

## James McCrae HANCOCK

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AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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James McCrae Hancock was born in 1891, the eldest son of Rev William Hancock, a clergyman of some renown, and Elizabeth McCrae. His childhood was spent in Euroa, Fitzroy and Bairnsdale, where his father was Minister.

James was educated at Trinity Grammar as a boarder, where he was active in the cadets, as well as a prolific athlete and prefect. He enrolled at Melbourne University to undertake a law degree in 1909. At this time his father was appointed vicar at St Thomas' Church, Moonee Ponds.

He completed his degree and was admitted to practice in early 1915. He enlisted on 5 July 1915 as a private with the 23<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. He was engaged to be married when he sailed, in September 1915, on board the HMAT *Hororata*.

He reached Egypt in October 1915 and, in a letter back to his family, described Cairo as "a rum sort of place". However, in spite of this, he also assured them that "*you needn't worry about me at all, for I am in the very pink of condition and getting along first rate*".

In March of 1916, his unit departed Egypt for France, and they proceeded to the Western Front. He took part in the action at Armentieres, and then subsequently at Pozieres. It was here, on August 4 that, according to an eyewitness, he was "*killed outright by a shell... He was on*

*fatigue and was carrying ammunition to new trenches at Pozieres. Called Jimmie. Did not see him buried there was too much of a mix-up to bury men*".

Initially listed as missing, it took some time for confirmation of his death to reach his family. He is commemorated at the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

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Studio portrait of 2158 Private (Pte) James McCrae Hancock, 23rd Battalion, of Bendigo, Vic. A Melbourne barrister and solicitor prior to enlisting on 12 July 1915, Pte Hancock embarked from Melbourne aboard HMAT *Hororata* on 27 September 1915. He was killed in action on 4 August 1916 at Pozieres aged 24 years