

# Ilchester, Somerset

## War Memorial



*Lest We Forget*

### World War 1



754 PRIVATE

**J. M. KIDNER**

15TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

7TH MAY, 1915

## James Merson KIDNER

James Merson Kidner was born at "Blackmore" Cannington, near Bridgwater, Somerset, England in 1893 to parents John and Mary Elizabeth Kidner (nee Merson). His birth was registered in the December quarter, 1893 in the registration district of Bridgwater, Somerset. James Merson Kidner was baptised at Goathurst Parish Church, Somerset on 22nd November, 1894.

The 1901 England Census recorded James M. Kidner as a 7 year old, living with his family at Castle Farm, Ilchester, Somerset, England. His parents were listed as John Kidner (Farmer- employer, aged 55, born Broomfield, Somerset) & Mary E, Kidner (aged 44, born Bickleigh, Devon). James was one of six children listed on this Census – Ethel M. Kidner (aged 14, born Cannington, Somerset), Dora M. Kidner (aged 12, born Cannington, Somerset), Simon Kidner (aged 9, born Cannington, Somerset), then James, George Kidner (aged 4, born Cannington, Somerset) & Edward Kidner (aged 3, born Ilchester, Somerset). Also listed was Laura Merson – sister-in-law (Living on Own Means, aged 36, born Bickleigh, Devon).

James Merson Kidner attended Wellington County School, Wellington, Somerset. He trained with Cadet Corps while at School – 12 months O.T.C.

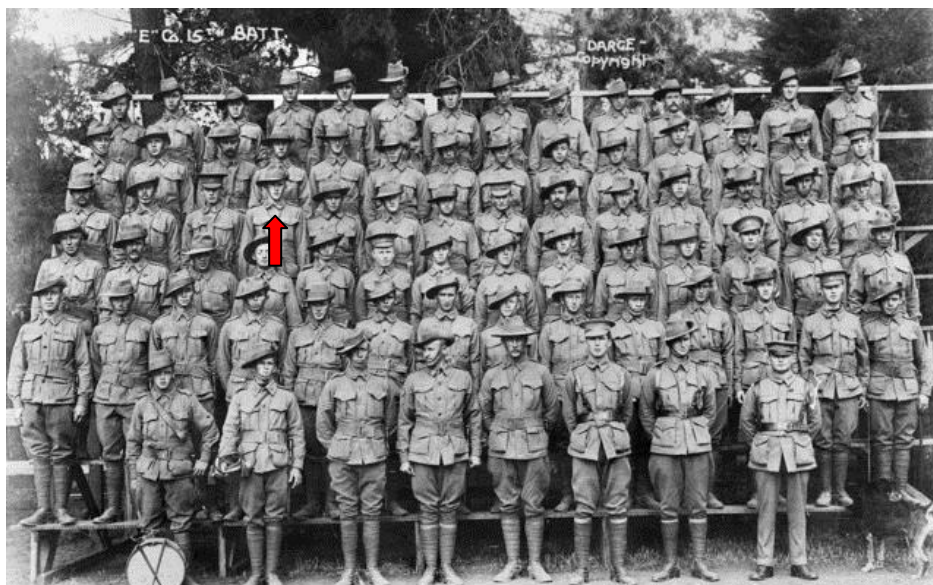
The 1911 England Census recorded James Merson Kidner as a 17 year old Farmer's Son working on Farm, living with his family at Castle Farm, Ilchester, Taunton, Somerset, England in a 13 roomed dwelling. His parents were listed as John Kidner (Farmer & Grazier, aged 65) & Mary Elizabeth Kidner (aged 53). John & Mary Elizabeth had been married for 28 years & had 7 children – all still living. James was one of six children listed on this Census – Francis John Kidner (Farmer's Son working on Farm, aged 25), Ethel Mary Kidner (Farmer's Daughter – House Work, aged 24), Dora May Kidner (Farmer's Daughter Dairy work, aged 22), Simon Kidner (Farmer's Son working on Farm, aged 19), then James & Edward Kidner (At School, aged 13).

A death for John Kidner, aged 66, was registered in March quarter, 1912 in the district of Yeovil, Somerset, England.

According to information provided by his mother for the Roll of Honour - James Merson Kidner came to Australia when he was 19 years old. A "Mr J. M. Kidner" was a passenger on the *Orvieto* which departed from the port of London & arrived at the port of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia on 22nd May, 1913.

James Merson Kidner was a 21 year old, single, Station Hand when he enlisted at Townsville, Queensland on 5th October, 1914 with the 15th Infantry Battalion "E" Company of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 754 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs J. Kidner, of Castle Farm, Ilchester, Somerset, England.

Private James Merson Kidner was posted to 15th Battalion on 5th October, 1914.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

A0 3577

Group portrait of officers and men of E Company, 15th Battalion C December 1914 Broadmeadows, Victoria

(Names start from Back row, then fifth row.....) Fourth row, left to right: 802 Pte Oswald Stewart Wemyss (killed in action at Gallipoli 29 April 1915); 723 Pte Percy Walter Boston (killed in action at Gallipoli 10 May 1915); 721 Pte Leslie Keith Brayley; **754 Pte James Merson Kidner (died of wounds received at Gallipoli 7 May 1915)**; 741 Pte Claude Arthur Daniel (killed in action at Gallipoli 3 May 1915); 780 Pte Thomas Terance Rodgers; 729 Pte Sydney Cresswell (killed in action at Gallipoli 8 August 1915); 818 Pte Leonard Lewis Daniel; 753 Pte Alfred Jackson (true name Henry Little - died of disease in England 23 October 1918); 776 Pte Francis Evan Perrett (killed in action at Gallipoli 3 May 1915); C. Gibson; 790 Pte Gordon Smith (died of wounds in France 8 September 1918); 816 Pte Stanley Clifford Cousens (killed in action in France 9 August 1916); 748 Pte Frederick Merton Heathcote.

Private James Merson Kidner embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Ceramic* (A40) on 22nd December, 1914.

Private James Merson Kidner was admitted to 15th General Hospital, Alexandria on 6th May, 1915.

Private James Merson Kidner died on 7th May, 1915 at 15th General Hospital, Alexandria, Egypt from wounds received in action at Gallipoli - gunshot wounds to shoulder, arm, severe.

### 15th Battalion

The 15th Battalion A.I.F. was raised from late September 1914, six weeks after the outbreak of the First World War. Three-quarters of the battalion were recruited as volunteers from Queensland, and the rest from Tasmania. With the 13th, 14th and 16th Battalions it formed the 4th Brigade, commanded by Colonel John Monash.

The Queensland and Tasmanian recruits were united when the battalion trained together in Victoria. They embarked for overseas just before Christmas. After a brief stop in Albany, Western Australia, the battalion proceeded to Egypt, arriving in early February 1915. Australia already had an A.I.F. division there, the 1st. When the 4th Brigade arrived in Egypt, it became part of the New Zealand and Australian Division. The 4th Brigade landed at ANZAC late in the afternoon of 25 April 1915.

From May to August, the battalion was heavily involved in establishing and defending the front line of the ANZAC beachhead. *(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)*

Private James Merson Kidner was buried in Chatby Military and War Memorial Cemetery, Alexandria, Egypt – Plot number A.71 by Chaplain A. V. C. Horden and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Private James Merson Kidner was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Kidner's mother in England – Mrs J. Kidner, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque sent March, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private James Merson Kidner – service number 754, of 15th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of Mary Elizabeth Kidner, of "Elmside", Winscombe, Weston-super-Mare, England and the late John Kidner. Born Cannington, nr. Bridgwater, Somerset.

Private J. M. Kidner is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 76.



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

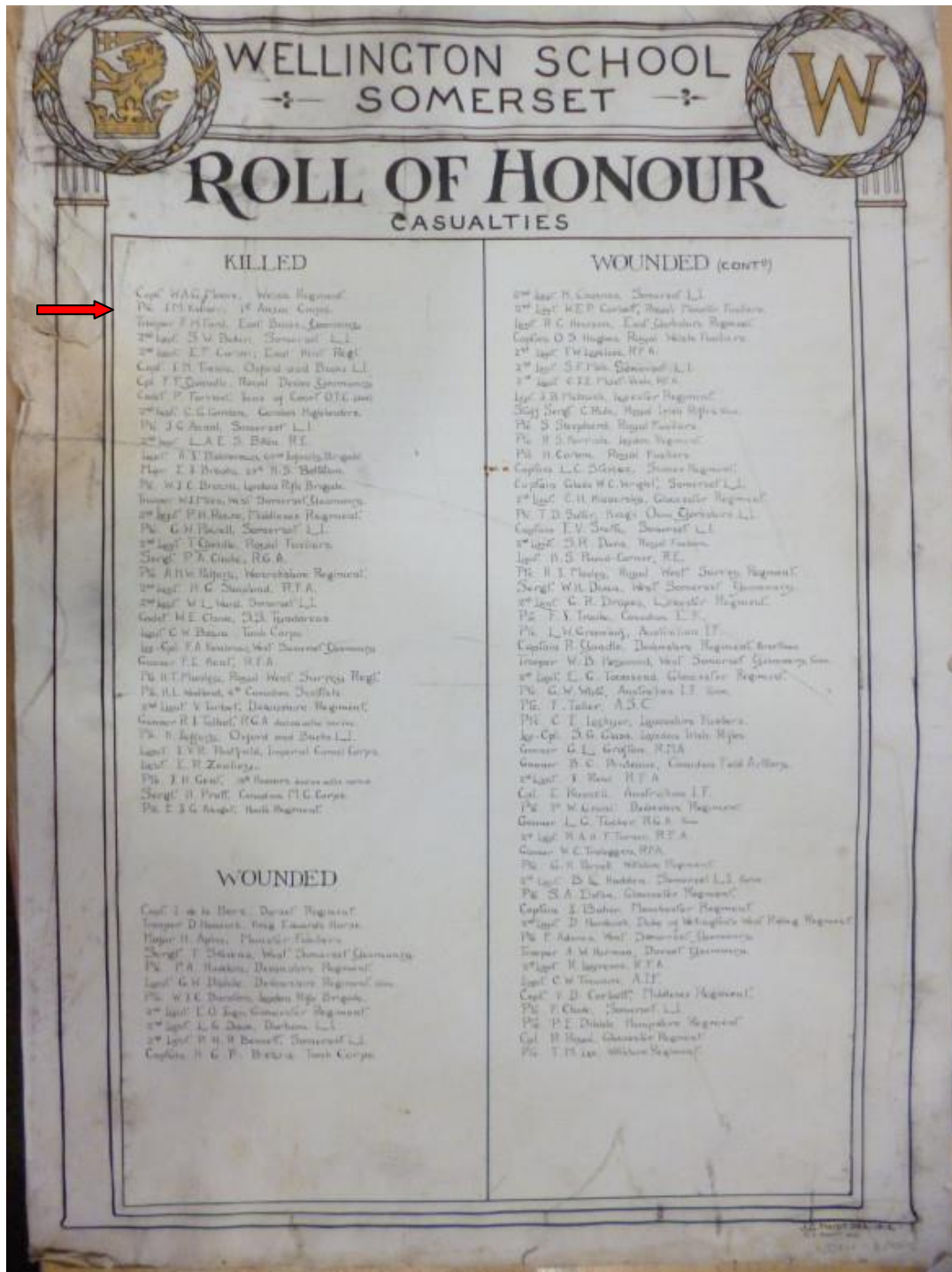
James M. Kidner is remembered on the War Memorial located in the Churchyard of St. Mary Major, Church Street, Ilchester, Somerset, England.



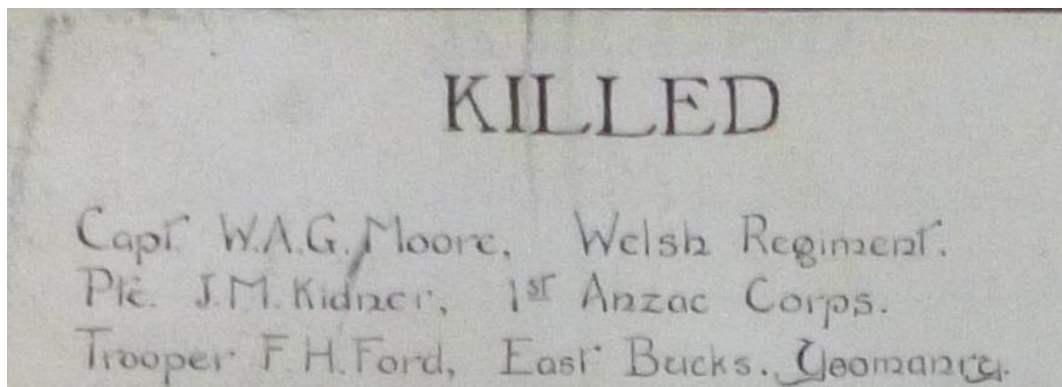
**Ilchester War Memorial** (Photos by Michael Day)



Pte J. M. Kidner is remembered on the Roll of Honour for Wellington School, Somerset, England.



Roll of Honour for Wellington School, Somerset

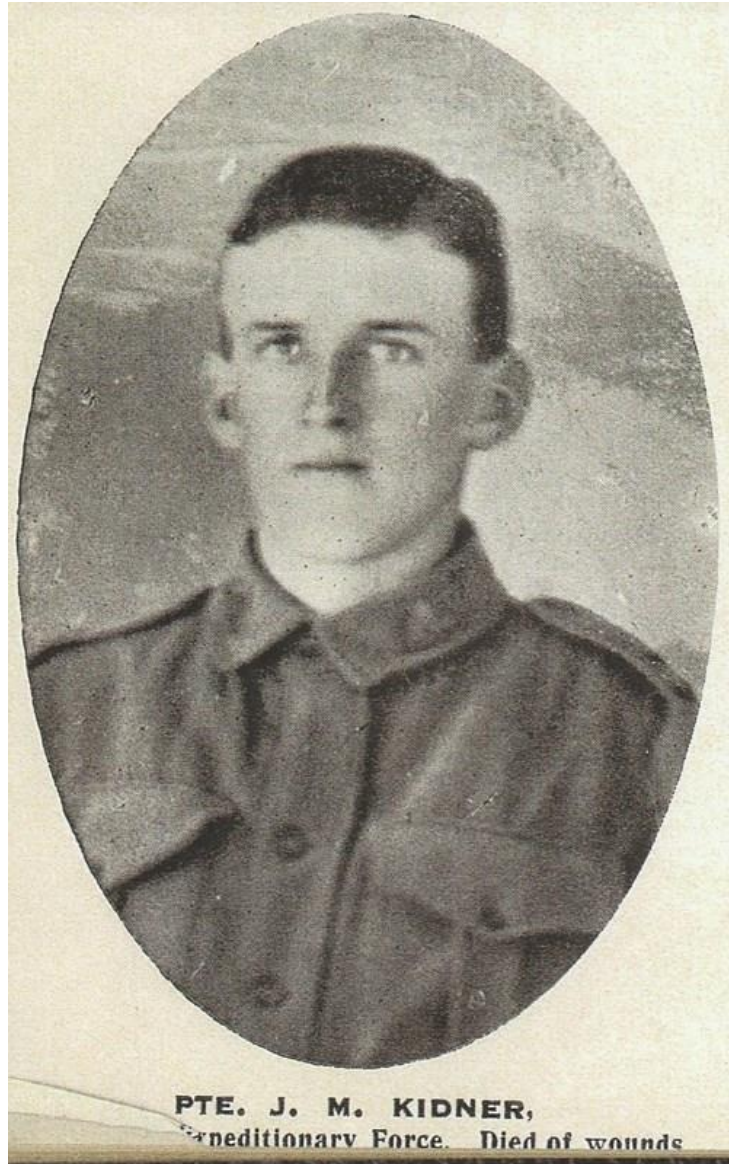


(29 pages of Private James Merson Kidner's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

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



**Private James Merson Kidner** (Photo from *The Queenslander Pictorial* 26 December 1914)



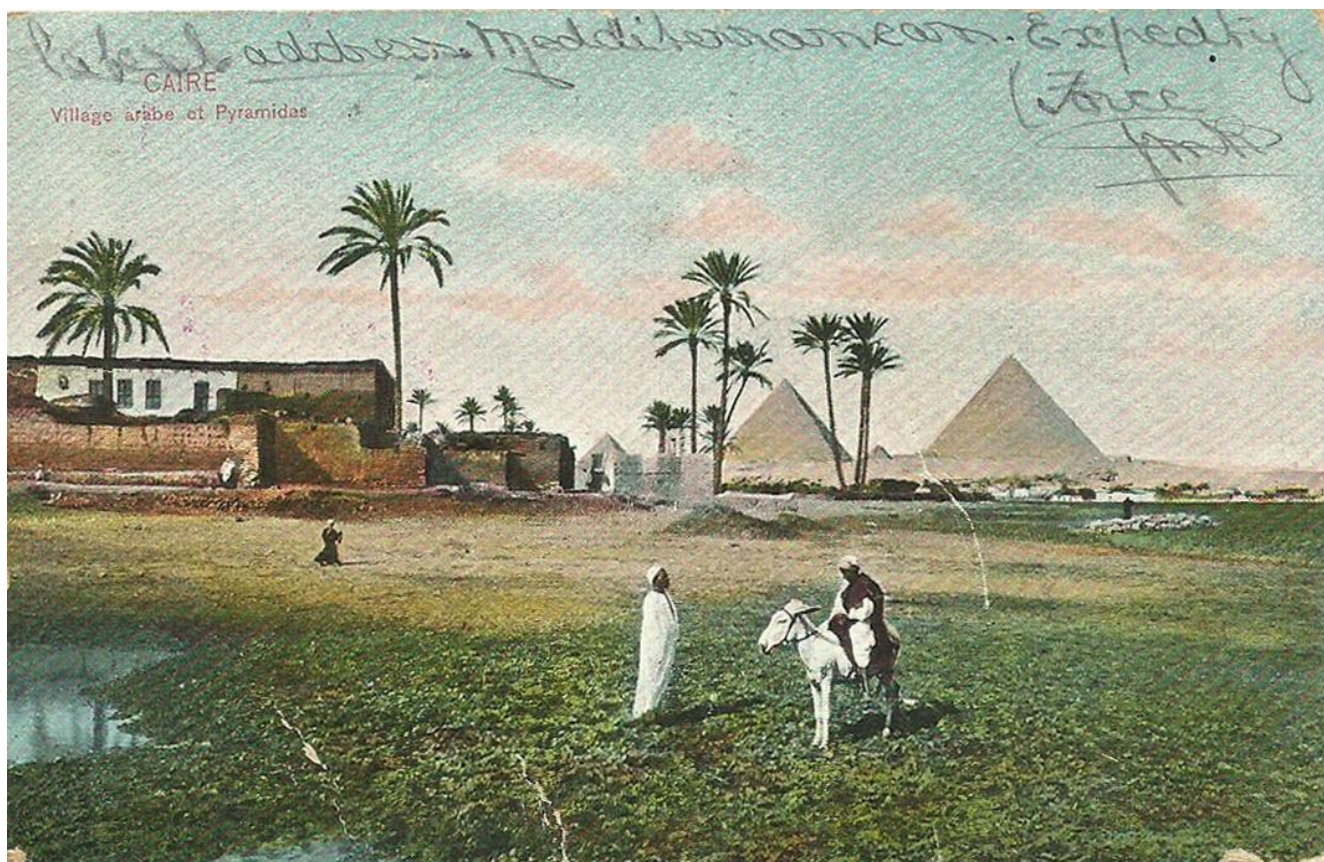
**PTE. J. M. KIDNER,**  
\*neditinary Force. Died of wounds

**Pte J. M. Kidner** (*Published in Wellington School Magazine*)

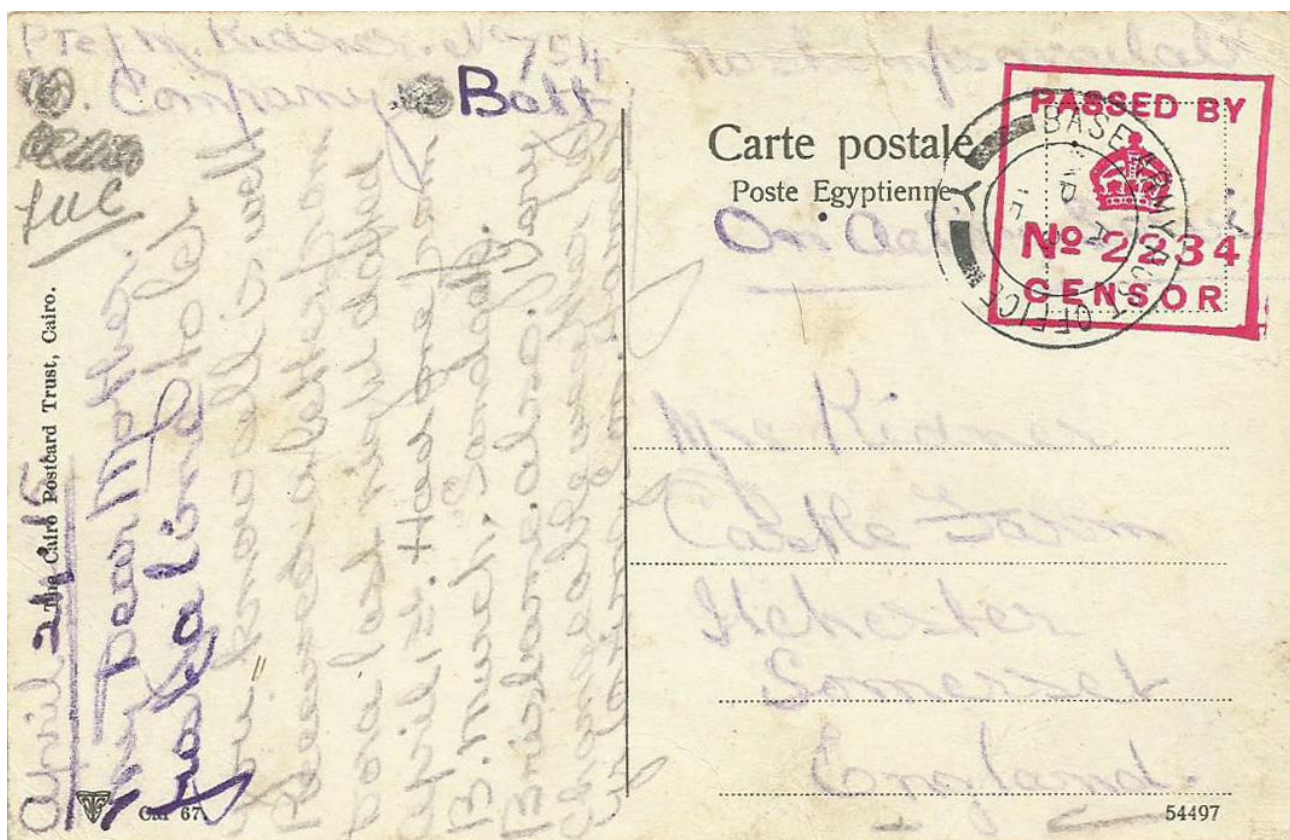


The following is a postcard sent from Private James Merson Kidner to his mother on 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1915.

Information provided by Rick Richards: "The red square censor stamp 2234 is tied to 15th Australian Infantry Battalion (Tasmania & Queensland). The postmark: Base Army Post Office Y was established on the ship R.M.S. *Arcadian* on 9th Apr. It transferred to the S.S. *Aragon* on 25 May and was then moved on land at Mudros East on 01 Nov. On the picture side James has added "postal address Mediterranean Expeditionary Force"



Postcard was purchased from Ebay by Rick Richards who has kindly allowed these photos to be used.





The postcard reads:

*My Dear Mother*

*Just a line to let you know all is well. Received a letter from Dora last night dated April 1<sup>st</sup>. Had one from B. Murch, Sandgate, Brisbane, also. Very changeable weather here.*

*Yr loving son, James*

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## **Newspaper Notices**

### **ILCHESTER**

A DARDANELLES VICTIM – The official casualty lists of the Australian Troops serving on the Gallipoli Peninsula, issued during the week-end, included “Died of wounds – 15th Battn., Kidner, 754, J. M.” This is accepted as referring to Mr J. M. Kidner, son of the late Mr John Kidner, the wellknown agriculturist, and Mrs Kidner, of Castle Farm. He went to Australia some time since, and joined the Australian contingent at the outbreak of war. So far, however, no official information has been received by the family.

(*Western Chronicle*, Yeovil, Somerset, England – 4 June. 1915)

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### **THE ROLL OF HONOUR**

#### **THIRTY-FIRST CASUALTY LIST ISSUED**

#### **QUEENSLAND**



PRIVATE J. M. KIDNER (15th Battalion), died of wounds

(*The Brisbane Courier*, Queensland – 5 June, 1915)

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## DEATHS

KIDNER – Died of wounds in the Dardanelles, on the 10th May, Priv. James Merson Kidner, of 15th Battalion, Australian Contingent, third son of the late John Kidner and Mrs Kidner, of Castle Farm, Ilchester, aged 21.

(*Western Gazette*, Yeovil, Somerset, England – 25 June, 1915) & (*Western Chronicle*, Yeovil, Somerset, England – 2 July, 1915)

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### Information from the Imperial War Museums:

James Merson Kidner is included on a gravestone in St. Andrew's Church, Roman Road, Northover, Ilchester, South Somerset, England.

*JAMES MERSON KIDNER , 15th BATT: AUSTRALIAN EXPED: FORCE.*

*THIRD SON OF JOHN KIDNER WHO DIED OF WOUNDS.*

*AT THE DARDANELLES MAY 10th 1915 AGED 21 YEARS.*

*(EXACT LINE SPACING UNKNOWN – Transcription from Imperial War Museums )*



**St. Andrew's Church, Northover, Ilchester, Somerset** (Photo by Sarah Smith)



### 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. M. Kidner does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

### **Chatby Military and War Memorial Cemetery, Alexandria, Egypt**

Chatby Military and War Memorial Cemetery (originally the Garrison cemetery) was used for burials until April 1916, when a new cemetery was opened at Hadra. Thereafter, burials at Chatby were infrequent, although some graves were brought into the cemetery after the war from other burial grounds in the area.

During the Second World War, Alexandria was again an important hospital centre, taking casualties from campaigns in the Western Desert, Greece, Crete, the Aegean Islands and the Mediterranean. Rest camps and hostels were also established there together with a powerful anti-aircraft base. Alexandria was also the communications centre for the middle and near east and became the headquarters of the Military Police.

There are now 2,259 First World War burials in the cemetery and 503 from the Second World War. The cemetery also contains war graves of other nationalities and many non-war and military graves, some of which date from 1882.

The CHATBY MEMORIAL stands at the eastern end of the cemetery and commemorates almost 1,000 Commonwealth servicemen who died during the First World War and have no other grave but the sea. Many of them were lost when hospital ships or transports were sunk in the Mediterranean, sailing to or from Alexandria. Others died of wounds or sickness while aboard such vessels and were buried at sea.

*(Information & photos from CWGC)*





**Chatby Military and War Memorial Cemetery, Alexandria**



