

Tribute to 4821 Private Joseph James Gurney, 48th Battalion, AIF.

Based on extracts from his Service Record held with the NAA: B2455, SERN4821, Bar Code Series 4380431 and supplemented with material from other sources, duly acknowledged.

4821 Private Joseph James Gurney, 4821, was aged 28 years and 4 months, when he enlisted in the AIF at Blackboy Hill on 25 November 1915, a month before Jim enlisted, and was assigned to the 16th Battalion, 15th Reinforcement. Joseph was the son of William and Maria Gurney of Tenth Road, York, and his occupation was recorded as labourer.

Joseph embarked on H.M.A.T. ULYSSES A38 with Jim and was assigned to the 48th Battalion on 20 May 1916 following his training at the Tel-el-Kebir AIF camp in Egypt. On 7 June 1916 Joseph also travelled with Jim on H.M.A.T. HUNTSPILL from Alexandria to France arriving in Marseilles on 17 June.

By 18 July Private Gurney was on the front line and was wounded in action on 8 August 1916 and taken to a military hospital in Wimereux, Pas de Calais, and then transferred to a hospital in Boulogne from 26 August. He re-joined the 48th Battalion on 3 November. However he was taken sick and re-admitted to hospital on 27 December 1916 before rejoining his Battalion on 9 May 1917. Being absent without leave on 17 August 1917 resulted in a forfeiture of 24 days pay. He rejoined the 48th on 26 August 1917.

On 31 May 1918 4821 Private Joseph James Gurney was recommended for the Military Medal. This was awarded to him on 13 September 1918.

'For gallantry and devotion to duty near VILLERS-BRETONNEUX on 3rd May, 1918, when a member of the "mopping up" party. He showed the most utter fearlessness throughout and his coolness and initiative in one instance were to a great extent the means of capturing 12 of the enemy. His conduct was very gallant and made him conspicuous during the whole of the operation.'

Source: Commonwealth Gazette, No. 15 Date: 4 February 1919

On 11 November 1918 4821 Private Gurney was readmitted to the Bulford Camp 39 General Hospital, Wiltshire, near Durrington, until 9 April 1919 having spent 150 days in hospital.

4821 Private Gurney's Military Medal was sent to his mother, Maria Gurney, for safe keeping on 9 January 1919.

On 1 June 1919 4821 Private Joseph James Gurney, embarked on H.M.A.T. SOMALI to return from England to Western Australia, arriving in Fremantle on 8 July 1919.



H.M.A.T. SOMALI troopship.

Courtesy of Simplon - The Passenger Ship website - www.simplon.co.uk



Returned soldiers from the troopship H.M.A.T. SOMALI march down the High Street, Fremantle, 8 July 1919

Courtesy of the State Library of Western Australia Image 6773B: slwa_b3929307_1

In addition to being awarded the distinguished Military Medal Private Gurney received two other medals: the British War Medal 1914-1920; and Victory Medal 1914-1919.

4821 Private Joseph James Gurney, was discharged on 22 August 1919.