

ANDREW CALDWELL WILSON was the son of Catherine Ann MCALLISTER & James Brown WILSON and born in 1894 in Broken Hill NSW.

His mother; Catherine, was the daughter of Charles Francis MCALLISTER & Elizabeth Ann ELY and was born on the 19th of July 1870, Church Place, Pt Adelaide SA.

His father; James was the son of Andrew Hunter WILSON and Isabella was born in 1866.

His parents were married on the 25th of December 1893 in the Congregational Church, Pt Adelaide SA.

His parents moved to Broken Hill, NSW for a few years and this is where Andrew was born.

The family had returned to Adelaide by 1897 and lived at 26 Franklin Terrace, West Croyden.

His sister, Kathleen May WILSON was born at 26 Franklin Terrace, West Croyden on the 4th of February 1897.

Andrew joined the 76th Battalion Senior Cadets in 1911 and later was transferred to the 77th Battalion Citizen Military Forces.

Andrew was still serving when he enlisted into the 6th Field Artillery Brigade, 1st Reinforcements on the 21st of September 1915 in Mitcham and allotted the service number 9514.

He listed his mother; Catherine Anne WILSON, of Franklin Terrace, West Croyden, as his next of kin.

Andrew was a civil servant.

The 18th Battery was a part of the 6th Field Artillery Brigade and Captain E.T Dean of the 35th Battery took command of the 18th Battery at Glen Osmond as its O.C.

On the 15th of October, this was a public holiday, actually Labour Day, but celebrated as the first Anzac Day the 18th was involved with a military procession including Red Cross Volunteers, with ambulance, etc.

On Monday the 18th of October, following four days leaves, the whole unit – 7 officers, 141 others – left Glen Osmond via Mitcham railway station, to travel by train to Essendon North, at “Marr-Lodge” Camp, Victoria, to join the 6th Brigade. This was an artillery camp only of three brigades for the 2nd Division. The 6th Brigade consisting of the 16th,

17th, 18th Batteries under the command of Lt. Col. H.E. Cohen, appointed to command on the 28th of August, 1915.

The next month was to see the unit busy training and being equipped ready to go overseas. On the 10th of November the Brigade was on parade through the streets of Melbourne but only at walking pace; the Governor of Victoria taking the salute on the steps of Parliament House.

Andrew embarked from Melbourne, on board the HMAT A34 Persic on the 22nd of November 1915.

He arrived at Pt Suez on the 18th of December 1915, but did not disembark until the 21st.

His Battery entrained for Zetour "Aerodrome Camp", near Heliopolis, some miles from Cairo. A detail of drivers was sent to the railway siding to help unload the horses on arrival. Timed for early evening, drivers were in shorts and shirts, no train arrived. As the night wore on, it became bitterly cold. Asking the British Tommies working for the "R.T.O." if there was anything available to build a fire, the answer was "dung" if you can find any, this being a common fuel supply in Egypt. Soon a fire was going with straw, dung and the sides of a railway truck, enjoyed by R.T.O Tommies as well. The train arrived at 6 a.m., about 12 hours late.

On the 26th of December the Battery marched, drivers leading the horses, through to Cairo and on to Maadi: Turo camp, a distance of 16 miles. On the 13th of January 1916 they moved to Tel-El-Kebir, on the edge of the desert and the Nile delta, the battlefield of 1882 of Lord Wolseley against Arai Pasha, leader of the Egyptian revolt. Old trenches and breastworks were still there, also old coins and rifle ammunition still to be found in the sand.

The sand was of a hard surface and lots of training, mounted, was done. Being on the fresh water canal dug direct from the Nile to Ismailia for the building of the Suez Canal it was a good site for artillery. Whilst here they were inspected in the parade of 40,000 Australians by General Murray who did not like their type of discipline, but later learned to appreciate their fighting qualities.

On the 8th of February 1916 they moved to Ferry Post, on east side of the Canal – an entirely new area, never been used as a camping site. They crossed the canal by Engineer's pontoon bridge, construction just completed. They were now on the Sinai Peninsula and detachments took up positions 7 miles east of the Canal, dug gun-pits and sandbagged trenches, an almost hopeless task in the moving sand. Everything in the way of supplies, also rations, and water, was transported by camel. This period was not without incident as it was easy to lose one's way, especially if the "Kamsin" was blowing – "lifting

the top off the desert". The horses would not face this. The guns were taken out to these gun pits, and on the 6th of March the first firing took place.

On the 8th of March the N.Z. Artillery took over the guns in the pits, also all equipment other than horses and harness. The Battery then moved back to a camp at Moascar, when it became known to all that the 2nd Division was moving to France.

The Battery embarked from Alexandria aboard the "HMTS Arcadia" on the 17th of March 1916, arriving in Marseilles, France, 6 days later. Horses, baggage and troops were soon aboard a train for the 58 hour trip to Sanvic Camp, Le Havre.

On the 31st of March the Battery entrained for Lynde near Hazebrouck. The same day an advance party left for Armentieres by bus (ex London) to be attached to a British 79th R.F.A. battery actually with their guns in action behind the convent walls on the edge of the town, whilst their wagon lines were across the River Lys into Belgium. The Battery wagon lines were set up at Erquinghem and the gun positions three and a half miles away near Bois-Grenier.

On the 10th of April the actual taking over took place. The right Section's two guns were in an old farm house where part of the walls had been removed and through which the guns fired. When they were not in action a hessian curtain coloured to look like a brick wall in position was draped over the guns. The position was right alongside the support line trenches, these guns never fired direct to the front, as they would have quickly been detected and blown out. Their favorite target was enfilading the communication trench to the north in part of the Armentieres salient. The detachments lived in the farm buildings. Great care had to be observed in day time that nothing was spotted by enemy planes, and for that reason, an observer was kept on duty on the village road just in front of the buildings. The left section's two guns were in a position in a farm a little to the north-west of Charlie's Farm. It comprised a large group of buildings; the guns being better placed for directing fire on the front line and beyond than the right section were.

The Battalion stayed on the front line until the 2nd of July 1916.

They marched out from the front line and entrained at St. Omer & Belloy-Sur-Somme and then marched to Puchevillers. On the 27th of July at 10 p.m. they took up a position in Sausage Gully firing on O.G. 1 & 2 (old German lines).

The Battery moved back to St. Leger for nine days to refit and clean up. The 18th of August saw the Battery via the Albert brickfields area, back

in action in Mash Valley on the opposite side of the Pozieres road to Sausage Valley. This was in support of the capture of Mouquet Farm, a famous name now, and was a very strong German position of cellars, tunnels and very deep concrete dug-outs. They were in action there for eighteen days.

The 18th Battery moved via the brickfields to Autheville and entrained to the north to Godewaersvelde and from there marched to Poperinghe, then forward to Menin Gate.

Andrew was appointed Acting Bombardier on the 26th of January 1917. The 18th saw all action on the front line.

Whilst the Battery held position at Thillooy, Andrew suffered a bout of Measles in February 1917 and spent nearly 1 month in the Casualty Clearing Station, rejoining his Brigade on the 12th of March 1917 and promoted to Temporary Bombardier on the 15th of June 1917. On the 4th of August 1917 he was promoted to Bombardier in the field in Ypres.

The Battery went on to fight in Zillebeke, Keiberg. (Courtesy the 18th Battery Booklet).

On the 8th of January, 1918, the Battery put the red dot on the colour patch to denote 6th Brigade.

Rosieres railway station was a good target for the German artillery. It was there on Sunday the 18th of August the Battery celebrated their thousandth day since leaving Australia.

On the 2nd of August 1918, whilst on leave, he was transferred on special duty detail to AIF Headquarters in London, where he remained.

On the 17th of January 1919, Andrew was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal.

The medal was awarded for "continuous devotion to duty and courage under all circumstances during the period 16th /17th September, 1918, to 11th November, 1918.

Andrew (N.C.O.) had acted as Records Clerk on Brigade Headquarters, during which period he was never absent from his B.H.Q. when in the line. He had at all times been most conscientious and keen in the performance of his duties, very often under most trying and difficult circumstances. By his untiring energy and devotion to duty the records of the Brigade have been most creditably and efficiently kept. By his loyalty, unselfishness and painstaking work, Andrew has immeasurably

contributed to the smooth-running of the administrative work of the Brigade Headquarters”

Andrew returned to Australia on the 19th of April 1919 aboard the “Sardinia”.

His medal arrived after he had returned.

Andrew was discharged on the 19th of June 1919.

He married Nellie Kathleen SKINNER on the 2nd of August 1922 in the Congregational Church, Henley Beach, SA. They did not have a reception after the ceremony. Nellie was the daughter of Walter Bruce SKINNER & Alice Mary VANDEPEER and was born on the 9th of August 1894 in Kent Town, SA.

They moved to 34 Stanley Street, Woodville Park and Andrew was a civil servant Woodville.

They lived in this home their entire lives.

Their daughter; Joan, was born on the 3rd of June 1928 in Woodville. Andrew was a member of the Woodville RSL Sub Branch.

In 1949, Andrew was secretary of the South Australian Harbours Board.

Nellie died on the 29th of March 1951 in a Private Hospital, Adelaide, SA and is buried in the Cheltenham Cemetery; Section P, Drive C, Path 42, Site number 12BN.

In 1959, Andrew was assistant general manager of the South Australian Harbours Board.

Andrew died on the 23rd of December 1960 in Adelaide, SA and is buried in the Cheltenham Cemetery; Section P, Drive C, Path 42, Site number 12BN.

*Natalie Lemar (nee McAllister)
RSL Macclesfield Sub Branch
1 January 2022*