

SAPPER ARTHUR FINDON DUNBAR
540 - 2nd Tunnelling Company

Born at Gawler, South Australia, Arthur Dunbar was 30 years and 3 months of age when he completed the 'Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad' at Adelaide, South Australia on 29 September 1915. A medical examination found him to be fit for active service and he signed the Oath to 'well and truly serve' on the same day.

A blacksmith by trade, Arthur was single and living at Brompton, S.A. He was 6ft 0½in tall and weighed 164lbs. He had a fresh complexion, blue eyes and brown hair. He named as his Next of Kin, his father Alan Arthur Dunbar, of Chief Street, Brompton, South Australia.

Arthur spent some time with 'E' Company, 2nd Depot between 14 and 31 October before being appointed to No.2 Tunnelling Company of the Australian Mining Corps on 1 November. He underwent training at the Miners' Casula Camp near Sydney, New South Wales in preparation for embarkation for the European theatre of war.

At a civic parade in the Domain, Sydney on Saturday 19 February, a large crowd of relations and friends of the departing Miners lined the four sides of the parade ground. Sixty police and 100 Garrison Military Police were on hand to keep the crowds within bounds. The scene was an inspiring one. On the extreme right flank, facing the saluting base, were companies of the Rifle Club School; next came a detachment of the 4th King's Shropshire Light Infantry, then the bands of the Light Horse, Liverpool Depot, and the Miners', and on the left rank upon rank, the Miners' Battalion.

The Corps boarded HMAT A38 *Ulysses* in Sydney on 20 February and sailed for the European theatre. Arriving in Melbourne on 22 February the Miners camped at Broadmeadows for a stay of 7 days while further cargo was loaded.

Another parade was held at the Broadmeadows camp on 1 March, the Miners' Corps being inspected by the Governor-General, as Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth military forces.

Leaving Melbourne on 1 March, *Ulysses* arrived at Fremantle, Western Australia on 7 March where a further 53 members were taken on board.

On Wednesday March 8, 1916 the whole force, with their band and equipment, paraded at Fremantle prior to leaving Victoria Quay at 9.30 o'clock.

The ship hit a reef when leaving Fremantle harbour, stripping the plates for 40 feet and, although there was a gap in the outside plate, the inner bilge plates were not punctured. The men on board nicknamed her '*Useless*'. The Miners were off-loaded and sent to the Blackboy Hill Camp where further training was conducted.

The Mining Corps comprised 1303 members at the time they embarked with a Headquarters of 40; No.1 Company – 390; No.2 Company – 380; No.3 Company – 392, and 101 members of the 1st Reinforcements.

Finally departing Fremantle on 1 April, *Ulysses* voyaged via Suez, Port Said and Alexandria in Egypt. The Captain of the ship was reluctant to take *Ulysses* out of the Suez Canal because he felt the weight of the ship made it impossible to manoeuvre in the situation of a submarine attack. The troops were transhipped to HM Transport B.1 *Ansonia*, then on to Valetta, Malta before disembarking at Marseilles, France on May 5, 1916. As a unit they entrained at Marseilles on 7 May and detrained on 11 May at Hazebrouk.

A 'Mining Corps' did not fit in the British Expeditionary Force, and the Corps was disbanded and three Australian Tunnelling Companies were formed. The Technical Staff of the Corps Headquarters, plus some technically qualified men from the individual companies, was formed into the entirely new Australian Electrical and Mechanical Mining and Boring Company (AEMMBC), better known as the 'Alphabetical Company'.

Arthur was officially transferred to the 2nd Australian Tunnelling Company on 29 December 1916. He was attached to the 1st Canadian Tunnelling Company from 12 January 1917 to 4 February when he rejoined his unit.

In March 1917, a Mary Haseldine wrote to Base Records Melbourne from West Perth, Western Australia seeking Arthur's address, as she was not in contact with his people. The Department of Defence provided Arthur's address in early April.

Promoted to Lance Corporal on 20 April 1917, Arthur reverted to Sapper rank at his own request on 22 October 1917.

In March 1918 Mary Haseldine again wrote seeking information on Arthur, as she had received no messages for some months and was becoming anxious. Base Records replied promptly stating they had not received any casualty report concerning Arthur and providing his current address for mail.

On 12 March 1918, Arthur was wounded in action (gas) and treated at the 149th Field Ambulance before being transferred to 48th Casualty Clearing Station on 13 March. He was admitted to 9th General Hospital at Rouen on 14 March and on 25 March he was transferred to 13th Convalescent Depot at Tronville. His Next of Kin was advised of his condition and location on 25 March.

Arthur was discharged to the Australian General Base Depot on 15 April and rejoined his unit on 25 April. Also in April 1918 his sister, Maud Dunbar, wrote to the Authorities seeking Arthur's current address and thanking them for their advice about his being wounded.

The advance at Bellicourt on the Hindenberg Line of 29/30 September 1918, was one of the last actions the 1st & 2nd Australian Tunnelling Companies were involved with. While C.E.W. Bean devotes almost an entire chapter to events on the Hindenberg Line, the Tunnelling Companies are mentioned only briefly in the Notes to three pages:

Note 8 page 948

The 1st and 2nd Aust. Tunnelling Coys. would then maintain the roads.

Note 18 page 1044

The following Australian units also remained in the line: No. 3 Sqn. A.F.C.; 1st A.T. Coy. 1st and 2nd Tunnelling Coys.; A.E. M M. and B. .Coy.; and Aust. Corps Salvage Section. [Abridged]

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5th Pioneers lost 3 officers and 61 others this day, and the 105th Regt 2 officer, and 46 others. The 2nd Aust. Tunnelling Coy., which went with them, had 9 men hit.

Sapper Arthur Findon Dunbar was awarded the Military Medal for his part in the action:

"During the operations against the Hindenberg Line on the morning of the 29th September, in the neighbourhood of BELLICOURT he was engaged with a party searching for enemy mines. Sapper Dunbar removed several dangerous booby traps from dugouts and assisted in the capture of many prisoners. He also detected and removed a large number of road mines. The whole of the day he worked under heavy shell and machine gun fire, during which 50% of his party became casualties"

The award was recommended by the Lieutenant Colonel C.R.E., Corps Troops, Australian Corps and further recommended by the Brigadier General, Chief Engineer, Australian Corps for the award of the Military Medal

On 29/30 September 1918, at Bellicourt, 10 Military Crosses, 2 Distinguished Conduct Medals and 12 Military Medals were recommended for members of the 1st & 2nd Tunnelling Companies.

Arthur enjoyed some leave from France between 17 December and 31 December 1918, rejoining his unit on 8 January 1919.

He was admitted to 5/6/7th Australian Field Ambulance on 25 March with jaundice, and transferred to 70th Casualty Clearing Station on the same day. He was then transferred by Ambulance Train 14 to the 14th Stationary Hospital on 31 March and evacuated to England on 7 April where he was admitted to the Endell Street Military Hospital in London. On 23 April he was transferred to 3rd Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford and on 30 April discharged to No.2 Com. Depot at Weymouth.

On 1 May 1919 his father was advised that Arthur was in hospital suffering from jaundice - mild. His sister Maud was also advised on 5 May by separate letter of Arthur's condition.

Arthur returned to Australia on board the *Orontes*, leaving London on 15 May 1919 and disembarking on 26 June 1919 at Adelaide in the 4th Military District.

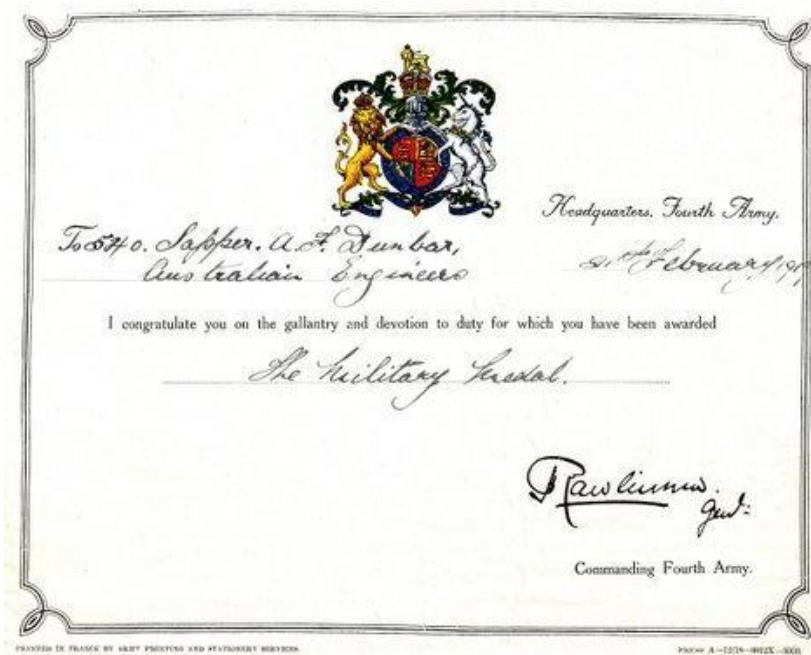
The London Gazette of 17 June 1919 published the award of the Military Medal to No. 540 A. F. Dunbar. The award was then promulgated in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette no. 115, dated 10th October 1919.

Arthur was discharged from the A.I.F. on 29 August 1919 entitled to wear the Military Medal, British War Medal (10046) and the Victory Medal (9982).

He was welcomed home by his family and friends:



In December of that year the Military Medal and Deed were received by the Commandant of 4th Military District for presentation to Arthur.



Arthur married Mary (Haseldine) and the couple had 3 children: Reg, Rena, and Linda.



On 21 April 1925 the Workers Home Board in Perth wrote to Base Records in Melbourne requesting verification of Arthur's service to allow consideration of an application for assistance under the War Service Homes Act. Details were provided on 28 April 1925

His Military documents were sent to the Repatriation Department, Perth on 24 December 1926.

After the war, Arthur was in partnership with "Synott & Dunbar" as shearing contractors in the North of Western Australia. His granddaughter Maureen recalls that he made pedal cars and large "glory boxes" from tin.

Although only ten years old when he passed, his granddaughter Maureen recalls that "he made pedal cars and large "glory boxes" from tin; that he helped her dad build their home on virgin land at Orange Grove in WA and always gave support encouragement and advice in helping my parent's build their poultry farm in 1945".

The truck Arthur used for shearing is sometimes on display at the motor museum at "Whiteman Park" Perth or at the Perth Royal Show.



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constructed with the assistance of Maureen MacDonald and Arthur McDowell, granddaughter & grandson of Arthur Dunbar.
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