Alexander Joseph BASSETT

Alexander Bassett was born at Longwood Victoria in 1890 although his attestation form states it was Kilmore. He was the eldest of seven children born to Alexander Galvin and Mary Ann (nee Hankins) Bassett.

He enlisted at Launceston Tasmania in February 1917 under the assumed name of Arthur Williams. In October of that year his military file shows Alexander had resumed use of his birth name and his file shows a Statutory Declaration to that effect.

It is unclear why he chose to use an assumed name. It may be connected to an item in the NSW Police Gazette in 1913 where Alexander is listed as a deserter from HMS Drake while in Sydney. A three pound reward was offered for his (and other deserters) apprehension. He appears to have eventually received a discharge from the Royal Australian Navy.

In February 1917 Alexander was aged 26 years and seven months, and was an unmarried fireman. His mother, Mary Bassett of Warragul, Victoria was listed as his next of kin. He commenced training with the 1st Depot Battalion and then Alexander was allocated to the 9th Reinforcements for the 40th Battalion. In October 1917 he embarked for overseas active duty aboard the "Aeneas".

In March 1918 he marched in to France ranked private, service number 3602 He sustained an accidental gunshot wound to his left foot with associated facial injuries in June 1918. As a result he was transferred to England for treatment and convalescence. His military file contains an undated note "Court of Enquiry re Injury – No!".

Alexander did not return to active duty. He returned to Australia in March 1919 and was discharged from the AIF the following month. He was awarded the British War Medal, the 1914/15 Star and the Victory Medal. His name is recorded on the Kilmore Honour Roll.

Post-war Alexander married Esther Evelyn Benstead in 1921. They had three children and lived most of their lives at Lake Bolac where Alexander was engaged in farming. Alexander died in 1962 and is buried at the Lake Bolac Cemetery.

Compiled by Kilmore Historical Society.

40th Battalion AIF reinforcements Melbourne 1917. AWM