

Driver Robert Edward BRUTON
2710 – 13th Infantry Battalion & 39th Battery,
10th Field Artillery Brigade.

WW2 – Sergeant, 6 Australian Detention Barracks,
Citizen Military Forces.

Born: 9 Jun 1899, Cumnock, NSW.

Parents: Abel and Mary Bruton

Occupation: Labourer

District Connection: Cumnock

Enlistment Date: 30 Jun 1915

Enlistment Age: 16yrs (stated 18yrs)

Embarkation: 9 Aug 1915, Sydney, HMAT *Runic A54*

Served: Gallipoli, Egypt, France

Fate: RTA 21 May 1919



Biography:

Robert Edward Bruton was born in Cumnock on 9 Jun 1899, the first child of Abel and Mary (nee Tierney) Bruton.

The first of the Bruton family to settle in Cumnock was Robert William Bruton, who was born in Norfolk, England in 1833. He immigrated to Australia at 21yrs of age on the *Rose of Sharon*, arriving in Sydney on 16 Apr 1855. His occupation was listed as a farm labourer. He married Susanna Munton at Brisbane Water (near Gosford), in 1867. They had 6 sons and 2 daughters. They moved to Bathurst around 1874 and to Cumnock around 1881. Robert Bruton died at Cumnock on 21 Feb 1886, aged 52yrs. Susannah lived to be 85yrs of age, but died tragically at Avondale, Cumnock, on 7 Apr 1929. (*Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 13 Apr 1929, p13.) She had been sitting in a chair in front of the kitchen fire and a spark apparently caught her dress alight and she was burnt and died.

Abel Bruton was born at Dora Green near Newcastle, in 1869. He moved with his parents and siblings to Cumnock around 1881. He rented 800 acres of land at Catombal, in the parish of Gordon late 1892 and another 200 acres of land at Westgate, Loombah in 1895. He and his brother Joseph farmed wheat and grazed sheep at Loombah. Local news items reported that Abel won many wheat competitions around local shows over a number of years.

Abel's wife Mary died, aged 28yrs, following childbirth in Sep 1900 at her residence at Loombah, Cumnock. The child, Mary Catherine Bruton, survived. Robert Edward Bruton was just 2 yrs old. Abel Bruton remarried in 1908 to Hannah Lavina Sloane, and they had five children. Abel was a keen member of the Cumnock Jockey Club in the early 1900s. In July 1906 he bought the Beehive Store in Cumnock from AJ Finch and sons and sold his Westgate Farm, Loombah to Mr G Bruce. Abel Bruton sold the Beehive Store to Mr Norman Lentz in August 1908 and then took up share farming in the district. He also ran a bakery business in Cumnock, which he sold to Mr H Connelly in April 1910. He lived for some time at Rosehill Farm, which was eventually taken over by his brother Joseph.

Robert Edward Bruton became known as Edward or Ted and went to school at Cumnock Public School. He is listed as E Bruton on the Cumnock and Baldry Honor Boards.

Robert Bruton enlisted in the AIF on 30 Jun 1916 at Liverpool with fellow school mates, Walter Murray, Percy Reilly and Daniel Murphy. He stated his age as 18yrs and one month, but was actually just 16 yrs and his occupation was a labourer. He was 5 feet 7 inches tall, had a fair complexion, grey hair and dark hair and was of the Roman Catholic religious denomination.

Private Bruton returned to Cumnock for furlough in September 1915 and embarked from Sydney on *HMAT Runic A54* on 9 Aug 1915.

The records of Pte Bruton's Gallipoli service are not clear from his war dossier, but it appears he saw little service on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Soon after arrival in Egypt, Robert was struck down with Dysentery on 30 Aug 1915 and treated at Heliopolis, Cairo. He joined his Battalion on 23 Oct 1915 at Mudros, and was hospitalised again at Mudros on 25 Oct. The *Molong Argus* – 7 Jan 1916, p4, reported:

"Writing to his uncle, Mr W Bruton, Private R Bruton stated that he was in hospital at Lemnos, suffering from mumps, but was disappointed to have to go into hospital again, as his old mates had gone on to the Dardenelles, leaving him behind. However, he hoped to rejoin them in a few weeks. His letter (dated November 16th), concluded with best wishes to his friends, and Christmas greetings."

Pte Bruton actually rejoined the 13th Btn at Gallipoli on 17 Nov 1915. The battalion stayed in Gallipoli until the evacuation of all troops in December 1915. He disembarked at Alexandria from Mudros on 3 Jan 1916. While in Egypt the AIF was expanded and reorganised. The 13th Btn was split and on 13 Mar 1916, Pte Bruton was transferred as a Gunner to the 10th Field Artillery Brigade at Tel el Kebir. On 1 Jun 1916 he became a Driver with the 39th Battery, 10th Field Artillery Brigade.

As part of the British Expeditionary Force, he embarked at Alexandria on 5 Jun 1916, and disembarked at Marseilles on 13 Jun 1916. The *Molong Argus* – 29 Sep 1916, p4, stated that Pte RE Bruton wrote to his father on 27 Jul 1916 and mentioned seeing Signaller Sgt D White a few days previously.

The 10th Field Artillery Brigade saw action at Pozieres, the Retreat to the Hindenburg Line, Bullecourt, Messines, Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Passchendaele, Villers Bretonneux, Hamel, Amiens, Albert and the Hindenburg Line.

On 7 Nov 1917 Pte Bruton faced a Field General Court Martial, charged with "When on active service, disobeying a lawful command given by his superior officer". The segeant who charged Pte Bruton stated at the Court Martial that:

"On the 27th Oct, about 6pm, Driver Bruton was coming to these Stagger Lines with the water cart & 2 horses, & was stuck [bogged] on the road, about 300 yards from the lines. He reported same to Battery 42 & 2 horses were sent down to help him out. Considerable time elapsed before the water cart was found & Driver Bruton had unharnessed his horses & put them on the Lines. This was reported to me as Orderly Sergt about 7pm. I ordered Driver Bruton to harness his horses again & bring the water cart up. This he refused to do." Pte Bruton acknowledged that he refused to take his horses out again that night and was found guilty and sentenced to 90 days Field Punishment No 2.

[Field punishment could be awarded by a court martial or a commanding officer for any offence committed on active service. There were two categories field punishment. Field punishment No. 1 consisted of heavy labouring duties, possibly being restrained in handcuffs or fetters, and being tied to a post or wheel. Field punishment No. 2 differed, in that the offender was not liable to be attached to a fixed object. https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/field_punishment/]

Pte Bruton received gunshot wounds to his arms in France on 30 Jun 1918 and spent time in the No. 5 General Hospital at Rouen, before being transferred to Graylingwell War Hospital, Chichester, England for treatment. He returned to France on 2 Oct, rejoining his unit on 8 Oct 1918.

Pte Bruton embarked from England on *SS Cluny Castle*, on 25 Mar 1919 and disembarked in Australia on 21 May 1919. He was discharged on 15 Jul 1919. He was awarded the 1914-15 Star Medal, the British War Medal 1914-1920, and the Victory Medal.

The Molong Argus – 8 Aug 1919, p19, reported Cumnock's welcome home to returned soldiers:

"On Monday evening last the following returned soldiers were welcomed home to Cumnock, namely- Private TA Denny, DCM; Corporal JG Murray; Trooper L Stark; Driver RE Bruton; Privates E Taylor and JW Murray. The welcome took the form of a reception and presentation of medals at Leary's Hall, which was beautifully decorated for the occasion. As the warriors entered the hall the audience sang 'Home, Sweet Home,' followed by the National Anthem. They later had gold medals pinned to their breasts by some Cumnock ladies. Trooper L Stark briefly responded on behalf of the returned men..."

Robert Edward Bruton became a member of the Cumnock branch of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA) and played football for Cumnock during 1920. He married Isabel Theresa Small, daughter of John Frederick and Elizabeth Small, 'Rosehill', Cumnock on 25 Oct 1920 at

St Dympnas Church, Cumnock. They subsequently had nine children. They lived in Cumnock where Robert worked as a labourer for many years until moving to Orange to reside in the early 1940s.

Abel Bruton died on 13 Apr 1932 aged 62yrs, at Cumnock, and was buried in the RC portion of the Cumnock cemetery.

Robert Edward Bruton also enlisted on 30 Oct 1940 in the Australian Army at the Sydney Cricket Ground. He stated his age was 43yrs and that he was born in 1897, but the NSW Birth Index state he was born in 1899 and he was actually 41 years. His occupation was listed as a road foreman and Isabel was noted as his next of kin. He served in the CMF until 3 Jan 1946, which included 1309 days active service in Australia. His last unit was with the 6 Australian Detention Barracks, Orange, which he transferred to on 7 Dec 1942.

Isabel Bruton died at Orange on 23 Mar 1957, and Robert Edward Bruton died at Lourdes House, Dubbo on 12 Feb 1973, aged 73 yrs.

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Robert Edward & Isabel Theresa Bruton