

*Situation: Position exposed, movement restricted to a minimum. Harrassing, ineffective enemy shelling round Bn HQ. No cooking possible on account of exposed position. Food prepared in Warloy and sent forward at night in hot food containers.*

*Works: Capt H B D Barlow MC appointed Works Officer during tour in line.*

*C O inspected all posts at dusk.*

*Rations: Rations arrived at 10:00 pm. Transport Driver killed and 1 storeman wounded. Rations distributed to Coy's by 11:15 pm. Rum Issue.*

*Strength: 1 OR killed and 2 wounded. 15 ORs rejoined unit from hospital.*

*28/4/1918 - Weather: Showery.*

*Situation: Great vigilance and sharp sniping all day. Our recorded hits, 2 Officers and 10 ORs. Our losses 1 OR.*

*Rations: Rations arrived at 10 pm. Rum issue.*

*One of our heavy guns shooting short, shells falling in own lines.*

*Strength: 1 OR killed and 1 wounded. 1 OR returned from hospital.*

From that entry it seems James was killed by a German sniper. He was buried in Plot II, Row F, Grave 3 of the Warloy-Baillon Communal Cemetery Extension by the Rev R. G. Crawford two days later. The first Commonwealth burials took place in this cemetery in October, 1915 but in preparation for an attack on the German frontline in mid 1916 an extension was created and it now contains 1,331 World War 1 Commonwealth burials and two World War 2 burials. There are 318 Australians buried in this facility.

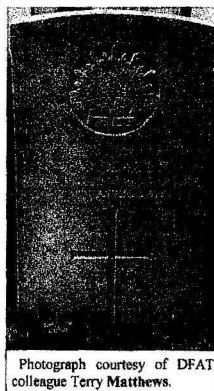
Although born (and at the time of his enlistment, also working) in the watershed it appears those who compiled the name list for The Nabiac War Memorial weren't aware James had been killed and so the usual small cross does not appear beside his name. Given this omission, his name was also not included in the allocation of trees planted in the park several years later.

**SYRON.** 3675 Trooper Daniel. Daniel completed his Att Fm at Newcastle on 26/5/1917 and the document stated he had been born near Cape Hawk, was single, a labourer (although on his Application to Enlist he stated he was a fisherman) and almost 19½ years of age. One of the last papers on his dossier however, was a Statutory Declaration dated 5/2/1941 in which he reported he'd lost his coat in Sydney Harbour in 1927 and it had had his Returned From Active Service badge still on it and he wanted the badge replaced. The bottom section of the form requested Daniel to give his birth details and in that section he entered: *Forster, 9/12/1900*. If this date was correct it means when he enlisted in mid 1917, he was really 17½ years of age! He began his basic training on 7 June at the ALH Recruit Training Squadron in Menangle and on 10 November was posted to 33<sup>rd</sup> Reinf, 7<sup>th</sup> ALH. The unit left Sydney aboard the *CANBERRA* on the 16<sup>th</sup>, disembarked in Suez and moved through to the Moascar Camp on 21 December.

Daniel's military career then began an extended downward spiral as just ten days later he was admitted to the No 2 Stationary Hospital, Moascar and his B.103 reported he had suffered a *Punctured wound thigh* but there was no explanation of how this wounding occurred. It must have been a minor injury however, as he was back training again by 4/1/1918. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> however, he was back in hospital and the entry this time stated *Doubtful Tubercle* but he remained a patient until 10 February when the diagnosis was altered to *bronchitis* and he was discharged to a Rest Camp at Port Said. Regular Medical Boards continued to declare his physical status as "B2" but he returned to the Moascar Details Camp on 16 March.

A month later (17/4) he was admitted to the 14<sup>th</sup> AGH, Port Said but no illness was stated. While in the facility (9/5) a Medical Board classified Daniel physically "A" Class but just two days later, he was transferred again to the Rest Camp at Port Said and this time the note *Chest Cough* was included. Three days later (14/5) he was admitted to the 14<sup>th</sup> General again suffering from a bout of *gastritis* and it wasn't until 31 May he made it back to the Rest Camp. On 12 June Daniel returned to Moascar and the 2<sup>nd</sup> ALH for more training. On the 24<sup>th</sup> he reported to his original unit - the 7<sup>th</sup> ALH - and was TOS.

On 12/9/1918, Daniel was back into the medical system again and while at the 44<sup>th</sup> Stationary Hosp he was diagnosed as suffering from *pharyngitis* (inflammation of the pharynx or throat) but the following day, after he'd been admitted to the 14<sup>th</sup> General again, the diagnosis was stated as *furunculosis* (boils). He was transferred to the Moascar Rest Camp again on 14 October, returned to the Details Camp on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and rejoined his unit on 3 November. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, Daniel was detached to Moascar again and was



Photograph courtesy of DFAT colleague Terry Matthews.

admitted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stationary Hosp the following day where he was diagnosed as suffering from a bout of *broncho-pneumonia*. His condition worsened and on the 30<sup>th</sup> he was stated to be *Dangerously Ill*. He was *Out of Danger* by 6 December however, and was transferred to the Rest Camp at Port Said on the 19<sup>th</sup>. He remained at the Rest Camp until 12/1/1919 when he returned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> ALH in Moascar. Later that same month he was detached to the ANZAC Divisional HQ and remained there until 16 June when he was detached to undertake a *Special Motor Course* in Cairo.

The war had long finished and on 2/8/1919 Daniel boarded the *DELTA* for his return to Australia. While travelling Daniel was to spend 2 days in the ship's hospital suffering from a bout of *dermatitis*. He was discharged from the AIF on 11/12/1919.

**SYRON.** 3452 Lance Corporal David. David, the elder brother of Daniel, was also born in Forster and stated on his Att Fm, when he enlisted at the Sydney Showground on 3/1/1917, he was single, 21 years of age and a fisherman. David's basic training was almost non-existent as he was posted to the 9<sup>th</sup> Reinf, 45<sup>th</sup> Bn and left Sydney aboard the *ANCHISES* on 24 January. They disembarked in Devonport on 27 March and began their serious training at the Australian Base, immediately. David crossed to France on 19 June and was TOS the 45<sup>th</sup> Bn on 9 July.

What battles David was involved in are not now known as his records contain an eight month gap at this point with the next entry dated 23/3/1918 and it reported he had been granted leave to the UK. On 18 July the next entry recorded David had been granted ten days in a Rest Camp. He was also granted another leave to the UK in the second half of August. Shortly after his return from this period of leave, David was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal.

The war ended and on the 12/5/1919, David left the UK aboard the *ZEALANDIA* for his return to Australia and was discharged from the AIF on 8/8/1919.

† **SYRON.** 2166 Private George. George was a cousin of both David and Daniel and he had also been born in Forster. At the time of his enlistment however, he was living with his parents near Port Macquarie. George completed his enlistment papers at West Maitland on 13/4/1916 and stated he was single, a labourer and almost 19 years of age. He underwent basic training at the Rutherford Camp, was posted to 3<sup>rd</sup> Reinf, 34<sup>th</sup> Bn and the unit left Sydney aboard the *ANCHISES* on 24/8/1916 bound for the UK. The unit disembarked in Devonport on 11 October and began additional training immediately. On 26 October George was TOS of 34<sup>th</sup> Bn and on 21 November the unit crossed to France and moved up to the Front.

Pages 571-587, Chapter XIV, Volume IV of *Bean's The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918* give a very detailed description of *The Flanders Plan* and more specifically *The Battle of Messines* which began on 7/6/1917. A big part of the preparation for this battle was the location not only of the enemy's artillery but any other military target behind their lines that when destroyed, would hinder their response to the planned Australian attack. To locate and confirm these targets aircraft were used for almost constant observation but regular raids were also conducted on the enemy's frontline trenches the purpose being to not only check out their location and the barbed wire that defended them, but to also capture prisoners for interrogation. In a lengthy foot-note which began on the bottom of page 585 and also occupied over half of page 586, *Bean* included reports on a number of these raids which included the following two:

*May 28 - 29. A patrol of 5 men under Lieutenant E. Shannon (Drummoyne, NSW), 34th Battalion, entered the German front line, examined it, and shot one or two of the garrison.*

and

*May 31 - June 1. In the 34th Battalion two small parties under Lieutenants Brodie and Shannon entered the German front line and, though meeting with opposition, drove back the Germans and bombed their dugouts. Shannon was killed. His body was brought back. No prisoner was taken.*

The next entry on George's B.103 was dated 1/6/1917 and it stated he had been *Wounded In Action*. It is sometimes difficult to realise nowadays the only writing materials available to battalion staff during this conflict were typewriters, ink pens or pencils and the latter two can certainly deteriorate over time. Sadly, the entries in the 34<sup>th</sup> Bn War Diary were made in pencil and while it's fair to assume they were legible at the time, now they're almost unreadable but what follows is my best understanding of the diary images from the AWM web site. The diary states the 34<sup>th</sup> Bn was at Plorgsteert Wood and at 2:30 am a: