

Queensland Rifle Association
ROLL of HONOUR TRIBUTE



James Edward HERBERT, M.C.
REMEMBRANCE Day 2022

Soldier and Rifleman in the
Great War 1914 - 1918

James Edward HEBERT MC

He was born on June 4, 1881, in Toowoomba, Queensland and was the third son of James and Emily Herbert, who had nine children. James travelled to England and Wales to live with his family while still a young child and some of his siblings were born overseas including Frank Stanley Herbert who was born in 1888. The family returned to Australia in 1888/1889 settling in Queensland.

Before the outbreak of the war, James worked as a travelling salesman for S. Hoffnung and Co, a prominent wholesale import business with branches in New South Wales, Queensland, and the Pacific.

James was a member of the Nerang Rifle Club, and he regularly participated in weekend shoots and some of his recorded scores included:

- Nerang v's Logan & Albert on February 9 1908
He scored 83 coming 3rd. Shooting with a 303 rifle with open iron sights, this was a very good score.
- Nerang v's Southport on September 13, 1909
over 300, 600 and 700 yards, he again came 3rd with a score of 26, 26 & 28 respectively giving a total of 80
- Then on September 17, 1909, over 300, 500 & 700 yards he scored 76

In 1909 James married Amelia Mabel Preston and had a daughter, Florence Emily who was born in January 1911. Unfortunately a year later, in 1912, his wife and their second child both died during childbirth.

Prior to the outbreak of war, James had held a commission as a Lieutenant for 6 years in the Moreton Regiment (Citizens Forces).

James Edward HERBERT, enlisted on 1st May 1915 in Brisbane in B Company of the 26th Australian Infantry Battalion. He left his young daughter in the care of his father.

His application for a commission in the AIF was granted on May 21 1915, at the rank of Lieutenant and he embarked with his unit from Brisbane, on board HMAT A11 "Ascanius" on May 24, 1915.

The 26th Battalion, along with the remainder of the 7th Brigade, arrived in Egypt in early September and on September 12, 1915, he landed with his Unit at Gallipoli to relieve the 1st Division which had been part of the first landing at Gallipoli and had absorbed most of the fighting. The 26th Battalion performed mainly defensive roles at Courtney's and Steele's Posts until being withdrawn from Gallipoli in December 1915.

While at Mudros Harbour awaiting transport to Egypt, James Herbert was made second in command of A Company on December 26, 1915.

In camp in Egypt, James received a second promotion, this time to Captain commanding A Company, 26th Infantry Battalion on February 24, 1916.

On March 21, 1916, the 26th Battalion landed in Marseilles and proceeded north to the Ypres sector of the Western Front around Messines. In July 1916, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig (Supreme British Commander on the Western Front) launched the Somme offensive. Casualties were enormous but Haig was determined to keep up the pressure. Three of the four Australian divisions in France were deployed to the Somme.

On July 23, the 1st Division AIF was tasked with capturing the village of Pozieres. The 1st Division took the village but were unable to take the two lines of trenches beyond. The 1st Division was subsequently withdrawn, and the 2nd Division was tasked with taking the enemy trenches. The subsequent attack, the first major offensive by the 26th Battalion since arriving in France, was to begin just after midnight on July 29. Prior to going into the line, each man was issued with a tin triangle which was to be sewn on to the back of the tunic as an aid to artillery spotters. During the attack on the German trenches (known as OG1 and OG2), Captain Herbert received a serious gunshot wound to the left arm and shoulder.

James was evacuated via a Casualty Clearing Station to the 1st Red Cross Hospital in Boulogne for surgery. A fortnight later, he was evacuated to England on the Hospital Ship "Dieppe" and admitted to 3rd London General Hospital in Wandsworth on August 14, 1916.

It was established that a bullet had entered at the point of the left shoulder and exited at the shoulder blade fracturing both humerus and scapula. The exit wound had not properly healed, and the left shoulder and his left arm were very weak.

He spent a total of 8 months recuperating from his wound before being placed back on the active list.

James re-joined his unit on May 29, 1917. Two months later he was detached to the 5th Army Infantry School for five weeks and re-joined the 26th Australian Infantry Battalion as the battalion moved from the Somme north to the Ypres sector.

The 26th Australian Infantry Battalion, as part of the 2nd Australian Division were put into the line during the Battle of Menin Road. The advance was most successful and General Sir Herbert Gough, the 5th Army Commander, decided to press home the advantage by continuing to attack the low ridge to the east of Ypres. On October 4 & 5, the three Australian divisions attacked beside each other towards the crossroads at Broodseinde, just south of what is now the large Commonwealth War Cemetery at Tyne Cot, outside of Passchendaele.

As a result of the action at Broodseinde Ridge, James Herbert was recommended for the Distinguished Service Order (the second highest award for gallantry).
the citation read:

'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty, during the operations on Broodseinde Ridge on 4/5th October 1917. He led his Company skilfully into the attack, and displayed great energy and resource in consolidating the captured position, and then reorganizing the troops on the whole battalion frontage. He set a fine example to his men throughout the whole 48 hours and was largely responsible for making the operations of the battalion a success.'

James was granted 6 days leave in Paris just two weeks after Broodseinde, during which time he was hospitalised with an illness.

While being treated in hospital, he was informed that he had been awarded the Military Cross rather than the Distinguished Service Order for his actions at Passchendaele. It can only be speculated that the reason for the award being down graded from DSO to MC, but it may have been simply that his rank was too junior for the D.S.O. and the M.C. was considered more appropriate. Regardless, James was entitled to forever after, append the letters M.C. after his name.

**Captain Herbert was presented
with his Military Cross by King
George V at Buckingham
Palace.**



In March 1918, Operation Michael pushed a German advance from the Hindenburg Line back across the Somme battlefields as far as Villers Bretonneux. The Australian divisions were rushed to the Somme to stem the tide of the German advance.

Unfortunately, it was near Villers-Bretonneux, a month later, that James met his fate. On April 17, 1918, the battalion diary records that Captain Herbert was shot in the back by a sniper whilst in 'No-Man's Land' supervising the burial of a fellow officer. James was taken to a Casualty Clearing Station but he had already succumbed to his wound at Warloy-Baillon, the Somme. He was 36 years old.

His grave bears the following inscription :

**"To live in hearts we leave behind
is not to die "**

Along with the Military Cross, he was also awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal for his involvement in the Campaigns at Gallipoli, the Middle East and on the Western Front.



He was buried at the Warloy-Baillon Communal Cemetery Extension (Plot II, Row F, Grave No. I), in France, and he is remembered on the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour, and also at Langlands Park Memorial Gates, at S Hoffnung & Co. Ltd. and at the United Service Club, Brisbane.

We will remember him.