

377 ARTHUR ANDREW KEARNS

378 EDWARD PATRICK KEARNS

Arthur and Edward were brothers born in Bathurst to Edward and Hanorah Kearns. Arthur was the elder, born around 1886, whilst Edward was born 1889. In both their attestations they listed their name as KEARNS whereas their birth name was KEARNES.

Both enlisted in the AN&MEF on 11th August 1914 and were posted to C Coy. Arthur listed his Occupation as Railway Employee, single, and gave his father, Edward Kearns, 24 Church St, Pyrmont as his next of kin.

Edward gave age as 24 years 10 months and his occupation as fitter.

Arthur was discharged, time expired, on 24th November 1914 after 106 days service and Edward was discharged on 4th March 1915, time expired, after 206 days in the ANEMEF. Both were "Mentioned in Special Garrison orders dated 14/10/14 in connection with capture KGS "Komet"". Both were aboard the HMAS NUSA at the time of the capture of the Enemy Armed Vessel KOMET and in a letter in 1929 it was stated that Edward's estate was entitled to two pounds ten shillings and two pence prize bounty due.

Whilst Edward was still in Rabaul, Arthur enlisted in the AIF on 2nd January 1915 but was discharged as Medically Unfit, due to Malaria three weeks later.

Arthur again enlisted in the AIF as part of the 2nd Reinforcements, 55th Battalion (service number 1676) and trained in Goulburn from 1st Dec 1915 till 13th April 1916. He then boarded the CERAMIC on 14th April 1916 for Port Said, arriving on 16th May 1916.

He moved from Egypt to the UK and took up duty with the 14th Training Battalion before re-joining his Battalion in France on 16th December 1917.

On 25th October 1918 he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for:

"...conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty E. of PROYART on 17th August 1918. A German was captured at about 4 a.m. by one of the posts in Sgt Kearns' sector, and this Boche indicated that there were wounded out in front. Sergt Kearns, together with Corpl Stewart, advanced into No Man's Land to try and locate the wounded man and went out some distance towards the enemy lines a large party, numbering about 25, was observed on the sky-line. This party proved to be Boche and appeared to be partaking of a meal. These two N.C.O's by their initiative and clever tactics worked to the rear of the party and taking them by surprise ordered them to surrender. The enemy immediately made a dash for the trenches close by, but these N.C.O's succeeded in cutting off and capturing 5 Boche (including 1 N.C.O) and a light M.G. On reaching the trench the enemy opened heavy M.G. and rifle fire. Whilst Cpl Stewart gave covering fire with the captured M.G., Sergt Kearns drove the 5 prisoners before him back to our lines reaching there safely.

This N.C.O's courage and coolness was very marked"

Arthur returned to Australia aboard the NEVASA in March 1919 and was discharged as medically unfit with defective hearing.

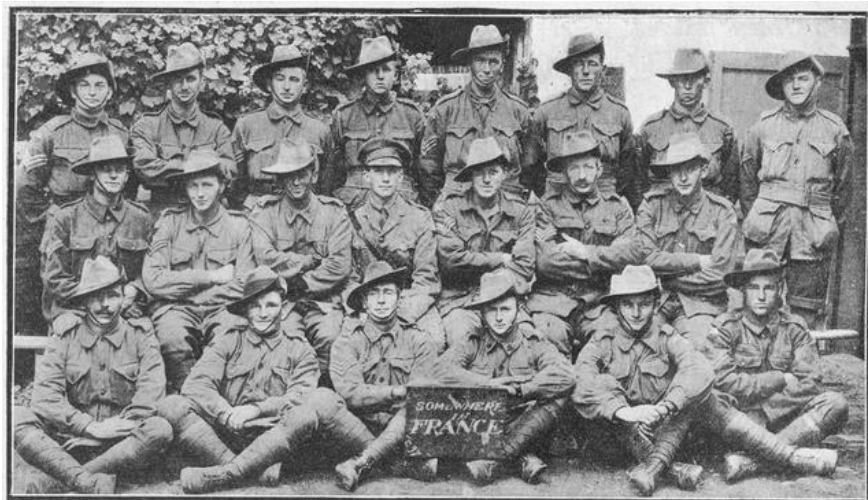
Arthur died on 21st September 1954.

On 23rd May 1915 after his return from Rabaul Edward also enlisted in the AIF, in B Coy, 20th Battalion (service number 603). On 25th June 1915 he embarked aboard the BERRIMA for the Middle

East and served on Gallipoli with the 20th Battalion. On 9th Jan 1916 he returned to Alexandria from Gallipoli and on the 28th of the same month he was promoted Corporal.

On 18th March he boarded with the 20th, the transport ship IGNOMA and disembarked at Marseilles. He became a Temp Sergeant and on 7th November 1916 he was awarded the Military Medal. The recommendation states:

“On the night of 5th May, near Bois Grenier, France during an intense bombardment and when only a few effective men remained, this N.C.O. held on to his position with the four remaining men of his group and successfully resisted the enemy attempts to gain a footing in his sector. His pluck and coolness in vigorously using his rifle and bombs undoubtedly saved the lives of a number of his comrades.”



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Australians After One of the Battles of the Somme.

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Edward Kearns, 3rd from left, front row, taken on the Somme sometime in 1916

Between 17th Jan and 16th Feb 1918, he attended the 17th Rifle Course at the Australian School of Musketry, Tidworth and “...qualified 1st Class with fair understanding of Lewis Gun.”

On 3rd October 1918 was killed at Bellicourt, France. Edward is buried at the Australian War Cemetery at Villers Bretonneux and is remembered on Panel 91 at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.