

Anzac Spirit Schools Prize
Tori Lockwood
2023
2023 Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize
Charles Bouchier Cass



43rd Infantry Battalion
Service number: 934

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Source: Virtual War Memorial

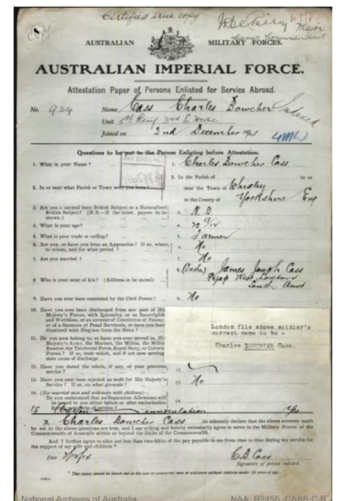
One of the characteristics that defines the Australian spirit and formed the foundation of the nation's identity is the ANZAC spirit. It is qualities such as mateship, bravery, optimism, and a keen sense of humour that create what is now known as the ANZAC spirit. The ANZAC Spirit is believed to have originated along the Gallipoli Peninsula on the 25th of April 1915, but it was also present amongst the brave men who fought and died along the infamous and dreaded Western Front during World War I. Charles Cass was an excellent example of this. He was a brave soldier who continually returned to service after many an illness or injury. He kept his spirits high and was a friend to all. He was an honourable example of the ANZAC spirit, and a true Australian.

Charles "Charlie" Bouchier Cass was born on the 4th of February 1889, in Whixley, York, England. He was the second born son to James Joseph Cass and Annie Louisa Burton. His parents married in 1886 in England. Annie Louisa Cass gave birth to one daughter and five sons. Charles was educated at Archbishop Holgate's School in York, but after he completed his education, he began working on the family farm in Whixley known as 'West Farm'. He continued to work on the family farm until the family emigrated to Australia during mid-1914. They did this so that their sons would be given more of an opportunity to farm with the extra land they had purchased in Pyap West. Their departure to Australia displays the optimism and the eager qualities the Cass family held as they welcomed the new opportunities the move would bring. These are attributes that are strongly associated with the ANZAC spirit. Charles and his family arrived at section 235, Pyap West on the 6th of June 1914. This is where the Cass family established their farming enterprise, which is still run today by family descendants, and remains family owned.

Charles was the first of the Cass brothers to enlist in the war and enlisted with the 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade on the 2nd of December 1914. As a keen horse rider, Charles joined the Light Horse Brigade between illnesses. His devotion and loyalty to both Australia and Britain may have played a part in his enlistment. Gallipoli and the Nile Valley were among the places he served. As of 23rd September 1916, Charles was a member of the 43rd Infantry Battalion within the 3rd Division and 11th Brigade. Because he was 'taken on strength' by the 43rd Battalion, he was transferred from the Light Horse Brigade. Getting injured and then making a quick recovery and going straight back into fighting in the war for his country is an example of when Charles demonstrated the ANZAC spirit quality of perseverance.

In a letter home that was written on September 13th, 1915, Charles mentions "Its work night & day & sleep in your spare time. Its been raining this morning which made things pretty miserable as we have no shelter but we are levelling some ground on the hill sides to pit up winter quarters. It looks like we are going to have turkey everywhere, but not a bit for Xmas." This is an example of the ANZAC spirit, because he was showing humour, and making a joke at the fact that there are heaps of Turkish men, but none of the bird for them to eat for Christmas dinner. By the 9th of October, he had caught Typhoid, and was shipped out of Gallipoli and warded to Brook War Hospital in England.

His arrival on the Western Front in December 1916 led to gruesome trench warfare across Flanders during the next year. Two of the most horrendous parts of the trench warfare were the bodies of the dead soldiers, and the rats. The rats were everywhere, spreading diseases, and feeding on bodies and food scraps. The dead were often buried near or in trenches on the front. Bodies could be dug up and buried again by artillery blasts. One of the battles that Charles and the 43rd Battalion served in was the Battle of Messines. The battle began on June 7th, 1917. It was designed to take hold of the tactical



Charles' AIF Enlistment form
Source: National Archives Australia

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to gain the tactical high ground that they desired. On the morning of June the 7th, The 43rd Battalion was commanded to advance through Messines and onto flat ground. This is a great display of immense courage and bravery from Charles and his fellow corps members.

On the 24th of April 1918, the Germans struck Villers-Bretonneux with gas, infantry, artillery and tanks. This was the first German use of such weapons to support an attack. Australian and British troops repelled against this attack. The 43rd Battalion helped stop the German Spring offensive. The aim of the Battle of Villers-Bretonneux was to border and envelope Villers-Bretonneux, cutting off its



43rd Infantry Battalion at Hamel
Source: Virtual War Memorial

German occupiers, and reclaiming the village for the British army. Having the vital British transport hub at Amiens less than 20 kilometres away, Villers-Bretonneux was an outstanding triumph. From there, it was easy for Amiens to be brought under artillery fire, and if the German advance continued, apprehended by infantry.

In July, the 43rd Battalion Infantry were a part of General Monash's attack at Hamel. In August and September, they helped push the Germans Back to the Hindenburg line. It was believed that the capture of Hamel and its surrounding areas in 1918 would be a significant and strategic advancement for the Allies. In addition to adding depth to

defences on Hill 104 - the Villers-Bretonneux plateau - capturing these areas would provide a vital foothold around the Somme area. Perhaps most importantly, this area had a crucial role to play in the defence of the nearby Amiens. Without control of this area, Allied movements would be hindered between Villers-Bretonneux and the Somme, and mounting an offensive would be much harder. During the Battle of Hamel, Charles was wounded in the head by a bullet. He was sent to the 12th General Hospital on the 5th of August, where he made a quick recovery and was returned to the front lines within the month.

On the 2nd of September 1918, Charles spent the day stretcher bearing with Private Arthur Edward Dean. They found the time to take an injured German Major to the Dressing Station, to have his wounds attended to. As the pair approached the station, a shell exploded a hundred yards from the station. The separating shrapnel from the explosion struck Charles in the chest. Dean ran to the Dressing Station for help since neither he nor the German Major had been wounded, but when he returned, he found Charles Cass had met his end. Charles was buried on the 3rd of September 1918, at Peronne Communal Cemetery Extension, with a cross bearing his name placed above, and all his personal belongings sent home to his father and mother. Just 5 short days after Charles passed, his brother, James Oliver Cass died of wounds. It was a terrible few days for the Cass family, with Charles' younger brother, John Edward Cass, being the only Cass brother to return from the war.

A.I.F. 43rd Bn. H.Q. 21st S. G.S.S. Pte. O.B. 934.
"K. 2.9.18."
5'10", medium complex. age 27 yrs. Cass was stretcher bearer between Bray and Peronne on 2.9.18. Two comrades had brought a German Major along in a trench and seeing Cass left him with Cass to attend to a wound the Major had in chest. Cass attended him and left him in the trench to attend to his own wounds. The Major was brought along to Cass early in the day. It was about 9 p.m. when Cass and Pte. A. Dean for stretcher bearer, same Bn. & Co had time to remove the Major to Dressing Stn. Cass and Dean were carrying the German Major to Dressing Station and when within 100 yds of Dressing Station Cass was hit by shell and badly wounded. Dean hurried on to Dressing Station for help and when they returned - after being away a few minutes Cass was dead. Neither the German or Dean were hurt by that shell. Dean and Cass were stretcher bearers together for months. Do not know anything of parish. I did not see Cass killed. The information was given me by Dean who is probably now at the agricultural college, Sutton Vony.
Informant:- Pte. Ramsell. 2383.
Address:- 43rd Bn. H.Q. H/Op.
A.I.F. Ward 3.3rd A.A. Hpl.
W. Australia. 16.5.19.
O.S.H. London. 21.5.19. A.
J.S.A.

Letter about Charles' death

Charles had brought great pride to his family name when he fought in the war, but brought lots of grief when he passed away. He had demonstrated the ANZAC spirit again and again throughout the time that he served in the war. He showed great perseverance when he was wounded, and then regained strength and went straight back to fight for his country. He demonstrated great mateship throughout the war, as he was a friend to all, and was willing to help anyone at any given moment. He embodied the ANZAC spirit in every characteristic and quality which defines it.

Word count: 1,314 Words

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Part B

I had discovered the ANZAC Spirit Prize after my sister put forward her entry into the competition back in May of 2020, and won a trip to Darwin. She said that she had a blast doing it, and she really loved learning about nurses and events from the wars. This piqued my interest in the competition, and thus lead me to write an entry for this year's ANZAC Spirit Prize.

I started my research for the ANZAC spirit prize by looking at some movies and stories about WWI, and seeing if there were any people who piqued my interest. The initial person I decided that I wanted to further research, already had a previous winning entry done on her, so I looked through a list of people from my area that fought in WWI. One name really stood out to me. That name was Charles Bouchier Cass. I found him interesting, and after reading further into his story, I found his story and his experience with war interesting.

I used a variety of primary and secondary resources throughout my research. I started off with looking online at websites. At first, I found basic information, like his service number, and where he was born. However, after some deeper digging, I found more detailed information about Charles. To start off with, I mainly looked at websites, with written information, but then I moved onto examining papers, and diary entries from Charles. I spent a lot of time looking through the Virtual War Memorial, and National Archives Australia. I also looked through all the papers that Charles had either written personally, or had written about him. There were lots of hospital records and letters about his death.

I also ventured out to the Loxton Soldiers Memorial, and looked through the list of names until I found Charles Cass's name. I found it quite interesting looking at all the names of soldiers who fought in WWI and II. I attempted to find his relatives here in Loxton, but all attempts made lead to dead ends. I thought it would be helpful to ask his relatives some information, and see if they had any belongings of his, like a diary, letters, etc, and have a look at them, but sadly I was unable to.

I wanted to learn about and understand what Charles had been through during the war, and how his life had changed so many times. I started to think about what I would've done if I was sent off to war, and how that experience would have greatly impacted my life. I wanted to share his story with people because I think his story is fascinating. I also think he was a remarkable example of the ANZAC spirit.

Word count: 456 Words

Total word count: 1770

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Fig 7: Cass Family