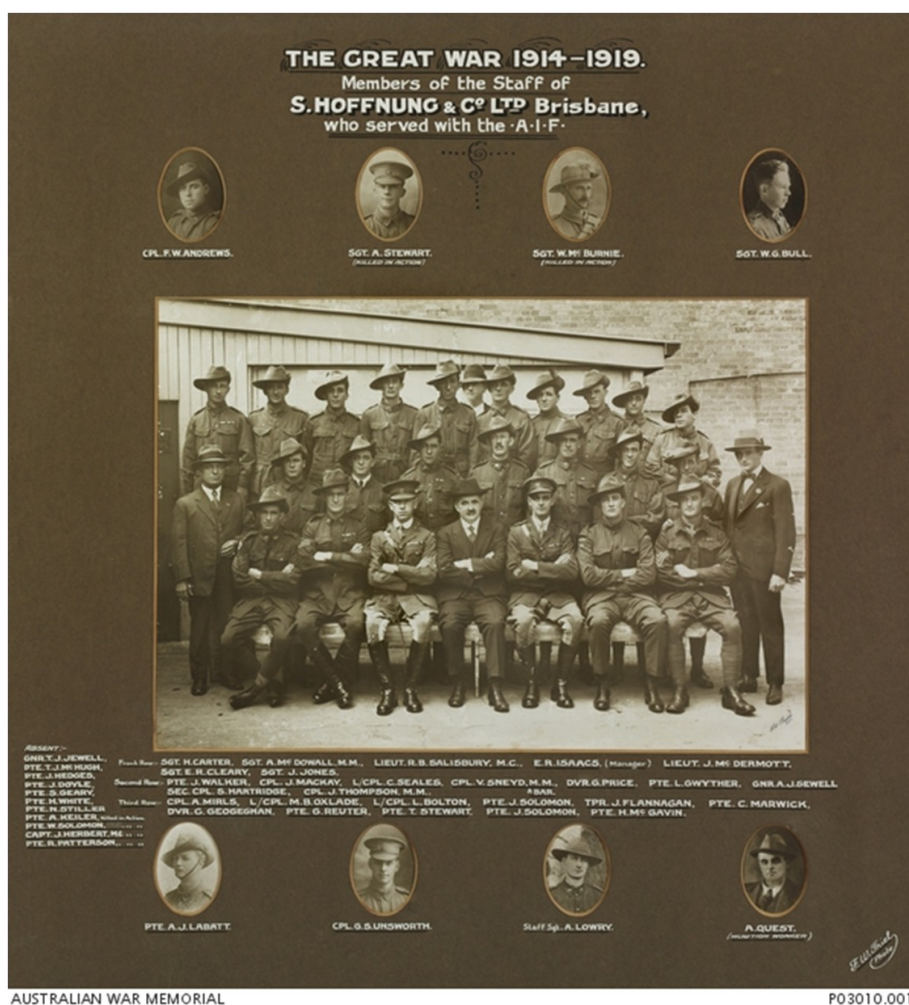


Stories from the Honour Boards

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 33

STEWART BROTHERS **Thomas Lodwick Stewart** **1891 - 1944** **Arthur Oswald Stewart** **1893 - 1916**



This booklet remains the property of Saint Andrew's Uniting Church.
Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.

Front cover:

The staff of S Hoffnung & Co Ltd who served with the AIF in World War 1.

Tom and Arthur Stewart were employees in this firm.

Private T Stewart is in the back row, third from right.

The photograph of Sergeant A Stewart is inset at the top of the memorial, second from left.

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Corner Ann and Creek Streets
Brisbane QLD 4000
2015

The Stewart Family

The family of Thomas and Nellie Stewart - two boys and two girls, lived at Fairy-Knowe, Roslyn Street, East Brisbane. Their two sons enlisted in 1915 for service in the Great War. One was killed in action; the other came back after spending a long time in German prisons. Mr and Mrs Stewart were members of Wharf Street Congregational Church. Mrs Stewart was President and her elder daughter Gwenda an active member of the Queensland Women's Electoral League. Their younger daughter Olwen married a Melbourne doctor in Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Brisbane in 1929. The stories of Tom and Arthur Stewart, two young soldiers who served King and country on the battlefields of Gallipoli and France, illustrate once again the impact of war on their own lives and the lives of their loved ones at home.

Private Tom Stewart

Thomas Lodwick Stewart was born in Brisbane on 11 December 1891, elder son of Thomas Stewart and Mary Ellen (née Thomas). Tom worked as a salesman at S Hoffnung & Co. before enlisting in Brisbane to serve overseas in the Australian Imperial Force on 30 December 1915. A single man, aged 24 years, he was allotted to 25th Infantry Battalion with service number 5408. After training at Enoggera, Private Stewart sailed on HMAT *Itonus* from Brisbane on 8 August 1916, arriving at Plymouth, England on 18 October.

More training took place in England and Tom Stewart's unit proceeded from Folkstone to France per SS *Victoria* in December 1916. The 25th Battalion fought as part of the 2nd Division and was engaged in attacks in the Somme Valley, floundering in the mud. In March, it became evident that the Germans were retiring westwards towards Cambrai and the Hindenburg Line.

The Allies were keen to take advantage by pursuing them, capturing small villages along the way. Bean's account describes the circumstances: "A number of fortified villages still lay between 5th Army and that line, but Gough¹ visiting the front on the 19th (March) was dissatisfied with progress. He was intensely and rightly eager that his army should reach the Hindenburg Line in time to help the 3rd Army's great offensive in April. Accordingly that night Gellibrand² tried to capture one of the next villages, Noreuil, by surrounding it.

"The attempt made in the drizzling dawn of March 20th failed with loss, the approach in the dark being difficult and late, and the chain of German posts in and between the villages of Ecoust, Noreuil and Lagnicourt too strong."³ Tom Stewart was reported 'missing' on 25 March, 1916. It was later revealed he had been captured by the Germans at Noreuil, a Prisoner of War.

Tom Stewart's whereabouts were not known till November 1918 when he was released in Switzerland. "I was out on patrol with Pte T Redhead ... I last saw him at Cambrai as a prisoner, unwounded on 25 March 1917." Asked what happened after capture, Private Tom L Stewart said, "I was taken to Cambrai Hospital to have my wounds attended to. I was seven days at Cambrai; two weeks in Valenciennes Hospital; eight weeks in Munster Lazarette; four weeks at Soltau; thirteen months at Hameln Lager. I saw other Australian prisoners at Hameln. I was sent out 'on Commando' to a farm but was sent back to Hameln Lager on account of my arm being useless. That was on the 8th July 1917. I have not been out of the lager (camp) since then."

¹ Sir Hubert Gough—British General

² Sir John Gellibrand—Australian Major General

³ Bean CEW, *Anzac to Amiens*, page 323



27. Hameln. Kommandantur und Schulbaracke. — La maison du commandant et la baraque de l'école. — Office of officer in command and school hut. — Comandancia y Barraca-escuela. — Коммендантура и школьный баракъ. Гамельнь.

Hameln Lager

The Hamelin camp in Germany where Thomas Stewart spent a long period as a prisoner of war.

In the safety of the Fulham Military Hospital in England on 10 December 1918, Tom Stewart said, "On the night of 24 March 1917, I was on patrol near Noreuil. I was wounded through the neck and became unconscious, awaking to find myself a prisoner. Behind the German lines I met my mate Private T Redhead who was captured at the same time."

Private Stewart sailed from London per TSS *Nevasa*, embarking on 5 March 1919. He arrived in Australia on 25 April and was discharged on 1 May 1919. Tom Stewart returned to the staff of S Hoffnung and Co.

He married Phoebe Hodsdon on 25 September 1920 at St Andrew's Church, Lutwyche. Tom's sister Gwenda was a bridesmaid. Tom and Phoebe Stewart lived at Cavendish Road, Coorparoo. Their children were June and Donald.

The funeral of Thomas Lodwick Stewart took place in Brisbane on 27 December 1944. He had reached the age of 53 years. Amongst those who mourned his passing were his mother who had learnt of her dear son's imprisonment in German POW camps in 1917, his sisters Gwenda and Olwen and his widow and children.



*S Hoffnung and Company's premises in Charlotte Street, Brisbane.
Thomas and Arthur Stewart were both employed by Hoffnung.*

Sergeant Arthur Oswald Stewart

The second son of Thomas and Nellie Stewart of Fairy Knowe, East Brisbane was Arthur Oswald Stewart who had joined the firm of S Hoffnung & Co as a salesman before enlisting on 9 February 1915, aged 21 years 6 months. His friends presented him with a gold wristlet watch, a case of gold-mounted pipes and tobacco pouch and a fountain pen. The warehouse manager commented on his patriotic spirit and manly qualities.

Training at Enoggera Camp followed and Arthur embarked with the 25th Infantry Battalion from Brisbane on HMAT *Aeneas* on 29 June 1915. His regimental number was 750. He proceeded soon afterwards to Gallipoli where he was promoted to the rank of Corporal. He was admitted to the Field Hospital in September with a back injury and discharged to duty on Gallipoli soon afterwards.

After appointment as Sergeant, he was wounded by a piece of stone and transferred by hospital ship to Alexandria, Egypt where he disembarked with jaundice in November. Arthur's parents were notified of their son's transfer to hospital. In a letter dated 25 November 1915 to the Minister of Defence, the Honourable W Pearce, they wrote, "The parents of Sergeant A.O. Stewart, #750, C. Company, 25th Battalion, 7th Brigade, desire to thank you for the promptness of the dept. in notifying them of their son's condition and his whereabouts. We feel confident that he will be well cared for in the 19th General Hospital Alexandria. Yours faithfully, Thos & N. Stewart."

Arthur's casualty form recorded several admissions, including one for a crushed abdomen, to auxiliary hospitals in Cairo before he was able to rejoin his unit at the beginning of February 1916. With the 25th Battalion reinforcements, Sergeant Stewart embarked from Alexandria on *SS Minneapolis* for Marseilles, France on 18 March 1916. Charles Bean wrote of the eagerness of the troops to reach the Western Front, "Day after day as their transports arrived, they marched at intervals through Marseilles to the troop trains that would carry them to the British zone, 130 miles north of Paris.

“Their journey up the Rhone Valley – with the orchards in blossom, and, beyond, the winding blue river and the distant Alps – was like a plunge into fairyland. The halts were thronged by friendly, welcoming French people. From the moment the Australians set foot in France their confident approach and breezy friendliness evoked an outstanding response from the French. Long before they had given any evidence of their quality on the Western Front, the population had them marked as ‘des bons soldats’; that confidence was never lost and led to some astonishing scenes in the last stage of the war.”¹ The weather became wet and cold as the troops neared Paris which they bypassed on their way to Calais. There they headed inland towards detraining points at or near villages in French Flanders.

The Australians were adapting to the conditions of trench warfare in France during the following months but by May were experiencing heavy German shell fire, the pounding of trench mortar bombs and the mud. In June Sergeant Stewart was admitted to field ambulance stations twice. He was treated for bronchitis and on another visit for pyrexia. He returned to duty again on 8 July and participated in the battles around Pozières. That he was reported missing on 29 July was announced in *The Brisbane Courier* on 18 September 1916. As late as 9 April 1917, his mother in East Brisbane hoped he was still alive somewhere. She wrote to Major J M Lean, “I wish to thank you for sending me the information you received from the front regarding the fate of our dear boy Sgt A O Stewart 750 = 25th Battalion. I feel that it still gives me a gleam of hope that he may yet be living and perhaps as prisoner and I also know how hard it must be to get news of them if they are prisoners but when the war is ended, surely, then we shall know. Again thanking you, I am, his anxious mother N. Stewart.”

¹ Bean, pp 194-5

In fact a court of enquiry found he had been “killed in action” on 29 July. Corporal Salter reported unofficially, “He was too game and used to go out on his own. He was killed in the second stunt at Pozières.”

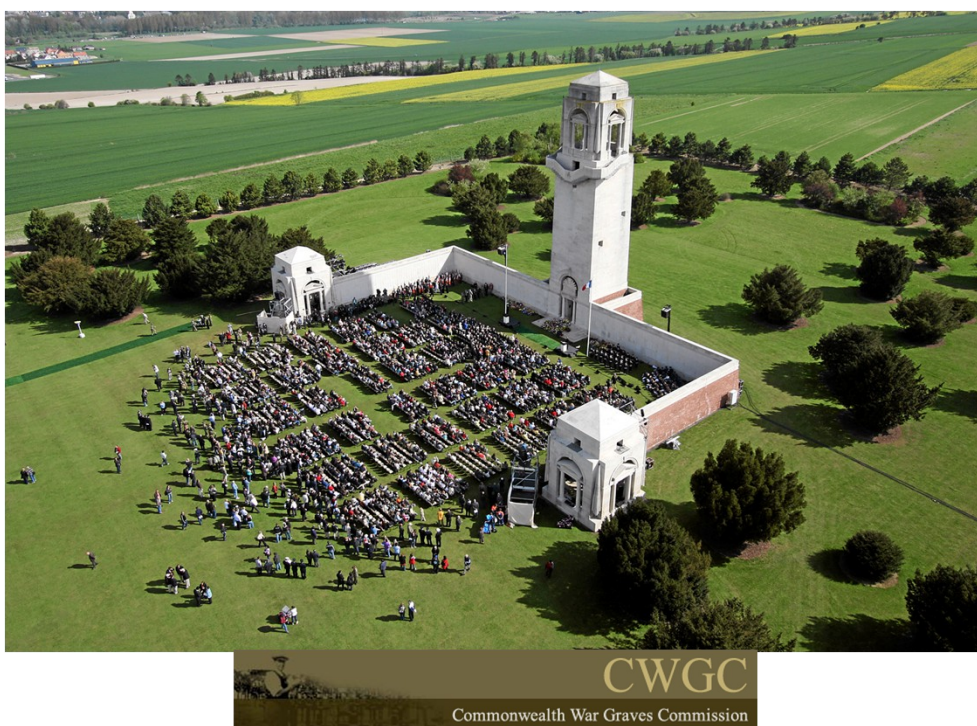
Arthur’s wallet, writing wallet, letters, post cards, two note books, photo and photographic paper were sent to his mother at Fairy Knowe, East Brisbane. The valued items presented to Arthur before he went away were not returned – the subject of further correspondence in the later months of 1917.

One detects Mrs Stewart’s pain and grief in the many letters she wrote to Major Lean. In one of them she said, “We claim no pension, although he was allowing me £1 per week, but we counted no cost, while the need of our country was so great so the sorrow is alone mine. He left Queensland on the 29th June on transport A60 so that he was away exactly 13 months to the day he was killed 29th July 1916 and we have heard since on the very best authority that he was buried with tem. (temporary) Sgt Price eight days later, but you will have all these facts yourself now. I may state in conclusion that Colonel Walker whose brigade my son was in at Gallipoli and in France spoke most highly of him when he paid us a visit on his visit to Brisbane...”

Arthur Stewart is remembered on honour boards at Saint Andrew’s Uniting Church and on the Hoffnung Memorial. His sister Gwenda applied for a medallion badge for Gallipoli in 1967 when she said, “I treasure the memory of my brother and keep the words, ‘Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten’.”



In Memory of
Sergeant ARTHUR OSWALD STEWART
750, 25th Bn., Australian Infantry, A.I.F.
who died age 22 on 29 July 1916
Son of Thomas and Mary E. Stewart, of "Fairy Knowe", Roslyn St., East Brisbane-
Born at Albion, Queensland.
Remembered with honour
VILLERS-BRETONNEUX MEMORIAL



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Compiled by Noel Adsett, Brisbane, January 2015



Lest we forget