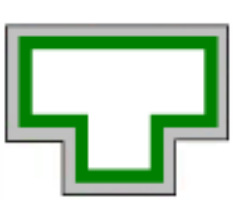
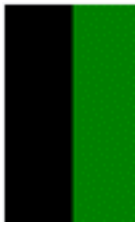




Colour patches of the 17th & 53rd Battalions.

Private Patrick Joseph PATTERSON

4897 – 17th Battalion, 12th Reinforcements
53rd Battalion.

Born: 1885, registered Cowra, NSW.

Parents: Bridget and Thomas Patterson.

Next of Kin: Brother, George A Patterson, Dilga.

Occupation: Farmer and carpenter

District Connection: Cumnock.

Enlistment Date: 28 Jan 1916, Sydney.

Enlistment Age: 30 yrs and 6 months.

Embarkation: 13 Apr 1916, Sydney, *HMAT Ceramic A40*

Served: Egypt, France**.**

Fate: KIA 4 Jul 1918, Morlancourt France, 33yrs.

Buried: Ribemont Communal Cemetery Extension, France.

Honour Boards: National War Museum, Canberra; Cumnock War Memorial Gates; Baldry Honour Board.

Biography

Patrick Joseph Patterson was the son of Bridget and Thomas Paterson. Thomas Patterson was born in 1855 near Boorowa, NSW, the son of Irish immigrants, Margaret (nee Hurley) and Joseph Patrick Patterson. Thomas married Bridget Mary Donnelly at Cowra in 1884 and they had eleven children born between 1885 and 1904: Patrick, Thomas, George, John, Margaret, Bridget, Mary, Michael, Ellen, James & William.

In the 1890s, Thomas and Bridget moved to take up a selection at Dilga, near Cumnock. Margaret Patterson was the first of their children to have her birth registered at Molong, in 1893.

In February 1897, Thomas was granted the contract of Conveyance of Post Office Mails by horseback and sulky for the Western Road between Cumnock and Dilga. The mail was delivered twice weekly for £26 per annum, and Thomas ran the service until January 1904.

Their dwelling was described in a news report in March 1898 as a *"nice little cottage, nearly covered with creepers, and a good garden and orchard at the front and rear. There is a post office here, and, a little distance up, a public school."* In 1899 he was granted a lease of 3,300 acres at Dilga for an annual rent of £15. Their property was called "Glenaldon." In December 1899, another news report stated that the Patterson's house had been robbed of rations and clothing while the family were away.

The family was to suffer a number of tragedies over the next 20 years. The first one occurred on 11 July 1897 when Thomas, aged 9 years, died after being thrown from a horse while rounding up cows on their property at Dilga.

The Molong Argus - 31 Jan 1902, p7, reported on the second tragedy:
"A sad drowning fatality is reported from Dilga. From particulars to hand it appears that on Wednesday evening [29th January] *two children, son and daughter of Mr Thomas Patterson, of Dilga, were found drowned in the creek near their parents' residence. The children— Eileen, aged 5 years, and Michael, aged 3 years— were missed about six o'clock in the evening and a search was made. The little ones were found drowned in the creek, locked in each other's arms. It is surmised that the boy fell in and that Eileen went to his assistance and was pulled in while attempting to rescue her brother…"*

Over several years the family had several accidents while driving their sulkies, and other incidents, but fortunately without receiving any serious injuries. Mr Thomas Patterson's brother Michael and his father Joseph Patterson both died within months of each other in 1903.

A news report in August 1903 said of the family after one of the daughters, Bridget Polly, broke her arm playing*; "Very much sympathy is expressed for member of the family who are universally popular and have never been out of trouble lately. The old saying 'misfortunes never come along singly' applies to this case.*

They seem to come to Mr Patterson's turn in half-dozens."

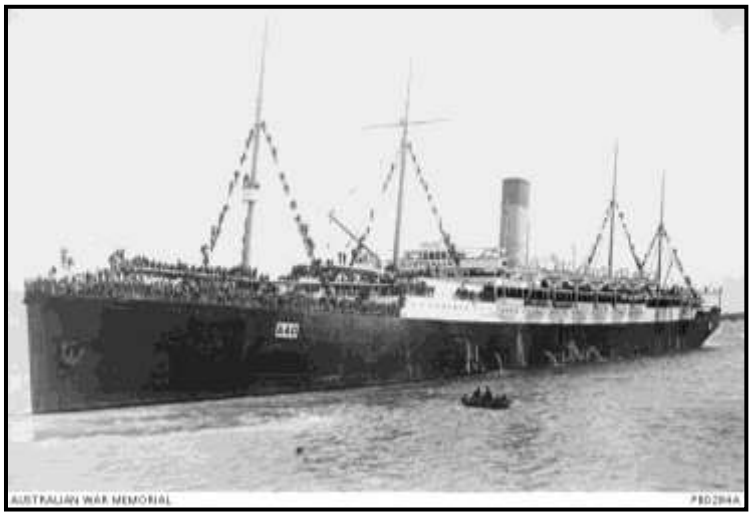
The family seem to have had a period of calm before a serious bush fire around Dilga on New Year's Eve and Day (Jan 1st 1905) affected a number of farmers in the district, including the Pattersons. 1905 was to prove a dreadful year for the family when in April a cholera outbreak occurred in the Molong and Parkes districts, including Dilga. Thomas Patterson was one of several people who died from the Cholera outbreak, on 9 April 1905, aged 49 years. Patrick, known also as Joe, was the only one of the family able to attend his funeral as Bridget and four of her children were also stricken with the disease and admitted to Molong Hospital.

Patrick also succumbed to the Cholera disease and was admitted to Molong Hospital following the funeral. His younger brother James, died on 12th April, aged 2 years.

Patrick and his brothers George and James managed the 'Glenaldon' farm with their mother and also leased land in the Dilga district. Their sister Margaret Lucy taught at Dilga School and at home privately during the period 1910-1915. Patrick attended Progress Meetings and Farmers and Settlers' Association meetings at Balderodgery. He was injured by his horse in a freak accident in February 1914 and was taken to Molong Hospital suffering from shock, facial injuries and bruises to his body. In November 1914, Patrick was granted a Crown lease of 148 acres in Dilga.

Patrick Patterson enlisted at the Town Hall, Sydney on 28 January 1916. He stated his age as 30yrs and 6 months old and his occupation was that of a farmer and carpenter. His medical examination stated that he was 5 feet 5½ inches tall, had a dark complexion, blue eyes, brown hair, and was of the Roman Catholic religious denomination.

The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser – 8 Apr 1916, p6, reported that a *"send-off"* was given to Patrick at 'Glenaldon' in April 1916 by his family and friends. He was presented with a military wristlet watch as a token of esteem from the Dilga folk. The article also remarked that three brothers (Patrick, George and James) had a draw to decide who should represent the family in the AIF. Patrick was also given a send-off around the same time at the Royal Hotel, Cumnock, by the Recruiting Committee and presented with a pair of pipes in a case. The report also stated *that "Joe was very popular, especially among the young and 'sporty' section of Cumnock. "*



Private Patterson embarked on 13 Apr 1916 on *HMAT Ceramic A40*, from Sydney with the 12th reinforcements of the 17th Battalion. On board the *Ceramic* also from the Cumnock district were Pte Arnold Astill 4659 – 19th Btn, KIA 14 Nov 1916, Pte Thomas Coady 1638 – 54th Btn RTA 18 Jan 1919, Pte David Gow 1746 – 45th Btn, KIA 13 Oct 1917.

The *Ceramic* stopped at Albany for two days taking in coal and water. The ship next stopped at Colombo, Ceylon, where they undertook a march ashore for a few hours before sailing on to Egypt. One soldier's letter complained about the food they were given and stated that soldiers who had travelled on the White Star liners, *Ceramic* and *Megantic*, thought they should be known as the "White Starvation Liners." Many of the soldiers purchased their own food from the canteens.

The *Ceramic* stayed overnight at Port Suez before taking two days to travel through the Suez Canal and on to Port Said. From Port Said the troops disembarked for a train to take them to Tel-el-Kebir. One letter published in the *Wellington Times – 27 Jul 1916, p2,* from Pte Ted Jones [4810 Pte Edward Jones – 20th Btn, KIA 16 Nov 1916] to his parents, Mr & Mrs Ned Jones, of Wellington, stated in part that *"The train consisted of cattle trucks dismantled. Tops were taken off, and nearly the whole of the four sides. We were packed 26 men in a truck.*
We left Port Said about 7pm on the night of 16th May and arrived 1am the next day. On arrival we marched about half a mile, and then bivouacked for the night.

After three hours' sleep we were marched off to our tents. The day was the longest and hottest that I have ever experienced. Hundreds of men were knocked out by the heat."

Pte Patterson embarked on *HMAT Megantic* from Alexandria on 28 May 1916 and disembarked at Plymouth on 7 Jun 1916.He proceeded to France on 10 Aug 1916 and disembarked at Etaples the following day.

On 7 Oct 1916 Pte Patterson was transferred to the 53rd Battalion. From 18 Jun – 22 Jun 1917 he attended Signal School at Etaples. He had leave in England from 29 Aug – 11 Sep 1917.

Pte Patterson reattended Signal School in France on 9 Jan - 24 Jan 1918 and had leave in Paris from 31 Jan – 11 Feb 1918. Pte Patterson was admitted to the 14th Australian Field Ambulance on 12 Feb 1918 with Venereal Disease (a common occurrence after soldiers had leave in Paris) and transferred to the 39th General Hospital, Havre. He re-joined his unit in the Villers Bretonneux sector, on 28 Apr 1918.

The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser – 5 Oct 1918, p3, printed a letter written by Signaller Patrick Patterson to his mother, dated 29 & 30 May 1918:

"We are now in reserve. I have had a busy day of it, between doing my bit for King and country and constructing a suburban villa for myself and a mate. I didn't go "nap:" on the one they put us in last night. Four of us were in the one 'possy,' and the telephone as well. I don't like living in the same place as the signal office is in; it's not private enough. The 'eads' are coming in and out all day and night.

In the forward area the night is the busiest time, and it's only dark for five hours any night now. We have a very comfy little home. It's dug into a fairly high bank, is about seven feet wide, and we have some straw and a carpet on the floor. We have the wall lined with canvas to keep the dirt from falling down on us. The ground over here is full of moles, which burrow about at night and send a shower of fine dirt down on our faces. We have it roofed with iron, and some of the dirt that we dug out we put on top to prevent the shrapnel or pieces of shell from intruding. The rest of the dirt is heaped up in front to prevent flying pieces from coming in the door. One feels quite safe in here, and were a shell to fall on top of the bank it would not hurt us; at the worst it might knock some dirt down on our roof.

The bally hun is almost supernaturally quiet here now. Our artillery shells him like 'blazes' and he scarcely sends a shell back— just scatters a few about now and then. I go on duty at 6am but only to sit by the 'phone. The other poor beggars are out now on their nightly fatigues, carrying ammunition, bombs, etc to the front lines, or digging strong points, trenches etc; or, most disliked of all, putting up barbed wire in No Man's Land. Handling barbed wire in the dark is not a fancy job, and when you add the risk of being caught in machine gun fire it's still less inviting. That reminds me; Bill Collits [Pte William Collits – 2150, 53rd Btn, from Forbes] *got a machine gun bullet in his shoulder a few nights ago. It's nothing serious; its just what we call a 'tailor-made Blighty,' and to get one is the height of a soldier's ambition.*

Fritz always comes a cropper when he attacks the Aussies. They have told us here that he was coming for a cert. at such an hour. Time and again we have stood-to, waiting for him; but he has never turned up yet. If he does he will have an interesting time. While we are waiting we have a good time— very few casualties, except for trench fever; a fair number have gone to hospital with that lately. It is not serious. I am in charge of the Company's signallers this trip. It will be my turn out next time and if I get through the next few weeks I will have weathered the 1918 campaign. Signalling is a fairly safe job, except when there is a stunt on, and then every one is on the same level. It's 'over the top,' with the best of luck, from the C.O, to the 'dingbats,' or officer's orderlies, as they call themselves.

The Germans won't attack the 'Aussies' or fight at close quarters. One of our raiding parties one night killed over eighty of them, and never had a casualty themselves. There is no doubt the 'Aussies' can fight, and Fritz knows it, too.
With one of his letters Mrs Patterson receive two pansies plucked at Villers Bretonneux."

The 53rd Btn War Diary for the 4 Jul 1918 at the Front Line stated: … *"At 3.10am an advance on our Left, and Right was made by Australians, the 55th Battalion on our right carried out two raids and we received a heavy bombardment from the enemy in consequence, which caused several casualties."* Pte Patrick Patterson was killed in action on 4 Jul 1918 and was buried at Heilly Military Cemetery No 2, on 6 Jul 1918. His body was later exhumed and re-interred in the Ribemont Communal Cemetery Extension.

The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser – 5 Oct 1918, p3, also printed a letter written by Signaller P McDonald, written on 6 Jul 1918:

"No doubt you already know of your son poor Joe's death. Being a very intimate mate of Joe's, I think it is my duty to write to you. Joe was killed on July 4. He died about half an hour after being hit, and his end was a very peaceful one. His death was a great loss to the Battalion, as he was a great favorite with the Officers and N.C.O.S, and I could not have felt his loss any more if he had been my brother. We were always together. Previous to his death, Joe was made an acting-corporal over his signal section. I helped to bury poor Joe, and our RC Padre read the burial service over him. If I can be of any use to you in the future I will do all I can."

His mother Mrs Bridget Patterson received his war medals, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and his will stated that his brother George Ambrose Patterson, of Dilga, was the legatee of his estate.

On Armistice Day 11 November 1918, Bridget Patterson would have been remembering her eldest son, Patrick's sacrifice. However, she had one more tragedy to face. William, her youngest son aged 14 years, died that evening, as a result of injuries he sustained after being hit by a car at Wellington while celebrating Armistice Day.

Bridget had lost six of her eleven children. She lived until her 80th year, dying in 1947. Thomas and Bridget's headstone in the Baldry Cemetery carries the inscription:

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

Above: Thomas & Bridget Patterson with 8 of their children. Patrick is the eldest, back row.
Left: The tombstone of the Patterson family buried at Baldry cemetery.
Below: Baldry & Cumnock WW1 Honour Rolls.