

Published 8 August 2017

Charles Leslie Wickham

Charles Leslie Wickham was born in Milltown in western Victoria, in 1890, to David and Annie Wickham (nee Thomas). David and Annie had six children in different towns in rural Victoria, including Myrtle who was born in Wandong in 1906. They were still there in 1911 when David was carrying out fencing work in the district.

By 1914 the family had moved to Launching Place, with the Electoral Roll listing David as a farmer and Charles as a labourer. David died in East Melbourne in late September 1916.

During 1916 Charles moved around country NSW for he married Agatha McGlynn in Wagga Wagga, then he was working in Tumbarumba as a sleeper cutter. He enlisted in the AIF at Coonabarabran on February 10, 1916 and took the oath at Bathurst 18 days later. His brother Francis Rayburn Wickham had enlisted in Melbourne on February 1, 1916.

Charles was allocated first to L Company, 45th Battalion, then in April to the 13th Reinforcements, 53rd Battalion and finally in July to 5th Reinforcements, 53rd Battalion, as private 2781 and after training embarked on October 7, 1916 in Sydney on board HMAT Ceramic, bound for Plymouth, England.

After undertaking further training at Hurdcott Camp on the Salisbury Plains, Charles left on February 24, 1917 for the Western Front to join his battalion in the Somme Valley. On March 24, Charles was transferred to 19th Battalion. He was probably wounded during a failed counter attack by a larger German force in April 1917.

With severe shell wounds to both legs, Charles died while being moved from the line to the 45th Casualty Clearing Station on April 15, 1917. He was buried in the Achiet-le-Grand Communal Cemetery Extension, Arras, France.

Charles was awarded the British War Medal, Victory Medal and 1914/15 Star. As well as these medals his wife received in the early 1920s Charles' personal effects, a photograph of his grave, a memorial scroll and plaque. Agatha received a war widow's pension from June 1919.

His name is recorded on the Kilmore War Memorial and the Kilmore Shire Roll of Honour at the Memorial Hall.

Image of Hurdcott Camp 1916

