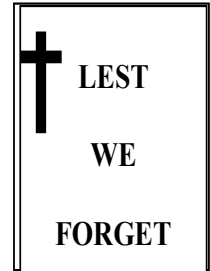


A SOLDIER'S STORY



Service No.: 1878
Name: Ernest Albert ATKINSON
Nickname: Alby



Medals and Decorations

British War Medal
Victory Medal

Rank: Private
Service: Army
Enlisted: 21 Feb 1916
KIA: 10 Apr 1918

Alby was born on 5 Dec 1893 at Snowtown (SA) to Charles Henry Atkinson and Emma Stewart Atkinson (nee Bidgood). There were 4 children in the family, 3 boys and a girl, of which he was the second youngest. His family lived at Melton (near Snowtown, SA) before moving to Tumby Bay in 1904 aboard the SS "*Ferret*" and travelling inland to establish a farm in partnership with Mr. J. Durdin on Sect 2 Hd of Cummins.

He went to Marble View School (south of Cummins) which was located in the church at that location. On completion of schooling he worked on the family farm until his enlistment in the Army in Adelaide at the age of 22. He gave his occupation as farmer and his address as Cummins, Eyres Peninsular (sic), SA.

On enlistment Alby was sent to 2nd Depot Battalion (Bn) at Mitcham for training before being allocated to 3rd Reinforcements/48th Bn.

The 48th Bn was raised in Egypt on 16 Mar 1916 as part of the "doubling" of the AIF. Approximately half of its recruits were Gallipoli veterans from the 16th Bn, the other half being fresh reinforcements from Australia. Reflecting the composition of the 16th, the men of the new Bn hailed mainly from regional S.A. and W.A. The Bn embarked in early Jun 1916 aboard HMAT "*Caledonia*" bound for Marseilles (France) arriving on 9 Jun 1916.

The 48th first major battle on the Western Front was Pozieres. Here, it was tasked with defending ground captured in earlier attacks by the 2nd Division and entered the line on two separate occasions - 5 to 7 and 12 to 15 Aug 1916. During the former period the battalion endured what was said to be the heaviest artillery barrage ever experienced by Australian troops and suffered 598 casualties - the total Bn strength was just over 1000 men! Before it had recovered from the trials of Pozieres, the 48th was again required to

defend ground captured during the battle of Mouquet Farm.

Alby had embarked from Australia aboard the HMAT "*Seong Bee*" on 13 Jul 1916 for further training in UK before being taken on strength by his unit (48th Bn) on 4 Dec 1916 at Etaples in France. Almost immediately he was admitted to 12th General Hospital where he remained for 2 months before returning to his unit in Feb 1917. However, it was only a brief stay, as again he was admitted to hospital, again for a period of 2 months.

On release from hospital he was transferred to 10th Bn on 14 Jun 1917.

The 10th Bn was one of the first units raised for the AIF in Aug 1914, embarking for overseas in Nov. It was one of the first units ashore at Gallipoli on 25 Apr 1915. After withdrawal from Gallipoli the Bn returned to Alexandria (Egypt) for reforming before it sailed for France and the Western Front, arriving in Mar 1916.

Obviously Alby still had not fully recovered from his illness, as a month after being taken on strength by his new unit (10th Bn) he was again admitted to hospital. This time through 1st General Hospital, then evacuated to 39th General Hospital. He was finally released from hospital and returned to his unit on 13 Oct 1917.

Alby was killed in action (KIA) on 18 Apr 1918 when his unit was deployed to halt the German Spring Offensive (Operation Lys - Mar/Apr 1918) in the area around Hazebrouck (France). He is buried at Hazebrouck Communal Cemetery in France.

His elder brother, Frederick James Atkinson also served with 10th Bn during WW1 and was killed in action on 26 Aug 1918 near Amiens (France), during the "100 Days Offensive" conducted by the Allies; it was one of the last battles fought by the 10th, the unit being withdrawn from the line in Sep 1918. Apparently neither brother was aware that they were serving in the same Bn.

The names of both brothers are recorded on the Tumby Bay Memorial.

The family relocated from the area to Payneham after the death of their sons.



British War Medal

Victory Medal



Memorial at Hazebrouck Communal Cemetery, France