Private John Wallace MURRAY
511 - 12th Light Horse Regiment
3379 & 4310 - 4th & 2nd Battalions

Born: 13 May 1892, registered Molong.

Next of Kin: Parents - William & Mary Murray, "Yarrangrove"

Occupation: Farmer

District Connection: Cumnock

Enlistment Date: 7 Sep 1915

Enlistment Age: 23 years

Embarkation: 20 Dec 1915 - Sydney, HMAT *A60 Aeneas*

Served: Egypt, Western Front

Fate: RTA 13 Feb 1919

Biography:

John (Jack) Wallace Murray was born on 13 May 1892 and registered at Molong. He was a son of William and Mary Ann Murray.

William Murray was born at Halkirk, Caithness, Scotland in 1835. His parents, Sage and Jane Murray, emigrated to Australia on the *Lady McNaughten*, arriving in Sydney on 4 Nov 1839 when William was 5 years old. His other siblings were: John, born 1814; Elizabeth, born 1818; Donald, born 1821; Adam, born 1823; Walter, born 1824; Robert, born 1827; Jane, born 1831; Janet, born 1836; and George, born 1839. The family first settled in the Manildra district, then taking up land near Gosling Creek, Orange, and later at 'The Meadows' on the Cargo Road. Sage Murray died in 1849, aged 56 years, and William helped his older brother Adam to work the 50 acre farm at Meadow Creek. In 1851 William joined the gold rush at various diggings at Ophir, Bendigo, Hill End and Turon. He later managed a cattle station on the Edwards River, near Deniliquin.

William bought 640 acres of land at Yarrangrove, near Cumnock, in 1873. His mother Jane died in Orange in 1875, aged 77 years. William married Mary Ann Connor at Orange in 1878. They had nine children – Jane Bruce 1879-1958; Robert Sage 1881-1941; Walter George 1883-1962; William Beach 1885-1970; James Gordon 1888-1975; Janet (Jessie) 1889-1977; John Wallace 1892-1978; Barbara 1895-1966; and Mary Beatrice 1896-1973.

As well as running a farm, William and Mary Ann built and ran a hotel at Yullundry. A builder by trade, William erected several Cumnock district schools. William transferred his land to his sons James Gordon and John (Jack) Wallace Murray in 1920. William Murray died aged 89 years on 24 Aug 1923 at Cumnock, and his wife Mary Ann died on 14 Aug 1935, and they are both buried in the Presbyterian portion of the Cumnock cemetery.

John Wallace Murray initially enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on 18 Feb 1915, and was assigned as 511 - 12th Light Horse Regiment (LHR). He was discharged as medically unfit on 8 Jun 1915. *The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* - 12 Jun 1915, p10, reported:

> *"Jack Murray, of Cumnock, who was to have left Sydney with with the 12th Light Horse this week, was unable to go owing to an attack of measles."*

John (Jack) Murray reenlisted in the AIF at Warwick Farm, Sydney, on 7 Sep 1915. Jack was medically examined at the Town Hall. He was single, his occupation a farmer at "Yarrangrove," and his parents William and Mary Murray were his next of kin. He was 5 feet 8 inches tall, had blue eyes, brown hair, a fresh complexion, and of the Presbyterian religious denomination.

Pte Jack Murray was first assigned as 3379 - 4th Btn, but prior to embarking overseas he was reassigned as 4310 - 2nd Btn. He embarked at Sydney on HMAT *A60 Aeneas* on 20 Dec 1915. He disembarked at Suez on 17 Jan 1916, a voyage of 26 days. Mumps were prevalent throughout the voyage, and on 20 Feb 1916, Pte Murray was admitted to hospital, suffering from the infectious disease. He rejoined his unit on 14 Mar 1916. .

As part of the 1st Division, the 2nd Btn was transferred to France in mid-March. Arriving in Marseilles, they were moved by train to northern France where it was initially sent to a quiet sector south of Armentières to acclimatise to the Western Front conditions.

When the 1st Division attacked shortly after midnight on 23 Jul 1916, it succeeded in capturing half of the village of Pozieres but failed to make progress in the neighbouring German trench system. After enduring a heavy German bombardment, far surpassing anything yet experienced by an Australian unit, the 1st Division was withdrawn on 27 July, having suffered 5,285 casualties, and was replaced by the Australian 2nd Division.


Pozieres, 1916.

Following the action by the 2nd Btn at Pozieres on 23rd, 24th & 25th July, the 2nd Btn diary reported that 3 Officers were killed, and 507 Other Ranks were killed, wounded or missing.

Molong Express & Western District Advertiser - 14 Oct 1916, p12, SOLDIERS STORIES:

> *"Pre. Jack Murray, of Cumnock, writing home from France on Aug. 3, says:- I have had four months in France, and they were months of changes, marches, and a time in the firing line— 33 days in all in the front lines, and about the same just behind in supports.*
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> *The first place where we were in the line was only a few miles off the Belgian Coast. We were 30 days there, and when we were relieved we had a rest for a few days, and then came down to the Somme section. We were over a week on the road - marched a good part of it too.*
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> *We attacked at Pozieres, and it was fair hell there. I only lasted three days. We arrived in our positions at 1 o'clock on the morning of the 20th* [July], *feeling very weary. Some of the boys were completely done. The distance was about 12 miles, and we were carrying a heavy load. The last four miles, about two miles of which were negotiated under heavy shell fire, we lost a few of our men from shrapnel, but none from gas. We have helmets for that, and there is practically no danger when they are worn.* [Not sure of what 'helmet' he was referring to, as the first WW1 gas mask to be used by the allies was not distributed to the front until December 1916]
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> *The last part of our march was over the ground whence the Germans had been driven from their positions. The sights and smells there were dreadful; thousand of both sides had fallen, and as yet we had not had time or opportunity to bury them, the shell fire being too heavy, and work of more importance to be done. The Huns in this part had fine dugouts— they never expected to be shifted— some of their dugout were 40ft deep. Gunfire itself would not have shifted them, and 'twas here that bombs, rifles and killing sticks came strongly into use— and good old English pluck.*
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> *They had machine guns galore, and here our men went down in thousands. Fine chaps they all seem here, whatever they may be elsewhere. When you are facing the foe and live relying on each other so much, it seems to bring every man to the one level- men and officers are brothers, and all would gladly hop over the parapet rather than stay behind in the trench under a heavy bombardment.*
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> *Even a bombardment has its grandeur and funny parts. Altho' the shells are knocking holes in your parapet, wounding, burying or killing someone, yet you will hear a joke cracked and a burst of laughter.*
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> *I was wounded about 2 pm on the 22nd, and was disgusted to think that I was brought away just in time to miss the charge that night. My battalion was amongst the first to go over, taking the first two lines. Then they were reinforced, and gained Pozieres, the place they started for; so it didn't matter about the loss. They are still holding on, tho' the Huns have made desperate attacks to oust them since."*

The 2nd Btn Unit Commander's diary for the 22 Jul 1916 stated: *"Patrols were sent out to reconnoitre the ground in front. No wire was found. Digging of communication trenches proceeded. 2 Other Ranks killed and 15 wounded."*

Pte Jack Murray received a gun shot wound to his right shoulder on 22nd July and was transferred at Rouen for England on 27 July and admitted to the Royal West Sussex Hospital, Chichester, the following day.

The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser - 28 Oct 1916, p10, reported:

> *"Ptes. Walter and Jack Murray, (brothers) who have been wounded in France, recently met in England while convalescing, after a separation of many months."*

Pte Jack Murray was admitted to the 1st Australian Dermatological Hospital (ADH), Bulford, with venereal disease on 12 Sep 1916 and treated over the next 78 days. He returned to France on on 13 Jan 1916 and rejoined the 2nd Btn on 14 Jan 1917.

In early 1917 the German Army withdrew to the formidable defences of the Hindenburg Line. The 2nd Battalion advanced towards these defences in April 1917. The battalion spent much of the rest of 1917 fighting in increasingly horrendous conditions around Ypres.

Pte Murray sustained a crushed finger whilst in the performance of military duty on 6 Apr 1917 and was treated in England at Southwark Military Hospital. He was also treated for Urethritis at the 1st ADH during June and discharged on 21 Jun 1917. He rejoined the 2nd Btn in France on 30 Jul 1917.

On 24 Sep 1917 Pte Jack Murray was promoted to Lance Corporal. However, on 27 Nov 1917, he was charged with being absent without leave from 2130 on 24 Nov to 2100 on 25 Nov 1917, and deprived of his stripe to revert to Private and forfeited 2 days pay.

Pte Murray was hospitalised as “sick” (not stated what cause but influenza was rampant among the troops at this time) in France from 20 Feb - 21 Feb 1918.

The 2nd battalion subsequently participated in the Allies' own offensive, launched to the east of Amiens on 8 August 1918. This advance by British and Empire troops was the greatest success in a single day on the Western Front.

Pte Murray returned to Australia aboard HMAT Suffolk and disembarked on 6 Jun 1919. He was discharged from the AIF on 29 Jul 1919 and award the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The Leader, Orange - 8 Aug 1919, p8, reported that on Monday 5 Aug 1919, *“that the people of Cumnock gave a welcome home to a number of recently returned soldiers, including Pte J. Murray. They were each presented with a gold medal, suitably inscribed. The welcome took the form of a supper at the School of Arts and a dance in Leary’s Hall.”*

Jack worked on Yarrangrove in partnership with his brother, James, for about a year after his return, but then sold his share to James, and moved to Sydney. Jack married Kathleen Windred in 1920 at Canterbury. They had three sons: Robert and twins, John and William.

According to the Australian Electoral Rolls, Jack and Kathleen lived at Lithgow between 1930-1934, where Jack worked as a carpenter. In 1935 they were living at Windeyer, an old gold mining town, where Jack’s occupation was noted as a carpenter. By 1937 they had moved to the Warringah district of Sydney.

N318129 Pte John Wallace Murray served in the Australian Army during WW2, enlisting on 27 Mar 1942 and was discharged on 30 Sep 1945. His posting at discharge was 7 Battalion Volunteer Defence Corps. His son NX106021 Driver William Murray, 79 Transport Platoon, also served in the Army in WW2.

John and Kathleen were living at Narrabean in 1972. Kathleen Murray died at Sutherland on 18 July 1976, aged 83 years. John Wallace Murray died, aged 86 years, on 20 April 1978. They were both interred at Woronora Crematorium, Sutherland.

Below & right:
Cumnock Memorial Gates, & WW1 Honour plaque.