

Wayne Koch – Captain H S Hummerston M.C.

Wayne Koch 5715685, a long standing member of the North Beach Sub-Branch was born in Boston USA in 1947. When National Service was introduced in Australia in 1965 he was, on turning 20 years old, conscripted to serve his 2 years. During his service he served in Vietnam from November 1968 to November 1969 with the Royal Australian Army Service Corps with Headquarters, 1st Australian Task Force.

In 2012, Wayne made a trip to Gallipoli along with 26 other Australian Conservation Volunteers to help with the commemorations of ANZAC Day 2012. Ninety Seven years before, on 25 April 1915, his Grandfather Stan Hummerston was where Wayne stood. This was truly a time of reflection.



However, this is not a story about Wayne. Like many of his generation, his father and grandfather served during World War 1 and World War 2. This is a story about his maternal Grandfather, Horace Stanley Hummerston (Stan), Service Number 677.

Stan was born in South Australia in 1890, the son of Charles Hummerston who later became the owner of the Kalamunda Hotel.



Stan enlisted in September 1914 at Bunbury and was allocated to the 16th Battalion. He was 24 years old, 6 foot 2 inches tall (188 cm) and 175 Pounds (79 kg) and was working as a railway Sleeper Hewer.

After initial training, the 16th Battalion left Albany for Egypt on 'HMAT Ceramic' in late 1914 with the second contingent of troops ships via the Suez Canal. On arriving in Egypt he wrote from Heliopolis:

Note: This letter is published as it was written and reflects the language of the time. It shows the wonderment and excitement experienced by many of the young Australians prior to their first time in battle.

"Heliopolis," February 10, 1915.

Dear Dad

Well I, with the rest of the boys, have arrived in the land of the Pharaohs, and what a bonzer trip we had getting here! Not a ripple big enough to drown our sorrow at leaving Australia, let alone make us sick.

Well mate, after leaving Melbourne our first stop was Albany, where we put in three days, but the censorship was so severe that I did not think it was worth while writing. After leaving Albany we had a long stretch of water, but the monotony was broken by ships passing and a few islands which we passed.

We left (that is, three of the transports) the rest of the fleet about three days off Colombo and made for Aden, so I can tell you nothing of Colombo, but as we stayed three days, at Aden—on board all the time—I will tell you how it struck me. It is one huge rock, honeycombed, the same as Gibraltar, and the town is situated on the only level piece of ground, which is close to the water. The town itself we never had chance of seeing, but I think like all of these places this way, it looks better at a distance. The next thing, and perhaps the funniest of the lot was the "bum boats," which were in swarms. All the boys had been paid a couple of days previously, so business was brisk. The first day the "nigs" had a great win at our expense, but the second and third days we started to "take a tumble," and the things we were paying a shilling for at first we bought for 3d. Oranges, for instance, we paid a 1/- a dozen for at first, but we got them for 3d. a dozen and less just as the boat was leaving. So the "nigs" will be waiting for the rest of the shrewd heads from Australia the same as we were.

The letter goes on to describe in detail the remainder of the trip to Alexandria, but this has been omitted from this story.

On disembarking we boarded a quite respectable train and started on a 120 mile ride. Dad, this is where I nearly died from shock, and so did everyone else who has never been here. Expecting to go through arid desert on our way to Cairo we went through nothing else but one vast green field of lucerne, clover, and other such grasses, except in places where there were extensive vegetable gardens. You cannot credit it is so fertile a country between Alexandria and Cairo, and right along the Nile unless you see it. But out the other side of Cairo is all desert, and also out from our camp.

Where we are camped is about half a mile from Heliopolis, which is an aristocratic suburb of Cairo, and it is one of the finest places as far as buildings and train services go, that you would wish to see. There is not building in the town under 3 storeys high, and every building built of white freestone. The hospitals and mosques here are magnificent, and other buildings, too numerous to mention, are worth a long walk to see. They also have a place called Luna Park here, exactly the same as the one at St. Kilda, aerial railways, water chutes, etc., so we can have a lot of fun for half piastre (1.25 pence). Cairo is the dirtiest place that God ever meant humanity to live in. Some of the streets are not ten yards wide, and every window is a shop—some fruit, others beer, dance rooms, and everything you can imagine. There are also some nice streets and buildings in Cairo but taken as a whole I will write it down as rotten, and I don't think I, or any of the boys, will trouble it much, as Heliopolis is good enough for us. Heliopolis is seven miles from Cairo by train, and the fare is half a piastre.

On Sunday we went to the Pyramids, where the first contingent are camped, and that is about 11 miles from Cairo in the opposite direction to us. For that ride they charge you one piastre, so it does not cost you much for travelling.

The Pyramids are great giant heaps of stone, built systematically, of course, and how they got some of the stones there, God only knows. We went inside, but to describe it by letter is beyond me, and but for the fact that we had a guide I don't think I would have risked it, as it is very slippery and loose in there.

*We also went and saw the boys of the first contingent, and on the whole they all seem in splendid "nick." I had a talk to Bert Baker (another Kalamunda contingenter), and you can tell his people if you see them he is in splendid health, and as merry as a lark. We are allowed leave till 9.30 in Heliopolis every night, and the boys conduct themselves splendidly— so the Colonel says, and that is good enough for us. One great peculiarity of this place—also of Cairo—is, as soon as you get in the town, there are hundreds of kids—black, of course—who say **“stalia goot, boots shine mister?”**, and they will clean your boots for half a piastre, and often for a cigarette. Every second "nig" you strike has got either postcards or silks to sell you, and you want about ten men to clear a way for you. There are also a lot of Territorials here, and most of them are not much older than our compulsory cadets, and certainly not as tall, but they are not a bad lot of fellows, and we get on with them all right.*

Well, mate, I don't know when we will be in the firing line, but I hope it is soon, as we are all looking forward to a fly at the Turks.”

In concluding his letter, Stan promises any news omitted will be furnished in his next letter, and conveys his kind regards to all his friends.

Letters from Stan may not have been frequent, as his sister wrote to a West Australian Senator to obtain help in obtaining his mail address. She was successful in obtaining this.

On 12 April 1915 Stan embarked Alexandria with the Mediterranean Expeditionary Forces for the Gallipoli Peninsular. He arrived on the beach on the afternoon of 25 April to a now alerted Turkish Army. In May he was wounded in the left hip, but soon returned to action. During his time in Gallipoli he was promoted to Corporal, Sergeant, and Second Lieutenant. Like many other troops he had bouts of sickness that required him to spend time on Hospital ships that were offshore from Gallipoli, and on Lemnos. These were staffed by both Australian and New Zealand Nurses who were also on the first and second contingents of troop ships that left Albany and other ports for Egypt.

In September he was admitted to hospital in London and by November 1915 returned to Ismailia via Alexandria in Egypt. He was promoted to Captain in April 1916 and by June that year was in France.

Stan served with a Major Black in Gallipoli, right through to the first Battle of Bullecourt where Black was Killed in Action. On Black's death Stan, as senior officer, took control organising his sector of the battle. On 11 April 1917 he was wounded and was reported as “Missing in Action”. As a result of this action he was subsequently awarded the Military Cross, but this was not formally approved until 1919 as he was a P.O.W. for the remainder of the War The Citation reads:

This officer is brought to notice for his exceptional powers of leadership , organization, and bravery under very trying conditions. He led his Company in the charge against the HINDENBURG LINE near BULLECOURT on the morning of the 11th April 1917.

He was the first of his Company into both the first and second objectives , and by sheer bravery and example carried his men with him over absolutely untouched barbed wire into the second objective. He was the Senior Officer of the Battalion in the line (Major BLACK having been killed after taking the first objective).

He superintended the organization and distribution of the men in all parts of the line captured and held by us. He was always to be found at the points of greatest danger assisting , encouraging and leading his men with a remarkable disregard for his own personal safety.

It is due to the resourcefulness of this Officer in husbanding ammunition and organizing troops to the best advantage that our troops were able to hold on to a most hazardous and difficult position for so long. He refused to leave the trenches until he and the handful of men remaining were surrounded on three sides.

He then directed the getting away of these men and saw that they had got a fair start for our trenches before he himself left on the hazardous return journey. He was seriously wounded when returning to our trenches and was subsequently picked up and made Prisoner by the enemy.

For his magnificent courage and devotion to duty he is very strongly recommended for the highest distinction”.

During this action he was taken as Prisoner of War in France and interred for the remainder of the War in Germany. His Service Records show he was P.O.W. in Karlsruhe on the French German border north of Strasbourg. The photo shows him in Krefeld, which is on the Dutch German Border, so he may have been relocated.



Australian Prisoner Of War (POW) Officers at Crefeld [Krefeld] POW camp in Germany.

Standing higher at back, left to right, Lieutenant (Lt) James Matthew Cooney, 13th Battalion, from Bodangora, NSW, and Lt Vincent William Charker, 20th Battalion, from Sydney, NSW;

Back Row, left to right, Lt Norman George Blanchard, 20th Battalion, from Sydney, NSW; Captain (Capt) Alexander Smeaton Robertson, 21st Battalion, from Melbourne Vic; Lt Oliver Stanley Gluyas, 13th Battalion, from Melbourne; Lt Peter William Lyon, 11th Battalion, from Perth, WA; Lt John Hamilton Matthews, 55th Battalion, from Cootamundra, NSW; Lt George D'Arcy Folkard, 55th Battalion, from Walcha, NSW; **Capt Horace Stanley Hummerston**, 16th Battalion, from Kalamunda, WA; Lt William Alroe Halvorsen, 51st Battalion, from Perth; Lt Reginald Edwin Sanders, 14th Battalion, from Wodonga, Vic; Lt Frederick Mitchel Culverwell, 16th Battalion, from Blackboy Hill, WA; Lt George Douglas McLean, 16th Battalion, from Adelaide, SA; Lt Joseph Huxley Honeysett,

47th Battalion, from Hobart, Tas; Capt Robert Alyth Keay, 32nd Battalion, from Perth; Lt Hugh Cresswell Anthony, 7th Battalion, from Melbourne.

Second Row, left to right, *Lt Alfred Tonkin Brine, 12th Battalion, from Claremont, WA; Capt Arthur Gerard Fox, 13th Battalion, from Sydney NSW; Capt George Guyatt Gardiner, 13th Battalion, from Sydney; Lt Albert William Montague Bowman, 53rd Battalion, from Sydney; Lt Herbert Johnson, 21st Machine Gun Company, from Stanthorpe, Qld; Lt Leo Clement O'Kelly, 8th Battalion from Gippsland, Vic; Lt Norman David Lloyd Cumming, 22nd Battalion, from Castlemaine, Vic; Lt Ernest John Leslie Edmonds, 14th Battalion, from Melbourne; Capt David Leslie Todd, 50th Battalion, from Adelaide; Lt Maxwell Gore, 50th Battalion, from St Peters, SA; Lt John Ernest Edwards, 50th Battalion, from Footscray, Vic; Lt Harold Redman Lovejoy, 54th Battalion, from Penshurst NSW, Lt William Murdoch, 15th Battalion, from Irvinebank, Qld;*

Front Row, left to right, *Lt George Cummins, 20th Battalion, from Sydney; Lt Alan McGown, 13th Battalion, from Sydney; Lt Leslie Percival Ridgwell, 46th Battalion, from Ballarat, Vic; Lt Albert Morris Marshall, 15th Battalion, from Ulverstone, Tas, Lt Charles William Hooper, 4th Battalion, from Sydney NSW, Lt William Stanley Missingham, 15th Battalion from Kingaroy, Qld; Lt Edward Binnington, 15th Battalion, from Bundaberg, Qld.*

His last letter home, probably written immediately prior to his capture shows a vastly different mood from his first letter, and this is understandable, considering his battlefield experience. This reads:

“Somewhere in France.

Dear Dad,

I hope you are all in the 'pink,' for we are well here. As you will no doubt know, things here are moving, though at present slowly, and we are in it, and intend to be in it at the finish. I believe fruit is very plentiful this year. Strange to say, fruit is a thing that does not trouble us much here, for you can just fancy this with a nice ripe orange, and the thermometer at 7deg. less than zero.

The 'burning question' here at present is: Do the W.A. people know that the 16th Battalion, A.L.F., came from Western Australia? If not, why not?

By the people of W.A., I mean people who haven't any relations or very near friends in the Battalion, and if it is widely known that we are a W.A. Battalion. What have we ever done wrong to deserve the treatment we have had since the two first formed - i.e., if it wasn't for the extremely patriotic people in South Australia, 'this Battalion' would be very poorly represented on the gifts cards. The South Australians in the Battalion are less than 100, and this out of say eleven hundred men is but a small proportion, and yet South Australians practically monopolise the picture with regard to gifts received by us to date.

This Battalion has been formed practically from the inception of the A.I.F., and has to its credit some of the finest exploits on Gallipoli and in France; yet when we read our W.A. papers, we see of committees being formed for all Battalions with the exception of the first two formed, i.e., the 11th and 16th. The 'Sunday Times' and daily papers received by the last mail are the papers quoted.

The 'Victoria League' has certainly very kindly sent us papers and some gifts, but not more than enough to go round. Hearing our grand lads complaining and talking of this, what we think is lack of interest in some of W.A.'s best men, and knowing it ourselves, is what made me at last mention it.

Now I have finished for the time and do not want anyone to think we say that we are any better than any other Battalion, but a little enthusiasm displayed towards a small committee or two will certainly help to get our boys a fair share of W.A. gifts, which are so thoughtfully sent to her lads on active service."

Stan was repatriated on 1 January 1919 with other Prisoners of War to Rippon, England and embarked to Australia per "HMAT Anchises". He disembarked in Albany on 10 April 1919 and was discharged from Service on 10 June 1919.

He was active in the Kalamunda community following the War and records show he was able to win a batting award representing the local cricket club in season 1919 – 1920. Like so many of the young men returning after World War 1 his health was seriously impacted by his service, wounds and gas exposure at Bullecourt in 1917. He developed "Pulmonary Tuberculous/Galloping Consumption" and died in 1926 at the age of just 36.

His Obituary in 'The West Australian' of Tuesday 31 August 1926 stated that his funeral was well attended by members of the community, community organisations and fellow members of the 16 Battalion. It stated that he was yet another victim of the scourge of the War.

A short lived life, but just one of many who were lost during and as a result of World War 1.