Bournemouth East Cemetery,

Bournemouth, Dorset

War Graves

Lest We Forget

World War 1

5435   PRIVATE

W. J. PUNCH

1ST BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

29TH AUGUST, 1917   Age 37

William Joseph PUNCH

William Joseph Punch was born around 1880. (A story has been circulated that William Punch was found as a baby by John Siggs in 1880 after members of his tribe had been massacred near the Bland River in retaliation of the Aboriginals having speared a cattle & roasted & eaten it. Apparently John Siggs had no knowledge of the massacre which occurred during the night & found the young baby with his dead mother. It is believed that Punch was told later in life that he had been born in Queensland so that he would not seek out his relatives as it was presumed that they had all been killed. Apparently William Punch was known in his home town simply as "Punch" and referred to himself as such.)

William Joseph Punch was a 31 year old, single, Labourer from Pejar, NSW when he enlisted at Goulburn, NSW on 31st December, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 5435 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his friend – Oswald Gallagher, Bourke Street, Goulburn, NSW. William Punch listed himself as Aboriginal on his Attestation Papers & stated he was born in NSW.

Private William Joseph Punch was posted to "A" Company at Goulburn on 31st December, 1915 for recruit training. He was fined 5/- on 15th February, 1916 for overstaying leave by 1 ½ hours. Private Punch was transferred to Liverpool, NSW on 14th March, 1916. He was fined 10/- on 1st April, 1916 for being Absent without leave.

Private William Joseph Punch embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Ceramic (A40)* on 14th April, 1916 with the 1st Infantry Battalion, 17th Reinforcements & disembarked at Suez on 16th May, 1916.

Private William Joseph Punch was reallotted from 1st Training Battalion at Tel-el-Kebir & posted to 14th Training Battalion on 20th May, 1916. (Note: Two Statement of Service forms in the Service Record file for Private Punch recorded that he was transferred to 53rd Battalion on 20th May, 1916. No other form in his file has a record of this).

Private William Joseph Punch embarked from Alexandria for overseas on 29th July, 1916 on *Arcadian.* Private Punch reported to 15th Training Battalion at Perham Downs, Wiltshire on 9th August, 1916 from Egypt.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Private William Joseph Punch proceeded overseas to France on 21st August, 1916 from 15th Training Battalion. He reported at 1st Australian Divisional Base Depot at Etaples, France on 21st August, 1916 from England. Private Punch proceeded to join his Unit from 1st Australian Divisional Base Depot on 4th September, 1916 & joined 1st Battalion from 17th Reinforcements on 5th September, 1916 in Belgium.

Private William Joseph Punch was wounded in action in Belgium on 7th September, 1916. [Note: The first 3 lines of his Casualty Form – Active Service which recorded the events around 7th September, 1916 have been torn & cannot be read.] Private Punch was admitted to 3rd Canadian Casualty Station on 8th September, 1916 with G.S.W. (gunshot wounds to scalp) then was transferred & admitted to No. 3 General Hospital at Boulogne, France on 8th September, 1916. He was transferred & admitted to No. 1 Command Depot at Boulogne, France on 13th September, 1916. Private Punch was discharged to Base Details on 15th September, 1916.

War Diary – 1st Battalion

7th September, 1916:

0230 – Advance party as detailed in Bn Relief Order of 5th ult. proceeded to Right sub-section trenches to take over trench stores, maps Documents etc & await arrival of rest of Bn. In the evening Coys proceeded to relieved 3rd Bn at hours and by routes as instructed in the Relief Order.

2135 - A Coy completed relief of right. Coy in firing line.

2200 – D ----------"----------------of left. ----------"-----------.

2150 – C Coy completed relief of Support Coy.

2200 – B Coy -------------"--------- Reserve Coy.

Reported relief complete by 1st Bn to 1st Inf Bde Hq.

During the night a little work was carried out improving the firing line. Fatigues and carrying parties were supplied by the Bn.

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Private William Joseph Punch reported to 1st Australian Divisional Base Depot at Etaples, France from Hospital on 16th September, 1916. He proceeded to join his Unit on 28th September, 1916 & rejoined his Battalion in the Field on 30th September, 1916 from being wounded.

Private William Joseph Punch was written up for a Crime on 11th November, 1916 "*Losing by neglect his General Coat valued at 30/3"*. This was admonished & he was to pay cost of General Coat 15/-.

Private William Joseph Punch was sent sick to Hospital on 26th November, 1916. He was admitted to XIV E. R. Station with Neuritis Feet on 26th November, 1916. Private Punch was transferred & admitted to 36th Casualty Clearing Station on 5th December, 1916 then transferred to 24th Ambulance Train on 6th December, 1916. He was admitted to No. 26 General Hospital at Etaples, France on 6th December, 1916 with Trench Feet. Private Punch was transferred to No. 6 Convalescent Depot at Etaples on 15th December, 1916 then transferred to 5th Convalescent Depot at Cayeux on 22nd December, 1916 & admitted on 23rd December, 1916. He was discharged to Base Depot on 4th March, 1917.

Private William Joseph Punch joined 1st A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 4th March, 1917 from Hospital. He proceeded to join his Battalion on 30th March, 1917 & rejoined 1st Battalion in France on 1st April, 1917.

Private William Joseph Punch was wounded in action (2nd occasion) in France on 5th April, 1917. He was admitted to 3rd Field Ambulance on 5/6th April, 1917 with G.S.W. (gunshot wound/s) to right buttock & transferred & admitted to 56th Casualty Clearing Station on 6th April, 1917. Private Punch was transferred to No. 23 Ambulance Train on 8th April, 1917 & admitted to 11th Stationary Hospital at Rouen, France on 9th April, 1917. He was transferred to England on 13th May, 1917 on Hospital Ship "*St David.*"

War Diary – 1st Battalion

HAPLINCOURT - 5th April, 1917:

0400 – Advance party proceeded to 59th Battalion Headquarters in line.

1030 – C. O. visited 1st Inf. Bde H.Q.

0930 – Received 1st Infantry Brigade order for relief 1st Battalion to relieved 59th Battalion in line on night of 5/6th inst.

1330 – Senior Major and R.M.O. proceeded to 59th Battalion H.Q. in line.

1630 – Senior Major reconnoitred line and support positions returning at 2020.

DOIGNIES

1730 – Battalion proceeded to DOIGNIES to relieve 59th Battalion in line

2240 – Relief was completed. 1st Brigade informed by code message.

2400 – Senior Major visited front line returning at 0300 6/4/17 found all correct.

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

1st Battalion

The 1st Battalion was the first infantry unit recruited for the AIF in New South Wales during the First World War……

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. At Bullecourt in

© Cathy Sedgwick 2019

May 1917, Corporal G. J. Howell became the third member of the battalion to be awarded the Victoria Cross. The battalion participated in the battle of Amiens on 8 August 1918.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private William Joseph Punch was admitted to Sherbourne Red Cross Hospital, England on 14th May, 1917. On 18th June, 1917 he developed Endocarditis. He was transferred to Mont Dore Military Hospital, Bournemouth, Hampshire, England on 24th July, 1917.

Private William Joseph Punch died at 7.15 pm on 29th August, 1917 at Mont Dore Military Hospital, Bournemouth, Hampshire, England from Pneumonia and Endocarditis.

A death for William J. Punch, aged 32, was registered in the September quarter, 1917 in the district of Christchurch, Hampshire, England.

Private William Joseph Punch was buried at 3 pm on 31st August, 1917 in Bournemouth East Cemetery, Bournemouth, Dorset, England – Plot number X. 3. 185 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Private William Joseph Punch - *Coffin was good. The deceased soldier was accorded a full Military funeral. Firing Party was supplied by the New Zealand Engineers, Christchurch. Wreaths were sent from Australian Friends, Fellow Comrades "C" Floor, Mont Dore and Nursing Staff, Mont Dore.*

Private William Joseph Punch requested in his Will, located in his Pay Book, that in the event of his death the whole of his property and effects to be divided in equal parts between Oswald Gallagher, Bourke St, Goulburn, NSW & Eliza Jane Lynch (at the farm where he was employed in Australia).

Private William Joseph Punch was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Punch's closest next-of-kin. (There is no record of who received his Medals or Scroll & Plaque. A receipt was signed for by O. Gallagher on 11th April, 1918 for the personnel effects of the late Private William Joseph Punch).
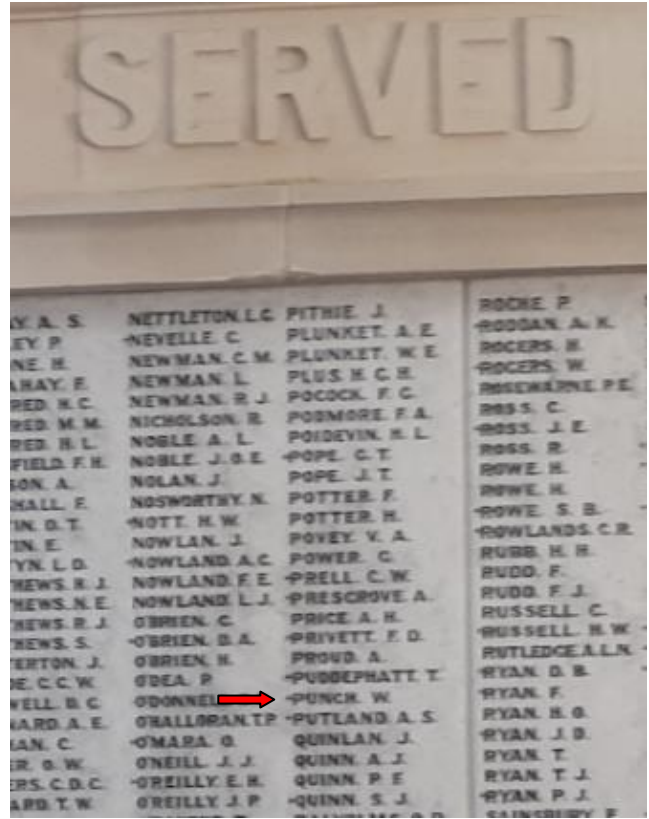
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private William Joseph Punch - service number 5435, aged 37, of 1st Battalion, Australian Infantry. No family details are listed.

Private William Joseph Punch is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 30.
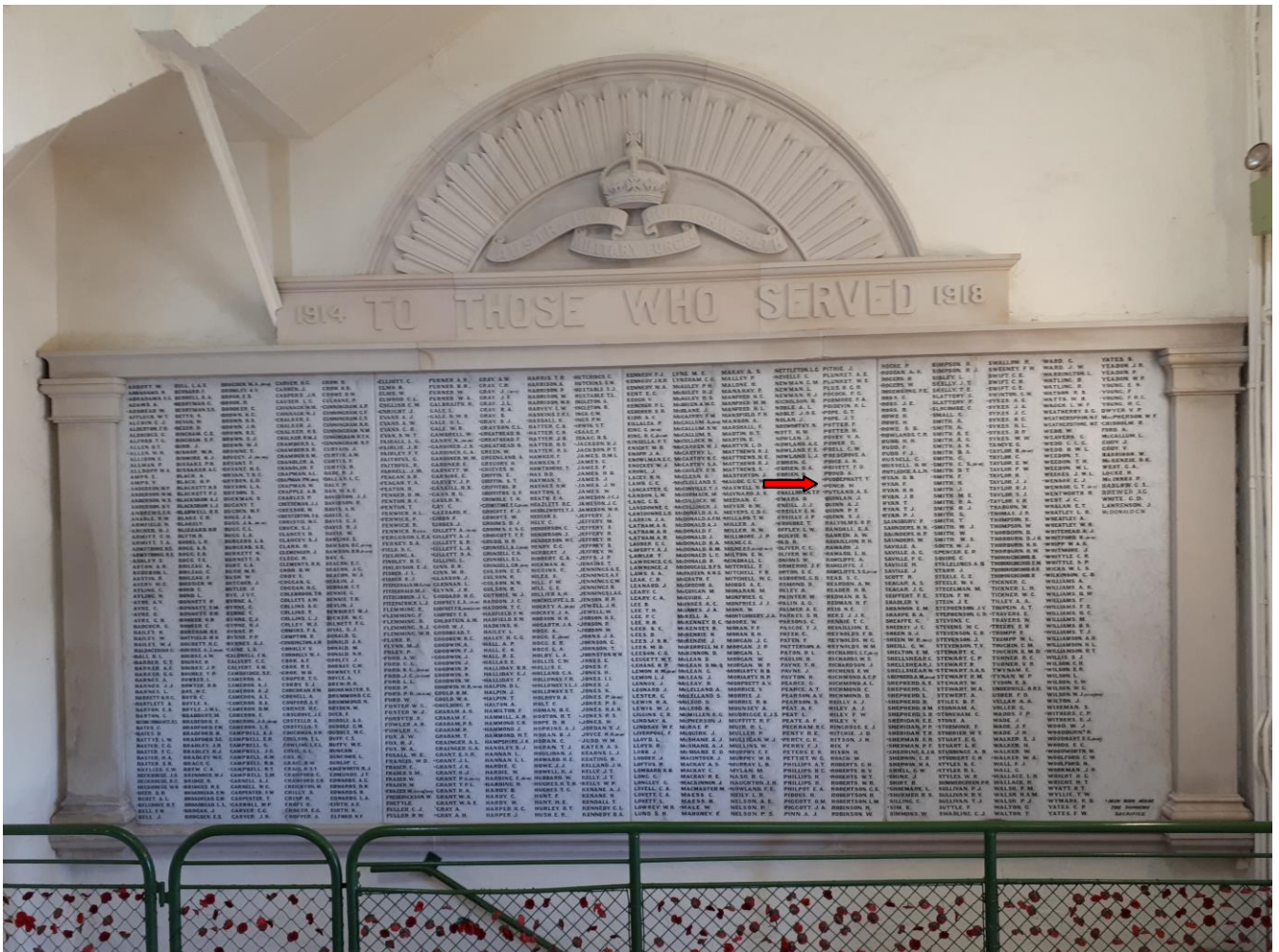

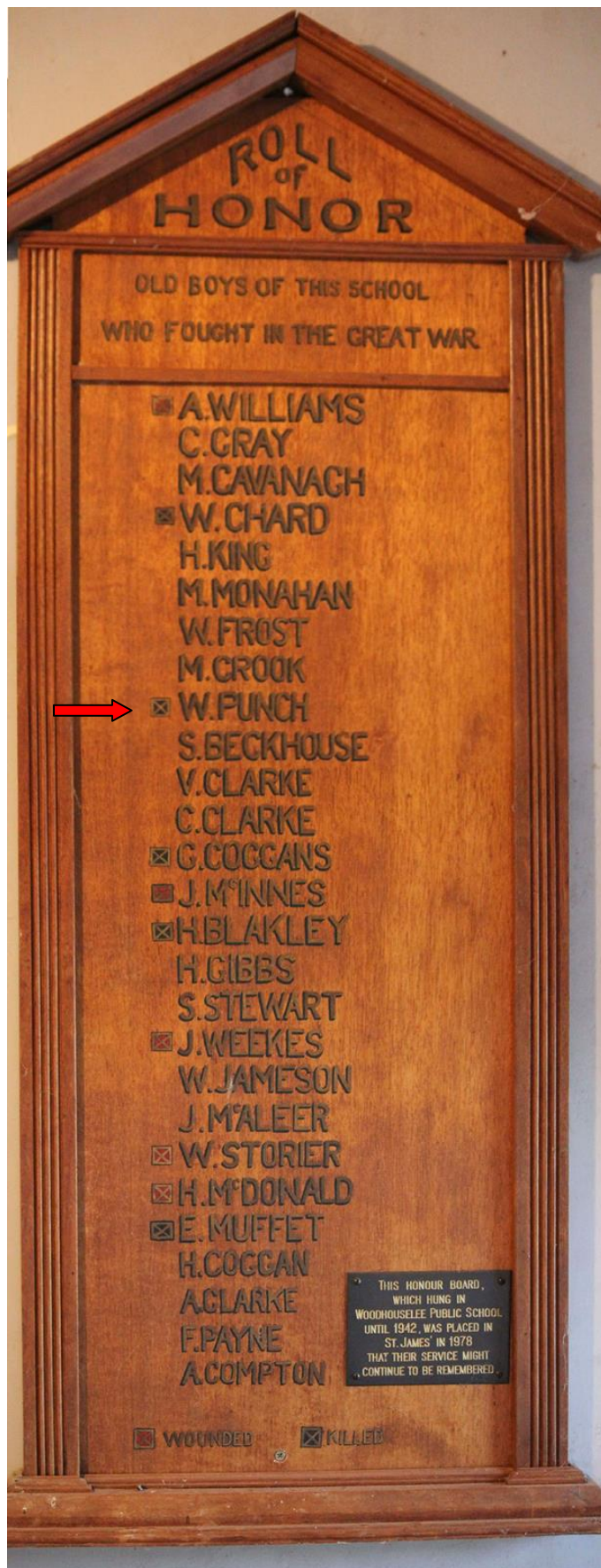*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

W. Punch is remembered on the Rocky Hill War Memorial, located on Memorial Drive, Rocky Hill, Goulburn, NSW.

Rocky Hill War Memorial at Goulburn *(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)*

W. Punch is remembered on the Woodhouselee Public School Roll of Honour, located in Roslyn Memorial Hall, 3597 Middle Arm Road, Roslyn, NSW. (Woodhouselee is between Crookwell & Goulburn.)

Woodhouselee Public School Roll of Honour

(Photo from War Memorial Register of NSW – Katrina Nixon)

W. Punch is remembered on the Crookwell War Memorial, located in Memorial Park, Spring & Marsden Streets, Crookwell, NSW.
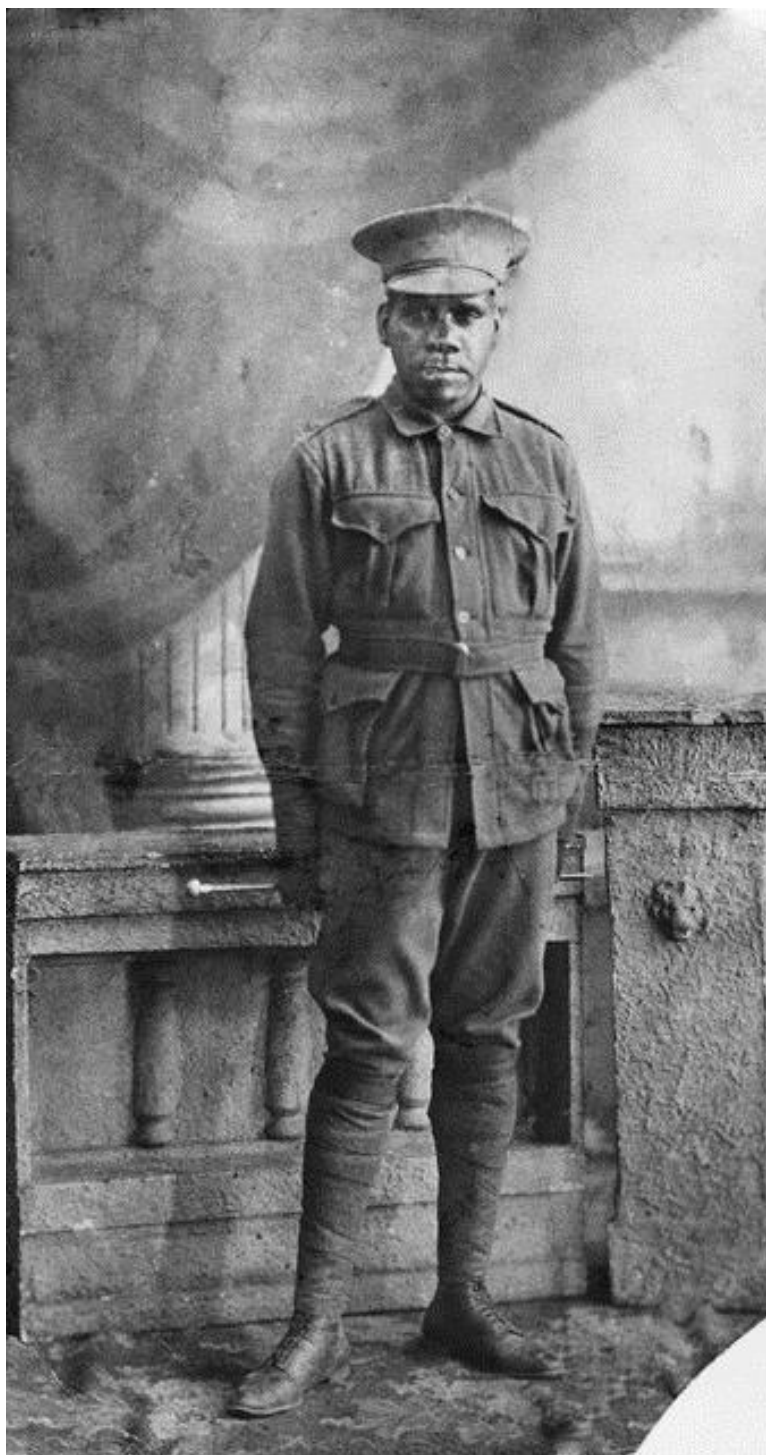

Crookwell War Memorial *(Photos from AWM – Places of Pride – Henry Moulds)*

Private William Joseph Punch is recorded by The Australian War Memorial as a person of Indigenous descent who enlisted for service in World War 1.

(45 pages of Private William Joseph Punch'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) & National Archives

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL   P01625.003

Private William Joseph Punch

Newspaper Notices

POLICE COURT

INDECENT BEHAVIOUR

William Punch, an aboriginal, pleaded guilty to a charge of behaving in an indecent manner in Goldsmith-street on June 6 and was fined 2/6 or one hour in the lockup.

(*Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, NSW – 9 June, 1914)

RECRUITING IN GOULBURN

The following names have been added to the list at the Drill Hall:- …..William Joseph Punch, Goulburn…..

(*Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, NSW – 4 January, 1916)

FOR THEIR COUNTRY

NSW WAR CASUALTIES

Mr. Oswald Gallagher of Goulburn. has received a telegram from the Base Records Offices, stating that Private William J. Punch had been wounded in France. Private Punch is an aboriginal, and was better known as "Sigg's Punch," he having been reared by the Siggs family, at Pejar, near Goulburn. He was a native of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and came to Pejar when quite a little fellow. He is about 32 years of age and was an all-round athlete, in addition to being a fine rifle shot. "Punch" was trained in the Goulburn Camp, where he was a favourite, and where he was looked upon as a mascot. He left in the early part of this year with the "Kangaroos."

(*Evening News*, Sydney, NSW – 10 October, 1916)

CASUALTY LIST

The 233rd casualty list gives a total of 26 officers and 567 others. Amongst the severely wounded is Pte W. H. Boyd, Braidwood. Others are:- …Pte W. J. Punch (wounded)..

(*Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, NSW – 14 October, 1916)

LETTER FROM THE FRONT

PTE W. J. PUNCH

Pte. W. J. Punch writes, dated Sept. 3:—I was in England nine days, and had a great time. We are now in a part of France, and have a good camp here. We have been all supplied with gas helmets, and were put through a tunnel with gas turned on in it to try the helmets. They proved all right. We also had bomb practice and bayonet drill. I am still, with my mate. He used to work at Dan McRae's at the Clear Hills. He is a "bosker" young chap. We are leaving

here early to-morrow morning for the firing line. It is only six hours' run in the train. Our camp is right aside the railway line, and the beach is also close. The people are very kind over this way, but it seems a pity to see the women, both here and in England, doing the men's work. (Private Punch was reported wounded two days after the above letter was written.)

(*Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, NSW – 28 October, 1916)

Goulburn and the War

PTE "PUNCH" WOUNDED

Mr O. Gallaher, Bourke-street, on Thursday night received a message from Base Record informing him that Pte William Punch had been wounded (second occasion). No particulars were given. Pte Punch is an aboriginal, and was known as "Siggs's Punch". He was trained in the Goulburn camp.

(*Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, NSW – 28 April, 1917)

CASUALTIES

The 324th list contains the following:-…..Ill: ……Pte Wm. Joseph Punch, Goulburn (dangerously, previously reported wounded, second occasion.

(*Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, NSW – 17 July, 1917)

Goulburn and the War

DEATH OF PRIVATE W. J. PUNCH

The Rev. Canon Carver received official information on Monday that Pte. Wm. Joseph Punch, 1st (late 53rd) Battalion, died on August 29, 1917. The intelligence was conveyed to his best friend, Mr. Oscar P. Gallagher, of Bourke-street. Pte. Punch, who was an Australian aboriginal, was brought from North Queensland by the late Mr. John Siggs, Pejar, about 25 years ago. He worked for some years on the Pejar Station, and afterwards until the time of his enlistment, January, 1916, with Mr. C. E. Prell. Punch was a great favourite everywhere, and his comrades in the army called him their "mascot." He was an athlete, and notwithstanding his complexion he was one of the "whitest" men in the district. He was a devout Roman Catholic, and was present at the memorable Communion breakfast given after Mass at St. Patrick's School Hall to departing soldiers in April, 1916. He was wounded twice before the illness which ended his life. The nature of the illness is not yet known.

(*Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, NSW – 11 September, 1917)

Goulburn and the War

Mr. O. Gallagher, Bourke-street. has been informed by Base Records that the late Pte. W. J. Punch died at Mont Dore Military Hospital, Bournemouth, England, on 29th August, of pneumonia and endocarditis and was buried at East Cemetery, Boscombe, Bournemouth, in consecrated ground, grave X3, No. 185, on 3lst August. The deceased soldier was accorded a full military funeral. A firing party was supplied by the N.Z. Engineers. Christchurch. Wreaths were sent from Australian friends, fellow comrades, "C" floor, Mount Dore, and Nursing Staff, Mount Dore.

WW1 Aboriginal Soldier William Punch defies all odds

The story of an Aboriginal man who defied all odds was told by former Aboriginal Affairs Minister, ex-Senator Nigel Scullion in Inverell on Wednesday.

Mr Scullion joined former Senator John 'Wacka' Williams to present a gift to the RSL Sub-Branch and RSM Club for hosting hundreds of delegates for the Nationals Conference a couple of weeks ago.

A framed portrait of an Aboriginal soldier was gifted, blessed and welcomed with clapping sticks by ex-serviceman Kelvin Brown.

Wacka said the image was of WWI solider William Joseph Punch who knew what toughness was all about being the sole survivor of a Bland Creek massacre, near west Wyalong in 1880.

History tells William was discovered amongst dead bodies of his tribe as a small baby who was trying to suckle from his deceased mother's breast.

A raid was conducted after white people had found a beast speared, roasted and eaten on the Bland River by the Aboriginal tribe.

Framed portrait: Inverell's Kelvin Brown accepts the National Party's gift of WWI Aboriginal soldier William Joseph Punch which will now hang in the RSM Club.

Unbeknownst to William, he grew up with many in the same community who slaughtered his people and enlisted in the AIF in Goulburn on December 31, 1915.

Mr Scullion said Punch would have been fairly educated and probably had little to no accent. His enlistment application listed "labourer" as his occupation and his skin colour was identified as "black".

According to the Australian War Memorial, he embarked for the training camps in England in April 1916 aboard the troopship HMAT Ceramic with the 17th reinforcements for the first Battalion.

On arriving he transferred to the 53rd Battalion. Punch joined the 53rd at the front in northern France on September 7, 1916. Just two days later he was wounded in action for the first time.

A piece of shrapnel to the head saw him out of action for four weeks. After receiving treatment, Punch spent winter in the trenches where he picked up trench foot and had to be evacuated to hospital.

Having recovered twice, he was sent back to the front line and wounded for the last time suffering a serious gunshot wound to the buttock.

He was evacuated to England and admitted to a military hospital in Bournemouth, where his condition deteriorated. Within days he was being treated for pleurisy, which soon developed into pneumonia, passing away on August 29, 1917.

(*Inverell Times*, NSW – 18 July, 2019)

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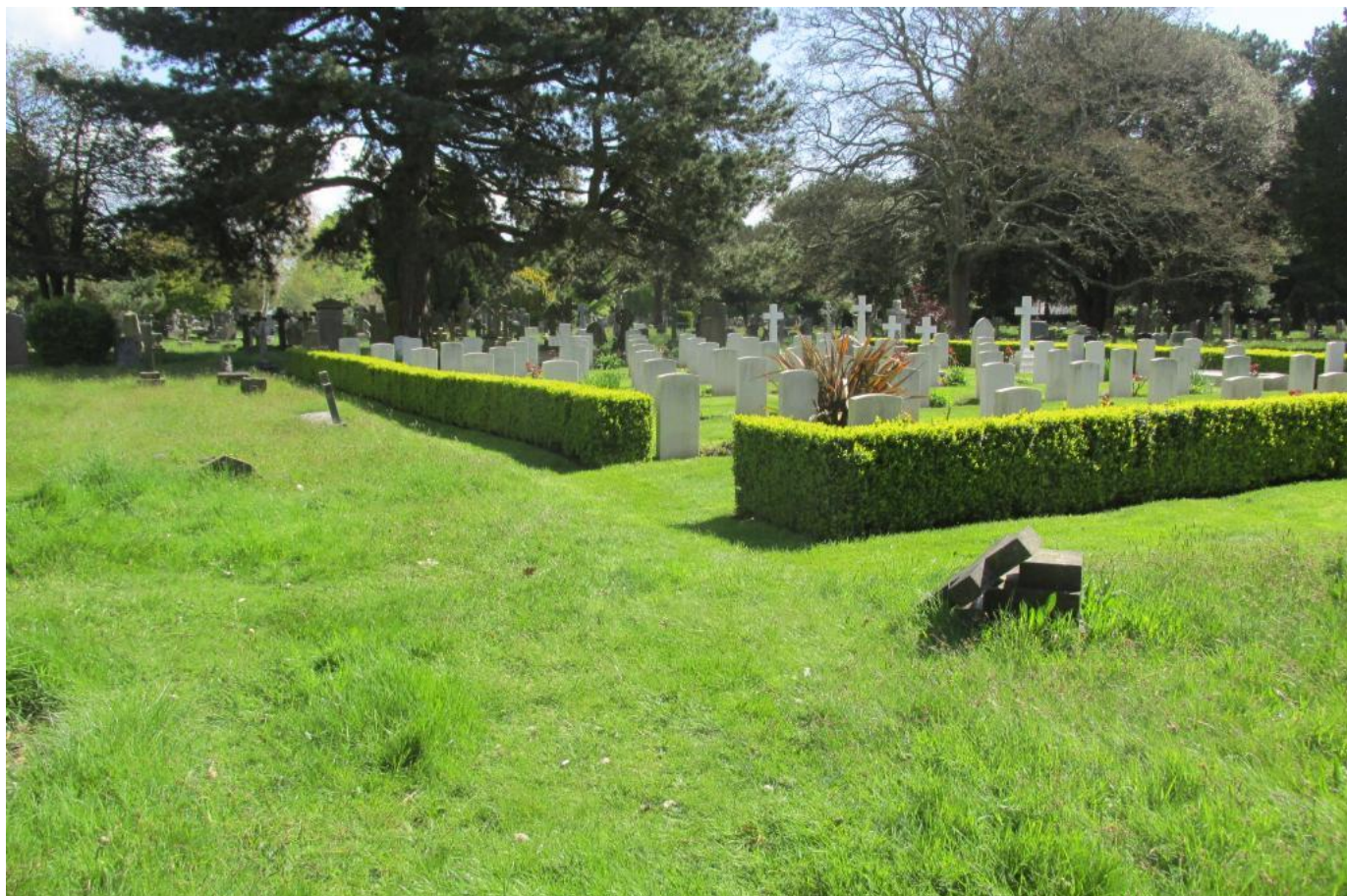*(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)*

Private W. J. Punch does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Bournemouth East Cemetery, Bournemouth, Dorset, England

Some of the 120 First World War burials in this cemetery are those of soldiers who died in Bournemouth's auxiliary and private hospitals. 75 of these graves are in a special plot on the main path and include a Special Memorial to 2 soldiers drowned off Bournemouth in January 1915, whose bodies were not recovered. The plot also contains 7 of the 68 Second World War burials, the rest being scattered throughout the cemetery. One of the First World War burials is unidentified. There are 4 Foreign National war burials here.

The war plot is enclosed by a hedge, and the War Cross is on the West side of it. It was at one time called Boscombe Cemetery.

(Information from CWGC)

Bournemouth East Cemetery *(Photo from CWGC)*

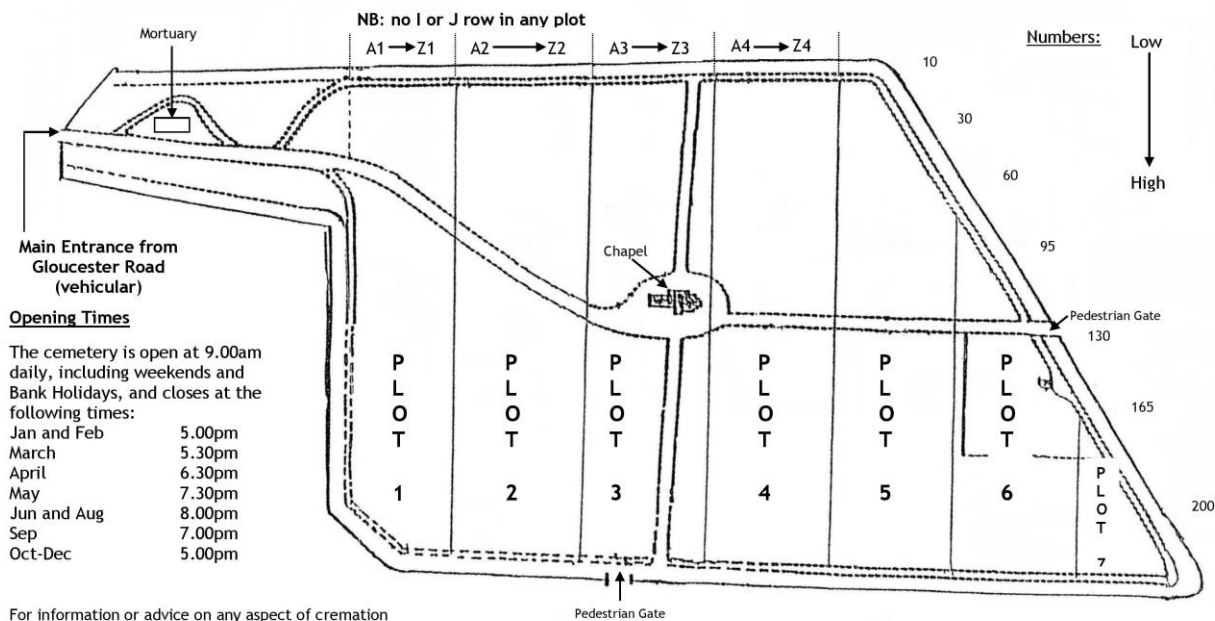**Bournemouth East Cemetery** *(Photos from CWGC)*

Photo of Private W. J. Punch's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Bournemouth East Cemetery, Bournemouth, Dorset, England.

(Photo by Julia&keld – Find a Grave)

East Cemetery, Gloucester Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, BH7 6JB

Mortuary

NB: no I or J row in any plot

A1 → Z1   A2 → Z2   A3 → Z3   A4 → Z4

10

30

60

Numbers: Low

High

95

Chapel

Pedestrian Gate

130

Main Entrance from Gloucester Road (vehicular)

Opening Times

The cemetery is open at 9.00am daily, including weekends and Bank Holidays, and closes at the following times:

Jan and Feb	5.00pm
March	5.30pm
April	6.30pm
May	7.30pm
Jun and Aug	8.00pm
Sep	7.00pm
Oct-Dec	5.00pm

165

P L O T 1

P L O T 2

P L O T 3

P L O T 4

P L O T 5

P L O T 6

P L O T 7

200

For information or advice on any aspect of cremation or burial please contact:

Bournemouth Bereavement Services
Bournemouth Crematorium
Strouden Avenue
Bournemouth
BH8 9HX

Tel: 01202 526238
Email: crematorium@bournemouth.gov.uk

Pedestrian Gate

Bournemouth
Borough Council