

A Soldier of the Great War.

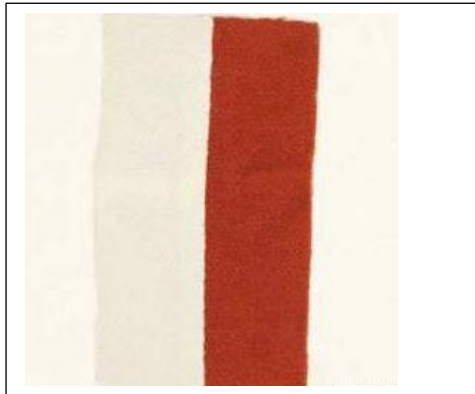


Private John Eric Farqur McArdle

60th Battalion Aif

Enlistment Number 2544

Lest We Forget.



John Eric Farqur was a labourer from Rathscar near Maryborough in Victoria.

At the age of just 18 years and 2 months he enlisted in the AIF on the 29 March 1916.

On the 25th September 1916 he left Australian shores on the Shropshire bound for Folkstone in England. After arriving and taken part in training he was despatched to France. He arrived there on the 6th January 1917.

Australian units were usually given a gentle introduction to battle on the battlefields and trenches of Belgium where it was known as the “Nursery sector”.

John was to bypass this though and by March 1917 he was in the front lines with his 60th Battalion around Bullecourt. He spent some time from March to August in hospital and recovering from scabies (a common curse of trench warfare) He was back in the trenches soon and was to be involved in the second Battle of Bullecourt in May 1917 holding the front line. During August the Battalion was withdrawn and in training behind the lines at Sercus near Hazebrouck near Ypres in the north on the salient.



Polygon Wood

In September the push against the Germans before winter began and John was involved in action around Polygon Wood.

On the 24th September he was in the Hooze area and on the Eastern edge of Glencourse Wood not far from Polygon Wood where a racetrack was located. He reinforced the 58th Battalion and the 5th Division of which the 60th Battalion was a part of, supporting the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders.

The 60th Battalion's role was to wait on the front line for orders to move forward to a Red line objective. Other Battalions would move on the Blue Line objective and so capture enemy territory. There was intense shelling during all this time and not much was left of the wood.


At 8.17pm the order came to move on the red line objective. John and his battalion went into action.

John was not to survive the action and was to be missing in action on the 26th September 1917just one year since he arrived to serve King and Country.

The casualty report for the 26th September was to show 39 killed in action ,156 wounded , 5 who later died from wounds and 9 missing. John was to become one of the over 54 000 soldiers who died on the salient and having no known grave.

A sad footnote, is that his final possessions left in camp were collected and despatched home. Tragedy was to strike though and the vessel carrying his possessions was sunk by a German Submarine. None of his personal items were to ever make it home to his grieving parents!

May he Rest in Peace.



THE BATTLE OF POLYGON WOOD September 1917

By the autumn of 1917 Polygon Wood had been in German hands for more than two years and was now part of a strong defensive system of concrete pillboxes and trenches, traces of which can still be seen in the wood today. With most of its once lush growth of trees now shattered by shell fire, the Butte loomed over the surrounding battlefield. Fortified with machine guns, laced with barbed wire and riddled with tunnels and dugouts, the Butte was a key German position for cover and observation, and a formidable obstacle.

Late September and the Third Battle of Ypres had been raging for nearly two months when the Fifth Australian Division was charged with clearing Polygon Wood as part of the allied advance up the Gheluvelt Plateau. As part of a five division attack on a five mile front, they went forward at 5.50am on 26 September 1917 amid the clamour of an immense protective bombardment. Following close behind the barrage, shielded by smoke and debris and showing considerable resource and skill in the face of fierce German resistance, objectives were rapidly gained. One by one, pillboxes and strongpoints were subdued, the Butte captured and the wood secured.

Despite heavy casualties, the Battle of Polygon Wood was the Fifth Australian Division's most decisive victory on the Western Front and after the war was selected as the site for the Divisional memorial. Designed by Major-General J.J. Talbot Hobbs, a pre-war architect who commanded the Fifth Division during the battle, the memorial is one of five dedicated to the divisions of the Australian Imperial Force who served on the Western Front. The other four are in France.

Major-General J.J. Talbot Hobbs, commander of the Fifth Australian Division at Polygon Wood and designer of the memorial.

Major-General J.J. Talbot Hobbs, de bevelhebber van de Vijfde Australische Divisie tijdens de slag om het Polygonwoud en ook de ontwerper van het gedenkteken.

