

Claude Vivian Radford



Lest we forget

Born: 25th May 1891

Died: 10th June 1917

Metala Burgess

Nuriootpa High School

Personal Statement

My name is Metala Burgess and this year I have decided to participate in the 2017 Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize. I decided to participate in this competition as I wanted to delve deeper into the life of an Anzac and tell a soldier's story who had not been specifically recognised for his service.

I am a very active teenager and I enjoy many different activities at school and during my free time. I play in the Angaston Netball Club's Junior one team and this year I was lucky enough to be voted by my teammates as captain. I also do three types of dance: Jazz, Ballet and Pointe. I enjoy both of these sports as they give me a sense of teamwork and I get to make a lot of new friends each year. This year I was chosen as the role of a cheerleader in Nuriootpa High School's Production of 'High School Musical on stage'. I am also involved in many school sports and I enjoy participating in extracurricular activities. I work really hard in all of my classes and at the moment I am extremely happy with the grades that I am receiving.

I have always loved history and how intriguing it can be. I especially enjoy learning about war, in particular World War One. I find learning about World War One interesting as there are so many soldiers who have untold stories that are still to be discovered. I also really love to travel, I have travelled to three countries with my family (Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia) and I would love to go back to all of them and many more if I could. It was amazing to experience their different cultures and traditions and how different their lifestyle is to ours.

This competition was advertised in our school bulletin and on posters around the school. As soon as I saw these posters I went straight to my history teacher and asked what was involved for me to participate. My teacher told me that during the holidays I needed to find a soldier that was from South Australia and went to Gallipoli. After a few searches on the Virtual War Memorial website I came across Claude Vivian Radford. I read his profile and he sounded like he was a reasonably sporty person and he lived in Angaston. Both of these facts were reasons why I chose Claude as my soldier. He seemed quite similar to me in many ways, and my dad was born and raised in Angaston. Once I had chosen Claude as my soldier I did a little bit of research online however I ultimately decided that after school I would go to the library with my nan and see if there were any books on the Radford family. To my delight there were two books which gave me a lot of information about Claude's life before war. Whilst my nan and I were talking about the competition a librarian working at that time overheard us and said that she was related by marriage to Claude and that her deceased's husband's sister had all of the letters sent to Claude's family from him while he was at war. I was so excited that fate had lined our visit to the library up with this lovely librarian's shift. I later got in touch with her husband's sister and we met each other a few weeks later at the local library. This lady's name is Anne. She brought many letters and diary entries that had been passed down from Clara Constance (Claude's Sister) and she explained quite an emotional and motivating story about Claude and his life. I've never had an ancestor go to war and this really made me feel connected to Claude himself and the events that occurred. Anne offered her personal collection of artefacts to me. Anne said to me "I can see that you are extremely passionate about this competition and history. I would love for you to borrow my copy of Claude's letters and diary entries so that you can continue your research in your own time." I felt very privileged for her to trust me as much as she did even though we had only met that afternoon. After continuing my research, in a way I now feel as if I am part of their family and feel I know Claude really well.

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in this competition and for allowing me to tell you about Claude Vivian Radford.

To the Radford Family

From Clara Constance Radford (Claude's older sister)

My brother was born Claude Vivian Radford on the 25th of May 1891, he was the youngest child to my parents Hermon and Mary Jane Radford. Claude and I grew up in Angaston, South Australia with our parents and seven brothers and sisters. Our first property was called Park View, when our father passed away our mother built a house in Sturt Street Angaston. Claude attended Angaston State School for the majority of his schooling. He was a typical Barossa boy, he was quite a handsome young man and a very talented sportsman. He enjoyed playing cricket, tennis and football. At the young age of 15, Claude began training to become a Carpenter. However, in 1914 at the age of 22, Claude decided that he wanted to move into the farming industry. To do this Claude moved to Curlwaa, NSW and bought a fruit block in an irrigation settlement. Our mother found Claude moving so far away tough to deal with in the beginning, she had no idea how hard losing him forever would really be.

Claude returned to South Australia and enlisted himself into the war in February 1916 almost 2 years after the war began. Although he had been living in Curlwaa, NSW for the past few years, Claude enlisted in Adelaide and recorded his home town as Angaston. As the saying goes "you can take the boy out of the Barossa, but you can't take the Barossa out of the boy." He recorded his occupation as a Carpenter instead of an Orchardist, maybe he did this because he thought Carpentry was a more 'manly' occupation.

My brother moved into his first camp which was based in Mitcham Adelaide on the 14th of March 1916 and a month later, he embarked on the HMAT Aeneas to Egypt. I can't believe I missed the train the day that he left. I never got to say goodbye to my brother before he left for the war. To think that this would be the last chance I had to say goodbye to him. Claude became a private in the 50th Infantry Battalion (2nd Reinforcements). His battalion arrived at their training camp in Egypt on the 14th of May 1916.

Claude describes training in Egypt quite thoroughly in his diary entries. He explains the hot and miserable days, the long walks for water and the sleepless nights. (Appendix 1). I can't imagine what it would have been like for my younger brother living in these conditions. After a month of training, the 50th battalion left Egypt on the 4th of June and arrived in France in the evening of the 12th of June 1916, exactly twelve months before my young brother's life would be cut short. From what I have read, arriving in France involved many lengthy train trips that were hot and crowded. (Appendix 2)

Reading his letters and diary entries revealed that the first few days in France required long sets of marching on cobbled stones which my brother recalled as 'horrible to walk on' (Appendix 3). In the time that Claude was at war he experienced many illnesses. He suffered greatly from tonsillitis and diarrhea more than once. I remember my mother worrying about him, she would always look so sad and we all knew how much she missed him.

According to the research I have done on the 50th battalion, my brother was among the majority, with it predominately made up of South Australian men. Claude's Battalion was lead into the war by Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Hurcombe and this was the reason why his battalion became known as 'Hurcombe's Hungry Half Hundred' I never understood why they were called 'hungry' until I was reading some of the notes that we had been sent after Claude's death. I have since found out that it was because the 50th battalion occasionally would go to nearby villages and eat some of their fresh produce during the times that they were in fact 'hungry'.

Claude himself defined the battlefield as 'hell on earth' (Appendix 4). In letters my brother regularly described the 'loud boom' of the guns, the 'star shells' and the copious number of aeroplanes that he saw (Appendix 5) even though his battalion were stationed 15 miles from the front line when not on duty.

Whilst Claude was in France he sent many letters talking about the beautiful scenery. It was nice to hear reassuring stories about the battlefield instead of the horrifying stories we were hearing at home. He also mentioned quite heavy rainfall and flowers called Begonias (Appendix 6). Begonias are flowers which only grow in cool summers and mild winters. This gave our family the impression that the battlefield was usually quite cold and wet. In later letters, Claude also stated '[W]hen I came out (of the trenches) I had a thick coat of wet mud all over me'. (Appendix 7)

The 50th battalion spent their time at war alternating between front-line duty, training and labouring behind the line duties. From the 13th until the 15th of August, Claude and the rest of his battalion took part in their first major battle at Mouquet Farm near Pozieres. This was where my brother was first exposed to the horror of war. How terrifying for Claude, lining up for the hop over, did he think that this was the end, even though it was only the beginning?

During this battle, the 50th Battalion lost a huge number of their men, Claude suffered from slight shell shock but whilst recovering he still assured our family that we had nothing to worry about (Appendix 8). During August of 1916, Claude became a member of the machine-gun section and in late April of 1917, my brother participated in the capture of the Village of Noreuil. This attack saw many casualties for the 50th battalion. However, Claude luckily came out without injury. Soon after this battle Claude was promoted to Lance Corporal.

Claude spent the next two months at war alternating between battalion duties and individual tasks. He then faced what would result as his final encounter. The 50th battalion attacked Messines Ridge on June 7th 1917. Although this attack was successful, many soldiers were killed. As I write this letter, I vividly remember the day that we received the telegram that told us my brother had lost his life on the 10th of June 1917. Claude was only 26 years old, he believed that he was protecting his country and I really believe that his bravery like many others saved Australia. Claude didn't give his life, it was taken away from him, from all of us.

A letter written by 'Ralph' (I assume he was one of Claude's mates) to my sister Blanche told our family of the fateful moment when Claude was killed. 'When the time for the hop over (that ended my brother's life) came Claude was the first one with his machine gun and was unlucky enough to be quite close to a shell and died

almost immediately.' (Appendix 9) It never really occurred to me that my brother wasn't coming home until we got this letter, maybe I just thought his boat was late or maybe he went to another country for a holiday or something. He never came home though.

As an Australian we believe that an ANZAC soldier who reflects the Anzac spirit is defined as someone who displays the qualities of loyalty, mateship, courage, bravery, larrikinism and ingenuity. These qualities allow the soldiers to cope somewhat with the hell that surrounds them and although they see this hell they continue in their fight to save our country. My brother, throughout his short time at war, like many other World War 1 soldiers was the epitome of an ANZAC soldier as he displayed many of these attributes. He was always optimistic about returning home until the fatal end of his journey and after his death, Claude was described by a fellow soldier as 'at all times a fair example of a soldier' (Appendix 10) and that 'He evoked nothing but praise and admiration from his officer' (Appendix 11). From numerous diary entries, we know that Claude was also always helping out around camp and many times whilst he was ill or wounded, continued to serve his daily duties. He displayed the qualities of bravery and optimism when writing letters to myself and the rest of our family as instead of complaining about the awful battlefield that he was witnessing, Claude described the flora of France, the conditions for gardening and the scenery of the surrounding towns.

Claude's story is one of many that deserves to be told. I trust that you will pass this letter down in generations to come.

Kind Regards,

Clara Constance