## John Swanston Martin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regimental number</td>
<td>11586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth</td>
<td>Forbes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>All Saints College, Bathurst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Church of England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>L and E agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>‘Clonard’, Mowbray Road, Chatswood, N. S.W.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at embarkation</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next of kin</td>
<td>Mother, Mrs G J Martin, ‘Clonard’, Mowbray Road, Chatswood,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlistment date</td>
<td>14 October 1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank on enlistment</td>
<td>Gunner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit name</td>
<td>Divisional Ammunition Column 2, Reinforcement 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarkation details</td>
<td>Unit embarked from Sydney, on board HMAT RMS Osterley on 15 January 1916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank from Nominal Roll</td>
<td>Gunner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit from Nominal Roll</td>
<td>4th Field Artillery Brigade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other details from Roll of Honour Circular</td>
<td>His great grandfather Captain Swanston (Indian Army) surveyed the first road from Baghdad to Constantinople in 1813.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fate</td>
<td>Killed in Action 15 September 1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of death or wounding</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at death</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of burial</td>
<td>Birr Cross Roads Cemetery (Plot I, Row G, Grave No. 1), Zillebeke, Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/military connections</td>
<td>Cousin to Brigadier General E F Martin CB DSO.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below is an update of an article for “Vim” Submitted 2009:

**Old Boy, John Swanston Martin - Killed in Action 15-9-1917.**

Why an article on this Old Boy killed so long ago?

Well, I left Saints’ 56 years ago and remember that we always had a special assembly on Anzac Day (or more likely, Remembrance Day, 11th November). At such occasions, read out, were the names of all those members of the School who
had paid the supreme sacrifice. In the Great War; there were 34 of these. (Later to
find two additional, not listed!)

I had read in VIM, that Christopher Morgan, with others, had formed a “Book
Committee” to update the School History, last published in 1964. Such, a distant
year, for present students. We were all then, invited to contribute to the revision.

Accordingly, I was aware that in this old history (First Edition 1932), not only
were the names of our fallen listed, but also set out were other details, such as their
units and date of death. It intrigued me that in the case of two of them, Martin and
Smith, no such details were given? In this copy from the list, we see the missing
details:

      MCPHILLAMY, Stewart: Pte, 19th and 4th Bn, D.W. 24/7/16.
      MARTIN, John Swanston: ????
      MIDDLETON, Roy Oswald: Capt., 3rd Bn, K.A. 25/7/16.

Had not Charles Bean, Old Boy and World War I official historian, been asked for
assistance by the original editors? Maybe also, Gavin Long, another Old Boy, and
editor of World War II volumes? These were men alive then, who would have
remembered them as classmates.

Today, with the Internet, it is possible to obtain online, the service dossier of every
World War I service person. The “AIF Project” from the Australian Defence Force
Academy, is also a source of data on the veterans. (Ed. acknowledging copy from
this, with opening table above.) Add too, the various databases of the Australian
War Memorial. I consulted these sources to seek more information on our men.
With success with one; failure with the second!

In World War I there were 32 “J. Martins” killed. I wanted information on our,
John Swanston. The National Archives could not give any direct linking among
them with All Saints’. But ADFA and the Australian War Memorial did! They
both listed as his “school,” All Saints’ College. This confirmation, for the first
time, allows us to complete the above entry in the School record, thus:

      11528 John Swanston Martin, age 28, 4th Brigade Australian Field Artillery,
      Killed in Action, Belgium 15th September, 1917.

What else do we find about Martin (ASC - 1904), in the records? It will surely
give us a history lesson:

He joined The AIF in Sydney on the 14th October, 1915, (i.e. about five months
after Anzac Day) age 27. His Attestation Paper, part of a file of 67 pages, gave the
details that he was unmarried, a Stock and Station Agent at Forbes. Religion, C. of
E. The medical examiner listed him as being 5’ 7”, 128 lbs, fair hair and
complexion, eyes grey and good. No scars or distinguishing marks.

“Roll of Honour” records reveal that his great grandfather serving in the Indian
army “surveyed the first road from Baghdad to Constantinople in 1813”. He had
training from Wagga Experimental Farm(s). He had also attended Wolaroi,
Orange. The records also reveal that his first cousin was Lt. Col. Edward Fowell Martin who led the 17th Battalion AIF and later 5th Brigade, ending the war as a Brigadier General with honours, C.B., C.M.G. D.S.O. and six times, Mentioned in Despatches.

John was allocated to the 3rd Reinforcements of 2nd Division Ammunition Column. It is interesting that then they used the “inspiring” word “reinforcements” and not another, such as “replacements”. It meant the same, but the latter, could make one darkly ponder, “who and why (?) I am replacing!”

With little delay, John found himself in Zeitoun, Egypt, 14th February, 1916, where the AIF was re-forming after Gallipoli. He was detailed to the 104th (Howitzer) Battery, 4th Field Artillery Brigade. They left Alexandria and arrived at Marseilles five days later, 23rd June, 1916.

They first went to the line at Armentieres, then to the battle of the Somme near Pozieres in late July. We have little material on John’s months of service. History tells that the artillery was probably kept in the front lines more than the infantry.

Fighting would have also taken them to Ypres and Bapaume to end of 1916.

His records indicate that around November, John had periods in hospital for dental treatment and influenza. On discharge, he was then sent for a tough three weeks retraining, at the notorious camp at Etaples.

In March, 1917, they moved to Bullecourt, and other battles such as Messines, Menin Road, Polygon Wood, and Broodseinde.

He was given leave in England 14th August 1917- 30th August 1917. Hopefully, he enjoyed this last respite, before returning to the guns. He was killed in action less than a month later, 15th September, 1917.

His mother received a private cable advising of his death on the 29th September, 1917. Then a letter of condolence from his commanding officer: “I write with the remainder of his comrades to express our deepest sympathy with your loss. During his time in France he has shared with us all our dangers and privations. The greatest hope of us all is that the knowledge that your son died bravely fighting his guns and doing his duty, may in some way usage the grief. I am able to state from being on the spot, that he was killed instantaneously and suffered no pain and was buried near where the fatality occurred”.

This letter thus had some standard elements. Typically, such writers wanted to console the families by stating what was rather repetitive. That is, the deceased “did his duty”, was a “good soldier” and “well liked by comrades and were without suffering.” This writer was Lt. T.E Muchmore (33) who was also killed less than a month later, 6th October, 1917. This was during the Third Battle of Ypres; the month when the Brigade suffered its heaviest monthly casualties of 151. Think of it! Just one artillery unit of Australians -151 in a month!
One has to imagine the distress of the families, made worse by the lengthy communications by cable and sea. So it was, that John’s mother did not actually receive an official report from the army as to the death, for some months.

Mrs Georgina Martin died soon after, 10th January, 1918. One speculates that her grief could have contributed to this?

Affairs were then handled by his elder sister Mrs D.W. Chapman of Mowbray Road., Chatswood. There were other sisters, Mrs P.F. Cortis of Bathurst and Miss J. Martin of Neutral Bay. With the family having no other details of the death, using today’s overworked word, they still needed “closure”. Back then they still had a chance to gain more information from the “Red Cross Society Wounded & Missing Bureau”. They would seek out surviving comrades, requesting such details as they could provide. Even with these though, one suspects they were often reluctant to describe any of the distressing details of the death.

Several letters were thus received. A letter from P.J.Byrne stated that John was “buried in the same grave as two of his comrades”.

“A shell burst on the gun and blew it to pieces killing Martin instantly”. From 9583 Lesley Arthur Davy from Adelaide. He had written from hospital in Portsmouth after being gassed 1/11/17.

The loss to the family would be lasting. But there must have been times when the memories were heightened. Such as in April 1918, when a parcel from the “Kit Store,” arrived from London. It contained John’s personal effects. The pathetic inventory comprised just a “printing frame, three books and a belt”

Then in 1920, two photos of the grave were received. In later years, his three service medals arrived. In 1922 a Memorial Scroll & King’s Message arrived. Then again, in 1923, the standard saucer sized bronze memorial plaque (No.331199!) was forwarded.

So, from a missing record we now have a long story on Martin. But none of another man A.W. Smith? Of all the names to search! There were 101 A. Smiths killed. The task would be narrowed if we just knew what the initials “A.W.” in the school register stood for?

End of above article. To continue with the usual contents of all of the dossiers:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20.2.16</td>
<td>Taken on strength 2nd DAC from reinforcements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.3.16</td>
<td>Taken on strength from 2nd DAC posted to B.A.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proceeded to join B.E.F.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.6.16</td>
<td>Disembarked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transfd. to 104th Battery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alexandria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transfd. to 4th F.A. Brigade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.5.16</td>
<td>Taken on strength 4th F.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.12.16</td>
<td>To Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.11.16</td>
<td>Dent. Adm. &amp; Tfd. to CSS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.11.16</td>
<td>Dent. Adm. admitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.11.16</td>
<td>Transfd. to Rest Stn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.11.16</td>
<td>Trfd. to C.S. Station</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A.I.F. 4th F.A.B.

MARTIN
John Swanston. 11686.

Killed in Action 16.9.17

Buried Birr Cross Roads Cemetery Zillebeke, 1½ miles E. of Ypres.

4th Bde.
A.I.A.
A.I.F.

"Killed 15.9.17."

If this is the J. Martin of the 104th Battery, he was killed whilst serving his gun between Bellqross Road and Hell Fire Corner. He was buried near Bellqross Rd., and the grave duly marked with a cross—-with him were buried Garrick and Boyle.

Description:-

Informant:- Capt. B.R. Justelius
The picture below specifies “Hoyle” who is mentioned above; probably the one buried with Martin. One could also ask if our man was also here.

Group portrait, of original members of the 104th Battery, 4th Australian Field Artillery Brigade. Identified in the back row, fourth from right is 6353 Driver Miraculous Emanuel (Harry) Hoyle.

4th Bde.
10th Batty.
A.I.F.

Date made c. 1917

I did not see the casualty, and cannot refer to anyone for details, but I saw his grave in a cemetery at Dickebusch, known as the Canadian Military Cemetery, which was marked with a cross bearing his number, name and burial.

Witness:— Shepherd J.M. 11893
4th T.M. Battery
S.A.A. Hospital, Dartford.

W. Oman,
London.
16.1.17

Field Artillery
4th Bde. 10th A.I.F.

Hartin, Gunner J.A. 11586
(K. Sept. 15/17)

"On Sept. 15/17 the Battery was at Binn X roads. A shell burst on the gun and blew it to pieces killing Martin instantaneously, severely wounding three others. He was buried at Binn X roads and a cross put up."

Eye-witness: Yes.

Description: He came from M.S. Wiles. 26. Short, was a stock and station agent.

Informant:— Gunner Leslie Arthur Davies, 9583
4th Bde. 104. Batty.
5th Southern General Hospital, Portsmouth.

Home address: Worship Avenue, Adelaide.
S. Australia.

Dec. 15/17
Killed Sept 15th 1917. Det. B.E.

He was killed by a shell at Burr cross corner, near Menin Road just out of Ypres. He was buried at Burr Cross Corner by his mates, no cross was erected at the time. I knew him in the battery. He came from N.S.W.


Witness. Gnr. Rodgeron, F.W. No. 901., 104th Howitzer Battery.

Nevje
4th A.F.A.
K. 15th Sept 1917. Det B.E.

19th January 1916.

Martin J.S. No. 11566.

S. Witnesses.
NO.4. Command Depot
Hurdott.

He was fair, about 5 ft 7 or so, aged about 25. He was called 'Jack'.
I saw him killed by a shell - it was a direct hit on the gun, when they were in action at Sillebeke about the middle of September.
He was killed outright - he and two others who were killed by the same shell were all taken away but I don't know where they were buried.

Inf: = Gunner A.S. Robertson, 9011.
Australian Camp.
Rouelles.
4th Brig. Field Artillery, A.I.F.

Martin, J. S., Gunner No. 11386.


I saw him killed in the gun position at Flir Cross Roads, about a mile from Ypres, 500 yards to the left of Shell Fire corner. He was buried where he fell. I saw his cross being taken up to put on his grave. I knew him about eighteen months, and he was a great chum of mine. He came from Sydney, N.S. Wales.

Description. Height 5'7. Complexion Medium. Build Ordinary.

Witness: Brockenshire, H. S., Gunner No. 8771. 10th Howitzer Battery.

Taken at
Hord, Command Depot
Hordcott
22-1-18
S.T.

4th F.A.B.
A.I.F.

"KILLED IN ACTION " 15.9.17"

He was killed on 15/9/17 we buried him in the field, in the same position as two of his comrades and erected a cross over the grave with the three names inscribed. It is not registered in cemetery though there are several other graves there, but I think all graves are registered. I could find out for certain, if you wish. A short description of deceased would run as follows: No. 11386. Gunner J. S. Martin. Height about 5'7" slightly built, rather high forehead.

Letter from: F. J. Byrne.
4th Brigade
10th How. Bty F. Art
France
16.1.18

Note: We regret the delay in typing the above report, but we have been obliged to hold it up on account of shortage of machines.

London
3.3.18
S.
Gunner Hill from Lismore was wounded in the knee by a shell 19th September, 1917 four days after Martin was killed. He was invalided to Australia.

Informant: Driver Burnett C.W. 11625
4th Field, 104 Howitzer Battery
Australian Camp, Aquollan.

I knew Martin & Clements well; they left Australia with me on 15/16 16 in 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column, 3rd Reinforcements. We called Martin Jack; he was medium build, fair. Clements was a Corporal, was medium build and dark, was an elderly man. These two men were in a gunpit up on the Menin Road 15.9.17 and were just about to fire their last shell when an enemy shell burst on the guns killed Martin and two others outright and wounded Clements very severely. I was at the Wagon lines at the time but was told about it the same day by other men who were on the same pit. They were certain that Martin and 2 others were killed outright. A few days later we heard that Clements had died of his wounds.

Informant: - HILL, Gnr. S.P. 11619, 2nd Div. Artillery, 104 Battery, 4 F.A.B.

Private address:- The Soldiers' Club,
9.4.18 George St., Sydney.
9.4 Australian General Hospital, RANDWICK.

H.S.O.

(Gunner Hill from Lismore was wounded in the knee by a shell 19th September, 1917 four days after Martin was killed. He was invalided to Australia).
Austrian artillery horses alongside an empty shell case dump near Menin Road, in the Ypres sector.

Dumping munitions from a truck at the Birr Cross Roads, in the Ypres sector, in Belgium. These shell dumps added to the dangers of the Menin Road during an enemy strafe.
A scene on the Menin Road near Hooge, looking towards Birr Cross Roads, during the battle on 20 September 1917. The wounded on the stretchers are waiting to be taken to the clearing stations; others able to walk are making their way along the road as far as possible.

(Australian Pioneers salvaging a 4.5 Howitzer)

Gunner John Swanston Martin, son of the late Mr. John Martin, of Drougalbie, Station, has been killed on the Western front.

1. 381st CASUALTY LIST, KILLED.
2. GNR. JOHN SWANSTON MARTIN, Lindfield, 15/0/17.

The sad news has just reached Bathurst announcing that Gunner John Swanston Martin of the 104th Howitzer Battery has been killed in action in France. Gunner Martin, who had an auctioneer's business at Denman, was 23 years of age. He was born at Drougalbie Station, Forbes was an only son, and was educated at All Saints' College, Bathurst and was a Model Farm student. He enlisted about eighteen months ago. His mother, Mrs.' J. N. Martin, resides at Chatswood, and his sister is Mrs. V. F. Cortis of this City.

The Bathurst Times 27/9/17 P.2
In memory of
Gunner John Swanston Martin
11586, 4th Bde. Australian Field Artillery
who died age 28
on 15 September 1917
Son of John and Georgina Jessie Martin. Native of Forbes, N.S.W.
Remembered with honour
BIRR CROSS ROADS CEMETERY
Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

St Stephen's Anglican Church Cnr. Sydney St. & Mowbray Rd. Willoughby:

Three gilt wooden honour boards, mounted on a wall along with St. Stephen's Willoughby Book of Remembrance, which is also in the Register.