

Philip John Crowley

Philip John Crowley was born in Rutherglen in 1895, the son of Joseph and Margaret Crowley (nee Luchinovich). The family moved to Kilmore East probably settling on 53 acres on the road to Kilmore. Phil was educated at Assumption College, where he served in the 57th Battalion as a senior cadet in the militia.

When Phil enlisted at Broadmeadows on May 10, 1916 he listed his occupation as a labourer probably working for his father. After training at Broadmeadows, Phil was allocated to the 21st Reinforcements of the 14th Battalion as a Private, service number 6488.

With the 21st Reinforcements, Phil embarked on the Nestor in Melbourne on October 2, 1916, bound for Plymouth in England. After more training at Folkestone and Etaples in France, he joined his Battalion at the front on January 4, 1917.

The 14th Battalion had suffered heavy losses on Gallipoli and from June 1916 it was on the Western Front where it took part in the trench warfare. Its first major action in France was at Pozieres in August 1916 and then suffered heavy losses at Bullecourt in April 1917. It was here that Phil went missing in action and later it was established he was captured by the Germans on April 10, 1917.

His parents in Kilmore East probably heard of Phil's capture in July, and his name in a list of POWs appeared in Victorian papers in August 1917. The 1918 Assumption College Annual reported that "Phil had written (to his parents) from Germany that he is a prisoner of war, receiving good treatment" and that "parcels and letters from home have reached him regularly."

Phil saw out the war at the Limburg POW Camp and was reported as being at Ripon in England on December 18, 1918. Then he returned to duty in France until transferred to London in late January 1919 where he met his brother who was being treated influenza before he died on February 20. Phil was attached to the Australian Army Ordinance Corps until November 1920 carrying out demobilisation duties.

Then Phil went on leave until late February 1920. In March he embarked on the Ceramic for return to Melbourne where he was discharged on May 6, 1920. Phil was awarded the British War Medal, Victory Medal and 1914/15 Star. His name is included on the Kilmore Honour Roll now in the Memorial Hall.

While Phil was a POW, his parents received a war pension. He returned to the farm at “Darrynam”, Kilmore East and became well known in the district until late December 1927 when he put their 53 acres up for auction. There was no immediate sale so Phil then leased the farm.

The family lived in several Melbourne suburbs, as Phil was working for the Railways. He died in 1964 and was buried with his parents in Springvale Cemetery.