

John Josphe Hatch

World War I



Figure 1: John Josphe Hatch, 1916

Premiers ANZAC Spirit School Prize 2025

Part A: 1,458 words

Part B: 337 words

PART A,

Early life,

John 'Jack' Joseph Hatch was born on 17 of May 1889 in the rural town of Nurioopta, nestled in the Barossa Valley, South Australia. He was one of ten children of John Charles Hatch and Sarah Cockshell.



Figure 2: Truro School, 1982.

Due to family financial hardship, he attended Truro Primary School for five years before leaving to work. Like many children of his time, he built rock fences, earning four pounds and six pennies weekly. As he grew older, he became a shearer, travelling to New South Wales and New Zealand with his friend Ben Grose.

War service,

John enlisted in Adelaide on 2 February 1916, joining the 43rd Battalion as a Private, service number 686. On 9 June 1916, he boarded the troopship *S.S. Afric*. The ship stopped along Sri Lanka, Egypt, and France, before disembarking in England for training.

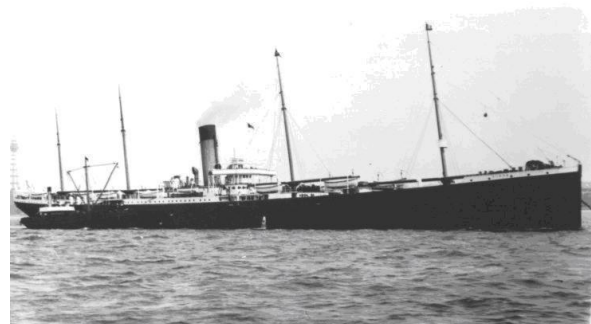


Figure 3: *S.S. Afric*.

At No. 12 Camp, Lark Hill, he lived in shared huts with access to large meal halls, a rifle range, and stores. Nearby villages were open to soldiers after hours.

Training ran from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekdays, and from 8:30 to 12:30 on Saturdays. John was promoted Lance Corporal on the 17 August 1916, and to Corporal on the 22 November the same year.

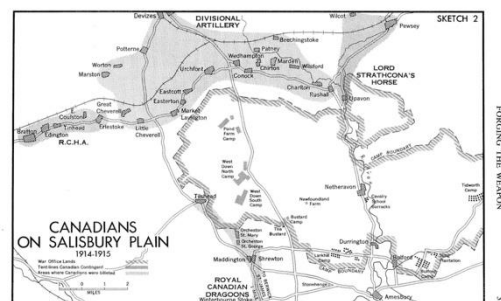


Figure 4: Map displaying Lark Hill and surroundings.

On 25 November 1916, John left England to France, settling in No. 1 Rest Camp, still training while awaiting orders to move into the line.

On 30 December 1916, the Battalion joined the 41st in Armentieres. Despite poor trench conditions, the soldiers remained strong. John participated in patrols, constructing dugouts, wiring and draining. There had also been a raid on the enemy's line, which seemed to have been successful.

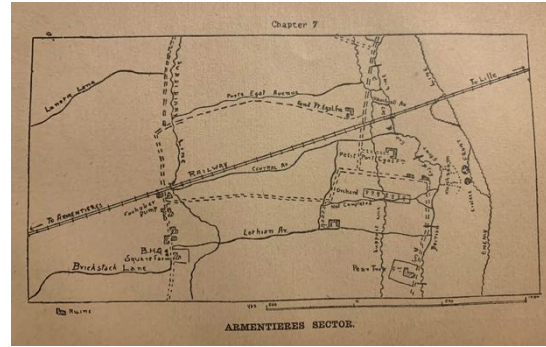


Figure 5: Map displaying the trenches in Armentieres.

In March 1917, John moved toward Ungodly Trench to push against Germany, enduring shellfire, bombardments, rain and continued training. They were later removed from the frontline where they assisted in the quieter support area, continuing with similar work.

On 1 May 1917, John moved to Journy to prepare for the battle of Messines, returning to Armentieres before advancing through St Yvon. He fought under harsh conditions, fighting through heavy gunfire, shellfire and constant air surveillance. Throughout the 18 days, the British, Australian and New Zealand soldiers pushing forward until the ridge was in their hands.

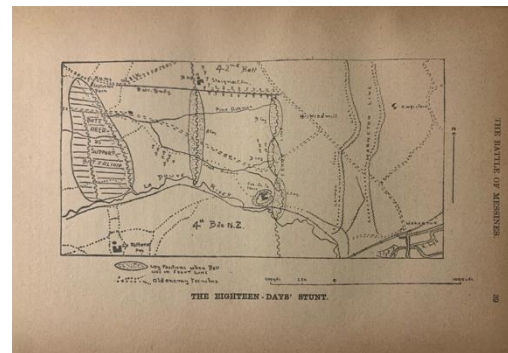


Figure 6: Map of Messines.

On 21 June 1917, the Battalion camped beside the Douve River. After brief rest, they prepared for a diversion east of Messines to aid the Ypres attack. John practiced the approach of attack and was lectured over a model of the battlefield, partaken in by all platoons.

In early July, the Battalion attacked and captured the oppositions strongpoint, a windmill beside Warneton used as an observation post for the Germans. Other than the heavy casualties, this diversion was successful as they captured the windmill and successfully diverted Germanys attention away from Ypres. During this time, John was officially promoted to sergeant on the 29 July 1917.

On 2 October 1917, the Battalion evacuated to Ypres, joining other forces. The Battalion began its assault by capturing Hill 40 despite early casualties. The first objective at Alma was secured, followed by consolidation under increasing shellfire. Mud and enemy fire made evacuations and supply delivery difficult.

John rotated through positions near Tyne Cott and Bremen Redoubt, enduring severe weather, gas exposure, and artillery bombardment. Despite exhaustion and trench foot, the men held the line, performed salvage and burial duties, and prepared for relief.



Figure 7: John's Croix de Guerre Medal.

From October to December, the troops were allowed to rest after outstanding performance. During November, they had a switch of camp, moving to Canteen Corner, where John stayed until the end of December.

On the 31 December 1917, John proceeded to the 10th Training Battalion in England. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre on the 18th of February 1918 and had taken time off to visit Glasgow. He met a woman named Margaret there, often meeting up with her during leave and kept in touch through letters after.

John returned to France on the 7 April 1918, to assist the 43rd in defending Amiens. A German attack south of the Somme was launched, leading to John being gassed multiple times. He was rushed to the Casualty Clearing Station on the 26 May 1918.

He remained in hospital from 27 May to 28 June 1918, and the Australian Convalescent Depot from 29 June to 22 July 1918, until he rejoined his Battalion to assist in the Battle of Hamel.

Report		Place of Casualty	Date of Casualty	Remarks
23	1-6-18, 1st D. H.S. Co. 43rd Bn.	Ypres	26.4.18	Gas
24	24.6.18, 10th T.B. Co. 10th T.B. Bn.	Alma, Somme	24.6.18	Gas
25	24.6.18, 10th T.B. Co. 10th T.B. Bn.	Alma, Somme	24.6.18	Gas
26	24.6.18, 10th T.B. Co. 10th T.B. Bn.	Alma, Somme	24.6.18	Gas
27	24.6.18, 10th T.B. Co. 10th T.B. Bn.	Alma, Somme	24.6.18	Gas
28	24.6.18, 10th T.B. Co. 10th T.B. Bn.	Alma, Somme	24.6.18	Gas
29	24.6.18, 10th T.B. Co. 10th T.B. Bn.	Alma, Somme	24.6.18	Gas
30	24.6.18, 10th T.B. Co. 10th T.B. Bn.	Alma, Somme	24.6.18	Gas
31	24.6.18, 10th T.B. Co. 10th T.B. Bn.	Alma, Somme	24.6.18	Gas
32	24.6.18, 10th T.B. Co. 10th T.B. Bn.	Alma, Somme	24.6.18	Gas
33	24.6.18, 10th T.B. Co. 10th T.B. Bn.	Alma, Somme	24.6.18	Gas

Figure 8: John's casualty form stating his gassing.

They supported further attacks, including clearing Mericourt-Sur-Somme. Despite gas and bombing raids, objectives were secured. The Battalion was later relieved and moved to Hamel to reorganise.

In late August 1918, John supported major Allied operations near Bray-sur-Somme and later advanced through Ceylon Wood and Suzanne Valley under difficult weather and enemy fire. Despite confusion on the flanks, troops successfully captured key objectives, including Scutari and Graz Trenches.

On 1 September 1918, they cleared enemy positions near Allaines. Over the operation, the Battalion took around 350 prisoners and 40 machine guns before being relieved on September 3, 1918.

After the Scutari Trench operations, he advanced in support of a German retreat, reaching positions near Mont St. Quentin, Tincourt-Boucly, and Courcelles. The troops adapted to open warfare, faced tough marching and poor weather, but had minimal casualties. At Courcelles, the Battalion rested and reorganised.

At the end of September, the John joined the attack on the Hindenburg Line near Bellicourt and Bony. They advanced through heavy shelling and poor weather, clearing trenches and capturing enemy positions. After occupying Bony, they held the line along the canal. This was their final operation of the war.

After their final battle, they settled in Ramburelles until demobilisation. On 23 April 1919, John proceeded back to England where he embarked back to Australia almost a month later on 23 April on the Konigin Luise. During his time in England, he took time off to travel to Glasglow where he married Margaret Robertson on the 8 May 1919.

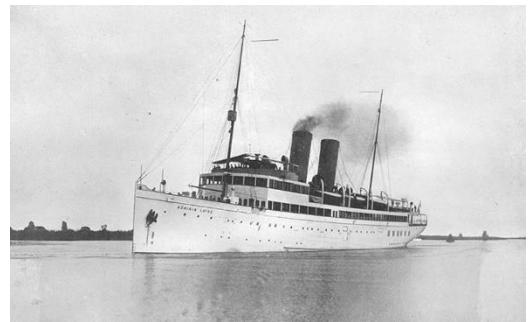


Figure 9: SS Konigin Luise.

John arrived back in Adelaide on 11 August and was later discharged on 25 September after being awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Post War,

John and Margaret settled in Edwardstown, where he worked at Pengelly's, transporting goods from Port Adelaide. They lived in a rented house while awaiting government housing under the Soldiers Settlement scheme.

Eventually, John rode his pushbike from Truro to Glossop to inspect blocks, choosing one to farm for the rest of his life. They moved there in August 1920, initially living in a military tent until a basic house was built.



Figure 10: John's block house.

John cultivated land in Monash before receiving his own block. He and Margaret had three daughters: Sally, Eeanne, and Jo. All attended Glossop High School, with Sally becoming its first head girl in 1941.

Despite limited education, John served on several committees, including the Upper Murray Grape Growers' Association, Glossop Literary and Debating Society, and Glossop Progress Association.

He died in October 1956 of a heart attack while tending vines, likely due to war-related gas injuries. His granddaughter Anne later inherited the family home and continues to live there.

ANZAC Characteristics,

The Anzac spirit embodies many soldiers who have fought in wars, and John seemed like no exception to that. However, out of the many qualities that John carried, I believe that he showed mateship and perseverance more than any. Before John had even joined the army, his 18-year-old brother was killed in the war, and despite what must have been a traumatic experience, he still went forward with his

enlistment alongside another of his other brothers. He fought hard amongst his friends in the 43rd Battalion and had to experience their deaths as well. In a letter to his fiancée of the time he writes, “You ask what’s wrong [with] the Aussies – Oh heavens if I could tell you our casualties since Aug 8th, 1918, you would hide your head in shame. Poor lads we did our job we set out to do-but at what a cost. We are expecting to go up toward the line, perhaps beyond the line for that matter.” He was a casualty himself before he wrote that letter as he was gassed multiple times whilst in the line of battle. After 2 months of rest and recovery, he was placed back in the middle of war with his Battalion once again. Towards the end of Johns time spent in Europe, he received a letter from a close friend of his, a French soldier who he most likely met whilst stationed in France. The man thanks John for his good heart and refers to him as a dear friend. John was also awarded the Croix de Guerre, a medal to recognise bravery and good conduct on the battlefield.

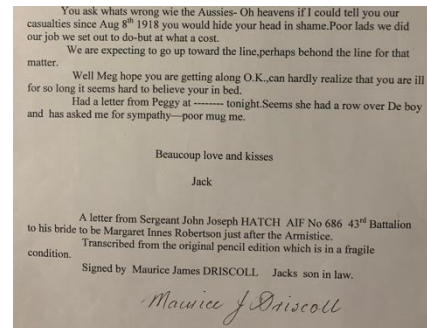


Figure 11: Letter to Margaret Robertson.

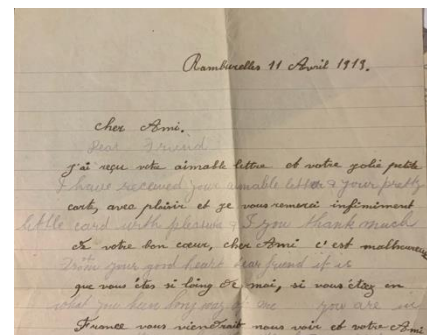


Figure 12: Letter from French soldier.

PART B,

Process behind the writing,

To gather the evidence, I followed a careful and step-by-step research process that combined both primary and secondary sources. I began by using the Virtual War Memorial of Australia, where I searched for soldiers who had lived close to me by entering local town names into the search function. This acted as a secondary source, giving me a starting point and helping me narrow my focus. I then visited the local library and explored the local history collection, where I eventually came across Jack Hatch's name on a poster made by his granddaughter. With further help from the librarian, Jackie, I was able to locate more records and photos. Jackie also pointed me towards Jack's granddaughter, Anne, and encouraged me to reach out to her. When I contacted Anne, she kindly invited me to her home and showed me the family's old records, primary sources that had been carefully stored for decades, and even allowed me to take some documents home to use in my research.

Along the way, there were some challenges and problem-solving involved. At first, I discovered there were two men named Jack Hatch in the Riverland, which caused some confusion. However, by comparing the dates and family relations, I was able to work out which one was the individual I was researching. Old handwriting also proved difficult, as most of the records were written in cursive, but the tips from the ancestry website helped me read them more accurately.

This process gave me more than just evidence, it gave me a personal connection to Jack's story. It was a surreal feeling to hold letters that were written over a hundred years ago, and it made the task feel less like an assignment and more like storytelling. I felt very appreciative that Anne trusted me with such important family records. Overall, the experience was both interesting and meaningful, helping me understand not only how chaotic life was during the war but also how stories of service can bring people together across generations and communities.

HaSS word count: Part A 1465

HaSS word count: Part B 341

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