

HORNER, Ernest George – killed in action – 24 April 1918 – aged 30

Ernest George Horner was born in Chard in 1888. His parents were George Henry Horner (born 1858 in Devon) and Mary Ann (nee Summers born in 1865 in Chard).

In 1891 father George was an agricultural labourer and living with his wife Mary and sons, Clifford, aged 5 and Ernest aged 3, at Knightshayne Cottage, Yarcombe.

In 1901 Ernest, aged 13, was a cow boy and living with the Loveridge family at Panshayne, Yarcombe.

In 1911 Ernest, aged 23, was an estate carter living with Charles Denslow (Groom, Coachman) and his family at Linnington, Wambrook.

His parents and sister Gladys Edith 15 (who became the wife of William Braddick of Tolcis) and their niece Alice May Summers, aged 2 were living at Sunnyside Cottage, Furley. George was a gamekeeper.

On 27 February 1912, aged 24, Ernest set off for a new life in Australia. He left London on the P&O ship *Narrung* bound for Sydney.

In 1914 he married Margaret Reid, a nurse living in Australia but originally from Artafallie, Inverness, Scotland. She emigrated, aged 24, on 1 August 1913 on the Orient ship *Orvieto*.

They lived at 9 Palm Place, Hackney, Adelaide. They had one son in 1914, George William Horner.

On 27 December 1915, Ernest enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (reg No 5121) in the 10th Battalion, Australian Infantry who recruited from Southern Australia from August 1914.

The 10th served in Gallipoli from April to December 1915, and were then transferred to the Western Front in France in March 1916. They were in the Battle of Pozieres, Ypres, and the Somme, returning in 1917 to take part in the Third Battle of Ypres (Passendale). In March 1918, they took part in the defensive operations during the German spring offensive.

His Australian military records show (shown separately from this file) in great detail that he left Australia for England on 9 August 1916 and then went to France. He was in hospital on 22 April 1917, had treatment for a sprained ankle, went on leave to the UK on 20 September 1917 and on his return was promoted to Lance Corporal on 1 December 1917. He went to Brigade school for a month in February 1918. The Australian record even includes a list of the kit he was issued with.

Lance Corporal Ernest George Horner was killed on 24 April 1918 and is buried at Meteren Military cemetery, south-west of Ypres (now called Leper), Belgium and his name also appears on the Australian War Memorial – panel 59.

His parents, George and Mary Horner are recorded on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website, as well as his wife, Margaret Horner of Artafallie, Inverness, Scotland.

His will left everything to his wife Margaret. On 23 October 1918, she wrote to the Officer in Charge at the Records Department in Melbourne asking if he could give her any information as to how Ernest died. The Australian Red Cross Society made an enquiry and his military record has the written reports.

Lieu King reported that Ernest George Horner was killed in an attack at Meteren which started about midnight. He was killed about 100/150 yards from the 'hop off mark'. He saw Ernest die but as he was hit himself a short time afterwards, didn't know what happened to the body.

Captain W McDonald reported that he knew him fairly well in the Battalion and he was generally a rather quiet fellow. He was married and had a photo of his little kiddie and he was indeed fond of this photo.

Pte J R Buttrick was with Ernest on the Lewis Gun Team and reported that he was killed outright – shot through the head about 70 yards from enemy lines. They had to fall back and leave his body. Buttrick says 'he was a married man and a fine chap'

The Australian Government have the most extensive records on their servicemen which are all easily accessible on the web. There and in the Membury file is a photo of Ernest and records of his comrades' letters.