

## ***95 LANCE CORPORAL James Robert DUFF***

James [Jim] Duff was born at Pakenham in the Gippsland district, by August 1914 he described himself as being a butcher, he was 32 years of age when he fronted to enlist at Broadmeadows on 18 August 1914. Jim described himself as being a widower, he had married Agnes Conder in 1908 and then couple had four children, James (1909), Dorothy (1911), Nancy (1913), and Basil (1914), Agnes died in 1914, perhaps during childbirth?

Jim told the recruiting clerk that he had served with the Victorian Mounted Rifles, he became part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Commonwealth Horse during the Boer War. (Regimental Number 642).

Enlisting in January 1902, Jim was with his contingent when it left Australia in February 1902 aboard the transport *St Andrew* the ship arrived at Durban on 10 March. The contingent arrived in time to take part in a large 'drive' against the Boers in early May. Following that the contingent returned to Klerksdorp on 21 May, and remained there until after peace was declared, they then marched back to Elandsfontein on 25 May. The contingent arrived back in Victoria on 2 August 1902, the men were paid off and discharged that same day.



Returning to his trade as a butcher, Jim once again stepped forward to enlist in the AIF at the outbreak of war in August 1914. Trooper Duff became part of A Squadron with the 4<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment. The 4<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment was originally formed as Divisional Cavalry for the Australian Division. It was raised at the Broadmeadows Camp on 11 August 1914. The bulk of its recruits were drawn from the Melbourne metropolitan area, with the balance of its men coming from militia units, including a number from New South Wales, the bulk of those men being allotted to C Squadron.



Training continued at Broadmeadows up until October 1914. The embarkation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment occurred aboard the *Wiltshire* and the *Anglo Egyptian*, departing from Melbourne as part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Contingent on 19 October, the bulk of the regiment were aboard the *Wiltshire* (shown right).



The *Wiltshire* arrived at Albany on 1 November, from there the vessel steamed to Colombo which was reached on 15 November. The *Wiltshire* remained at Colombo for several days, the troopship arrived at Suez on 1 December and then Port Said the following day. Alexandria was reached on 8 December, but it was not until the 11<sup>th</sup> that the regiment was allowed to disembark.



The regiment proceeded to the Mena Camp on the outskirts of Cairo, the camp was in the shadows of the pyramids. A liberal amount of leave was granted to allow the men to visit the sites close to camp and to travel into Cairo.

One of the first tasks was to get the regiment's mounts back into peak physical condition. Initially the horses were led everywhere and gradually more weight was added to their saddlery, however

it was several days before the men were allowed to ride their horses.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment was not part of a Light Horse Brigade, and as such didn't train alongside the other light horse regiments located nearby. The 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment was part of the Australian division. The regiment's training syllabus shows the men being put through rigorous drills in '*dismounting for action to meet Cavalry Mounted Attack*', its drills orientated towards working with and against infantry and other cavalry.

Mid-January saw the regiment carry out a route march followed by outpost practice. On 25 January the regiment drilled in '*Advance and rear Guards*,' the following day the regiment was trained in the '*Practice of Pursuit*.' On Wednesday 27 January the regiment drilled in '*attacking defensive positions when dismounted*,' during the afternoons the men were regularly rotated in being allowed to wash their clothes and clean their saddlery.



February saw various training conducted including ‘*musketry instruction and bayonet fighting.*’ The regiment continued to practice its drills in ‘*Advance and Rear Guards*’ and ‘*Dismounted Actions.*’

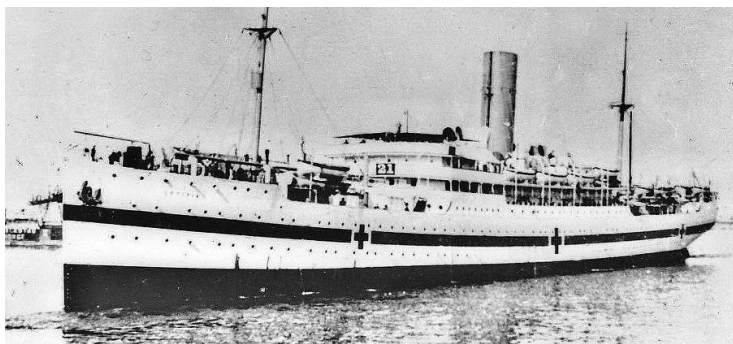


March saw the squadrons being inspected ‘with all war outfit’, the squadrons continued to rotate through various drills. On 8 March the regiment carried out a short route march, by 10 March all the squadrons had been checked to ensure they were ‘war outfitted.’ Mid-March saw the men carrying out their drills using blank ammunition, perhaps the realisation that action was close would have given the men a bit more purpose.

Date.	Morning 8.45a.m. to 11a.m.
Mon. 22nd.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>By Troops.</u></p> <p>First half hour- Bayonet fighting.                      Second half hour- Arms Drill.                      Second Hour- Musketry.                      All Batmen and last reinforcements will parade under R.S.M. assisted by S.M. Smith, for instruction in Arms Drill and Musketry.</p>
Tues. 23rd.	<p>Holiday for those who remained in on previous Saturday.                      Remainder:- Bathing parade, washing clothes, and cleaning saddlery.</p>
Wed, 24th.	Attack and Defence of Convoy.
Thr. 25th.	<p>Squadron Drill. All Troop Leaders to be given turn at handling Squadron.                      Tactical problems by Squadrons.</p>
Friday. 26th.	Same as for Monday.
Saturday. 27th.	<p>Washing clothes &amp; cleaning saddlery.                      Holiday for those who remained in on previous Tuesday.</p>

The 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment headed for Gallipoli in mid-May 1915, landing on 22 and 24 May. The regiment was initially split up into squadrons, helping to reinforce the depleted infantry battalions. After 11 June 1915 the 4<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment was reformed and was then mainly deployed on defensive activities around Ryrie's Post.

Like so many Trooper Duff only remained on the peninsula for a few months before ill-health required his evacuation. On 8 August 1915 he was admitted to a field ambulance on the peninsula and then on 15 August he was sent back to Alexandria, where he was admitted to No 21 General Hospital, he was recorded as suffering enteric fever.



Jim remained in hospital at Alexandria up until early October 1915 when he was sent to England aboard the hospital ship *Letita* (shown left) on 12 October he was admitted to the Royal Victorian Hospital at Netley (London).

Trooper Duff's file gives no details as to when or where he returned, it is not unlike many other soldiers recuperating from ill-health in the UK after being wounded on Anzac Cove. There are no entries at all for 1916 shown on his file, presumably he was given a role at a depot that suited himself and the army.

What is shown is his transfer to the Anzac Provost Corps on 1 January 1917. Jim is shown as being posted to Bhurtpore Barracks at Tidworth, he would spend the next 12 months at Tidworth. While he was at Tidworth he married 20 year old Mary Leach, Jim was now 34 years of age, the couple married at Wilton on 8 August 1917.



On 1 January 1918 Trooper Duff was sent to France and after a short time at the Rouelles (Cavalry) Depot on 7 January he joined the MMP detachment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. Jim remained on the Western Front for most of 1918. During June he spent a short time at a casualty clearing station suffering from the flu. On 1 September 1918 he was promoted to lance corporal.

Because of his early enlistment in November 1918 Jim became eligible for 'special 1914 leave', he could have chosen to have returned to Australia, but because Mary was still living in the U.K. (Bemerton, Salisbury) Jim chose to take his 75 days furlough in England. Jim was at Tidworth about to take his leave when the Armistice was signed, he had his photo taken on the steps (most probably of the Salisbury Town Hall) in early 1919.



Jim is standing next to Lance Corporal Leslie Flint (**left** facing) and Corporal James Kelly (**right** head turned slightly), behind them left to right are; Corporal's (or Lance Corporal) George Green, John Howard, James Pendergast and Richard Jensen.

Upon the completion of his leave he returned to duty at Tidworth. It appears that Jim Duff was happy to stay in England throughout 1919, it was not until 10 February 1920 that he and Mary began the voyage to Australia aboard the *Port Napier*.

Lance Corporal James Robert Duff was discharged from the AIF at Melbourne on 12 March 1920. Following his discharge Jim applied for a soldiers' settlers block near Apsley, in April 1920 he was successful in a ballot and was granted a block on Elderslie Station, 9 miles to the south of Apsley. It's unclear exactly how long Jim farmed on Elderslie for, several of the original settlers did not last long before surrendering their blocks. A report in the Horsham Times in late August 1924 noted that '*the Duff's block on Elderslie has been taken up by one of the Wilson's.*'

Jim and Mary are shown as living on the Coleraine Road at North Hamilton in 1931, Jim was described as a trainer. 1936 shows the couple living in Stephen Street, Hamilton, Jim's daughter, Nancy (now 23 years old) also appears to have been living at that address. A later letter on his file gave Jim's address as Barunah Plains, Hesse (Victoria) in June 1943.