Mr John (Jack) Walsh

Date of Birth: 28 February 1896

Died: 21 August 1966, aged 69 years R.I.P.

WW1, 12th Battalion, Australian Imperial Forces

Motto: Ducit Amor Patriae (Love of My Country Leads Me)

Colours: White over blue

Awards: Belgian Croix de Guerre

Where it has been difficult to interpret words in John's service notes, a question mark or marks appear.

The family have documents that support the information provided.

1915

John Walsh offered himself for enlistment in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on the 31 July 1915 with the consent of his parents. He was 18 years and 5 months old and an apprentice Butcher who lived with his parents in Ulverstone.

His medical examination took place on the 31 July 1915, and he was considered fit for active service. The examination was undertaken in Ulverstone and his age on this day was given as 19. He weighed 11 stone and his height was 5 feet 9 ½ inches. Complexion dark, eyes blue and hair dark. His religion was Roman Catholic.

He signed his Attestation Paper on the 19 August 1915 where he attested his age to be 19 and 7/12 years. His Oath was signed on the 20 August 1915 at Claremont in Tasmania. His official Date of Joining is 19 August 1915.

A North West Post (Formby, Tas.) article from Tuesday 17 August, 1915 states:

"Ulverstone Presentations

At Mr Stones' butchery establishment on Saturday evening, Mr John Walsh, who has volunteered for active service, was the recipient of a shaving outfit, presented by his fellow employees. Mr P.D. Pinkus, in making the presentation, wished the young soldier God speed and a safe return. Mr Stones also presented Mr. Walsh with a wristlet watch, as a token of his appreciation of his past service and good wishes for his future success."

John was appointed to the 26th Battalion at Claremont on the 27 September 1915. We assume that his initial training was done at the base called Claremont Camp. The majority of Tasmanian's who enlisted for WW1 trained at this Camp. Up to 2000 soldiers were stationed there at any one time. A War memorial commemorating the site has been unveiled at Claremont (The Mercury, Sunday April 12, 2015).

John embarked at Melbourne, on HMAT *Ulysses* A38 on the **27**st **October, 1915** as part of the **6**th **Reinforcements of the 7**th **Infantry Brigade, 26**th **Infantry Battalion**. His Regimental Number was 2926 and his enlistment rank was as a Private.

Service number 2926

Rank Private

26 Infantry Battalion - 1 to 8

Roll title Reinforcements (June 1915 - January

1916)

Conflict/Operation First World War, 1914-1918

Date of Embarkation 27 October 1915

Place of embarkation Melbourne

Ship Embarked On HMAT Ulysses A38

Launched in 1913, the *Ulysses* was the largest ship to serve as a troop carrier, and was leased by the Commonwealth until 15th August 1917. On 8th May 1915 she set sail from Melbourne with the **first contingents of the 21st and 22nd Battalions and 6th Brigade Headquarters. On a subsequent voyage on 27th October 1915 she transported the 6th reinforcements 22nd Battalion** to Egypt.

The following is obtained from Army Form B. 103. Casualty Form – Active Service:

1916

On the 1 March 1916 Private John Walsh was allotted to proceed to join the 12th Infantry Battalion, 3rd Brigade (a Brigade of the 1st Division) and on the 2 March 1916 it is recorded that he joined this Battalion at the "Railhead", (Zeitoun Railhead or Zeitoun Camp, near Cario, Egypt). On the 29 March 1916 his record noted; "Proceeding to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) at Alex". (Alexandria in Egypt).

Information following and through the document that is indented and within quotation marks and where the source is not quoted, is taken from the Australian War Memorial's website information;

"The 12^{th} Infantry Battalion was among the first infantry units raised for the AIF during the First World War. Half of the battalion was recruited in Tasmania, a quarter was recruited in South Australia, and a quarter from Western Australia. With the 9^{th} , 10^{th} , and 11^{th} Battalions it formed the 3^{rd} Brigade.

The Battalion was raised within three weeks of the declaration of war in August 2014 and embarked just two months later. After a brief stop in Albany, Western Australia, the battalion proceeded to Egypt, arriving in early December. The **3rd Brigade** was the covering force for the ANZAC landing on 25 April 1915 and so was the first

ashore at around 4:30 am. Lieutenant Colonel L.F. Clarke, commander of the 12th Battalion, was killed by a sniper within hours of the landing. The battalion was heavily involved in establishing and defending the front line of the ANZAC position, and in August contributed two companies to the attack on Lone Pine. It was the only battalion in the brigade to do so. The 12th served at ANZAC until the Gallipoli evacuation in December 1915.

After the withdrawal from Gallipoli, the 12th Infantry Battalion returned to Egypt and, in March 1916, sailed for France and the Western Front."

John did not serve in the Gallipoli campaign. He disembarked at Marseilles, France on the 5 April 1916. Before proceeding to France, John would have undertaken some training in Egypt. Possibly at Ismailia – a training area near the Suez Canal for the 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions from 1916 to 1919. John's family have a photo of him taken at the Pyramids.

Anzacinfrance.com website reads that in mid April 1916, the Australian 1st and 2nd Divisions are committed in the line at Fleurbaix, just south of the manufacturing town Armentieres on the Lys River near the Belgium border. July 19, 1916 the 1st Division enters the rear area of Albert in preparation for action at Pozieres. July 23, 1916 the Australian 1st Division commences action at Pozieres.

The Australian War Memorial's website information on the 12th Infantry Battalion continues;

"From then (March 1916) until 1918 the battalion took part in bitter trench warfare. The battalion's first major action in France was at Pozieres in the Somme valley in July 1916".

Anzacinfrance.com goes on the say that; The 3^{rd} of September 1916 was the last attack by Australians on Pozieres. Total approximate losses for the six week period: 1^{st} Division – 7000 soldiers. The 2^{nd} and 4^{th} Division losses amounted to 15200 soldiers.

In Pozieres there is a street named: the 'First Australian Division Street'. Close by is the First Australian Division Memorial. This site was chosen (for the Memorial) because it was the scene of the first operation, on a large scale, undertaken by the 1st Division in France; because of its strategic importance in the Battle of the Somme, 1916; and on account of the intensity of the fighting and gallantry shown by both sides in its capture and retention. Pozieres so impressed itself on the minds of the members of the 1st Australian Division that its selection as the site of the memorial to be erected to the fallen of the Division was unanimously endorsed.

On the 5th September 1916, Canadian troops relieved Australian troops at Pozieres. Australian troops are withdrawn from the Somme and sent north to the Ypres salient in Flanders.

"After Pozieres, the battalion fought at Ypres in Flanders and then returned to the Somme for winter."

A promotion to Corporal is recorded on the 25 July 1916 for John. This date also records him being in the "Field".

On the 24 November 1916 John is promoted to Sergeant and Acting Company Quarter Master Sergeant to complete "Establishment". He is still in the "Field".

^{1 see page 6} On the 29 December 1916 he is promoted to Company Quarter Master Sergeant "vice Hearps Commissioned?". Still in the "Field".

1917

There is no information relating to 1917 in John's record. However Army Form W. 3121 dated 1/09/1917 headed: 12th Australian Infantry Battalion Unit, 3rd Infantry Brigade, 1st Australian Division, 1st ANZAC Corps states that:

C.Q.M.S. John Walsh was

Honoured by a Recommendation for the following action; "For marked ability and keenness in looking after his men and anticipating their requirements. He keeps the Company books in a very efficient manner".

This Honour is recorded in the Australian War Memorial's database under John's personal service record .

"In 1917 the battalion took part in the brief advance that followed the German Army's retreat to the Hindenburg Line. For their valorous actions near Boursies during this advance, Captain J.E. 'Jim" Newland, commanding A Company, and Sergeant J.W. Whittle were each awarded the Victoria Cross. The battalion subsequently returned to Belgium to participate in the offensive that became known as the Third Battle of Ypres. [A website refers to this Third Battle of Ypres as where the soldiers of the 1st Division (which includes the 12the Infantry Brigade) fought with great success at Menin Road in September 1917 and Broodeseinnde in October]".

The Third Battle of Ypres (31 July to 6 November 1917) is also known as the Battle of Passchendaele, in which the British, Canadian, ANZAC and French forces recaptured the Passchendaele Ridge east of the city at a terrible cost of lives. After months of fighting, this battle resulted in nearly half a million casualties to all sides, and only a few miles of ground won by Allied forces.

A beautifully embroidered cushion cover showing the burning of the famous Cloth Hall in Ypres, Belgium is in the family's possession. It is not known if John brought in back to Australia at the time of his discharge or if it was sent to him at a later date.

1918

On the 16 February 1918 John received a Belgian Decoration the "Croix de Guerre". This Honour is recorded in the Australian War Memorial's database under John's personal service record.

The Award was published in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette on the 27 November 1918 and in the London Gazette of 9 July 1918, page 8191. He was one of only 193 Australian servicemen to receive this Award.

The London Gazette notice issued by the War Office on the 12 July 1918 says;

"The following are among the Decorations and medals awarded by the Allied Powers at various dates to the British Forces for distinguished services rendered during the course of the campaign:-

His Majesty the King has given unrestricted permission in all cases to wear the Decorations and medals in question.

Decorations conferred by
HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF THE BELGIANS
2926 Company Quartermaster-Serjeant (sic) John Walsh, Infantry."

John is shown still with his unit on the 27 February 1918.

On the 2 March 1918 he is on leave to the United Kingdom from the "Field" and he is shown as returning from leave on the 16 March 1918. No other information recorded between this date and the 19 October.

"In March and April 1918 the battalion helped to stop the German spring offensive, and later participated in the great allied offensive of 1918, fighting near Amiens on 8 August 1918.

This advance by British and empire troops was the greatest success in a single day on the Western Front, one that German General Erich Ludendorff described as "the black day of the German Army in this war". The battalion continued operations until late September 1918."

On the 19 October 1918 he is promoted to temporary W.O. Class II and temporary Regiment Quarter Master Sergeant "vice Cassidy to Woolwich?"

"At 11 am on 11 November 1918, the guns fell silent. Soon after, the members of the AIF began to return to Australia for demobilisation and discharge."

On the 18 November 1918 while TRQMS he is shown as having an injury to head and shoulders "acc". He is still shown to be in the "Field".

21 November 1918 a report appears that indicates he was in the 2nd Stat. Hospital* in Rouen. (The French city of Rouen on the Seine was, in WW1, safely behind the lines and became a major logistics centre with numerous base hospitals including an Australian hospital). On the 22 November 1918 he was classified injured - accidentally.

*There were 2nd Stationery Hospitals recorded in Nantes, Outreau and Abbeville but not Rouen. There was a 1st Stationery Hospital at Rouen and LeMans in addition to many other hospital types.

On the 28 November 2018 he was transferred to England and embarked from France on the S.S. West Australian? (there is no record on-line of this vessel). He is shown to be in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Netley on the 29 November 1918 with a fractured clavicle - accidental. This hospital was a large military hospital in Netley, near Southampton, Hampshire, England. The building was badly damaged by fire in 1963, and most of it was demolished in 1966, leaving just the chapel in the centre, which still survives today as a museum and visitor centre. On-line chat says that there are no surviving patient records from any period of the hospital's history. The hospital housed the British Army's largest psych unit. On the 31 December 1918 his Next of Kin were advised he was in hospital. "Mother" noted on record.

1919

On the 21 January 1919 on Service & Casualty Form Part II, John is shown as being at Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley for G.S.W. left shoulder (acc) and discharged to furlough on 24 January, to report to No.1 Command Depot, Sutton Veny on 7 February 1919.

On the 10 April 1919 his Next of Kin were advised he was returning to Australia.

He embarked on the "H.M.T. Derbyshire" on the 2 March 1919 for Australia and disembarked on the 15 April 1919.

John was "discharged" from the AIF by an M.D. on 15 June 1919.

^{1 see page 4.} In the book "**Tasmanian ANZACS**" by Stefan Petrow, John's promotion is mentioned. See Chapter 15, September 1917 **Polygon Wood**.

"Ulverstone butcher, Company Quartermaster Sergeant John Walsh (cadets), who joined the battalion in March 1916, was commended for his marked ability and keenness in looking after his men and anticipating their requirements. He kept the company books in 'a very efficient manner'. In February 1918 he was awarded the Belgian Croix De Guerre. Injured accidentally by a gunshot wound to his left shoulder and face in November 1918, he returned to Australia in March 1919."

On June 2 1926, John (Jack) Walsh married Florence (Tory) Green. They lived in Devonport for a couple of years before moving to Launceston. John worked for the then PMG (Post Master General –the organisation that looked after telephones and the mail – now Telstra and Australia Post). He worked as a Linesman, Grade 1. He retired from the PMG as from the close of that business on 7 November 1945. John and Florence purchased a grocery/milk bar shop on Invermay Road, Launceston, next to 88 Invermay Road which became their permanent home. Their business was successful and they then set up business in the milk bar attached to the iconic Star Theatre (directly across the road from their house) in Launceston where they both work for many years. They had 4 children – 3 girls and 1 boy. John was brilliant at maths and could add any number of figures up in his head – a skill which probably helped him in his role as CQMS in the 12th AIF. John had issues with lung disease for many years. He passed away on the 21 August 1966, a much loved husband, Father and Grandad.

The 3rd Infantry Brigade (Outer States) [First Division] formed 17 August 1914.

Subunits: 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Infantry Battalions.

3rd Machine Gun Company

3A/1 & 3A/2 Light Trench Mortar Batteries

3rd Light Trench Mortar Battery

Commanders:

Colonel/Brigadier General E.G. Sinclair-MacLagan from 8/8/1914 to 3/12/1916 Brigadier General H.G.Bennett from 3/12/1916 past November 1918.

Campaigns:

Egypt, Sinai: Defence of Suez Canal, Landing at Anzac, Defence of Anzac, Sari Bair, Withdrawal from Anzac.

Western Front: Pozieres, Retreat to the Hindenburg Line, Bullecourt, Menin Road, Broodeseinde, Hazebrouck, Amiens, Hindenburg Line.

Research by John's Grandchildren: Yvonne Brown (nee Hill), Dianne Duffy (nee Hill), Wendy Little (nee Hill), Sandra Halpenny (nee Hill) – daughters of Gwendoline Walsh and Ern Hill. Gwendoline was John's eldest child. Scott Dalton son of Dorothy Walsh and Max Dalton. Dorothy was John's second child. Residents of Tasmania.

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