



ALBERT BUDD CARTER



1877 – 1918



57th Bn, 1st AIF

Preface

In 2014, LTCOL Glyn Llanwarne of the Australian Army and founder of *Lost Medals Australia* contacted me concerning a set of World War I medals which had been found and passed to him. After extensive research by his team, he established I was the next of kin of the medal recipient, Albert Budd Carter.

Until this time I had no knowledge of Albert my Great Uncle, let alone of his war service and death in action on the Western Front in World War I. Albert's medals were repatriated to me later in 2014 and so began my interest in him and in his army service.

In 2017 as Ambassador to AWAMO, I was privileged to be involved in the dedication of the first overseas Australian memorial to animals at war at Pozières, France. Albert was buried at Bellicourt Military Cemetery 45 km from Pozières, and during our stay in Pozières Lindy and I spent some time at his grave.

Our period on the Somme had a lasting and profound impression on me. The scale and complexity of the conflict together with the realisation of Albert's supreme sacrifice encouraged me to undertake some further research. This paper is the result of that limited research. My interest is twofold – of Albert's final journey and of the enormity of the task of prosecuting the Great War.

It is not, nor was it intended as any form of family history. It simply chronicles Albert's experiences from the time of his enlistment in the AIF until his death. Through that, it also touches on the conduct of his battles as well as aspects of army administration, for example, casualty management. Contemporaneous images have been included in the paper to help understand his journey.

I was surprised at the scope of records kept by a Battalion in battle during World War I as well as the amount of these records existing one hundred years later as primary source material.

During my journey with Albert, I could grasp only little of the appalling conditions of the troops in the trenches, in battle and as casualties. I could grasp only little of the magnitude and intricacies of the strategies and administration of the conflicts of the Great War. And I could grasp only little of the impact of the war on the lives of the French people, through whose country Albert and the AIF fought. My journey triggered an awakening which left me with an enduring respect for Albert and those like him who served and sacrificed, and for the French people who suffered during the flow of battle and the German occupation.

Finally, I acknowledge with appreciation Glyn Llanwarne for his work through *Lost Medals Australia* which introduced me to Albert; to Nigel Allsopp, President of AWAMO for honouring me as Ambassador which led to Lindy and I travelling to the Somme and Aisne, and to our French friends Chantal and Pierre Murat-Debray for making our pilgrimage to Albert's final resting place a reality.

Albert Budd Carter was born in Sunderland, England in 1877. By 1904, he had arrived in Australia and was working as a stoker on the Australian United Steam Navigation Company's 2,664 ton *SS Pilbarra* plying between Fremantle and Sydney. He married Jane Bishop in 1905 in Sydney and worked for some time for the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company in Queensland.¹

As the First World War progressed, he was employed on war work at the Colonial Ammunition Company's works at Footscray, Victoria, living at nearby Yarraville.² He subsequently enlisted in the AIF (Australian Imperial Force) in Melbourne on 5 April 1917 at 40 years of age.

With regimental number 695, he was posted to the 12th Reinforcements for the 14th Machine Gun Company of the 14th Brigade, 5th Division AIF.³ Following recruit training at Broadmeadows and machine gun training at Seymour, Victoria, he embarked for overseas service at Melbourne on *HMAT A29 Suevic* on 21 June 1917.⁴

Built by Harland and Wolff in Belfast for the White Star Line in 1901, *SS Suevic* was the fifth and last of the "Jubilee Class" ocean liners. At 12,531 tons, her service speed was 13 knots and she could accommodate 400 steerage passengers. From March 1915 until 1919, *Suevic* was requisitioned for military service and sailed as His Majesty's Australian Transport, *HMAT A29 Suevic*.⁵

Suevic departed Melbourne in June 1917 as part of Australian Convoy No. 32 along with four other transports and three Royal Mail Ships from Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Freemantle. She carried 1,521 troops, almost four times her civilian design load, mostly 27th Reinforcements for the 4th Light Horse Regiment, the 1st Pioneer Battalion and Medical Officers as well as Albert Carter's 12th Reinforcements, 14 Machine Gun Company.⁶

Albert disembarked at Liverpool, England two months later on 26 August 1917 proceeding to 14 Training Battalion at Hurdcott for training on Salisbury Plain. He was taken on strength of the 57th Infantry Battalion from 12/14 Machine Gun Company on 12 September 1917.

On 16 December 1917, he transferred to 15 Training Battalion also at Hurdcott. Two days later, he proceeded overseas from Southampton, disembarking at Havre, France on 19 December into the Australian Infantry Base Depot. He left the following day for his unit, marching into the 57th Battalion at Doudeauville near Boulogne on Christmas Day.⁷

The 57th Australian Infantry Battalion was raised in Egypt on 18 February 1916 and trained intensively there before proceeding to France, disembarking at Marseilles in late June 1916. As part of the 15th Brigade, 5th Australian Division AIF, the Battalion's first major battle on the Western Front soon followed – the Battle of Fromelles in July 1916. The Battalion subsequently spent two and a half years in the trenches in France and Belgium. In 1917, it advanced towards the Hindenburg Line and defended gains made in the Second Battle of Bullecourt before mounting a major attack in Ypres at Polygon Wood in September 1917.⁸

The collapse of Russia in October 1917 meant the end of fighting on the Eastern Front and allowed the Germans to transfer large numbers of men and their equipment to the west. A major German offensive on the Western Front was thus anticipated in early 1918. The Germans launched this spring offensive in March 1918 against the Allied lines east of Amiens. In their first major use of tanks in battle, the town of Villers-Bretonneux fell to the Germans on 24 April.⁹

Albert Carter had been with the 57th Battalion on active service for four months with periods in the front line east of Messines, when the Battalion took part in the now legendary counter attack on Villers-Bretonneux on Anzac Day 1918.¹⁰ In a well-planned attack on the night of 24/25 April, the Australian 13th and 15th Brigades were brought forward and with elements of the British 8th and 58th Brigades successfully recaptured Villers-Bretonneux town in a complex enveloping manoeuvre. Crossing the start line at 2200 hours, the 57th Battalion fought to protect the right of the Brigade advancing to the north of the town. During the early hours of the morning, the flanks of the town had been captured and "B" Company sent out large fighting patrols through the town. Australians spent Anzac Day, clearing Germans out of the houses and fighting in the streets. Enemy artillery was still very active including much gas shelling. The town was finally secured on 27 April with the Australian Brigades suffering 2,473 casualties.¹¹

On 26 April during this fighting, Albert Carter was severely wounded with shell and gunshot injuries as well as suffering the effect of gassing from the German mustard gas shelling.¹²

After evacuation from the front line, he was treated at 61 Casualty Clearing Station (known as the South Midland CCS) at Vignacourt near Amiens. He was then transported to Rouen by Ambulance Train No. 38, one of 49 ambulance trains supplied by the British Railway Companies for overseas military service. On 27 April, he was admitted to the 5th General Hospital, a British hospital established on the racetrack at Rouen.¹³

On 30 April, he was transferred to England on the hospital ship *HMHS Grantully Castle*. *Grantully Castle* was built in 1910 for the Union-Castle Mail Steamship Company by Barclay, Curle and Co. at Glasgow. At 7,612 tons, she had a service speed of 13 knots and in January 1915, commenced service as a troopship. After the Gallipoli campaign, she was commissioned in Malta as a hospital ship with 552 beds on 22 June 1915.¹⁴

For the soldiers who had been wounded and shipped back to England, there was a defined process for their recovery and training. As no Australian General Hospitals were established in Britain during the conflict, Australian casualties arriving from France went to British hospitals right across the country.

Once well enough to be moved, they were transferred to one of the Australian Auxiliary Hospitals at Harefield in Middlesex, Dartford in Kent or Southall in West London. Auxiliary hospitals were established by voluntary organisations and were attached to a central military

hospital with patients remaining under military control while they were convalescing. Most servicemen preferred the Auxiliary Hospitals to the military hospitals because they were less strict, less crowded and the surroundings more pleasant.¹⁵

Upon discharge from hospital, if they were deemed fit to return to the front within about three months, they were sent to one of the four Command Depots in Wiltshire and Dorset to continue their recovery. Having already been part of a fighting unit and undergone training, the focus was very much on getting the men fit.

From mid-1917, those fit enough to resume active service were then sent from the Command Depots to the Overseas Training Brigade to prepare them up for life back in the trenches. The AIF Overseas Training Brigade initially at Perham Down was moved to Longbridge Deverill near Sutton Veny in October 1917.¹⁶

Arriving in England on 1 May 1918, Albert was admitted to the Alexandra Hospital at Cosham, near Portsmouth. He underwent further treatment, remaining at Cosham until 23 May when he was transferred to the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford.¹⁷ 3AAH was formerly the Orchard Hospital which was turned over to the military on 9 October 1916 for the duration of the war. During this period, 3AAH with its 1,200 beds admitted an outstanding total of 56,411 patients.¹⁸

After only a short stay at Dartford, Albert was discharged to No 3 Command Depot at Hurdcott on 29 May 1918, medically classified B.1A1. On 6 July, he was transferred to No 1 Command Depot at Sutton Veny, reclassified as B.1A2/3. A month later on 2 August, he marched out to the Overseas Training Brigade at Longbridge Deverill.¹⁹

On 29 August 1918, he was on his way back to his Battalion and the front. He proceeded to France from Folkestone and on 1 September marched into the Australian Infantry Base Depot at Havre. On 6 September, he re-joined the 57th Battalion at Péronne at the end of the Battle of Mont St Quentin, in time to enter the Battalion's last major action in the war, the Battle of St Quentin Canal.²⁰

The Battle of St Quentin Canal was a pivotal battle of World War I with the main assault on 29 September 1918 involving British, Australian and American forces. The Australian forces comprised the 3rd and 5th Divisions with the 2nd Division in reserve. The objective was to break through one of the most heavily defended stretches of the Hindenburg Line which used the St Quentin Canal as part of its defences. The canal ran through a tunnel for 5.6 km north of Bellicourt. Two American Divisions, the 29th and 30th, were to attack over the top of the tunnel, advancing to take the "Green Line", a defensive line extending from Le Catelet (A6) to Nauroy (H14) east of the canal. As part of the 5th Division, the 57th Battalion was to leap frog through the American 30th Division and advance further east of the canal beyond the Estrées (H2b) – Joncourt (H9a) line.²¹

Albert Budd Carter was killed in action on the first day of the battle, 29 September 1918. ²² On that day, the Battalion endured heavy machine gun and shellfire as it advanced across the St Quentin Canal tunnel towards its objective at Wiancourt (H5a), known as the "Red Line".

The day began when the Battalion started moving up from south of Templeux (L8/L9) to the "Start Line" west of Bellicourt and the canal (G2). Difficulties arose with the American 30th Division securing the "Green Line" where the 57th Battalion was to pass through and fight eastwards. As a consequence, it became necessary for the Battalion to fight its way from around north of Bellicourt (G4) to the Le Catelet – Nauroy trenches where it consolidated its position on the night of 29 September. ²³

Albert's "A" Company came under shellfire as they passed Higson Quarries (L10a) about 0715 hours moving up to the Start Line. "A" Company formed the right flank of the first wave. They advanced to their first stage - the canal tunnel at Bellicourt (G3) and at 1230 hours, a patrol was sent out 500 yards to the front but failed to locate either an American line or any allied troops. Then at 1500 hours, the Company advanced to attack the Le Catelet – Nauroy line, supported by a Mark V tank and four Whippet light tanks. Just east of Bellicourt (G4d), they came under a barrage of machine gun fire as well as close range artillery shelling which took very heavy casualties and put most of the tanks out of action. Resuming their attack, "A" Company reached the Le Catelet - Nauroy trenches (G5d) about 1600 hours. Patrols went forward but faced heavy machine gun fire from Cabaret Wood Farm (A29c). The Company remained in the trench that night. ²⁴

Interpretation of the events of 29 September sourced from Battalion records suggests that Albert was mortally wounded within the four kilometres between Bellicourt and the Le Catelet – Nauroy Line, most likely just east of Bellicourt (around G4d).

By 2 October, the attack had resulted in a 17 km breach of the Hindenburg Line and had cost the Australians 2,577 casualties. Despite changing plans and confused fighting, the attack was considered "an astonishing success" in what was an "extraordinary difficult task". ²⁵

Along with some other British and Australian war dead from this battle, Albert's remains were interred near the centre of the fighting in the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission's Bellicourt British Cemetery. ²⁶

Without Albert, the 57th Battalion was withdrawn to rest on 2 October and remained in that state until war's end. The Battalion disbanded in March 1919. ²⁷ It was a particular tragedy of war for those men of the 57th Battalion who perished in the Battle of St Quentin Canal – their Battalion was withdrawn from the line forever only three days later and only weeks later World War I ended.



RIP Great Uncle Albert. Lest we forget all those who did not return.



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- ² *The Footscray Advertiser*, 2 November 1918, p.2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/88797706>.
- ³ National Archives of Australia, B2455, Carter A B, AIF Attestation Papers.
- ⁴ *ibid.*
- ⁵ "His Majesty's Australian Transport [HMAT] Ships", *Desert Column - Australian Military History of the Early 20th Century*, Retrieved 5 January 2018;
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- ⁶ Tregarthen, Greville, n.d., *Sea Transport of the A.I.F.* Melbourne: Naval Transport Board, pp. 152-53;
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- ⁷ National Archives of Australia, B2455, Carter A B, AIF Service and Casualty Form Part II;
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- ⁸ Australian War Memorial, "57th Australian Infantry Battalion", *First World War 1914-1918 Units*, Retrieved 5 January 2018;
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- ⁹ Australian War Memorial, "57th Australian Infantry Battalion", *First World War 1914-1918 Units*, Retrieved 5 January 2018;
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- ¹¹ Australian War Memorial, Australian Imperial Force Unit War Diaries, 1914-18 War, Infantry, 23/74/27, 57th Infantry Battalion, April 1918, Vol.4, Folio 9-14;
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- ¹² National Archives of Australia, B2455, Carter A B, AIF Service and Casualty Form Part II.
- ¹³ "Location of Hospitals and Casualty Clearing Stations in the Great War", *World War 1, The Medical Front*, Retrieved 13 January 2018;
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- ¹⁴ National Archives of Australia, B2455, Carter A B, AIF Casualty Form - Active Service;
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- ¹⁶ "Training Camps: England", *Following the 22nd*, Retrieved 26 December 2017.
- ¹⁷ National Archives of Australia, B2455, Carter A B, Medical History - Table II.
- ¹⁸ "The History of Dartford Hospitals", *Dartford Hospital Histories*, Retrieved 5 January 2018.
- ¹⁹ National Archives of Australia, B2455, Carter A B, AIF Casualty Form - Active Service.

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- ²¹ Battalion Order No.9/101, Australian War Memorial, Australian Imperial Force Unit War Diaries, 1914-18 War, Infantry, 23/74/32 Part 2. 57th Infantry Battalion, September 1918 Appendices, Appendix 27, Folios 80-93;
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- ²⁴ *ibid.*
- ²⁵ Australian War Memorial, "St Quentin Canal", *First World War 1914-1918*, Retrieved 5 January 2018;
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Australian War Memorial, Australian Imperial Force Unit War Diaries, 1914-18 War, Infantry, 23/74/32, Part 2. 57th Infantry Battalion, September 1918 Appendices.

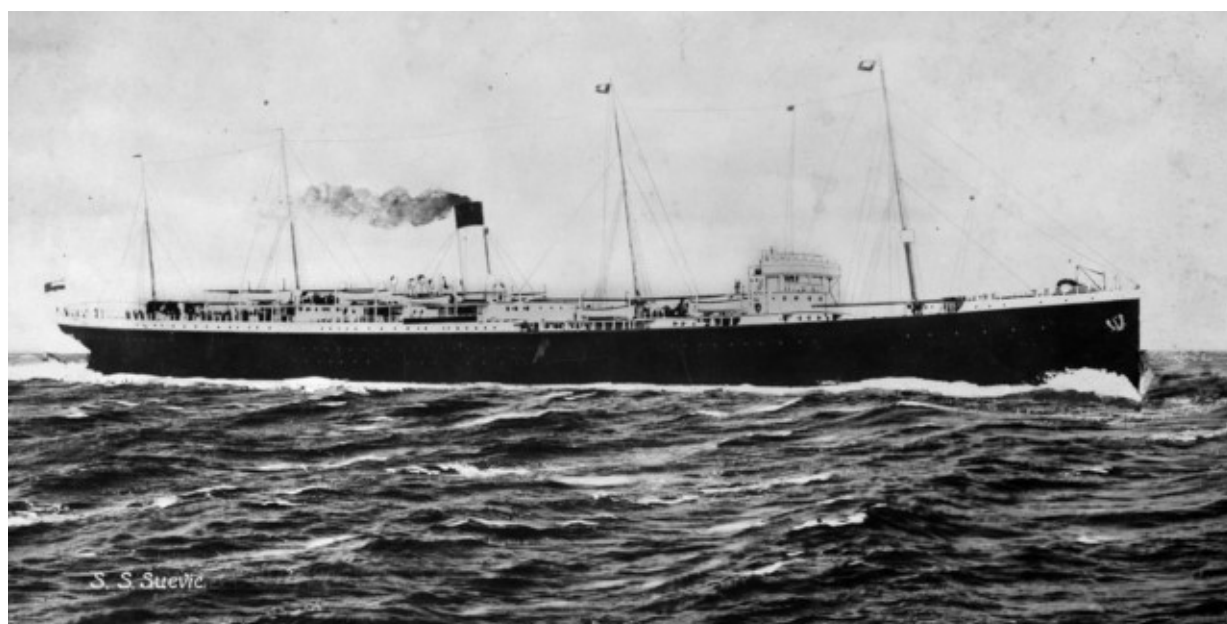
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Map showing Albert's final journey. His sea routes, battle sites, movements, location of hospitals, convalescent and training depots and his final resting place are shown in red.

Base Map - Basil Rathbone: "Map of France during World War I"



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

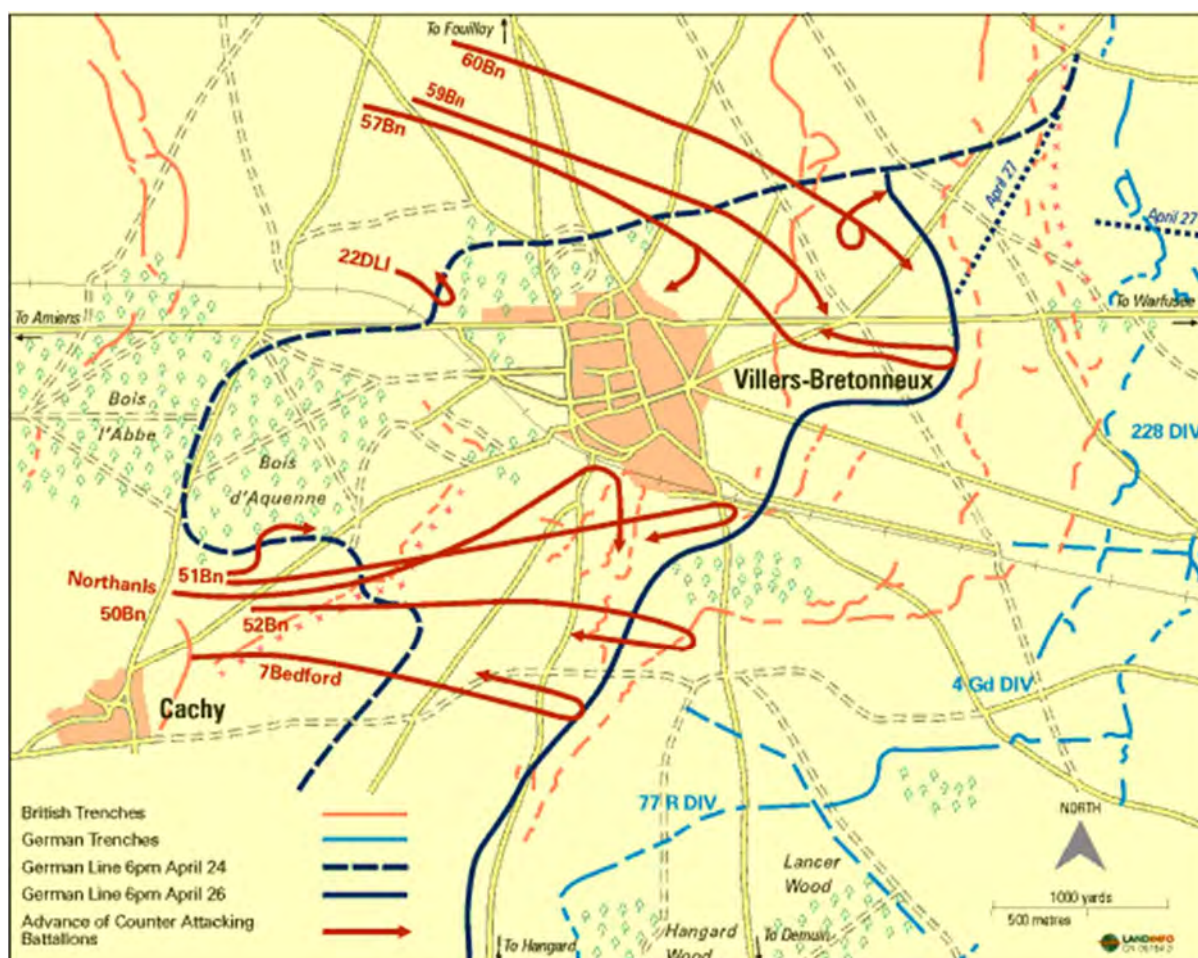
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Albert travelled on *HMAT Suevic* from Melbourne to Liverpool on his way to the Western Front.

Australian War Memorial P04754001

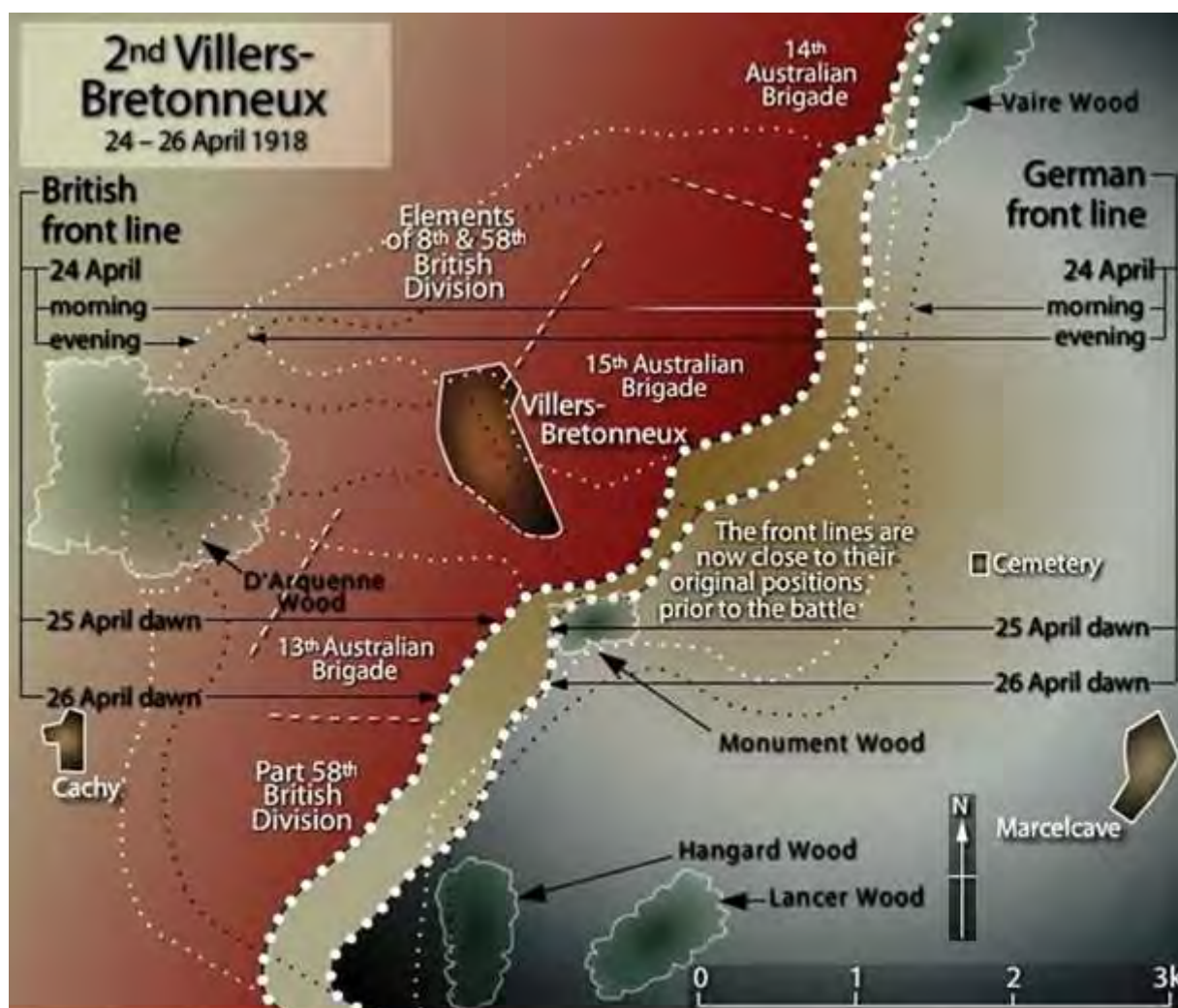


Australians playing "Two Up" at Hurdcott Camp where Albert trained in 1917. The map of Australia overlooking the camp was carved into the chalk hill by Australian troops in 1916. Various forms of this image exist including *Australian War Memorial P11848.002*



A compiled map of the Villers-Bretonneux Anzac Day 1918 counter attack showing the advance of the 57th Battalion north of the town together with the direction of the Battalion's fighting patrols into the town.

Australian War Memorial: "Wartime", No. 2, April 1998



The Second Battle of Villers-Bretonneux (24 and 25 April 1918)

Within 48 hours of the German attack, the Australians (13th and 15 Brigades) with British forces had restored the front line to its former position. The Anzac Portal: Dept of Veterans Affairs, Australia



After heavy fighting, wounded troops arrive from the front at a Casualty Clearing Station.

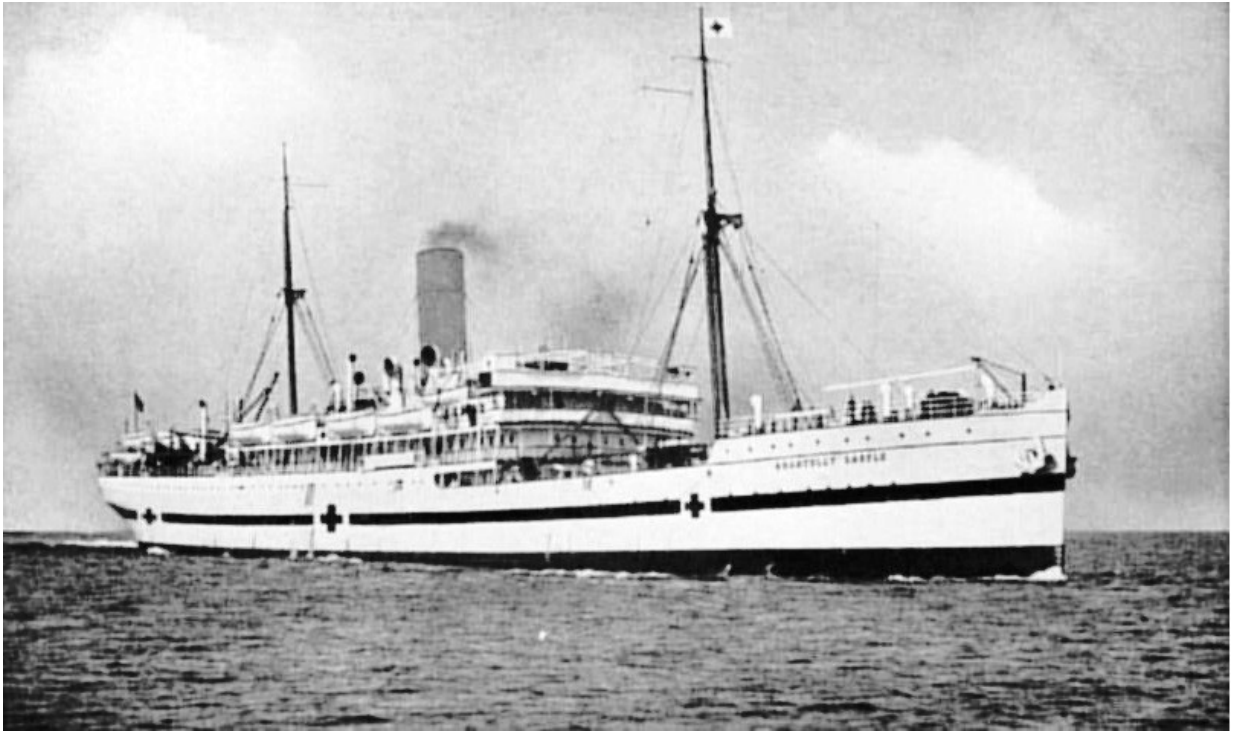
Worcestershirereqiment.com



Unloading casualties from an Ambulance Train for admission to hospital in France.
Northumbrian Gunner



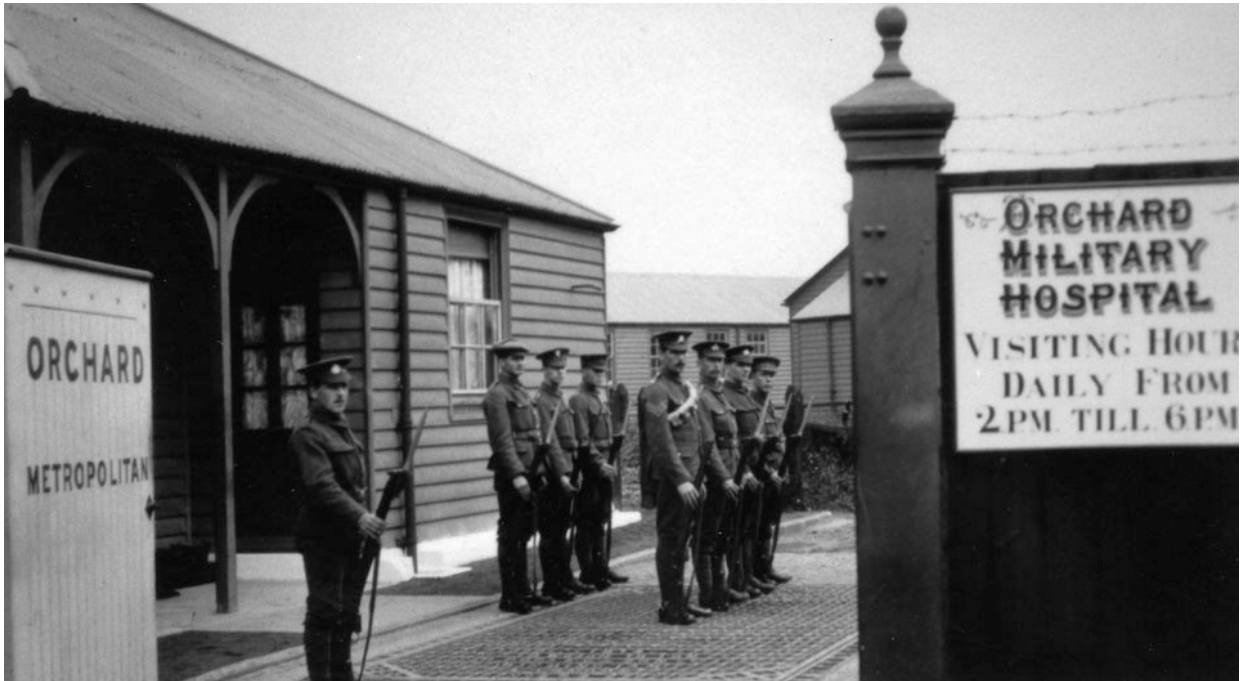
The 5th General Hospital in France where Albert was treated before being transferred to England was located on the racecourse at Rouen.
Welcome Library: RAMC/738 Collection of Lt Col G.J.S. Archer, RAMC



Albert was invalided to England for treatment on *HMHS Grantully Castle*.
Martin Edwards: 2018 Roll of Honour



The Alexandra Hospital at Cosham (Portsmouth) about the time of Albert's admission.
Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps



The guard turned out at the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford (formerly the Orchard Hospital) where Albert convalesced briefly in 1918.

Dartford Hospital Histories



Australian patients and staff at the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford.

Dartford Hospital Histories



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

C00628

After discharge from 3AAH at Dartford, Albert continued his recovery at No.3 Australian Command Depot at Hurdcott.

Australian War Memorial C00628

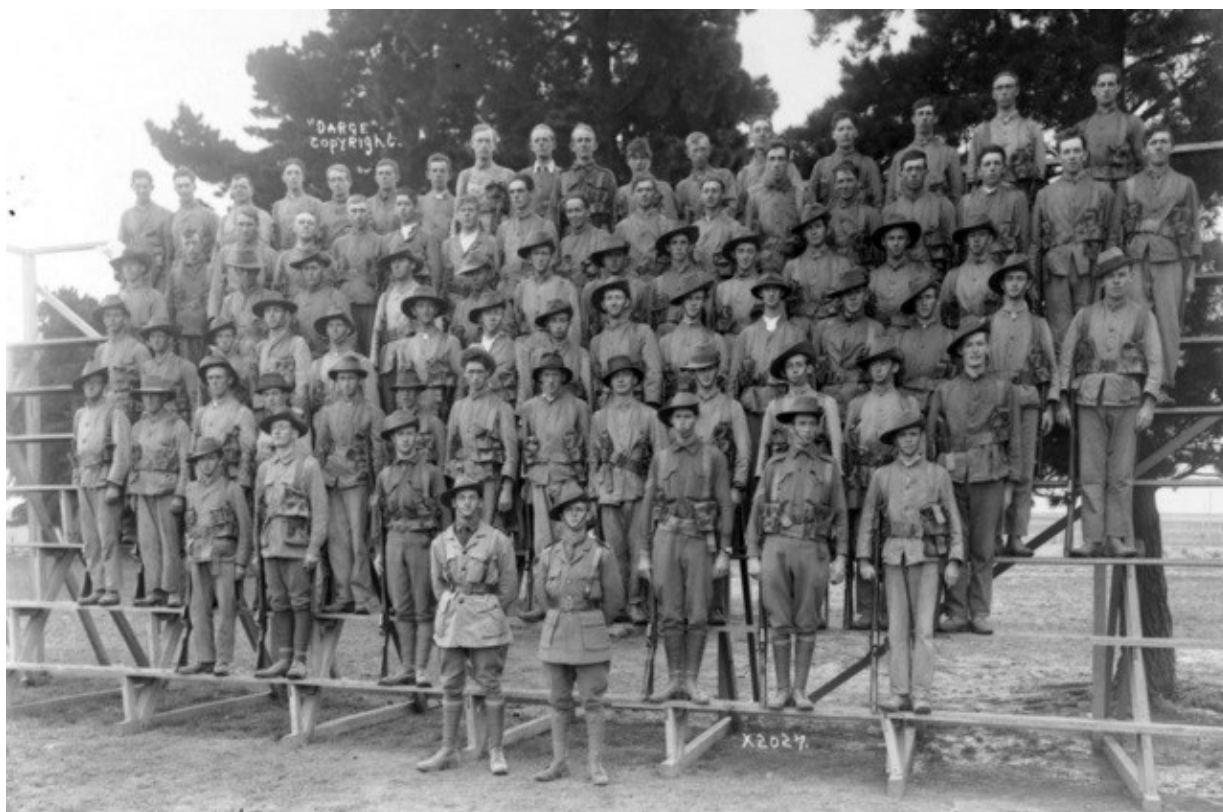


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

H01729

Albert completed his training to return to the front at No.1 Australian Command Depot, Sutton Veny. Soldiers from 1ACD are seen here visiting Sutton Veny's Greenhill House YMCA.

Australian War Memorial H01729



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

DAX2027

Albert's "A" Coy, 57th Battalion photographed in 1918.
Australian War Memorial DAX2027, Photo: Darge Photographic Company



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

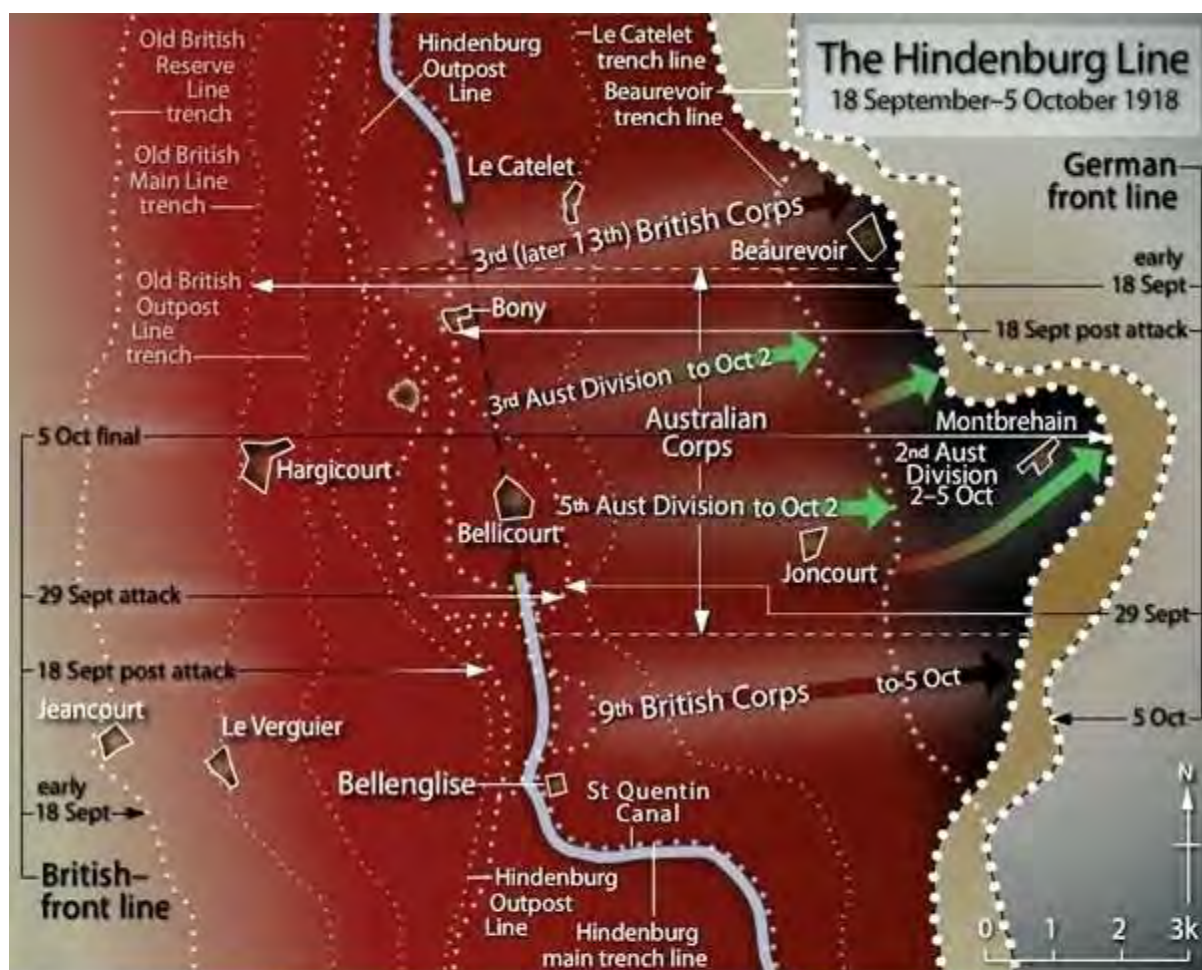
P01431.003

The St Quentin Canal in September 1918 showing the entrance to the canal tunnel over which the 57th Battalion attacked.

Australian War Memorial P01431.003, Photo: Lt A G Barrett



Aerial photograph of the 57th Battalion's St Quentin Canal battlefield produced only days before the battle. This photo formed part of the Battalion Attack Order No. 9/101. Grid co-ordinates shown on the photo can be located on the battle map which forms an Appendix to this paper.



Battle of St Quentin Canal. (Allied advance 29 September to 5 October)

With some American support in the first few days and British Corps (13th in the north and 9th in the south) on their flanks, the Australian Corps advanced nine kilometres east, capturing the two remaining German trench systems.

The Anzac Portal: Dept of Veterans Affairs, Australia



An artist's impression of the fighting during the Battle of St Quentin Canal. While the painting does not depict 57th Battalion troops, it captures the ferocity of the battle in which they fought.

Frank E Schoonover, Smashing the Hindenburg Line, from "Souvenir Pictures of the Great War", The Ladies Home Journal, August 1919, p.16

ROLL OF HONOR

'The Unreturning Brave' Byron

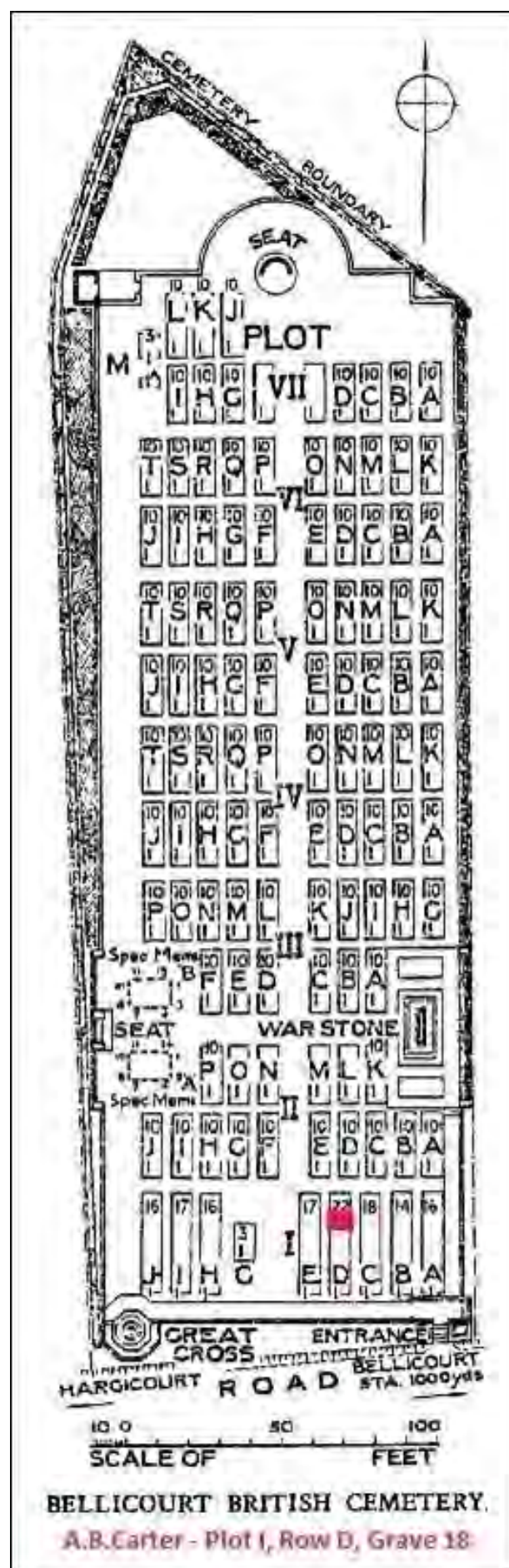


PTE. A. B. CARTER.

Mrs Carter of 10 Regent St., Yarraville has received the official sorrowing news to the effect that her husband, Pte. A. B. Carter, has been killed in action in France. Pte. Carter belonged to A Company, 57th Battalion and had 15 months' active service to his credit. He was in the employ of the Colonial Ammunition Company at their brass works, Gordon St., prior to enlisting.

Roll of Honor
in *The Footscray Advertiser*.
2 November 1918, p.2
National Library of Australia

Plan of Bellicourt Military Cemetery, Aisne
showing the location of Albert's grave.
Commonwealth War Graves Commission



In Memory of

Private

Albert Budd Carter

Regt No. 695, 57th Infantry Bn, A.I.F. who died on 29 September 1918
in the battle of St Quentin Canal, France, Age 41

Son of James and Hannah Carter
Husband of Jane Carter
of 10 Regent St., Yarraville, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.
Native of South Shields, England.

Remembered with Honour

Bellicourt British Cemetery
Plot I, Row D, Grave 18



Commemorated in perpetuity by
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Albert's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Commemorative Certificate
"SUNSHINE PASSES, SHADOWS FALL, LOVE AND REMEMBRANCE OUTLAST ALL"
(The Poppy Cross marks Albert's grave in the updated photograph).

Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Albert's British War Medal and Victory Medal were bestowed posthumously on his wife Jane in 1921 and 1924 respectively.

Albert's memorial stone laid at the Pozières Memorial in France in 2017.



Placing a cross on Albert's grave at the Bellicourt British Cemetery, France in 2017.

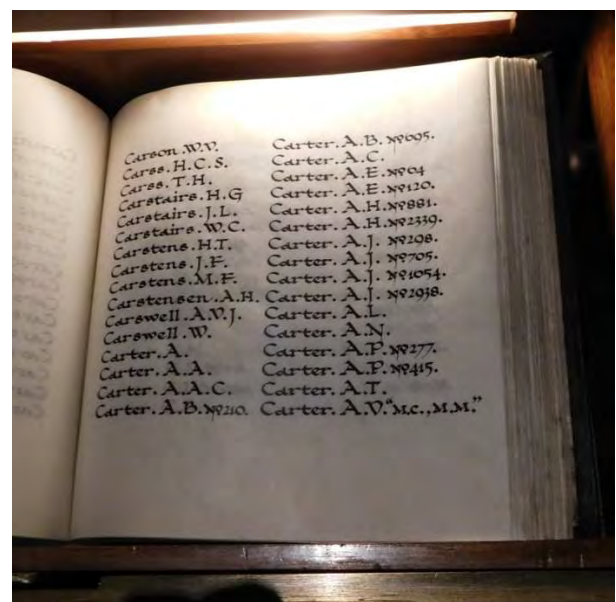
Albert was living at
10 Regent Street,
Yarraville, Victoria
when he enlisted.
Photographed 2019.



The Colours of Albert's
57th Battalion laid up at the
Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne.



Albert's tribute in the
Book of Remembrance at the
Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne



APPENDIX following:

The St Quentin Canal Battle Map. The battle map accompanied the 57th Battalion Attack Order No. 9/101 for their assault on the Hindenburg Line in the Nauroy – Gouy sector over the St Quentin Canal.

This Order specifically provided for the direction of the 57th Battalion's operation under command of the Australian Corps with affiliated II American Corps, to commence on 29 September 1918.

The map represents the operational plan as directed by the Attack Order. Besides the topography and features of the base map, it incorporates

- marked up German defences as at 18 September 1918 (in blue)
- troop disposition boundaries (American and Australian)
- attack forming up and start lines
- the lines of objectives –
 - the "Green Line" extending from Le Catelet (near Gouy) to Nauroy and
 - the "Red Line" running between Beaurevoir and Wiancourt.

Places defined by grid co-ordinates mentioned in the text of this paper can be located on this map.

The digital copy of the Appendix may be enlarged to the map's original size for clarity.

Australian War Memorial. RCDIG1007600 in 23/74/32 Part 2, Vol.9, Folio 88

Conversions: 1 yard = 0.9144 metres 1 mile = 1.6093 km

