

Wednesday 22 April - Ypres to the Somme

Warloy-Bailion Communal Cemetery Extension

Commemorating Moreton Mitchell Hampson by Courtney Trost

We have come a long way to stand here. From Brisbane, Queensland, from the streets of Red Hill, Windsor, Ithaca and Kelvin Grove. Places Moreton Mitchell Hampson knew as home, we have travelled to this quiet corner of France to speak his name aloud, over the ground where he rests. More than a century separates us from the boy who grew up on Windsor Road. And yet standing here, that distance collapses. He is not a distant figure in a history book or a name inscribed on a page at the state library, a brass embossed name at the War Memorial or a name etched in marble beside the Ithaca Fire Station. Standing together and recognising, he is family.

Moreton Mitchell Hampson was born on the 22nd of January, 1895, the son of William Henry Hampson and Emily Sinclair Hampson of Windsor Road, Red Hill, Brisbane. Moreton one of many siblings in an active community oriented family. His mother, Nurse Hampson, would be involved in community stalls at the Ithaca Town Hall Concert Band, wearing white muslin dresses and his uncle was the clerk to the council, then councillor of the Kelvin Grove Ward and onto being Mayor of Ithaca for some time. A childhood spent playing and learning from influential people in his life. His grandfather William Henry Hampson had a bootmaker shop up on Upper Edward Street Spring Hill for many years near this other family members were involved in running a boarding house.

Moreton Mitchell Hampson attended Kelvin Grove Boys State School, who performed well at sport, we infer that he lived an active life, sports enriched as all young men were and by the time he left school he was working as a plumber - learning his trade, living his ordinary, unhurried Brisbane life. He came from a family of faith, a family of service. His grandfather had fought in the Crimean War. That thread of duty ran deep in the Hampson blood.

When war was declared in August 1914, Moreton was nineteen years old. He did not wait. On the 18th of August 1914 - days after the announcement he enlisted. He already had militia service behind him, so he knew something of what he was stepping toward. He knew it was not a game. He went anyway.

Moreton joined the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade, 7th Battery - the Australian Field Artillery. He was a Driver and a Gunner. To understand what that meant, you need to understand the work. An artillery driver was not a man who sat at a distance from the fighting. He was the man who moved the guns. Who coaxed enormous horses through churned mud, under shellfire, in the dark, night after night, to keep the ammunition flowing and the batteries fed. The horses came first - always. A driver tended his pair, knew them, depended on them. In the blackest hours of the Western Front, it was that bond - man and horse, moving through chaos - that kept the guns speaking. A role perfect for a son of Queensland.

On the 25th of September 1914, Moreton boarded HMAT Rangatira at Brisbane's Pinkenba Wharf with the very first AIF convoy. A camera captured that moment, a dock filled with boys and men ready for the journey of a lifetime. I wonder amongst the shades of uniform, which brave face was yours. He sailed across the Indian Ocean, expecting training in England, instead, orders changed, and they docked at Alexandria, Egypt. For the Field Artillery home became Zahariah Camp desert, dust, and horses a long way from anything Brisbane could have prepared a young man for. Before he faced the horrors of war, he would have seen the captivating and diverse sights of South West Asia North Africa. Moreton and his Battery would have been awestruck when taking in the vibrant nature of Egypt's beauty, culture, food, people. I wonder if he hoped his siblings would one day be able to see the Great Pyramids of Giza and been mesmerised like him. His time in Egypt was dedicated to drills in the incomparable desert heat then shivering through nights colder than anything he would have felt back on a Brisbane winters night. The bond forged between man and horse and man and his fellow comrades in Egypt were the bonds that filled him with the strength to embark on what would be the most challenging chapter of his life. M. M.



Hampson now into a war that would consume an entire generation. He was nineteen years old. Moreton would never see twenty-two.

After Egypt, the 7th Battery made the journey to the Gallipoli Peninsula, over 1300 kilometres across the Mediterranean to the shores of Turkey. There Moreton became part of something that would be woven permanently into the identity of a nation. The landings, the cliffs, the impossible terrain, the mateship forged under fire - The ANZAC experience that now lives in the collective memory of every Australian and New Zealander. Like all there, Moreton's story an important page in the chapter that was written in the brutal months of the campaign. Word would reach the Hampsons on Windsor Road that their son had been slightly wounded at Gallipoli. I can only imagine their fear as the war waged on. He endured the grinding months on those ridges, and survived the evacuation. Like so many of the first ANZAC men, he was moved to the Western Front to France, to the Somme, to a remorseless artillery war that bore no resemblance to anything the world had seen before. Even Gallipoli had not prepared them for this.

Here on the Somme, his brigade served through Pozières where Australian losses were catastrophic. The gunners and drivers served with all their might, they moved mainly when their path was lit by the shine of the moon. They fired, they resupplied. Night after night, Moreton would have made runs through the dark -the roads swept by shell-fire, the horses picking their way through mud that could swallow them whole.

And then, just shy of two years from departure at the Pinkenba docks of Brisbane, on the 21st of August 1916, a German aeroplane flew low overhead and dropped a bomb. Moreton was twenty-one years, six months, and thirty days old. He was taken to the 2/1st South Midland Casualty Clearing Station, not far from where together we stand today. He died of his wounds. Taken care of by Australian Soldiers, he was brought here to Warloy-Baillon and laid to rest in Plot VII, Row D, Grave 26.

Yet his family in Red Hill did not find out for weeks and even when they did, they received a letter from him which the date appeared to look later than the 21st of August, leading his family to write many letters asking if their son was alive and if the AIF had it wrong.

His Aunt, Mrs A Senior of Waterdale Doncaster in England, received a letter to quote from the Brisbane Courier 'from a chum of the late gunner Hampson; "Morty was a grand lad. We enlisted together and were good pals. All through he was bright and cheerful and was looking forward to having his first leave in England."

When Emily and William did receive the news, his parents had already been carrying grief for almost a year. Moreton's sister Dorothy had died in September 1915, aged just twenty-five, while Moreton was still stationed at Gallipoli we believe he never found out. His mother Emily had already buried a daughter. Now she had lost a son too. His father William, his sisters, his brothers – one of whom, Jack, was himself on active service when the news arrived. All of them bore the weight of Moreton's passing in different ways, from different places, separated by oceans.

In her grief, Moreton's Mother placed a notice in the paper. She chose a poem:
Only a bundle of letters, All that is left to me, But the boy who died for his country, Ever lives in my memory. Only some lines from the trenches, And the hand of the writer is cold, But his name on the paper is graven In shining letters of gold. Another notice, placed by his father, mother, sisters, and the brother on active service, read simply: "And in death they were not divided." It commemorated both Moreton and Dorothy together. Two children taken in the space of a year. His cousin Frederick Attewell was killed in action just months later, in November 1916.

Yet through the darkness, here today this is what I want us to hold onto. Moreton's brother Jack inspired by his brother, enlisted into the field engineers, served and returned home. He went onto having a son, his first born and named him Moreton Mitchell. That



child was born in 1922, and he carried this name forward into the world. That is a brother saying: you are not forgotten. I miss you, yet you will not disappear.

Moreton isn't just a Queensland Solider to me, we are connected. Moreton Mitchell Hampson is my grandmother's great uncle, which means he belongs to my family's story not a casualty statistic. He is the nineteen year old who signed up before the ink was dry on the declaration of war. He is the young plumber from Windsor road who learned to be essential and handle horses, guns and kept the ammunition moving through the dark. He is the boy whose mother wished the outcome would be entirely different. This cemetery, these rows of white stones, this French sky; we can see they are far from what life looks like in Brisbane. But this is where Moreton has been for one hundred and eight years, tended carefully, remembered in stone. And today, his Queensland family has come to him.

The Hampson family notice placed after his death called him "unknown to fame." That was how his parents described their own son, not a hero of the grand narrative, not a man whose name would be carved on statues, but a young man who answered when his country called, who did his work without fanfare, who kept the guns supplied and the horses alive, who bore what had to be borne. Unknown to fame. But not forgotten.

And to you, Emily - his mother - who spent years placing notices in the paper, year after year, to make sure the world did not forget her son. If only we could reach back across time and hold her hand, and tell her: he has not been alone all this time. My grandmother, June Campbell, née Hampson, Moreton's own family with her friend Yvonne made the journey to stand with him. My uncle Malcolm and I visited, in April of 2023, and I stood in this very place and felt the weight of what it meant to be here. The moment that drew me to apply for this program. Now in 2026, I have returned. This time with an incredible group of young people whose lives will be forever shaped from a journey we undertake together.

Moreton, you are the reason I applied. Your name, your story is what brought me here, and that power is what brought every one of these young people on this journey too. Emily could not have known that. She only knew grief and love, and the stubborn refusal to let her son be forgotten. Very Hampson it seems but it paid off. However, the butterfly effect and a mother's love, as it turns out, has very long wings. Without your sacrifice we would not be here on this journey. Who can say how far the butterfly's wings will continue to flutter. What seeds of remembrance are planted today in these young lives, what stories they will carry home, how they will shape the Anzac Legacy and how their lives will be shaped because of this time.

Moreton Mitchell Hampson. You were never truly alone, not in Brisbane, on the HMAS Rangitira, nor on any battlefield, or where you lay to rest and not today.

Moreton Mitchell Hampson. Morty. Gunner. Driver. Son. Brother. Friend. Great-great-uncle. A Brisbane boy who lies in French soil, and who lives still, in the name his brother chose, in the family that carried him forward, and in the voices of those who have come here today to say:

Thank you for your service and we remember your sacrifice.

Lest we forget.

