

The war service of Ivo Mack and John Thomas Eather

These brothers joined the AIF at Rutherford on 16th October 1916. Ivo was the sixth child and John (Jack) was the tenth and youngest child of John William and Harriet (Clark). Ivo had tried to enlist earlier but had been rejected, this time both were accepted and had consecutive army numbers.. Their father John had died in 1915 so Harriet had to watch two of her sons march off to war, Ivo 33 and 5 feet 8 and Jack 24 was 6 feet 1 inch. They embarked on the MV "Suevic" on 11-11-16 and arrived at Devonport via Durban on 30-01-17 and proceeded to Windmill Hill camp Perham Downs. Ivo recalled in later years the bitter cold and the review by the King (George V) mounted on what looked like a half draught horse, (a small man on a big horse). Jack had a bout in hospital on arrival and then they had training before embarking for France to reinforce the 3rd division at Rouelles they were moved to the 35th battalion in August '17.. On 7th November Ivo was wounded in hand, neck and Ear by shrapnel and went back to England returning to France in March '18. While in England he inspected some pigeon lofts and wrote to his brother Reg reporting on some outstanding birds as there were pigeon lofts at both "Meerea" Bulga and at "Henriendi" Baan Baa.

Jack meanwhile spent some time in a machine gun battalion before transferring to the 35th battalion. Jack had 14 days leave in Paris in January 1918. Jack was wounded at Villiers Brettoneaux on 4th or 5th April 1918 with bullet penetration to left lung and facial injury. Ivo was then wounded a second time at Villiers Brettoneaux when the neck of the femur was broken and he was 48 hours in the field before being moved first to Abbeville then to Fulham military hospital in Hammersmith. Ivo recalled the Germans were in massed formation with their officers behind them with whips while the Australians were in open formation and eventually the German line broke, a decisive battle in that terrible war. Jack was wounded also in this same battle with a bullet through the left lung and a facial wound. There is a photo of both of them in the same ward in Fulham. Ivo was transferred to Weymouth for return to Australia in July 1918, he arrived in Australia via "Arrawa" on 17-11-1918, but because of his injuries was not discharged from the army till July 1921. The nerve was severed in the injured leg and that leg was shorter than the other so had to wear a special boot for the rest of his life. Medical knowledge has advanced so much now and it is easy to replace the neck of the femur and the joint which would have made such a difference to his life.

Jack joined Ivo at Fulham hospital and was repatriated to Australia from Weymouth in July 1918 being discharged from the army on 18th November 1918.

35th battalion records show it was formed in the Newcastle area and took part in operations at Ypres, Messines. Passchendale then at Villiers Brettoneaux there were 70% casualties on 4th April 1918 when Jack and Ivo were wounded.