

# Service Records

## In this chapter

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Sample service record . . . . .                | 13 |
| Abbreviations used in service records. . . . . | 35 |
| Medical classifications. . . . .               | 38 |

### Sample service record

To provide you with an understanding of the typical forms found in a service record, we will look at the dossier of one of our more famous Diggers: John Hines of the 45th Battalion.

John ‘Barney’ Hines was quite an identity in the AIF. Known as ‘The Souvenir King’, Barney was rumoured to have had a price, dead or alive, placed on his head by the Kaiser. The cause of this rare honour was a photo taken of John Hines surrounded by ‘souvenirs’ taken from the battlefield (principally from the German dead) that Hines no doubt intended to sell to others who served in the back areas.

In the photo, John Hines looks very different from the image of the lean, fit and handsome

Digger of the ‘ANZAC legend’. Battle-weary, unshaven and draped with some of his ‘finds’, Barney’s picture conveys a side of the war that was closer to the reality of service on the Western Front.

The first step in finding out more about the man in this photo was to obtain his service record from the National Archives. As the photograph has appeared in several books, there was no problem identifying the soldier’s name. His battalion, service number and rank were obtained from the Australian War Memorial’s Nominal Roll database.

Once received in the mail, interpretation of the material can begin.



‘The Souvenir King’  
AWM Negative E00822

Let's look again at page 4 of John Hines's Casualty Forms [pictured below]: Columns E, D and C are the most important sources to draw information from, as they enable us to discover *what happened* to our soldier, and *when* and *where* it happened.

Given these events happened so long ago, we are indeed fortunate that such details of a person's life are available for us to study.

If we look at this page of his Casualty Form, we can interpret certain events in John Hines's life as a soldier.

The best order in which to read the page is Column E, then D, C, then B.

Column (A) tells us **when** the paperwork was completed.  
 Column (B) tells us **where** the soldier arrived; or **who** received or dealt with the soldier and completed the necessary formalities.  
 Column (C) tells us **what happened**.  
 Column (D) tells us **where** the event occurred.  
 Column (E) tells us **when** an event occurred.

| (A) Date | (B) Report From whom received | (C) Authority of Part II. of Orders | (D) Record of promotions, appointments, reductions, casualties, transfers, postings, &c. All acting as well as substantive promotions to be shown, for method of entry of which see A.C.I. 1816 of 1917. Corps and unit to which transferred and posted to be invariably named. | (E) Place of casualty | (F) Date of promotion, reduction, reversion, casualty, &c. | (G) Remarks, and initials and rank of an officer |
|----------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|--|--|
| 12/9/17  | C.O 45 Btn.                   | ①                                   | Absent from 9 a.m. to 2 P.M. 4. 8.30 p.m. parades w/out permission Forfeits 3 days pay by C.O   | Field                 | 6/9/17   | D.051/   |
| 14/11/17 | " "                           | ②                                   | Absent from 9 a.m. parade to 12.30 p.m. <u>AWARD</u> 14 days F.P. No.2 by C.O 10/11/17  | "                     | 7/9/16<br>9/11/17  | Do 69  |
| 2/2/18   | C.O 45 Btn.                   | ③                                   | Rejoined from Leave to U.K.   | "                     | 29/1/18  |  |
| 18/4/18  | " "                           | ④                                   | 1. Drunkenness<br>2. A.W.L from 9.30 a.m till 11.45 p.m<br><u>AWARD 14 days F.P. No.2 by C.O period waiting 45<sup>th</sup> Bn 16.4.18.</u>   | "                     | 12/4/18  | D.032/1638                                       |
| 4/5/18   | " "                           | ⑤<br>⑥                              | Period awaiting trial 13/4/16 to 15/4/16<br>Total forfeiture 18 days pay<br>Wounded in Action   | "                     | 3/5/18   | D.038/2069                                       |

Column (F) contains mainly references to specific forms that have long been lost or discarded by the Army, and so are not available to the researcher.

Written in this margin.

① On 6 September 1917, 'In the Field' (which meant either France or Belgium), Hines was absent from the 9 am, 2 pm and 9.30 pm parades without permission. On 7 September, the Commanding Officer (CO) of the 45th Battalion docked Hines three days pay.

② On 9 November 1917, Hines again absented himself from the parades held at 9 am and 12.30 pm. On the next day, the CO this time awarded Hines 14 days Field Punishment No. 2.

③ On 29 January 1918, Hines returned to the Battalion after leave in the United Kingdom. (While the commencement of leave is not shown, UK leave was usually of two weeks duration.)

④ Hines was in trouble again on 12 April 1918, for (1) drunkenness and (2) for being absent without leave from 9.30 am till 11.45 pm. Four days later he came before the 45th Battalion CO who again awarded Hines 14 days Field Punishment No. 2.

⑤ The next entry implies that Hines was locked up in the cells awaiting his trial between the 13th and 14th of April. (The entry here appears to have been typed erroneously as '1916'.) To add to his troubles, Hines was docked 18 days pay.

⑥ The last entry reveals that on 3 May 1918 Hines was wounded in action.



# Tips, Tools and Useful Information

## In this chapter

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Frequently asked questions . . . . .              | 57 |
| Useful addresses . . . . .                        | 62 |
| Internet support for users of this book . . . . . | 62 |
| Useful contacts . . . . .                         | 63 |
| 1914–1920 calendars . . . . .                     | 64 |
| Useful forms . . . . .                            | 64 |

## Frequently asked questions

**Q. I am going to visit the Australian War Memorial. Can I see a copy of my soldier's record while I am there?**

A. No, the Australian War Memorial does not house the service records. The files are held by the National Archives of Australia, and may be accessed at the National Archives Reading Room in Canberra. Please contact the Archives at least 24 hours before your visit to arrange for the files to be prepared for your inspection. Alternatively, order a copy of the file to be sent to your home address.

**Q. When is the National Archives open to the public?**

A. The National Archives Reading Room is located in Queen Victoria Terrace, Parkes, ACT, and is open to the public from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm weekdays and on Saturdays. The Reading Room stays open to 9.00 pm each Tuesday. WW1 service records must be pre-ordered before your visit, as they are not stored in the building. *Note:* The National Archives general exhibition area is open 9.00 am to 5.00 pm, seven days a week.

**Q. Is it worthwhile visiting the Australian War Memorial Research Centre in Canberra?**

A. Definitely, as the AWM houses many records relevant to your soldier's unit, if not on the soldier himself. It is strongly suggested you search the AWM's Collection and Biographical Databases (e.g. photographs, books and private records) on the internet before your visit to ascertain what records you may wish to see. Record the catalogue numbers of any interesting items to help the Research Centre staff find the resources more readily.

You are strongly advised to have obtained your soldier's file from Archives before travelling to the AWM, and to take the file with you. As it can take, on average, 30 minutes for the AWM staff to obtain requested items off their shelves, you should allow sufficient hours to achieve your research objectives. Once you become familiar with the Research Centre's collection and the potential it offers, you may find you need to spend several days in Canberra.