

A SOLDIER'S STORY



Service No.: 2145
Name: Thomas FERGUSSON
Nickname: Tom



Medals and Decorations

1914 - 15 Star
British War Medal
Victory Medal

Rank: Driver
Service: Army
Enlisted: 5 Mar 1915
Discharged: 6 Jul 1919

Tom was born on 9 Jul 1893 at Hergott Springs (near Marree SA) to William Fergusson and Annie Mary Fergusson also known as Annie Amelia Fergusson (nee Norton). There were 7 children in the family, 6 boys and a girl, of which he was the eldest. His family lived at Marree (SA) before moving to Quorn.

On completion of schooling he remained in the Quorn area and worked as a horse breaker/trainer until his enlistment in the Army at Morphettville at the age of 20. At the time of enlistment he recorded his occupation as farmer.

On enlistment Tom was sent to 2nd Depot Battalion (Bn) at Mitcham for training. With his background in horse breaking it would have seemed obvious that he should have been allocated to one of the Light Horse Regiments, but this was not to be the case; instead he was posted to 6th Reinforcements/10th Bn.

On completion of training he embarked at Outer Harbour aboard HMAT "*Borda*" on 23 Jun 1915, bound for Alexandria and then on movement to Gallipoli. He arrived at Gallipoli on 4 Aug 1915 and was taken on strength of his Bn. He remained at Gallipoli until the withdrawal from the Peninsula in Dec 1915, when he embarked aboard the HMAT "*Seang Bee*" on 27 Dec 1915 bound for Alexandria, arriving there 2 days later.

The 10th Bn was reformed and retrained at Alexandria; as part of this reformation he was "promoted" to driver on 3 Jan 1916. Two months later the Bn was on the move again, this time aboard HMAT "*Maryland*", departing Alexandria on 26 Mar 1916 and arriving at Marseilles (France) on 2 Apr 1916.

The Bn was involved in bitter trench warfare from its arrival until the Armistice. It's first major action was at Pozieres in the Somme Valley in Jul 1916; in this action 2 of its members were awarded the Victoria Cross. The Bn then moved to Flanders where it was

involved in the first battle of Ypres, before returning to the Somme.

After this battle Tom was admitted to 2nd Stationary Hospital at Amiens with rheumatism, then evacuated to 22nd General Hospital on 30 Nov 1916. He was released from hospital on 9 Feb 1917 in time to move with his unit forward to the third battle of Ypres, in particular Polygon Wood. Immediately after this battle he was again admitted to hospital with Scabies and Dermatitis, this time to the 26th General Hospital at Etaples. A month later he rejoined his unit in the vicinity of Amiens. It was in this area that the 10th Bn helped to stop the "German Spring Offensive" of Mar/Apr 1918.

On 24 May 1918 he was again admitted to hospital as the result of an accident where he sustained injuries to his chest, arm and legs. He remained in hospital for just over 2 months before being granted leave to the UK for several weeks to recuperate, returning to his unit on 26 Sep 1918. The details of the accident are not known, but it is known that a court of enquiry was convened and found "that the soldier was not to blame for the injury".

Just after his return to the Bn it was withdrawn from the line and was not involved in further frontline action before the Armistice on 11 Nov 1918.

Tom returned to the UK and embarked aboard the "*Kildonean Castle*" on the 21 Mar 1919, disembarking at Outer Harbour on 7 May 1919. He took his discharge in Adelaide (4th Military District) on 6 Jul 1919.

Tom's brother, Miller also served during WW1; he died of wounds on 5 May 1917 in France.

Tom returned to Quorn for a short period where he met the love of his life, Olive Florence Merry, whom he married on 24 Sep 1923 at Unley. It is thought the family then moved to Cowell, then Kimba, before settling in Tumby Bay in 1934. There were 6 children in the family, 4 boys and 2 girls.

Tom died on 26 Oct 1976 and is buried in Tumby Bay Cemetery beside his wife.



Tom's Gravemarker, Tumby Bay Cemetery