

### No.2188, Pte. CHARLES HICKS

Charles Hicks was born, in 1896, in the Parish of Holy Trinity, South Shields, Co. Durham, England, a son of Charles and Margaret Hicks and cousin to No. 7000, Alfred Hicks and No. 2187, Walter Hicks. Charles senior was born in Great Henny, Essex, and before 1896, had moved to South Shields.

Young Charles, and two brothers (John and David), were living with their Mother in South Shields (1901 census), until 1912 when they emigrated to Australia, to join Charles senior.

Charles worked as a farm labourer, before he enlisted, at Kiawa Camp, following a letter of consent from his mother, on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1916, and after his initial training was posted to the 4<sup>th</sup> Reinforcement Draft, 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, Australian Imperial forces.

He left Australia, via Sydney Harbour, on the Australian Troopship, A.18. 'Wiltshire', on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1916, and arrived at Plymouth, England on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1916. His service record reads as follows: -

#### 1916

3/11 – sick to Hospital, Woolwich – Haemojoltpus

12/11 – marched into No.3 Composite Depot, from Borrington Military hospital, Woolwich

17/11 – marched out to 12th training battalion – Woolwich

#### 1917

8/1 – 12<sup>th</sup> Trn. Batt. – to proceed overseas to France – via Folkestone – 'Princess Henrietta'

8/1 – 4<sup>th</sup> Australian Divisional Base Depot, Etaples – joined ex- training Batt.

18/1 – taken of strength, 4<sup>th</sup> A.D.B.D. – to 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion

7/6 – killed in action – 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion

On 5<sup>th</sup> October 1917 the personal effects were forwarded to his father, Charles, and contained; cards and souvenir paper knife.

The service record of No.2188, C. Hicks, held by the Australian Archives, contains a letter from the 'United ancient Order of Druids', (a friendly society), requesting proof of death for their records and also contained several letters between his family and The Base Record Office A.I.F. Three letters from his father plead with authorities, for more information about the death, and procedures afterwards, concerning his son. One reads as follows;

Dec. 22 1919

Dear Sir,

I have my doubts if ever my son, No. 2188, Charles Hicks, 45<sup>th</sup> Battalion was ever found, although we got word that he was buried in the Military cemetery at Messines. If his remains were found and buried, how is it that we never received anything personally belonging to him such as Pay Book, Wallet, Watch, Fountain Pen, Identification Disc, etc. All I ever received was a few Picture Post Cards and a Souvenir Paper Knife. I have been given to understand that when a soldier left England for the Front that some of his personal kit was left behind at headquarters in London. Although I made enquiries, I could never get on to anything belonging to my son, only the above mentioned postcards and paperknife.

I beg to remain yours respectfully,

Charles Hicks

Perthville, N.S.W.

The absence of his personal effects may be explained by some of the eyewitness accounts held by the Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau. There are six accounts, by four witnesses, describing his demise, all concurring on the date and place of death and some, that he was buried in front of Messines Village, on the battlefield. One of the accounts reads as; -

45<sup>th</sup> Battn.  
AIF

HICKS  
C. 2188

"Killed June 7<sup>th</sup> 1917"

I saw him killed by a shell in a trench just as we were going over the top at Messines. All smashed about and died instantly. He was buried but no prayers. Came from Perthville NSW, near Bathurst. Came over together, in the Wiltshire, very much liked.

Witness -

H.J. Kirby 2201 2752

45<sup>th</sup> Battn.

War Chest.

W. Alison  
London.  
26.1.18

Another, written 13 months after his death, says he was hit by a bullet and died instantly.

Charles was 20 years old when he died; he was not entitled to the 1914-15 Star but his father was issued with the British War Medal, No.45891; the Victory Medal No.45366. A copy of 'Where Australians Lie' was received on 19/3/1921 and the Memorial Scroll and Plaque both numbered 326639 were received on 19/7/1921 and 2/9/22 respectively.

Charles has no known grave and is remembered on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, panel 7-17-23-25-27-29-31