

A SOLDIER'S STORY



Service No.: 1223
Name: Jack Wilfred USHER



Medals and Decorations

1914 - 15 Star
British War Medal
Victory Medal

Rank: Private
Service: Army
Enlisted: 21 Sep 1914
KIA: 2 May 1915

Jack was born on 11 Nov 1894 at Noarlunga (SA) to William Usher and Mary Ann Sophia Usher formerly Dungey formerly Curry (nee Bates). There were 3 children in the family, 2 boys and a girl, of which he was the eldest. There were also a number of step children from his mother's previous marriages. The family lived in Norwood (SA), after relocating from Noarlunga.

Jack went to school at Norwood. On completion of schooling he moved to Lipson and worked for his brother in law, Arthur Greenslade, as a farrier and blacksmith until his enlistment in the Army at Morphettville at the age of 19. At the time he recorded his occupation as farm labourer.

After enlistment he was sent to 2nd Depot Battalion (Bn) at Mitcham for training before being allocated to 16th Bn.

The 16th Bn was raised in Sep 1914, only 6 weeks after the outbreak of WW 1. 5 Companies of the Bn were recruited in WA, whilst the remaining 3 Companies were from SA. The 16th Bn along with 13th, 14th, and 15th Bns comprised the 4th Brigade, commanded by Colonel John Monash.

After a very short period of training the Bn was first united in Victoria when they embarked on HMAT "*Ceramic*" on 26 Dec 1914, bound for Egypt via Albany (WA), arriving in early Feb 1915. Another period of training ensued before Jack, with the rest of the Bn - in fact the rest of the Brigade - sailed for Gallipoli, arriving in the late afternoon of 25 Apr 1915.

A Week after landing at Gallipoli the Bn was thrown into the attack on Bloody Angle, suffering severe casualties. Unfortunately Jack was one of these casualties, being initially listed as missing in action (MIA) on 2 May 1915.

Again we are made aware of the confusion of war and poor communications of the time. Jack was posted as missing in action on 2 May 1915, but his next of kin and family were not officially advised until late Dec 1915; and only then because they had queried authorities on the welfare of the soldier because they had received letters from his mates and his company commander advising that he had been killed in action at Gallipoli.

A Court of Enquiry at Serapeum (Egypt) on 28 Apr 1916 found that Jack had been killed in action on the day that he was posted as missing in action, but this was not relayed to his family until 13 Jul 1916. However, on 15 Sep 1916, the family received a letter from a mate of Jack's saying that he was not dead, but had been taken prisoner of war (POW). Another letter from another mate was received stating that Jack had been seen at a Dressing Station and then evacuated to a hospital at Heliopolis in late Sep 1915.

This confusion, along with disagreement as to who was the "official" next of kin, created much stress in the family and led to a family member writing to the military on 25 Feb 1917; "think of the awful suspense this has created in the last 12 months. In the name of Him to whom we all belong let us have these (rumours) either officially contradicted or verified." In the midst of this Jack's father died!

The official response, some months later, was; "that he (Jack) was killed in action must be accepted as correct until disproven." Not a particularly compassionate response!

He is commemorated on the Lone Pine Memorial, as he has no known resting place.

He is also commemorated on the Tumby Bay Memorial.



1914-15 Star

British War Medal

Victory Medal



Lone Pine Memorial, Gallipoli