

**Netley Military Cemetery,
Hampshire, England
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



2343 PRIVATE

J. H. CROFT

3RD BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

27TH JULY, 1916 Age 25

John Hector CROFT

John Hector Croft was born at Mittagong, NSW on 28th March, 1891 to parents John and Eliza Croft (nee Evans).

John Hector Croft attended Bulli Public School, NSW.

John Hector Croft was a 23 year old, single, Drover from Farrell's Road, Bulli, NSW when he enlisted at Liverpool Camp, Sydney, NSW on 3rd November, 1914 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 1343 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his father – John Croft, of Farrell's Road, Bulli, NSW. John Hector Croft stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served with Bulli Rifle Club for 2 months. He had also been previously rejected at Victoria Barracks as unfit for His Majesty's Service.

Private John Hector Croft was posted to 2nd Reinforcements of 3rd Battalion for recruit training.

Private John Hector Croft embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Seang Bee (A48)* on 11th February, 1915 with the 3rd Infantry Battalion, 2nd Reinforcements.

(The original Attestation Papers, the Embarkation Roll, Notice of the Death of a Soldier & an Inventory of Effects (to be sent to Mr John Croft) have the Service number for Private John Hector Croft as 1343. The rest of the forms in the Service Record file have the Service number as 2343).

Private John Hector Croft embarked on *Derflinger* to join M.E.F. (Mediterranean Expeditionary Force) on 4th April, 1915.

Private John Hector Croft was wounded in action between 25th & 30th April, 1915 at Gallipoli with gunshot wounds to right forearm. He was admitted to No. 2 General Hospital at Cairo on 30th April, 1915. Pte Croft was discharged to duty on 3rd June, 1915.

Private John Hector Croft was admitted to No. 2 General Hospital at Cairo with Hydrocola on 13th July, 1915.

Private John Hector Croft proceeded to rejoin M.E.F. from Alexandria on 1st August, 1915 on *Alnwick Castle*.

Private John Hector Croft was evacuated from Anzac on 21st December, 1915 & disembarked from *Simla* at Alexandria on 29th December, 1915.

Private John Hector Croft embarked from Alexandria on HMTS *Grampian* on 22nd March, 1916 & disembarked at Marseilles, France on 28th March, 1916.

Private John Hector Croft was admitted sick to 2nd Australian Field Ambulance on 15th June, 1916 with frachoma then transferred to 1st Australian Casualty Clearing Station the same day. He was discharged to duty on 22nd June, 1916 & rejoined his Unit on 25th June, 1916.

Private John Hector Croft was wounded in action in France (no date recorded. Usually soldiers were taken to a Field Ambulance first then transferred to a Casualty Clearing Station). He was admitted to 3rd Casualty Clearing Station on 23rd July, 1916 then transferred to No. 29 Ambulance Train on 24th July, 1916. Pte Croft was admitted to No. 3 Stationary Hospital at Rouen, France on 24th July, 1916 with gunshot wounds to left shoulder. He embarked for England on Hospital Ship *St. George* on 26th July, 1916.

From the War Diary – 3rd Battalion

20th July, 1916 – La Boisselle:

Work commenced on improving communication trenches. Officers & NCO's carried out reconnaissance of our front & enemies position at Pozieres. 2 O/Ranks to wounded.

21st July, 1916 – La Boisselle:

Work on communication trenches continued.

2100 large parties from each company moved up and dug assembly trenches behind front line parados, and approaches along CONTAL MAISON – POZIERES Road. Lieut. F. W. Morton wounded.

Operation order received for attack on POZIERES

9 O/Ranks to killed in action

11 O/Ranks to wounded. 1 O/Rank to Hospital

22nd July, 1916 – La Boisselle:

Officers & NCO's carried out further reconnaissance of enemy front – Operation for this night cancelled and one on larger scale announced by Brigadier at conference of CO's and preparatory orders issued.

The Brigade was to assault three objectives in enemies lines before POZIERES & these were given to Bn's vide operation orders attached to summary of 23rd inst.

200 Bn moved up to assembly trenches immediately in rear of 1st BN & occupied trenches prepared the previous night in rear of Parados and along the POZIERES - CONTAL MAISON ROAD.

1 O/Rank Killed 3 O/Ranks Wounded 1 O/Rank to Hospital

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

3rd Battalion

The 3rd Battalion was among the first infantry units raised for the AIF during the First World War. Like the 1st, 2nd and 4th Battalions it was recruited from New South Wales and, together with these battalions, formed the 1st Brigade.

The battalion was raised within a fortnight of the declaration of war in August 1914 and embarked just two months later. After a brief stop in Albany, Western Australia, the battalion proceeded to Egypt, arriving on 2 December. The battalion took part in the ANZAC landing on 25 April 1915 as part of the second and third waves and served there until the evacuation in December. In August, the battalion took part in the attack on Lone Pine. For his valorous action in defending Sasse's Sap at Lone Pine on 9 August, Private John Hamilton was awarded the Victoria Cross. After the withdrawal from Gallipoli, the battalion returned to Egypt. In March 1916, it sailed for France and the Western Front. From then until 1918 the battalion took part in operations against the German Army, principally in the Somme Valley in France and around Ypres in Belgium. The battalion's first major action in France was at Pozieres in the Somme valley in July 1916. Later the battalion fought at Ypres, in Flanders, before returning to the Somme for winter.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private John Hector Croft died at 12.40 am on 27th July, 1916 at Sea, on board the Hospital Ship *St. George* as a result of wounds received in action – ruptured spinal cord and cardiac failure. Pte Croft's body was sent to the Mortuary at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley awaiting burial.



Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley

Private John Hector Croft was buried at 3.30 pm on 28th July, 1916 in Netley Military Cemetery, Hampshire, England – Plot number C.E. 1824 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Private John Hector Croft contains a request from the Red Cross on behalf of the relatives to obtain details of his sufferings and death. The O.C. of Troop Hospital Ship St George wrote the following reply: *“ With reference to your letter dated 2.11.16. No 1343A, Pte John Hector Croft 3 A.I.F. died on board the Hospital Ship “St George” at 12.40am on 27-7-16. from (1) Rupture of Spinal Cord (Result of Gun shot wound received in action) and (2) Cardiac Failure. The death occurred at sea on voyage from Rouen to Southampton, the body being removed to the Mortuary at the Royal Victoria Hospital Netley on 27-7-16. Private Croft gradually became weaker during his last hours and was unconscious at death. He left no message of any kind. Personal effects left on board were sent to the Baggage Officer Southampton, and his money to the Paymaster Southampton.”*

Private John Hector Croft requested in his Will, dated 12th April, 1915, that in the event of his death the whole of his property & effects be given to Frank Cat, Hopetoun Street, Bulli, NSW.

Private John Hector Croft was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Croft's father - Mr J. Croft, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent July, 1921 & Plaque sent November, 1921).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private John Hector Croft – service number 2343, aged 25, of 3rd Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of John and Eliza Croft.

Private J. H. Croft is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 36.

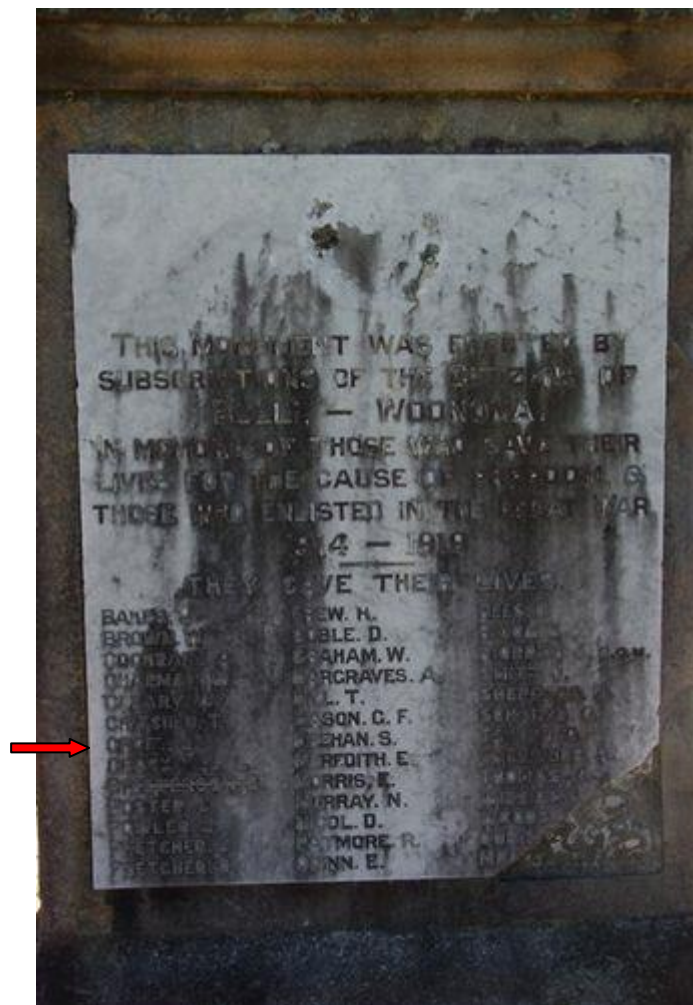


Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

J. Croft is remembered on the Great War Memorial, located at Slacky Flat Park, Princes Highway & Grevillea Park Road, Bulli, NSW.



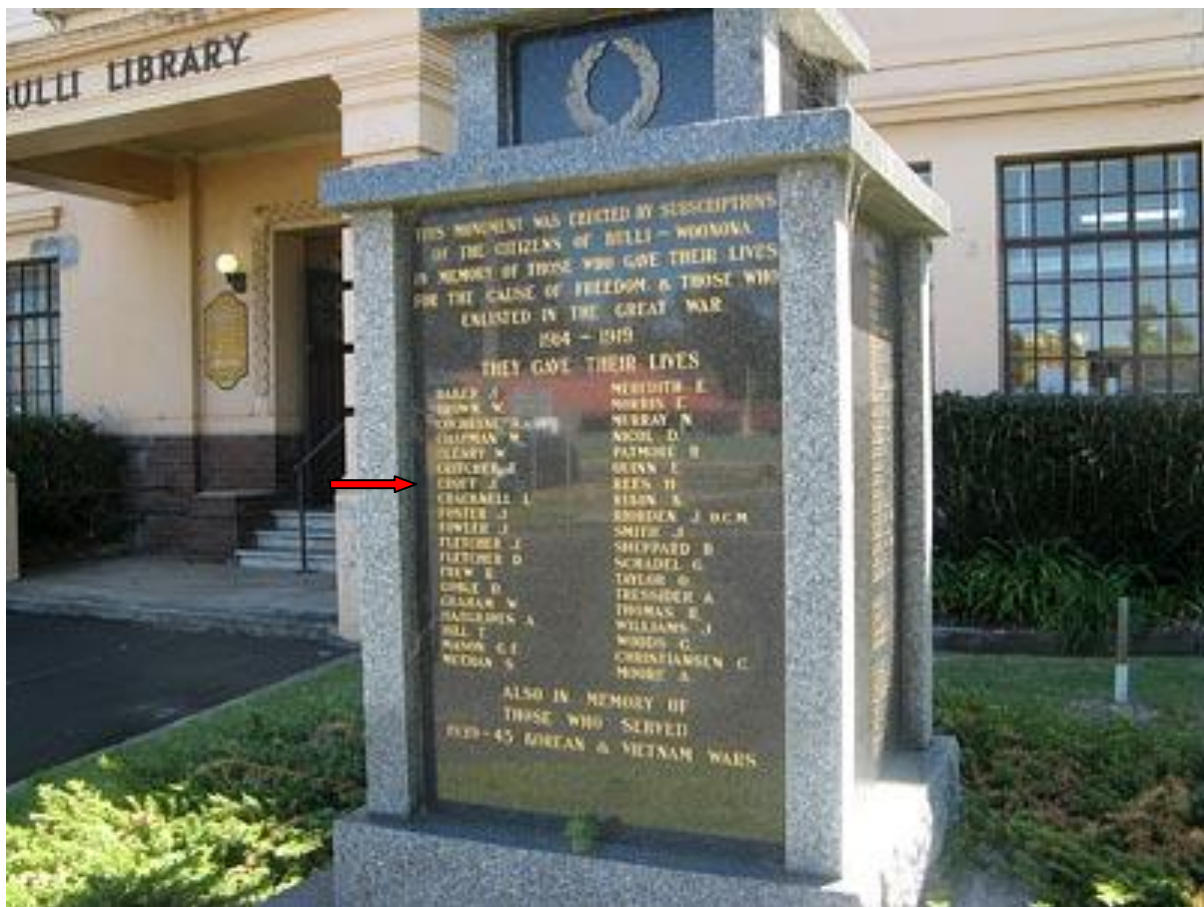
Great War Memorial, Bulli (Photos from Monument Australia – Peter F. Williams)



J. Croft is remembered on the Bulli-Woonona War Memorial, located at Bulli Library, Princes Highway, Bulli, NSW.



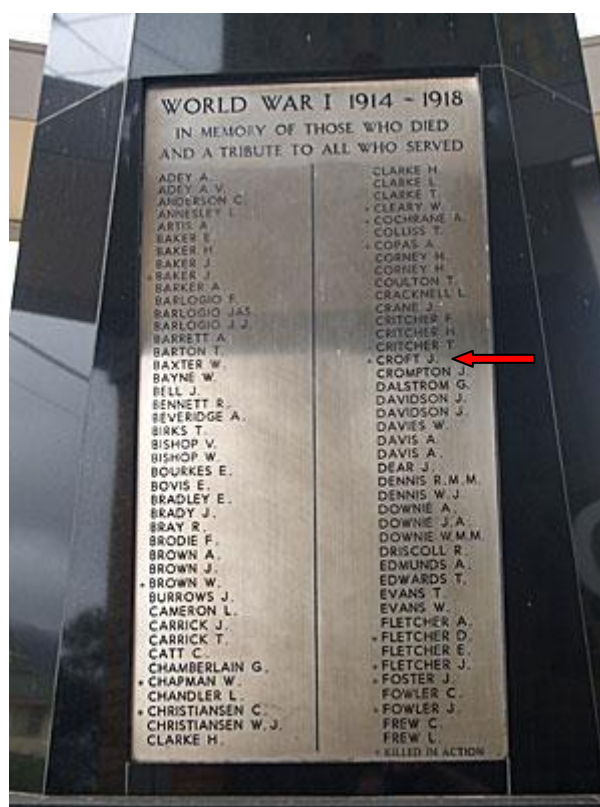
Bulli-Woonona War Memorial (Photos from Register of War Memorials in NSW)



J. Croft is remembered on the Woonona-Bulli RSL War Memorial, located outside Woonona-Bulli RSL, cnr Princes Highway & Nicholson Rd, Woonona, NSW.



Woonona-Bulli RSL War Memorial (Photos from Register of War Memorials in NSW)



(37 pages of Private John Hector Croft's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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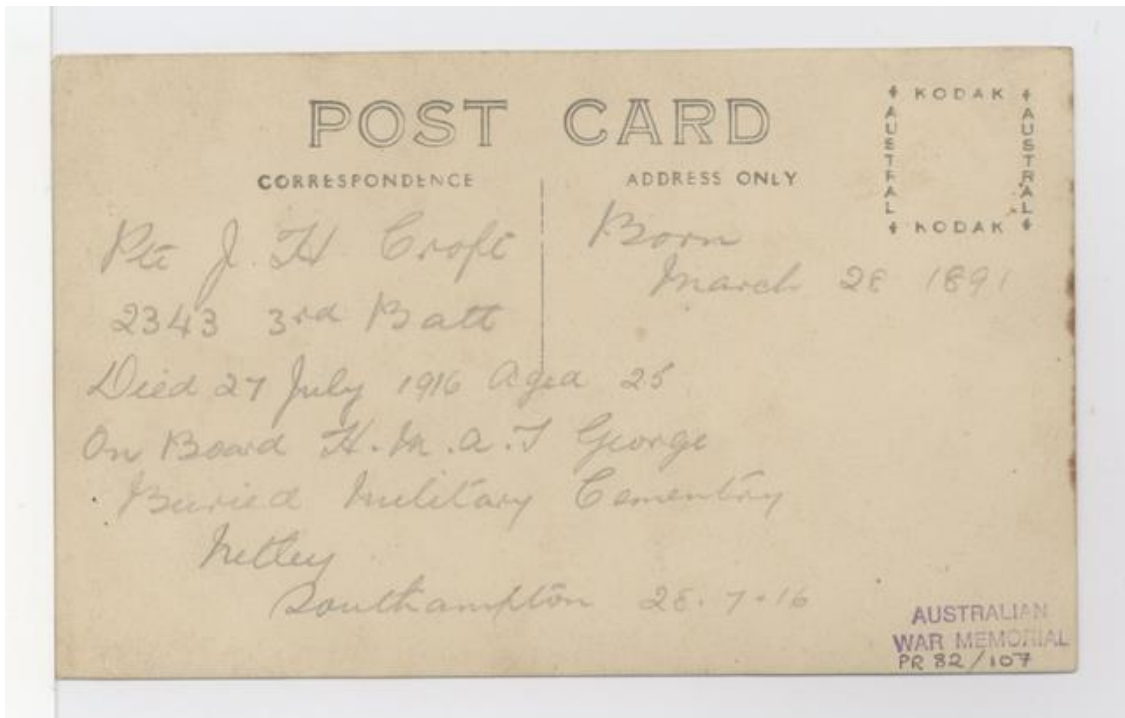
John Hector Croft



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

RCDIG0001001

Private John Hector Croft

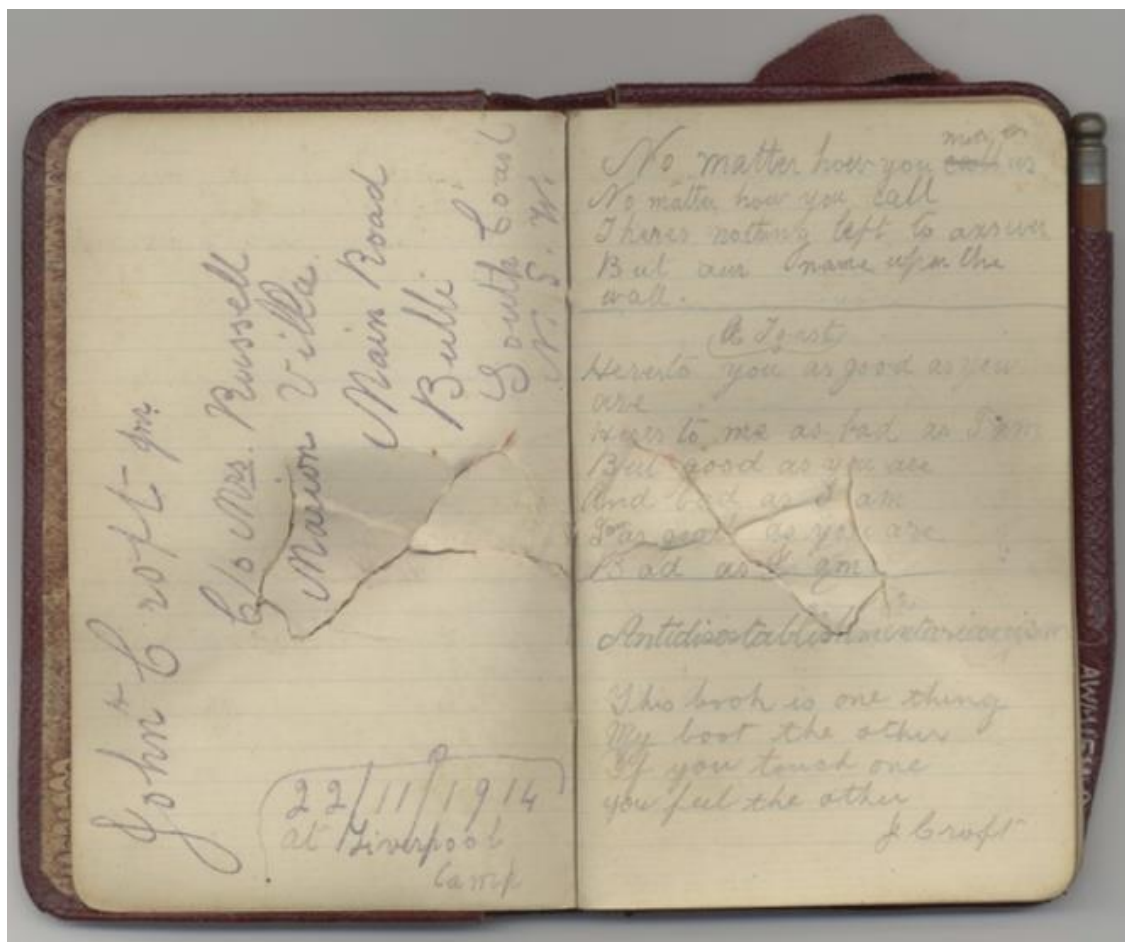


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

RCDIG0001001

The Australian War Memorial website has a Pocket-book relating to the First World War service of 2343 Private John Hector Croft, 3rd Battalion, AIF. The pocket-book was kept by Private Croft throughout 1915 at Gallipoli. On the 25 April, 1915, the pocket book was pierced by a Turkish bullet which had penetrated Croft's arm and then lodged in the book. 17 images are available for viewing on the AWM website.

According to information provided by his father for the Roll of Honour – Pte Croft “was in the landing at Gallipoli, where he was shot through the wrist and his pocket book shattered over his heart by the same bullet.”



Pocket book belonging to Private John Hector Croft with bullet damage.

Two letters & a postcard written by Private John Hector Croft are also available for viewing on the Australian War memorial website.

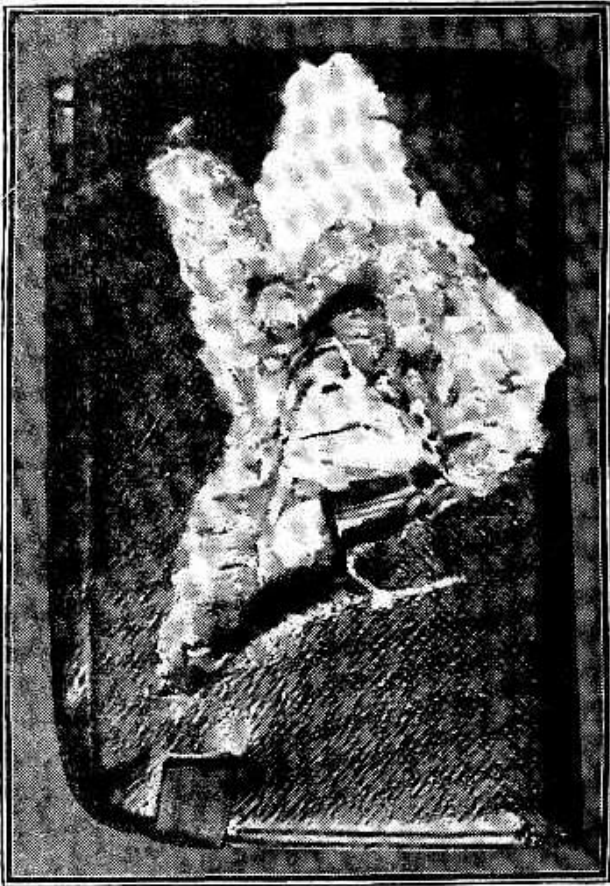
Newspaper item – Illawarra Mercury, Wollongong, NSW – 11 June, 1915 & Sunday Times, Sydney, NSW – 13 June, 1915:

A Valuable Pocket Book

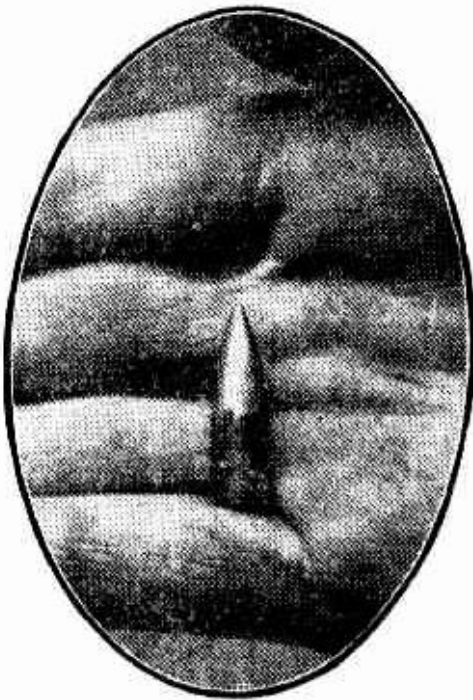
SAVES A SOLDIER'S LIFE

A souvenir of the war was received this week by Mr Frank Catt, of Bulli, from Private John Croft, of Woonona. It consisted of the young fellow's pocket book with a sharp nose bullet embedded in it. A few weeks ago Private Croft was reported wounded, and from this practical message it can be seen how narrowly he missed fatal injury. This message of death passed through his fore-arm, and would have entered his body but for striking the book at an angle. He has sent an earnest request that the sacred trophy be preserved.

SAVED BY A POCKET-BOOK



POCKET-BOOK WHICH SAVED THE LIFE OF
PRIVATE JOHN CROFT, OF BULLI



**ACTUAL SIZE OF THE BULLET
WHICH EMBEDDED ITSELF IN THE BOOK**

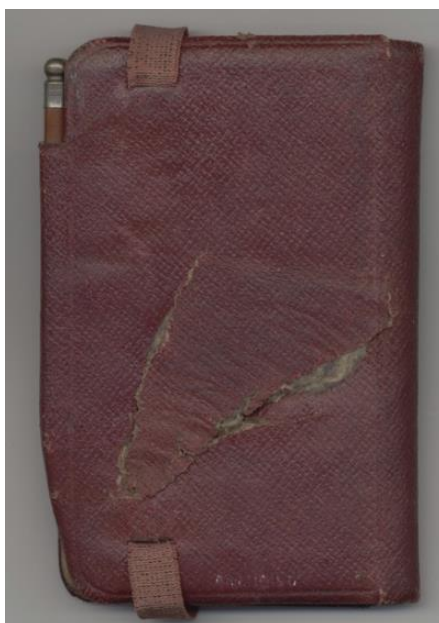


PRIVATE CROFT

The story of Private Croft's narrow escape is best told in his own words in a letter to Mr F. Catt, of Bulli. "Towards 12 noon on the day of the landing at the Dardanelles," he writes, "the Turks were knocking us over pretty often, and I stopped a bullet in my pocket-book after it had been through my left fore-arm. It was a good thing for that it turned against the bone, causing it to come out broadside on (as the doctor says), in which fashion it entered my pocket-book, going almost entirely through it. Had it done so there would have been no more Turks for me. I thought I was finished as it was, because the blow over the heart knocked me out. I will send you the pocket-book to keep for me as soon as I get to Cairo. It is no use to me now, but as it saved my life I would like to keep it as a curio."

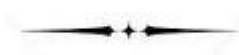
Mr H. F. Cotterell, of Bulli, in forwarding the pocket-book for reproduction, on behalf of Mr Catt, says that the doctor at the base hospital at Mena stated that but for the bone of the arm deflecting the bullet nothing could have saved young Croft.

The book is about half an inch thick, with Morocco cover. The bullet completely embedded itself, but in the above picture is shown partially exposed.



Back Cover of Pocket-book belonging to Private John Hector Croft

(Photo from AWM – 17 images in total are available for viewing)



Newspaper Notices

THE LOSSES

....

WHO THEY ARE

.....

PRIVATE CROFT

Private J. H. Croft, wounded in action, is a single man, of athletic build, 24 years of age, and was an expert in mechanical and practical engineering work. He was a member of the Second Expeditionary Force, and left Bulli in February.

(Daily Telegraph, Sydney, NSW – 10 May, 1915)

ROLL OF HONOUR

CROFT – July 27, on board H.M.S. St George, John H. Croft, beloved son of Joe and E. Croft, Bulli; aged 25 years.

(Sunday Times, NSW – 6 August, 1916)

ROLL OF HONOUR

CROFT – Died at sea, July 27, on board H.M.S. St. George, Private John H. Croft, beloved son of J. and E. Croft, of Bulli, aged 25 years.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 8 August, 1916) & (Daily Telegraph, Sydney, NSW - 8 August, 1916)

WAR CASUALTIES

PRIVATE J. CROFT

Mr John Croft, of Farrell's-road, Bulli, has received a cable message stating that his son, Private John Croft, about 25 years of age, has been killed in action in France. Deceased saw service in Gallipoli. He was employed for some years at the Bulli cokeworks.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 10 August, 1916)

CASUALTIES

NEW SOUTH WALES

DIED OF INJURIES

Pte J. H. Croft, Bulli

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 14 August, 1916)

Return Thanks

Mr and Mrs JOHN CROFT, of Bulli, wish to return thanks to all kind friends who sent letters, cards, and tokens of sympathy during their bereavement through the death of their son, Pte J. H. Croft.

(South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus, NSW – 18 August, 1916)

IN MEMORIAM

CROFT – In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Private John Croft, died of wounds, July 27, 1916.

He rose responsive to his country's call,

He gave his best, his life, his all.

Inserted by his sorrowing parents, brothers and sisters.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 27 July, 1917)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)

Private J. H. Croft does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Netley Military Cemetery, Hampshire, England

Netley Military Cemetery is a permanent military cemetery, the property of the Ministry of Defence. The cemetery was at the back of the Royal Victoria Military Hospital and was used during both wars for burials from the hospital. The cemetery contains 637 First World War burials but only 35 from the Second World War. In addition to the Commonwealth graves, there are a number of war graves of other nationalities including 69 German graves dating from the First World War.

(Information & photos from CWGC)



Netley Military Cemetery, Hampshire



Netley Military Cemetery, Hampshire (Photo above - Andrea Charlesworth; below - darealjolo)





AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

RCDIG0001001

The original Cross Marker for Private John Hector Croft in Netley Military Cemetery, England

Photo of Private J. H. Croft's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Netley Military Cemetery, Hampshire, England.



(Photo by Andrea Charlesworth)



Netley Military Cemetery



Original Cross markers – Netley Military Cemetery