

'Don't worry over me ... lead my men on.'
A journey through WWI guided by the words from the letters and diary of
Lieutenant John Timothy 'Boy' Maguire MC, 8th Battalion AIF
Evan Evans, Kevin Chamberlain, Peter Nelson and Dennis Nelson.^[1]

John Timothy 'Boy' Maguire (born 17 May, 1896, at Bowenvale, Victoria) was the second child of John (1866-1926) and Johanna Maguire (nee Hassett, 1872-1934). Boy's father was an underground gold miner at the Grand Duke and other mines in Timor via Maryborough, Victoria. They lived at Bowenvale, previously known as Chinaman's Flat, next to the Timor/Bowenvale cemetery. The road approaching their old home site is today named Maguire Road after the family. Broadly speaking, Timor/Bowenvale is towards the western edge of Victoria's famous 'Golden Triangle', bounded by Wedderburn (north); Avoca (west) and Castlemaine (east), where large and pure alluvial gold nuggets are still being found.

As the first-born Maguire child had been a girl (Mary, 1894-1962), John Timothy was quickly given the endearing nickname of 'Boy' from an early age. 'Boy' would also distinguish him from his father of the same first name. Certainly, Boy's first cousins and wider family only ever referred to him as Boy, judged from surviving correspondence, and it was a nickname he wore with affection and pride throughout his short life. The four younger children of John snr and Johanna Maguire were:

- Clement ('Clem') J [1898-1980]
- Veronica E ('Vera') [1901-1986, later Sister Uriel, a Josephite nun]
- Elizabeth Monica ('Monnie' or 'Liz') [1904-2001] m.Denis Lane (two sons)
- Sheila Agatha (1908-1990) m.Kevin Chamberlain (five children, including author Kevin jnr).

Boy Maguire was raised in a close and loving family. He wrote frequently to all his siblings as well as to his beloved mother. His letters are typically filled with comments and inquiries about all his family members, friends and local residents. Boy's family was well established in the Timor district near Maryborough. His grandfather, Patrick Maguire, emigrated from Ireland and worked as a gold miner across many parts of Victoria before securing a five acre allotment at Bowenvale in 1888. The population of Timor/Bowenvale peaked at around 30 000 at this time and was spread out along the Maryborough Road and the nearby Bet Bet Creek. When the rich surface deposits of alluvial gold became depleted, deep lead mines were sunk to tap into the sediments of buried ancient stream courses. The large Grand Duke, Duke Extended and North Duke mines were up to 350 feet deep, and the extremely wet conditions in the mines required huge volumes of water to be pumped out day and night.

Boy's father, John Maguire, often worked night shifts in these mines and was known to always say the rosary with the family before heading off to work. The family's Catholic faith was very devout, and the strength of the local Catholic community was indicated by a photograph of the local church picnic taken in 1912. In this photo (not included here) there are approximately 200 men, women and children seated on the side of a large mullock heap. Most of the Maguire family is present, including Boy and his brother Clem standing at the top of the heap. Boy's father worked in the difficult conditions of the local deep lead mines until they eventually closed down in the early 1920s. Boy's letters contain many expressions of concern for his father and his hard mining life.

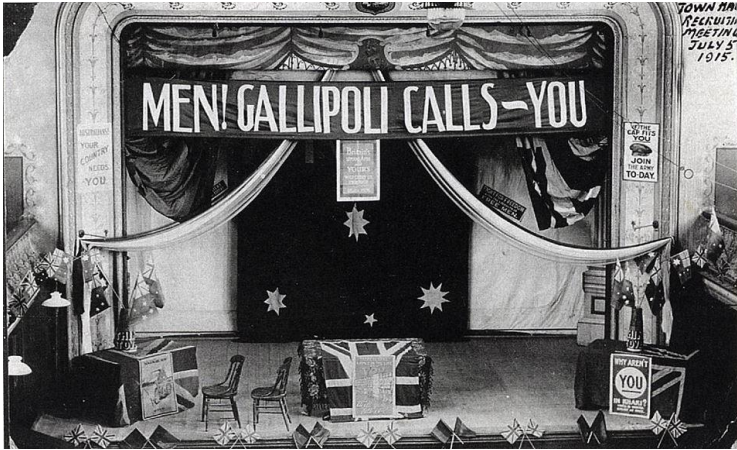
Boy grew up in a pocked landscape of shallow diggings, shafts and mullock heaps, creek beds, paddocks and residual box and ironbark forests. This was an adventure playground, in which the young Boy could enjoy and study nature. The pursuit of plentiful rabbits would have added further excitement and food for the table. Boy was also known to have practiced shooting at the local rifle range near Maryborough. Some of the skills he acquired in this environment would have been useful to him in the scarred landscape of the Western Front. His letters from France spoke of his nostalgia for the Bush, and his family sent him sprigs of wattle to remind him of home. Boy also wrote of his dream to mine a possible gold deposit he had discovered with his mates in earlier days.

In actual fact, gold mining in the Timor/Bowenvale area was in decline after about 1910. The mines were starting to close and Boy's father was sometimes out of work. Boy did not follow his father down the mines. After obtaining his Merit Certificate at the Timor Public School in 1911, Boy found work with the Post Office. His Aunt Kate had worked as a postmistress in several country towns before being appointed to the Heidelberg Post Office in Melbourne. Boy did some initial postal training in Melbourne and was then employed as a postal assistant in Maryborough. He commuted daily into Maryborough with his sister Liz, who was then attending the Maryborough Convent School. Family lore records that Boy used his first pay to buy linoleum for the family kitchen, which up until then had an earthen floor. Over the next few years Boy

continued to work at the post office and develop social contacts in Maryborough. Eighty years later his sister Liz was still able to name two girlfriends Boy had at this time.

Enlistment and embarkation

After the war started in 1914, stories of German atrocities in Belgium began to circulate and recruiting drives commenced. A typical recruiting meeting was held in Maryborough on 5 July, 1915 [**below left**]. The town hall was decked out with flags and patriotic posters. Boy enlisted as a private on 9 August, 1915, in Melbourne



at a recruiting centre that was perhaps similarly decorated to the Maryborough Hall.

Left: Maryborough Hall decked out for a recruitment rally, 5 July, 1915.

Boy completed infantry training at Broadmeadows Camp over the following months, during which time his aspirations to attain military skills and lead others must have been encouraged by those tasked with looking for future NCOs and officers. Boy was quickly promoted to acting sergeant on 6 September, 1915, at Broadmeadows, where the picture of him [**below left**] was

most likely taken in late 1915. Boy's enlistment followed that of his older cousin, **Cyril James Maguire** [**below right**], a ship's fireman, who had enlisted in the AIF at Liverpool, NSW, on 7 April, 1915.



Far left: Sergeant John T 'Boy' Maguire, (later Lieut, MC) 8th Bn ('Mac' or 'Jack' to his men).



Left: Corporal Cyril Maguire, 17th Bn, died of illness, 10/11/18, London.

Boy's Bowenvale neighbours who also enlisted for the war included: **Ned McKinley** [L/Cpl Edward McKinley, 4883, 5th Bn, enl 17/8/15, RTA 12/5/19]; **Eddie Blake** [Pte Edward Blake, 4137, 14th Bn, enl 19/7/15, KIA 11/4/17, 1st Bullecourt] and **Harry Ballantine** [Pte Henry Ballantine, 6217, 7th Bn, enl 24/5/16, RTA 16/1/19].

These men would remain his best friends till

Boy's war ended. Boy would fill many of his letters from Europe with enquiries about them. Working in Maryborough also opened up a whole new world of acquaintances for Boy to embrace in wartime camaraderie, bravery and achievements. Boy would often write home with reports on the exploits of the 'Borough boys' (as he referred to them) and he expressed concern about their welfare on many occasions.

It would be no great surprise that when news of the landings at Gallipoli, and the entrenchment of the ANZAC troops in the hills of the Dardanelles, that a new wave of recruits were actively sought in the Victorian country towns, where young, fit men with a sense of adventure were in good supply; most of whom felt a great duty to God, King and Country.

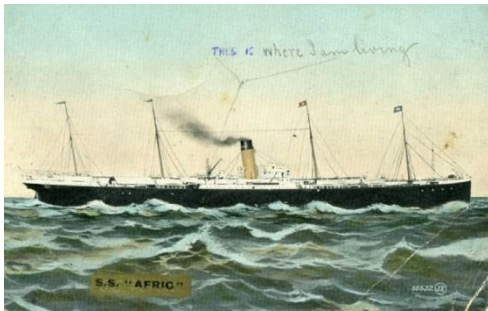
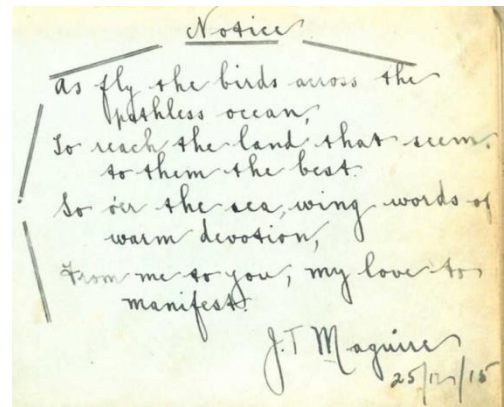
Boy returned home briefly on embarkation leave to Bowenvale in early December 1915 to spend Christmas with his family. He was given a 'send-off' at Bowenvale Public Hall, along with his cobbler Ned McKinley. This event was proudly reported in the 'Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser' (3 December, 1915)^[2]. The article described the Bowenvale Hall decked out similarly to the photo [**top**] and stated the hall was packed to capacity for the event.

Boy was presented with a 'handsome' pocket wallet and fountain pen by the citizens of Bowenvale, as well as a watch guard and gold cross from the members of St Mary's Roman Catholic Church. On Christmas Eve he presented his mother with the gift of an autograph book, and on Christmas Day, Boy wrote his entry on the first page (the verse entitled 'Notice' on the **next page**). This autograph book is still a treasured family possession today, with many entries by Boy's family and friends and later generations up to the present day (most entries are humorous, some more profound). This visit to Bowenvale coincided with the evacuation of troops from Anzac Cove at the conclusion of the unsuccessful Gallipoli campaign.

Notice

*As fly the birds across the
pathless ocean,
So reach the land that seem
to them the best
So o'er the sea, wing words of
warm devotion,
From me to you, my love is
manifest.*

Above left and right: Verse written by JT Maguire, Christmas Day 1915, on the first page of the autograph book he presented to his mother.



Boy sailed from Australia on 5 January, 1916, as part of the 8th Reinforcements to the 24th Infantry Battalion on HMAT *Afric*, disembarking in Alexandria, Egypt.

Left: Postcard of HMAT *Afric*.

As the 'goal posts had now shifted' following the departure from Gallipoli, Boy and his cobbles mostly had thoughts of fighting on the Western Front during the sea journey. Only a small proportion of the Anzacs, predominantly the Australian light horse regiments and NZ mounted rifles, would stay on in Egypt to push

the Turks out of Sinai and Palestine. The infantry divisions would all be in France by the end of June 1916.

Boy sent the picture postcard of the SS *Afric* [above] to one of his sisters with the caption: *This is where I am living* (note the arrow pointing to his sleeping quarters). The *Afric* was later sunk by the German Submarine UC66 on 17 February, 1917, in the English Channel, outbound from Plymouth, with 143 survivors and the loss of 22 lives.

Fortunately, Boy was too late to have served on the rugged cliffs of Gallipoli on a diet of poor food, bad water and 'Turkish munitions'. His cousin, Cyril Maguire, was not so lucky, as Cyril developed a gastric ulcer while on Gallipoli that saw him eventually discharged in London on 15 June, 1916, permanently unfit for service. Cyril married Kathleen in London (Boy served as his best man) and they had one daughter, Patricia, but Cyril sadly succumbed to Spanish influenza on 10 November, 1918.

From Egypt to France and introduction to the Western Front

Although only 19 years of age, Boy Maguire had gained the attention of his superiors at training and had been appointed acting sergeant in Australia on 6 September, 1915. After briefly reverting to private in Egypt, Boy was again appointed temporary sergeant on 28 February, 1916, four days after his transfer from the 24th Battalion to the 8th Battalion at Serapeum, as part of the reorganisation of the AIF into four divisions. On 13 May, 1916, one week before his move to France on HMT *Megantic* on 20 March, Boy officially became Sergeant JT Maguire ('A' Coy, 8th Bn). The *Megantic* arrived in Marseilles late in the day on 31 March, 1916.

The trip from Alexandria to France was hazardous, with German submarines ready to strike. One of Boy's new 8th Battalion comrades, **2nd Lieutenant Gerald Evans** ('D' Coy) described the transit and arrival into the port of Marseilles, France, as follows:

We arrived quite safely last night. I managed to dodge the torpedoes, the Captain never left the bridge all the way from Alexandria. This is the prettiest port I have seen yet. We got in about 4 pm and passed the Notre Dame de Armentieres right up on a hill & as we came into the harbor, passed within 50 yards of the Chateau d'If where the Count of Monte Cristo was imprisoned, it is a very small island right in the mouth of the harbour with a very old stone building on it. Everything is beautifully green with the Spring just coming on and I am afraid La belle France knocks poor old Australia into a cocked hat for beauty.

[**Gerald Evans letter to father, 1/4/1916.** ^[3] **Above right:** Capt D Gerald Evans MC, MID, photo c1916, b.8/12/1889, enl 18/2/1915, 22nd Bn to 8th Bn, DOW 20/9/17, at Menin Road.]

Boy was also impressed on his arrival into Marseilles. He wrote in his diary on 31 March, 1916:



The French have quaint uniforms. Baggy looking red trousers with sky blue overcoats with the flaps buttoned back and postman's caps, also blue. A Frenchman with a cocked hat like Napoleon came aboard to change our money and incidentally to rook us. The country we are now passing through is hilly, something like Daylesford. The country is dotted with houses and ploughed fields but as in Egypt, no fenced boundaries. The soil appears to be very fertile and to be planted with something. The view is simply splendid, and the clean healthy looking people add to the picture.

Boy noted in his diary on 2 April, 1916:

The people all the way gave us a great reception. I could see them waving towels, hats etc in all directions. Our lads replied with great vigour. We kept the Rhone in view nearly all the way to Lyon. Hereabouts the country is one mass of grapevines. It must look a perfect picture when all the vines are in leaf, as it is it looks A1 with the regular rows ... found to our great disappointment that we would not be going through Paris, but to the northwest.

A fellow comrade and sergeant with the 8th Battalion ('A' Company) was **Sergeant Percy Lay** [below right]. Percy would later become the most decorated man in the 8th Battalion^[4] before joining Dunsterforce in early 1918. Dunsterforce was an Allied military force named after its commander, **General Lionel Dunsterville**. The force had fewer than 350 elite Australian, New Zealand, British and Canadian officers and NCOs. Dunsterforce operated against the Ottoman Turks, mainly in Iran and the southern Caucasus, to replace the departing Tsarist armies. In essence, Dunsterforce was a precursor to the SAS regiments of today.

One of Lay's superior officers described him as *always a volunteer for any work which entails danger and his coolness and courage under fire are noticeable*^[5]. Lay's diary also demonstrates that he was an excellent and strategically savvy scribe. In his diary Percy also lamented the bypassing of Paris and was buoyed by the enthusiastic reception the French gave the Australians all the way to Northern France. This was something also prominently remarked upon by **914 Archie Barwick** (1st Bn) in his diary.^[6]

Right: Captain Percy Lay MC, DCM, MM, CdeG (1892-1955), enl 19/8/14, 8th Bn to Dunsterforce (1918), dis 18/2/20. Portrait WB McInnes. AWM ART03184.



Once Boy and the 8th Battalion completed their three-day northward railway journey, they were initially billeted in the area around Bailleul and Steenwerck, not far from Fleurbaix and Fromelles. This was the sector chosen by the British Army to train the Australians in the art of 'trench warfare' on the Western Front. Boy was quick to sense this, 'the deep breath before the plunge' of battle, and that he, along with his cobbles, were waiting on its edge without way of escape^[7].

In his diary, Boy recorded the following observations (3-8 April, 1916):

We are now billeted in a barn in this village about 6 miles from the firing lines. I can hear the big guns booming like thunder. At night it is the worst. It makes our barn tremble and shiver.

I can also hear the rifle and machine-gun fire. It is just like continuous heavy thunder. The sky is lit up all around every night with the flashes and searchlights and star shells.

Nothing startling today. A few enemy aeroplanes appeared in view. Shot after shot was fired at them. One or two were brought down.

Gerald Evans was also much taken by the new-fangled aeroplanes above, which were the latest marvels of modern military technology. In a letter to his mother dated 29 April, 1916,^[3] he described one memorable incident, showing that chivalry on both sides was not yet dead.

This week the weather has been beautiful just like the spring in Australia, in fine weather the aeroplanes are always very active and this week especially so. On Sunday morning two German planes were brought down, one within half a mile of our billet; we saw it fall quite clearly just like a shot bird, it was a direct hit, the shell passing clean through the engine, both the men in it were killed. It is the custom with the Aviators that when one of the enemy is brought down behind our lines, they collect all his personal belongings and clothes and take them over the German lines & drop them, so last evening about 6 o'clock a German plane flew over our billet and dropped a wreath and a note thanking our men for having done this. The German planes are faster and superior to ours but our men make up for this by extra daring. Our men counted 450 shells fired at one British major in one flight over

the German lines, not counting machine-gun fire. They call this chap the 'Mad Major' as he has all his planes perforated with bullets and shrapnel.

A week later, and now more familiar with his new environment, Boy wrote:

But for an occasional burst of fire, no one would think there was a war on, much less that the enemy were only a few yards from us. All around our trench the grass is nice and green and birds hopping about in the trees and the sun nice and warm. One would think it an ideal place to rest in but if he just stuck his head above the parapet of the trench, half a dozen bullets would be rushing to greet him. I haven't caught sight of any Huns yet. They keep low and so do I for very good reasons.

[Letter to mother, 16/4/16.]

The people are very religious and everywhere one goes he sees shrines and crucifixes, more particularly at crossroads. It is pay day today and the boys are all cheerful and happy. The shops, etc profit some. Beer is only 10 centimes (1 penny) a glass, but our lads drink only champagne on pay days. The Tommies stand aghast, only penny beers for them.

[Letter to mother, 20/4/16.]

In his diary for 5 April, 1916, Boy had also observed:

Nearly every French village has a church with a tower situated in the middle of the town and this one is no exception. Altho' only situated in a village a little bigger than Timor the church is three times the size of M'boro one.

Gradually the tedium and rhythm of war set in, as Boy explained to his mother. Around this time Boy had been part of an advanced party of 8th Battalion officers and NCOs who visited the front line near Fleurbaix in preparation for the battalion's stint in the line between 15 and 30 May, 1916.

I am having a jolly good time here although it is a bit monotonous.

We got a 'bit' of war the other night. Things were humming some for a few hours but gradually it died down to an occasional burst of rifle fire. But it was exciting while it lasted. By jove the iron was flying about. The noise from the big guns nearly stunned one and the blinding flashes of light made a scene that can hardly be described. We expected to go up any time. The ground shook under the explosion of the shells.

The grass is very long and green here. There are no cattle about to keep it down and so it grows rank everywhere. There are plenty of fruit trees hereabouts and I can see us having a good feed when the fruit is ripe, that is if we are here. I haven't seen a fresh vegetable since I've been in France. The people seem to grow either corn or vines or hops.

[Letter to mother, 7/5/16.]

A similar tack was taken with a letter to his sister Mary dated 11 May, 1916, just days before the battalion formally took over the line and relieved the 6th Battalion.

The country itself is very beautiful. It is spring time here you know. The countryside is alive with wild flowers and the garden of our ruined house is in full bloom. Up around the trenches it is just the same and it is hard to believe at times that there is a war on.

PS. Fritz is sending over some whiz-bangs just now. Two of them burst on the parapet near me and I got a shower of dirt all over me. My hair is full of it. They are getting a bit lively now.

Surprisingly, Boy seemed to be able to write reasonably candidly in letters to his mother and family, avoiding the ire of the censor. As such, Boy's letters describing what it was like on the front line are illuminating, presenting army life, warts and all.

We have got a pretty safe 'possy' in the line but occasionally Fritz puts over some shrapnel. He is sending over some now. It is bursting just in the rear of the trench. The 'dead' ground between us and Fritz is full of game. I had a pot at a hare running along last night. The grass is full of partridges and pheasants. They don't seem to care for the guns at all.

The Australian soldier can be depended on to look out for themselves. We dug up a bag full of tins of jam last Wednesday. It has evidently been buried by the Germans when retreating. We scraped the mud off the tins and opened them up. They were mostly plum and raspberry and I can tell you they came as a great luxury.

[Letter to mother, 18/5/16.]

It is nice and warm today, just the sort of day for a walk. We cannot move about much here as we are cooped up in the trenches and if we showed much of ourselves we'd be blown to blazes. I've got a nice little dug-out built of bags and a bunk inside it. We are not so badly off for tucker as we were before.
[Letter to Vera, 22/5/16.]

Boy also had some pithy commentary, with a flair for the comical, in other letters to his family. These gave an astute picture of his mindset and circumstances during his stay in the trenches at Fleurbaix:

The shirkers at home simply do not know what they are missing. There is plenty of risk but it's all in the game.
[Letter to Mary, 24/5/16.]

It is the platoon officer's dug-out by rights but as we have none in No. 1, I reside in it. The crook thing about these 'dug-outs' however is that one has so many undesirable boarders. They literally swarm with rats and mice and worst of all, fleas. They are beggars those same fleas. One is continually on the scratch and every morning there is a regular hunt for them. They bite some too.
[Letter to Liz, 22/5/16. Boy was probably describing lice – Ed.]

It must be pretty rotten to have no water again. (The same old thing year in, year out.) There is plenty of it about these parts, in fact the ground oozes water. We are not allowed to drink it without it first being boiled or sterilised. The ground is full of germs etc, but all the same I wouldn't care about drinking water drained from ground, full of dead or decomposing men. One doesn't get a very pleasant smell from round about the trenches either.
The country around here is glorious, the fruit trees all out in blossom. But wherever one looks he sees ruined houses and empty fields. One could not help thinking what a great place it would appear in peace time.
[Letter to mother, 30/5/16.]

The war did, however, provide possible 'business opportunities' for the Maguire family, though this opportunity was not provided risk-free for Boy:

I'll send you some good souvenirs for your old bazaar (you spell it with three "a's" you know, not one as you are doing). I have a lot of German shell caps. I will get them made into rings and post them on. They ought to sell well. Relics of the battlefield. Mind you I can't promise I'll send them as we are not exactly tourists. We are fighting just now and haven't got much time for anything else.
War is all right – at a distance. When one gets in the firing line he never thinks of the danger he is running. I know I used to be up on the parapet fixing sandbags of a night and bullets used to be whistling everywhere and I never gave a thought to the risk I ran until I got into bed and thought what an idiot I was to expose myself like I did. The enemy trenches were only a couple of hundred yards off too. But it's all in this game. I love the sensations. There's some of the real excitement of life in it. One doesn't get any cheap thrills here.
[Letter to Mary, 3/6/16.]

We had a gas attack the night before last. It was about 2 am and we were all asleep. The gas alarm sounding woke us all up in a more or less state of stupidity. Some didn't comphre [sic, comprehend] that it was gas and very nearly went out to it. I could smell the vile stuff and after a minute's searching grabbed my respirator and stuck it on. The attack lasted an hour. There were no casualties in our company but a good many of the Tommies suffered. I believe they died in terrible agony. The gas corrodes the throat and reduces the lung organs to water. One man's lung was enlarged to three times its natural size and they got a pint of water from it. The doctors have no remedy for men who get gassed. All they can do is to lay them down and watch them die. A good many of the casualties were due to carelessness more than anything.
[Letter to mother, 30/3/16.]

Well Mum, I have been having a jolly good time and enjoy this life. It's simply great. Real genuine healthy life this. It will do me. I don't know why the others stay behind. The petty little things of civilian life seem so much rot. It gives a man a bigger and broader outlook on life and things in general. So, if you don't get any letters after this one you can rest your mind, as I would write if I got the opportunity. For military reasons all letters will be stopped for a certain time now.

Well Mum, I think I will have to finish now. Don't get worried if my letters get irregular from now for a few mails. As I told you our movements are uncertain, but the direction is Berlin. Might hear from me there. Don't worry over me. With God's and His Holy Mother's help I will come out alright.
[Letter to mother, 7/7/16.]

Inevitably, all good things came to an end with the transfer of the 1st AIF Division to the Somme. The men of the 8th Battalion would look back and consider their stints in the line at Fleurbaix and Messines in May and June 1916 as being pretty easy stunts compared to what awaited them at Pozieres.

Finally, we camped in a sort of factory in the rear of an estaminet (wine shop). Packed pretty closely but comfortable. Had a cup of hot coffee from 'madame' in a cup or jar. Moved out from Billet to Rail Station about 5 pm but we found that we had to wait 4 hours before the train left. Settled ourselves in a grassy paddock nearby and enjoyed ourselves with the French children. Some of them are characters.

[Diary, 19/7/16, Bailleul, Northern France.]

Pozieres July/August 1916

Arriving in the Somme, Boy and the men of the 8th Battalion immediately noticed substantial differences in this locale to their previous area of operations:

The houses down here appear to be made of mud, straw and whitewashed. The people are much poorer than up north & seem barely to eke out an existence. Nearly all old men and women. Eligible men fighting.

Can buy practically nothing in the village. Inhabitants are very poor and miserable. Buildings same. Scenery delightful, glorious.

[Diary, 19-20/7/16, near Doullens, France.]



Left: Postcard of Notre Dame, Albert, with leaning Virgin, sent home to Bownenvale by Boy.

Boy wrote about the church at Albert:

Extraordinary things about church. Statue of Blessed Virgin on tower of church fallen below the level of a right angle. Very wonderful position. The Blessed Virgin is holding the Child in her outstretched hands and He seems to be appealing to the people with his arms. The statue is of bronze or brass and shines in the sun like burnished gold. There are great legends woven around the statue. It is said that when the statue falls the war will end. The French regard it as a miraculous position. The church is battered to pieces. The statue seems to be held by a tangled framework of steel supports.

Stayed at bivouac two days and then moved up in the evening of the third day to the support trenches. These were until a week before the German 3rd line of trenches. Our artillery fire had reduced the trenches to mere hollows, but most of his deep dug-outs were intact. These are wonderful affairs, some of them going down a depth of 60 to 70 ft. Apartments open out underneath and the whole place was like an underground village. Shells could never touch these places.

[Diary, 20/7/16, Albert, France.]

Second Lieutenant Donovan Joynt later recalled on passing the Leaning Virgin:

A 'digger' in the column, looking up and seeing the falling figure on the tower above them, "Mind out, there is Annette Kellerman taking a dive!" Sacrilege, no doubt, but what spirit! (Kellerman was a famous Australian swimmer and diver pre-war and an actress in America by WWI.)^[8]

It was at Pozieres that the implications of mechanical warfare (such as heavy artillery, aerial bombs, grenades and machine guns) truly dawned on the AIF and the 8th Battalion in particular. The official battalion diary^[9] described that on 23 July, 1916, the 8th Battalion moved up Sausage Valley to around the beginning of

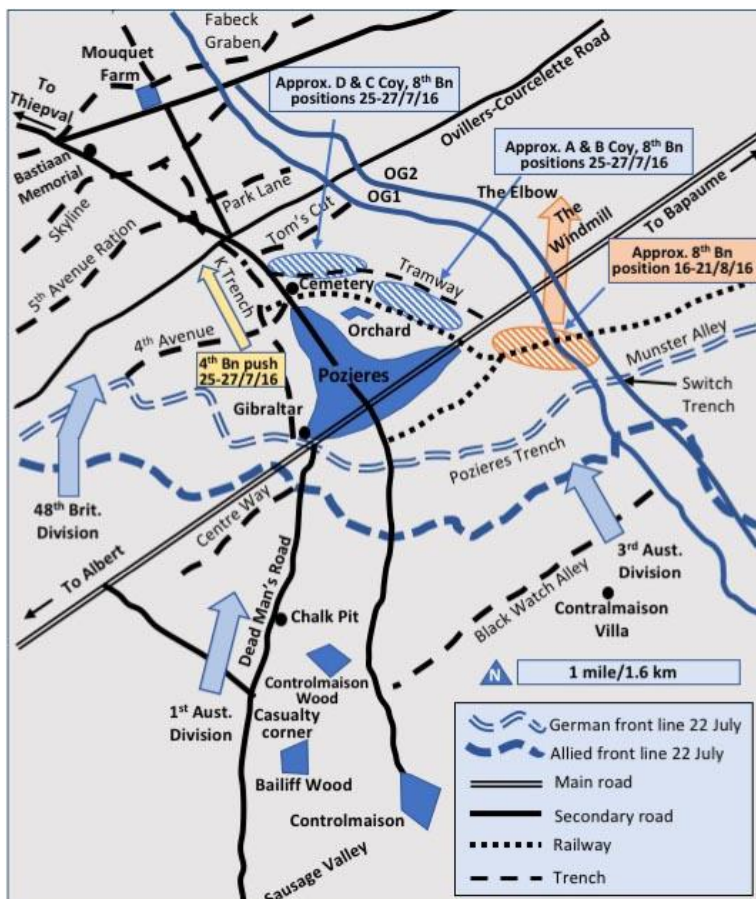
Dead Man's Road, with 'D' Company assigned to undertake water ration fatigues, up Dead Man's Road via the Chalk Pit, to the infantry fighting in Pozieres. 'D' Company was noted to have done 'good work', despite heavy shelling and many casualties around the Chalk Pit area.

Lieutenant Luke Fay MC (1884-1965) was in command of 'A' Company, which included Sergeant Boy Maguire, Corporal Percy Lay and 2nd Lieutenant Donovan Joynt (later VC) in his first action. 'A' Company worked alongside 'B' Company, led by **Captain George James** (KIA 24/7/16).

Moving into Pozieres with bayonets fixed, past the Gibraltar blockhouse, the 8th Battalion encountered little German opposition. They were able to take up their allotted positions to the right of the orchard, after having progressively cleared the trenches and strong points on the northern edge of Pozieres. The 'fog of war' delayed a follow-up artillery barrage early on the morning of 24 July, which in turn delayed a further infantry attack and allowed time for the Germans to regroup. The enemy then retaliated by placing the captured positions under a fearsome artillery barrage.

Donovan Joynt was a wide-eyed observer in his first real battle at Pozieres, as his memoirs written later in life attest.^[8] The 8th Battalion's first stint on the front line at Pozieres had already begun when Joynt joined it on the front line during the day on 24 July.

Lt Bob Wallis took me in hand and a guide led us out to A Coy HQ. It was only a shell hole and was where a Sgt named Maguire was sitting. Lt Wallis left to take charge of B Coy [as Capt James had been killed]. There were only 15 men in A Coy's fourth platoon, strung out along a line of shell holes making do for a trench. These men were all that remained of three platoons of fifty men – fourth platoon being detached as a carrying party. Shells were falling constantly – one landed and exploded on our line of trenches about 50 yards away. Sgt Maguire left me and went along to investigate. He came back sort of chuckling, highly strung, half laughing, half serious tone of voice and announced to me – 'Three more gone – only twelve of us now!'



Perhaps Boy was unwittingly channelling successful Roman Emperor and stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius' sage advice, *Death smiles at us all. All a man can do is smile back.*^[11] Such was the strain of the heavy and continuous shelling, even on a brave man such as Boy – but he coped.

Left: Pozieres battlefield map between 22 July and 5 September 1916, based on a tracing from Bennett^[10] and descriptions by Ron Austin.^[4]

After Lieutenant Luke Fay had been seriously wounded, battalion adjutant, **Captain Gus Lodge** took over 'A' Company. Donovan Joynt provided a first-hand description of how Lodge took over command of the company:^[8]

We just sat there for the next two days with shells falling all around continuously, anticipating an enemy counter-attack which never came. The surviving men of the company were magnificent ... A runner arrived to warn that a German attack was imminent – the Germans could be seen forming up with their officers ... The men responded with shouts – 'Let them come!'

We won't give an inch!' They then got to with cleaning rags and wiped the mud away from their rifles ... We waited with rifles and fixed bayonets ... we could see officers running forward, waving their arms in encouragement to their men, but the Germans wouldn't face us and went to ground hiding in shell holes. Soon after daylight (26th July) a figure came running along the line from the left of our position – a picture of war as it is painted in boy's soldier books – a white bandage tied around his head where he had been wounded – a revolver in his hand. Disregarding enemy shell fire and sniper's

bullets he ran along the trenches, stopping here & there to get reports from the forward posts and saying words of cheer. "Who is that?" I asked Sgt Maguire. "Capt Lodge the Adjutant", he replied. What courage! I thought, and he immediately became my hero.

Above and left: Some officers of the 8th Battalion AIF mentioned in these pages.

On the left side of the 8th Battalion's position, 'D' Company had forged even further ahead on 25 July



Capt Luke Fay MC
8th Bn, 1884 – 1965
enl 17/8/1914, Dis 26/9/1919
NAA#A14290:88.



Capt George E James,
8th Bn, E 6/12/1914,
KIA 24/7/1916, Pozieres
AWM P05248.064



Capt Augustin B Lodge
DSO, 8th Bn, 1895-1949.
enl 19/8/1914, Dis 2/7/1919
AWM H06208.



Capt James Hurrey MID,
8th Bn, 1884-1965.
enl 1/3/1915, Dis 7/3/1917

under **Captain James Hurrey**, to dig into positions between Pozieres Cemetery and Tom's Cut. During a lull



Capt Donovan Joynt VC
8th Bn, 1889-1986
enl 21/5/1915,
Dis 11/6/1920



Capt Robert J Wallis MC
8th Bn, 1891-1972
enl 17/8/1914,
Dis 15/12/1919

in the fighting, **RSM Willie Goodwin** (MC & Bar, KIA 4/10/17), led a small patrol which unbelievably made it almost to Mouquet Farm – nearly to the spot where Dr Ross Bastiaan's memorial plaque now stands [see article, 'The indomitable Lt Goodwin' in *DIGGER* 62^[12]].

Second Lieutenant Gerald Evans ('D' Company) had little to say in his letter home to his mother (31/7/16^[3]) and being wary of the censor was less effusive.

However, his letter does give a general overview:

I have not written for some time as we have been rather busy & have not had an opportunity – but I was lucky enough to get out of it with a slight crack on the ribs & did not leave the Company.

I am trying hard to write something, but it is hard with the censor to contend with, you will probably know all about our stunt before this as they are sure to write it up a lot in the Australian papers. Our battalion has done remarkably & my company was furthest ahead of the lot. I don't know what I will get out of it – but hope a promotion anyhow – I have been long enough getting my second star [awarded 1st MID].

I saw Bill Usherwood the other day, he is a sergeant and looks very well. I hope he got along alright, he was going in when I saw him.

It wasn't until after Gerald Evan's death at the Battle of Menin Road (20 September, 1917), that a more descriptive account of 'D' Company's role in the first assault at Pozieres was provided by Capt James Hurrey (writing 29/9/17) ^[3]: *Jerry [Evans] was a grand man, and on the occasion of the attack on Pozieres we spent 12 hours in the Chalk Pit. The Bosche had seen us enter there, and that 12 hours I shall not forget. I had been slightly wounded, and very badly shaken just reaching that point. Jerry was wounded in the side and I felt hopeless, almost quite sure he would go away, but to his everlasting credit he returned after having his wound dressed.*



Lt F Willie Goodwin
MC & Bar, MID, 8th Bn
E 29/8/1914, DOW 4/10/17.

D Coy, 8th Bn, completed the capture of Pozieres. We took 3 M[achine] guns and 59 prisoners. We were 600 yds in advance of the furthest strong point and 1 000 yds in advance of our line. We followed our own barrage so closely that we got to between the German strong points unseen, and into K Trench before the Bosche had chance to use his M. guns. The attack took place just before day-break, and when day broke we saw 1 000 Bosches between us and our line. Our fire decimated them. Jerry used one of their own M. guns, and as my orders were no prisoners on account of our isolated position, the 59 men we took actually got through the fire to us.

The retreating Germans were flushed out of their positions by the bombers and Lewis gunners of the 4th Battalion, who were fighting their way northwest along K Trench, on the western side of Pozieres.

Of all the accounts of Pozieres that we have read, the entries in Boy's diary and letters home appear the most direct, honest and immediate from the perspective of the 8th Battalion:

We stayed in the communication trench all the afternoon. Fritz shelled us. Killed one of my platoon and wounded another. About 12 midnight we advanced to first line and took village of Pozieres without much opposition. Four divisions of Tommies had a try at this same place without any effect. We were only supposed to advance 200 yds and 'dig in', but we advanced right through the village and dug in within 30 yds of Fritz's new 2nd line.

[Diary, 25 July, 1916.]

*Next day (Monday), Fritz gave us hell. He smashed our trenches to bits and outed our chaps right and left. It was cruel (**H Barber** got killed with machine gun that night. Caught him through the head. [Pte Harold Barber, b.1896, enl 28/8/14, Maryborough.] Continuous bombardment of village by Fritz all day. It was nerve-wracking and some of our chaps went mad. It was reckoned a fiercer bombardment than Verdun. There wasn't a square inch of [untouched] ground anywhere. The place was full of shell holes or craters, most of them being 15 to 20 ft deep and same across. That night the 8th hopped out and took Fritz's first line, advancing our front about 600 yds. We attacked his trenches on the left but there wasn't enough of us and we had to retire but got possession again an hour after. Fritz was on the parapet aiming bombs at us. I caught pieces of a bomb which one of them through [sic, threw] at me. One piece caught me on the forehead and others on the chest and arm. I bled like a pig. Have got a little splinter of bomb in my head yet, don't know how the thing didn't catch me properly. I seemed to get thrown sideways when I saw it coming. Had a wonderful escape. It was pretty hot. The machine guns got into us properly and rolled a lot of our boys over. It was heart rending to see all our pals go down. There wasn't many left when it was all over. Went out to screw around for wounded. The platoon officer came with me. Hadn't gone 50 yds when two bullets got him in the shoulder, paralysed him. Couldn't move hand or foot. Lumped him on my shoulder and staggered under cover with him and got him into trench with help of two others.*

Fritz got absolutely walloped. Took prisoners by the score. Our lads revelled in the scruff. They chased Huns everywhere. Secured hundreds of trophies. Fritz's dug-outs are fitted up like suburban homes. Gives the direct lie to all that the papers say about starving prisoners. They are a very poor class however, most of them being boys or semi-old men. They surrendered in hundreds. They are treacherous beggars. Their machine guns continued to mow our fellows down until we got right close to them. The gunners then threw up their hands expecting to be taken prisoner. Our chaps didn't have any intentions however. They simply made holes in them with the bayonet.

The whole 1st Division was greatly complimented on the work it had done. I believe a congratulatory telegram was sent to Australia about us. Our company (A) had only 17 men and 4 NCOs left out of the original. All our officers were wounded, and another Sgt and I were practically in charge. An officer from another company was supposed to be at the head but I think he had the ('jim jams') or something. Every one of the lads stuck it like heroes.

It was awful. All along the road mangled men were lying in heaps. The warm weather didn't make it any better. It was hell, there is no doubt about it. It was reckoned that Fritz heaved over shells (coalboxes) at the rate of 5 000 a minute. There wasn't a sq yd left untouched.

[Diary, 25 to 27 July, 1916, Pozieres.]

Boy's letter of 1 August, 1916, to his mother is also remarkably detailed and direct in its telling:

As you have no doubt read by this time, we have been walloping the life out of Fritz. But we got terribly cut up in the job, but we left our mark on Fritz. Our company got terribly cut up. We had over 60 percent casualties. I am glad to say that I am one of the lucky ones. (The details will do until I get home.)

Well Mum, we were in the trenches four days and in that time, I think we had the fighting of a year crowded into it. It was a hell, a roaring boiling hell of shot and shell and mangled men. It was truly awful, but I enjoyed the excitement of the hand to hand scruffing. Our lads simply walloped Fritz. They were glorious. Fritz gave himself up in handfuls. They were surrendering everywhere. I never saw such a rout. You ought to have seen our chaps after them. They gave them all they were looking for.

We were supposed to advance into a certain village and dig in about 200 yds ahead. Instead of doing this our chaps advanced about 600 yds and dug in within thirty yds of Fritz's trenches. We eventually had to retire about 100 yds and there we stuck. Next day we got hell. Fritz seemed to open up his whole force of guns on to us. They razed our trenches. The earth was pulverized. There wasn't a square foot of solid earth for miles around. The ground was full of shell holes, most of them being from fifteen to twenty ft deep and same across.

Next night we got our opportunity. We 'hopped out' and took Fritz's first line. They mowed us down with machine guns until we got close up to them and then they threw up their hands and cried for mercy. We gave it to them, I don't think. They deserved all they got. They are treacherous beggars. The beggars ran for their lives, but they didn't go far. Our boys were right in amongst them and were in their element cutting them down and bombing them out of their dug-outs. They seemed utterly demoralized. And their dug-outs! They are wonderful. They go down in the ground for about 60 or 70 feet and are splendidly built. Our shells would never reach them in those hiding places. We had to bomb them out of them.

Some of these underground houses were as well furnished as any home. In one dug-out under a village (all that remained of the village was a heap of ruins and bricks) the floor of the dug-out was carpeted, and walls papered and a big double bed together with chests and tables and chairs. It is absolutely marvellous.

With the exception of a couple of hours I didn't have any sleep during the whole period. I slept well when we got down to the reserve trenches, I can tell you.

Bivouacked outside a large town five or six miles from the front [Albert]. Most of this town is wrecked with Hun shells. The church is in ruins too but there is one extraordinary thing about it. A statue of the Blessed Virgin and Child surmounted the top of the tower. She is holding up the Infant in her outstretched arms and He seems to be appealing to the people. When one of the Hun shells struck the tower, it toppled the statue over and now it is in this position. The French seem to regard it as a miracle and say that a prophecy foretells that when the statue falls the war will end. The French are a deeply religious people and regards the position of the statue as if it was guarding the town. It is made of burnished bronze or brass and shines like gold in the sun.

Do not worry over me, Mum dear, as I am looking after myself. I went to Confession two days before we went into action and was quite prepared for anything. I seemed to bear a charmed life. Thanks be to God and His Holy Mother and St Joseph I came out OK. A Hun threw a bomb directly at me but somehow or other I twisted aside and only got a bit of it.

Tell Clem not to worry about enlisting as everything will be over in a couple of months.

In contrast, the normally expansive diarist, Percy Lay ('A' Coy), gave very little detail in his diary, other than to say that:

Our battalion got pretty badly smashed up but had gained all our objectives and was hanging on to them like grim death. [Diary 25/7/16 ^[5].] Fritz shelled the hell into us, in fact we could see the shells falling, they were that thick. [Diary, 26/7/16 ^[5].]

Gerald Evans added in a letter to his mother, dated **31 July, 1916**^[3]:

The shell fire passes all imagination!

More telling were the observations of two other members of the AIF regarding the state of the men who walked out of Pozieres after being relieved by the 22nd Battalion. **Sergeant Edgar Rule** [MC, MM, 14th Bn, enl 28/6/15, dis 9/6/19, author of 'Jacka's Mob'^[13] wrote in his diary about the return of the 1st Division men from Pozieres:

Those who saw them will never forget it as long as they live. They looked like men who had been in Hell. Almost without exception each man looked drawn and haggard, and so dazed that they appeared to be walking in a dream, and their eyes looked glassy and starey.^[14]

Sergeant 263 Bill Usherwood [23rd Bn], who was a friend of Gerald's from the Evans' family property, 'Redcamp', wrote on 27 July, 1916, the following regarding Gerald and the 8th Battalion to Gerald's brother Evan: ^[3]

As I said before he [Gerald] had just come out of the warmest corner in this part of the globe, and consequently was somewhat dirty & unshaven and a bit ragged and he hadn't had a sleep for several days. Do you realise what that means? In case you don't fully, I'll give you an idea in a few words. It means that he has been with his men playing a big part in the biggest game being played in the world today, with the result that his company took & held the most advanced position we hold in our line today and the fact that I saw him tired & dirty is clear proof that he wasn't only showing his men how to play the game but was helping them to play it and it takes a man to do that ...

[Sgt Usherwood went missing in action one week later at Pozieres, later confirmed KIA 4/8/16 ^[3].]

Perhaps the most brutal and succinct account of the fighting was penned by **Lance Corporal 3949 William Allen Trevena** [DCM, 8th Bn, enl 3/7/15, RTA 15/4/18].^[4]

Left the Huns' first line of trenches and moved up in supports. Heavy shelling. Dead, dead all round. Heaps of bodies blown to atoms!

Finally, **Private 1672 Reg Johanesen** [8th Bn, 1895-1976, enl 15/1/1915, RTA 3/1/19] dramatically captured the terror at Pozieres in a letter written to his parents:^[4]

We lay in shell holes all night and as soon as dawn came they started to shell, and all hell broke loose. They shelled us all day without break and men were getting skittled everywhere. I shall never forget the cries of the wounded for stretcher-bearers. We never had a moments spell from then till the time we were relieved. I could hear the cries for stretcher-bearers in my sleep for weeks after. We were four days in that hell.



Lt Edgar J Rule MC, MM
14th Bn, 1886-1959.
enl 28/6/1915, Dis 9/6/1919



Sgt TWC Bill Usherwood
RN 263, 23rd Bn, b 8/1885,
enl 13/2/1915, KIA 4/8/1916,
Pozieres, France

Overall, the men of the 8th Battalion were very proud of their attacking achievements at Pozieres on 25 July, 1916, but saddened by the terrible losses, which amounted to 81 killed, 266 wounded, and a further 23 missing, with almost all of those missing later deemed to have been killed.^[4]

Pozieres, 16 to 21 August, 1916

The 8th Battalion's next turn in the meat grinder that was Pozieres was between 16 and 21 August.^[9] This time the Germans were more prepared for the resolute onslaught that the Australians brought to the battle. On the first day the 8th Battalion moved up Sausage Valley and then along Dead Man's Road into Pozieres on what was deemed a 'quiet day.' On 17 August the 8th dug a communication trench, later

called DOT Trench, with only 'light' casualties being recorded.

A grand attack was planned from 18 August with the 6th, 7th and 8th Battalions. 'A' and 'C' Companies of the 8th were to spearhead the attack with 'D' Company in reserve. On that day L/Cpl Allen Trevena observed *shell holes full of bodies, heads and parts all over the place.*^[4] The attack was to begin in the positions between Munster Alley and the Tramway Tracks and move forward past The Windmill towards Mouquet Farm [see previous **map**].

This would be the first time Australian troops had advanced under a creeping barrage, later to become a feature of infantry attacks. *As was too often the case when complicated fire plans had been prepared, there was insufficient time allowed to communicate the details and timings of the creeping barrage to the participating infantry.*^[4]



Capt Dudley Hardy
b1894, enl 14/8/1914,
8th Bn, MIA 18/8/1916
AWM C01197



Lt Clarence 'Tas' Mummery
MC +Bar, b 1894,
8th Bn, enl 15/8/1914
KIA 20/10/1917

The end result was the artillery barrage ceased too early, leaving the Australian battalions exposed to withering machine-gun fire as the German defenders had time to get out of their dug-outs. In this unrequited foray, Boy's 'A' Company suffered considerably. The Company OC, **Captain Dudley Hardy** [8th Bn, far left] was lost early in the attack. Again, the battalion's adjutant, Captain Gus Lodge DSO came to the aid of the company. With (now Sergeant) Percy Lay, he organised three determined attacks that were ultimately thwarted at great cost. On the third attack, Captain Lodge was grievously wounded with gun shot wounds to his right arm, leg and abdomen. Lodge was very lucky to survive.

For the second time in a month, (now 2nd Lieutenant) Willie Goodwin rose to the occasion. Goodwin teamed

up with **Lieutenant Tas Mummery** [MC & Bar, above right], to repeatedly recover the wounded; in the case of **Private George Groves** [8th Bn, 1898-1972, enl 26/8/1915, dis 4/10/17] literally from in front of the German parapet. A summary of these actions and the work of Sergeant Percy Lay (back to his best diarist form) are provided in *The indomitable Lt Goodwin*.^[12]

In contrast, Boy's diary entries painted a more low-key slant on the 8th Battalion's second stint at Pozieres. In a letter to his mother (28/8/1916) Boy made the following observations about Pozieres:

We are getting plenty of fighting this last month or so. Reckon it's time we had a spell. Haven't filled up the gaps yet but suppose they will rush some 'green' recruits over from Australia to complete.

Well Mum dear, I am enjoying the best of health and am happy as Larry. I hope everybody is in the same frame of mind as me. How are all the people? Is K Anderson married? Heard she was. There seems to be a big crowd of enlistments from the old town. There can't be many left. How are all the kiddies? Sheila must be a Daddy longlegs now, like Vera I suppose. How is Liz? I suppose she can beat Clem in whistling. Clem told me that he is coming over in the Engineers. Scant can't be too busy. I got a letter from Mrs Greenwood last week, also a card from Myrtle. I told you I seen Ned McK. He is in the 5th Batt. I wonder if you are worrying over me. But Mum don't do anything like that. I am as right as pie.

Will write longer letter next time. Have to scribble this. Fruit season now. Plenty apples, tomatoes etc, plenty of feed (tres bon).

The end result for much pain was very little gain of ground in the 8th Battalion's second stint at Pozieres, with 25 killed, 154 wounded and 32 men reported missing.^[4] Thus, within the space of two short engagements at Pozieres over the course of less than a month, the battalion had been reduced to half its fighting strength. Now was the time for the 8th Battalion to rest, and replenish with fresh reinforcements to replace the losses from Pozieres.

Into the line, 31 August to 13 September, 1916, at Ypres and the Zillebeke raid (29/9/16)

The next job for the much-mauled 8th Battalion was to take over the easier job of occupying the well-established lines near Ypres Mental Asylum (Hospice du Sacre Coeur). Boy commented in his diary:

Ypres Asylum (very much battered). From there guides from the battalion we were relieving, guided us to the trenches we were to 'take over'. We circled round Ypres and arrived at trenches south east of the town. Nothing happened during our 'changing over' and after the Tommies we relieved had gone, I had a good run round to 'take stock' of the position. Trenches in a bad state. Very much knocked about. Enemy very active with minenwerfers (minnies) and rifle grenades. Had a few casualties as a result. Commission came out when I was in there. [Diary 31/8/16.]

After fourteen days of it we were relieved and returned back into reserve. Was then transferred to D Coy. Volunteered to lead a party in a raid on Hun trenches together with two other officers.

[Diary 14/9/16.]

Our dug-out is on the bank of what used to be a canal but is now only a chain of rushes and bog holes. The country around here is very wild looking. Nearly all the houses are in ruins and things look down at heel. The sun has just peeped out of the black sky and is shining on the paper as I write. It is nice & warm.

I suppose you have read details of our recent fighting on the Somme. The casualty lists ought to be out by now. What a tale they will tell to be sure. I have been very lucky all through thanks to God and His Holy Mother.

A lot of nervous breakdowns here too. Strain too great. Doesn't affect me in the slightest.

Got that wattle with the letter. Dear reminder of the old wattle trees around in the bush where we used to hunt of a Saturday. Glad there is a good season this year. Counter-balance the effects of the war.

[Letter to mother, 14/9/16.]

The raid mentioned by Boy was into the previously thought impregnable German lines of The Bluff at Zillebeke and was made up of hand-picked men from the brightest of the new officers and NCOs. The raid was originally to be commanded by Captain James Hurrey, but when he fell ill, Lieutenant Gerald Evans took over command. Gerald was joined by lieutenants Willie Goodwin, Donovan Joynt and Boy Maguire, with the steady hand of **CSM George Harris** [DCM, MID, 1885-1960]. **Colonel Gordon Bennett** [CO 6th Bn, CB, CMG, DSO, MID, 1887-1962] was in overall command. Boy described the raid as follows.

We eventually carried out the raid very successfully. We crawled out late at night and got close up to the enemy wire without him suspecting anything. The wire had been cut in some places by a few trench mortars we sent over early in the day. At a given signal a 'wire' mat was thrown over the entanglements and we bolted over this into the trench. We bombed our way along the trench. Bombed dug-outs etc and finished a few Huns we found in our way. Secured a couple of prisoners.

Very exciting while it lasted. I had one man wounded (died next day). Another officer of the left party [Lieut Joynt] also wounded with shrapnel. Our artillery put up a very effective barrage the whole time the raid was on. Bit Fritz that time.

[Diary, 29/9/16.]

The 'job' has now come off so I may tell you about it. We were training for a raid on the Hun trenches and it came off the other night very successfully. I was in charge of one party and we crept across, got through Fritz's wire and raided his trench for a good distance. Our lads were a bit bloodthirsty and didn't take many prisoners. Poor old Fritz got quite a shock. We bombed the poor beggars in their dug-outs. I can tell you it was a wild and exciting time we had. Unfortunately, one of my men got knocked. We got special mention in 'orders' for the good work that was done.

The raiders are going to celebrate their success by a dinner and concert in the local YMCA Hall tomorrow night. We were accorded a welcome last night at dinner. Congratulated on our achievement. I suppose we will be digging Fritz in the ribs again shortly. He doesn't like the Australians. They are too rough for him.

[Letter to Mother, 4/10/16.]

Further descriptions of this raid are provided within Donovan Joynt's book, 'Breaking the road for the rest'^[8], Austin's 'Cobbers in Khaki'^[4] and Evans and Armstrong, *The indomitable Lt Goodwin*.^[12] Boy was recommended for a mention in despatches for his participation in the successful raid by Major General HB Walker, but it seems that the MID did not eventuate.

The cold hard slog: the winter of 1916/17

After the capture of Pozieres, the next push on the Somme was to capture the key town of Bapaume. Boy's letters and diary entries provide a useful perspective on this period of the war.

Followed the canal for three miles and then turned off to the left and entered the village of Illabrouck, where we billeted for five days. Lady of the house where we stopped was very good to us. Couldn't do enough. I had a bonza bed with white sheets. First time since leaving Australia. The old lady cried when we left and wanted us to come back sometime. We marched to station south of St Omer where we were to entrain for the Somme.

[Diary, 16-21/10/16.]

Also brought a well-fitting officers tunic yesterday from Ordnance. I'll get my photo taken first chance I get and post it along.

[Letter to mother, 28/10/16.]

Switch Trench then up to front line Guillemont trenches [very wet, not many places to sleep or keep dry, disease rampant].

Reserve trenches – A couple of 'wounded' Tanks in our vicinity. Ground cut and torn by shell fire.

Tanks:- The much talked of 'Tank' is a funny looking object. Seems to be made of armour plate. Has two rear wheels for steering purposes. Propelling device consist of two caterpillar endless chains

passing around 'tank' on both sides. Two 3 inch guns in front and machine guns on both sides. Plenty of room inside. The crew sit on bicycle seats at their posts. Very intricate inside. Funny looking beggars altogether.

[Diary, 4-10/11/16.]

Great rumours regarding peace nowadays. Fresh 'Furphies' every day. The poor Hun is very tame. They keep deserting every day. "Glad to get away from it", they say.

[Letter to mother, 26/1/17.]

Are now getting misty rains. As a result, the ground has thawed and the whole country is once again a beautiful expanse of mud and slush. The ice and snow have not completely disappeared, but this warm weather will soon settle it. I much prefer the hard-cold frosty weather. This mud is the limit.

*I suppose you heard that **Billy Allison** [Pte 5697, 39th Bn, KIA 27/12/16; from Bowenvale] had been killed. First time in action too. The bullets seem to be letting the 'old' men alone lately and picking out the reinforcements.*

[Letter to mother, 17/2/17.]

Wounded, and recovery in Blighty

Towards the end of February 1917, Boy's luck ran out – or did it? He was wounded on 19 February, 1917, at Flers/Gueudecourt (between Delville Wood/Longueval and Bapaume). Boy suffered a bullet wound to the left side and was discharged to duty on 2 April, finally rejoining the 8th Battalion on 13 May, 1917.

I suppose you know by this that the Hun got in one on me at last. The beggars turned a machine gun on me while I was walking along the top. Two or three bullets went thro' my coat and one poked its way in through the left side just under the ribs and came to a dead end in my middle. Was hit about 8 o'clock on Monday 19th, just a week from today.

Got the bullet out from the middle of me somewhere. They sliced me to some order in getting it too.

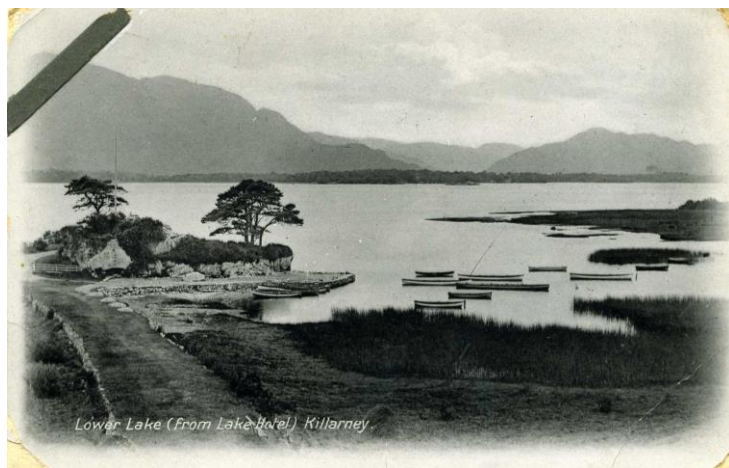
[Letter to mother, 26/2/17, from 1st Red Cross Hospital, Paris.]

The good fortune of his February wounding was that Boy missed out on the 8th Battalion's costly attack at Second Bullecourt in May 1917. During the 8th Battalion's residence of the front line at Bullecourt (7-10 May), it assaulted the Hindenburg Line and captured 200 yards of the German's OG2 Trench, which the 8th held despite three strong counter-attacks, in what was later described as one of the most ferocious hand-to-hand bombing fights of the war.^[1,6,16,24] At one end of the 200 yard stretch of trench a wounded and valiant Sergeant Percy Lay was fiercely holding the line for 'A' Company, while at the other end of the trench Gerald Evans was similarly fighting desperately with 'D' Company. In this stunt both men were deservedly awarded their first decorations: a MM for Percy Lay and a MC for Gerald Evans. Not long after Gerald was promoted to captain (on 27 July, 1917).

Once released from London General Hospital on 13 March, 1917, Boy Maguire completed his convalescence at Cobham Hall and then travelled on leave to Killarney, a popular tourist destination in Ireland. Boy's family roots were Irish and so it is not surprising he wanted to visit the 'old country'.

Boy was staying at the International Hotel in Killarney and noticed an attractive young woman passing the hotel every day on her way to and from work. He asked to be introduced and so met Bridget ('Bee') Dillon

who lived close to the hotel. They became friends and Bee agreed to show Boy the many beautiful spots around Killarney. In no time love blossomed, and this culminated in Boy writing to his mother to say that he and Bee had become engaged. He wrote that *she is one of the best and sweetest girls I have ever met*. He wrote to his younger sister Sheila on 16 April, 1917, that his time in Killarney had been *the best fun I've ever had*.

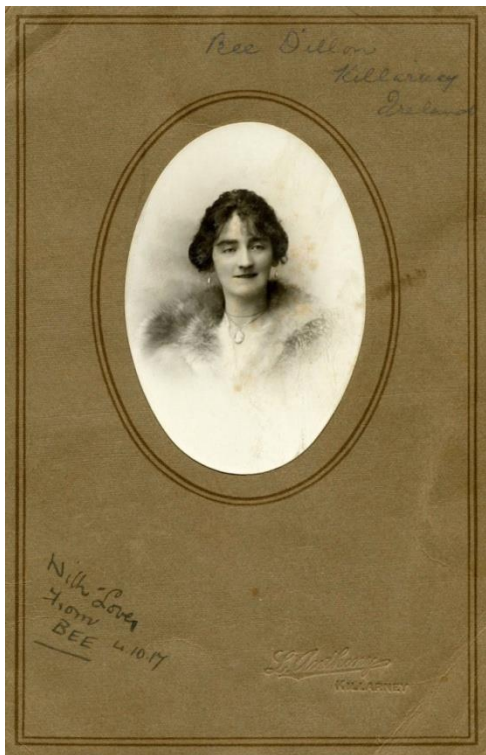


Left: Postcard to Mary of Lower Lake from Lake Hotel, Killarney.

Postcards sent at this time show many of the scenic places visited by Boy and Bee around Killarney. There are also photos of them together in a jaunting

cart with a lady friend (or chaperone) seated in the rear of the cart [photo **next page**]. A very moving portrait of Bee was sent by her to the family on 4 October 1917 – the very day Boy was killed in Belgium.

After Boy was killed, Bee continued to correspond with the Maguire family for some years. She spoke of Boy as *Dear Jack* and reminisced about the places they visited together. Bee did not marry and succumbed to tuberculosis, aged around 40 years.



Far left: Bee and Boy in an Irish Jaunting Car with chaperone.

Left: Bee Dillon's photo dated 4 October, 1917.

Bee Dillon's family kept Boy's memory alive for many years. Kevin Chamberlain spoke to Bee's niece, Kitty Looney, in Killarney in 1990. Kitty was aged in her 80s at this time, but still had clear memories of her favourite Aunt Bee and of Boy Maguire. Boy gave the nine year old Kitty some military buttons for her collection, and the walking stick he needed during his convalescence was left with the family and kept for a long time. Kitty had inherited letters between Boy and Bee but eventually decided to burn them, not knowing that Boy's nephew would turn up on her doorstep one day.

Return and training for Passchendaele

Shortly after returning to his battalion on 13 May, 1917, Boy was promoted to the rank of lieutenant (on 8 June). Given that the 8th Battalion had been badly knocked about again at 2nd Bullecourt in May, the battalion was then in a rest, rebuilding and training phase. Their billets were at Biefvillers-les-Baupame (from 11 May), Bresle (from 23 May), Mailly-Maillet (from 9 June), Bresle (from 23 June), Bray-sur-Somme (from 16 July), Hondeghem (from 9 August) and Le Doulieu (from 14 September). These towns are largely between Bailleul and St Omer, and near Amiens in Northern France.

Boy's diary and letters indicated that he was quite prepared to bump along and regroup with the rest of the battalion over this time.

I have joined up with the Battⁿ again. It is just so like being back home, today is very fine. We are camped in tents. Am feeling well. Very heavy fighting in this part of the world. Plenty of dead men about.

[Postcard to Vera, 13/5/17, Biefvillers-les-Baupame, France.]

The boys have just come out of the line after a very heavy time. The fighting is very severe now and the artillery fire makes the whole place an absolute hell. It's a wonder that any of us are left at all.

Our lads have done splendid work in the line. They are magnificent without a doubt. It makes a man swell with pride to think he is of the same race. The Australians are absolutely the best troops on the Western front. They can take anything and hold it too.

[Letter to mother, 13/5/17, Biefvillers-les-Baupame.]

Well Mum dear, I am in the best of health and spirits. I think your prayers must have something to do with it. I have been very, very lucky in the line. The bullets and shells seem to miss me somehow,

Thanks be to God. Today is absolutely perfect. We have left the winter behind us for good. The hedges about here are covered with white blooms. This part belonged to the Huns a couple of weeks back.
[Letter to mother, 14/5/17, Biefvillers-les-Baupame, France.]

Throughout this time, divisional and battalion sports were popular with the AIF commanders for improving the men's physical and psychological wellbeing, as well as contributing to the *esprit de corps*.

Today the divisional sports are being held. Same with tomorrow. Had our battalion sports last Saturday and the brigade events yesterday. Some going I can tell you. Our battalion held its end up as usual and came out with top number of points. We are absolutely top dogs of the brigade now. Same applies to the fighting as we have done more 'hop-overs' and met with better success than any of the others.

[Letter to mother, 11/6/17, Bresle, Northern France.]

I forgot to tell you I received four 'Tisers and some Advocates. Seen an account of the welcome home to Capt Lodge DSO [see earlier photo]. He was adjutant of this battalion and a really fine chap.*

[Letter to mother, 24/6/17, Mailly-Maillet, Northern France. * Captain Gus Lodge returned to the war in France from Australia on 26/11/17, much to the surprise of his fellow officers.]

This time was also mid-summer, with long days and a more cheerful local populace. It was also a time of bountiful fruits and warm weather which contrasted with the privations of the previous winter.

Another officer and I have made very good friends with a family in the next village. They treat us like one of the family and we enjoy ourselves some. Great opportunities for picking up French. I can tell you I can parli vous some now.

Strawberries and cherries are ripe now. Had a feed of 'straws' last night. Good too. Struck a cherry tree yesterday. Perched myself on top and had a gut full. Oh, we have fine times here. Wandering about the free open country. I'll have no time for the city after this. The grass about here is up to one's knees. Get wet feet promenading of an early morning.

Oh, I only wish that I were back home again and wandering through the old bush. You have no idea what fascination the bush has for us exiles.

[Letter to mother, 24/6/17, Mailly-Maillet, Northern France.]

However, with the on-going training and the continuous low boom of artillery in the distance, the men's thoughts were never too far from their wartime duties.

Our fellows have no time for the Tommies at all. They are useless in the line without their officers. Time and time again the Australians have had to take a position after the Tommies had failed. We get all the stiff work alright. No wonder we have had such enormous casualties. I think they reckon the Australians to be the only troops on the Western Front. Looks like it. We are now being trained for attacking troops. They'll stick us in where the Huns are strongest to blow them out. It makes one's heart bleed to see our fellows get bowled over. It seems such a pity to waste them in that fashion. I've never seen our lads being pushed back by the Huns yet. Shell fire might blow them out but as far as the Hun himself is concerned they would rather die fighting than yield to the bloody Bosches as they call them. [Letter to mother, 26/6/17, Mailly-Maillet.]

Boy also sent home a number of postcards of the large Amiens Cathedral, with which he was obviously impressed. He was also an astute observer of the crowds when on these ventures.

Was in Amiens yesterday. Had a good day but my time was occupied chiefly with shopping. One gets tired of walking the streets, altho' they are very crowded and busy. I never get tired of watching a French crowd. Even in these times of mourning the street is quite gay looking. The mourning dress of the women is very neat and petit with a touch of white here and there and a flowing crepe veil.

The Americans are over here now. (Guess we're going to end this blinkin' war anyhow.)

Got a reception from the French people but I believe they have already fallen into disfavour as they are making nuisances of themselves in some districts. However, they are a welcome addition to the forces. God knows we need a long spell to recover our wind.

[Letter to mother, 8/7/17, Bresle, Northern France.]

This will be our last day at this spot. We move off tomorrow to God knows where. Certainly, up north. But before we go from this part we have to go through a four days course of swimming lessons. What does that portend? Another landing I think.

The French cockies are getting busy now reaping their crops. And such weird old reaping machines they have. The work is done mostly by women and boys. Some of the old men potter round too. Their potato crops are coming on well. Should be plenty of spuds this season.

[Letter to mother, 14/7/17, prior to moving to Bray-sur-Somme.]

We are right almost on our camping ground of today twelve months ago, the day before which we advanced through the village of Pozieres and slaughtered the Huns. Well I remember the great spirit our fellows were in. God rest their souls, there were not many left three days from then. When I think of the splendid men and pals who fell during that week it makes me feel very lonely indeed. However, it is all over and done with now. Pozieres is just a blot on the landscape and as peaceful as any country village. The war is miles away now. The 8th Battalion has a fine monument erected to the memory of the officers and men who fell in the battle. It is a fine white cross on a large square fixture.

[Letter to mother, 21/7/17, Bray-sur-Somme.]

Like many of the Australians, Boy developed a soft spot for the local French people he met and was often billeted with.

Am sitting at the table of a farmhouse writing this. Madame is up the other end of the table ironing sheets. Every now and again she apologises for shaking the table. She is a decent old sort and can't do enough for me. Gives me coffee in bed about 7 o'clock every morning.

Madame here thinks me AI because I'm a Catholique. She say:- "Vous Catholique" I say "Oui madam", she says "Oh, tres bon, vous reste ici." ["Oh, very good, you stay here."]

Our fellows are out in the fields helping the Froggies to bind and 'stook' their crops. They still have the old-fashioned idea of harvesting, cut it down with a small sickle and collect it together as it is cut, with a crook stick. And my word they can cut some area in a day. The women and spare parts of the farm bind and stook the wheat. The people much appreciate the help our lads give them. But I've a shrewd suspicion why the boys are so eager to lend a hand. (Women and girls do most of the cockying.)

[Diary, 17/8/17.]



Capt Joseph Booth MC, CMG
8th Bn Chaplain, (1886-1965)
Photo from January 1917.



Postcard of Place de la Concorde, Paris.

Boy was fortunate to visit Paris in August 1917 with **Captain Joseph Booth MC, CMG** [above left] who was a learned man of moderation. Booth had endeared himself to the men of the 8th Battalion for his assistance in looking after the wounded and, of course, providing for the many that did not make it.

The Battalion C of E chaplain was with me so I was in good company (Capt Booth). We took a large room between us. The padre (Booth) was a decent old sort and we visited all the places of interest together, he acting as guide. The French museums are full of interesting things. One could spend months in these places. The Cathedral of Notre Dame is a great old place but not so beautiful as Rheims and Amiens. The church of the Sacred Heart is a most beautiful edifice, built of marble and granite.

There are plenty of Yankees in Paris. They have a uniform much the same as the New Zealanders. Seem to be a fine type of men but terrors to brag of what they intend doing. They are not in the trenches as yet.

The Parisians are the real French. I could understand them very well. They speak very differently from the people here. And talk about style – these French Parisians know how to dress. The English are not a patch on them. But they spoil themselves by painting and rouging etc. Some of them are awful paint pots. Could scrape off enough to paint a house.

[Letter to mother, 10/9/17, Le Doulieu, Northern France.]

Well now for that bit of news. My commission came through last night and now I'm a lieutenant or officer if you like.

[Letter to Mary, 11/9/17, Le Doulieu.]

Lieutenant Donovan Joynt noted in his memoirs^[8] that his trip to Paris was in the company of Boy and a number of other officers and NCOs. Boy sent home a number of postcards, including one of the famous Place de la Concorde [previous page]. Other postcards featured the sumptuous bedroom of King Louis XIV and Petite Trianon at Chateau Versailles, Hippodrome, Sacre Coeur at Montmartre and sailing at Le Touquet Paris-Plage. This pleasant interlude must have been just the tonic for the men of the 8th after the rigors of Bullecourt.

Have been back from my holiday in Paris over a week now, but haven't written before because somehow or other I didn't have the time. Oh Mum, Paree is some place, believe me. I had six glorious days there. Visited all the old historic places. I wrote you from the city too and also sent some souvenirs and postcards of the different spots of interest. I stopped at the Hotel de Louvre in the centre of the city and near the Grand Palace of that name.

Menin Road, Belgium, 20 September 1917

The first of the Battles of Third Ypres ('Passchendaele') in 1917 for the Australians was the Battle of Menin Road. Success in this battle took the Australians to the western edge of Polygon Wood. By 8.30 pm on 19 September, the 8th Battalion had assembled at Zillebeke Bund in preparation for the advance. The men had been resting and training for over three months and were now eager to resume the fight with the Hun. Heavy rain soon turned the ground into mud, which slowed the advance of the AIF units through Clapham Junction and into their attack positions.

As a consequence, the tardy progress of the 7th Battalion delayed the 8th Battalion, so that by 5.15 am Capt Gerald Evans' 'D' Company was only just entering the Junction. An SOS bombardment brought down by the Germans, perhaps as a result of hearing noise or spotting an ill-advised lit cigarette, caught Gerald and two other men. Ron Austin^[4] reported that *Evans was badly wounded, but gallantly refused any assistance as it would still further delay the move to the start line*. Gerald was hit by shrapnel, which pierced his abdomen and broke his femur. It is likely they knew he was 'done for' as the bleeding would have been uncontrollable. He died soon after at the 10th Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on the Menin Road.

Gerald temporarily handed stewardship of 'D' Company to the ever reliable **CSM George Harris**, with the assistance of **Corporal 1326 Owen Carroll** [MM, 1897-1971, enl 7/12/14, RTA 10/3/18] who led the company through Clapham Junction and into position. Both Harris and Carroll excelled on that day, with Harris being awarded a DCM and Carroll a MM. Sergeant Percy Lay later bitterly noted in his diary for the day, *we lost the best Captain in the AIF*.^[5]



Left: German prisoners bringing in Australian wounded to the Regimental Aid Post near Clapham Junction in the Ypres sector during the advance of the 1st and 2nd Divisions on 20 September, 1917. Note the injured soldiers on the ground on stretchers. AWM E00974.

In his diary, Percy Lay provided a typically penetrating account of the Battle of Menin Road.^[14]

8th Battalion was to capture the third and furthest objective which we did very easily. Got about 25 MGs, a brigadier and all his staff and hundreds of prisoners, not to mention those killed.

*We gained all we were asked to and a little more. It was amusing to see the way the chaps went into battle. It looked more like a race meeting than a battle. Consolidated positions for the counter-attacks that were sure to come and we caught him massing for the attack and cut him up before any of them reached our lines. Our casualties were very light for the day but our company lost most of our officers, Capt Gerald Evans, **Lts Alexander Fulton** [b.1883, enl 6/7/15, KIA 20/9/17], **James Wicks** [b.1891, enl 12/7/15, wounded, RTA 8/11/18] and **Reg Brinsmead** [MC, b.1893, enl 18/8/14, wounded, KIA 17/12/17] got wounded, leaving only one officer unwounded but Lt Brinsmead would not go away ... we lost a few slashing good NCOs, amongst the gamest and best was **Cpl Horace Hayes** [138, b.1893, enl 19/8/14, KIA 20/9/17] who died like a true Briton, also **Sgts John Brown** [5048, b.1894, enl 27/9/15, KIA 20/9/17] and **Arnott** [Gilbert Arnott, 518, DCM, 1884-1962, enl 18/8/14, dis 24/1/19].*

For his role in the 8th Battalion's action at Menin Road, Percy Lay was awarded a DCM, which was well deserved based on the descriptions of both Bean^[5,6] and Austin.^[11] On 29 September, 1917, Lay was promoted to second lieutenant.

Boy's report on the battle was sent in two letters to his mother, as follows:

The Fritzies were terribly frightened and gave us everything they had. It was as funny as a fence to see our lads dragging in the prisoners and ratting them in the midst of a fierce barrage of shells. We lost a lot of good men too, but it wasn't too heavy considering the ground and prisoners we gained. The battalion has done splendidly, and we have been congratulated on the job from all sides. It is a big feather in Australia's hat.

Went to Mass in the next town this morning and received Holy Communion. Also received before going into the 'stunt'. I feel as happy as Larry. You need have no worry over me. I am as ready as the next man and have every confidence that I'll come right through.

[**Letter to mother, 23/9/17**, Steenvoorde, Belgium.]

We have been getting praise from all quarters on our successful advance five days ago. Douglas Haig reckons it the finest in the present war. We are getting some decorations out of it too. Don't be surprised if you hear of me coming out with the highest of the bunch. Am recommended for a decoration I believe.

I tell you Mum dear, you ought to be proud to be an Australian. If you only could see the way our fellows act under the heaviest fire and the way they knock the Huns over. You would go mad with enthusiasm. There's no other soldier of any country that can come anywhere near them.

[**Letter to mother, 26/9/17**, Steenvoorde.]

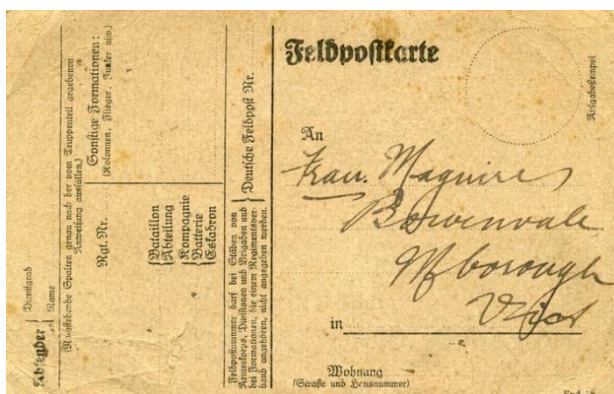
Boy was awarded the Military Cross for his skills in leading his platoon on the far right edge of 'D' Company. The recommendation reads:

During the attack on POLYGON WOOD near YPRES on September 20th 1917 this officer was in the command of the far right platoon of the division and it was largely owing to his splendid coolness under fire and in the face of great opposition that the direction of his company was maintained. He kept touch with the division on his right and captured two strong points in the third objective. During the consolidation of his position, he so placed a Lewis Gun as to break down the resistance of a party of the enemy on the right, thus enabling the battalion on his right to consolidate. Throughout the action he set a fine example to his men by his cheerful manner and great gallantry and devotion to duty.

[**'Commonwealth of Australia Gazette', 25 July, 1918**, page 1596, position 15].

Battle of Broodseinde, 4 October 1917

In late 1917 writing paper was in short supply when the men were in the field. After the victory at Menin Road, the men, including Boy, used some of the postcards souvenired from the Germans to write home. With a nod towards his larrikin streak, Boy cheekily addressed a postcard on 29 September, 1917, to 'Frau Maguire'. How this played in the local Bowenvale Post Office, and whether they got the joke is unknown. The so-addressed postcard is on the **left, next page**, while the **right** image is a postcard showing a squad of German soldiers. The Huns 'ratted' for the postcards are likely in the picture.



On the reverse of the 'Frau Maguire' postcard, Boy wrote:

Dear Mum,

Just a card to say that I am A1 & in the best of health. Owing to the paper shortage I am compelled to fall back on Fritz's postcards. What do you think of them? Will be in another mix up in a couple of days time. All from here for present.

Best and fondest love from your best boy. [Lots of XX's up the right-hand side of the postcard.]

In the short lead up to the Battle of Broodseinde, Boy wrote one final post card to his sister Mary. The coloured postcard, titled 'Dixmude 1914' was worked in silk by one of the local Belgian women. The scene portrayed was that of the town being shelled and burning in 1914. [Diksmuide (modern Flemish spelling) is 22 km north of Ieper; it is known for its 'Trench of Death' and attached museum.]

Just letting you know we are OK. Am moving up at present towards the F[ront] Line. Will be in a scruff in a few days.

I got your last letter ok. Hope Auntie's cold is better ...

[Postcard to Mary 1/10/17, Chateau Segard, Belgium.]

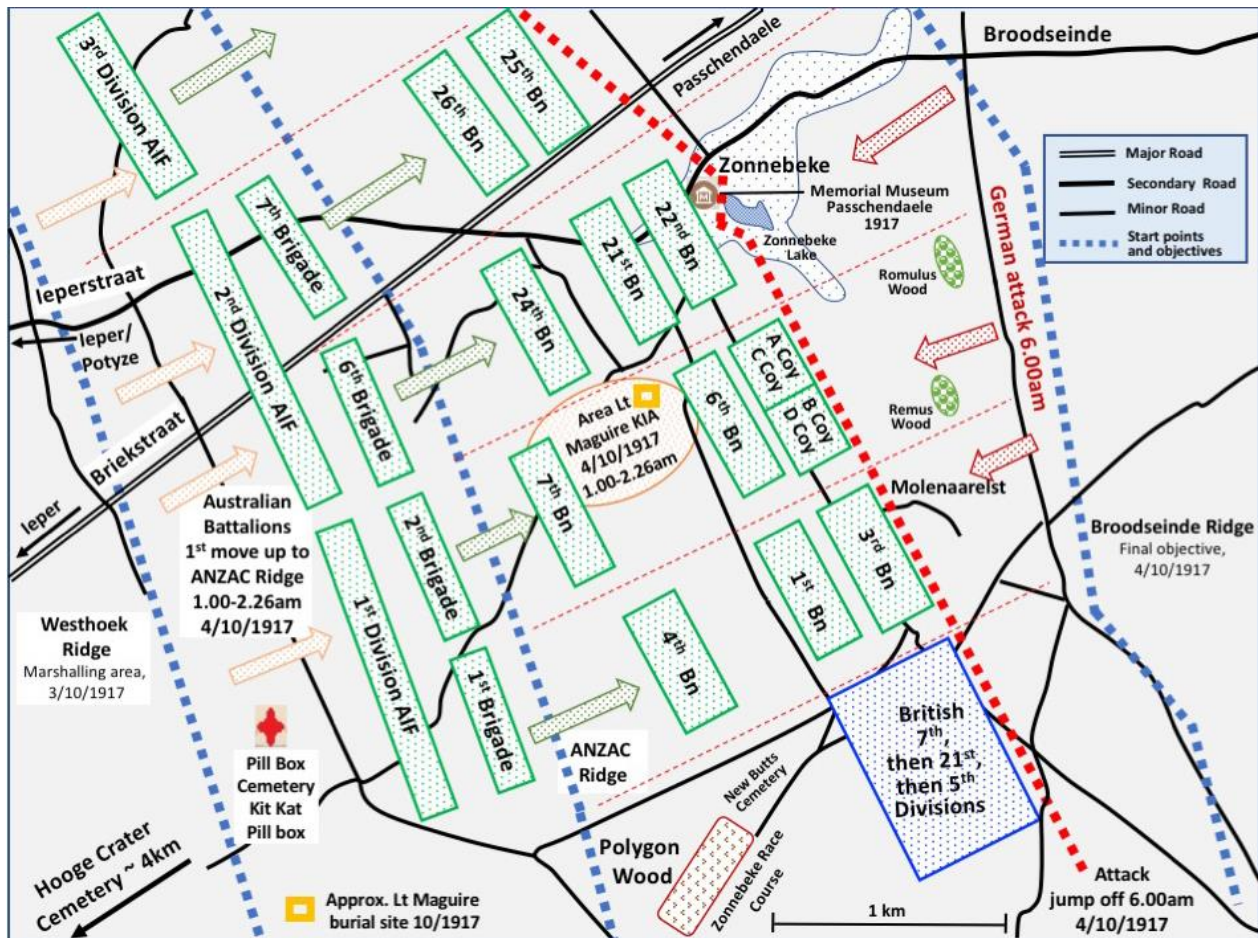


Above left: Dixmude 1914 postcard in embroidered silk. It was at Essex Farm dressing station on the Dixmude Road out of Ypres where Canadian doctor, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, was inspired to write 'In Flanders Fields', May 3, 1915. **Above right:** Photo of the 'Kit and Kat' pill-boxes near Zonnebeke, where the 8th Battalion wounded were brought to an aid station, in or behind the pill-boxes.

A combination of the 8th Battalion's unit diary and that of Percy Lay's diary tells the story of the attack on Broodseinde Ridge on 4 October, 1917. A map of the 8th Battalion's approximate position and its objectives is given on the **next page**.

In the lead-up to the attack, Lieutenant Maguire, **Lance Corporal 384 James Herbert Dehn [next page]** and **Private 3276 Patrick Connelly** [b1888, enl 2/8/1915, KIA 4/10/17] were hit by shell fire between 1 am and 2.26 am, approximately midway between Anzac Ridge and the battalion's jumping-off point for the attack on Broodseinde Ridge. They had been either in the process of laying guide tapes with the battalion's intelligence officer, **Lieutenant Len Errey [next page, KIA around 6.30 am 4/10/17]** or guiding other men to the jumping-off positions. Private Connelly was killed instantly, Lance Corporal Dehn's right arm was severely mangled and Boy Maguire was mortally wounded by the shell blast.

Through his pain, Boy was able to pass his final words on to fellow officer, **Lieutenant Frank Tickle MC** [8th Bn, 1888-1952, E 21/8/14, Dis 12/9/19], which were *Leave me ... I'm done. Lead my men on.* It seems incongruous that an officer such as Boy, who always led his men into battles from the front, would meet his end by being hit by random shellfire behind the front line.



Above: Schematic map of the area in which the 8th Battalion and other 1st and 2nd AIF Division units were advancing on 4 October, 1917.



LCpl James Dehn 8th Bn
1889-1969, E 24/8/1914,
Dis 31/1/1919



**Lt Len Errey DSO, MC,
MID, b1892, E 16/8/1914
KIA 4/10/1917**

Boy's final words may have inspired Lieutenant Tickle as he led Boy's platoon into the fight for Broodseinde Ridge, as Tickle would be awarded the MC that day.

Lieutenant Tickle's Military Cross citation reads:

On the 4th October 1917, at BROODSEINDE RIDGE, he led his company throughout with such fearless disregard of danger as to inspire his men to great effort. When they came under heavy shell fire he halted his men in shell holes and went out to a flank and engaged the enemy with a machine gun. During the fight for the final objective he was again heavily opposed by a machine gun. He led his men forward with great gallantry and personally killed the entire gun crew and successfully captured the position. He set a splendid example of courage and determination.

Despite the losses before the hop-over, the attack continued with 'A' Company on the left and 'B' Company on the right ('C' and 'D' Companies in support respectively). The unit war diary notes with some pride that *the pre-attack barrage was one of the severest tests of the operation ... but the troops stood their ground with great fortitude anxiously awaiting zero hour. Erratic but heavy shelling reported.*^[9]

Both Bean^[15,16] and Austin^[4] suggest that Lieutenant Willie Goodwin was hit by shrapnel at around the 6.00 am start of the attack and died several hours later in the Regimental Aid Post.

Percy Lay wrote:

Fritz put down a heavy barrage (5.30 am) on us and we lost a good number of our men and we were all pleased when the moment came for us to go. We met Fritz coming over but we just pipped him by a few minutes and when he saw us coming he turned, then we had some fun. We got a large number of prisoners and close to 50 machine guns and also gained our objective, which was a lovely ridge commanding all the ground for miles around. About six of us had some fun, we got well out in front and first we got 35 prisoners out of three strong points, then we had a good chase after the HQ staff but they beat us, but I got all their papers and sent them back and heard they were the most important papers ...

[Percy Lay's diary.]^[5]

*We lost a good lot of officers and men, some of the best in the Division: **Capt Rudolph Kirsch** [b1893, KIA 4/10/17]; **Capt John Davidson** [b.1895, KIA 4/10/17]; **Lt John T Maguire** [3945, MC, MID, b1896, KIA 4/10/17]; **Lt Len Errey** [DSO, MC, MID, b1892, KIA 4/10/17]; **Lt Willie Goodwin** [MC & Bar, MID, b.1886, KIA 4/10/17]; **Lt George Johansen** [b1888, KIA 4/10/17], **Lt Harold Ross** [MM, b1889, KIA 4/10/17]; and **Lt Ronald Glanville** [MC, b1892, KIA 4/10/17]. 'A' Coy suffered the heaviest, we lost 5 officers, & six sergeants & another officer went to take charge & then he [Glanville] also got killed. Then I had to go and take charge (of 'A') & I managed to get through with them.*

[Percy Lay's diary.]^[5]

Boy was initially buried close to where he fell, about 1 000 yards south south west of Zonnebeke, by some men of the battalion [see **map**]. Boy's grave was set slightly apart from the other men and, unfortunately, his grave was lost when the Germans retook the area in March 1918.

After the war, Lieutenant Goodwin and many others' remains were disinterred and aggregated in the nearby Hooge Crater Cemetery. Perhaps Boy's remains were exhumed and reburied as 'Known Unto God' in New Buttes Cemetery (in Polygon Wood), where others buried near Boy were reinterred. Or perhaps his body remains on the battlefield. These possibilities are currently being explored by the Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 staff in Ieper, Belgium. For now, Boy remains one of the missing on the walls of the Menin Gate in Ieper.

An article in the 'Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser' (23/01/18) contained the following story only a few months after Boy was killed, saying that *Lt Frank A Tickle MC bent over Boy and he cried 'Leave Me ... I'm Done ... Lead My Men On'*. These last words were communicated via Lieutenant Tickle to Boy's mother Johanna, who not long afterwards visited the poet and novelist Marion Miller Knowles at her home in Malvern and asked her to write a poem to commemorate Boy. The resulting poem was published in the same issue of the 'Advertiser' of 23 January, 1918 [see a version of the poem and the accompanying **note** on the **next page**].^[18]

The loss of their brave son, who had such bright prospects, must have been particularly hard for John Maguire and his wife Johanna. Perhaps their pain would have been somewhat lessened by the heartfelt letters of sorrow from Boy's mates in the 8th Battalion and a belated congratulatory note from **General Birdwood** for Boy's recent Military Cross awarded for his gallantry at the Battle of Menin Road. These were published in the 'Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser' on Friday, 23 December, 1919. One letter said:

Poor old 'Mac', as we always called him, was a fine soldier and a true comrade, and we feel his loss and miss his company more than I can express. It may be of some consolation to know he died doing his duty, and after all, a soldier's death is a glorious ending. I admired and envied your son, as he was about the best living boy I have ever had the pleasure to meet.

I am enclosing a letter I received yesterday from General Birdwood, which I know you will prize:

*Lieut JT Maguire MC, 8th Batt. AIF, 1st Anzac Corps,
October 8, 1917.*

Dear Maguire, I write to you for your good work, congratulate you very heartily upon the award to you of the Military Cross, in recognition of your good work in command of the right platoon of your company in the attack on Polygon Wood on 20th September. I well know the difficulties which you overcame by your coolness and resource under heavy fire in keeping touch with the division on your right. After capturing two strong points and consolidating your final objective, you rendered great assistance to the battalion on your right, by bringing your Lewis gun fire to bear on a strong party of the enemy in front of them.

Lead my men on

(Last words of Lt JT Maguire MC, 8th Bn AIF.)

*Lead my men on, my task is done;
For me shall rise a brighter sun
Where burdened hearts find sweet release,
And every sound is soft with peace.
Lead my men on.*

*Lead my men on! Full long I led
Where groaned the living by the dead;
Led on, and on to victory,
But now my Captain calleth me;
Lead my men on!*

*Lead my men on! I loved them well;
With them I fought, beside them fell,
I ask but for a kindly thought,
One quick-breathed prayer, with memories fraught.
Lead my men on.*

*Lead my men on. They will not fail.
God's right shall in the end prevail,
No backward look give when I'm gone;
Lead my men on! Lead my men on!
And they marched on*

*Rest, rest in peace, O dauntless one,
Australia had no braver son;
While such there are her rights to shield,
No foe shall hold the battlefield.
Australia, on!*

*"Leave me to die, but lead my men!"
No stroke of brush, no stroke of pen
Can hope to paint the scene sublime,
Whose colors live thro' endless time.
Australia, on!*

*Rest, rest in peace! You did your part.
O gallant soul and noble heart!
And ringing still, your last brave cry
Nerves man to strive, nerves man to die.
Still leading on!*

By Marion Miller Knowles, Malvern (1865-1949).

Note: The poem was originally published in the 'Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser' on Wednesday, 23 January, 1918 and can be found on Trove.^[18] In 1919, Marion Miller Knowles included the poem in her book, 'Love Luck and Lavender: Original Poems'^[19], but that version only has five stanzas (stanzas 5 and 7 deleted), presumably to fit the poem on the one page. The version of the poem in the second edition (1934) was printed with some minor changes to the words. A copy of the second edition of "Love, Luck and Lavender" with a handwritten dedication was given to Boy's sister, Sheila Chamberlain, by Marion Miller Knowles in 1938.



Lieut John T 'Boy' Maguire MC,
8th Bn AIF.



Lt FWT Tickle, MC.

Lieut Frank W Tickle MC, 8th Bn,
b 5/1888, enl 21/9/14, dis 12/9/19.



Marion Miller Knowles (poet).



Left: The International Hotel, Killarney. Bee wrote on the postcard: *This is where poor Jack stayed in Killarney. BD. I live close to it.*

Bee Dillon kept in touch with the Maguire family for many years after Boy's death. (Boy was known as 'Jack' to Bee.) An example is the postcard sent to the family [**above** and **below**], dated 18 February, 1918.

Dear Mrs Maguire,

Thank you very much for the 'Advocate' received. It was so thoughtful of you to send it. I was delighted to get it. I am so anxious to get a letter from you.

Hope you are well.

Kindest regards, Yours sincerely, Bee Dillon

Perhaps the most heartfelt and touching condolence letter was that sent and signed by many of Boy's platoon members [**below**]:

France, 21-10-17

Dear Mrs Mac Guire

Words fail to express our sorrow caused by the death of your dear son Jack, & our hearts go out to you in sympathy for the sad loss that you have suffered through his death.

Jack was a soldier & a man & he set us an example of courage that we would do well to emulate. He was ever thoughtful of the men under his charge & his popularity was the outcome of his soldierly bearing & devotion to duty. The boys had every faith in him & would follow him anywhere. It was whilst leading the company into the frontline that he was killed at night by a shell.

We know that mere words are cold comfort at such a time, but we trust that you will gain consolation from knowing that he died in the services of his country & his God.

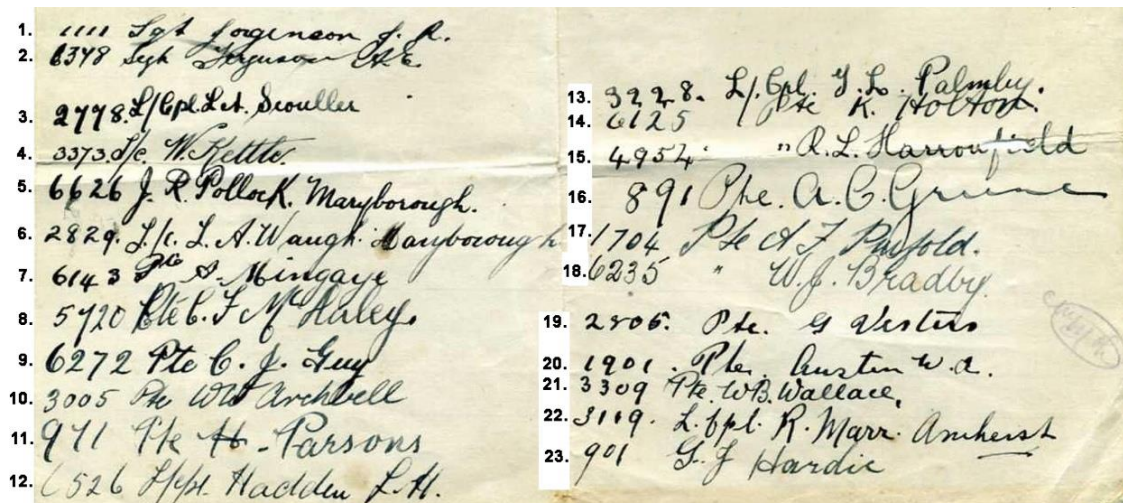
We mourn the loss of a brave officer who we were proud to follow.

May God help you to bear up against the loss of one so near & dear to you & the lads who served under him.

Yours faithfully

(signed by available members of his platoon).

Details on the platoon members, some with their photos, are given on the **next page**.



1. Sgt Jack J Jorgenson
SN 1111,
8th Bn, A Coy, b 1/1895,
enl 17/8/1914, dis 31/1/1919,
from Hawthorn, Vic.



2. Sgt Arthur E Ferguson
SN 6378
8th Bn - 20th Rfts, b 11/1878,
enl 8/3/1916 (T/Sgt), dis 10/8/1918,
from Hampton, Vic.

3. L/Cpl Leslie A Scouller MM
SN 2778,
24th Bn then 8th Bn,
b 28/1/1893, enl 10/7/1915,
KIA 26/8/1918, France,
from Colac, Vic.



4. L/Cpl William W Kettle
SN 3373, (later Cpl),
8th Bn - 11th Rfts, b 9/1894
enl 10/7/1915, dis 6/7/1919
from Brunswick, Vic.

5. Sgt James R Pollock MM
SN 6626,
8th Bn - 21st Rfts, b 1/2/1894,
enl 9/5/1916, dis 11/8/1919,
from Maryborough, Vic.

6. L/Cpl Leslie A Waugh
SN 2829,
24th Bn then 8th Bn, b 8/1897,
enl 2/8/1915, dis 2/5/1919,
from Maryborough, Vic.

7. Pte Arthur JM Mingaye
SN 6143,
6th Bn then 8th Bn
b 7/1894, enl 3/8/1915,
KIA 26/8/1918, France
from Birregurra, Vic.



8. Pte Charles F McAuley
SN 5720,
8th Bn - 18th Rfts, b 10/1880,
enl 12/7/1915, dis 16/1/1920,
from Albert Park, Vic.

9. Pte Cecil J Guy
SN 6272,
8th Bn - 20th Rfts, b 9/1893,
enl 7/7/1916, dis 8/6/1919,
from Ballarat East, Vic.

10. Pte Walter W Archbell
SN 3005, 24th Bn then 8th Bn,
b 4/1884, enl 19/7/1915,
KIA 25/10/1917, Belgium,
from Collingwood, Vic.



11. Pte Harris Parsons
SN 971,
39th Bn then 8th Bn, b 11/1897,
enl 11/2/1916, dis 10/9/1919,
from Buninyong, Vic.



12. L/Cpl Leslie H Hadden MM
SN 6526,
8th Bn - 21st Rfts, b 10/1888,
enl 11/8/1915, dis 22/2/1919,
from St Kilda East, Vic.

13. L/Cpl Leslie T Palmby
SN 3228, (later Sgt),
24th Bn then 8th Bn, b 11/1890,
enl 19/7/1915, dis 4/8/1919,
from Lexton, Vic.

14. Pte Keatley Holton
SN 6125,
8th Bn - 19th Rfts, b 3/1892,
enl 17/3/1916, dis 17/4/1919,
from Mt Sabine Forest, Vic.



15. Pte Robert Harrowfield
SN 4954, (later L/Cpl),
8th Bn - 15th Rfts, b 3/1895,
enl 14/8/1915, dis 11/4/1919,
from Avoca, Vic.



16. Pte Albert C Greene MM
SN 891, (earlier L/Cpl),
8th Bn, H Coy, b 11/1889,
enl 20/8/1914,
dis 24/1/1919, wounded 3x,
from Korumburra, Vic.

17. Pte Albert F Pinfold
SN 1704,
39th Bn then 8th Bn, b 1/1896,
enl 30/3/1916, dis 2/7/1919,
from Pootilla, Vic.

18. Pte Walter J Bradby
SN 6235,
8th Bn - 20th Rfts, b 9/1897,
enl 10/7/1916, dis 10/9/1919,
from Ballarat East, Vic.

19. Pte George Vestris
SN 2806, 24th Bn then 8th Bn,
b 4/1895, enl 30/6/1915,
dis 2/10/1919,
from Chelsea, Vic.

20. Pte William A Austin
Photo later in life,
SN 1901, b 6/1895,
8th Bn, then 1st Sig Coy,
enl 16/4/1915, dis 6/7/1919,
from Drysdale, Vic.



21. Pte Walter B Wallace
SN 3309,
24th Bn then 8th Bn,
b 11/1886, enl 17/7/1915,
DOW 29/3/1918,
from Coburg, Vic.



22. L/Cpl Reginald Marr
SN 3119, (later Cpl),
8th Bn - 10th Rfts, b 11/1893,
enl 3/7/1915, dis 2/12/1919,
from Amherst, Vic.



23. Pte George J Hardie
SN 901,
39th Bn then 8th Bn, b 10/1892,
enl 18/2/1916, dis 17/1/1920,
from Warragul Vic.

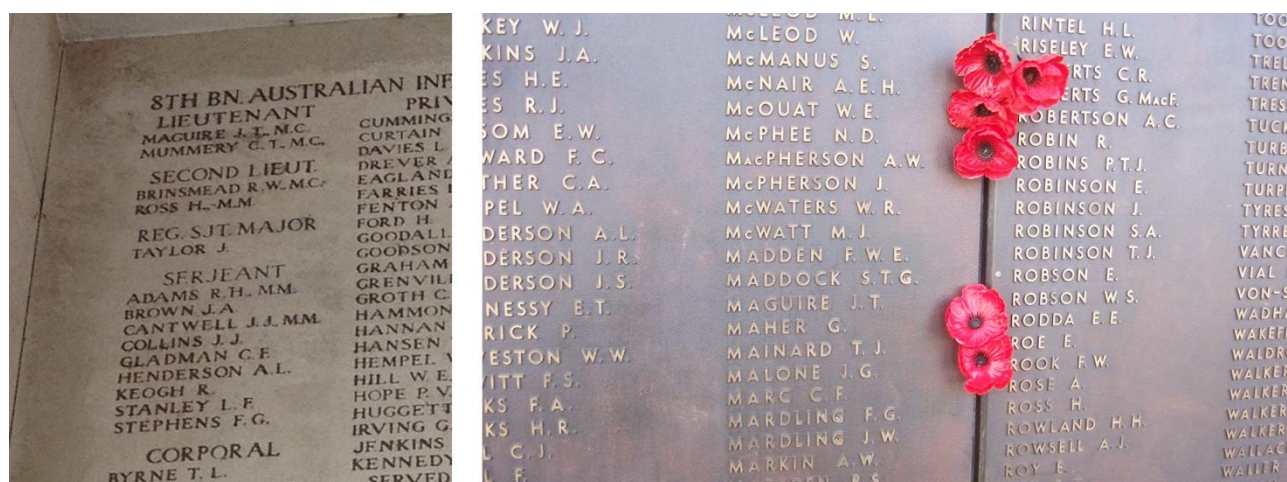
Lieutenant John T. ('Boy') Maguire's award of the Military Cross came through after his death. His father John accepted the award on Boy's behalf at a ceremony at Government House, Melbourne, in July 1918.

The Maguire family left Timor and moved to Fairfield, Vic, in the 1920s. John Maguire snr continued to 'dig' in Melbourne, but mainly trenches for the expanding sewerage network. His younger workmates thought John was a slow toiler, but at the end of the day he was still going when they had collapsed in a heap.

Aunt Kate retired to live at Timor and eventually Clem joined her and practiced his blacksmithing trade in the Maryborough district. Vera became a Josephite nun and taught music (piano and violin) in outback South Australia. Boy's older sister Mary became a well-known telephonist at Melbourne telephone exchanges for many years and a devoted aunty when her nieces and nephews arrived. Monica (Liz) married Denis Lane, a farmer and raised two sons. Sheila married Kevin Chamberlain, a plumber, and had four girls and one son (Kevin jnr).

The memory of 'Uncle Boy' was kept alive throughout the Maguire family, and the photos and letters valued and preserved.^[20]

Though the Diggers are now all gone, they still occupy a very special place in our hearts.



Left Lt JT Maguire's name listed above Lt Tas Mummery MC+Bar on the Menin Gate, Belgium, Right the Hall of Honour, AWM Canberra.

Bibliography

1. Authors: Evan Evans is a great nephew of Capt Gerald Evans MC, MID, 8th Bn, DOW 20/9/1917; Kevin Chamberlain is the nephew of Lieut John T 'Boy' Maguire MC; Peter and Dennis Nelson are both Maguire family descendants.
2. 'Advertiser, Maryborough and Dunolly District News' - Bowenvale - Send-off to Sergeant Maguire. TROVE, Friday, 3 December 1915: 4, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/93800551#>, 1915.
3. Evans, DG. Evans, David Gerald (Captain, b.1889 - d.1917). Australian War Memorial (AWM.gov.au), Accession Number: AWM2017.1366.1, 1914-1917.
4. Austin, R. 'Cobbers in Khaki: The History of the 8th Battalion 1914-1918'. Slouch Hat Publications, McCrae, Australia, 1997.
5. Lay, P. Diary of Percy Lay, 1914-1918. <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1357964?image=1>, 1918.
6. Barwick, A. 'In great spirits'. HarperCollins Publishers, Sydney, Australia, 2013.
7. Tolkien, JRR. 'The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King'. George Allen and Unwin, London, 1955.
8. Joynt, WD. 'Breaking the road for the rest'. Hyland House, Melbourne, 1979.
9. Official War Diaries of the 8th Battalion, AIF. <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/RCDIG1000578/>, 1914-1918.
10. Bennett, S. 'Pozières: The Anzac Story'. Melbourne, Victoria: Scribe Publications, 2011.
11. Aurelius, M. Meditations by Emperor Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180). New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1997.
12. Evans, DE, and Armstrong, H. 'The indomitable Lietenunt Goodwin from Colwall'. *DIGGER* 62: 3-23, 2018.
13. Rule, EJ. 'Jacka's Mob'. Sydney: Angus and Robinson, 1933.
14. Wray, C. 'Pozières: Echoes of a distant Battle'. Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2015.
15. Bean, CEW. Diaries, Notebooks and Folders. *Australian War Memorial*, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/AWM38/3DRL606/>, 1914-1919.
16. Bean, CEW. 'Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918'. Vol. III & IV. Brisbane, Qld University Press, 1941.
17. The original 'Maryborough & Dunolly Advertiser' article identified a **Lt Teckle** as the person who heard Boy's last words on the morning of 4/10/17. There was a **Lieut Frank A Teckle** (later Capt) in 12th Bn (b.28/2/1875, enl 28/12/1914, dis 9/11/19, Adelaide, SA) but the 12th Bn was not directly involved in the battle that day. It is almost certain that the spelling of Teckle should have been **Lieut Frank William Tickle MC**, 8th Bn, an 'A' Coy officer who would have known Boy very well from Boy's time in 'A' Coy. Lt Tickle would have been in this section of the battle field with A Company (see schematic map).
18. Knowles, MM. Lead my men on. 'Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser', Wednesday January 23/1/18. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/90195940?searchTerm=lead%20my%20men%20on%20knowles&searchLimits=>
19. Knowles, MM. 'Love, luck and lavender: original poems', H Mullin Printers, Malvern, Vic, p22, 1919 (2nd Ed 1934).
20. Lieut John T Maguire's letters and diary have been donated to the Australian War Memorial and are available in Canberra: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C89012>.