

Reginald Walker Rankin DARGAN

1887 – 1920



ANZAC – War Hero

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Acknowledgement

The basis of this research has been the 102 pages of Reg DARGAN's military records available from the National Archives of Australia and available online at :-

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3487673>

Extensive use of TROVE, a search engine for digital copies of Australian newspapers, Government Gazettes, maps, magazines and newsletters has been utilised, along with transcripts and online search of the records of the NSW registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Many DARGAN family history researchers have contributed to this document, the most significant being :-

1. John Robert FIELD - great nephew of Reg DARGAN, great grandson of Patrick and Margaret DARGAN;
2. Edward James (Ted) MINTY - great grand nephew of Reg DARGAN, great great grandson of Patrick and Margaret DARGAN;
3. Darren Anthony DARGAN - great grand nephew of Reg DARGAN, great great grandson of Patrick and Margaret DARGAN.



Reginald DARGAN

Regimental number	1122
Place of birth	Sydney New South Wales
Religion	Roman Catholic
Occupation	Line operator
Marital status	Single
Age at embarkation	27
Next of kin	Father, Patrick Dargan, 48 Lord Street, North Sydney, New South Wales
Enlistment date	28 September 1914
Rank on enlistment	Lance Corporal
Unit name	2nd Battalion, 1st Reinforcement
Embarkation details	Unit embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, on board HMAT A32 <i>Themistocles</i> on 22 December 1914
Rank from Nominal Roll	Lance Corporal
Unit from Nominal Roll	2nd Battalion
Fate	Returned to Australia 20 December 1917

2.13 Reginald Walker Rankin DARGAN

the thirteenth child of Patrick and Margaret DARGAN <née Middleton> was born in Norton Street [now Central Street] Manly, on the 5 Sep 1887 as recorded in the family bible and his birth was registered in 1887 at Manly.

Reginald, known as Reg to the family, was to be the thirteenth and last of the children born to Patrick and Margaret and was baptised on the 31 Oct 1887 at the Mary Immaculate Church Manly, the service was performed by Father G. TUCKWELL and the Godparent was Emily THOMPSON.

Note. Contradictory information received from the Mary Immaculate Church incorrectly lists Reginald's middle name as Walter.

Reg's childhood and adolescent years is thought to have been essentially uneventful with the family living on the northern beaches, in particular in a large 2 storey home near Queenscliff Lagoon and later on Pittwater Road. Like all his father's sons, no doubt Reg was called on to help out with the family fuel business [wood & coal] in Raglan Street, Manly and the carrying business [running bullock drays from Manly wharf to the powder works at Narrabeen and other locations on the Northern Beaches].

By the turn of the century however, the maritime strikes of the 1890s, the scandal and closing of the powder works [major fraud & swindle] and the introduction of electricity and the motor vehicle sent Patrick to the wall

[bankruptcy] and the family moved to a cottage of his new employer, the Council, in Miller Street adjacent to St. Leonards Park before finally residing at 48 Lord Street, North Sydney.

Reg attended Marist Brother's school North Sydney, whose motto was "ESSE NON VIDERI" or "To be, not to seem". His early adult life was not out of the ordinary but not quite totally uneventful as the following newspaper articles highlight :-

Daily Telegraph – Tuesday 23rd October, 1906 – page 10

A GAME OF "TWO-UP."

At the North Sydney Police Court Ernest Johnson, Ernest Sharpe, William Aikman, John Yates, Reginald Dargan, George Fairlie, Joseph M'Sweeney, Richard Thomas, and Alfred Harding were charged with playing at "two-up" on Sunday afternoon on unenclosed land between Folly Point and the Suspension Bridge. Aikman and M'Sweeney pleaded not guilty. The former was discharged, and M'Sweeney was fined 20s, with 3s 6d costs, or seven days. The others pleaded guilty, and each was fined 10s, with 3s 6d costs, or three days' gaol with hard labor.

Sun – Thursday 17th April, 1913 – page 1

DARGAN'S TRIP.

ACCUSED BEFORE THE COURT.

At the Central Police Court to-day, before Mr. Barnett, Arthur Thompson, aged 21, John Torpy, 23, and Richard Broad, alias Hawchoar, 29, were charged with assaulting Reginald Dargan on April 12, and robbing him of a gold watch, chain, pendant, medal, silver sovereign-purse, and £5 in money, valued in all at £25.

Sergeant Mankey asked for a remand, as the police had not prepared their cars.

Mr. Barnett asked for the facts of the case.

Sergeant Mankey stated that it was alleged that the accused men were in a sulky in the city. They picked Dargan up and drove him to Centennial Park, where Dargan was robbed and thrown out of the vehicle. Dargan remained on the roadway, where the police found him.

Accused were remanded until April 23, bail being fixed at £30. *

By the out-break of World War 1, Reg had completed an apprenticeship in the printing industry as a linotype operator [print setter] with William Booth & Co. where he had worked for 7 years alongside his brother Lorne who was foreman. Like most young Australian men, Reg no doubt saw the war as an adventure and was keen and quick to enlist, as suggested by his low serial number.

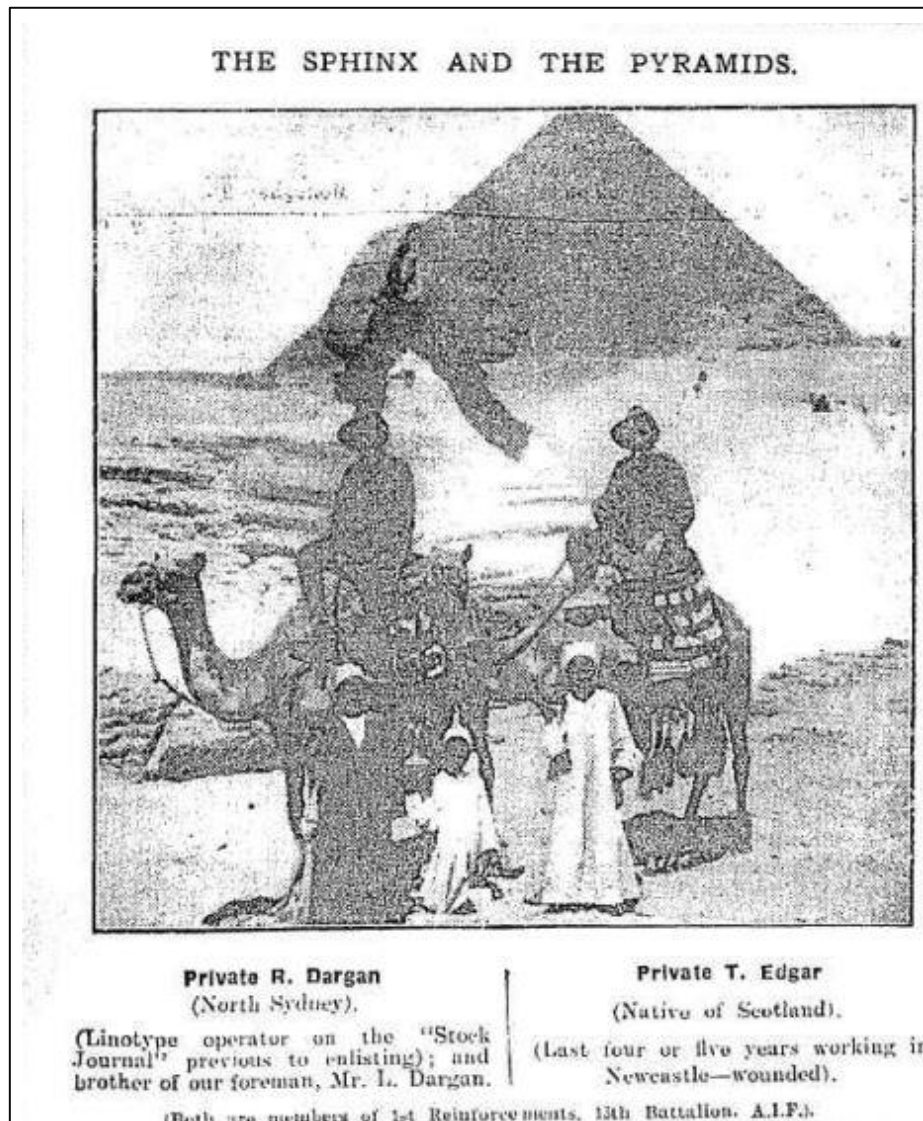
According to Reg's attestation papers when he enlisted on 29 Sep 1914, he was 27 years old, 5'9" tall, weighed 10 stone 7 lbs with fair hair, fair complexion and grey eyes, not married and being of the Roman Catholic faith.

Reg was marched into camp at Rosehill on 2 Oct 1914 and was assigned to

the 2nd Battalion, 1st infantry Brigade, 1st Division with a serial number of 1122.

Little information is recorded in Reg's military records about early training or movements. It is known that he embarked overseas from Melbourne onboard the HMAT A32 Themistocles and based on the following newspaper article, it is assumed that Reg was transported to Egypt like most ANZACs in preparation and readiness for Gallipoli, where he obviously generated and sent back news copy initially perpetuating the myth of the adventure he no doubt thought he had embarked on.

Sydney Stock and Station Journal - Friday 25th June, 1915 – page 3



ANZAC Cove Landing

Contrary to the above and other incorrect Battalion allocation, Reg's 2nd Battalion, 1st infantry Brigade, 1st Division was in the initial landing at ANZAC Cove, Gallipoli on the morning of 25 Apr 1915 and Reg survived unwounded, this fact is supported by sworn evidence given in support of later regimental court martial proceedings and in Reg's military records. Clearly Reg was an exemplary soldier, leading by example and thus being promoted in the field at

Gallipoli to Lance Corporal on 7 May 1915 and then again to Corporal on 22 Jun 1915.

By early July 1915, not only was Reg becoming quickly battle hardened but so was the family at home who was beginning to have to deal with and mourn the casualties of war. Reg's nephew, 20 year old artillery gunner William Robert DARGAN died on 15 June from unattended wounds received in action at Cape Helles on Gallipoli. He died while aboard a ship in transit to the military hospital on the Greek Island of Lemnos.

Daily Telegraph - Monday 5th July, 1915 – page 9



The following is an extract reproduced here from part of a letter sent from Gallipoli by Reg to his sister Mrs. Grace Minty.

From the Trenches, Gallipoli 20 Jul 1915

My Dear Gracie,

Just a line to let you know I am in the best of health and to acknowledge receipt of your very welcome letters, and little Paddys.

Thanks for her photo Grace, I always carry it with me, and now look upon it as my mascot, because I have not been wounded yet.

I had a letter from Alma last mail, and she said.....?

Note. Unfortunately what she said we will never know as this is a part of the letter missing, on the other side of the page, the letter continues:

were at instead of war.

It is very amusing to hear them talking about the feeds they are going to have when the war is over, if they come through safely.

Well Grace I must close this short note now, hoping to hear from you soon. I remain your loving brother Reg.

PS, Remember me to Ted, and tell little Paddy.

Battle of Lone Pine

The above letter was written by Reg approximately 2 weeks prior to the Lone Pine offensive by the ANZAC forces which was to be a diversion for a big British attack at Suvla Bay to the north. The British attack at Suvla Bay failed miserably with massive losses and the Turks reinforced and later retook Lone Pine.

The Anzac map of 19 May 1915 that follows shows the 2nd Battalion located close to Lone Pine and opposite the Turkish 16th Division. Only 3 Australian battalions of the 1st Division, (less than 3,000 men) were directly arrayed against an entire Turkish regiment of approximately 10,000 men. The trenches of the 2nd Battalion were located at the western edge of the Lone Pine plateau at 120m asl and facing slightly uphill towards the Turkish trenches about 100-150m distant across open scrubby terrain.



A naval artillery barrage had cut much of the Turkish barbed wire just prior to the charge which kicked off at 5:30 pm on 6 August but the men's silhouettes were clearly visible close to sunset as they charged across that uneven ground and up towards the Turkish trenches which were covered by layers of heavy timbers and compacted earth. Machine guns fired from concealed

loopholes in the Turkish trenches. The Australians surprisingly, suffered light casualties during that initial charge however Reg's luck had run out and he was shot initially through the abdomen, then as he laid wounded shot in each leg and also his right arm. Those who successfully made the dash across no man's land were then faced with the problem of gouging their way with rifle, hand-bombs and bayonet, into the covered Turkish trenches and overcoming their opponents with fierce hand to hand fighting.

Other Australians of the 1st Division moved eastwards to intercept the Turkish reinforcements moving out of "The Cup", a defensive hollow behind the forward trenches.

By nightfall, the Australians held part of the Turkish trench system, but they had to defend these gains against determined counterattacks. A vicious battle developed in the warren of trenches, with grenades a principal weapon, sometimes thrown back and forth three times before exploding. From nightfall on 6 August until the night of 9 August a fierce battle ensued underground in the complex maze of Turkish tunnels.

Brutal hand-to-hand combat and short range fighting still raged on 7 August and evacuation of the wounded was near impossible, many died where they lay. Along the front held by the Australians and no man's land was littered with the bodies of the dead and dying. The trenches were occupied by wounded and stunned survivors of the short-lived attacks. Streams of casualties were taken to the beaches for treatment, some to die there or on the hospital ships. Most of those wounded and still on the battlefields would succumb, out of reach, and remain for years to rot, breed flies, and have their bones scattered by wild dogs.

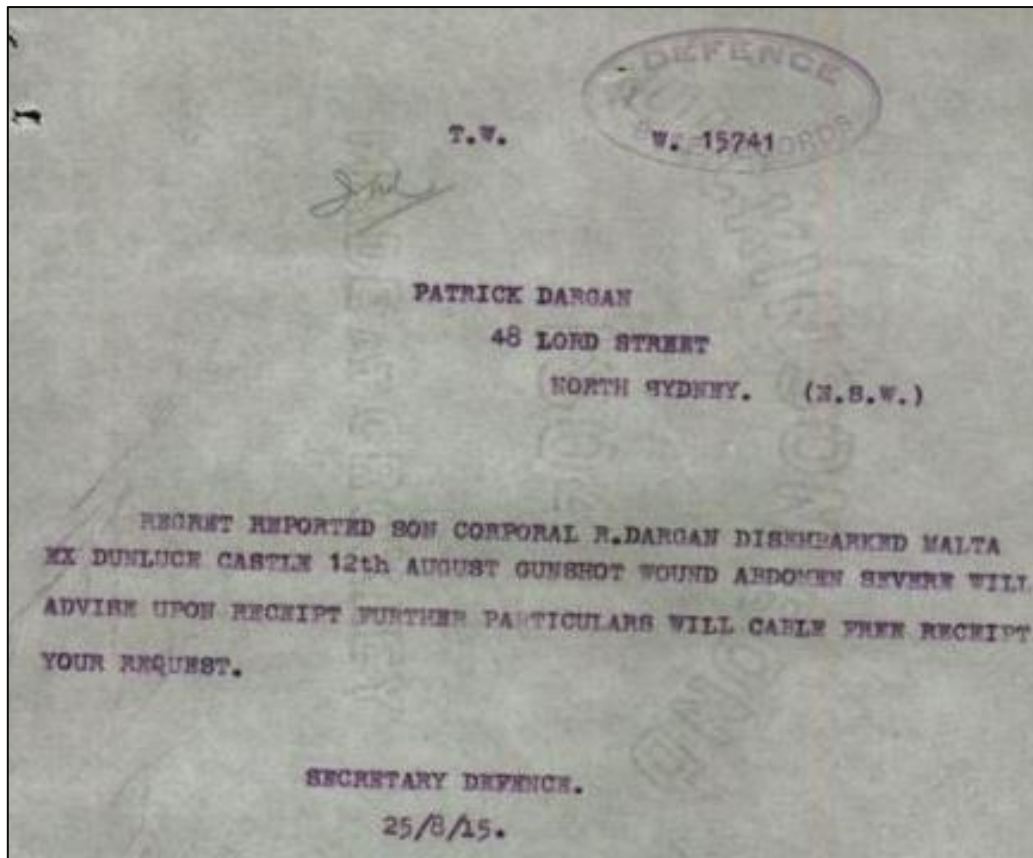
Surprisingly Reg survived being shot four times at close range and lying severely injured until fortunately being amongst the wounded retrieved and evacuated to the beaches by the brave field ambulance men. It is thought that Reg was dragged to safety early on the morning of 7 August and in the process to have lost on the battlefield his lucky mascot - the portrait card from "Little Paddy".

The slaughter at Lone Pine dragged on until 9 August. By 10 August, the Australians were in control of the trenches, but their success no longer had strategic significance and the overall stalemate remained unbroken. The Australians took and held the entire Turkish front line and most of the communication and reserve trenches, but the Australian 1st Division lost more than 3,000 out of its total of 4,620 men and Reg's 2nd Battalion lost 408 enlisted men out of a total of 560 and 20 of its 21 officers. Lieutenant George Sydney Cook, was Reg's commanding officer and he was shot in the head and briefly invalided to Australia. The Turks lost 7,000 men during that engagement. Lone Pine was exposed to more elevated Turkish positions to the north and with the simultaneous failure of the major British offensive at Suvla Bay, there was no plan to hold this position. The ongoing brutal stalemate on the Gallipoli Peninsula caused Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, Commander in Chief of the British Army to order evacuation of the allied offensive at Gallipoli during December 1915.

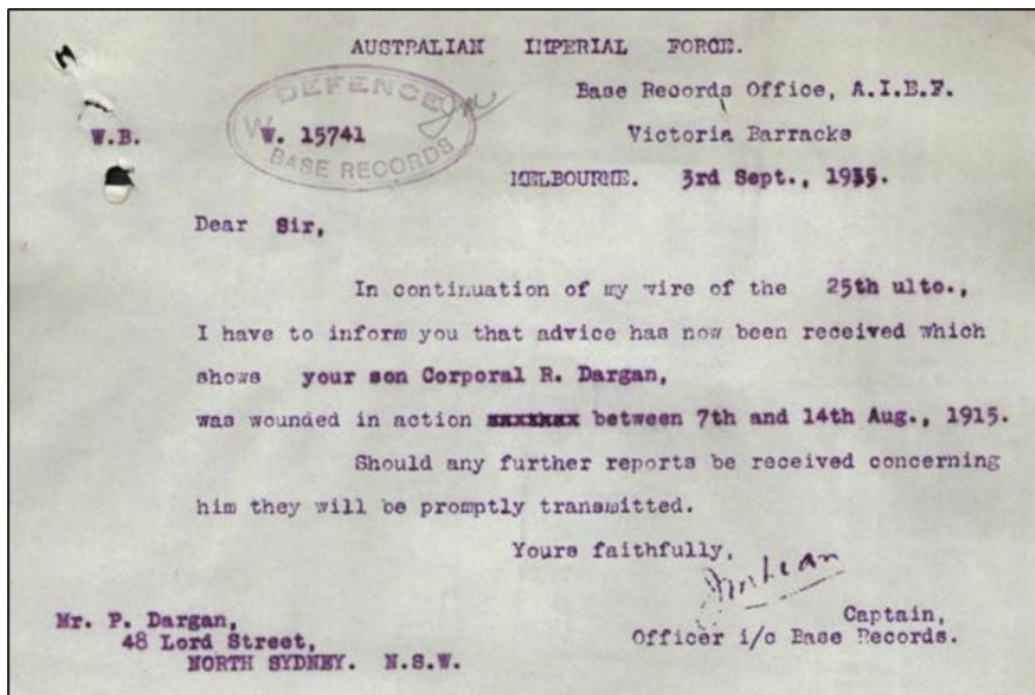
1st Wounding and Recovery

By 12 August Reg had been evacuated from the Gallipoli Peninsula on board the hospital ship "Dunluce Castle" and landed at Malta and admitted to the Cottonera Military Hospital for initial assessment and treatment.

It was not until 25 August the family was informed by cable that Reg had been severely wounded :-



On 3 September the following cable was also received :-



Despite the experience and his severe wounds, Reg obviously remained positive, as the following newspaper article later highlighted, albeit that the family at home was not yet aware of this and struggled for more information.

Corporal Reg. Dargan.

A "STOCK JOURNAL" MAN.

Corporal Reg. Dargan, who used to be a linotype operator on the "Stock Journal," went away with the first reinforcements, and got to Gallipoli soon after the first landing. About a month ago he was wounded in four places, and in the course of a letter from Malta to his home folk, he tells how it happened:—

"This day we had to make the attack. I had only gone about a hundred yards when I received four shots—the first was through the abdomen (went in the right side and out the left); the second caught me on the side of right leg, just above the knee; the third went through my left leg above the ankle; and the fourth through my right arm. I have to consider myself very lucky regarding the abdominal wound, as the doctor tells me it was a near thing. This is considered the best hospital in Malta, and I can quite believe it. The doctors are very clever, and the Sisters are exceedingly kind and attentive. In addition, the priest comes every afternoon to see us, and always brings a word of cheer with him."

In spite of his four wounds and the rough time he has had, "Reg." writes very cheerfully and says he looks upon his injury as a "pleasant holiday." On Saturday word came that he had been invalided to England.



Corporal Reg. Dargan.

In the following month, no further correspondence was received by the family from the Department of Defence

Corporal R. Dargan Wounded.

A "STOCK JOURNAL" MAN.

Mr. P. Dargan, of North Sydney, has received the following wire from the Defence Department:—

"Regret to inform you your son, Corporal R. Dargan, received gun-shot wound abdomen—severe. Left for Malta, per Dundonald Castle, August 12. Will advise progress."

Corporal Reg. Dargan was for years a linotype operator on the "Stock and Station Journal," and is a brother of Mr. L. Dargan, our foreman printer.

Reg. was one of the first to volunteer and went away a private. The fact that he is now a corporal shows that he proved himself a good soldier and efficient at the business.

We will be glad to hear he is progressing satisfactorily. He was the first of the "Journal" staff to get into the firing line and the first to be wounded. Good man, Reg., and good luck!

and Patrick DARGAN (Reg's father) wrote on 3 separate occasions desperately seeking further information pertaining to Reg's condition beyond the minimum facts the family had already been told.

DEFENCE
W 15741
BASE RECORDS

Kiora, W 15741
48 Lord St
North Sydney.
26.8.15

To
Secretary Defence
Melbourne.

Dear Sir
Re message received this morning
that Corporal R. Dargan had been wounded
& that would be sent through if you could
send following message.

Hope getting alright fondest love
all at home.

Thanking you in anticipation

I remain
faithfully
Patrick Dargan
P. D.

RECEIVED
31 AUG 15M.

W 15741 30 0 344

TELEGRAM
R.T. No. 1. COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT, VICTORIA.

REMARKS

STATION FROM, NO. OF WORDS, AND CHECK.

NORTH SYDNEY 19 FREE 11 A

11 47WP

SECTY

FOR DEFENCE MELB

IS THERE ANY FURTHER NEWS OF CORPORAL DARGAN

PATRICK DARGAN

48 LORD ST NORTH SYDNEY

RECEIVED
31 AUG 15M.

RECEIVED
31 AUG 15M.

NOTE: The figures at the bottom represent the time elapsed at
sending station and time received at this Office respectively.

W 15741
14/9/15

"Kina,"
48 Lord St
North Sydney. N.S.W.
Sep 9. 15

Secretary for Defence
Victoria Barracks
Melbourne.

Dear Sir

I know you have many cables on you these
times but if I am entitled to have another
cable sent through to my son 1122 Corporal
R. Dargan. I would be very grateful if you
would send it through at once?
If I could only get word that he was
alive & getting along at all well I would
be considerably relieved.
Thanking you in anticipation

I am
Faithfully yours
Patrick Dargan per
M.D.

Cable to
1122 Corporal. R Dargan, Malta Hospital
Cable Through, how you are.
Mother

RECEIVED
13 SEP 15
RECEIVED
13 SEP 15

By early October, details of casualty lists including Reg's name were being printed in newspapers across the country.

Meanwhile, on 9 September Reg was transferred from hospital in Malta to the "Ghain Tuffieha" camp awaiting transfer to England for further medical attention and on 17 September Reg embarked for England aboard the hospital ship "Carisbrooke Castle" where on arrival on 24 September was admitted to the 3rd London General Hospital Wandsworth.

On 1 October, 56 days after being shot, Reg was operated on for gun shot wounds of both legs, right arm and abdomen, with shrapnel bullet being removed.

Shortly thereafter, the family was sent the following two cables :-

T.W. **W 15741**
BASE RECORDS

P.DARGAN
 48 LORD STREET
 NORTH SYDNEY, (N.S.W.)

NOW REPORTED SON CORPORAL R.DARGAN CONVALESCENT
 WILL PROMPTLY ADVISE IF ANYTHING FURTHER RECEIVED ~~XXXXXXXX~~
 CABLE CRASES.

BASE RECORDS.
 5/10/15.

R.D.B. W 15741
BASE RECORDS

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

BASE RECORDS OFFICE,
Victoria Barracks,

Melbourne, 9th Oct. 1915

Dear Sir,

With reference to my wire of the 5th instant,
 I now have to advise you that information has been received to the effect
 that your son, Corporal R.Dargan,
 is now in the Hospital at London, suffering from gun shot wound both
legs. His postal address will therefore be—

No. 1122 Corporal R. Dargan,
 Wounded, 2nd Australian Infantry,
 c/o Australian High Commissioner,
 LONDON, S.W.

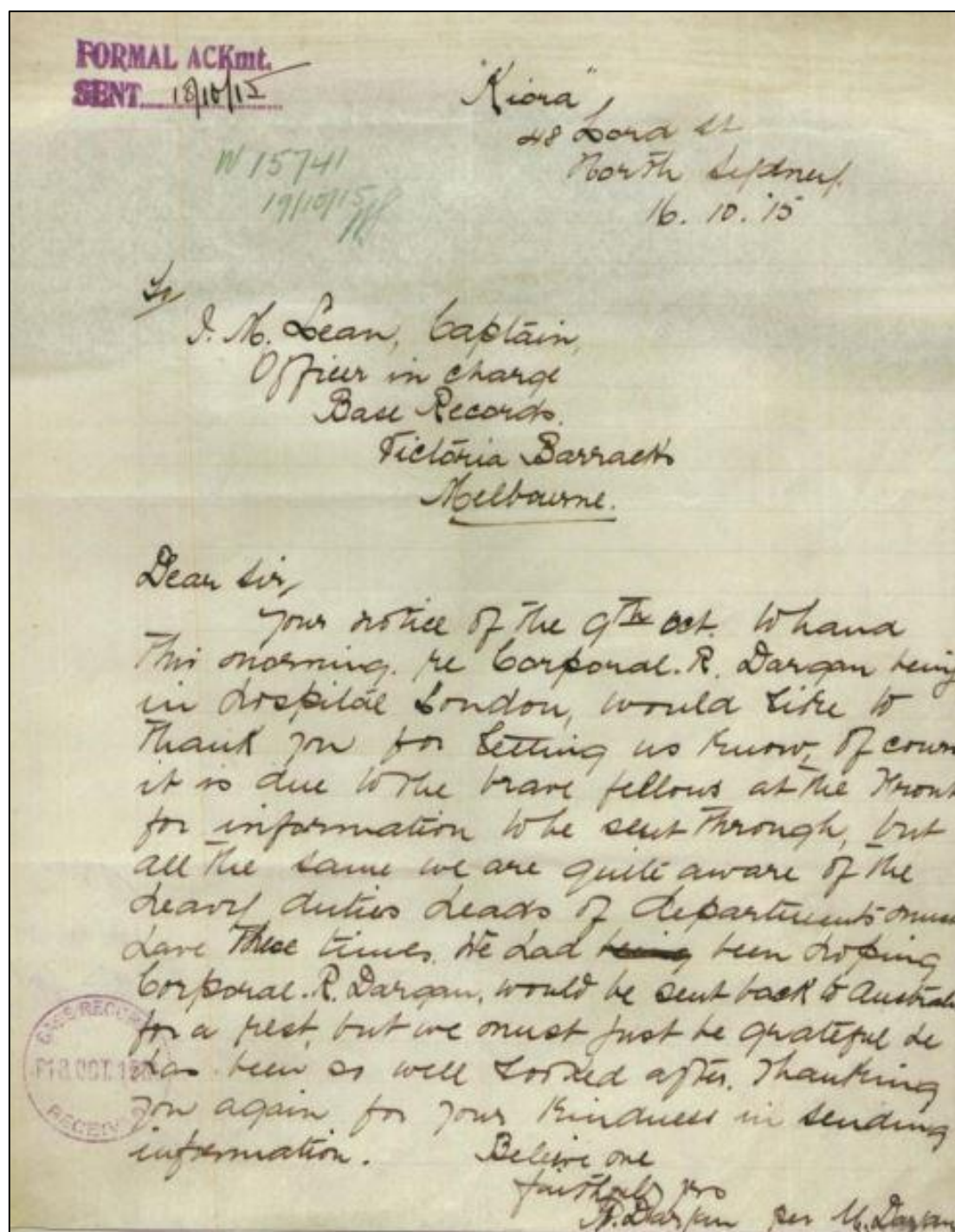
Any further particulars coming to hand will be promptly transmitted.

Yours faithfully,
J. M. LEAN, Captain,
Officer in charge Base Records.

Mr. P. Dargan,
 48 Lord Street,
 North Sydney, N.S.W.

C.12977.

Meanwhile, back at Sydney, Patrick DARGAN was seeking news of Reg's condition and hoping for his return to Australia, given the serious nature of his injuries but this fell on deaf ears, later as we will see to the detriment of Reg's recovery :-



Just 12 days after major surgery, in order to free up much needed hospital beds, on 13 October, Reg was discharged from hospital and was expected to report for duty only after a brief 30 day furlough to recuperate. This situation, common for rank and NCO personnel, firstly involved him locating and renting a room in which to convalesce at his own expense as there was no wherewith all to rehabilitate in the overcrowded hospitals or military facilities.

Yet on 22 October the following cable indicating that Reg was, as per the previous communications, still in hospital recovering.

FBI/MD
W 15741

22450 22nd October 5

Dear Sir,

In acknowledging receipt of your communication dated 16th inst., I beg to inform you there is no further report of No. 1122 Corporal R. Dargan, 2nd Battalion, and in the absence of same, favourable progress may be assumed, the practice of the overseas authorities being to notify this department of any serious change in condition.

You are in possession of the soldier's postal address while in England, and if any later information comes to hand it will be promptly communicated to you.

Your realisation of the Department's efforts is appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. P. Dargan,
"Kiora",
48 Lord Street,
North Sydney, N.S.W.

Capt
Officer i/c Base Records

The above was quickly followed by another historical and misleading piece of information

E.C. W.15741 AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE .

Base Records Office, A.I.F.F.
Victoria Barracks.

MELBOURNE. 24th October 1915.

Dear Sir, The following is an extract from a Nominal Roll of sick and wounded received by post dated 13/8/15 who landed at Malta 12th August from Hospital Ship "Dunluce Castle", No.1122 Corporal R. Dargan, 2nd Battalion, suffering from "Bullet wound abdomen, legs and arm, serious".

You have already been notified that your son was subsequent reported convalescent, and later admitted to hospital at London, Engl

Any further reports received will be promptly communicated to you.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. P. Dargan,
"Kiora", 48 Lord Street,
NORTH SYDNEY (N.S.W.)

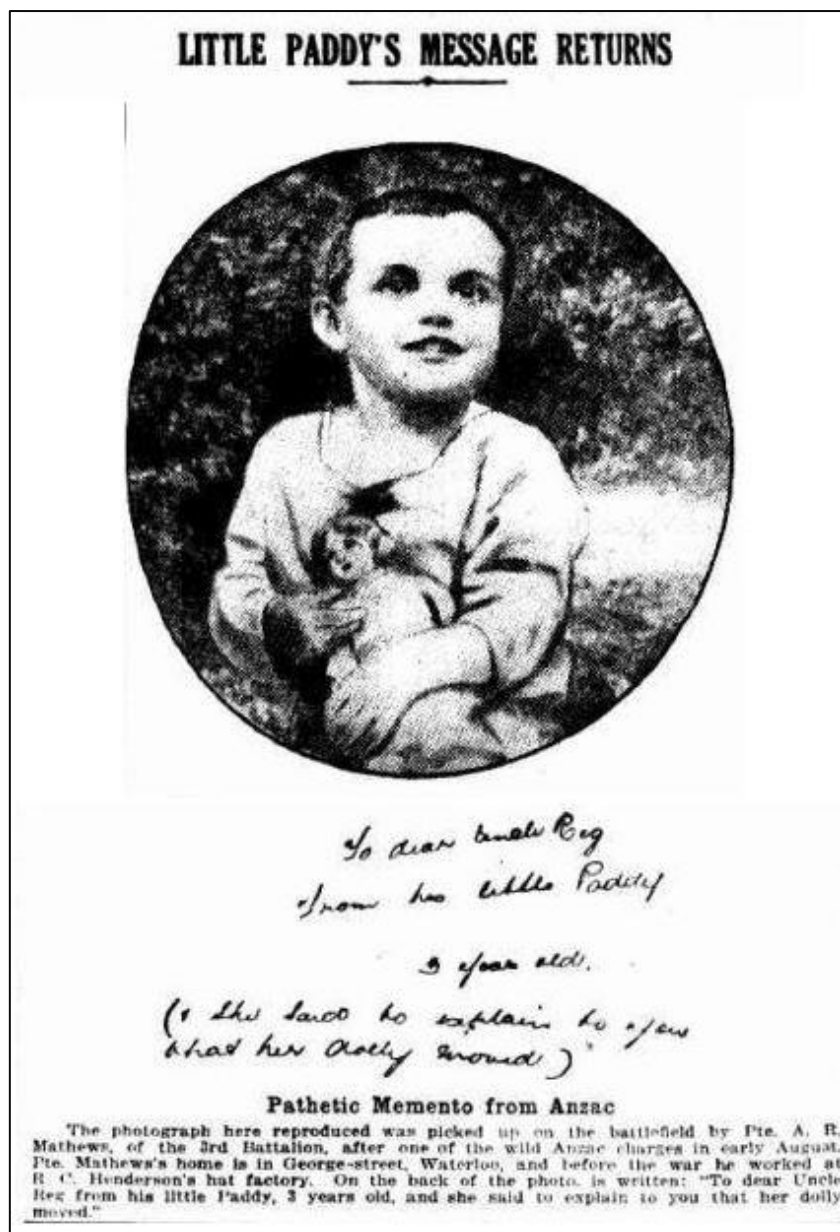
J. M. LEAN. Captain.
Officer i/c Base Records.

Consequently, the family in Sydney were not aware of the difficult challenges Reg was faced with in his recovery and rehabilitation.

Instead, interestingly, via the Australian press, another story was playing out.

Little Paddy

Sun - Sunday 17th October, 1915 – page 20



In the chaos of the charge at Lone Pine or in the evacuation of the wounded in the aftermath, Reg misplaced his lucky mascot, sent to him from his little niece, which he had made mention of in his letter to his sister from the trenches of 20 Jul 1915 (see earlier).

The memento had been found on the battlefield, it's owner unknown, thus returned to Australia and subsequently published in the hope of identifying the rightful owner. Very swiftly of course the photo was recognised by the family and its owner identified and its return to the family achieved.



Patricia MINTY went on to become a prolific storyteller for the DARGAN family and married the English born Australian novelist, freelance journalist, broadcaster and travel writer, George FARWELL.

Court Martial

It is not known where or with whom Reg found billeted accommodation in London after being discharged from hospital. He did not however find himself capable or well enough to march back to barracks for active duty by 11 Nov 1915 as required. He was without medical attention but once he could stand up reasonably, he did however report for duty on 17 Jan 1916 upon which he was immediately placed under arrest and charged with "absenting himself without leave". A charge of AWOL if associated with desertion usually resulted in the firing squad for the unfortunate soldier in the British Army. Many young British soldiers suffering from shell-shock that attempted to run away, ended up in front of a firing squad.

On 9 Feb 1916 Reg was brought before a Regimental Court Martial held at Abbey Wood barracks and conducted by Major F. V. Hogan, where he pleaded guilty to the charge of absenting himself without leave from 11 Nov 1915 to 17 Jan 1916. The following hand written statement, reproduced here, is contained in Reg's military records and was given in evidence by Reg, under oath at the court hearing :-

I arrived at the Peninsula on the morning of the 25th April 1915. I was hit 4 times on the 6th of August 1915. I left hospital on the 13th October and obtained furlough till 11th November 1915. On the 12th November my stomach was very troublesome and I thought I needed further rest. I was too sick to write myself and for about 50 days was laid up being actually in bed for about 30 days and had no medical attendance. I was in uniform the whole time and had no intention of deserting.

Questions to accused.

Q. Do you wish to produce any witness except to character

A. No

As luck would have it, Reg's commanding officer, now Captain George Sydney Cook of the 2nd Battalion 1st Brigade, AIF, who was the only surviving officer of the Battalion from the Lone Pine offensive, who had just returned to the front after also being wounded at Lone Pine, gave Reg a character reference signed and under oath at the hearing. Reproduced here from Reg's military records :-

The accused was a member of no 13 Platoon under my command, I never had any occasion to speak to him for neglect of duty, he did his work well and I felt proud to have him in my platoon. As far as I am aware there has been no trouble with him and from my experience of him he would be the last man I would have expected trouble from. His conduct was in the highest degree favourable.

Reg was found guilty as charged, the period under charge was deemed to be 24 days and the sentence given was, a) to be reduced to ranks (ie demoted to private), b) to undergo detention for 32 days to commence from 01 Feb 1916 and c) a total forfeiture of 124 days pay.

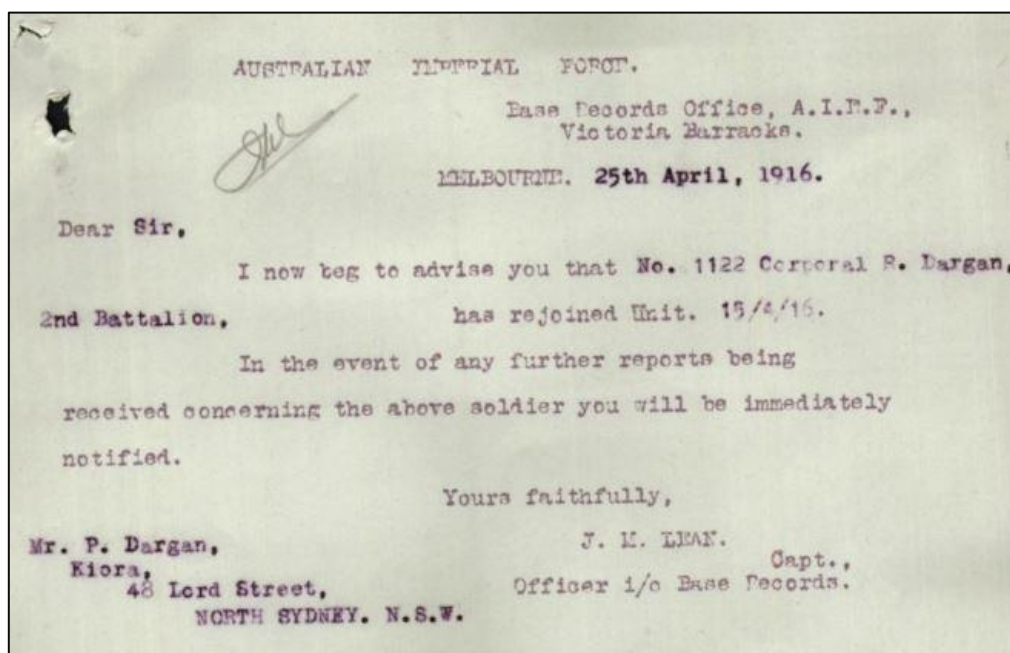
Just how much information pertaining to the court martial was known by the family at home is not clear. Evidence suggests that Reg did have some contact with the family but in essence, from when Reg was reported as being seriously wounded at Gallipoli until his arrest and conviction, was a harrowing experience for the family at home with very little communications or advices received.

This situation obviously had its toll on Reg's mother Margaret, who it is said "died of a broken heart", significantly influenced by over 10 months of anxiety worrying about the fate of her favourite youngest son and having her pleadings to have him returned home to recuperate ignored.

On the 1 Apr 1916, Margaret Russell DARGAN died at home with the official cause of death being Mitral Regurgitation of Cardiac Valves (Heart Failure).

Battle of Pozieres - Somme Valley

Having served the detention Reg was immediately taken on strength with the 1st Division and rejoined his unit in France on 15 April with the family being informed accordingly shortly thereafter:-



After returning to duty on the 18 April Reg was involved in preparations for the Somme offensive and the 1st Brigade was being expanded into four separate Divisions which put a big responsibility for training new recruits onto the few surviving experienced soldiers.

Near the French village of Pozières, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) lost as many men over a few weeks as it did over 8 months on Gallipoli.

At 28 minutes past midnight in the early hours of Sunday 23 July, the 1st Division artillery began firing as fast as the guns could load. Under cover of this fire, the Australians seized the German front positions as their shelling barrage moved forward, giving the Australian 1st Division cover to cut the wire and seize the German front reaching the main road through Pozières an hour later. The Germans counter-attacked at dawn, but the Australians fought them off. The rest of Pozières fell between 23 and 25 July.

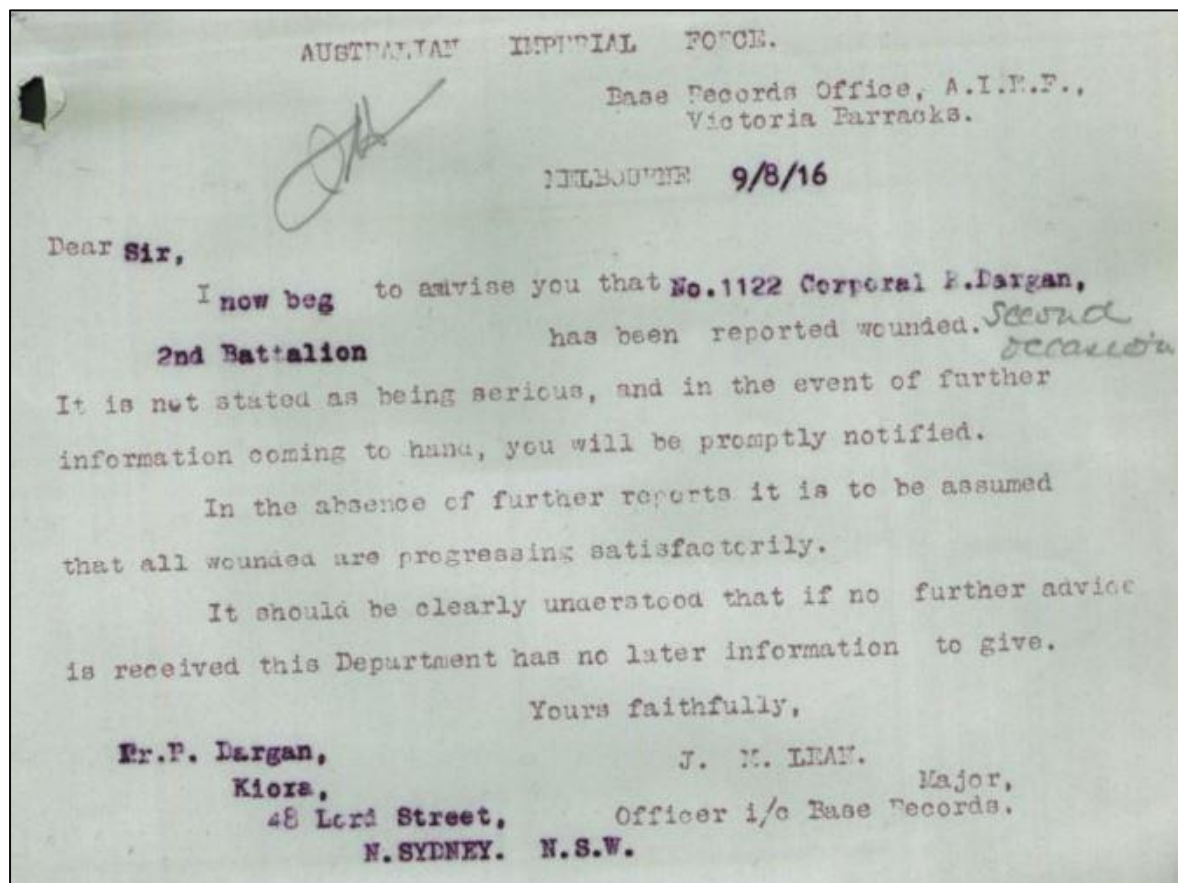
Elsewhere, the British offensive had gained no ground which meant that the Germans concentrated their firepower on the bulge which the Australian 1st Division had pushed into their lines.

2nd Wounding and Recovery

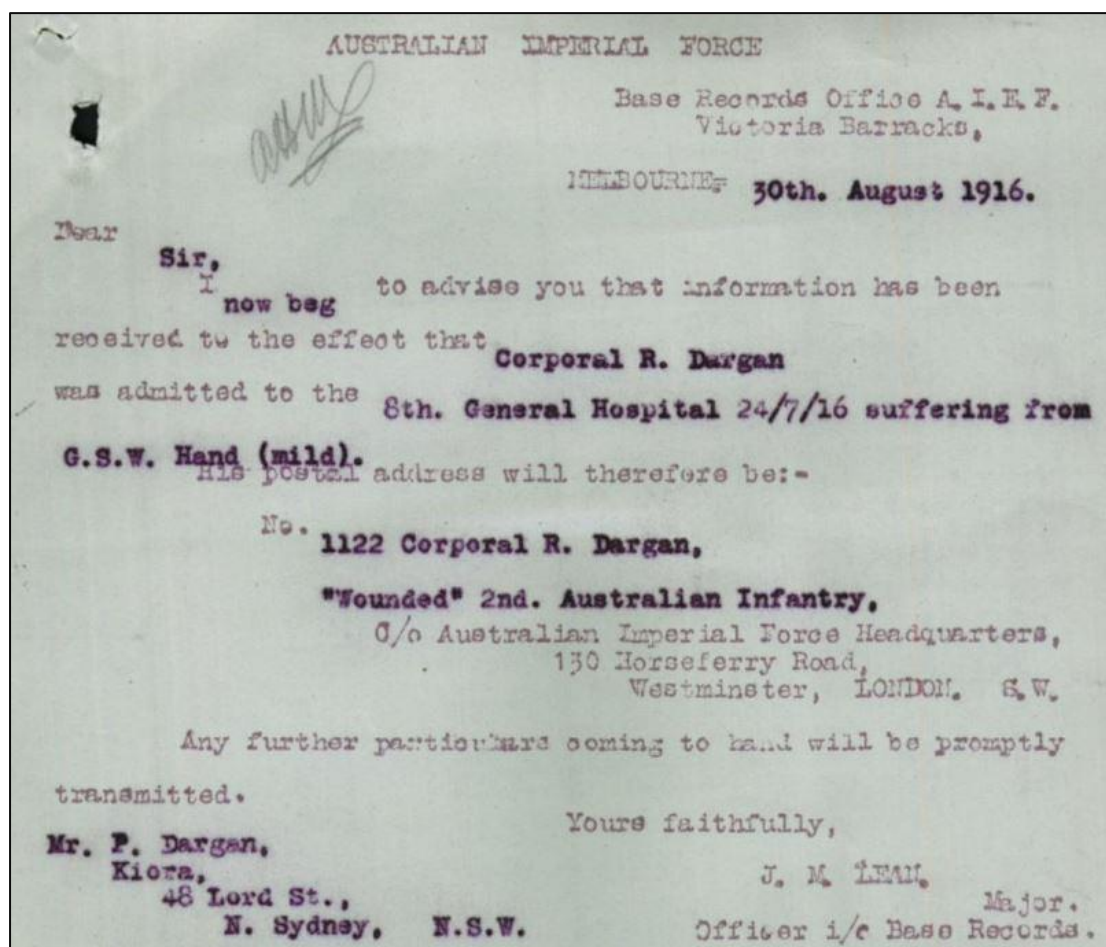
At Pozières Reg was once again wounded in action on 23 July with a gunshot wound to the right hand. The 2nd Battalion lost 10 officers and 500 men killed or wounded in this engagement.

On 24 July Reg was admitted to the 8th General Field Hospital, assessed and repatriated back to England embarked aboard the hospital ship "Lanfranc" where on arrival on 27 July was once again admitted to the 3rd London General Hospital Wandsworth.

On 9 August the family was sent the following cable advising Reg had for the second time been wounded in action :-



On the 30 August the family was sent the following cable :-



Little information is available as to the extent of the gun shot wound suffered by Reg to his right hand. The field hospital described it as "mild" while the report from the hospital in London described it as "severe". His hospital stay was not brief, as he was not discharged until 3 October after which he was then required to present to Wareham Hospital on three further occasions at three weekly intervals to have the wound dressed and strapped.

During this time Reg was stationed at barracks in both Wareham and Weymouth until he was returned to France aboard the "Princess Clementine" on 24 January and rejoined his unit on 7 February.

On 9 April Reg was promoted to Lance Corporal.

Battle of Bullecourt – the Hindenburg Line

During April 1917 the British planned to break through the new German defensive line, the Hindenburg Line at Bullecourt. The Australian 4th Division spear headed the attack on April 11th 1917, with the 1st Division, Reg's Division defending the right flank and holding a frontline close to 12 km long with only a skeleton system of posts.

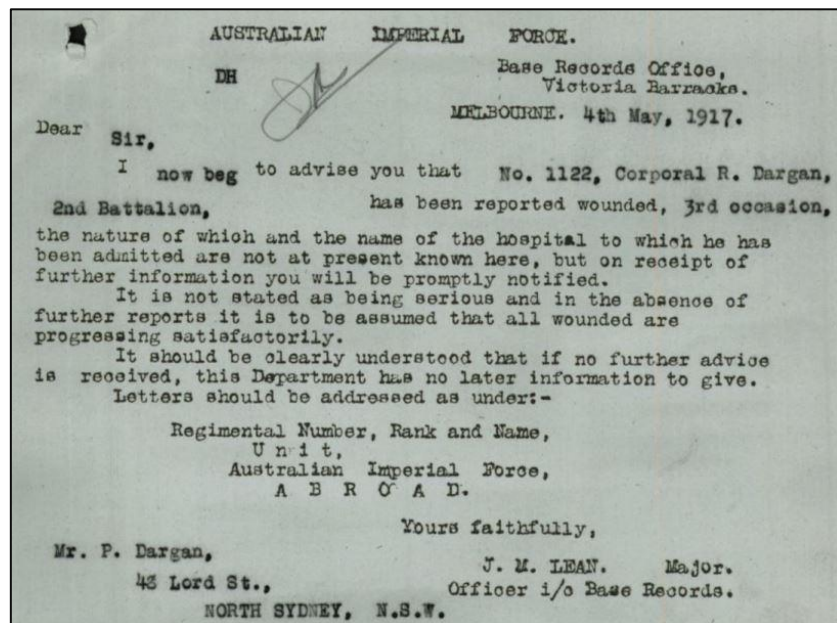
On 15 April the 1st Division checked and repelled a counterattack by 4 German Divisions on this entire 12km front.

3rd Wounding and Recovery

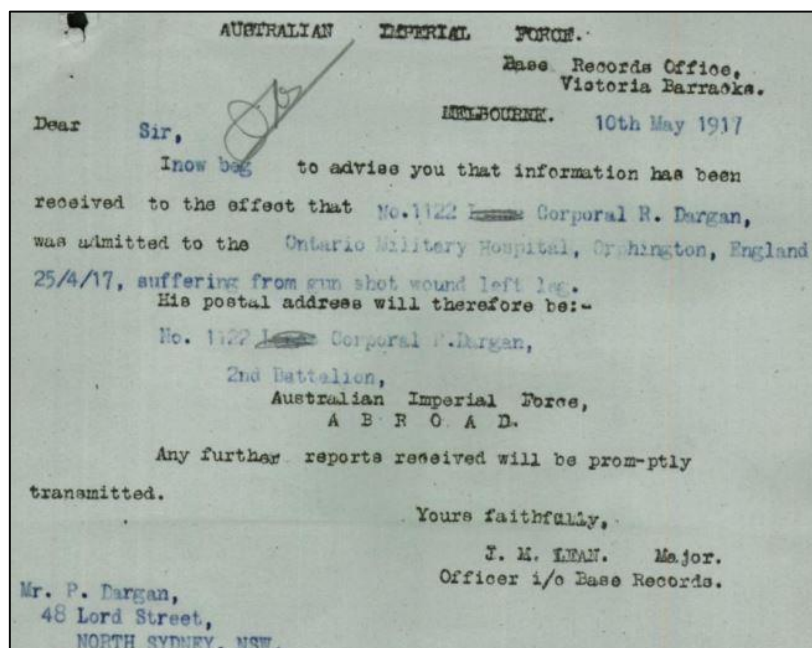
Unfortunately Reg's 2nd Battalion came under extensive artillery fire while Reg was preparing to go back out and assist a nearby post in difficulty. Reg was seriously wounded with a shrapnel wound to the left leg.

Fighting remained intense around Bullecourt while Reg was transported via numerous field ambulance and casualty stations and it wasn't for another 10 days before Reg was embarked aboard the hospital ship "Jan Breydel" at Boulogne for England, where he was admitted to Ontario Military Hospital at Orphington on the 25 April. This being just two years to the day after Reg's overseas adventure was rudely interrupted with him being landed at Gallipoli and receiving his initiation to war. Reg remained here in this hospital for the next 210 days, to his detriment.

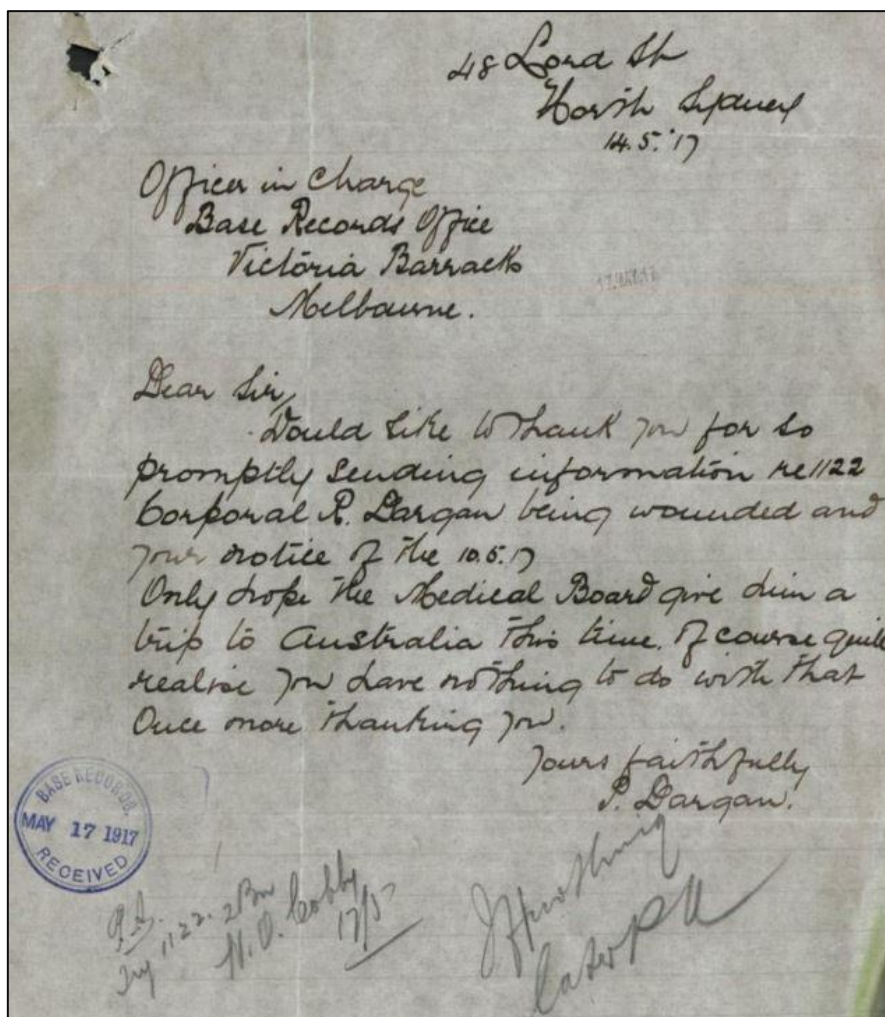
As usual the cables flowed to the family at home, firstly on 4 May :-



and then again on 10 May :-



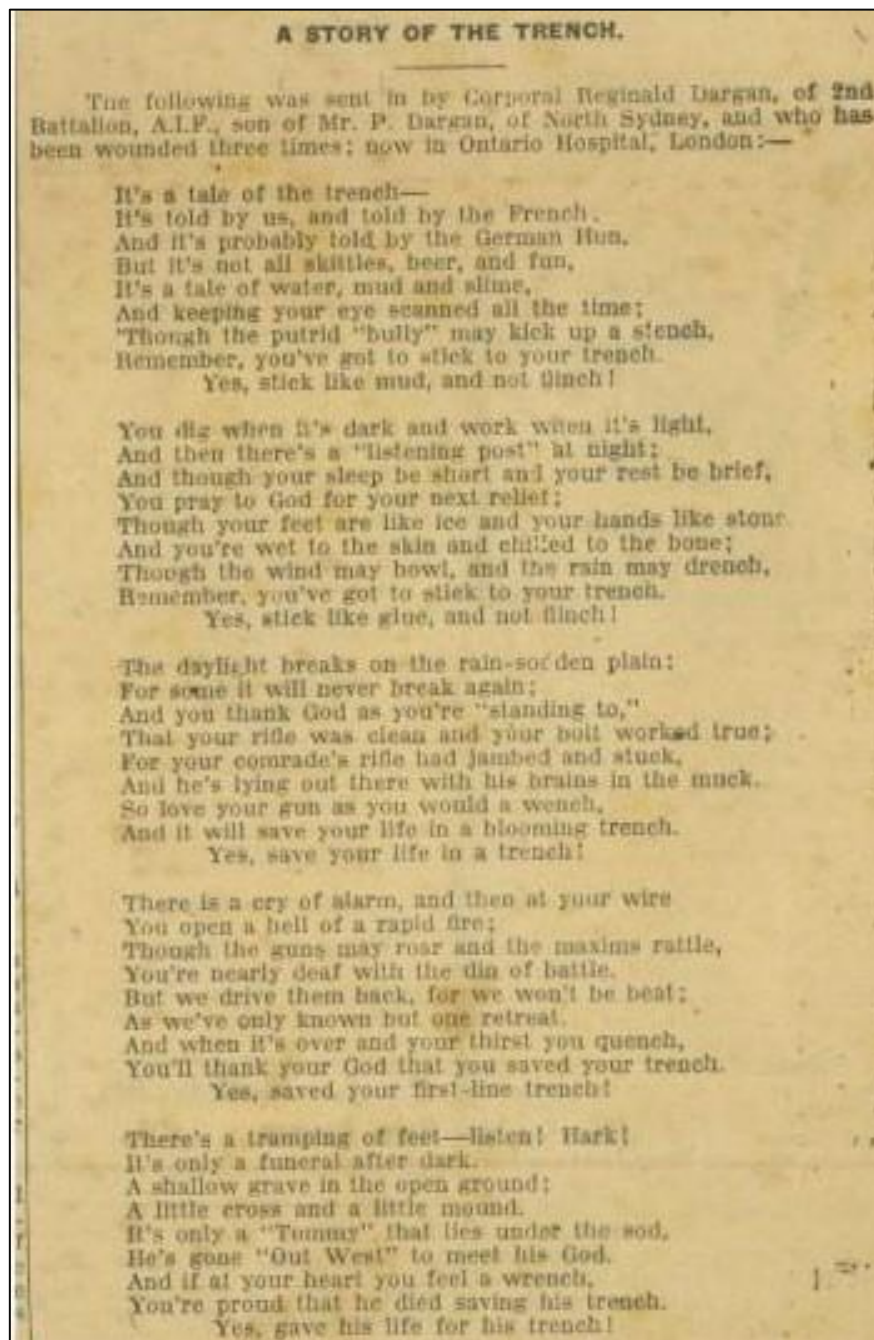
Again as usual, Patrick DARGAN wrote and asked that Reg be allowed to return home to recuperate, which I cannot help but think, that had such a request been listened to, Reg may well of been significantly better off :-



On 4 May the initial examination of Reg's left leg reported no pieces of metal and no bony injury, apparent infected area near the head of the fibula.

The extent of the injury to Reg's left leg was extensive. It was described as having been a shrapnel wound on the outer boarder of the popliteal space (hollow at the back of the knee) with subsequent infection and drainage by counter openings. By 13 August the condition was described as marked atrophy of muscles of thigh and leg, knee joint fixed, range of movement from 80° to 100°, ankle joint seems normal but movements are weak, no evidence of nerve injury.

As Reg continued to rehabilitate in Ontario Mititary Hospital he turned his hand to poetry and wrote the following poem, clearly reflecting 1st hand experience but also highlighting some hidden talents. The poem was obviously sent to a family member back at home and subsequently published :-



On transfer from Ontario Military Hospital to the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital Dartford on 22 Nov, Reg's condition was described as follows :-

"Very extensive wound back of left knee, sepsis, Foreign Body removed inner side of leg, and leg drained. Limb very wasted from knee down, some foot drop. Very limited movement of knee both flexion (bending) and extension (straightening). Is still on crutches."

The leg wound sustained by Reg had unfortunately not healed well resulting in large chunks of his lower thigh and calf progressively cut away to drain the wound and excise infected flesh. In those days there were no antibiotics and sepsis of any wound could result in death if not dealt with in this fashion.

Medically unfit

Reg was eventually assessed as "Permanently unfit for general service. Unfit for home service, for 6 months." and approved for discharge and repatriation back to Australia on 7 December. By this time it is thought that the total 216 days in hospital took another toll that was not assessed at that time. During the early 20th century Tuberculosis was a common, insidious infection throughout the western world. Confined in a hospital bed would have exposed Reg to this chronic infection which was usually fatal in the long run. His weakened condition after three successive woundings would only have exacerbated his exposure to any number of infections in a hospital ward at that time.

On 20 December at Davenport, Reg finally embarked upon the HMAT A54 Runic arriving in Melbourne on 14 Feb 1918.

Sun - Thursday 14th February, 1918 – page 5

FULL SHARE OF FIGHTING

Hit Four Times by Sniper

Corporal Reg. Dargan, who returned to-day, has had his full share of the fighting. At Lone Pine he was well ahead in the dash for the Turkish stronghold, when he was plugged about the body. After getting over the first shock he tried to proceed, but was struck four times by a sniper, and went down. He remained down until he was lifted up about 12 hours later by field ambulance men.

Corporal Dargan on being discharged from a hospital in England was sent to the firing line in France. While there he received a wound in a peculiar way.

His company had been engaged in a successful surprise attack on a village, and while in the billets they were ordered to start off to the assistance of some other troops. While Dargan was putting on his belt a 5.9 shell came through the roof, and a flying splinter tore a lump out of his leg from the knee to the calf. This wound made further fighting on his part impossible.

The young corporal, who was a linotype operator at William Brooks and Co.'s printing establishment before the war, is a son of Mr. P. Dargan, of Lord-street, North Sydney. At Lone Pine he lost a photograph of his two-year-old niece. The picture, which had the name "Paddy" upon it, was returned to "The Sun" office, and being reproduced in the paper was recognised by the Dargan family and duly claimed.

Upon arrival back in Australia, Reg was transported over land to Sydney where he was admitted to No.4 Australian General Hospital, Randwick and on 26 February, his discharge was deferred until 25 April. This was the first indication that indeed Reg was much more unwell than what to date had been communicated. He continued to undergo treatment and have his future assessed, including for some strange reason a review of the earlier court martial.

Discharge

Reg was finally discharged medically unfit on 12 Jul 1918.

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.	
2nd Military District.	
<p style="text-align: center;">OFFICER IN CHARGE, BASE RECORDS, VICTORIA BARRACKS, MELBOURNE.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Victoria Barracks, Sydney, JUL 3 1918</p>
<p style="font-size: 1.2em;">1122 Cpl. Dargan. R. 2nd Bn</p>	
<p>The above mentioned Soldier who returned to Australia per H.M.A.T. "<i>Ruenie</i>" on the <u>14. 2. 18</u> was discharged from the Australian Imperial Force in consequence of medical unfitness on <u>12. 7. 1918</u>.</p> <p>Documents relating to this man's discharge forwarded herewith completed.</p>	
<p><i>W. Taylor</i>, Captain, S.O. Invalids & Returned Soldiers, 2nd Military District.</p>	
<p><small>D.H. 2's Printing Office, Victoria Barracks, Sydney</small></p>	

Reg spent the remainder of his life in and out of hospital and did manage to return to work for a brief period at his old job with William Booth & Co.

We never did discover what Alma had said to Reg in his letter from the trenches at Gallipoli, as part of that letter was missing, however, we do know that she did say "I Do" on the 21 Dec 1918 at St Mary's Church Concord in Sydney, when 31 year old linotype operator Reg married 26 year old clerk

Alma Christina OLSEN (1892 - 1967)

The service was performed by Father Thomas BARLOW and witnessed by Patrick John O'HALLORAN and Adaline May OLSEN and the marriage was registered in 1918 at Burwood.

Alma was born on 11 Jun 1892 at Five Dock in Sydney the daughter of engine driver Carl and Elizabeth Jane OLSEN <née JONES> and her birth was registered in 1892 at Drummoyne in Sydney.

At the time of their marriage Reg was living in North Sydney and Alma was living at Mortlake in Sydney.

Reg suffered much family recrimination as Alma was thought of as being German, when in fact she was Scandinavian.

Reg died on 13 Aug 1920 aged 32 years in the Woodville Military Hospital at Randwick in Sydney.

Daily Telegraph - Saturday 14th August, 1920 - page 10

DARGAN.—August 13th, 1920, at "Woodville" Military Hospital, Randwick, Corporal Reginald Dargan, late of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Brigade (Aussie).

DARGAN.—August 13th, 1920, at "Woodville" Military Hospital, Randwick, Reginald, dearly loved husband of Alma Dargan, and youngest son of Patrick and the late Margaret Russell Dargan, of North Sydney.

Reg was buried on the 14 Aug 1920 in the Roman Catholic Section of the Gore Hill Cemetery in Sydney, the service was performed by Father Joseph BREEN and witnessed by J. and L. DARGAN, Reg was buried with his mother Margaret and would be joined later by his father Patrick and sister Margaret Jessie.

Sydney Morning Herald - Saturday 14th August, 1920 – page 11

DARGAN—The Relatives and Friends of Mrs. ALMA DARGAN are kindly invited to attend the Funeral of her late dearly beloved HUSBAND, Reginald, to leave his father's residence, 48 Lord-street, North Sydney, THIS (Saturday) AFTERNOON, at 3 o'clock, for Catholic Cemetery, Gore Hill.

WOOD, COFFILL, LIMITED.

DARGAN—The Relatives and Friends of Mr. PATRICK DARGAN and FAMILY are kindly invited to attend the Funeral of his late dearly beloved SON and their BROTHER, Reginald, to leave 48 Lord-street, North Sydney, THIS (Saturday) AFTERNOON, at 3 o'clock, for Catholic Cemetery, Gore Hill.

DARGAN—The Relatives and Friends of Mr. and Mrs. C. OLSEN and FAMILY, of Turner-avenue, Northcote, are kindly invited to attend the Funeral of their late dearly beloved SON-IN-LAW and BROTHER-IN-LAW, Reginald W. R. Dargan, to leave his father's residence, 48 Lord-street, North Sydney, THIS (Saturday) AFTERNOON, at 3 o'clock, for Catholic Cemetery, Gore Hill.

WOOD, COFFILL, LIMITED.

Centenary of ANZAC – 2018

Before




After



Inscription: *Pray for the repose of the Soul of REGINALD Late Corporal 2nd Battalion A.I.F. ANZAC. Dearly Loved Youngest Son of the above. Died at Randwick 13th Aug. 1920. Aged 32 years and 11 months.*

The Australian Army have left no record of what happened to Reg after his discharge as an invalid but the notification of his death from Victoria Barracks to Military Base Records suggests that the army transferred him to the Red Cross Hostel at Randwick because they knew he was infectious with pulmonary tuberculosis and had not long to live.

MILITARY FORCES OF THE COMMONWEALTH.		
TELEPHONE— <i>E.W.</i>	2ND MILITARY DISTRICT.	Please quote this Number when replying. 69. 1. 395.
VICTORIA BARRACKS, SYDNEY, (District Headquarters), (Date) August 14th...1920.		
Officer-in-Charge, Base Records.		
I regret to inform you that ex No. 1122, Private Reginald DARGAN, 2nd Battalion, (Discharged Soldier) died at "Woodville" Red Cross Home, Randwick, on 13.8.20, cause of death being Tuberculosis.		
		<i>W. H. H. H. H. H.</i> Colonel, A.A.G., 2nd Military District.

The following obituaries were published after Reg's death :-

Sydney Stock & Station Journal - Tuesday 17th August, 1920 – page 4

Lone Pine Hero.

**CORPORAL REG. DARGAN
DEAD.**

(From "The Sun.")

A Lone Pine hero, Corporal Reg. Dargan, died in the Soldiers' Consumptive Hospital, at Randwick, on Friday morning.

The young soldier—he was 32 years of age—was the youngest son of Mr. P. Dargan, of Lord-street, North Sydney, and an old Manly pioneer. He left Sydney with the first contingent, and was among the first to land on Gallipoli. At Lone Pine he was badly smashed up, but after many months in hospital in England he was turned out fit again for active service. He then went to France, where his fighting days were ended by what he always regarded as an unlucky incident.

He had just returned to his billet with his platoon, and was throwing off his gear preparatory to a rest. Suddenly he received orders to go out with his men and help an outpost which was reported to be in difficulties. As he was replacing one of his puttees a shell burst in the billet, and tore away the greater part of the calf of one leg.

Returning to Australia about two years ago, he was passed by the doctor, and in due course went back to his old employment as a linotype operator at Messrs. William Brooks and Co.'s. He soon, however, became ill, and it was found that as the result of a neglected cold, probably contracted at Gallipoli, he had developed consumption.

(Reg. was a member of the mechanical staff of the "Stock Journal" for a number of years, and we are all sorry that he has handled his last bit of "copy.")

DEATH OF CORPORAL REG. DARGAN.

The death of Corporal Reg. Dargan, 2nd Batt. (A.I.F.), youngest son of Mr. P., and the late Mrs. Margaret Russell Dargan, of "Kiora," 48 Lord-street, North Sydney, occurred at "Woodville" Military Hospital Randwick, on the 13th ult. The deceased soldier, an ex-pupil of Marist Brothers, North Sydney, enlisted in September, 1914, and participated in the landing at Gallipoli, and through the campaign, up to the Lone Pine engagement, when he was badly wounded. After seven months in hospitals in Malta and England, he rejoined his unit in France, and fought through all the battles which have made Australians famous, up to Pozieres, when he was again wounded. He then had four months in hospital at Wandsworth, after which he again re-joined his unit, and saw service up to the Battle of Hermies, at which engagement he received wounds which put an end to his active service. He was invalided home, and arrived early in 1918. He died after a long and painful illness, borne with true Christian patience, fortified by the last rites of the Church. The interment took place at Gore Hill Cemetery, on the 14th ult.—R.I.P.

After Reg's death, Patrick DARGAN continued his daily ritual, whenever possible, of walking from his home "Kiora" at 48 Lord Street, North Sydney to Gore Hill Cemetery where he would sit and talk with his late wife Margaret and now also his beloved youngest son, Reg.

Patrick died at his Lord Street home on the 25 Jul 1922 aged 82 years, after suffering for 1 month from influenza and 1 month from broncho pneumonia. The influenza may have been at the tail end of the Spanish influenza pandemic that killed 50 million people world-wide after the Great War. The informant was his son John H. DARGAN, 48 Lord Street, North Sydney and his death was registered in 1922 at St Leonards.

Patrick was buried on the 26 Jul 1922 in the Roman Catholic Section of the Gore Hill Cemetery, he was buried with his wife Margaret and son Reg, the service was performed by Father Richard J. MURPHY and was witnessed by 2 of his sons, John and Lorne Dargan.

Throughout his life Patrick was a devout Catholic, and carried with him his very proud Irish heritage, he was a fine horseman, and remained the head of the DARGAN family right up until his death. At the time of his death Patrick had lived in NSW for 64 years. Patrick was the eldest male of 8 siblings all of whom had immigrated to Australia between 1856 and 1884.

Children (13) of Patrick and Margaret DARGAN <née MIDDLETON> were Robert Patrick, John Hugh, Arthur Lawrence, Annabella Marion (PUXLEY), Daniel Middleton, William Henry, Adam Russell, James Lorne Bede, Margaret Jessie, Mary Elizabeth (O'HALLORAN), Elsie Cecilia (TURNER), Grace May (MINTY) and Reginald Walker Rankin DARGAN.

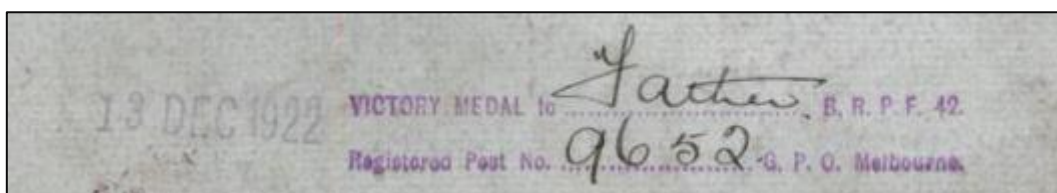
Mr. Patrick Dargan.

Another link with the pioneering days of New South Wales has been severed by the death, on the 25th ult., of Mr. Patrick Dargan, of "Kiora," 48 Lord-street, North Sydney. The deceased gentleman, who was born at Clonmel, County Tipperary, Ireland in 1840, arrived in Sydney in the year 1857. He at once proceeded inland, and engaged in pastoral pursuits, being manager of the "Lockyersleigh" Station (Rankin family), in the Goulburn district, for close on a quarter of a century. He had an intimate knowledge of the doings of the bushrangers who infested the district during that period. In his later years, when in a reminiscent vein, the deceased's vivid recollections of those stirring times were always a source of entralling interest to those who listened to him. Relinquishing station life, the deceased settled in Manly late in 1870, and engaged in contract work for a period of about 20 years, being associated with the building of most of the landmarks in that district, notably, St. Patrick's College and Quarantine Station. He watched Manly grow, with an ever-increasing pride, from a tiny hamlet to the large and prosperous municipality that it now is. He died, full of years, a sterling Catholic, mourned by a large family, and fortified by the rites of Holy Church. The deceased was attended during his illness by the Rev. Fathers Cock, Murphy, and Corish, S.J., and the Sisters of St. Joseph, Mount-street. He was interred on the 26th ult. at Gore Hill Cemetery. Rev. Father Murphy, S.J., officiated at the graveside. He was predeceased by his wife, the late Margaret Russell Dargan, by six years.—R.I.P.

As a result of the large broader DARGAN family, Patrick saw many members of the family and the following direct descendants serve King and country during the Great War with some making the ultimate sacrifice :-

1. Reginald Walker Rankin DARGAN - son - 2nd Battalion, 1st infantry Brigade, 1st Division
2. William Robert DARGAN - grandson - 3rd Battery Field Artillery
3. Robert Reginald DARGAN - grandson - 14th Light Horse Regiment
4. John Hugh DARGAN - grandson - 4th reinforcements, 13th Battalion
5. Alan Lorne Gibson DARGAN - grandson - merchant Navy

On 13 Dec 1922, Patrick was forwarded the Victory Medal as the Reg's next-of-kin, being small recompense for his and the family's loss. Unfortunately Patrick never received Reg's Victory Medal as he had passed away, this having not been communicated to the appropriate authorities.



Five years after Reg's death, Alma married her second husband Septimus Roberts (1894 - 1986) and went on to have a relatively long life dying on the 6 Apr 1967 aged 74 years and her death was registered at Burwood, Sydney.

War Service Summary

Reg enlisted on 28 Sep 1914 and was discharged on 12 Jul 1918, a total of 1,383 days, the majority of which was spent overseas on active duty. In essence, Reg fought 4 fights, ANZAC Cove Landing and Lone Pine, Gallipoli, Pozières and Bullecourt, Somme Valley, France. These four battles were amongst perhaps the four most significant ANZAC legend defining battles. He fought these battles until he could fight no more. He was seriously wounded on three occasions being 8 August 1915 - abdomen, both legs and right arm, 23 Jul 1916 - right hand and 15 Apr 1917 - left leg.

As a result Reg spent a significant amount of time, approximately 800 days, in hospital or being transported to or between hospitals for medical attention or recuperating from his injuries.

In an unfortunate and unreasonable incident, Reg was subjected to a court martial and found guilty of absenting himself without leave while in reality recuperating from serious injury on his own accord without adequate assistance.

In conclusion Reg served his King and country as an exemplary soldier and while not making the ultimate sacrifice in an instant, he ultimately made this sacrifice so that the rest of us could enjoy a more peaceful existence and better life.

Vale Reg.

**They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.**

Thank you Reg for a job well done.