

715 Philip Ashley Douglas

The Philip Douglas story is one of tragedy and disconnection which, commenced at birth and continued through his life.

On his Attestation papers Philip indicated that his next of kin was his Aunt a Mrs Annie McOwan of St Kilda, Victoria. It is uncertain whether Philip ever knew that the said Annie McOwan was in fact his mother. Probably not, or he maintained the family secret, as on his marriage to Margaret McCallum in 1915, he indicated that his mother and father were unknown.

Anna Maria Cabalzar gave birth to Philip Ashley on 8 July 1894, listing the father as unknown. She was 18 years old. Anna's father was Christian Cabalzar and sometime after Philip's birth she changed her name to Anna Christian and subsequently married John McOwan.

Philip enlisted in Sydney on 12 August 1914 and listed his occupation as labourer. He also stated that he served in the Senior Cadets in Melbourne but did not get a discharge because he had left the city.

He served with F Company and was discharged on 26/1/1915 after 161 days service.

He enlisted in the AIF on 17 Feb 1915 and was discharged at on request on 23/3/1915.

He re-enlisted on the 14th July 1915 and married Margaret McCallam shortly afterwards on 8th August 1915. On re-enlistment he was given the service number 2518 and assigned to the 13th Battalion (10th Reinforcements). He left Sydney on 20th August 1915 and disembarked in Egypt on 16th September 1915. He joined the 13th Battalion, which was then at Mudros, Limnos Island before returning to Egypt in early 1916 aboard the H.T. Tunisia.

In early June 1916, Philip stowed away on the Runic. On reaching Australia, Philip was sentenced to 106 days hard labour for desertion. He served his sentence and then embarked aboard the CERAMIC to Plymouth, arriving on 21st November 1916 from where he re-joined the 13th Battalion in France but not before he again when absent without leave for 5 days earning himself 28 days Field Punishment.

On 2 February 1917, the 13th Battalion launched an attack on German Positions in the Gueudecourt region, France and Philip Douglas received a Gun Shot Wound to the right leg on the first day of this skirmish. He was repatriated to hospital in England where he remained until discharge on 17th April 1917.

On 31st January 1918 he faced a General Court Martial charged with having "...absented himself without leave from noon on the 26th day of July 1917, until apprehended by the Military Police, London about 8.30 on the 22nd day of January 1918"

Before he could be sentenced, Philip Douglas escaped custody. He was subsequently discharged in 21 July 1920 and forfeited any claim for WW1 medals. Tragedy followed him after the war, when his 2 year old son, Norman, was accidentally thrown from a carriage on Anzac Parade, Sydney and died from his injuries.