

James Stephen Lynch

1873 – 1948

AN UNSUNG LIFE

Part One.

Compiled by,
Vince Gattenhof
(The Third)

The following pages are not a chronological listing of James Stephen Lynch's story, it is rather, set out in the order of the various findings of this very unsung life as they were uncovered.

The end of his unsung life is the start of this story.

James Stephen Lynch died on the 20th May 1948, just 18 days after his 75th birthday. The back page of the Sydney Morning Herald, page 14, Friday 21st May 1948 contained the following notices.

“Deaths”

Lynch. James Stephen, - May 20, 1948, at his residence, 4 Wilson Avenue, Belmore, and late 55th Battn. 1st A.I.F. Dearly beloved husband of Gertrude Lynch, late of Bulgundra, Dalgety.

Requiescat in Peace.

“Funerals”

Lynch. The relatives and friends of Mrs. Gertrude Lynch of 4 Wilson Avenue, Belmore, are invited to attend the funeral of her beloved husband, James Stephen; To leave St, Joseph's Church, Belmore, This Friday, at 2.15pm. for Catholic Cemetery, Rookwood. (No. 3 Mortuary).

Wood Coffill, Limited. Sydney and Campsie. Phones; M4611 and LF3173.

When James died he and Gertrude had been married for 32 years. There were no children. Gertrude died 7 years later, 3rd February 1955. Both James and Gertrude are buried at Rookwood Cemetery. (Catholic Section). Sydney. N.S.W.

Gertrude's maiden name was Eather and 4 Wilson Avenue, Belmore was her Eather family home. It was 1906 when Gertrude's older sister Theresa had purchased the property. It was the focal point of the Eather family and their many relations and off spring for the next 50 years. The house itself was known by the name of “Yabbi”.

James and Gertrude had moved into “Yabbi” in 1942 just after the Japanese invasion of Sydney Harbour, to support Gertrude's sister Theresa. They both spent their final years living at

“Yabbi” with many passing siblings and descendents who called in for a day or a week or month or more. “Yabbi” was an old traditional family home.

This is the only picture of James and Gertrude in their later life that seems to exist.



Gertrude and James Lynch

A very formidable couple when you look at the photo. They were much respected and admired.

James Stephen Lynch was born 2nd May 1873 at Bulgundra, Dalgety, N.S.W. He was the 7th of 13 children born to Owen Lynch and Catherine McMahon. Owen Lynch was born 1829 in Foyran, County Westmeath, Ireland. Catherine was born 26th November 1840, Melbourne, Victoria. The Lynch family was one of the early pioneer families of the Monaro region of N.S.W.

Back to 1916, 100 years ago. W.W.1. was a major concern to Australia, as it was beholden to its ties with Britain. Recruitment drives from country areas were attempting to increase the number of men willing to join the war. One of these country marches was "The Snowy River March". It commenced 6th January 1916 from Delegate. Not too far from Dalgety and no doubt a great influence on James' next move shortly after.

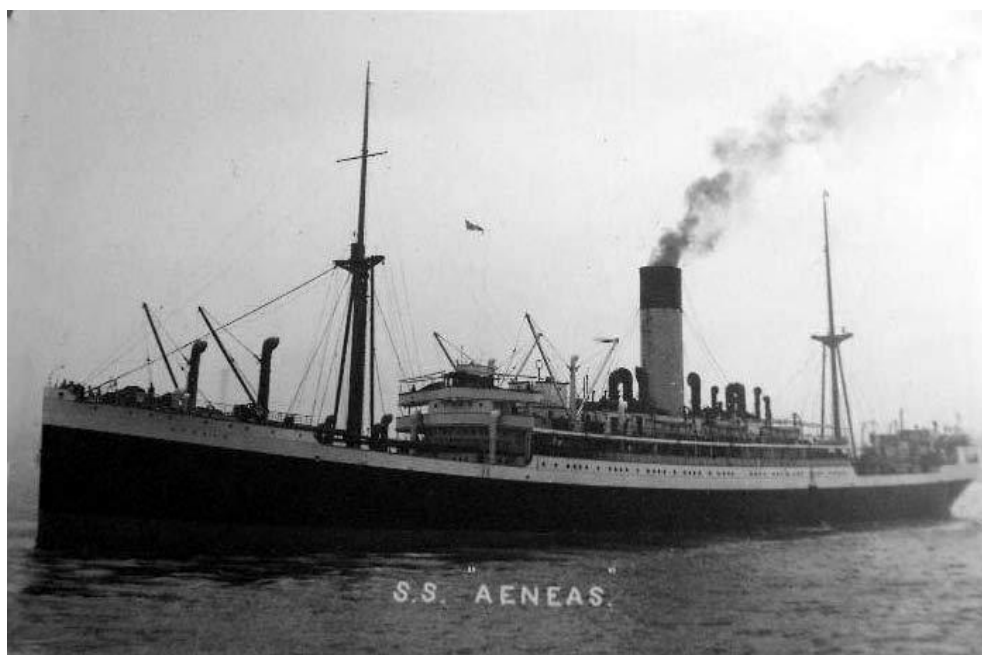
14th March 1916, James enlisted for service in the First A.I.F. at Berridale, near Goulburn. He was given the rank of Private, service number 2445, and attached to 55th Battalion, 1st A.I.F.

Just 6 months later on 16th September 1916 James Stephen Lynch and Gertrude Elizabeth Eather married at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Belmore. James was 43 years old and Gertrude was just two months short of her own 43rd birthday. There were just 14 days between their marriage and James' embarkation with his unit from Sydney, N.S.W, on board HMAT A60 Aeneas, bound for the Western Front.

S.S. Aeneas was built in 1910 in Belfast for the Blue Funnel Line for service on the South Africa to Australia route. It was requisitioned by the Australian Government for use as a troopship in 1915. It had already completed three return voyages carrying troops to the war fronts by September 1916.

HMAT Aeneas A60, with James Stephen Lynch aboard sailed from Sydney on 30th September 1916.

Melbourne was first port of call, then Fremantle, on to Cape Town, then a quick stop at Dakar in Senegal, West Africa, before arriving in Plymouth, England on 19th November 1916.



Images courtesy of Australian War Memorial.



Troops boarding HMAT Aeneas A60 at Melbourne heading off to war on the Western Front.

Before James departed Gertrude presented him with a small folding leather wallet with metal clip to lock it shut.



Inside was a small red patterned note book.



The top right corner inside the wallet can be seen inked into the wallet, James' home address.

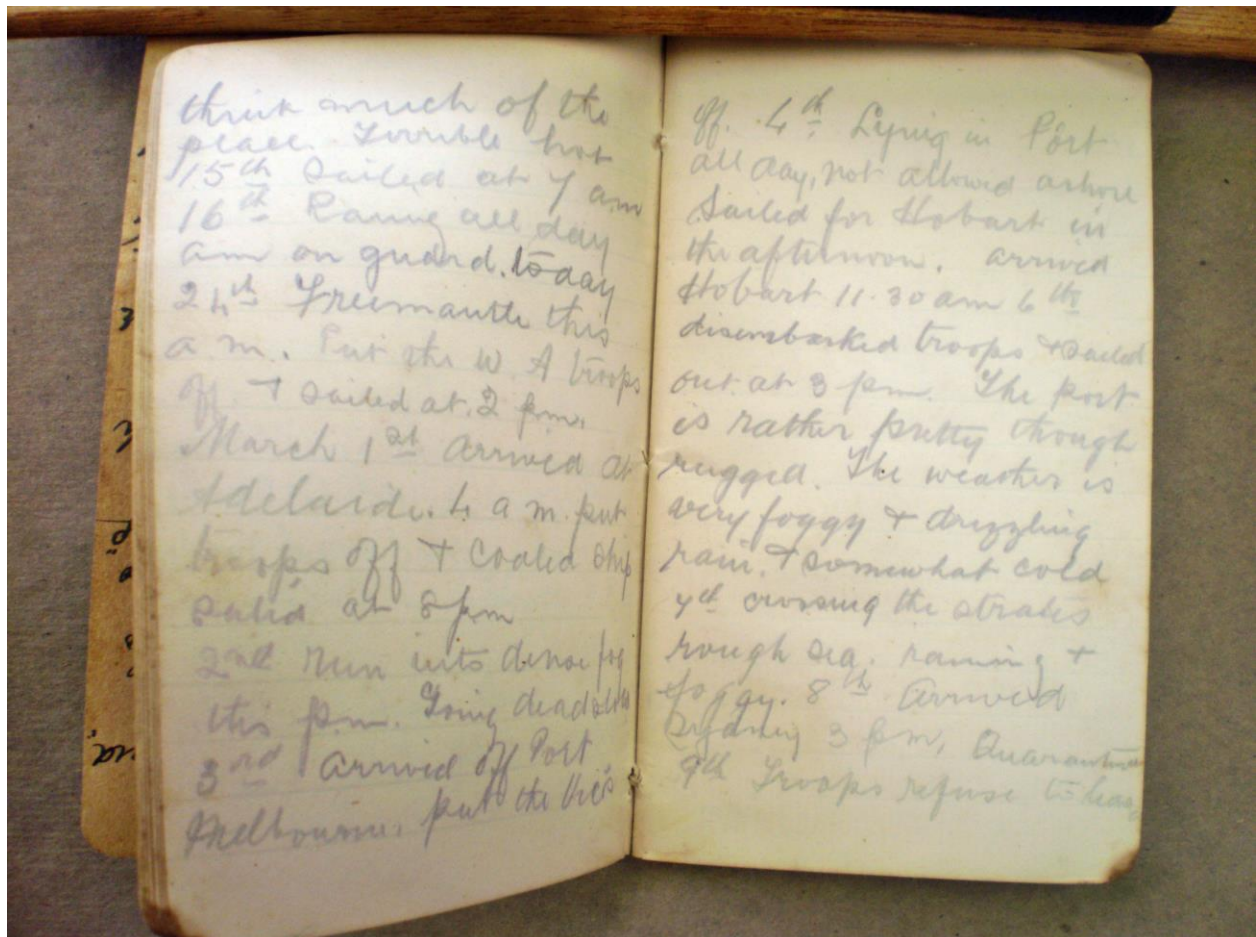
"J.S.Lynch. "Bulgundra". Dalgety. N.S.W."

There was however a written inked message inside the cover from Gertrude to James.

May God watch over
you, & protect & guard.
& send you safely
home to the one who
will always be
watching & waiting
for her Shavi "Habib"

Gertie Lynch
"Yabbi"
Wilson Avenue
Belmore
N.Y.C.
Nov. 15 -
is my birthday

It was in this small note book James recorded in pencil the main events and happenings in his life over the next two and a half years. 21 faded pages now approaching 100 years since they were penciled.



The picture above shows two pages of this small note book and his writings.

James' notes started from September 30th 1916 when they sailed from Sydney and finished on March 9th 1919. A very understated record of his involvement in harrowing times.

Below is a verbatim reproduction of his diary notes.

Diary of James Lynch

World War 1 September 30th 1916 to March 9th 1919.

Sept. 30th. Sailed from Sydney.

Oct. 3rd. Arrived in Melbourne.

Oct. 5th. Left Melbourne sailed around West Coast. Called at Fremantle. From there direct to Cape Town. Stayed two days in C.T. Were given afternoon tea on shore on arrival and a dinner the following day, and grand concert at night. Next call at Dakhah. Took a light gun on board. It freed up escort.

Arrived at Plymouth Nov. 19th. After a good voyage, no rough weather. Entrained at Plymouth for Hurdcott Camp, about 2.30pm. Reached camp at 12.30am. Had a five mile walk from Durton railway station. Got four days leave to go to London. Had a good time. Returned to camp and got to work. Went through musketry, bomb throwing and bayonet fighting.

Left Hurdcott Camp about 10pm. Dec. 18th. Raining all the while.

Reached Dover 6.30am. Dec. 19th. All hands as wet and miserable as possible. Embarked at once for France and weighed anchor at 9.45am.

Arrived at Calais 20th. Trained to Boulange and marched out to camp at Etaples.

Dec. 23rd. (Snouris?) left for the front in the early morning. Raining and blowing a hurricane. A lot of tents blown down.

Xmas day. Had a quiet one. Went to church.

Jan. 1st. 1917. Training through the bull ring, gas chambers, etc for the month.

Feb. 2nd. Went to hospital. Blood poison toe. A fortnight in hospital. Told off in draft for the front, a few days spent in preparation.

March. 1st. Went into trenches had a couple of narrow escapes from splinters of shell also a sniper put a few bullets in the side of the trench alongside me.

March 3rd. Came out of the trenches.

March 5th. Started back to the trenches again. In trenches and camped in dugouts. Lost Capt. Cummins and Leut. Chapman at Sunray Trench.

March 16th. Started for Bapaum, passed through several ruined villages.

March 18th. Reached La Flvos camped in a dugout for 4 days. The town deserted houses and churches blown to pieces. A statue of St. Joseph standing against a pillar at entrance not injured, found a little cave a short distance from church and a beautiful statue of Our Lady. Cave evidently used as a place of worship. In our dugout we have a picture of the Sacred Heart also two pictures of the crucifixion.

24th. Moved up in support trenches. Several aeroplanes flying around.

26th. Saw an aerial battle. 3 of our planes brought down in flames.

27th. Moving up this afternoon to the Somme front.

April 1st. Advanced at daylight across open country. Came under heavy machine gun fire. Lost a good few men. Captured two villages and several trenches. Held the trenches for two days and were then relieved.

April 3rd. Moved back for a rest. Spent a week doing fatigues. Continued fatigues and drill till May 7th. Then moved up into support.

8th. Raining all day. Standing to under orders to move up to front line tonight. Moved up to reserves.

10th. Moved into supports. Hit in foot with shrapnel.

12th. Went into front line.

15th. Relieved came back into reserves. Foot getting worse went to Dr. and am ordered back to hospital.

17th. Reached Field Hospital. Had foot lanced and small piece of shrapnel removed. Dr. says have got septic poison and must remain in hospital. Quite a relief to be away from the roar and din of the battle and the screeching of shells over our trench with the burst of shrapnel all around us.

19th. Am having a nice quiet time resting in hospital. Must get some writing paper and write some letters.

June. 1st. Still in hospital foot doing well.

June. 5th. Transferred to Con. Camp.

July. 1st. Transferred to Buchy Park. This is a very nice place. Some beautiful avenues with hedges and tall pines. Church half a mile from camp has been damaged by enemy. Another nice church 3 miles away, at Monterolier. Have church parades frequently.

18th. Am nearly well and will soon be leaving here.

Aug. 21st. Came to base and am light duty.

Sept. 9th. Joined the battalion two days ago. Foot not right yet. Am on light duty. Moving up to front.

Sept. 21st. Standing too to move into front line tonight.

22nd. Moved up last night camped in swamp behind front line. Shells dropping all around us. Going forward today and going over for bayonet charge.

24th. Two days in trenches. Relief can't get up. Expect them tonight.

Sept. 30th. Relieved about midnight. Came back to camp.

Oct. 3rd. Foot very bad and am sent back to field hospital.

Oct. 8th. Still in field hospital and have been shelled every night. He is sending a lot over today. Several are wounded and one sarg. killed.

Oct. 16th. Am in hospital at Para Pla. Foot not much better. May go to Blighty.

Oct. 21st. Came to England last night and am in hospital at Wulwich.

Nov. 13th. Foot improving not allowed to walk on it yet.

Dec. 1st. Have been out walking. Feeling alright again.

Dec. 22nd. Came to base.

March. 1st. 1918. After a couple of months at base am going to London today on 14 days leave.

4th. Arrived in Glasgow this morning. Have had a look around very nice city and the people are very friendly.

7th. Am having a fine time. Went for a sail down the Clyde. Have been to concerts and theatres every night. Had special invite to concert at James Hall. They took all overseas troops on to platform. Over two thousand people in hall. Marched onto platform headed by pipe band. Were cheered again and again by audience. Have been down the Clyde and through the big shipping yards and munition works, cloth factories and tobacco factories also museum and art galleries and botanical gardens.

12th. Leaving for Edinburah today.

13th. On my way back to London.

15th. Arrived at base this evening.

April. 4th. Classified C.L. and put on duty in Orderly Room.

August. 9th. Came to London for four days leave.

10th. Out all day. Visited Houses of Parliament, Hyde Park, Pall Mall.

10th. Sunday. Drive around London and visited the zoo.

13th. Came home today.

Sept. 12th. Transferred to Sutton Veux. Quite a big command here.

Sept. 16th. Have had a look around camp. Not on any particular duty yet.

18th. Cooking Sgts. Mess.

Oct. 2nd. Transferred to 1st. A.D. Hospital A.M.O. staff.

Dec. 4th. Came to London on ten days leave.

6th. Crossing to Dublin tonight.

7th. Looked around.

8th. Visited Phoenix Park. Statue of Wellington.

“Inscription”

Asia and Europe, saved by thee, proclaim

Invincible in war thy deathless name

Now round thy brow the civic oak we twine

That every earthly glory may be thine.

Conservata tuie asia atque europa triumphs

Invictum bello te colue re ducem

Nunc umbrata cerie cimili yempora quebiem

Ut desit fame Gloria nulla tue.

(Field Marshall Hugh Gough Viscount Statue.

Erected from cannon taken in the Peninsular war.

10th. Through Dublin Castle and College. The vaults in castle containing mummified bodies, in perfect state of preservation, one vault containing skeleton of nun eight centuries old. Museum. Beautiful paintings. One of Lady Morgan by R.T. Birtram 1818. Met some fine people here. The country is in a state of eruption. There have been riots to no end and the elections are on Saturday and likely to be riots. One of the interned prisoners named died in London and is being brought to Dublin for burial on Sunday.

14th. Returned to camp today.

18th. Transferred to Weymouth.

19th. Transferred to Verne Atads.

21st. Went to mass this morning.

Xmas day. Attended two masses. Had dinner in large hall. The ladies of the town came out and waited on table. Social dancing and singing 2 to 5.30. Concert after tea.

29th. Sunday. Went to mass and H.C. A wet foggy day.

Jan. 1st. 1919. Had a sports meeting. In tug of war team and beaten in final pull.

18th. Left for Verne at 6am. Reville at 4. Breakfast at 4.30am. Arrived at Plymouth 3.30pm and went aboard the Ulysses.

19th. Steamed out at 2.30pm on our way to Australia.

20th. Are having heavy weather wind and sleet and rain. The sea very rough and choppy. Have not been sick yet, although didn't feel too safe.

21st. We are in the Bay of Biscay.

22nd. Sighted the coast of Spain this morning are having beautiful weather and running along the Spanish coast.

23rd. Gibralter. 2am. Put ashore 25 troops and one nurse with flue. Rather a nice place.

26th. Passed a floating mine at one o' clock this morning and passing Malta at 2pm.

28th. Port Said 2.30pm. Not much to see here.

29th. Left Port Said 12. 30pm. Passing through canal, appears to be nothing but sand. Miles of tents and troops. Quite a lot of Aussies.

30th. Arrived at Port Suez. No one allowed to leave the boat. Talks of being quarantined.

Feb. 1st. Left at noon and are going through the Gulf of Suez.

12th. Arrived at Colombo at midnight last night.

13th. Lying at Colombo all day.

14th. Went ashore today and had all day in the town don't think much of the place terrible hot.

15th. Sailed at 7am.

16th. Raining all day. Am on guard today.

24th. Fremantle this a.m. Put the W.A. troops off and sailed at 2pm.

March 1st. Arrived at Adelaide 4am. Put troops off and coaled ship. Sailed at 8pm.

2nd. Run into dense fog this pm. Going dead slow.

3rd. Arrived off Port Melbourne. Put the Vic's off.

4th. Lying off Port all day. Not allowed ashore. Sailed for Hobart in the afternoon. Arrived Hobart 11.30am.

6th. Disembarked troops and sailed out at 3pm. The port is rather pretty though rugged. The weather is very foggy and drizzling rain and somewhat cold.

7th. Crossing the Straits. Rough sea, rain and foggy.

8th. Arrived Sydney 3pm. Quarintened.

9th. Troops refuse to leave ship. Got ashore into quarantine 4pm.

This was the end of the diary entries. James' service records show these final entries.

24th April 1919. Discharged from the A.I.F. at Sydney.

Medically unfit. Disability. Trench Feet.

There was a welcome home celebration for James shortly after his return and this was held at the Eather Family home, "Yabbi", Wilson Avenue, Belmore.

The following photo taken along the side of "Yabbi" records the day.



Back row – left to right. Harry Lynch. Mary Magdalene (Madge) Plumridge, (nee Eather), Percy Major Plumridge, (husband of Madge), May Clare Olive Clark, (nee Eather), Therese (Tess) Eather, Terry Murphy, Elizabeth Hanrahan.

Second row – left to right. Eileen Smallwood, (nee Eather), Eileen (Dianne) Murphy, Ellen Balbina Murphy, (nee Eather), Mary Hentsch, (nee Eather), Bernard Gattenhof, Kathleen Cecelia Gattenhof, (nee Eather), Eileen Medcalf, (nee Eather), John (Toby) Medcalf, Louisa Lynch.

Third row – left to right. Christopher Gattenhof, Desmond Murphy, Ellen Eather, (nee Farrell.2nd wife of Abraham Eather)), James Lynch, (husband of Gertrude), Gertrude Lynch, (nee Eather), Major Thomas Joseph Lynch, (cousin of Jamesa Lynch). Joseph Gattenhof.

Front row – Left to right. Vincent Karl Gattenhof, Kathleen Magdaleen Gattenhof, Molly Clark, Colin Medcalf.

Two people in the photograph remained unidentified by the Eather family until 2014. They were the gent, back row left. Harry Lynch and the lady, second row far right, Louisa Lynch. There lies a story of which more will be told later.

,There is also, a not very clear photo of the old weatherboard cottage that was the home of this branch of the Eather family, and was known to all as “Yabbi”.



“Yabbi” all dressed up and the family celebrating, 1919.

It is now nearing 100 years since James Stephen Lynch penciled his notes in his diary. He was a quiet, reserved person in his later life and this comes across in his writings. His religious beliefs show through in his comments whilst dealing with day to day life on the Western Front. James wrote of the times he went into the front line, went over the top on bayonet charges and was stuck for days under all sorts of bombardments and the injuries he suffered and worse for nearby comrades. His little diary left unsaid the horrors that he and his fellow members of the 55th did themselves endure.

October 2014, a new book was published. Titled “Snowy to the Somme”. By Timothy J. Cook. The definitive history of the 55th Battalion in W.W.I. Brilliantly researched with minute details

from letters, diaries, reports and with basic down to earth remarks from those who were there at the time. This book will give you more “on the ground” details of life on the Western Front and more particularly the 55th battalions’ trials and tribulations. A fine record of a very terrible time.

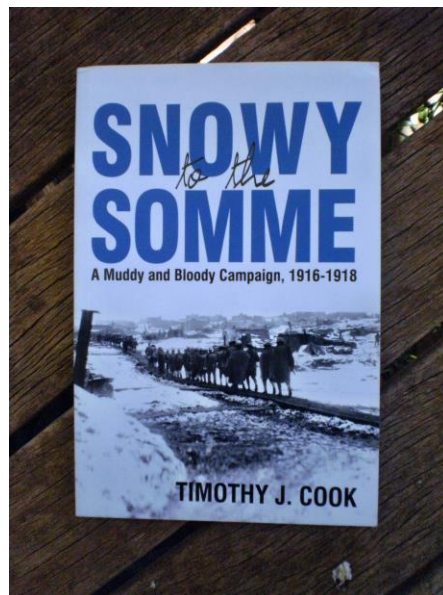
Read it!! And weep!!

Mid February 1917 the battalion received a further intake of reinforcements. These included Private James Lynch. Page 97 of the book records this as “Most of the men were from the Kangaroo and Snowy River route marches. Fine big countrymen they were, typical of the Monaro and the Riverina”. Over the next eight to nine months the 55th battalion was heavily involved in the battles at Doignies, then at Bullecourt and at Polygon Wood. It was the end of September 1917 when James with a very bad foot was sent to a field hospital. No rest apparently, as the hospital was shelled. He was then taken across to “Old Blighty”, as he stated.

The book lists 531 troops who died on active service from the 55th battalion. There were 1875 wounded in action and 105 were taken as prisoners of war. There is also a “Nominal Roll” list of the names of those who served with the 55th battalion. This runs to 38 pages and it is where we find on page 22 the following, “2445 Lynch, James.”

James’ diary entries fit into the book from page 97 to page 160. He did not elaborate with graphic descriptions but there is no doubt he was there amongst the mud, the gore and horror.

He survived!



Above is the book that holds these records of the men of the 55th Battalion who lived, suffered and died on the Western Front 100 years ago.

5th cent
AUSTRALIAN

5th cent
MILITARY FORCES.



A

105008

IAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. N 13621 2445 Name James Lynch
55th Batt. Unit 55th Batt.
 Joined on 14th 3.16

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name? 1. James Lynch
2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born? 2. In the Parish of Belgumda in or
near the Town of Dalgety
in the County of N.S.W.
3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.) 3. Yes
4. What is your age? 4. 43
5. What is your trade or calling? 5. gunner
6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period? 6. No
7. Are you married? 7. Yes
Miss Gertrude Lynch
8. Who is your next of kin? (Address to be stated) 8. Dalgety
Belgumda
9. Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? 9. No
10. Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces, with Ignominy, or as Incurable and Worthless, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy? 10. No
11. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge 11. Shanghai Police 1897
12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? 12. Yes
13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? 13. No
14. Do you understand that no Separation Allowance will be issued in respect of your service beyond an amount which together with Pay would reach eight shillings per day. 14. Yes
15. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against smallpox and enteric fever? 15. Yes

I, James Lynch do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

* And I further agree to allot not less than two-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife three-fifths
 wife and children

Date 14/3/16 Signature of person enlisted. James Lynch

*This clause to be amended where necessary and should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 18 years of age.

The previous page shows a copy of The Attestation Paper that James Stephen Lynch completed when he applied to enlist in the 1st A.I.F. at Berridale in March 1916.

There were some later corrections to his married status before he left Australia which can be seen. His service record runs to some 30 plus pages

However, the eye catching item on this Attestation Paper is his answer to question 11.

Asked about previous service for British or Colonial forces he answered, "Shanghai Police". and added "eight years".

The "Unsung Life" of James Lynch suddenly became the "Very Unsung Life" of James Lynch