



**Farrier Sergeant James DENNY**  
**1059 & 7 – A Squadron, New South Wales**  
**Mounted Rifles**

**Born:** 1875, Molong, NSW.

**Parents:** William & Elizabeth Denny

**Occupation:** Blacksmith

**District Connection:** Cumnock, Molong

**Enlistment Age:** 25yrs

**Embarkation:** 3 Nov 1899, Sydney, SS *Abereen*

**Fate:** RTA 16 Aug 1900, Sydney, SS *Persic*

**Honour Boards:** Molong Armed Forces  
Honour Roll, Molong, NSW.

**Medals:** Queen's South Africa Medal & 2 clasps  
(Paard & Drief)

### Biography

James Denny was born at Molong in 1875, the son of William and Elizabeth Denny, according to his marriage certificate. No birth record has been found for him, and his family history is very confusing. William Denny was transported to Australia in the 1830s, but there were a number of convicts with the name of William Denny and it is uncertain which one he was.

*The Sydney Morning Herald* – 3 Oct 1845, p2, Bathurst Circuit Court, has a report of Sheep Stealing, in which Mr George Smith, alias Green, ticket-of-leave, and William Denny, free by servitude, were arraigned for stealing a flock of sheep (around 880) from Mr Francis Lord, of Burrawong. They were found guilty and each sentenced to fifteen years' gaol. William Denny survived his fifteen years in gaol and married Elizabeth Graham at Orange in 1864. Elizabeth's father was Thomas Blake, who also came to Australia as a convict. Elizabeth had previously been married to William Graham, but he died in 1860. Some of the children born of Elizabeth and William Denny were William, Reuben, Henry, a female, and presumably, James. William Denny leased land at Mullion Creek and died on 29 April 1899.

James Denny's early life is unknown, but Mr Christian Miller made a speech at Cumnock in 1911 and stated that he had known James since his childhood. In 1898, James Denny was a member of the Molong Half-Company of Mounted Riflemen. The *Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 25 Jun 1898, p4, reports on a Military Social held in the Molong School of Arts in which *"At intervals during the evening Messrs. Garlick, Atkinson, Moss, Rubie, and Denny, contributed various songs and duets ..."*

*The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 28 Oct 1899, p7, published several articles about the send off of the volunteers for the Boer War which included:

- Molong farewelled the soldiers on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October at the School of Arts with a musical social.
- A social was held at Cumnock on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> October to say farewell to Corporal Owens, and privates C Miller and J Denny, and that *"Several speeches were made, and about forty couples indulged in the dance."*
- *"At about eight o'clock, Wednesday night, Bank Street [Molong] was practically blocked by people, who had come from all parts of the district to see the 'brave boys' off, and the railway station was thronged. Headed by the band, playing 'Soldiers of the Queen', the marched from the School of Arts, and at 8.30p..m. the train moved off amidst the heart cheers of their friends and comrades... The names of our 'Little Heroes' are – Corporal EP Owens [FP Owens], Corporal S Weeks, Bugler V Daly [Daley], Lance-Corporal MG Moss, Privates C Miller, C Gosper [FW Gosper], G Murray, J Denny, H Garlick, EV Silk; WC Quinn and LJ West (late Victorian Ranges), supernumeraries."*

All the Molong contingent of volunteers were medically examined in Sydney on Friday 27 Oct 1899 and pronounced fit to serve. They were quartered at the Royal Agricultural Grounds, Sydney.

The first contingent of NSW Mounted rifles sailed from Sydney on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1899 on SS *Aberdeen*, stopped briefly at Albany, WA, on 14<sup>th</sup> November, and arrived at Port Elizabeth on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. They were not permitted to land at Port Elizabeth and sailed onto Capetown, where they arrived on 6<sup>th</sup> December. During the voyage, James Denny was promoted to the position of farrier-sergeant, which earned him 9 shillings per day.

A letter from Corp S Weekes written on 5 Dec 1899 was published in the *Molong Argus* – 5 Jan 1900, p7, and stated: “Had a fair trip all through, plenty of tucker, but of a rough sort.

*Men had a bad time with arms after being vaccinated; I escaped luckily; Miller had a most terrible arm ... I got Jim Denny a shoe to-day for his jacket; he is as pleased as if he had a commission; he is as hard a case as ever. Kit inspections are very constant. All hands have made their will. First Aid Bandages were issued; these are carried in jacket pocket...”*

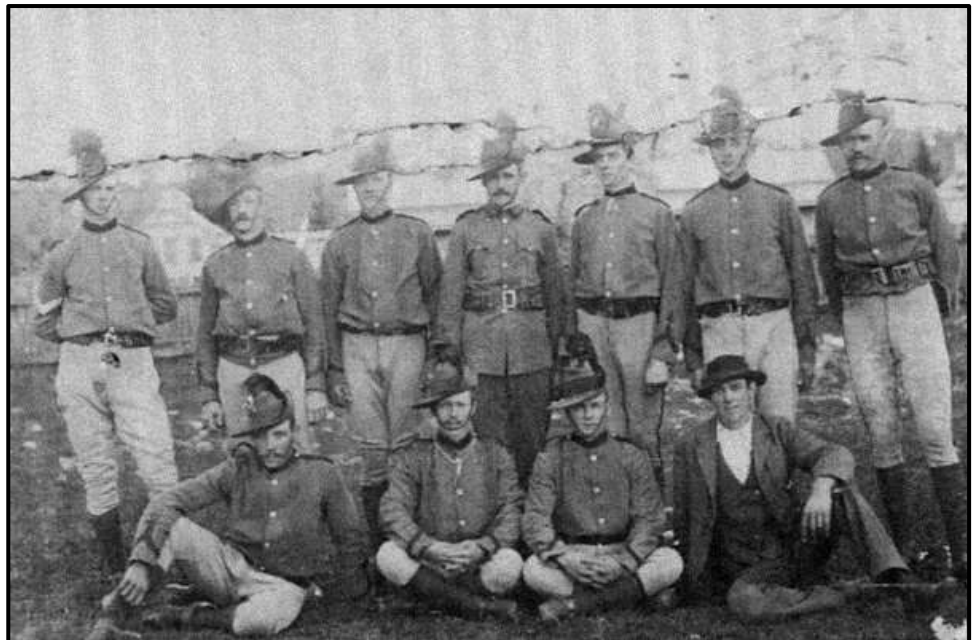
“The squadron of Mounted Rifles, commanded by Captain J M Antill, was, on arrival upon 6th December 1899, taken to Orange River, and during December and January did useful work in that neighbourhood, being sent to garrison Prieska for a time when there was good reason to believe many of the inhabitants in that district were disloyal. The squadron of infantry which was converted into mounted infantry was, during December and January, its period of foot service, working in the Enslin neighbourhood along with the other units which composed the Australian Regiment of Infantry. Along with these other units it was taken to Naauwpoort, Central Cape Colony, in the end of January 1900, and was there served out with horses. Under Captain Legge, this squadron did good service in General Clements' operations, both in the retirement from the positions round Colesberg, in the fighting round Arundel, in the advance from Arundel to Colesberg and Norvals Pont, and on the march through the Orange Free State.”

www.angloboerwar.com

In a letter from Corporal F Owens published in the *Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 3 Mar 1900, p3, stated: “*Farrier-Sergeant Denny is fast gaining experience, and bids fair to be able to talk horse as well as Sampie Moss. All Molong ‘savages’ wish to be remembered to the Express clique; and all friends interested in us...*”

In another letter from Shoeing-Smith Hubert Garlick published in the *Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 17 Mar 1900, p3, and dated 19<sup>th</sup> January: “... we had orders for a party of us to go to Prieaks, and to take next to nothing with us, as we were to be absent only a week. I was one of the first to be picked to go, as Captain Antill is in love with me and Denny – he is farrier sergeant, and I am shoeing smith... We were in De Arr seven days.. Sixty of us, 125 mounted infantry, and eight baggage waggons, which they call transports, started for Prieaka, and rode from six in the morning till twelve at night, when we pulled up at a dam of water kept full by a windmill. Here we had two dog biscuits, and as much water as we could drink. That was our dinner – in fact, it was dinner, tea, and supper...”

*The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* - 28 Apr 1900, p4,5: South Africa – News from our boys - Corporal S Weekes, of Molong Mounted Rifles, in a letter to relatives in Molong, from Ventar Valley, Orange Free States, 16 March 1900, wrote:



**Photo of the Molong Half-Squadron of Mounted Rifles Selected for Service in the Transvaal – Australian Town & Country Journal – 2 Dec 1899, p30. James Denny is sitting, 3<sup>rd</sup> from left.**

*“ We have achieved a glorious victory over the Orange Free States, and are now encamped two miles out of Bloemfontein, the capital. We had to fight our way through the Free States, driving the Boers before us. Our first real battle took place on Feb 11, and we have been fighting hard up to two days ago.... The NSW contingent is now attached to us, so we make a big show. A dead man over here is not thought much of. I saw 200 Boers buried in one grave. We had one man shot last Saturday. Poor fellow; he was only a boy, and was sitting behind a rock between Farrier-Sergt. Denny and Corporal Bugler Daley [Verdi Daley died of disease at Bloemfontein on 11 Jun 1900], when a bullet, a stray one, flew over Daley’s head and killed him [Private William Abraham from Bega, NSW] dead.”*

Farrier-sergeant James Denny was invalided home on the *SS Persic*, arriving at Sydney on 16 August 1900. The invalided soldiers were conveyed to the Victoria Barracks the following day. *The Australian Town Journal* – 25 Aug 1900, p42 published an article and photo of the returned soldiers in which it was stated that Farrier-Sergeant J Denny of the Mounted Rifles was suffering from rheumatism and bronchitis.

He was publicly welcomed back to Cumnock on 24 August by over 200 residents.

*The Molong Argus* – 31 Aug 1900, p4, reported on the evening and speeches.

*“... Sergt. Denny, amidst a round of applause, said he was deeply affected by the magnificent reception accorded him that evening. He was really glad to be amongst his friends again, though in a way he could not help feeling disappointed at the manner in which he and his comrades had returned. He assured them that they would all have liked to return having accomplished their mission, but this was not to be...”*

Henry Denny, brother of James, also enlisted in the Boer War. He served with the NSW Imperial Bushmen. He had property at Mullion Creek and died, aged 50yrs, in 1919.

James Denny married Annie Roberts on 7 January 1901 at her parents’ house at Narroogal, near Wellington. He set up as a blacksmith in Mr Nesbitt’s shop at Cumnock. Children were Thomas (stepson), born 1897; Nancy, born 1902; Pearle, born 1904; Gladys, born 1908; Norman, born 1913.

*The Molong Argus* – 7 Jun 1901, p2, reported that the Duke of Cornwall presented medals to the NSW troops who had served in South Africa at Government House Grounds, Sydney, on 1 Jun 1901. Farrier-Sergeant James Denny was included in the list of Molong soldiers to receive the Queen’s Medal, but was unable to attend the ceremony due a family bereavement.

*The Molong Argus* – 25 Sep 1903, p8, Cumnock Police Court: *“J Denny was ordered to pay 2s 6d a week towards the support of his mother, who is an inmate of the Gladysville Asylum.”* (Henry Denny was also ordered to pay maintenance of his mother, who was in the hospital for the insane, in January 1907).

James Denny helped establish the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows (MUIOOF), Loyal Pride of Cumnock Lodge. He placed his blacksmith business up for sale in 1907. *The Molong Argus* – 22 Dec 1911, p4, reported on a farewell given to James and Annie at Leary’s hall when they were presented with a purse of sovereigns, on behalf of the citizens of Cumnock. The couple were then reported as moving to Orange.

The Denny family moved to Manildra early in 1912, where James set up as a wheelwright, blacksmith and horseshoer. *The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 17 Feb 1912, p16 reported: *“A very contemptible act was perpetrated on Mr James Denny, our new blacksmith, a few nights ago, when some person unknown entered his shop and made a clean gash of 15 inches wide across his bellows. The police have the matter in hand, and it is to be hoped the offender will be caught and dealt with in a manner deserving of such despicable tactics. A subscription list to replace the damaged bellows was started by Mr P Hogan who quickly raised the necessary amount (£11), and the new bellows were wired away for the day after the incident occurred.”*

James Denny was an agent for JK Byrnes ploughs in February 1913. His son Norman died in Manildra on 28 Jan 1914. In May 1914 James Denny sold his blacksmithing business in Manildra to Mr James Scott, of Parkes. The family moved back to Cumnock around 1914.

James and Annie's son, Thomas Denny, enlisted in the AIF during WW1, on 20 Nov 1915. Private Thomas Denny – 5002, 17<sup>th</sup> Battalion, won the Distinguished Conduct Medal for gallantry while on the front line in France on 18 Sep 1918. He returned to Australia on 12 Jun 1919.

James Denny advertised a pony stallion, Little Bob, to do stud duty in the Cumnock district in August 1916. On 29 March 1917, James pleaded guilty to a charge of riotous behaviour at the Cumnock Police Court and was fined 15s and costs of courts. He was appointed a pound keeper by the Amaroo Shire Council in January 1918. James was also appointed ring keeper at the Cumnock Show in January 1921 and a trustee of the Cumnock Church of England cemetery in March 1921. His eldest daughter Nancy, who commenced training as a nurse in Young in 1920, was married to Harold Thompson at St Matthew's Church, Cumnock on 6 January 1925. At some stage during the next few years James and Annie parted, with Annie staying on in Cumnock and James moving to the Gunnedah district.

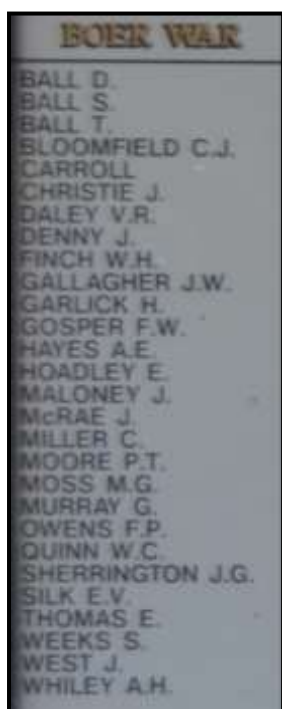
Annie Denny was a nurse and at various times ran a hospital in Cumnock. Local newspaper reports show that Annie was living in Cumnock in January 1926 and established a private hospital in Cumnock. She is listed in the 1930-1936 Electoral Rolls for Calare/Cumnock as living at Wyoming, Obley Street, Cumnock, with the occupation of 'nurse'. The Electoral Rolls also show that in 1937 Annie had moved to Forbes to work as a nurse, and by 1943 was living in Wellington. Annie Denny died at Wellington on 23 December 1953, aged 77yrs.

The 1930-1943 Electoral Rolls for Gwydir/Boggabri showed James Denny worked as a blacksmith at Dubbledah, Gunnedah. James Denny died at the District Hospital, Gunnedah on 20 Aug 1946. His death certificate states that he was 74yrs of age, late of Emerald Hill, a farm hand, and a war pensioner from the Boer War. He was buried in the Church of England Cemetery, Gunnedah, on 21 August 1946. His death certificate does not list his marriage nor his children.

**References:**

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 Australians in the Boer War, Oz-Boer Database Project - [http://members.pcug.org.au/~croe/ozb/oz\\_boer0.htm](http://members.pcug.org.au/~croe/ozb/oz_boer0.htm)  
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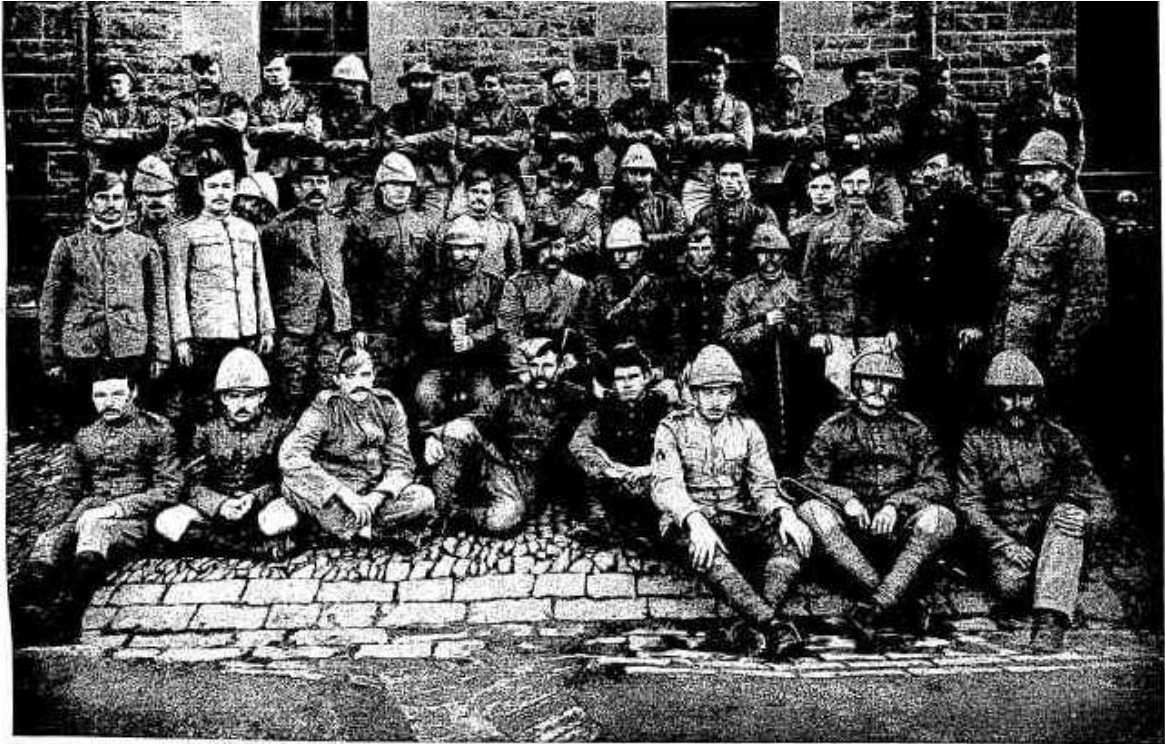


*Molong RSL Club Roll of Honour,  
22-24 Riddell Street, Molong*

&

*Cumnock War Memorial Gates,  
Obley Street, Cumnock.*





Home from the War.—N.S.W. Invalided Troops from South Africa, returned by the Steamer Parac.

Front Row: Private W. J. Stone, Lance-Corporal E. F. Clay, Private T. Knight, Private J. Ford, Private L. B. Higginbotham, Private A. Armstrong, Private G. Egan, Private D. J. Tom. Second Row: Lance-Corporal James, Private M. B. Mearns, Corporal Walter, Corporal Folliver, Private W. H. Martin, Sergeant M. G. O'Connell, Lieutenant R. J. H. A. Jenkins, Sergeant J. Denny, Sergeant H. A. Miles, Private E. H. Lamb, Private M. J. Ford, Private W. J. Ellis. Third Row: Private W. Butler, Private Granville, Private A. Horgan, Private S. A. Gordon, Private W. Beck, Private H. G. Bauer, Private W. F. Young. Back Row: Private L. P. Parry, Private E. Deussen, Private T. O. Williamson, Private W. H. Richardson, Private J. W. Wallis, Private J. Lewis, Lance-Corporal Graham, Private W. J. Brown, Private H. Tidy, Private R. Nixon, Private G. W. Sanderson, Private R. H. Barber, Corporal Hartz.

**Sergeant J Denny is listed above as being on the second row, but it is not clear where the second row is being counted from, so it is not able to state with any certainty which soldier is James Denny.**