



In Memory of
Lance Sergeant
580, JOHN STEUART HENDERSON

26th Battalion Australian Infantry, A.I.F.

who died age 25
on 29 July 1916

Son of Arthur and Caroline Henderson, of Queensland and NSW

Remembered with honour

VILLERS-BRETONNEUX MEMORIAL, FRANCE



LANCE SERGEANT
JOHN STEUART HENDERSON

26TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY, A.I.F.
SERVICE No: 580



Few Australian families of the Great War era suffered losses as grievous as the Henderson family. Four sons of Arthur and Caroline Henderson enlisted in 1915 in Brisbane, but only one returned. Their eldest son was John Stueart Henderson, with his name spelt as his parents chose; but this difficult spelling was dropped by their son, as he was known at Toowoomba Grammar, and in the army almost universally, as **John Stewart Henderson**. (On the Embarkation Roll he is John Stueart, but his own writing at enlistment, Brisbane, 18 May 1915, has the middle name as Stewart).

John enlisted in Brisbane a week after his brother Roy Douglas – SNo 575 (also Douglas Roy on some files) and the two young men were posted to the new 26th Battalion, destined for the 2nd Division and the latter phases of the Gallipoli campaign. In May 1915, they gave their ages as 24 and 18, John being the senior. In June and November their twin brothers Erle SNo 4797 (18) and Arthur SNo 2828 (21) also enlisted in Brisbane, both being posted to the 9th Battalion.

John and Roy sailed from Brisbane aboard the A11 Ascanius on 24 May 1915, both “originals” of A Company 26th Battalion. The new battalion was the second of 7th Brigade, made up of Queenslanders and Tasmanians, a battalion that would distinguish itself from Gallipoli to the last weeks in France before the Armistice, including the capture of the German tank “Mephisto” in 1918. The Henderson boys landed at Gallipoli about 8 September 1915. They served through to the end of the campaign and then returned to Egypt, via a short stay on Mudros Island before they reached Alexandria.

In March 1916 the 26th Battalion sailed to France for service on the Western Front. It went into its first major action (apart from trench raids) at Pozieres in July. On 29 July 1916, both the Henderson boys were missing in action. The 26th Battalion had been part of an attack (“our first charge” said one witness) near the Pozieres Windmill; the official historian later described the battle as one of the worst actions fought by Australian troops in the War. Later, Roy’s body was discovered and buried at Courcelette, but John Stewart’s body was never recovered and his name is engraved on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

The deaths of the two brothers on the same day, in the same battle, was not uncommon in the Great War. But worse was to follow. Younger brothers Erle and Arthur had been serving in the 9th Battalion. At Passchendaele, in Belgium, in the 1917 offensive, Erle (aged 19) was killed

in action on 20 September 1917. Arthur (aged 21) survived, and in 1918 he requested leave to Australia due to his family's loss. Leave was granted. He did not return to war.

Meanwhile in Australia, parents Arthur and Caroline Henderson had been busy keeping abreast of their four sons on active service. All their boys had followed their father into banking, and on enlistment in Brisbane (address Lucinda St, Taringa) had given their occupations as clerk or bank clerk. In the course of their correspondence with the army the parents had written from addresses at Albert Park, Melbourne (1923), Rose Bay, Sydney (1934), Woody Point, Brisbane, as well as the GPO Sydney and Brisbane. Their boys had been born in country towns in NSW and Victoria as Arthur took various positions with the bank. Caroline and Arthur Henderson had not lived in Queensland for some years, but in the late 1920s, Caroline wrote that John Stueart had attended "Grammar School Toowoomba" when she wrote to the historian in Canberra. Records show that he spent three years at Toowoomba Grammar, from 1908 to 1910. The family's long separation from Queensland, and the deaths of their sons, seems to explain the absence from the TGS Memorials of John's name until the commemorative events of 2018.

Toowoomba Grammar School Archives Records state that he was enrolled as Steuart Henderson and started on 1st January 1908 and left on 31 December 1910. He preferred the spelling 'Stewart'.

External Links:

[National Archives of Australia Military Records](#)

[CWGC](#)

[Australian War Memorial Honour Roll](#)

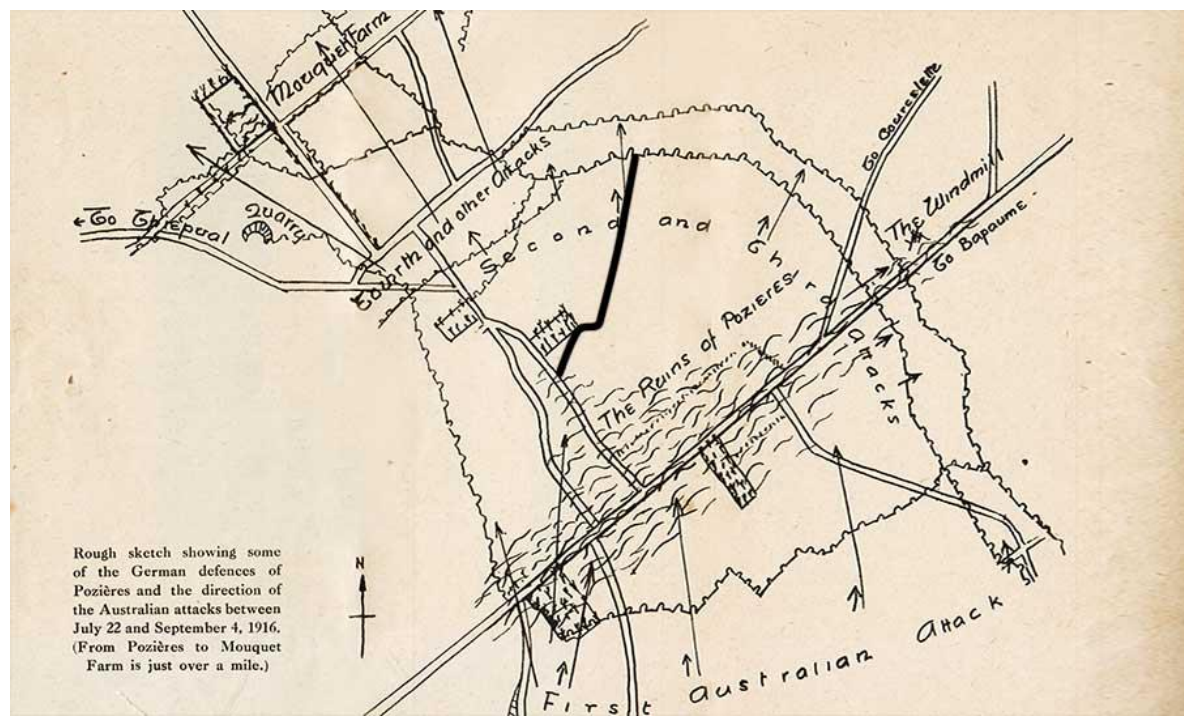
[AWM4 AIF unit war diaries 23/43/12 26th BN JULY 1916](#)



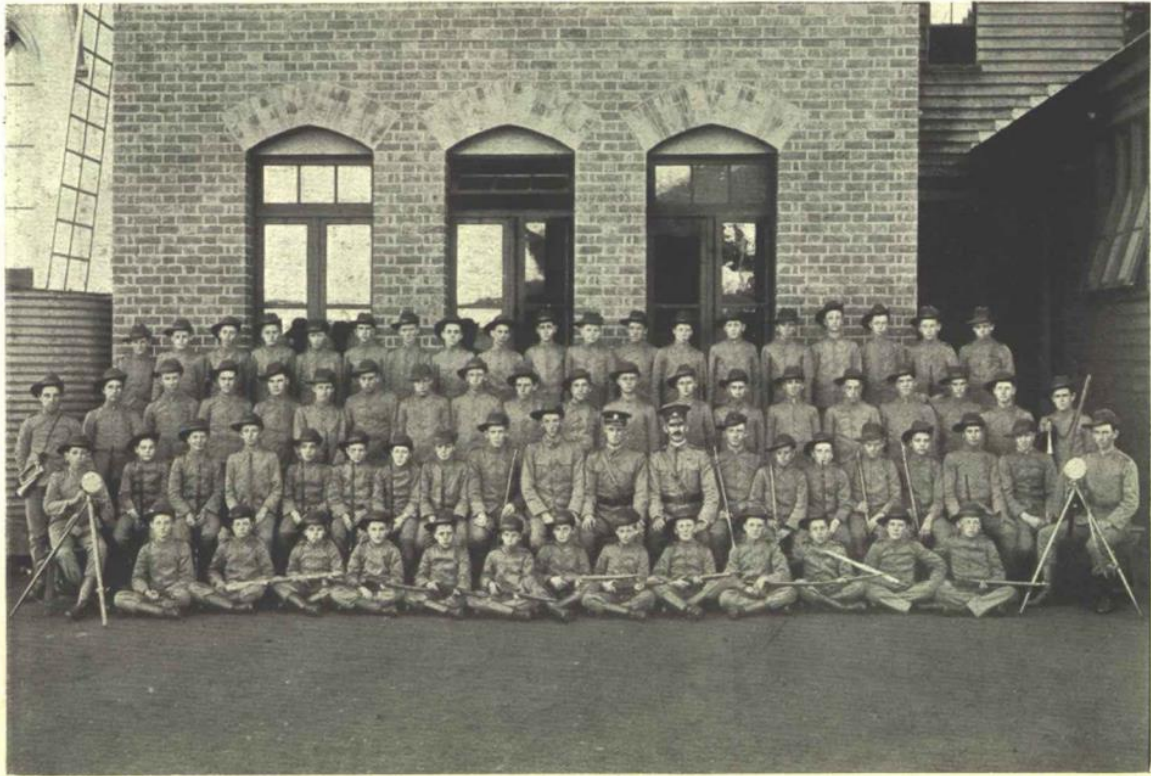
Courtesy: The ANZAC Portal – DVA



The 26th Battalion AIF was part of the 7th Brigade and Second Division. The original Second Division Memorial at Mont St Quentin depicted a Digger about to bayonet a German eagle. It was removed by the occupying German troops in 1940. Australia replaced the Memorial with a 2.5m tall slouch-hatted digger in battle dress. – courtesy of The Anzac Portal DVA



The Windmill – Pozières, France. Battle Map: the Australian attacks at Pozières, July-September 1916.



TOOWOOMBA GRAMMAR SCHOOL, CADETS, 1908. F Coy., No. 3 Queensland Battalion.

Toowoomba Grammar School Magazine May 1909 – Cadets was compulsory at the school