

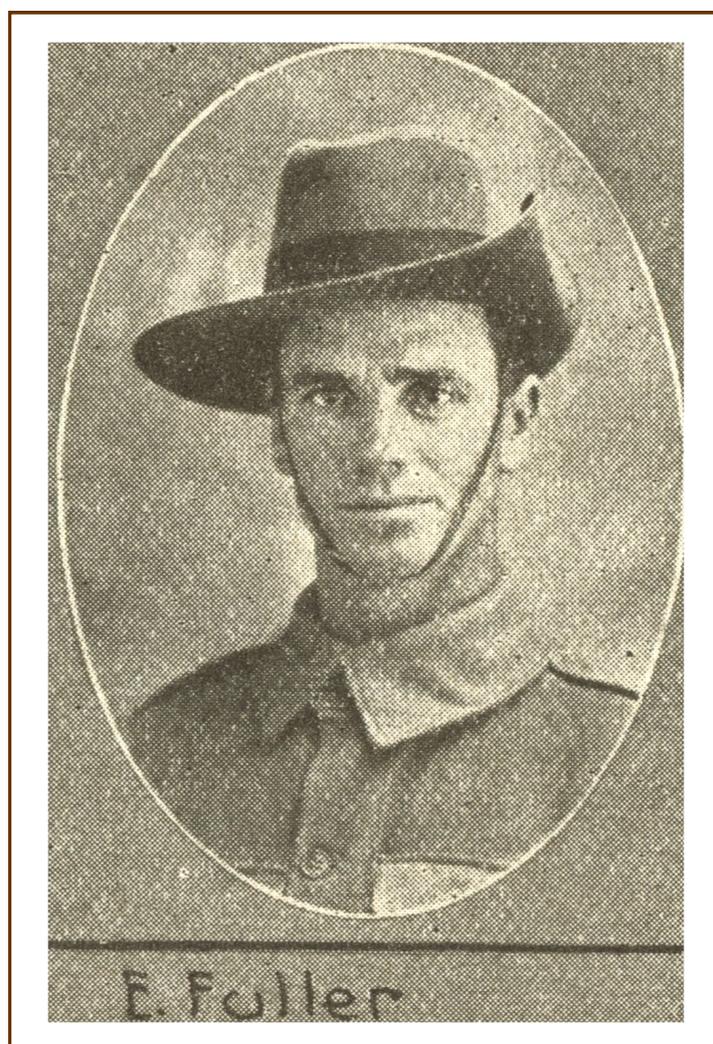
Stories from the Honour Boards

Stories of those who served and are remembered on the Honour Boards in the Merrington Anzac Memorial Peace Chapel at Saint Andrew's Uniting Church

Booklet Number 160

ERNEST FULLER

1884 - 1960



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Corner Ann and Creek Streets
Brisbane QLD 4000
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Sergeant Ernest Fuller MM and Bar

Ernest Fuller was born near Mudgee, NSW in 1884 and having worked as a mechanic and driver, was placed in the mechanical transport area of the Australian Army Service Corps (AASC) when he enlisted in the 1st AIF in September 1914.

He served in Belgium and France and had the distinction of being formally recognised for bravery twice – receiving the Military Medal for actions in February 1916, and a Bar to his Military Medal for actions in October 1917.

After the war Ernest worked for the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade (QATB) in Brisbane, and passed away in 1960, aged 75.

Early life

Born in Dungaree near Mudgee on 6 November 1884, Ernest was the youngest of six children of Henry Fuller, a fettler and Mary Jane née Ralph. Henry originated from Hartley and Jane from Kelso, and they had married in 1875 in Gulgong.

Several members of the family were stricken during an influenza epidemic in November 1891. Henry was apparently recovering when Jane fell ill, and Henry ‘exposed himself too much attending to her, and suffered a relapse’. Both he and Jane and one of their sons subsequently died. It was noted that ‘Fuller’s home was a happy one, and Mrs Fuller had established a Sunday school class, where she taught her own and her neighbours’ children’.

The circumstances of the children in the following years are unknown. Nor do available records show when Ernest came to Queensland.

We do know that he had done a short apprenticeship in garage work, and that in 1910 or 1911 he joined the QATB as a bearer.

He left the Brisbane QATB in June 1913, and a newspaper report covered a social evening to farewell Ernest at the QATB building in Ann Street.

He was presented with 'a handsome Gladstone bag, suitably inscribed, as a token of the high esteem in which he is held by them' and wished every success in the future.

Interestingly, the report noted that bearer AF Pilcher proved an efficient MC, and that the musical program included items by bearer AE Beech and bearer AF Pilcher. Algernon Fittall Pilcher is one of four brothers covered in booklet no.24, and Albert Edmund Beech is the subject of booklet no.110. Other members of the QATB who enlisted and are on the Saint Andrew's Honour Boards include Edward Clark (booklet no.157) and Ernest Sydney Pilcher (also booklet no.24).

Enlistment

Ernest enlisted in the 1st AIF in Brisbane on 25 September 1914. He gave his occupation as motor driver, and his religion as Presbyterian. At this point he was single and his next-of-kin was listed as one of his brothers, AE Fuller of Hornsby, NSW. Ernest stood 173cms tall, weighed 61kg and had brown eyes and hair and a dark complexion.

Given his background, it is no surprise that Ernest was placed with 301st (Mechanical Transport), 8th Company, AASC.

In November Ernest was based in Melbourne with the 8th Company, and married Brisbane-born Mary Grace McKinnell there on 24 November 1914, with Presbyterian rites. The couple had met in Brisbane - Grace was a typiste residing in Gregory Terrace, Brisbane and she and her widowed mother were members of the congregation at Saint Andrew's Church (on the corner of Ann and Creek Streets in Brisbane).

Early war service

Ernest embarked on the HMAT *Ceramic* A40 in Melbourne on 22 December 1914. The AASC 8th and 9th companies went to England, separated from the rest of the AIF, and in England were re-equipped with Peerless 3 ton and Daimler 30cwt lorries. They were then despatched to France in July 1915 for duty in support of British forces, with Ernest being in what was named 17 Divisional Ammunition Sub-Park.



It was in this period that he was recommended for the Military Medal. Ernest, by now a Corporal, was on duty at Bully Grenay north of Arras, when on the night of 21 February 1916 he drove 'his lorry up to within 250 yards of the enemy trenches under heavy fire with material urgently required for an observation post on an extremely rough and dangerous track during heavy snow and without lights'.

Formal advice of the award of the Military Medal was sent to Ernest's brother in April 1917, and this caused a reaction from Grace.

She wrote to the records section 'when our marriage took place, I understood that the name of his next of kin had been altered before he left Melbourne', and politely asked that this now be rectified. She may not have been impressed with the reply asking to sight the marriage certificate, but she duly sent the certificate with a stamped return address envelope.



Colour Patch:

2nd Australian Divisional Ammunition Sub-Park AIF

Further war service

The Australian 1st and 2nd Divisions arrived in France from Egypt in March 1916, and on joining up with them the transport companies were again reconfigured, with Ernest allocated to what was named the 2nd Australian Ammunition Sub-Park. He was promoted to Lance Sergeant on 31 March 1916, and then to Sergeant on 11 August 1916.

Although an organisational distinction was made between supply columns and ammunition sub-parks, and each did focus on transporting their priority items, the AASC history notes that they also hauled a wide range of other materials as required such as 'lumber, road metal, ordnance and postal cargo, petrol, quicklime, rails and medical comforts'. On occasion, they were also involved with mass medical evacuations and incidentally filling in as medical assistants at dressing stations.

On the afternoon of 28 October 1917, while carrying road metal to Gordon Road, east of Ypres, Ernest's actions earned him a Bar to his Military Medal. The recommendation said that while the lorry was being backed into position, it 'became ditched, through the side of the road giving way, and at the same time came under heavy shell fire from the enemy.

The shelling forced the unloading party to take cover. Showing a total disregard for their personal safety, the abovementioned Sergeant and Drivers set to with shovels and unloaded their lorry and got then got it out of the ditch to a place of safety. Whilst this was being done, their position...was being subjected to heavy shell fire by the enemy'.

This time the records section sent the formal advice of his award to Grace.



An Australian lorry damaged by shellfire near Ypres in 1917

Further re-organisations in March 1918 saw Ernest placed with the 4th Motor Transport Company. On 11 July 1918 he transferred to the 12th Field Ambulance, and late in August 1918 travelled to Administrative Headquarters, London for transport home.

He reported aboard the HT *Runic* A54 for submarine guard duty on 23 September 1918, and back in Australia was formally discharged on 27 January 1919.

Post war

Available records don't reveal exactly when Ernest re-joined the QATB, but it was probably in the early 1920s. In the 1919 electoral roll he and Grace were living in Coorparoo and his occupation given as mechanic, but then in the 1925 roll and through the rest of the 1920s and the 1930s his occupation was listed as 'motor driver' - which was probably employment with the QATB. Newspaper reports in 1934 and 1944 describe his evidence in court in shooting and assault cases where he had come onto the scene as an ambulance-bearer.



A motor ambulance carrying a two wheeled covered stretcher. c1920

Certainly the electoral rolls for the 1940s and 1950s describe Ernest as an ambulance officer and living with Grace at 111 Victoria Street, Spring Hill, Brisbane.

Ernest died on 21 January 1960, aged 75 at the Greenslopes General Repatriation Hospital, and was cremated at Mt Thompson with Presbyterian rites. Grace and two daughters - Elva Agnes Grace Maguire and Enid Frances Charlton - survived him.



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Buderim

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Lest we forget