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Robert James Nickelson MM

Robert James Nickelson was born at Moranding near Kilmore in 1894, the son of Charles Oscar and Annie Mary Nickelson (nee Smith). He attended school at the Glenaroua State School and Heathcote where he was a cadet for 12 months.

Robert, a labourer of Tooborac, enlisted in Melbourne on July 12, 1915, not long after his 21st birthday. He undertook training at , and was allocated as a private 2752 with the 6th Reinforcements. He embarked on the HMAT Ulysses in Melbourne on October 27, 1915 for Egypt.

On arrival Robert joined the recently formed 57th Battalion which was made up of Gallipoli veterans and reinforcements from Melbourne. After training in Egypt the Battalion was transferred through Marseilles for the Western Front in France in July 1916. Their first major battle took place on July 19 at Fromelles. On November 29 Robert was admitted to a casualty station with trench feet. After a month stay at a hospital in Narve, he returned to his Battalion. He was promoted to Corporal on February 20, 1917.

Early in 1917 the 57th participated in the advance following the German retreat and took part in the Battle of Bullecourt. Robert received a bomb wound in the right thigh on May 30, 1917 and after local treatment rejoined his battalion 3 weeks later. During a defensive period in the trenches, Robert was posted to Glencorse Wood near Ypres, Belgium. The following citation published in the Commonwealth Gazette No 31 on March 17 1918, describes what happened next.

#### “Military Medal

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. On September 22, 1917 Coporal Robert James Nickelson was employed at Brigade Ammunition Dump in Glencorse Wood. A German 5.9” shell hit the dump and set fire to

40 boxes of Smoke Bombs and also a large dump of Mills Grenades. This N.C.O. rushed out of a dugout, together with a bomber, and despite the dense smoke cloud shovelled loose earth on the fire and after about 20 minutes strenuous work managed to smother it. During this time the Mills Grenades were exploding all over the place and the dump was being very heavily shelled. This was the main forward Brigade Dump from which all ammunition was being forwarded to the front line to supply the demands of the attacking Battalions and was saved from absolute

destruction by the excellent work and determination of these two men at great personal risk. Whilst returning from the dump to his dugout a few yards away after smothering the fire, this N.C.O. was badly wounded by shell fire.” He received a gun shot wound to the chest.

In October Robert was transferred to Birmingham Hospital in England. After treatment he returned to the front line on Christmas Day 1917. After another period in hospital and on leave, Robert took part in the Battle for the St Quentin Canal in late September 1918. Robert was promoted to temporary sergeant from November 22 to March 7 1919. The battalion was disbanded in March 1919 and Robert returned to Melbourne on the Devanha arriving on June 23, 1919. He was discharged from the army in Melbourne on September 16, 1919.

In addition to the Military Medal Robert received the British War Medal, Victory Medal and 1914/15 Star. He is listed on the Tooboorac Roll of Honour and the Glenaroua State School Roll of Honour..

Robert married Lila May Sebrie in 1921 and they had one son Kenneth James. At different Victorian towns Robert was a storeman, clerk and farmer. He died in 1971, aged 77 years, at Mooroopna.