

William Guard was born in Bulli in March 1894 to William Guard and his wife Ellen, nee Pointer. He joined the AN&MEF on 11th August 1914 and assigned to A Coy. On his attestation papers he indicated that he was 20 years old, a Loco Fireman by profession, single with his mother, Mrs Ellen Guard of Phillip St, Thirroul, as his next of kin.

Whilst in Rabaul, William had an accident, a report of which is contained in the first Government Gazette issued by the Australian Administrator of German New Guinea, Col W Holmes, on 15th October 1914 as follows:

“ On the 7th inst. an unfortunate accident happened near the Garrison Barracks, caused by some men foolishly handling some signal rockets which exploded, causing serious injury to Private G. James, who was some distance away at the time, and Private W. Guard, both of “A” Coy. The men were at once attended to by Dr. Wicks, on the spot, and were immediately afterwards, removed to the Hospital at Namanula, where they were operated on by Captain Maguire, A.M.C., and are progressing as well as can be expected, although the former is not considered to be yet out of danger.”

William completed his period of engagement on 4th March 1915, having served 206 days with the AN&MEF.

On 26th May 1915, William enlisted in the AIF (service number 1707) with the 20th Battalion. He left Sydney aboard the KANOWA on 18th June 1915 as an acting Sergeant. He landed on Gallipoli on 31st August 1915 and was promoted to Sergeant on 11th October 1915. William was wounded three times during his service, the first at Gallipoli in Nov 1915 and the latter two in France in 1916.

In the Gallipoli incident he received a shrapnel wound to the head resulting in a period of hospitalisation which resulted in him being away from his unit for a month.

After the battalion's withdrawal from Gallipoli, William went to France and there, on 16th August 1916 he was appointed as 2/Lt and in November the same year, promoted to Lieutenant. Between October 1917 and August 1918, he acted as the Battalion Adjutant, and left the UK aboard the ORCA on 19th February 1919, arriving back in Sydney on 3rd April 1919. His appointment was terminated on 2nd June 1919.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

A03630

William with other Officers of the 20th Battalion taken some time in late 1916.

It would appear that William was recommended for a Military Cross in December 1918, and, while there is no record of this being awarded, the recommendation below, gives some indication of his character:

“During the recent operations this officer showed untiring devotion to duty. On several occasions he organised parties and carried out reconnaissances and obtained much valuable information. This Officer has always set a wonderful example to his men by his untiring spirit and cheerfulness. His work with the unit has always been of the highest standard.”

On 12th May 1929 he married Vera Stephanie Jordan at which time he listed his profession as signwriter.

He had moved to the Canberra suburb of Ainslie and between 1939 and 1959 worked at the Australian War Memorial. William died on 7th April 1969.

6, O'Connell St.,
Ainslie, Canberra, A.C.T.

13th February 1966

Dear Dudley,- Your diary published in "Stand-To"
R.S.L. Journal is extremely interesting and a
valuable and accurate account of a front line
Australian soldier in W.W.I. To me it is doubly
so because I was a member of the 20th Bn. Can't
say I remember you because, as you know, 9,000
men having passed through the Battalion its
difficult to keep in touch with one's own company.
You may remember me, 1707, Bill Guard Sgt. D
Company - served with the 1st Naval and Military
Expedition, New Guinea, on the outbreak of war
and the whole Battalion was discharged on return
to Sydney, March 1915 - I re-enlisted with 2nd
Reinforcements, 20th Bn., left Sydney a fortnight
before the Bn., was on Gallipoli 8th August, a
fortnight before any of the 2nd.Div. and was
attached to the 5th Bn. near Lone Pine until I
picked up the Battalion at Russell's Top on its
arrival about 25th August. I was there until
wounded on 11th November and picked up the Bn.
again at Tel-el-Kebir after the evacuation of
Gallipoli. (That's where your diary started) From
here out to Australia Hill East of Suez. I have
enjoyed every minute of your published diary,
and remember well our early days in France -
teenbecque, Kitchener's Review, Joffre, and on to
his Grenier.

My wife and I recently returned from a
trip overseas.

After visiting the battlefields we stayed in Albert. Of course, except for the cemeteries, to a stranger it would be hard to believe it was the scene of such carnage- Pozieres where the A.I.F. suffered nearly 30,000 casualties in a fortnight, was just a little village, kiddies playing on the Bapaume Road and waving oat and wheat crops covering the area where we attacked O.G. I and 2 (got my commission there). Of course Dudley, you too may have seen all this but I wanted to tell you that we later made a separate trip breaking our journey at Armentieres. We dined that night with a delightful old lady who was 16 years old when we were about that area- her son is the proprietor of "Hotel du Prophete" near the Armentieres Railway Station. I took a taxi out to Bois Grenier, a smart little village with nothing to show of war but the graves in the "Brewery Yard Cemetery". Like all others we saw these were beautifully cared for. I have just taken these three photographs from my wife's album but, as she has the negatives, they will be replaced. I thought you might like to keep them. He made a list of the 20th names which includes that of your pal "A.Dollar". Again I looked out towards our old front line- nothing but grain crops. I believe the old main trench lines can be picked out in aerial photographs. One snap shows the village church steeple which was a shambles our day.

Recently I met a Sgt. Durie at Lady Gowrie, and Cross Home, Gordon, who was taken prisoner in the 5th May raid. He is not too well.

I think I have attended my last Battalion

Letter written by William Guard to Dudley Jackson, MM and contained with Jackson's diaries and other information at the Australian War Memorial

union. The ranks have sadly thinned out and although Colonel Ralston manages it I think its a big strain- he must be nearly eighty. I correspond with Phil. Brennan (old and crippled who is with Currie) also Sgt. Tarrant, Sigs., also Lieut. Bill Jones and Sgt. Vernazoni, Christchurch N.Z. to whom I am sending your diary to read.

Trust that this note finds you and that you are in good health.

Kind regards and every good wish,

Sincerely,

Bill Guard