hill

Arrived here about 4. am. very cold Received our mail & had concert in the evening.

Feb 1st 1917 Lark Hill.

Doing well. Wrote to all in Ausie. Andy Wylie & I sleep together.

Feb 9th 1917 London.

Arrived here about 12. Stopping at Shaftsbury Hotel. Went to theatre this evening.

Feb 12th 1917 Lark Hill

Came back from London tonight Saw St Pauls, Westminster, Abbey, Buckingham Palace, King's Stables, Madame Tousseards, Houses of Parl. London Bank, Petticoat Lane on Sunday morning. Trafalgar Square, Underground railways. Wrote to Irene.

March 11th Lark Hill.

All reinforcement NCO reduced. Aeroplane dropped near us. Mail from Ausie. Sent cable for £5. Met J. Gibb & Corker, Wallace, Tom Newton, & Jack Meagher. George Kent & Watson. No 4 Hut occupiers Allan Martin, W. Taylor, C Wilson, A Wylie A Edwards, J & S Stonehouse, S Weatherill C Sartain, P & B Tuckett, J & W O'Connor L

Thomasson, P McKenzie, P Carter H Rawlins, A Stewart, C Watts, J Cloke C Tillig, P Smissen, H Rolton, W Rashleigh W Slatter, W Tickell, S Tipping J Mitchell, W Stanbrook & W J Armstrong. 2MS Kennedy. J & Pte O'Leary J died.

March 15th 1917. Lark Hill

Met Bill Cook from Prince's Hill.

March 17th 1917 Lark Hill

Played ASC football & were beaten by a few pts. Met Alex Cook.

Sunday 25/3/17 Lark Hill.

Went to Durring 2nd pair of fowls.

March 31st 1917 Lark Hill.

Received word that Ben was wounded & left for Ausie. Bill Taylor's birthday.

April 4th 1917 Lark Hill.

Met Fred Cullenin Arty & Engugh from St Johns. Went to Figheldean & saw Old Blacksmith's Shop.

Tuesday April 4th 1917 Lark Hill.

Review by King at Bulford. Concert in evening.

April 18th 1917. Lark Hill.

Jack Gniel died

April 23rd 1917. Went to Figheldean and got photo taken with Albert Edwards yesterday. Explosion at bombing school at Rollestone while at the range. one killed & several wounded.

April 24th 1917. Lark Hill.

Concert in Mess Hut. Heard J Paxton committed suicide

April 28th 1917. Lark Hill.

Most of the old Hut left to join the 66th battalion.

Sunday May 5/17 Fargo

In hospital with appendicitis. Operated on last Thursday. Andy Allan & Bert came over to see me.

May 12th 1917 Fargo

Ausie mail. Albert enlisted Bert, Andy Jim & Walter over to see me.

Camp shifted to Rollestone.

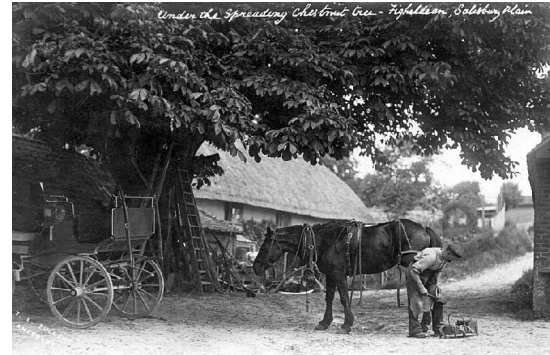
May 20th 1917 Fargo

Chap named Wise died this morning with appendicitis

May 28th 1917. Fargo

Got up today for a little while but couldn't stop up long.

William Edward TAYLOR (6396). Single 27 year old metal polisher of West Melbourne. Next of kin: Father, William Taylor. Enlisted 17 October 1916. Embarked HMAT *Hororata* 23 November 1916. Killed in action 4 October 1917 Passchendaele. No known grave.



Blacksmith shop, Figheldean, Wiltshire, 1917.

Reference to newspaper clipping regarding the death of John Paxton from Mansfield, Vic. The clipping was with William's effects. (See pg. 25).

Larkhill, Fargo and Rollestone camps were situated on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, near the town of Durrington.



As the Boat Broke Away



Bulford Manor, Wiltshire, 1914.

Arthur Alfred CROCKETT (2301). Pte, 37th Battalion. Enlisted Wangaratta, Victoria.

May 31st 1917. Fargo.

4 weeks in hosp today. up in the afternoon & fairly well

June 11/6/17. Fargo.

Met Arthur Crockett today

June 16th 1917. Bulford Manor

Transferred to Bulford Manor Convalescent Home for 5 weeks.

June 27th 1917 Bulford Manor

Met Les Taylor the other day & heard Bill was wounded. Met Jack McPhee. 2 parcels from Irene. Concert yesterday evening at ASC camp.

29/6/17 Bulford Manor

£5 received O.K from Irene. Visited Mrs Coles. Met Bob Moore at Sports.

July 1st 1917. Bulford Manor

Met Chas. Tetaz. Irene's Birthday

July 7th 1917. Bulford Manor

Went to Salisbury & had a very fair time with T. Machin

July 15th 1917 Bulford Manor

Sports at ASC on Saturday. Won Silver match box.

July 22nd 1917 Rollestone

Back in Camp. Feeling O.K 19th reinforcements arrived last Friday evening. Chas Atkins with them

July 25th 1917 Rollestone.

Entered Signalling school. Met Ralph Hearn.

July 30th 1917 Rollestone.

Met Cecil James.

Aug 13th 1917 Rollestone

Boxing tourneys in full swing

Aug 18th 1917. Rollestone.

Heavy rain & Huts flooded.

Aug 20th 1917 Rolleston.

Review by Duke of Connaught at Rolleston.

Aug 23rd 1917 Rolleston

Dodged route march & spent morning in dugouts behind 7th TB lines.

Aug 30th 1917 Rolleston

Heard Albert was in England. also Frank Byrne.

September 5th 1917 Rolleston

Met Capt Rodgers from St Mich.

Sept 26th 1917 Rolleston.

Albert at Hurdcott.

Shortly after this we shifted to Fovant & I met Albert. I classified here.

Shortly afterwards had leave to Manchester & shortly after was in draft for France together with Tom Hogg & Bert Rowe. We spent one night at Southampton & next evening embarked for France I met Albert often & he lent me £5 to go on leave with until we cabled for more

Nov 15th 1917. Left England

Arrived at Le Havre & stayed there till 20th.

Nov 23rd 1917. Loere.

Joined the battalion exactly 1 year after leaving Ausie. Put into A Coy.

Met most of the old hut boys. Heard P McKenzie, W Taylor, J

Stonehouse,

Jan 22nd 1917. Belgium.

During our stay in Loere we had the battalion sports & I managed to get 2nd in Hurdles & 2nd in high Jump & later in the Brigade sports ran 4th in the 3 miles 50 starters.

We then came to Kortepyp near Neuve Eglise & not far from Ballieu Played with the Batt against the 22nd but sprained my ankle We had plenty of fatigues up the line & in Ballieu lumping shells. Met Cliff Burge, Norman McCormick.

Albert James MACKLAN (721). Single 21 year old butcher of Whitfield, Victoria. Son of Mary and Isaac Macklan and brother of Irene Macklan. Enlisted 12 March 1917. Embarked Melbourne, on board HMAT A29, *Suevic* 21 June 1917. Albert served in the 59th Battalion 15th Machine Gun Company. Died of wounds 26 April 1918 aged 22. Buried at Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery (Plot XI, Row C Grave No. 4).



Fovant village hosted a number of military camps from 1914-1918, housing soldiers from Britain and Australia. Over these years troops from various units carved their insignia into the limestone hills that surround the village.

Percy George McKENZIE (6349). Single 29 year old labourer from South Richmond, Victoria. 18th Reinforcements 24th Battalion. Embarked HMAT *Hororata*, from Melbourne 23 November 1916. Killed in Action, 4 October 1917. No known grave.

John STONEHOUSE (6443). 25 year old labourer from Garvoc, Victoria. Embarked HMAT *Hororata*, from Melbourne 23 November 1916. Private in the 24th Battalion. Killed in Action, 9 October 1917. Buried Passchendaele New British Cemetery (Plot XIV, Row E, Grave No. 14), Belgium.



Captain William ELLWOOD. Awarded the Military Cross for actions at Bullecourt 3 May 1917. Returned to Australia as a Major, 2 June 1919.

NOTE: Entries in the original diary switch from ink to pencil from 24 January 1918.

Alexander STUART, 2nd Lt, 24th Battalion. 28 years old, from Footscray, Victoria. Awarded Military Cross, Mont St Quentin, September 1918. Returned to Australia 2 June 1919.



Australian troops at the entry to the "Catacombs" near Lôcre, Belgium.

There are a number of teachers here. Cpts Ellwood, Kitchen, & Lts. Ellis, Allan Martin, Roy Miller Chas Atkins, & Cliff Anderson. Old MGS boys Martin Miller, Buge, Forbes.

We have been 8 days in line & came out last Sunday night. Struck a bad time with the mud & quiet otherwise. only one slight casualty, but plenty of trench feet. Got through alright but lost most of my kit when the dugout fell in. Back now at the Catacombs in a snug spot. Sleep well now & have Jim Thompson for a bed mate. While here I met Billy Bray, Jack Bowen & Moore from Wang. Heard Jerry and Ken Evans were killed also Jack Burke while Billy Bryce & Arthur Crockett are back in Ausie.

Jan 24th 1918 Belgium

Still at the Catacombs, on fatigue last night at the support lines. Very quiet except for a little machine gun fire which was too close to be pleasant.

Radcliff & Booth over on last draft. Lt Stuart who came over on the Korata with us, rejoin the battalion Seymour Harrison in B Coy.

Received letters last mail from Irene, Mum, Ettie, Dad, Jessie Alex & Auntie Lizzie Dorrie & Chas M.

Jan 29th 1918 Neuve Eglise Belgium

Left Catacombs 27th & marched here. Billeted. Sig Booth and Radcliff rejoined. Met Fred Clark at Catacombs Mac met Fred Barry this morning. Moving somewhere tomorrow

Jan 31st 1918 Lottinghen Fr

Left Neuve Eglise yesterday at 4.30 & entrained for here. Billeted at a farmhouse. 1,2,&3 platoons in this barn. Arrived here this morning at 4.00 am. slept till 11am. Very quiet place & out of the sound of guns etc.

Tuesday March 5th Lottinghen

Have been here now since 31st Jan and have had a very fair spell. We had another football competition for the cup which has to be won 3 times before being the property of one battalion.

We met the 22nd in the final and won after an exciting match. During our stay here we had leave to Boulogne going in by motor wagon. We were presented with sports medals which we won at Loere. I got two. We were inspected today and are moving up to the Forward Area tomorrow morning. Mac & I cabled for £20 each to go to Paris on leave.

March 7th Thursday Kortepyp

Fighting order today and moving up to the Front line. Later – We left early this afternoon with the advance party to take over and were all in at 10.15.

March 8th – Friday, Front Line.

We opened a barrage at 9pm & the enemy replied heavily. Cpl Collerson & Pte Horan of our company were wounded. At 12 midnight he opened again and Butterfield Died of wounds and Tommy Welsh who came over with us were killed. Tommy was on his way back for SBs when he got hit. 5 others from B Coy were also wounded. Had bother with lines owing to the heavy shelling.

March 11th Left for support lines

5th Div had a raid tonight & was very successful. One of our men were killed but enemy sustained heavy casualties & 11 taken prisoner.

Wednesday March 13th Near Neippe

Left supports for Div Sig School. Whithear & myself from A Coy Beardshall from B and Swanton and Charters from D arrived at 4.30 pm.

March 17th Sunday Div. Sig School.

Doing well here Went to Bailleau today. Fritz shelling there now also around & in Neippe.

March 22nd. Friday Div Sig School

Went to see 24th Concert party (Ramblers tonight which was very good a great number of A & D Company were gassed. All A Coy

In the AIF, sport developed a competitive spirit and camaraderie. Competitions were followed closely by all in the battalion. Each unit had its own football and cricket team, and battalions carried their colours to the field, marched to conquest to the music of their bands, and endeavoured to uphold their reputation. During the winter of 1917–18 football competitions were the supreme interest behind the lines.

The AIF used a three level system to provide rest for its troops. At any given time, roughly one third of the soldiers in any Division would be "resting" in billets behind the lines. One third would be in reserve trenches close to the front and one third would be on the front line. Units were rotated through these locations, on average, every 8 days.

William James TICKELL (6401) aka William Ticknell. 21 year old labourer from Horsham, Victoria. Next of kin: Mother, Mrs Annie Tickell, Dawlish, Devonshire, England. Embarked HMAT A20 *Hororata* from Melbourne 23 November 1916 . Killed in Action 25 March 1918. Buried Berks Cemetery Extension (Rosenberg Plateau Plots), (Plot II, Row B, Grave No. 45), Ploegsteert, Belgium.



Neuve Eglise, 1918.

& most of D Coy suffered. A lot of our chaps are in the 5th Field Amb which is just around the corner. Lt. Cpl Bill Popple died from gass today. He came from Alexander.

March 24th Sunday Romarin

Left Sig School today. Germans have begun their push down South. Back at the Horse lines Lt's Ellis, Forbes, Clough & Sedgwick from A Coy gassed.

March 25th Monday Romarin

Fritz has pushed a great way down south. He claims 30,000 foris. Pte Bill Tickell who came over with us was killed today.

March 26th Tuesday Front line

Went up today with Composite Coy under Lt Ball to Potterie farm.

Camped in a Pill Box which Fritz shells heavily & also plays his machine guns on.

April 1st Monday Neuve Eglise

Came out of the line tonight after 6 days in Front line. Came down to Kortepyp by train & then marched to Neuve Eglise where we had supper & then into bunk. During our turn in at Potterie Farm we had a good time. Lt Ball being a good OC & could stand a joke. Lt Jenkin from Wesley was also there.

We had great fun one night making a boat which we launched on the moat which surrounds the farm. One of Fritz's shells hit the corner of our pill box but didn't do much damage.

Tuesday April 2nd Flêtre

We left Neuve Eglise by motor transport this morning and arrived at our billets 4pm. Went back to A Coy under D Munro. Missed seeing Frank Byrne again as Mac couldn't find my billet at Neuve Eglise.

Friday April 5th Left at 2 am for the south & arr at Calais 8 30 am

Came through Boulogne, Calais. Staples, Abbeyville to Amiens We then march to Paux where we camped for the night.

April 6th Saturday left at 5.30 and march about 5 kilos to the motor busses on route to the line. via Franzelle up to the reserve line behind Millencourt. Owing to Tommies being in our dugouts we had to spend the night out in the open in the rain.

Sunday April 7th Reserve line

We moved in early this morning and had a good sleep. 23rd went up to the front line last night.

April 9th Tuesday Reserve line

We were asked up to HQs Sigs to support tonight. Salvaged a piano & had a splendid evening. The Adj & Sig officer Lt Thompson were present. Whit played and we sung all the songs we could think of. The people must have had to leave here in a great hurry as they had to leave a lot behind. Cpl Rookes was slightly wounded in the neck but not bad enough to be evacuated.

April 10th Wednesday Reserves

Jim Charters died of wounds yesterday 2 D Coy men were killed & 5 wounded We blew up a train of troops later.

April 11th Thursday Front line posts

We changed over tonight and are in the out posts. We had to take up a line from the front line to 21st HQs & run it out to our post we had several squeaks coming in & laying the wire. Pte Young from D Coy was killed this evening. Heard Fritz has broken through up north. We are in an open post overlooking a long vally & must keep down during the night time.

Fritzs plays on this during the night & we have to be careful

April 14th Sunday Out posts

A small raid was carried out early this morning between the 21st & 24th but was unsuccessful owing to the heavy machine gun fire.

James CHARTERS (5313). Married butcher from Sea Lake, Victoria. A native of Bootle, Liverpool, England. Next of kin: Wife, Mrs Emily Charters, Rosebank, Black Rock, Victoria. Embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, on board HMAT A28 *Miltiades* 1 August 1916. Died of wounds 9 April 1918. Buried in Warloy-Baillon Communal Cemetery Extension (Plot IV, Row E, Grave No. 5), France.

As the Boat Broke Away



Baron Manfred von Richthofen, known as the "Red Baron", was a skilful and deadly fighter. His exploits captured the imagination of the German public. He was shot down in combat over France 21 April 1918. He crashed his aircraft near Australian lines. Australian machine gunners on the ground claimed the "kill", but a Canadian pilot, Captain Roy Brown, is also credited.



German shelling, Amiens, France, 1918.

21st officers killed, 7 men wounded & one of ours wounded.

April 15th Monday Reserve line

Relieved tonight by 23rd and had a hot time getting out along the Amiens-Albert Rd & it was a miracle that only two of us were wounded, Pte Robins & Farley. We arrived at the reserve line at 11.30 pm.

April 19th Friday Support line

Snowing slightly this morning. Relieved 23rd this evening in support lines.

April 21st Sunday Support line

Enemy Art very active. Corp Hughes of KCs sigs. killed last night.

April 22nd Monday Support line

St German Air man Baron von Richthofen brought down this morning by 5th Div gunners. Tommies on our left pushed this evening & were successful

April 23rd Tuesday Support line

Fritz plane brought down this morning. Cpl McDonald killed by shell. Out this morning under heavy shell fire mending lines had a couple of narrow squeaks.

April 24th Wednesday Support line

Relieved tonight by 23rd back to Reserve line. Relief cancelled

April 25th Thursday Reserve line

Relieved tonight back to reserve line & all arrived safely.

April 29th Monday Reserve line

Moved our reserve line about 1 kilo to left and made a very good dug-out.

Fritz shelled our old dug outs heavily today.

May 2nd Thursday Pont Nogelles

Left line at 9.30 and after passing through Henencourt, Warloy, Vadencourt, Beaucourt, & Montigne & were billeted in an old barn.

Tuesday May 7th Berteaucourt

Left Batt today for Rest camp by motor & passed through Tuequil, Amiens, St Vass, Vernacourt. City of Amiens has been heavily shelled. Civilians have all evacuated.

During our stay at Pont Noyelles Gen Birdwood inspected us (6th Bde) & decorated a few of our chaps. Cpl Rookes got M.M. I met Mick Cowan, Alcock, Alex Ferguson, and a couple of others from Wang way. Mac & I both received word while in the line that our money had arrived in Eng but have not received any further word yet.

May 13th Monday Berteaucourt.

Plenty of parades here. Saw Capt Jacka here. Met Fred Clark, Warren Hay, Jenkin (Contin) Frank Lee & Dug Muir (ASC.) Went for a walk yesterday to St Ouen through St Ledger. Austin Mahoney & Lt Ball had both been made Temp Capts: Cond

We played the 7th Bde football last sat & won by 3 pts after an exciting finish.

May 18th Sat Berteaucourt

Sports (Corp) at Vignacourt. It was hear that I heard Albert had been killed at Villiers Britineaux on the 26th April. After the hopover he & a mate were down in a shelter when a shell burst on them. Albert was hit in the head and died on the way out. He was unconscious He was buried at Al Bigny. Am writing to Irene & Mum tonight. Such is war that even an only son must pay the supreme sacrifice. Albert's death will cast a gloom over his people for a long while as everyone thought well of him. He was greatly liked in his battalion and was a good soldier.

May 22nd Wednesday. Berteaucourt

Our battalion along with the 2nd Div hop-over on the 19th. No news yet to hand.

Had quite a lot of letters the other night & a pair of socks from Ettie. Fritz was over last night and bombed around here. Several fell close to the camp but none of us were hit. He bombed London heavily on Monday the 20th instant. George Ferguson has gone to Aussie. Our Div won Corp sports



The date on the headstone of **Private Albert MACKLAN**, 59th Battalion (Victoria), in Plot XI, Row C, Grave 4, reads 26 April 1918. It recalls the well-known AIF action at Villers-Bretonneux, the recapture of the town from the Germans on the night of 24–25 April, which was fought across the ground on which the cemetery now stands. Macklan would most likely have advanced with his mates over this countryside to where the 59th reached its ultimate objective just beyond the town and north of the main road leading to Lamotte-Warfusée. There they dug in and he was wounded by a shell, carried out by stretcher-bearers and died at a dressing station. Macklan was remembered as "cheerful" and had enlisted against his parents' wishes.



Cpl. James William Isaac AINSWORTH (1329). Born 1894. Single farmer from King Valley via Wangaratta, Victoria. Embarked on HMAT A34 *Persic* 3 June 1916. Joined 37th Battalion. Returned to Australia 27 June 1919. Died September 1941. Buried Brisbane, Queensland.



Pte. William John ARMSTRONG (6276). Single teacher of Whitfield, via Wangaratta, Victoria. Next of kin: Father, Donald Armstrong, 60 Mont Albert Road, Surrey Hills, Victoria. Embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, on board HMAT A20 *Hororata* 23 November 1916. Killed in Action 31 August 1918. Buried, Peronne Communal Cemetery Extension (Plot IV, Row A, Grave No. 7), France.

64 pts 5th 57 2nd Went to a lecture by Mr Peter Fleming from Sih A. at Y.M.C.A tent on The Empire. It was very good.

June 6th Wednesday Berteaucourt

Still having a spell. We have had plenty of cricket lately & the 24th are unbeaten. We have a good team. I have the honor of being captain and have made 57 in 3 matches retiring twice & bowled once so am going strong. The Kookaburras are showing in this village They are very good. I went to Vignacourt yesterday to draw my money. Got a ride both ways. Brough Bobby Hunter back with us & went to a show at St Ouen. Capt Bowden, Lis Burge, Thompson, Nicholls Sweetland evacuated with gass Lt Munro died of wounds. We saw Lt Baxter yesterday & also Lt Munro's grave.

Aug 4th 1918 Left Lamotte on route for Paris on leave. Travelled to Allie-sur-Somme by cars where I met Jim Ainsworth & another Sgt from his battery named Tom McDonald. We left there at 10 oclock & got out of the trucks at Romes Camp and walked down the line to Avoncourt & caught a French train to Paris where we arrived about 9 oclock am. on the 5th Aug. We went to the Spiniere Barracks to report. We then went to the Hotel Diana where we put up for the night. We went to the Olimpia in the evening after getting shirts collars etc & getting cleaned up.

6th Aug We changed our Hotel & came in more Central to Hotel Suisse in the Rue de la Fayette which proved to be an ideal place for us. We went to the Follies Bergères.

7th Went to Grand Roue & Invalides by tube & tram & taxis. Jim & Tom went to another theatre & I went to the Follies again with Gustave the son of the proprietress of the hotel who can speak fairly good English. We made the acquaintance of "Joe" from Nice, a nice chap (Italian) who is very Enthusiastic about Diggers Had our photos taken

This was the last entry in William's diary.

Cricket Team

Capt. Menzies

Lt Calvert

Lt Clough – Capt Ball

Sgt Cantlin

McGregor

Webb

Cpl Hart

ACpl Rowlands

Jackson

Pte Donald

Armstrong (Capt)

Emery. Martin.

Kearn.

Melle Lily D'Ortiss

10 Rue du Kelder

Hotel du Nil

Paris No 1329

Cpl J Ainsworth

Aust

5th ^ Medium French Bty

A . I . F

Digger Gregory Fotiadi

Bois de Boulogne

Champs Elysées

Place de la Concorde

Wheel Trocadero

Versailles

William was a keen sportsman and, by all accounts, an excellent cricketer. The appendix to the September official 24th Battalion War Diary, contains this news clipping (below). The game in question was played 24 August 1918, just a few days before William was killed. It was published the day after his death.

INTER-COMPANY CRICKET.

“B” v. “A.” Won by “B” Coy by 4 runs.

Scores :— “B” Coy 58. “A” Coy 54.

For the losers Armstrong showed out well with bat and ball, and T. Moore kept wickets in a masterly manner.

“B” Coy's best was Pinkerton, who got 25 by good all-round batting. Lt. Baldock, F. Aitkin and Hart shared the bowling honors.

“C” v. “D.” Won by “C” Coy by 2 runs. Scores :— “C” Coy 35, and “D” Coy 33 runs. For “C” Loveless made 14 nicely.

“A” v. “C.” Won by “A” Coy by 8 wickets and 2 runs.

For “C” Cleverly got 11, and Webb took the three wickets for 9 runs. Lt. Sedgwick (19 not out) and Lt. Noble (14) were top scorers.

“A” v. “D.” Won by “A” Coy by 37 runs. Scores :— “A” Coy 100. “D” Coy 63.

For “D” Coy Capt. Ball (12) and Melville (10) were the main scorers.

“A” Coy's crack, Armstrong, got 36 by good cricket, and Lt. Noble, with 27, batted nicely. Armstrong also did well with the ball, getting four wickets for four runs.

M'elle Lily D'Ortiss seems to have written her address in William's diary in her own hand.

Humor.

A kind lady assisting in re-making some Australians in hospital in England expressed to one of them the hope that he did drink "I turned my back on liquor 2 years before I left home" he said. To his cobber after she had gone "I useter drive a brewery lorry, y'know.

A joker of the 24th Batt submitted to his Lieut his wish to get back home before he did any fighting. He had just heard that the King and the Kaiser were cousins & wanted to excuse from having anything to do with a family row.

A small stretcher bearer & his mate were carrying a 16 stoner who was wounded. Shells began to drop & they made for cover. They found the 16 stoner there first.

"Is it safe" asked a newcomer while a bit of strafe was going on. "Oh yes" said the old hand with the gold A. "I've seen the staff blokes come up as far as this.

Addresses

*S. W. Weatherill Stan
No 8 Box (Little Dope)*

Swan Hill

Albert K Edwards

"Keayang"

Dixie Via Kerang

Jack Stonehouse

Cororooke

Via Colac

The addresses recorded at the back of William's diary are predominantly those of the occupants of Hut 4, Larkhill. Others, written in a less formal style, seem to have been added as a new contact was made. It is also possible that some pages here have been copied out of order.

Sam Stonehouse

Garvoc

Via Terang

Andy Wylie

Durham Lead

Via Bunniong

Perc G McKenzie (Killed in Action)

Mirboo Nth.

Gippsland

or 4 Yarra St

Sth Richmond

Charlie Filling

Wood - Wood Vic

Harold W Rashleigh

Shepparson Av

Murrumbena

Thomas Welsh

Curlewis

Via Geelong

Stan T Tipping

Lauriston Vic

Jack Mitchell (Killed in Action)

Costerfield Vic

Jim Cloke

Amphitheatre Vic

Les Thomasson

St John's Av

Camberwell

Walter Stanbrook

Ultima

Perc Carter

Balmoral

Via Hamilton

Tom & Bill O'Connor

Wallacedale

Via Condah

Bill Slatter

Woodlawn

Baringhup

Via Maldon

Bert Tuckett & Perc.

18 Pridham St

Newmarket

Bill Taylor (Killed in Action)

147 Adderley St

West Melbourne

Charlie Wilson

181 Hawke St

West Melbourne

Bill Fickell

Horsham PO

Charlie Watts

c/o Mrs Thickbroom

St Albans

Nth Rd Brighton

Harold Rawlins

c/o Mrs Snowden

53 Cecil St

Fitzroy

As the Boat Broke Away

Jim Donald
Mt Pleasant
Woodend
L. Allen Martin
Landcop St
Brighton
Les. Telford
Canianbo PO
Via Shepparton
Mat Dawson
No 3 Willacoat St
Coburg
Bill Tuckwell
Woodford
Harden N S W.
Bob Sartain
clo Mr Sartain Saddler
Mansfield

No 721 Pte A. J. Macklan
59th Battalion
15th Brigade
No 12 Camp
Hardcott.
OIC
Aust Base P. O.
Mt Pleasant
London.
No 3068 A. F. Giles
37th Batt
No 10 T B Lark Hill *A.F.*

Pte A. A. Crockett No 2301
37th Batt
No 3 a Camp Lark Hill.

A E McGuffie
clo Cooper & Sons
Petersham
Sydney

Mr D Winter
106 Amess St
Nth Carlton
Mrs R Martin
Sth African Police Stn
Colesberg
Sth Africa

WEDDING DAY TRAGEDY.

BRIDEGROOM'S DEAD BODY FOUND

Verdict of Suicide.

MANSFIELD, Saturday.—John Paxton, aged 34, a native of the district, was reported to the police as missing on Tuesday last. He was to have been married at Bonnie Doon at 10 o'clock on Tuesday, and every preparation had been made for the ceremony to be performed. When the bridegroom did not put in an appearance the services of the police were requisitioned.

Constable Quinn headed a search party, and on making inquiries found that Paxton had driven in a spring dray on Tuesday morning in the direction of the Delatite River, and had afterwards been seen there. The horse in the meantime had come home, minus the dray and harness. In searching the river near the place he was last seen the dray was found, with the harness hanging on it. The search party then proceeded down the river, and found the body of Paxton floating in a hole, about half a mile from where the dray was left. The body was much decomposed, the features hardly recognisable. In his pockets were found several letters, a cheque book, and 8/5 in money, but nothing to show that he contemplated suicide. The body was conveyed to the Mansfield Hospital Morgue, and an inquiry was held by Mr. H. G. Amor, deputy coroner. Several witnesses were examined, and a verdict returned of suicide, with nothing to show the state of mind of the deceased when he took his life.

The deceased was up on harvest leave, and was to have returned to camp at Broadmeadows on Saturday next.

CHESHUNT RACES.

The Cheshunt annual races held on Monday last proved very successful, and the meeting was most enjoyable. The day was all that could be desired for an outing, and the local and district people taking advantage of the beautiful day turned out in large numbers. The following gentlemen conducted the meeting:—Mr. D. Slater, president and treasurer; Mr. R. Miller, secretary; Mr. I. Macklan, starter; Mr. D. Wyllie, judge; Mr. S. Laurence, clerk of scales; committee, Messrs V. Tiernan, R. Lamson, H. Rutledge, J. Macklan, A. McCalman, E. Burrows, F. Burns, F. Lamson, J. Slater and W. Kelleher. The whole of the committee without exception worked hard to make the meeting a success, and Mr. Miller made a splendid and courteous secretary. The publican's booth was conducted by Mr. Swinburne on behalf of the committee, and the refreshment booth and fruit stall were conducted by Mr. H. Smith, of Whitfield, and his catering gave satisfaction, and there were no protests or disputes. Results:—

1. TRIAL STAKES of £4, 2nd horse £1 out of stake.
A. Gibson's La Belle, 8.5 (Sullivan) 1
J. Slater's Eager, 8.10 (W. Rowan) 2
Lady Solano, Bess and Sandhurst also started. Won by a length and half. Betting—2 to 1 on Lady Solano, 2 to 1 La Belle and Bess, 10 to 1 others.

2. PONY RACE of £2 10s, 2nd horse 10s out of stake. 4 furs.
T. Johnston's Volunteer, 8.0 (Foster) 1
Rutledge's Dolly, 8.3 (Johnston) 2
Only two started. Won by two lengths. 2 to 1 on Volunteer, 2 to 1 agst Dolly.
3. HANDICAP HACK RACE, £1 5s, 2nd horse 5s; once round the course.
J. Whitty's Bess, 8.0 (Moore) ... 1
J. Macklan's Sandhurst, 8.10 (Larkins) 2
Corporal, Lora and Ornament also started. A good race. Bess, cleverly ridden by Moore, won by a length and a half. Evens Bess, 5 to 1 others.
4. OPEN HANDICAP of £7, 2nd horse £1 out of stake; 8 furs.
Mrs J. Meares' Wakeup, 9.7 (Sullivan) 1
D. Slater's Useful, 9.5 (Robinson) 2
J. Slater's Eager also started. Won easily. 2 to 1 on Wakeup, 2 to 1 Useful, 10 to 1 Eager.
5. NOVELTY PONY RACE of £2 10s, 2nd horse 10s out of stake. 4 furs.
E. Johnstone's L.K., 8.0, scr. (Foster) 1
H. Rutledge's Dolly, 8.3, 36yds. bhd. (Johnston) 2
Gentle Annie also started. Won by two lengths. 2 to 1 on L.K., evens Dolly, 10 to 1 Gentle Annie.

6. HACK RACE HANDICAP horses barred, £1, 2nd horse 1s. 4 furs. Whitty's Bess, 8.0 (Moore) ... 1 Macklan's Sandhurst, 7.0 (M. Moroney) ... 2 Bonnie Bell, Shamrock, Daisy, Lora and Avondale also started. Won by a length. Evens winner, 5 to 1 others.

7. FORCED HANDICAP £2 10s; 2nd horse 10s out of stake. 6 furs. D. Slater's Useful, 9.0 (Robinson) 1 A. Gibson's La Belle, 9.0 (Sullivan) ... 2 A good race; won by a length. 2 to 1 on La Belle, evens Useful.

CHALLENGE RACE FOR £1. I. Mad Lark's Paddy (Larkins) ... 1 C. Burrows' Avondale ... 2 Won easily. Avondale lost ground soon after the start through running off. 2 to 1 on Avondale; evens Paddy.

A very successful dance was held in the Chestnut Hall in the evening in connection with the races; 50 couples attending, and danced to music supplied by Mr. and Miss Mahlook and Mr. F. Lamson acted as M.C. in an efficient manner. The catering was in the capable hands of Mr. H. Smith, of Whitfield, who supplied a very tasty supper.

ELDORADO RACES

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10th, 1917

Programme of Events.

1st Race. **Trial Stakes** (handicap) of £4. 4 furlongs. For horses that have not won stake exceeding £5. Start 1 p.m.

	st	lb
1 J. Slater's Eager	9	10
2 F. Fisher's Bidy	9	5
3 T. Johnson's Semperfidelis	9	0
4 W. Weston's Larrie	8	10
5 Mrs Hill's The Blemish	8	10
6 M. Maroney's Fluke	8	7
7 Mr Cunningham's Starlight	7	0
8 W. Doyle's Laddie (further particulars required). Start 2 p.m.		

2nd Race. **Handicap Novelty Pony Race**, 14.2 a.u., 12yds. for each inch under 4 furlongs. Smallest pony to run full distance, £5. Second pony 10s from stake.

	st	lb
1 W. Robb's Lady Glen	9	10
2 L. and M Johnson's Golden Treasure	9	7
3 Steve Moore's Belgian Queen	9	3
4 C. Schulz's Lady Valve	8	10
5 T. Archer's Miss Cavell	7	12
6 Mrs Tully's Golden Gift	7	0
7 A. Byrne's Dot	7	0

3rd Race. **Eldorado Handicap**. 6 furlongs, of £8. Second horse £1 from stake. Winner to be re-handicapped. Start 2.45.

	st	lb
1 D. Slater's Useful	9	12
2 F. Fisher's Bidy	9	3
3 J. Meares's Wake-up	9	3
4 W. Bell's Belfast	8	12
5 Mrs Hill's The Blemish	8	10
6 M. Maroney's Fluke	8	7
7 W. Weston's Larrie	8	7
8 J. Moore's Daylight Saving (late Athens)	8	7

4th Race. **Open Trot** (handicap) of £5. 1 1/2 miles. Second horse 1 sov. from stake. Start 3.30.

	yds	bhd
1 F. Fisher's General R.	100	"
2 W. Connor's Ngapara	100	"
3 F. C. McGovern's Tess	75	"
4 Chas. Weinert's Wild Girl	75	"
5 Cunningham's Sattenette	25	"
6 G. Luke's Blaze	15	"
7 Chas. Weinert's Woombalano		scr.
8 G. Everett's Top Light		scr.
9 J. Newbound's Yellow Boy		scr.
10 J. Meare's Black Wattle (particulars required)		

5th Race. **Welter Handicap**, 7 furlongs, of £5. Second horse 10s from stake. Minimum weight 9st. Start 4.15.

J. Slater's Eager	st lb	11 0
F. Fisher's Bidy	10 4	
J. Meare's Wake-up	9 10	
Mrs Hill's The Blemish	9 10	
W. Bell's Belfast	9 5	
J. Moore's Daylight Saving (late Athens)	9 5	
th Race. Hack Race (handicap).	5	
furlongs' of £3. Start 5 45.		
	st lb	
D. Slater's Useful	10 0	
F. Fisher's Bidy	9 5	
T. Johnson's Sem perfidelis	9 0	
W. Bell's Belfast	8 12	
W. Weston's Larry	8 10	
Mrs Hill's The Blemish	8 10	
M. Maroney's Fluke	8 7	
J. Moore's Daylight Saving (late Athens)	8 7	
T. JOHNSON	} Handicappers	
D. OLIVER		
A. STEPHENS		

WHITFIELD

Albert Macklan, only son of Mr. and Mrs I. Macklan, goes into camp on 2nd April. He was running the butchering business in conjunction with his father, but Mr. Macklan finding it impossible to carry on the business with his farm, and being unable to get suitable labor has now sold the business to Mr. T. Pickles, of Moyhu.

On the evening of March 8th Mr. Isaac Macklan, with his son and two daughters, attended a dance at Tolmie, and upon arrival tied up their horses by the bridles in a paddock at the rear of the hall, in common with a number of other people. Upon going to get the horses at 11.30 p.m. the animals were found to be loose, and the bridles, valued at £2, were missing. One was a double-rein bridle, and the other two single-rein.



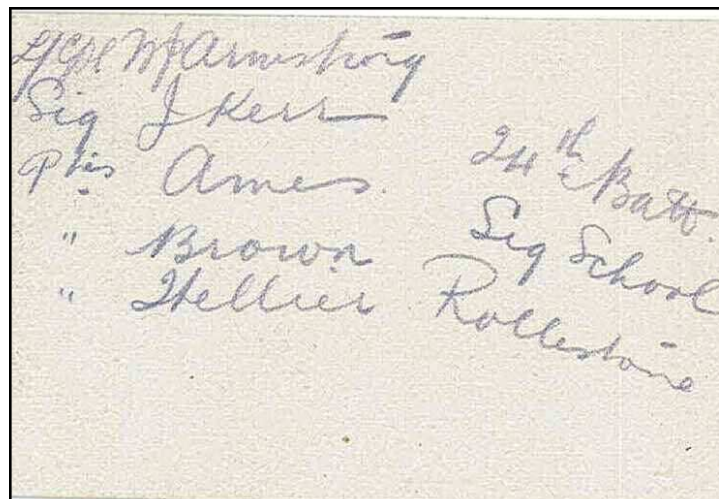
Unknown group, 1917. Possibly Larkhill.



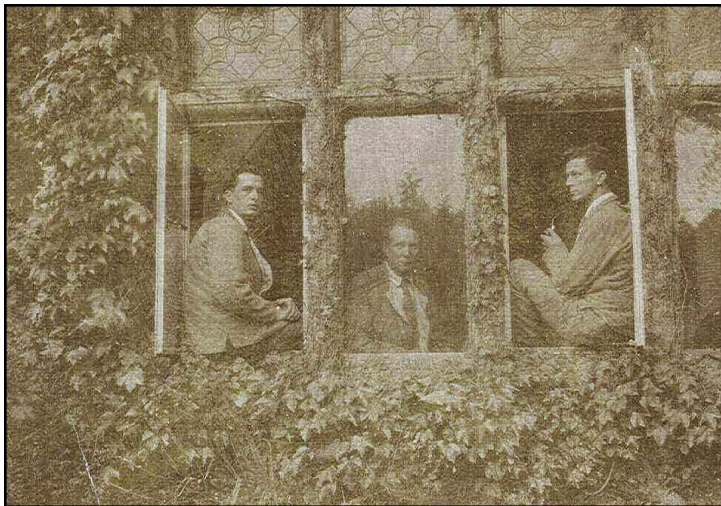
Unknown group, 1917. Possibly Larkhill.



Signals School, Rolleston, 1917. William Armstrong, left.



Reverse side of facing photograph.



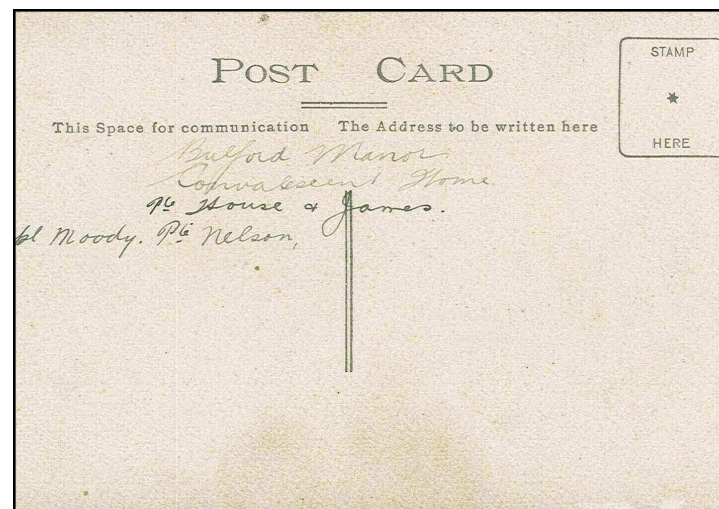
Unknown trio. Bulford Manor Convalescent Home, Wiltshire, 1917.



Unknown group. Possibly Larkhill, 1917.



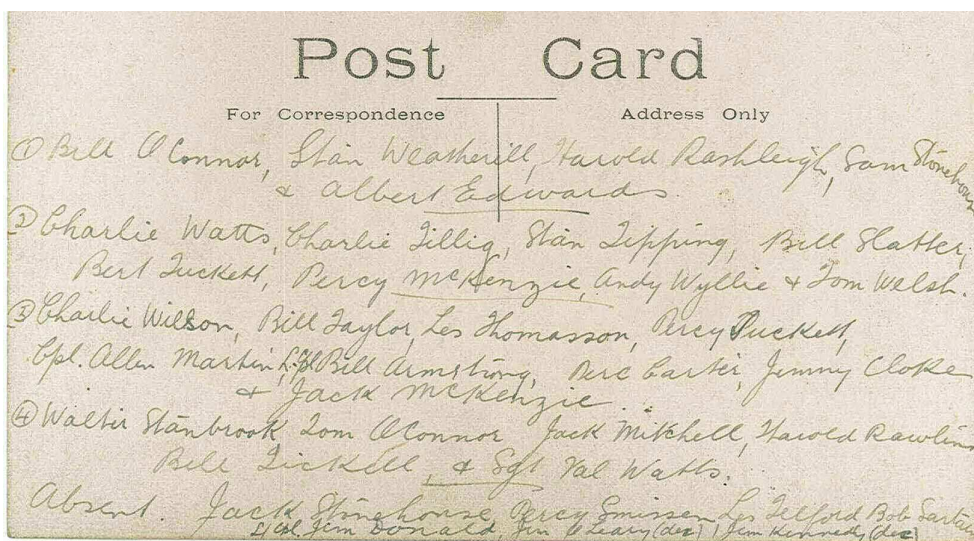
Bulford Manor Convalescent Home, Wiltshire, 1917. William Armstrong, fourth from right, front row (seated).



Reverse side of facing photograph.



Occupants of Hut 4, Larkhill, 1917. William Armstrong, fourth from right, second row from front.



Reverse side of photograph above.



Sgt. Tom MacDonald, Cpl. Jim Ainsworth, Pte. William
Armstrong. Paris, July, 1918.

A.W.M. File No.12/1

6276 Private W.J. ARMSTRONG, 24th Battalion, A.I.F.
who on 31st August 1918 was killed in action at
Peronne. Other biographical details concerning
him are: school teacher (State); of Melbourne;
born Albert Park, Vic., was appointed a junior
teacher at Preston (Vic) in 1910, was transferred
to Camberwell, and then had charge of schools at
Degamero, Glenmore, Edi, Delatite, and Howquadale;
enlisted in A.I.F. on 24 October 1916, embarking on
23 November with 18th reinforcements of the
24th Battalion and joining the 24th in France in
November 1917; age at time of death, 24 years 8 mont

Australian War Memorial, article description. Possibly 1953.



Four of William's nieces, a great-niece and a great-great-great-niece at the Australian War Memorial Last Post Ceremony in honour of William John Armstrong, 13 April 2014.
Cecily McMahon, Miriam Webb, Janita O'Neill, Abby O'Neill, Leonie Gauld, Joan Armstrong.



Janita, William's great-niece, at William's grave, Péronne, France, 2009.

