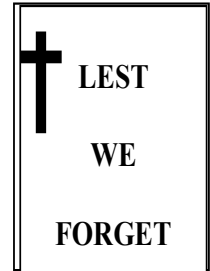


## A SOLDIER'S STORY



Service No.: 3604  
Name: Arthur John GREENSLADE



### *Medals and Decorations*

British War Medal  
Victory Medal

Rank: Sapper  
Service: Army  
Enlisted: 20 Jan 1916  
DOD: 1 Mar 1919

Arthur was born on 25 Sep 1888 at Maitland (SA) to William Greenslade and Margaret Greenslade (nee Bowey). There were 11 children in the family, 5 boys and 6 girls, of which he was the fifth youngest. His family lived at Urania (near Maitland SA), before moving to Warratta Vale (near Lipson SA) in the early 1900s.

Arthur went to school at Weetula (near Maitland). On completion of schooling he moved with his family to Warratta Vale, where he worked on farms in the area until his enlistment in the Army at Adelaide on 20 Jan 1916 at the age of 27. At that time he recorded his occupation as farmer.

After processing he was sent to 2<sup>nd</sup> Depot Battalion (Bn) at Mitcham for training before being allocated to 1<sup>st</sup> Tunnelling Company, Royal Australian Engineers. About half of the men employed in the tunnelling companies had previously been employed in the mining industry: it is not known if Arthur had been employed in the mines in the Tumby/Lipson area prior to his farming experience.

He embarked (with his unit) from Sydney aboard HMAT "*Ulysses*" on 20 Feb 1916 bound for UK. The ship was holed in Perth, so the unit trained at Blackboy Camp (WA) for a month, before again embarking for UK. On arrival in France the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Tunnelling Companies were raised. The primary tasks of the tunnelling companies was the construction of tunnels and mines for offensive action, detection and interruption of counter mining activities and the construction of underground dugouts to accommodate large groups - up to 100 men.

It is little known that a major part of the war on the Western Front was fought underground, which led to the men of the Australian Tunnelling Companies being referred to as the 'Phantom Soldiers', because they spent most of their time underground

and were rarely seen on the surface. Mining played an important part in both the Allied and German strategies up until the Battle at Messines in 1917 at which time the nature of the fighting changed and more moveable defences took the place of positional defences against which tunnelling was most effective. The troops who undertook this type of warfare were generally 'hard rock miners' who played a very dangerous game of cat and mouse underground with the enemy. Many a pitched battle was fought in the confines of the tunnels. These men risked being poisoned by gas (Methane), blown to pieces or buried alive.

Hill 60, located at Zwarteleen about five kilometres south-east of Ypres (Belgium), was to have strategic importance for both sides during the battle for Ypres. It was not a natural feature but an artificially created hill some 60m high and 250m long which had been made from spoil during the construction of the Cowes-Ypres railway during the 19th century. Built on loamy clay, underneath which lay 7m of dry sand separated by a layer of blue clay and 2m of quicksand. It received its name from the Australian troops and related to its height in metres above sea level on the contour map.

The explosion of 19 mines around Hill 60 at 0310 hours on 7 Jun 1917, which involved 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Tunnelling Companies, has been described as the greatest exploit ever conceived in military mining. It opened a series of craters; one on Hill 60 which was 20m deep and 85m wide and at the 'Caterpillar', a crater 30m deep and 110m wide. These explosions killed 700 Germans of the 204<sup>th</sup> Division and disoriented the remainder, allowing the position to be overrun without major casualties.

After surviving the horrors of war, in particular tunnelling, for almost 3 years Arthur became ill just prior to the end of the war and tragically died of disease (broncho pneumonia) on 1 Mar 1919 at 40 Stationary Hospital at Le Havre (Fr) at the age of 31.

He is buried at Sainte Marie Cemetery, Le Havre.



Sainte Marie Cemetery, Le Havre, France