

PRIVATE JOHANN CARL KINDLER – NURIOOTPA

First World War

Johann Carl Kindler was born in Nuriootpa on 31 December 1891. His father had died six weeks before he was born. Carl was working as a shop assistant in Tanunda when he enlisted. He was a keen sportsman and his name appears in match reports for cricket games, snooker tournaments and cycling races right up until he joined the war effort. Popular and well-liked, he was the youngest of six children in a highly musical family. His two older brothers, Ernst and Martin, were well-respected musicians playing in bands across the region, and Carl was highly regarded as a member of the Tanunda Town Band.

A party was thrown before he left and a silver wristwatch that had been purchased from Mr Summerton's Emporium in Nuriootpa was gifted to him by a group of close friends. Carl wore the watch with pride.

Carl enlisted on 9 August 1915, alongside his friend Stanley Shroeder, from Tanunda, and the two of them, along with another small cohort of Tanunda boys, were drafted into the 6th reinforcement of the 27th Battalion.

Carl's mother died in 1913, so the now parentless Carl gave his brother Ernst as Next of Kin on his enlistment papers. He declined to nominate a religion, although several newspaper articles connect him with St John's Lutheran congregation in Tanunda. This is not unusual for soldiers enlisting in the Barossa region. The pernicious anti-German sentiment had seen many high-profile Barossa residents arrested and interned, and many boys with German names gave the more patriotic 'Anglican' or 'Methodist' as their religious denomination – or, declined to nominate at all, as Carl did.

On 27 October 1915 Carl, Stanley and the rest of his Tanunda cohort were shipped from Port Adelaide on board the Benalla, via Fremantle to Egypt as part of the 27th Infantry Battalion. On 26 February 1916, Carl arrived in Zeitoun and was transferred to the 10th Infantry Battalion.

In March 1916 the battalion was moved out of Alexandria and shipped to France. On board the boat, another local Tanunda boy, Louis Hoffmann, who was keeping a diary says 'A guard is kept – day and night watching for submarines – there is more life on this trip than the one just over. We have a band – Carl and Stanley joined it today'.

The Battalion was stationed only four miles behind the Belgium frontier where they were billeted in farmhouses while they continued training to be readied for combat. The band established on the ship was continued in the Battalion, and Carl and Stanley were both members. On 9 April 1916 the Battalion was issued cigarettes and tobacco, and they went under their first real gas attack. They could hear the big guns from Flanders and were counting less than a minute between shots. The weather was 'beastly cold' and the Battalion was being marched in the rain, through mud up to their knees and covered in spots of white that were a mixture of snow and hail.

On 19 April 1916 the Battalion were being marched only 4 miles behind the front lines when they were shelled. It was a deadly attack. On 20 April 1916 Louis says: '...Carl killed April 20th and Stanley died of wounds on the 21st – Good Friday – a sad one for us. We received word at 8.30am yesterday that Carl was killed by a shell yesterday and Stanley was seriously injured. 75 casualties. Received word this afternoon that Stanley died early this morning from wounds received from the shells – he had 25 wounds. Carl was blown to pieces – killed instantaneously – happened yesterday about two hours after dinner. They were buried in the village so I have been told. We can't realise that only a few days ago we were all together'

Carl's eldest brother Ernst, who was now the conductor for the Nuriootpa Town Band, and listed as Next of Kin, received the telegram advising of his youngest brother's death. A newspaper article talking of the telegram says that Carl was one of the most popular young men of the district and had been given a farewell by the Cheer Up Society before he left in October the previous year. Tragically, Ernst died in 1919 and by the time Carl's war medals were being despatched, it was left to the only remaining brother, Martin, to arrange for memorial plaques on memorials and to receive Carl's personal belongings.

Two packages containing Carl's effects were received, their inventory being: 2 belts, 19 coins, 2 keys, note book, writing pad, wallet and cards. In a second parcel were a wrist watch (damaged) and strap, jug purse, testament, letters, post cards and writing pad.

In 1936, twenty years after Carl's death, his sister, Emma Scholz of Nuriootpa, was the subject of a newspaper article: A war-scarred wristlet watch with shattered glass was wound on Sunday at Nuriootpa and faithfully continued its purpose. The watch had been worn by the late Carl Kindler, of Nuriootpa and Tanunda, when he was killed in action in France on April 20, 1916. It was subsequently returned to his sister, Mrs. C. Scholz, Nuriootpa, who has since treasured it. Sunday being the twentieth anniversary of her brother's death, she got out the little memento and turned the winding stem. The watch, one of a number specially obtained by Mr. Summerton, was a farewell gift by Nuriootpa friends before Carl left for the front.

Carl's name was etched into the white marble of Tanunda's Cross of Sacrifice, and his photograph, alongside that of fellow band member, Stanley, hangs in the Tanunda Soldiers' Memorial Hall. Private Johann Carl Kindler is buried at the 13th London Graveyard, France. Grave F 46.

Lest We Forget.



PRIVATE JOHANN KINDLER
Nuriootpa
FIRST WORLD WAR