

John “Jack” Hunter

3504 PRIVATE JOHN HUNTER 49th Australian Infantry Battalion

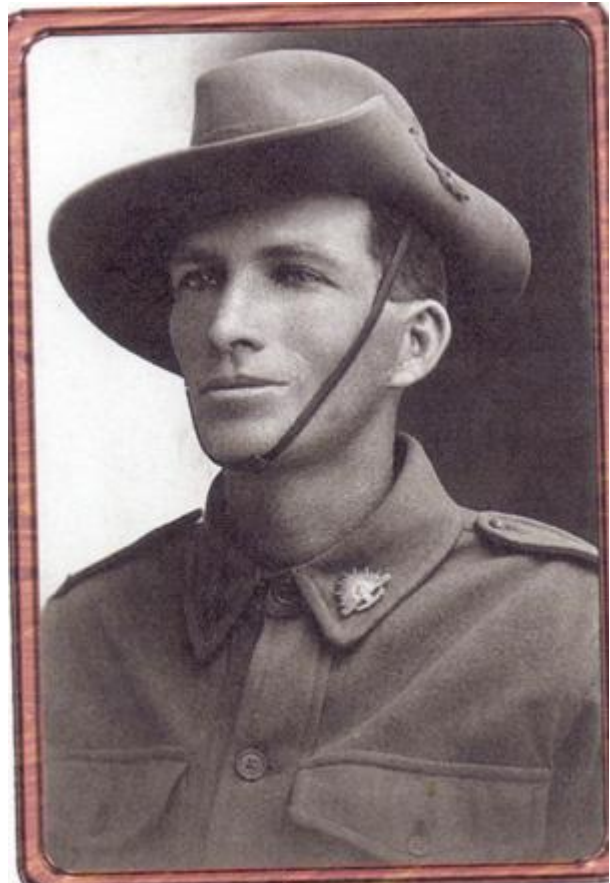
John (Jack) Hunter was born in Jimboomba, Queensland. At the time of his enlistment he was working as a timber getter at Nanango, near Gympie.

He enlisted at Brisbane on 25 October 1916 at the age of 27. He was described as having a dark complexion, grey eyes and brown hair. He was 166cm tall.

After initial training he departed from Sydney in the transport Ayrshire on 24 January 1917 and disembarked at Plymouth on 12 April. He joined the 13th Training Battalion at Codford, where he was trained in the latest fighting methods. He arrived in France on 6 August and undertook hardening training at Etaples. He and his brother Jim joined the 49th Battalion on 25 August.

On 26 September the battalion was in action at the Battle of Polygon Wood. In the course of the battle Private Hunter was killed. According to family accounts, he died in the arms of his brother Jim.

(source Dept of Defence)



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32587

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.



Q 15458

ALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.**3504 Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.**No. 327Name { Surname HUNTERin full { Christian Name JOHN.

Unit

9th REINFORCEMENT,
49th BATTALION9th Bat 49th BattnJoined on 25th. October, 1916.**Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.**

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1. What is your Name? | ... | 1. <u>JOHN HUNTER.</u> |
| 2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born? | ... | 2. In the Parish of ... in or
near the Town of <u>JIMBOOMBA</u>
in the County of <u>QUEENSLAND.</u> |
| 3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.) | ... | 3. <u>BRITISH BORN.</u> |
| 4. What is your Age? | ... | 4. <u>27 yrs. 2 mths..</u> |
| 5. What is your Trade or Calling? | ... | 5. <u>Timber getter.</u> |
| 6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period? | ... | 6. <u>No.</u> |
| 7. Are you married? | ... | 7. <u>No.</u> |
| 8. Who is your next of kin? (Address and relationship to be stated) | ... | 8. <u>(FATHER) MR. JAMES HUNTER</u> <u>Box 54.</u>
<u>NAWANGO</u> <u>QUEENSLAND.</u> |
| The answer to this question shall not be construed as in the nature of a will. | | |
| 9. What is your permanent address in Australia? | ... | 9. <u>NAWANGO VIA GEMPIE QUEENSLAND.</u> |
| 10. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge | ... | 10. <u>No.</u> |
| 11. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? | ... | 11. <u>Yes.</u> |
| 12. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? | ... | 12. <u>No.</u> |
| 13. (For married men, widowers with children, and soldiers who are the sole support of widowed mother)—
Do you understand that no separation allowance will be issued in respect of your service beyond an amount which together with pay would reach eight shillings per day? | ... | 13. <u>--</u> |
| 14. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small pox and enteric fever? | ... | 14. <u>Yes.</u> |

JOHN HUNTER. do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

And I further agree to allot not less than two fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife*†

Date 25th. October, 1916.John Hunter

Signature of person enlisted.

CERTIFICATE OF ATTESTING OFFICER

Army Form B. 103.

Regimental Number... 3504..

Casualty Form - Active Service.

Pte. Regiment or Corps... 49th Battalion A.I.F.
 Rank... 1st Lieut. Surname... H. METER Christian Name... John.
 Religion... Age on Enlistment... years... months
 Enlisted (a) 26.10.16. Terms of Service (a) Service reckons from (a)
 Date of promotion to present rank... Date of appointment to lance rank...
 Extended () Re-engaged () Qualification (b) or Corps Trade and rate...
 Occupation... Signature of Officer.

Report		Place of Casualty	Date of Casualty	Remarks
Date	From whom received			
		Embarked ...		
		Disembarked ..		
	O.C. Troop A33 Avonshire	Embarked	Sydney	24.1.17 LM1579
		Disembarked	Devonport	13.4.17. 13.4.17.
29.4.17	13th Eng. Bn	Marched in from Australia	Gedford	13.4.17 Do337 LB2433.
30.6.17.	do	Appointed A/LCpl	do	27.6.17 Do474 LM4965
5.8.17.	do	Pte. Proceeded overseas France	do	6.8.17. Do544 LB6526
11.8.17	CO 4th ADSD	Marched in ex England	Hayro	6.8.17. D69/32.
23.8.17	do	Marched out to 49th Bn	do	25.8.17. Do59/2.
1.9.17.	CO 49th Bn B213	Taken on Strength	Field	25.8.17. D20/35 Do38/5131
6.10.17.	do	KILLED IN ACTION	BELGIUM	26.9.17 D20/40 Do43/5553 VL 489 4.10.17.

In the case of a man who has been reported as missing, the particulars of such report should be entered in the column headed "Missing".
 (a) In the case of a man who has been reported as missing, the particulars of such report should be entered in the column headed "Missing".
 (b) In the case of a man who has been reported as missing, the particulars of such report should be entered in the column headed "Missing".

above-named soldier.

(Signature)

Unit.

APPROVED.



LIEUTENANT.
 Adjutant No. 11 Depot Battalion and Fraser's Hill Camp.



JOHN HUNTER

Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form BL13, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.

CERTIFICATE OF COMMANDING OFFICER.

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9th REINFORCEMENT.
Commanding 49th BATTALION

Description of **JOHN HUNTER** on Enlistment.

FIELD SERVICE.

Army Form B. 2090A.

REPORT of Death of a Soldier to be forwarded to the War Office with the least possible delay after receipt of notification of death on Army Form B. 213 or Army Form A. 36, or from other official documentary sources.

REGIMENT OR CORPS **49th Battalion A.I.F.** Squadron, Troop, Battery or Company }
 Regimental No. **3504** Rank **Private**
 Surname **HUNTER** Christian Name **John**
 Died { Date **26th September 1917.** Place **BELGIUM**
 Cause of Death **KILLED IN ACTION**
 Nature and Date of Report **Field Return (A.F.B.213) dated 6th October 1917.**
 By whom made **Commanding Officer 49th Battalion A.I.F., B.E.F.**
 * Specially state if killed in action, or died from wounds received in action, or from illness due to field operations or to fatigue, privation or exposure while on military duty, or from injury while on military duty.
 Particulars not yet to hand
 Burial { Place _____ Date _____
 By whom reported _____
 State whether he leaves { (a) in Pay Book (Army Book 64) _____ (b) in Small Book (if at Base) _____
 a Will or not { (c) as a separate document. **Will not received.**

All private documents and effects received from the front or hospital, as well as the Pay Book, should be examined, and if any will is found it should be at once forwarded to the War Office.
 Any information received as to verbal expressions by a deceased soldier of his wishes as to the disposal of his estate should be reported to the War Office as soon as possible.

A duplicate of this Report is to be sent to the Fixed Centre Paymaster at Home, or to the D.F.A.G., Indian Expeditionary Force, or Field Disbursing Officer, as the case may require, together with the Deceased's Pay Book (after withdrawal of any will from the latter). If the deceased's Small Book is at the Base, it should be forwarded to the War Office with this Report.

Station and Date **Anzac Section** Signature of Officer in charge of Section **R. W. Murphy** Capt..
3rd Echelon G.H.Q., B.E.F. Adjutant-General's Office at the Base **Officer i/c Records.**
 22.10.17

Place

BRISBANE

Signature of Examining Medical Officer.

CERTIFICATE OF COMMANDING OFFICER.

I CERTIFY that this Attestation of the above-named person is correct, and that the required forms have been complied with. I accordingly approve, and appoint him

to **49th BATTALION.**

Date

15 DEC 1918

Place

Rifle Range

Commanding

9th REINFORCEMENT, 49th BATTALION.

Army Form B. 103.

CASUALTY FORM—ACTIVE SERVICE.

32587

Regimental No. 3504 Regiment or Corps 49th Battalion 9th Div Rank Private Name HUNTER Jim

Enlisted (a) 25.10.16 Terms of Service (a) 6/12/17 Service reckons from (a) _____

Date of Promotion to present rank _____ Date of appointment to lance rank _____ Numerical position on roll of N.C.O.'s _____

Extended _____ Re-engaged _____ Qualification (b) _____

D. 202/6.16.—C. 7516.—50M.

Report.		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, &c., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place.	Date.	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents.
Date.	From whom Received.				
	O.C	Embarked	Sydney	24-1-17	
	Corps	. A33. Ayrshire..			L.R. 1579
		Disembarked	Devonport	12-4-17	13-4-17
29. 1. 17.	13th Y. Bn	Pte. M/2m from Australia	Bedford	13.4.17	DR 33 E. SR 2483. 30/5/17
30. 6. 17.	" "	Pte. App. A/2/Bpl.	Bedford	27.6.17.	DR 4985. DR 147E. 12.7.17.
5. 8. 17.	13th Y. Bn	PROCEEDED OVERSEAS FRANCE via 13th Eng. Bn. via Folkestone.	Bedford	6.8.17.	DR 54E. DR 6342. 11.8.17.
11/8/17	4th A.D.B.D.	Marched in	Home	B. 213	DR 19/32. 24.
23/9/17	4th A.D.B.D.	Pro: to Join Unit.		23/9/17	DR 75/2.
1/9/17	C.O. Bn. 49.	Taken on Strength	in the Field	25/9/17	DR 22/35. DR 38/355.
8/10/17	O. Bn.	Killed in action	In The Field	B. 21	DR 30/40. DR 43/555.

(a) In the case of a unit which has been disbanded or otherwise, the particulars of such re-engagement or enlistment will be entered.
(b) e.g., Signaller, Shoeing Smith, &c., &c. also special qualifications in technical Corps duties.

Headquarters, London, With A.F.B. 2699 a on 26/10/17

V.L. 489 4.10.17

Lost for 90 years

(source DVA)

Jack and Jim Hunter sat down under a tree to water their horses and have a quick bite to eat before continuing their journey. They still had six hours of riding ahead of them before they would see their old homestead again.

Back in 1914 when the call to war rang out across Australia, thousands of eager young men joined the queues outside recruitment offices in high spirits, ready to sign up for the big adventure. Like many others, the brothers had been keen to go, but their excited talk of overseas travel was soon cut short by their father, Harry. He had argued that they were needed more at home than they were for the war. Being a pioneering family in outback Queensland, near the small town of Nanango, meant that all the family were needed to help on the property. Their father's timber business was just starting to thrive, but his health wasn't the best. Still grieving the loss of his wife, Emily, which had left him to raise the seven children, he relied on his boys to help him, particularly his eldest son Jack, who was his right hand man. Jack managed the timber interests, the cattle, bullock and horse teams, a mill, and the steam traction engines and winch.

Everyone was saying that the war was likely to be over by Christmas, and it seemed a waste of time to go through all that effort just to come home again in a few months, so the boys had obeyed their father's wishes.

But the war didn't finish at Christmas, and throughout the next year the brothers followed with great interest the story of the Anzacs fighting on Gallipoli. They felt torn between

wanting to do their bit to help their country, and doing what was needed for their family. When the Australians withdrew from Gallipoli and started fighting in France, along the **Western Front**, the number of casualties rose sharply. Jim felt that he could no longer stay at home, and so on 20 October 1916 he signed up. He was 25 and did not need his father's permission to join the army. Jack didn't want his younger brother to go to war without him, so he signed up two days later.

They finished their initial training and went on their final leave with only six days off before they needed to report back to their commanding officer. The trip home had already taken 15 hours by train, and they were only half-way through the 12 hour ride that followed. There really wasn't going to be much time for their plans to muster and sell cattle, transfer property, and see friends and relatives. It was December and starting to heat up, so despite enjoying their rest in the shade, they needed to get going, as home was still a long way off.

It was wonderful to see their family again. Sisters Polly, Daisy, and May, and younger brothers Archie and Bill all crowded around, vying with each other for their big brothers' attention. While there was a sense of celebration, it was overshadowed by the unexpressed fear, that they may never come home again. They had all seen the long lists in the paper, the names of those who would never return and the messages of sorrow and grief from their families left behind.

Jack took time to make a private farewell to the girl he had promised to marry. Now he needed to make a new promise – that he would keep himself safe so he could [come back](#) to her. But he also made a promise to his little brother Jim that he would look out for him. They would go on this adventure together and he would keep Jim safe

The town sent them off in style with a presentation evening and public farewell for both the Hunter brothers, and for two other local boys, Phil Therkeisen and Dan Buckley, who were also at home on their final leave. What none of these four realised that night was that one of them would never return.

During their training, Jack and Jim were inseparable. Jim was promoted to lance corporal, but when he discovered he would be separated from his brother, he happily returned to the rank of private to stay with Jack. In late January 1917, they embarked on the troopship HMAT Ayrshire for the long journey to the other side of the world. By the time the brothers arrived to take their place fighting on the Western Front, almost a year had passed since they first signed up. They joined the 49th Battalion, made up mostly of Queenslanders, stationed in Belgium, in an area that came to be known as Flanders fields.

What Jack and Jim saw around them was truly horrific. The landscape had been blown apart and the constant rain had turned the area into a **quagmire**. Miles of wooden **duckboards** were laid over the mud, but they could see how difficult it was to move the troops across these boards, and they wondered how they could ever move supplies through the mud. They were told that the **artillery** was having trouble maintaining its accuracy as every time the guns fired they would sink a little bit further into the thick mud.

In late September 1917, shortly after settling in to the routine of their new lives, Jack and Jim received word that they would be moving up to the frontline, ready to fight in their first battle. The area they had to capture from the Germans was called Polygon Wood and hidden amongst the trees were reinforced concrete bunkers known as pillboxes. The Australians

moved into their positions under cover of darkness at 1.30am; the attack would start before dawn.

In the early morning light, Jack was ordered out into **no man's land** to retrieve a piece of metal that was reflecting light into the eyes of the troops further along the trench. While he was out, he was hit by **shrapnel**. Badly wounded, he managed to crawl back to the trench where Jim was waiting for him. However, unable to get the medical assistance his injuries required, Jack died in his brother's arms soon afterwards. The battle, and Jack's life, was over before breakfast.

Devastated, Jim wrapped him carefully in his groundsheet, tied it up with wire, and buried him in a temporary cemetery near the little township of Westhoek, along with four others who had been killed that day. Jim's battalion was relieved the next day and moved out, so he had to leave his brother behind.

The war continued and, despite being wounded and gassed, Jim fought on without Jack. But his brother's death was a heavy burden on him. As soon as the fighting stopped, Jim returned to Westhoek, and tried to find Jack's grave. His dearest wish was that he could bring his big brother home again. As he looked out over the battlefield where they had been two years earlier, the weed strewn landscape bore little resemblance to the muddy battlefield he remembered. He was unaware that a road had been built over the place where he had buried Jack; he may even have walked right over his grave without realising.

Jim returned home to Australia; his grieving father thought Jim should go back and continue to try to find Jack's grave, but he was never able to do so. Eventually Jim had the life his brother never did, marrying the matron of the Nanango hospital, Esme Butler, and having a family of six children. But he never forgot his brother, often talking about him and the friendship they shared. In the last moments of his life, Jim called out for his brother Jack.

In 1927, ten years after Jack's death, the **Menin Gate** Memorial was built in Belgium. The inscription on it reads:

Here are recorded names of officers and men who fell in Ypres Salient, but to whom the fortune of war denied the known and honoured burial given to their comrades in death.

Jack's name was one of more than 50,000 that went on the Memorial, over 6,000 of them belonging to Australians.

In June 2006, the remains of five First World War soldiers were found when a road was dug up to lay a new gas pipeline in Belgium. The remnants of their uniforms identified them as Australian, so some Australian archaeologists were contacted to excavate the remains. Upon examination of the five bodies, one stood out from the others. He had been placed carefully in the grave, his hands crossed over his heart, and his body methodically wrapped up in a groundsheet. They knew when they saw this, that he had been buried by someone who loved him.

There were no personal effects found that could help identify the five soldiers, but painstaking research from the Army History Unit narrowed down the possibilities to seven individuals. These seven names were published around Australia in the hope of finding living relatives who could supply samples of DNA to identify the five sets of remains. Mollie Millis saw the names and wondered whether the 'John Hunter' that was listed was her Uncle Jack,

as he would have enlisted under his proper name John, rather than his nickname. Her DNA correctly identified Jack's remains, and the Hunter family finally felt they had an end to this wartime story. Jim's son, Harry, had hoped that they could at last follow his grandfather's wishes and bring Jack home, but he was to stay forever in the country where he had fought and died.

On **Remembrance Day** 2007, 90 years after Jack Hunter was killed, he was **reinterred** at Buttes New British Cemetery in Polygon Wood. Sprigs of wattle and a slouch hat were laid on the coffin. Mollie Millis and one of Jack's nephews, another Jim Hunter were there for the ceremony. On his tomb stone are engraved the words 'At rest after being lost for 90 years'. No longer did the Menin Gate Memorial need to bear his name. His 'known and honoured burial' was now complete.

THEY were lost for 90 years, killed in the slush of the Passchendaele battles of 1917, and forgotten. Now DNA technology has identified the remains of two Australian World War One diggers unearthed last year in the Belgian hamlet of Westhoek, east of Ypres. Sergeant George Calder, of northern Victoria, and Private John Hunter, of Queensland, will be overlooked no more.

Belgium's National Institute for Criminalistics and Criminology has matched the remains with DNA taken from living descendants of the two men. They will be buried with full military honours at Belgium's Buttes Cemetery on October 4.

Private Hunter's niece, Mollie Millis, who provided a saliva swab for the DNA tests, was stunned by the news yesterday. Her uncle, who served in the same unit as a younger brother, Jim, died in the Battle of Polygon Wood. "It puts a finish to the story," she said. "It knocked the wind out of my sails a little bit when one of the family rang me to say they had found Uncle Jack's bones."

The remains of six Anzac bodies were unusually well preserved when uncovered by Belgian gas workers 13 months ago. Buried in blankets tied up with signal wire, dirt-smudged rising sun badges pinned to the uniforms, it appears the soldiers were hastily buried for later reinterment but were missed when ad hoc burial grounds were "consolidated" into larger cemeteries after 1918.

The find prompted the Australian Army History Unit to trawl burial registers and plot war battlefield map co-ordinates to come up with seven possible names, including those of Private Hunter and Sergeant Calder.

Using mitochondrial DNA matching, which can be traced through female family lines, the unit invited descendants to provide samples for comparison with DNA extracted from the femur bones of the remains.

Unit head Roger Lee was not confident of getting a single DNA match. Dye tests on shoulder patches had not determined the men's battalions. Pathology reports offered few clues regarding the men's age, height, dental records and manner of death. An absence of personal effects at the grave site made identification highly unlikely.

"We were relying on old-fashioned research and it's really nice when you get this sort of empirical proof," Mr Lee said. "We took a bit of a punt when we put those names out there. 'Relieved' is the word."

Both men were killed in the Battle of Polygon Wood, an attack against entrenched German positions that began on September 26, 1917.

Patrick Carlyon
September 5, 2007

Five diggers laid to rest today

Thursday 4 October 2007 by Craig Tibbitts.

The remains of five AIF soldiers will be laid to rest today with full military honours in the Buttes New British Cemetery at Polygon Wood, Belgium. The remains were discovered by chance in September 2006 during roadwork and pipe-laying excavations near the small village of Westhoek. This is situated in the middle of the dreaded Ypres-Passchendaele Salient where up to half a million casualties on both sides fell, of which tens of thousands were either never recovered or were unidentifiable.

The Australian Army through its History Unit headed the investigation into the identity of the five men, with the assistance of the Memorial Museum Passchendaele, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and the Office of Australian War Graves. The Australian War Memorial also provided some assistance early in the piece, particularly with archival maps and documents.

Subsequent DNA testing proved [successful](#) in identifying two of the five men (see news articles below).

May they all now rest in peace.

Australian diggers honourably laid to rest

Europe Correspondent Jane Hutcheon



Photo: The grave of an Australian soldier during the re-burial ceremony in Zonnebeke

Five Australian World War I soldiers have been re-buried with full military honours in a Commonwealth war cemetery in Belgium.

The men's remains were discovered in September last year during digging for a new [gas](#) pipeline.

DNA testing and historical research recently confirmed two identities as Private Jack Hunter from Queensland and Sergeant George Calder from Victoria.

It is believed they were killed in the battle of Polygon Wood, 90 years ago last month, which was part of the treacherous three-month long Passchendaele campaign.

In a moving service at the Buttes New British cemetery in Zonnebeke, West Flanders, the five caskets were interred with full military honours.

[Australia's](#) Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery, praised the diggers, saying they had been fighting to preserve a way of life based on the Australian adage of a fair-go for all.

He says the forensic work done to identify two of the five men needs to be commended.

"Some remarkable historical detective work in Belgium and Australia have helped end 90 years of uncertainty for two Australian families," he said.

"Sergeant George Calder and Private John Hunter can now be laid to rest under their own names."

First posted Fri Oct 5, 2007 6:28am AEST