

**Cumnock New Cemetery,
Ayrshire, Scotland**

War Grave



Lest We Forget

World War 1



2025 PRIVATE

J. STEELE

1ST BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

31ST JULY, 1916

John STEEL(E)

John Steel(e) was born at Galston, Ayrshire, Scotland around 1889 to parents Robert & Jessie Steele (nee Young).

The 1891 Scotland Census recorded John Steel as a 1 year old, living with his parents as 10 Main Street, Loudon, Ayrshire, Scotland. His parents were listed as Robert Steel (Saddler, aged 31, born Galston, Ayrshire) & Jessie Steel (aged 27, born Galston, Ayrshire). Also listed was William Steel (aged 1 month, born Newmilns, Ayrshire) – younger brother of John & Christina Young (aged 17, born Galston, Ayrshire).

Jessie Steel, mother of John Steele, died on 15th March, 1899 at Galston, Ayrshire, Scotland.

The 1901 Scotland Census recorded John Steel as an 11 year old Scholar, living with his family at Townhead Street, Old Cumnock, Ayrshire, Scotland. His father was listed as Robert Steel (Vanman, aged 41). John was the eldest of four children listed on this Census – John, then William Steel (Scholar, aged 10), James Steel (Scholar, aged 6, born Newmilns, Ayrshire) & Annie Steel (aged 4, born Old Cumnock, Ayrshire). Also listed was Jeanie Steel, niece of Robert Steel (Housekeeper, aged 24, born Galston, Ayrshire).

John Steel(e) was a 25 year old, single, Farm Hand from Glebe Hotel, Forbes, NSW when he enlisted at Liverpool, Sydney, NSW on 22nd January, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 2025 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr Robert Steel, Town Head Street, Old Cumnock, Ayrshire, Scotland. John Steel had a Horseshoe tattoo on his left forearm.

(Note: The Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial has the surname recorded as Steele, the Embarkation Roll at the Australian War Memorial has the surname as Steel.)

(There are 2 copies of Attestation Papers - one in the name of John Steel & the other with the "E" added – John Steele. On the first Attestation Paper for John Steel there are 2 signatures – John Steele & John Steel)

Private John Steel(e) was posted to 5th Reinforcements of 1st Battalion on 22nd January, 1915 for recruit training.

Private John Steel embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Ceramic (A40)* on 25th June, 1915 with the 1st Infantry Battalion, 5th Reinforcements.

Private John Steel(e) joined 1st Battalion at Gallipoli on 5th August, 1915.

Private John Steel(e) disembarked at Alexandria from HMT *Huntsgreen* on 28th December, 1915 (after evacuation of Gallipoli).

Private John Steel(e) was written up for a Crime on 31st January, 1916 while posted at Tel-el-Kebir – “*Overstaying leave from 11 pm 28-1-16 to 10 pm 29-1-16.*” He was awarded 7 days C.B. (confined to Barracks) & forfeited 2 days’ pay.

Private John Steel(e) proceeded to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) from Alexandria on 22nd March, 1916 on HMT *Ivernia*. He disembarked at Marseilles, France on 28th March, 1916.

Private John Steel(e) was wounded in action in France 22/25th July, 1916. (date as recorded on Casualty Form – Active Service). He was admitted to No. 1 Field Ambulance on 23rd July, 1916 with GSW (gunshot wound/s) to left Arm, right Foot, right Knee, right Cheek and Hand. Private Steel(e) was transferred to 6th Motor Ambulance Convoy on 23rd July, 1916 & admitted to No. 6 General Hospital at Rouen, France on 24th July, 1916 with GSW – multiple. He was transferred to England on 26th July, 1916 on Hospital Ship St. George with GSW to forearm and right knee.

According to the War Diary of 1st Battalion – they were at Contalmaison from 20th – 23rd July, 1916 then Pozieres from 17.30 hrs on 23rd July, 1916 to 25th July, 1916.

1st Battalion

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

After the withdrawal from Gallipoli in December 1915, 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.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private John Steel(e) was admitted to Reading War Hospital, Reading, England on 27th July, 1916 with G.S.W. (gunshot wound/s) to arm – severe. He was reported as seriously ill on 31st July, 1916.

Private John Steel(e) died on 31st July, 1916 at No. 1 Reading War Hospital, Reading, England from wounds received in action in France – G.S.W. Arm (Amputated).

The Hospital Admissions form has the following details: *“Admitted with large foul wound on back of forearm destroying all muscles. Arm greatly swollen and oedematous, oedema extending down chest. Gas could be seen bubbling out of the wound. Wound was received 5 days before admission. Circular amputation through upper third of arm, and incisions in chest. Slight temporary improvement resulted; but later the amputation stump became tense & swollen & general condition steadily became worse and pt. died in a state of collapse.”*

Private John Steel(e) was buried in Cumnock New Cemetery, Ayrshire, Scotland – Plot number 2440 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

(The Report of Death of a Soldier – Army Form B. 2090A. records that Private John Steele was buried in Old Cumnock Cemetery – Section “A” Grave No. 2440. Another form A.R.76 has the same details & also that Private Steel was attached to 1st Machine Gun Section)

Private John Steel(e) was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Steel(e)'s father – Mr R. Steele, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque issued in England in October, 1922).

A handwritten note in the Service Record file reads “Soldiers name apparently Steel Plaque sent to Mr R. Steele in England”. Another note reads “London file shows original signature “STEEL”. “E” added later.”

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private J. Steele – service number 2025, of 1st Battalion, Australian Infantry. No family details are listed.

Private J. Steele is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 31.

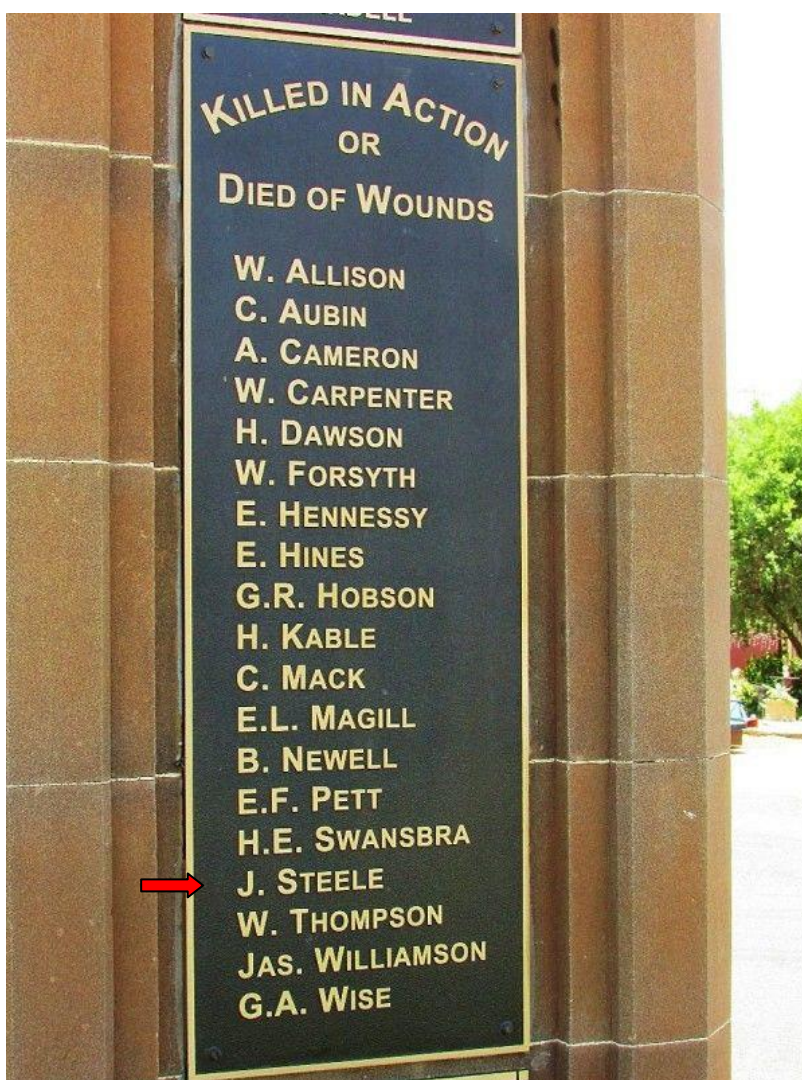


Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

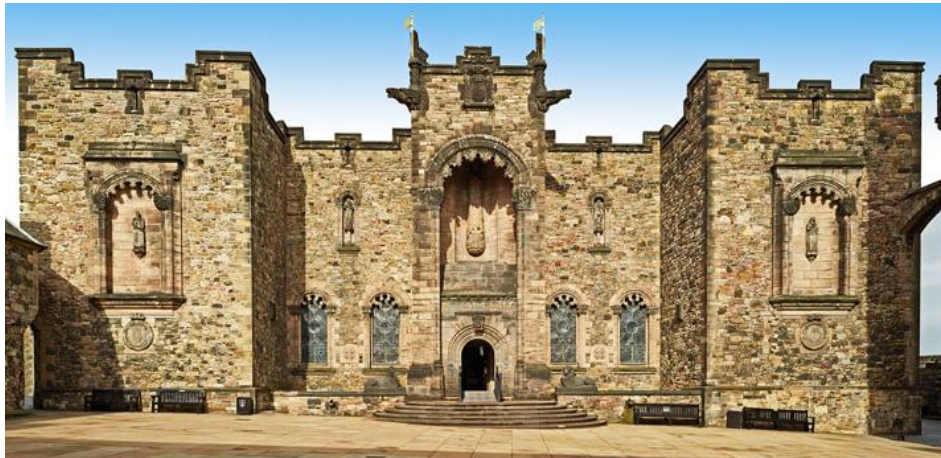
J. Steele is remembered on the Bogan Gate War Memorial Clock Tower, located on Lachlan & Hutton Streets, Bogan Gate, NSW.



Bogan Gate War Memorial Clock Tower (Photos from Monument Australia – Sandra Brown)



John Steele is remembered in the Roll of Honour books held in the Hall of Honour inside The Scottish National War Memorial. The north side of the Hall of Honour is divided by columns into bays, each dedicated to a different regiment and enhanced with battle honours and consecrated colours. On the broad shelf in front of each of the bays, the names of the dead are listed in leather-bound books.



The Scottish National War Memorial & the Hall of Honour & the Roll of Honour books.

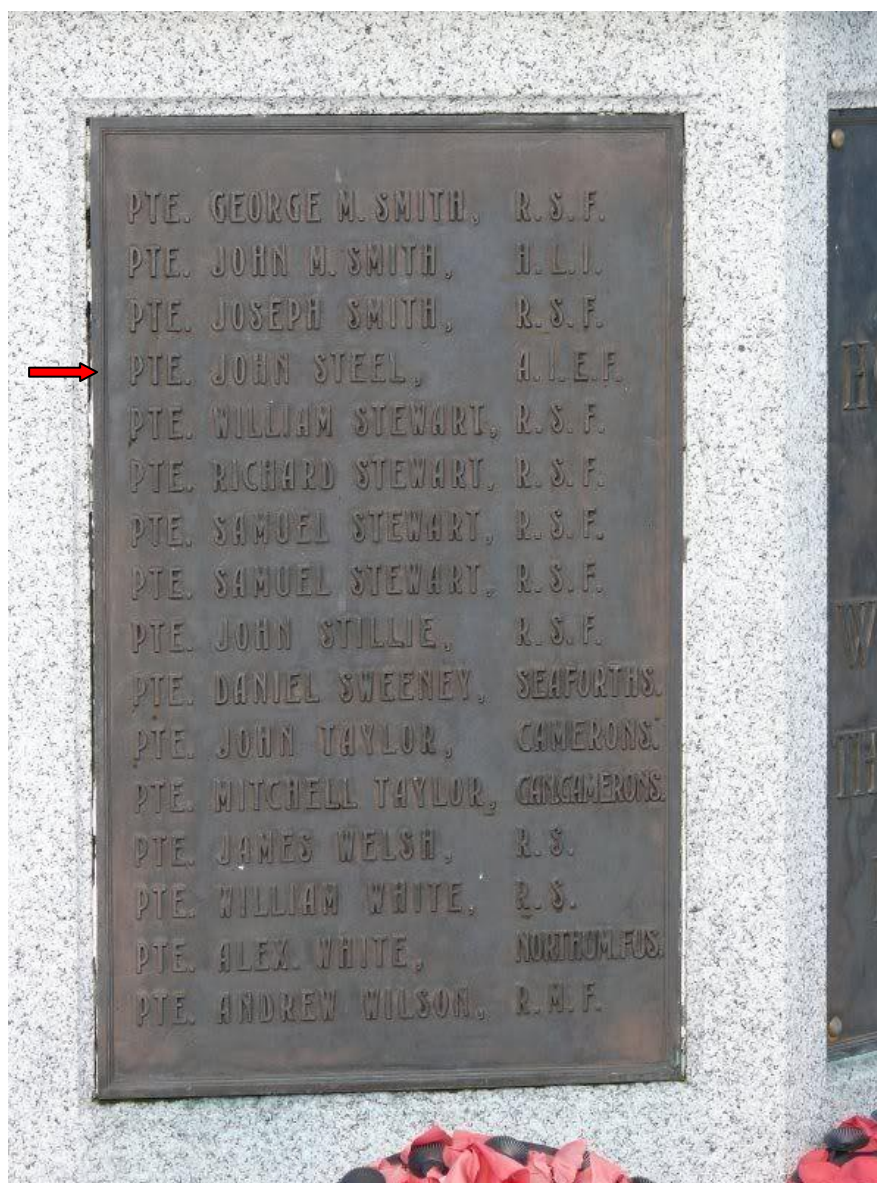
(Photos from The Scottish National War Memorial)



Pte John Steel is remembered on the Cumnock War Memorial, located in The Cemetery, Glaisnock Street, Cumnock, Ayrshire, Scotland.



Cumnock War Memorial (Photo from spoons – Scottish Military Research Group)



(37 pages of Private John Steel(e)'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



Newspaper Notices

140 DEATHS

HEAVY CASUALTY LIST

OVER FIVE HUNDRED WOUNDED

The 192nd casualty list issued this morning contains 756 names.

NEW SOUTH WALES

ILL

Pte J. STEEL, Scotland (seriously)

(The Sun, Sydney, NSW – 12 August, 1916)

MORE CASUALTIES

NEW SOUTH WALES LOSSES

197th LIST

Died of Wounds

Pte J. STEEL (Scotland) 31/7/16

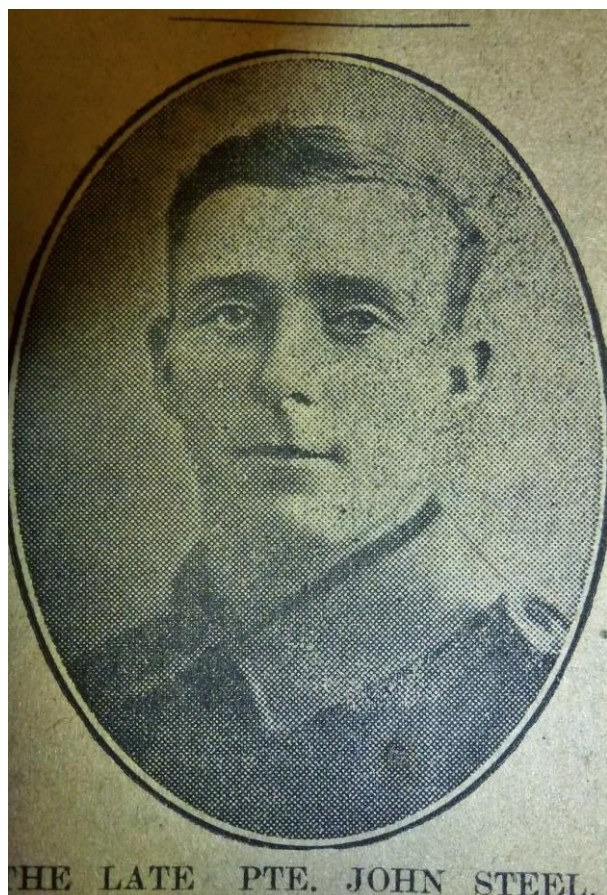
(Evening News, Sydney, NSW – 21 August, 1916)

WAR ITEMS

Last week's list of casualties shows the names of several Bogan Gate boys, both ill and wounded. The following names appeared as wounded: Privates Cyril Aubin and J. Steele.

(The Forbes Advocate, NSW – 25 August, 1916)

From Scottish Newspaper – *Cumnock Chronicle*, 1916:



THE LATE PTE JOHN STEEL

At the close of service in the Established Church on Sunday last the Rev. J. Spence Robertson said, - I much regret that our service to-day should have been saddened by the loss of another member of our Roll of Honour. I refer to the sad death of Private John Steel, of the 1st Australian Machine Gun Corps, who died in the War Hospital at Reading on Monday last after the amputation of his left arm. He was well known here, and about five years ago he left his native land for Australia, and had all gone well with him he had hoped to return to the land of his adoption. It is an evidence of his worth and of the esteem in which he was held there that since he left Australia for the Front his former employer had written every week to him. The chaplain who attended him and was with him at the end has written a very comforting letter to his father, in which he states that the dying soldier made a confession and testimony which proves that he had not listened without thought to the gospel which he heard preached in his own church. Our deepest sympathy is extended to all his sorrowing relatives, who at least have this consolation denied to multitudes, that they know where his body lies awaiting the Resurrection, and can occasionally stand beside his grave. It is to the credit of this family that all the sons, three in number, joined the King's Forces.

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. Steel(e) does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Cumnock New Cemetery, Ayrshire, Scotland

Cumnock New Cemetery, Ayrshire contains 12 Commonwealth War Graves – 5 from World War 1 & 7 from World War 2.



Cumnock New Cemetery (Photos by Billy McCrorie)



Photo of Private J. Steele's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Cumnock New Cemetery, Ayrshire, Scotland.

