



## Captain James Edward HERBERT MC

[1881 – 1918]



26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion

James (Jim) Edward Herbert was born in Toowoomba on 4 June 1881 and his story remains a bit of a mystery. There seems to be little known about his early life or personality, and there may be unusual aspects of the circumstances of his death.

Jim was one of 10 children of James Herbert and Emily Ada Herbert (nee Johnson). The family lived at Yuelba and Nerang.

After a State-School education, Jim was a shopkeeper at one stage but later he represented merchant and importers, S. Hoffnung and Co.

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His interests in later years included duties as Secretary Nerang Show Society and the Nerang Race Club and he provided chess problems to the local newspaper. There are a number of newspaper reports about his involvement in Rifle Club shoots associated with military interests, but it seems he was a fairly average shot with no significant individual or team successes recorded.

His mother died in Yuelba when Jim was 25 years old on 29 July 1906. His father remarried twice more before Jim left for the war.

Prior to the Great War, he had served for five or six years with 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment and had passed the exams for lieutenant in 1909 and was probably later placed on the Unattached List.

He married Amelia Mabel Preston at Nerang on 24 May 1909, but she died in 1912. When he joined the AIF to serve overseas he left his three-year old daughter in the care of his father, then living at Coorparoo.

Herbert was appointed to the AIF as Lieutenant, 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion on 1 May 1915. He was later promoted to captain on 12 May 1916. 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion landed at Gallipoli on 12 September 1915 and in 1916 moved to the Western Front.

26<sup>th</sup> Battalion's first major attack was at Pozieres. Captain Herbert was wounded there on the night of 29/30 July 1916. During the assault he received a severe gunshot wound in the left arm and shoulder and was evacuated to England to recover and convalesce. He was retained in the hospital, convalescent, and reinforcement systems until 1 June 1917.

On 3 July 1917, only about a month after his return to the unit, Herbert was sent to the Fifth Army Infantry School returning on 8 August 1917 to his unit which was preparing for its next major battle. The four months of preparation came to an end on 12 September when 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion was deployed for the Third Battle of Ypres.

26<sup>th</sup> Battalion played a minor role in the Battle of Menin Road (19/20 September), but was heavily committed in the Battle of Broodseinde on 4/5 October 1917. Captain Herbert was awarded a Military Cross for his actions during this battle:

*He led his company skilfully into the attack, and displayed great energy and resource in consolidating the captured position and then reorganizing the troops on the whole Battalion frontage. He set a fine example to his men throughout the whole 48 hours, and was largely responsible for making the operations of the Battalion a success.*

At the end of October 1917 Herbert took five days leave in Paris. A few days after he returned, he was evacuated to hospital for disease treatment. He re-joined the battalion in January 1918 and in February he went to England for two weeks, returning on the 23 February.

In early April the brigade moved to Somme-Baizieux and 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion went into the line on night 11/12 April.

Captain Herbert was hit by sniper fire on the night of 16/17 April 1918 and died of his wounds a few hours later. The battalion's Adjutant later wrote to Herbert's daughter:

*...he [Herbert] was wounded on 16th April, 1918, while he was out in "No Man's Land" supervising the burial of another officer. He received a bullet wound in the back, from which he died, and he was dead on admission to the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulance at 12-30 a.m. on the 17th April, 1918. He was buried on the 18th at Warloy Communal Cemetery Extension.*

Captain Herbert now lies in Warloy-Baillon Communal Cemetery Extension, near Corbie in France.



James is also memorialised In Balmoral Cemetery Brisbane, on a simple cross laid by his young daughter, Florence, on the grave of his wife and parents:

*In memory of  
Capt JE Herbert MC  
Died of wounds in France  
17<sup>th</sup> April 1918  
Placed by his little daughter Florrie.*



Herbert James and daughter Florrie 1915.

Sources included:

- Australian War Memorial
- National Archives of Australia
- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents