



Herbert River ANZACS: 'A Messines episode', by Dan Sheahan

Description

'A Messines episode', by Abergowrie Digger Dan Sheahan

'Twas in the dark days of 1917

When we held the line of the ridge of Messines

With 'Jerries' in front and the big guns behind

A cosier spot would be easy to find.

The 'chats' were as thick as the bees in a hive

All fat ones and big ones – they'd eat you alive –

We'd scabies and ulcers and rot in our toes

And shortage of tucker to add to our woes.

The brass hats behind that led the brigade –

Were sending us over that night on a raid –

The sergeant suggested if we had some rum –

We'd flatten our formen as fast as they'd come.

There's some in the dugout way back in the rear

If someone will bring it – now who'll volunteer?

We weren't too keen about taking the chance
None wanted a permanent posse in France.
Then Bluey the shearer spoke up and he said –
'Just as well die here as home in a bed –
The Red Rum of Bundy will always do me –
I'll charge to Hell's Gate for a jar of O.P.'
He tightened his belt then a skip and a hop
And Bluey the shearer went over the top –
The snipers were ready – they all had a go –
But Bluey was quick and the shooters were slow.
The duckboards were flooded – in places aswim –
The barbwire and water seemed nothing to him –
Then when the dark shrapnel burst overhead
Bluey went down and we thought he was dead.
We hadn't much time to be praying for his soul
No more would he answer his name on the Roll –
The big guns were booming for all they were worth
The place was a shambles – a hell upon earth.
With star shells and bomb shells the night skies were red –
When Bluey appeared like a ghost from the dead.
Add muddled and weary but not showing a scar
And close to his bosom he carried a jar!
We all gathered round him expecting a nip –
For this was a chance we could not let slip.
He strove with a bayonet to take out the cork

The yell that he gave could be heard in New York.
He swore in strong Aussie, in Gypsy and French
When Persian petroleum poured out on the trench –
'Twas stuff that the Army was using in tons
For cleaning the rifles and greasing the guns.
'Twould seem some shrewdy had worked the old head
Had juggled the jars and left this stuff instead.
As both were the same as identical twins
Let us hope that the Lord will forgive him his sins.
And graves of the bravehearts that rest in Messines –
The poppies are blowing and the grasses are green
Maybe some old diggers wherever they are
Will think of the oil that came up in the jar!

From 'Songs from the Canefields', by Abergowrie poet Dan Sheahan (born in Cork, Ireland in 1883-died in Ingham in 1977) and published with the permission of the Sheahan family.

Date Created

24/04/2022

Author

jpearce