



Captain James Shaw Rose MACDONALD

[1894 – 1917]



2nd Field Artillery Brigade

James Shaw Rose Macdonald was born in Brisbane on 8 November 1894, third youngest of nine children to Alexander Rose Macdonald (cane grower and senior public servant) and Nancy Ayrey Macdonald (nee Armitage), of 'Hill View', Greenslopes in Brisbane.

He was educated at Bowen House School for four years and two years at Brisbane Grammar School where he won track and field events.

When he left school, he was employed by the Bank of New South Wales.

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Macdonald spent three years in the senior cadets and three years in the militia (Australian Field Artillery), and was appointed Second Lieutenant on 16 June 1913.

After the news of the Gallipoli landings reached Australia, he applied for commission in the AIF and was appointed as Lieutenant, 3 Field Artillery Brigade (3 FAB) on 1 May 1915 and reached HQ 3 FAB on Gallipoli on 3 September.

A few days later he was attached to 3 FAB Ammunition Column (3 BAC) for three days, returning to Egypt to join 1st Division Ammunition Column (1 DAC) on 21 September. The terrain at Gallipoli prevented the deployment of more than one battery of 3 FAB's guns, so there was probably little need for a full complement of officers in the ammunition column, and he was sent back to Egypt to gain more experience and to reduce the resupply burden and/or reduce the chance of unnecessary casualties.

He sailed to the Western Front with his unit, disembarking at Marseilles on 2 April 1916. He was posted to 21 FAB on 15 May 1916. Captain Macdonald was in battle with 21 FAB at the major battles at Pozieres in July 1916, where Australian and German shelling and counter-battery fire was very intense and prolonged. 21 FAB supported the action at Pozieres from 20 July to 7 August despite 1st Division being relieved by 2nd Division on 26 July. (Artillery provides support for all units within range regardless of their divisional affiliation.)

Macdonald was also involved in the battles around Flers (November 1916, when 1st Division artillery supported 5th Division), including a period when he took charge of his battery when his commander was disabled by wounds.

21 FAB was rotated into and out of battle over some months in these battles, and was returned to the line from 16 to 23 August, from 17 September to 14 October, and from 26 October to 18 November 1916.

He was promoted to Captain on 21 January 1917. When 21 FAB was disbanded as part of the artillery re-organisation, he was posted to 2 FAB a few days later, on 24 January 1917. During the period February to June 1917, he was in battle with 2 FAB supporting the advance/pursuit from Bapaume to the Hindenburg Line and the attacks at Bullecourt.

On 23 June 2 FAB returned to the Ypres sector, firing interdiction missions until 6 July when its guns were withdrawn for service/replacement. From 19 to 30 July, it began a program of bombardments to support British attacks in the Third Battle of Ypres.

On 30 July 1917 it moved forward to Dickebusch (2.5 miles from Ypres) and then further forward again, to the vicinity of Sanctuary Wood, on 31 July. However, the earlier reports of the success of the British infantry in securing the area were incorrect and the batteries came under severe German artillery and machine gun fire as they deployed and they suffered heavy casualties.

The brigade remained in action throughout the day, but at 9.30am Captain MacDonald was killed by artillery fire while in action with his battery near Sanctuary Wood outside Ypres.

He was only 22 years old when he was killed by shellfire near Ypres on 31 July 1917. He is one of the eight members of USC who were killed in action on the Western Front.

Captain Macdonald now lies in Dickebusch New Military Cemetery Extension, Kerkstraat, Ieper (Ypres) Belgium.



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