

SAPPER MICHAEL JOSEPH SHIELDS
857 – 2nd Tunnelling Company

Richard Joseph (Mick) Shields was born in Newcastle, New South Wales on May 26, 1877 the son of Patrick and Elizabeth (Eliza nee Merrigan) Shields. His father passed away on May 4, 1900. It appears Mick and his brother went to the goldfields of Western Australia where he was a miner in 1916 at Pinnacles, Cue near Dampier, W.A. before he enlisted.

At Day Dawn, W.A. on January 26, 1916 he applied to enlist for active service abroad and passed the medical examination. Attestation Forms were completed for the thirty-nine year old, showing he was 175cms (5ft 9ins) tall and weighed 78kgs (172lbs) with a chest expansion of 100-105cms (39½-41½ins). Complexion was fair with blue eyes and had fair hair. Distinctive marks noted were a small round dimpled scar on left cheek, a small pink wart on scalp behind his left ear plus three to four of these situated on the body. Religious faith was Roman Catholic. Next-of-kin nominated was his mother Mrs Elizabeth Shields of 37 Abbottsford Road, Rozelle, NSW.

Basic training took place at Blackboy Hill near Perth, W.A. where he was sworn in on February 16, 1916 at No.3 Area of the Helena Vale Camp at Blackboy Hill.

A few days later in Sydney, New South Wales at a civic parade in the Domain on Saturday February 19, 1916, a large crowd of relations and friends of the departing Miners' Corps lined the four sides of the parade ground. Sixty police and 100 Garrison Military Police were on hand to keep the crowds within bounds. The scene was an inspiring one. On the extreme right flank, facing the saluting base, were companies of the Rifle Club School; next came a detachment of the 4th King's Shropshire Light Infantry, then the bands of the Light Horse, Liverpool Depot, and the Miners' on the left, rank upon rank, the Miners' Battalion.

The Corps boarded HMAT A38 *Ulysses* in Sydney, NSW on February 20 and sailed for the European theatre. Arriving in Melbourne, Victoria on February 22 the Miners camped at Broadmeadows for a stay of 7 days while further cargo was loaded.

Another parade was held at the Broadmeadows camp on March 1, the Miners' Corps being inspected by the Governor-General, as Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth military forces.

Leaving Melbourne on March 1, *Ulysses* arrived at Fremantle, Western Australia on March 7. Shields had been placed on stand-by on March 5 at Blackboy Hill camp for departure with the Miners' Corps and two days later was assigned to the No. 2 Company of the Corps in the rank of Sapper with the regimental number 857. A further 52 members were also allotted to the Corps the same day.

On Wednesday March 8, 1916 the whole force, with their band and equipment, paraded at Fremantle prior to leaving Victoria Quay at 9.30 o'clock.

The ship hit a reef when leaving Fremantle harbour, stripping the plates for 40 feet and, although there was a gap in the outside plate, the inner bilge plates were not punctured. The men on board nicknamed her '*Useless*'. The Miners were off-loaded and sent to the Blackboy Hill Camp where further training was conducted.

The Mining Corps comprised 1303 members at the time they embarked with a Headquarters of 40; No.1 Company – 390; No.2 Company – 380; No.3 Company – 392, and 101 members of the 1st Reinforcements.

Finally departing Fremantle on April 1, *Ulysses* voyaged via Suez, Port Said and Alexandria in Egypt. The Captain of the ship was reluctant to take *Ulysses* out of the Suez Canal because he felt the weight of the ship made it impossible to manoeuvre in the situation of a submarine attack.

The troops were transhipped to HM Transport B.1 *Ansonia*, then on to Valetta, Malta before disembarking at Marseilles, France on May 5, 1916. As a unit they entrained at Marseilles on May 7 and detrained on May 11 at Hazebrouck. It was recorded on May 9, 1916 that a copy of his Will had been left with Mr S.W. Munsie, M.L.A. of Fitzgerald Street, North Perth, W.A.

A 'Mining Corps' did not fit in the British Expeditionary Force, and the Corps was disbanded and three Australian Tunnelling Companies were formed. The Technical Staff of the Corps Headquarters, plus some technically qualified men from the individual companies, was formed into the entirely new Australian Electrical and Mechanical Mining and Boring Company (AEMMBC), better known as the 'Alphabetical Company'.

On May 22, 1916 he was admitted to the 142nd Field Ambulance with a gunshot wound to his left ear. Five days later he went to the 1st Northumbrian Field Ambulance. It is not recorded when he returned to duty but there appeared to be a misspelling of his name therefore Base Records in Australia could not locate him on their Nominal Roll and on June 16, replied back to London that 'no trace can be found.' His identity was established on June 30 allowing on July 3, 1916 Base Records to regretfully advise his mother that he had been wounded but continuing to state it was not serious and if any further information came to hand, would promptly notify her.

Three months later on August 23, 1916 Sapper Shields was sent to the 14th Aust Field Ambulance with an abscess and transferred to the 1st Aust Casualty Clearing Station where he was diagnosed with cerebral-spinal meningitis and conveyed to the 7th General Hospital at St Omer entering with Congestion of the Lungs. Sapper Shields died a day later on August 24, 1916.

Burial took place in Longuenesse Souvenir Cemetery at St Omer, Pas de Calais, France.

His grave is located in Plot 4 within row A in grave 45.



Photo of headstone and cemetery by kind permission of The War Graves Photographic Project - www.twgpp.org



An overseas cable with the news of his demise was sent and acknowledged on September 4, 1916 and his mother was notified by the Department of Defence and the sad news forwarded to Kalgoorlie, W.A. where his brother, step-sisters and step-brother placed a notice in the:

Kalgoorlie Miner September 8, 1916:

KILLED IN ACTION

SHIELDS—Killed in Action on August 24th, 1916 at France, Michael J. Shields, beloved brother of Mrs J. Colgan, Pat Shields, York-street Boulder and J. Boland, Ora Banda.

His name was recorded on the Casualty List dated September 8 and four days later an announcement was printed Casualty column of the:

Sydney Morning Herald Tuesday September 12, 1916:

SAPPER M. SHIELDS

Sapper Michael Shields, son of Mrs Elizabeth Shields, Rozelle, died in France on August 24, from wounds.

A copy of his Service Record was made for the War Pension Department on September 16, 1916 and the cause of death due to 'congestion lung' was reported by the Medical Officer dated October 2.

The Mutual Life and Citizens Insurance wrote to Base Records requesting a Death Certificate on October 19, 1916 and a Certificate of Identity was completed to that date and sent on October 31.

The Field Service Report was completed and dated November 4, 1916 at Rouen, France giving the cause of death as Died of Disease due to Congestion of Lungs.

The next day his mother wrote to Base Records asking for a Death Certificate as a small amount of insurance was due to her and she could not claim without it and advised a change to the number of her house to 69 Abbottsford Road, Rozelle. Acknowledgement and Certificate were sent dated November 15, 1916.

Staff Sergeant L. Parker certified on January 17, 1917 of the true copy of Sapper Shield's Will.

Base Records advised his mother Mrs E. Shields on February 6, 1917 that in accordance with the policy of the Department all further information of the regrettable loss of her son was now available and he died at the 7th General Hospital, St Omer, France on August 24, 1916 from congestion of lungs.

Base Records received a letter from Parliament House, Perth dated February 15, 1917 from S.W. Munsie, M.L.A. requesting a copy of the Death Certificate as he left a Will making his wife Mrs Jessie Munsie his Executor.

The copy was required that she may prove the Will and settle up his affairs. Acknowledgement and the required Certificate were sent on February 24, 1917.

The address of Mrs E. Shields was changed and marked on February 16, 1917.

A copy of his Will was forwarded on April 20, 1917.

The A.I.F. Kit Store in London forwarded his personal effects on the transport *Miltiades* which their Inventory stated were:

Identity disc, Metal ring, Strop, French book, Rosary beads, Shaving brush, 4 Handkerchiefs, Razor, Badges, Fountain pen, Button, Bunch of decorations.

These were posted by registered post to his mother on July 24, 1917.

His personal effects possibly from his Kit in the field were despatched on the troopship *Themistocles* which contained the following articles:

Pocket Waller, Coins (3), Letters, Cards, Writing portfolio, Photos, Regimental Colours (4), Charm and Identity disc.

On August 7, 1917 these personal effects were sent by registered post to his mother.

A circular and booklet regarding war graves was mailed on January 5, 1920 to his mother and a final reminder sent on February 20, [year blurred].

The same day photos of Sapper Shields' grave were sent in triplicate to his mother and on June 25, 1920 a further group in triplicate were also sent. Advice of his burial was given in the cemetery as plot 4; row A in grave no. 45.

The British War Medal (32130) and the Victory Medal (31907) were issued for his supreme sacrifice to Sapper 857 Michael Joseph Shields, 2nd Tunnelling Company.

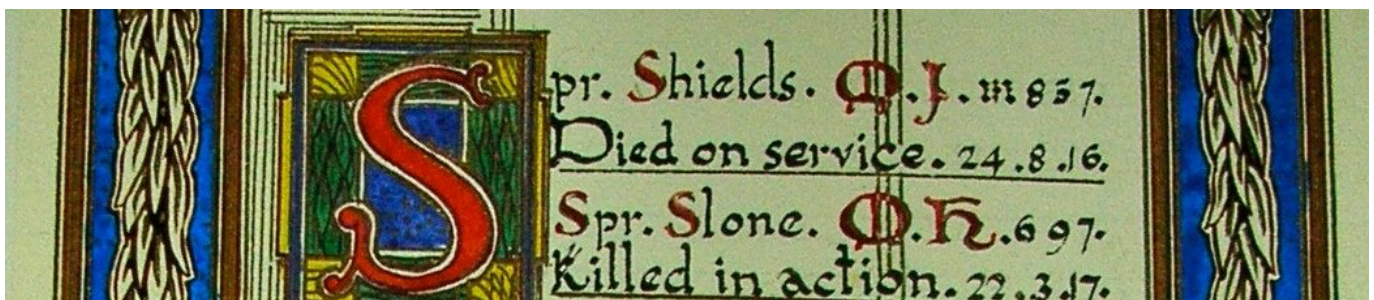
Base Records wrote to Mrs E. Shields on November 10, 1921 in accordance with the 'Deceased Soldiers' Act 1918' in regards to his father for distribution of his war medals. Mrs Shields wrote in reply from 42 Hornsey Street, Rozelle that she was the nearest blood relation living and would be pleased to receive his medal. On December 21, 1921 she also wrote after receiving a letter dated December 5 that she had overlooked their letter owing to being ill stating that his father had died twenty-one years ago and was the nearest blood relative of M.J. Shields.

The Sydney Morning Herald - Saturday 23 July 1921:

ENGINEERS' ROLL OF HONOUR

The Royal Engineer War Memorial Committee are arranging to deposit a roll of honour of all ranks of the Royal Engineers whose names were officially published as killed in action or died of wounds or disease in the war in the chapel of St. Paul's Cathedral, and the Engineer corps of the dominions, colonial, and Indian armies have been invited to deposit similar rolls of honour in St. Paul's, to be attached to that of the Royal Engineers. This invitation has been accepted in Australia. The roll will be inscribed on vellum and enclosed in a casket of Australian timbers to rest on a slab of Australian marble.

This extract from Tunnellers Roll of Honour included in profile with the kind permission of the
Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral, London
Photos courtesy of Robin Sanderson, Paris



The War Medal was forwarded to the Commandant, 2nd Military District on January 13, 1922 to issue to his mother. The Victory Medal was sent directly by post on February 19, 1923 and receipted by her four days later. The pamphlet 'Where the Australian's Rest' and the Memorial Scroll (320482) were mailed to Mrs E. Shields on February 22, 1922 and delivery was receipted on March 5, 1922.

On July 17, 1922 a Statement of his Service was sent to the Repatriation Commission in Sydney from Base Records.

The Memorial Plaque (320482) notice was sent to his mother on August 4, 1922 for collection and she authorised Alfred Shields to collect this for her on September 14. A request for the outstanding Form 'A' was sent on December 16, 1922.

Mrs Shields ordered after receiving a circular and remitted three shillings in payment for the purchase of the Register of the cemetery where her son was laid to rest. Due to the numerous enquiries for the Register of Longuenesse (St Omer) Souvenir Cemetery, Base Records advised on November 24, 1924 that the supply had been exhausted and would have to obtain further publications from the War Graves Commission. The overseas authorities had been asked to expedite their request and when available a copy would be forwarded without further delay. One Cemetery Register was despatched on February 14, 1925.

His mother passed away on December 29, 1925, her death registered at Balmain, NSW.

Sapper Shields' name appears on the State War Memorial in Perth and the final list of names were published in:

The West Australian Thursday August 1930:

STATE WAR MEMORIAL NAMES FOR TABLETS Final List

The names of all West Australian soldiers who gave their lives during the Great War are to be handed down to posterity by means of a series of tablets bearing their names on the walls of a section of the State War Memorial on Mount Eliza. The final section of the list of names is published below: *[Abridged to Tunnellers]*

Spr. SHEEHAN, Patrick, 3rd T. Coy.

Spr. SHERRIF, Charles Mackern, E. and M.M.U.

Spr. SHIELDS, Michael Joseph, 2nd T. Coy.

Article abridged

Kings Park - Perth



Great War Memorial



Honour Boards



CORPS OF ENGINEERS				ENGINEERS			
ABBERTON E.	COX J. B.	JONES J. P.		PERCEC A. W.	TRUMAN W. P.		
ABBOTT C. H.	COX W. J.	JOSE A. H.		PENNER J.	TUCKER A.		
ALEXANDER H. D.	CRAWFORD C. E.	KELLY E.		PERRY W.	TUCKETT F. J.		
ALLEN J.	CRAWFORD S. J.	KELLY M. H.		PHILLIPS F.	TURNBULL J.		
APPEL H. J.	CROSS A.	KELLY P. J.		PHILLIPS F. W.	TURNBULL J.		
APPLEBY F. W.	CUNNINGHAM M.	KELLY R.		PHILLIPS F. W.	VALLAURI S.		
ASHTON C. C.	CURPHEY W. K.	KEMP W. C.		PIDGEON I. F. W.	VAN DOK W.		
ATKINSON J.	CURRAN S. J.	KENNEDY A.		PLAYNE J. M.	VECCIA D. C.		
AYLIFFE M.	CURTIS S. C.	KENNY W.		PLUNKETT J.	VERRAN W. R.		
AYLWARD W. S.	DABB W. H.	KERSLAKE C. R.		POOLE L. W.	WALKER W. R.		
BABCH R. M.	DAVIS E.	KNIGHT F. N.		POWELL W.	WATERSTON C. A.		
BARLOW A. E. B.	DAVIS J.	LARKIN H. V.		PRADO W. J.	WATKINS C. A.		
BARNES T.	DAWSON F. W.	LAVARS W. J.		PROSSER T. E.	WATSON W. H. E.		
BARNES W. H.	DENNEY J.	LAVERY J. C.		PUDDY W.	WELCH A.		
BARNETT W.	DENTON A. J.	LAW-DAVIS F. C.		QUINE W. J.	WIGZELL A. T. J.		
BARNETT C.	DONNELLY J.	LEAVERS R.		QUINN C.	WILLIAMS C. E. C.		
BENSON F.	DONOHUE J. T.	LECHANE H.		READ F.	WILLIAMS H.		
BERRY J. W.	EDDISON J. J.	LEIPOLD J. T.		REID J.	WILLIAMSON F. C.		
BERRY W.	EDMONDS E. A.	LEWIS J. F.		REID N. A.	WILLIAMS J. R.		
BIDMEAD S. M.	EDWARDS H. L.	LUGG A. R.		RICHARDS J.	WILSON JOHN		
BIRRELL N. H.	ELIASSEN A. M.	LUND W.		RICHES H. J.	WILSON JOHN		
BLADES F. H.	ELIASSEN C. A.	LYNN J. C.		ROBERTSON J.	WISE E.		
BLOTH R.	ELLIS W.	M'ANDREW G. N.		ROBERTSON L.	WISLOCK A. J.		
BORG C. L.	FARE A. E.	M'COMISH A. C.		ROBERTSON T. R.	WITHERSPON J. A. F.		
BOWERS A. E.	FENNELL S.	M'CURRIE F. H.		ROBERTSON T. R.	WYATT R. A.		
BOWRA F. D. A.	FINCH T.	M'INERNEY J.		RODGER J. H.	YEWIS A. W.		
BRENNAN F.	FLANAGAN J.	M'INTOSH G.		RODGER W. J.	WILLIAMS A. S.		
BROCKLEY J. R.	FOX G. W.	M'KAY D.		ROSS H.			
BROWN E. J.	FRECKLETON J.	M'KAY JOHN		RUSSELL H.			
BROWN P.	CATTI A.	M'KAY JOHN		RUSSELL O. J. S.			
BUCK F. T.	CEDDER A. C.	M'KAY W. A.		SACKS C.			
BUCK J. N.	CIBSON E. T.	M'LEARY C.		SAMPFORD E. M.			
BURLEY C. E.	CILES W. J.	M'LEAH H.		SAUNDERS T. A.			
BUTLER E.	GILLET A. S. F.	M'MAHON J. J.		SAVERS A. H.			
CAMPBELL J. W.	GODFREY A. J.	M'PEAK W. J.		SCOTT W.			
CAMPBELL N.	GODLEY T. H.	M'ROONEY W.		SEINOR J.			
CAMPBELL W. A.	GRANT C. W.	MATHIESON W. D.		SHECHAN P.			
CARDEN J.	GRANT W. A.	MAYNE W. C.		SHERIFF C. M.			
CARLTON F. W.	GRAY J.	MENZIES W. R.		SHIELDS M. J.			
CARROLL H. J.	GREEN F. L.	M'NEERNEY J.		SKINNER W. J.			
CASSIN W. F.	GRIFFITHS W.	MUNRO A. C. F.		SMITH C. R.			
CHALKLEY J.	HALEY A.	MUNSTER J. T.		SMITHERAM J. T.			
CHAMBERS W. H.	HALEY F.	MUNY F. T.		SNELL W. A.			
CHEETHAM N.	HALL S. G.	MYTTON E.		SNOWDEN J. L.			
CHEWIDEN C. H.	HANBURY A.	NEWTON H. R.		STEDMAN T.			
CHRISTIANSEN P. M.	HARVEY J.	NIELSEN L. H. V. M.		STEPHENS J. R.			
CLARKE C.	HAWKINS S. H.	NOBLE R.		STEPHENS R.			
CLARKE R. F.	HAWTHIN F.	NOONAN W. B.		STEWART J. E.			
CLUNING C.	HEAF W.	OATES W. H.		STRANGER T. J.			
CLIVE B.	HEWLEY F. P.	OLSEN S. F.		SUTHERLAND J. F.			
COCKBURN G.	HOOD J. J.	O'SULLIVAN V.		SYMERS D. C.			
COCKS F. J.	HOPKINS H.	PASCO M. G.		TAYLOR F. L.			
COCKTON H.	HORAN A. A.			THOMPSON C. R.			
COHEN D. C.	HORROCKS B.			THOMPSON L.			
COLLYN E. E.	HORTON W. F.			THOMPSON S.			
CONNOLLY M.	HUTCHINSON F. J.			THOMSON A. T.			
COOK C. J.	JARRY A. E.			THORPE F. E.			
COOPER F.	JOHN C. W. C.			TOMLINSON T. C.			
	JOHNSON A. R. D.			TRECANOWAN W. J.			
	JOHNSON J.			TREKIDDER H. C.			
	JOHNSTON J. W.						

His name is also commemorated on Panel 27 in the commemorative area of the Australian War Memorial.

LEST WE FORGET

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