

A SOLDIER'S STORY



Service No.: 12029
Name: Joseph Dench NANKIVELL
Nickname: Joe



Medals and Decorations

British War Medal
Victory Medal

Rank: Lance Corporal
Service: Army
Enlisted: 1 Sep 1915
KIA: 13 Oct 1917

Joe was born at home at Minlacowie (SA) on 6 Sep 1889 to Joseph Nankivell and Selina Nankivell (nee Treasure). There were 8 children in the family, 4 boys and 4 girls, of which he was the third youngest. His father was a farmer at Minlacowie.

Joe went to a school on the farm at Minlacowie, which had been built by his father, with his brothers and sisters. He left school at grade 7 and worked on the family farm until the end of 1908 when he moved with the family to a newly purchased farm at Tumby Bay. He then worked on the farm at Tumby until he moved to Melbourne and commenced training for the ministry.

He attempted to enlist in the Army in SA, but was rejected on medical (dental) grounds, so he went to Sydney and successfully enlisted in the Army at Holsworthy on 1 Sep 1915. After enlistment he was posted to 7th Battalion (Bn) for training and then to 9th Field Ambulance, on the raising of that unit, in Mar 1916.

On 2 May 1916 he embarked aboard the HMAT “*Hororata*” for Plymouth UK via Alexandria, arriving on 23 Jun 1916.

After a further period of training his unit was posted to France, arriving in Nov 1916. He must have done well as a soldier as he was promoted in the field to Lance Corporal on 15 Mar 1917. Six months later he was killed in action (KIA) in Belgium on 13 Oct 1917 at the third battle of Ypres, in the final push for Passchendaele which began on 9 Oct 1917. A notation on his records indicates that he was buried “in the vicinity of Paaschendaele”.

The battles for Ypres commenced on 31 Jul 1917 and ended with the capture of Passchendaele on 1 Nov 1917; they were fought in the most dreadful conditions where the use of tanks became impossible, the movement of guns was extremely difficult

and the German defensive line, using the “pill box” strategy, resulted in very heavy casualties. These battles were won at a cost to the allies of more than 310,000 casualties.

His unit, the Field Ambulance is not a vehicle! It is a group of personnel whose prime role is the evacuation of casualties from the battlefield, a task often undertaken by stretcher bearers and drivers whilst under heavy enemy fire. “The bravery and self sacrifice of these persons is obvious.”

The Imperial War Graves Commission was aware that many of those who fell during World War 1 (The Great War) had no known graves; often soldiers were buried on the battlefield with very scant records of the location of their graves. It was therefore decided to honour these service people by a memorial and the Menin Gate was selected as the site for this area, as this had been the one point where hundreds of thousands of men had passed through to enter the battlefields of the Ypres Salient.

The Menin Gate Memorial has the names of over 54,000 officers and men recorded upon it, 6,191 of whom are Australian, with an inscription repeated over the two main arches that reads:

“TO THE ARMIES OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE WHO STOOD HERE FROM 1914 TO 1918 AND TO THOSE OF THEIR DEAD WHO HAVE NO KNOWN GRAVE”.

Another inscription which is repeated over the two staircases leading from the main hall is:

“HERE ARE RECORDED THE NAMES OF OFFICERS AND MEN WHO FELL IN YPRES SALIENT BUT TO WHOM THE FORTUNE OF WAR DENIED THE KNOWN AND HONOURED BURIAL GIVEN TO THEIR COMRADES IN DEATH THEY SHALL RECEIVE A CROWN OF GLORY THAT FADETH NOT AWAY”.

The name of Joseph Dench Nankivel is recorded on the Menin Gate.



British War Medal Victory Medal



Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Belgium