

Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize 2021-22

Louis James Imer



Service number: 3655

17 January 1899 – 24 June 1969

Why did I choose Louis James Imer?

Louis James Imer is my great-great grandfather on my mother's side. Before this competition, I never knew of any relatives on either side of my family that had fought in World War One or Two. This competition encouraged me to ask family members about family history. I soon learnt I had many relatives on both sides of my family who fought in war. The story and history of Louis made me intrigued, which is why I wanted to research him.

Louis James Imer

Louis James Imer was born on the 17 January 1899. His parents were Fredrick George Imer and Catherine Winifred Mary Wheeler. Louis was born in Richmond, Victoria. He was raised in Upper Beaconsfield alongside his five siblings, Henrietta Louise Bertha (1896-1991), David George (1897-1976), Margaret Lillian (1900-1982), Winifred Maud (1903-1988) and Alice (1907-1977).

Louis' father, Fredrick was a very big gardener as Louis was in his older years. Fredrick was on the local council; he also had owned a very popular orchard named the Puumba Orchard In Beaconsfeild Upper. Louis and his siblings would often help their father on the orchid. This was until bushfires unfortunately burnt the orchid down.

On 9 August 1916, Louis' mother Catherine unfortunately passed away at the age of 45. It was an unexpected death as she was known to be a healthy woman. Louis and his family never found out the cause of her death.

When Louis was 17, he worked as an apprentice boot machinist for Marshall Shoe Company. He worked there for three years. Louis was a member of the Sen Cadets 55th and City Force 56th in Richmond, Victoria for six months each. His cadet number was 2622. Louis learnt valuable life lessons and skills that he was able to put to practise during his time in the war.

Louis James Imer enlisted in the first world war on 17 January 1918, his 18th birthday. Louis enlisted in Melbourne and was given the service number of 3655, his father George Imer was his next of kin. He was assigned to the 58th

battalion. Louis' enlistment took some time longer as he had not been issued a birth certificate when he was born.

At the time of Louis' enlistment he was 5 ft, 4 1/2 inches in height and had blue eyes and short brown hair. He weighed 126 pounds (57 kgs) with a chest measurement of 33 1/2 inches.

A 97153 AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES. AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. 3055 Name IMER!
in full Louis James
Unit 58th Joined on 1.2.18

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name? IMER Louis James

2. In or near what Town were you born? Beaconsfield Upper, Victoria

3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? 19 years months
17th January 1899
Beaconsfield Upper, Victoria

4. What is your Trade or Calling? Doctor - Cavalry 14/18

5. Are you a single man or widower? single

6. What is your name of Father? Mr George Imier
Beaconsfield Upper
Victoria

7. What is your permanent address in Australia? Beaconsfield Upper
Victoria

8. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Force? Yes

9. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? Yes

10. For medical data, including all children, and address who are the sole support of widowed mother? Yes

11. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small pox and other loathsome diseases? Yes

I, Louis James Imier do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

And I further agree to abide by the rules and regulations of the Army applicable to our class, class or rank during my service.

Witness my hand and seal this 17th day of Jan 1918.

L. J. Imier Signature of Person Enlisting.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA NAA: B2455, IMER LOUIS JAMES

VICTORIA (AUSTRALIA).

"NO RECORD" RESULT.

Office of the Victorian Government Statist,
RECORDS OFFICE, QUEEN STREET,
Melbourne, 27th Dec 1917

Re Application Vol. — Fol. — (or Cor. —)

Imier

The Indexes of this office from 1896
to 1901 have been searched, but no record
can be found therein of the birth
of Louis James Imier
alleged to have occurred in the year 1899.

A. M. LAUGHTON,
Government Statist.

N.B.—After a period of seven years, the registration of a birth may be effected on the authority of a Judge of the Supreme or County Court. The procedure is, first to furnish to the Government Statist full particulars on an Information Paper, accompanied by a fee of 5s. 6d. for a search; and, if there be no record, then to procure a Baptismal Certificate (if available). There should be produced to the Judge an affidavit embodying a statement that there is no record of the birth, giving reasons for non-registration, and containing statements as to the marriage, and the birth of the child, together with a reference to the Baptismal Certificate (which should be attached).

When obtained, the Judge's authority should be forwarded to the Government Statist, who will instruct the local Registrar to register the case. The fee for registration is 10s., payable by means of a duty stamp.

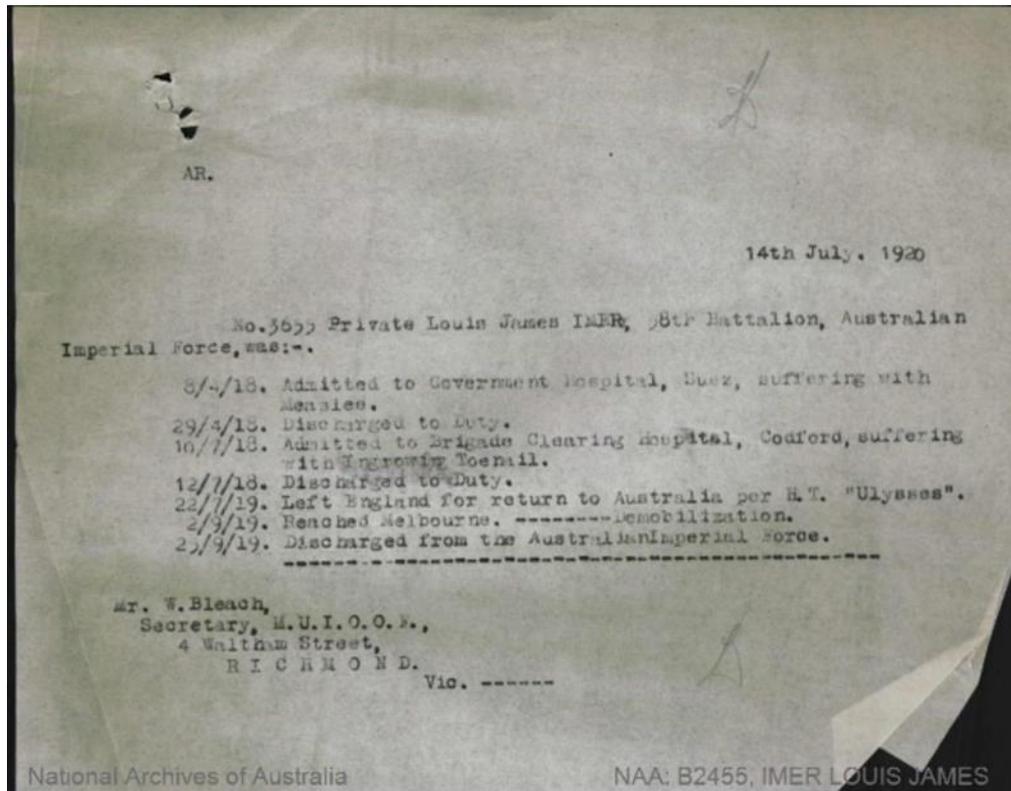
National Archives of Australia NAA: B2455, IMER LOUIS JAMES

This is an image of a form that was filled out as Louis had no birth certificate at the time of his enlisting

Louis' enlistment papers

The 58th battalion was made up of mostly Victorian men, half of which had fought in Gallipoli in 1915, whilst the other half were all fresh recruits. On 7 March 1918 Louis embarked for Egypt on the RMS Ormonie. They travelled to a Egypt to be trained and raised ready for war.

Not long after arriving in Egypt, on 8 April 1918 Louis was admitted to the Suez Hospital where he was treated for measles. Louis spent 21 days in this hospital and was discharged and cleared for service on 29 April. Louis continued training in Egypt until he was admitted to the Bridge Clearing Hospital in Codford on 10 July, suffering an ingrown toenail. Two days later on the 12th he was cleared for service.



Louis' hospital records

Louis and the 58th battalion embarked for their journey to the Western Front. They were sent to Fromelles for their first battle. They were sent as a reserve force, to carry supplies to the front line and give back-up where necessary. Over half of the battalion was ordered to go to the front line and attack using machine gun fire. They were defeated within 24 hours, with over 5,500 Australians killed either in action or, post action from wounds and over 400 were also captured. The Fromelles is known as Australia's deadliest battle during World War One. Some consider it Australia's most tragic event in history. The Battle of Fromelles reflected the lowest point of leadership and teamwork throughout World War One.

Despite the strength they had lost in the battle of Fromelles, the 58th battalion continued to be a reserve force for many battles until they withdraw from the war on 2 October 1918. As Louis had enlisted in 1918, he was only in the war for less than 12 months and did not get the full experience on the front lines, as many other soldiers did.

Documents show Louis' location was unknown for a period of time from before 30 September 1918 to when he embarked for his journey back to Australia on 22 July 1919. A letter dated 30 September 1918 from an Officer states "In response to your personal request. I have to state that there is no record in our office of No.3655, Private Louis James Imer". This letter was sent to Louis' father, Fredrick. No record of Fredricks response to this letter was documented, however, another letter from an officer had indicated Fredrick had replied. A letter dated 14 October 1918 said "In response to your personal request I have to state there is still no record in this office of your son No.3655 Private L.J. Imer, 58th Battalion, being incapacitated from duty". They still had no record of Louis' whereabouts.

The 58th Battalion had merged with the 59th Battalion on 24 March, 1919. Louis could have been with the 59th Battalion but there was no records of this. Louis arrived in Australia on 2 September 1919. On 25 September 1919 Louis was officially discharged from the Australian Imperial Force. On 11 November 1922, Louis received his British War Medal and Victory Medal.

When Louis returned from war, he met Violet Adelaide Bailey. Louis and Violet fell in love and married on 24 June 1922. Together, they had three children, Lawrence, Gloria and Bob. At some point in their life, Louis and Violet purchased a block at 249 Station Street, Edithvale in Victoria. Louis worked as a hospital assistant before working as a store man for some period of his life, as well as working at an orchard in Hunting Vale. The orchard was believed to grow the best apples, pears and peaches in Victoria. Louis was often seen outside his house in the garden. Louis loved spending time in his garden, following in his fathers footsteps.



This is an image taken approximately 1954 of George, Louis, Lawrence and Colin Imer.

Top left- Lawrence (Louis' son), Top right- Louis, Bottom left (baby)- Colin (Lawrence's child/my pop), bottom right- George (Louis' father).

In 1933, Louis was charged at the South Melbourne court for "having driven a motor-truck to which a silencer was not effective". Witnesses to this event say it made a noise like an aeroplane at close range.

Louis and Violet lived a beautiful, happy life, living in Canterbury, Edithvale and Richmond, Victoria. On 24 June 1969, Violet and Louis' 47th wedding anniversary, Louis was in his garden picking flowers for his beautiful wife when he collapsed, suffering from a heart-attack. Unfortunately, he passed away age 70. Louis was known to be a happy, healthy man and Louis' death came as a shock to many people. Violet had been sick for many years leading up to his death and died a few years later. It is unknown if she still lived in the same house or had moved. Louis was cremated in Springvale Botanicals. Louis' family received his death notice from the Australian Imperial Force in 1973.

For Louis' service throughout World War One, he has memorials at the Winchelsea Shire of Barrabool Residents role of honour, Bellbrae Primary School, JanJuc Stae School,



Bellbrae School World War One Roll of Honour

The Jan Juc State School Honour Board



Winchelsea Shire of Barrabool Residents Roll of Honour, Victoria

IMER.—On June 24th, Louis James, of 249 Station Street, Edithvale, dearly beloved husband of Vi, and loving father of Laurie, Gloria (Mrs. Hill) and Bob, fond father-in-law of Molly, Frank, Lyn, and loving pa of Colin, John, Judith, Ruth, Nola, Graeme, Christine, Jeffrey, Catharyne, Stuart, Mitchell and Maree. IMER, Louis James.—Late 58th Battalion, late A.I.F., passed away suddenly June 24, younger son of the late George and Winifred Imer, of Bellbrae, dear brother of Ettie (Mrs. Pratt), David, Margaret (Mrs. Gogoll), Maude (Mrs. Maclelland) and May (Mrs. Armstrong), brother-in-law of Clarrie, Norman (deceased), Bill (deceased) and Angus.

At rest.

IMER.—The Funeral of Mr. LOUIS JAMES IMER, of 249 Station St., Edithvale, will leave the Methodist Church, Edithvale Road, Edithvale, TOMORROW (THURSDAY), after a service commencing at 10.40 a.m., for the Springvale Crematorium.

Louis' death notice listed in the Geelong, The Argus and The Herald Melbourne Newspapers.