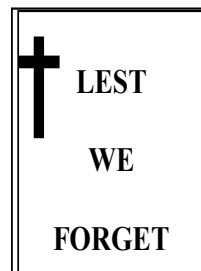


A SOLDIER'S STORY



Service No.: 3206
Name: Alexander CALDERWOOD
Nickname: Alec



Medals and Decorations

British War Medal
Victory Medal

Rank: Private
Service: Army
Enlisted: 29 Mar 1916
KIA: 17 Oct 1917

Alec was born at Mundoora (SA) on 31 Oct 1888 to Alexander Calderwood and Lucy Rebecca Calderwood (nee Dennis). There were 14 children in the family, 5 boys and 9 girls, of which he was the sixth eldest. His father was a farmer at Whites River and the farm is still in the family today.

His schooling was undertaken at Whites River. On the completion of schooling he worked on the family farm, before purchasing a scrub block at Edillilie: he then divided his efforts between the two locations until his enlistment in the Army in 1916.

On enlistment he was posted to 2nd Training Depot Battalion (Bn) at Mitcham for a period of 12 weeks to complete basic training. On 27 Jun 1916 he embarked at Port Adelaide aboard HMAT “*Malakuta*” bound for Devonport (UK), with the remainder of 43rd Bn; after landing briefly in Egypt, the Bn went on to Britain for a further period of training. During this period he became ill with mumps and was admitted to hospital for 2 months.

On 20 Dec 1916 he embarked aboard the “*Princess Victoria*” for Etaples in France and rejoined his Bn. His unit comprised mainly personnel from regional South Australia and Western Australia. The Bn arrived on the Western Front in late Dec 1916.

The 43rd Bn spent 1917 bogged in bloody trench warfare in Flanders. In June the Bn took part in the battle of Messines; this action was the most successful of any major Western Front attack by the Allies at that stage of the war. In early October the Bn was engaged in the Third Battle of Ypres (also known as the first battle of Passchendaele). It was during this battle that Alec was killed in action (KIA) on 17 Oct 1917 in Belgium. An historian commented on this battle as follows: “The weather again broke and the constant rain turned the battlefield into a quagmire so that further attacks on 9 October at

Poelcappelle and on 12 October at Passchendaele failed with heavy loss.”

The Third Battle of Ypres was the major British offensive in Flanders in 1917. It was planned to break through the strongly fortified and in-depth German defences enclosing the Ypres salient, a protruding bulge in the British front line, with the intention of sweeping through to the German submarine bases on the Belgian coast. The battle comprised of a series of limited and costly offensives, often undertaken in the most difficult of waterlogged conditions. The main battles associated with Third Battle of Ypres were:

- Pilckem, 31 July to 2 August
- Langemarck, 16-18 August
- Menin Road, 20-25 September
- Polygon Wood, 26 September to 3 October
- Broodseinde, 4 October
- Poelcapelle, 9 October
- Passchendaele (First Battle), 12 October

A letter from the Army to his mother, who was listed as his next of kin, states “he was buried in an isolated grave at Seine, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from Zennebeke and 5 miles N-E of Ypres. In all cases where members of the AIF are buried in isolated graves the remains are to be re-interred in the nearest military cemetery”. A further note later advises that his remains were exhumed and re-interred at Dochy Farm Cemetery, 4 miles E-N-E of Ypres. The mother later paid 3d each for three photos of the grave – can you imagine this happening today! Alec’s mother was granted a pension of 2 pound per fortnight from 19 Jan 1918.



British War Medal

Victory Medal

Private
CALDERWOOD, ALEXANDER

Service Number 3206

Died 17/10/1917

Aged 29

43rd Bn.
Australian Infantry, A.I.F.

Son of Alexander and Lucy Rebecca
Calderwood, of Whites River, Port Lincoln,
South Australia. Native of Mundoora, South
Australia.



Dochy Farm
Cemetery

