

6994 Private
Jarvis Bunting Fuller

7th BN Australian Infantry AIF
who died Thursday 4 October 1917, age 22
Buttes New British Cemetery, Polygon Wood,
Zonnebeke, West-Vlaanderen, BELGIUM
plot XXIX, row B, grave 11



In May 2002 a man found a probably lost photograph during his daily walk on the Buttes New British Cemetery in Polygon Wood. It was an old and original 1920s photograph showing the wood cross of a British (Australian) soldier's grave. On the back of the picture was written "*Jarvis Bunding Fuller Killed in France 4 October 1917 - plot XXIX row C grave 11*".

Realizing this was an interesting item, the man took it to De Dreve and gave it to Johan.

In July 2002 it was noticed that another original wartime photograph of this Jarvis Fuller had been placed in front of his headstone (in row B – and not in row C as mentioned on the photograph !) On the back of this picture was again his name and "killed in France". Were both photographs lost by a battlefield pilgrim (and placed in front of the headstone by a goodhearted person who found them). Or were they left by a visitor who for some reason wanted these two original and unique documents to disintegrate bit by bit while standing in front of this headstone?

As it was believed that both pictures must have been lost, they were removed and replaced by good and laminated copies.

The cemetery register did not give any directions of who might have visited the grave of Private Fuller and an almost impossible search started... And yet, with the help of several persons in Belgium, Australia and Greece the mystery was solved by the end of October 2002 : both photographs had been placed on the grave by Todd Fraser, a student from Queensland, Australia.

In January 2003 Todd Fraser wrote : "During the months of April and May 2002, I was involved in the Mackay North High School Project, the ANZAC 2002 *Commemorative Tour*. Our group, consisting of 23 students and 4 teachers travelled to Gallipoli and France to research and locate 78 Australian World War One soldiers that were either relatives or men given to the students to locate. I personally have three relatives buried in France, while also another soldier was given to me to research and commemorate. Our group visited Jarvis Fuller's grave on the 2nd May on a misty and cold Belgian morning. At the time I decided to leave two photos at the grave as a mark of respect, but now I realize that I should not have left it there. As I was unable to find the register at Buttes New British Cemetery I did not leave a message. My commemoration was very special to my family and I as tour group tradition, left a bunch of poppies on the grave. The commemoration included my eulogy, which I enclose in this letter, which I hope you find interesting. I also have a video of the commemoration and plenty of photos. I did place both photos at the grave and I am glad to hear that the photo that blew away from the grave was found. I cannot thank you enough,

Hilde and Johan, for your dedication to keeping my great-uncle's spirit and story alive. I certainly give you permission, on behalf of the family to place the photos in a private museum in Belgium. (...) In a few years time I will probably be visiting the European battlefields with a few more friends from the 2002 tour group."

From the contacts with all who were involved in tracing Todd Fraser and with the organizing teacher Mr Mike Goodwin, grew new and warm friendships between Belgians and Australians.

Here follows the eulogy, read by Todd Fraser as a tribute to his great-uncle.

We are present today at Buttes New British Cemetery, Polygon Wood, to commemorate Private Jarvis Bunting Fuller. Jarvis was the son of George and Emily Fuller and was born at Moonambel near Ballarat, Victoria in 1895. Jarvis worked as a Rope Machinist before he signed up with the AIF on the 17th of October 1916. He was rejected at first because of his bad eyesight and needed to wear glasses which he is wearing in a photo that my grandmother, also named Jarvis, had kept over many years. At the time of his enlistment he was only 21 years and 2 months, a very young age but still willing to fight, like many before him and many after.

After his acceptance at Altona Barracks, Melbourne, he sailed to England, but on his arrival, Jarvis was admitted to hospital with bronchitis on the 17th February 1917. On the 4th of May that year he finally reached France and took on strength with the 7th Battalion, a battalion that had been through the horrors of Gallipoli and the hell of Pozieres.

On the 26th of September the 7th BN was part of the attack here at Polygon Wood, Zonnebeke, Belgium. This attack at Zonnebeke Ridge was a part of the Battle of Passchendaele or the Third Battle of Ypres as it is known. Before the start of the battle, Jarvis was most likely told to not wear his glasses as they could reflect light and give away trench positions to the enemy. The attack went ahead as planned, but somewhere amongst the chaos, Jarvis became lost as a result of his poor eyesight and was tragically killed on Zonnebeke Ridge.

I would like to read the account of Lieutenant A.G. Taylor when he found Jarvis Fuller.

Dear Mrs. Madam

Your son Private Fuller J.B. did not belong to our Battalion, but I discovered his body a few minutes after he was killed, and we buried him. I thought that it was due to the memory of a brave soldier to let his dear ones know as much as we could of their ones end.

Your boy has apparently been right in the final move of the attack, and had died nobly, doing his duty. My men made a cross, which now marks the spot where his body lies. We buried him where he fell, on Zonnebeke Ridge, about five miles east from Ypres. His personal effects were returned to his Battalion.

With the deepest sympathy and respect.

I remain A.G. Taylor (Lieutenant) 22nd Battalion

Jarvis Fuller may you rest in peace in this foreign field, but you are safe in our hearts and minds for evermore. Our family cherishes not how you fought or how you died, but how you lived. Amen.

*They shall grow not old
As we that are left grow old
Age shall not weary them
Nor the years condemn
At the going down of the sun
And in the morning
We will remember them*

LEST WE FORGET

2 May 2002

Todd Fraser

Mermaid Beach, Gold Coast, Queensland, AUSTRALIA

Mackay North High School - ANZAC 2002 Commemorative Tour Gallipoli/France/Belgium