

John William Dawson ANZAC Service 2025

Researched and written by Penny Harris Jennings.

The dedication today is soldier, John William Dawson, Service No VX34391, Australian Army WW2.

John William Dawson was born on a fine and bright day at St Andrews Private Hospital in Brighton Victoria, 10 April 1919 to parents Gregory and Louise Dawson.

His parents and sisters affectionately called him Jack. The Dawson family moved quite often in Jack's formative years as his father, Gregory, was a station master. Jack spent his school years in the western district towns of Berriwillock, Dunnstown, Garvoc and Derrinallum. In 1934 the family including Jack, then aged 15, moved to Welshpool, South Gippsland. In subsequent years the Dawsons came to Berwick Station and then Beaconsfield.

Jack residing at the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Northcote enlisted 3 July 1940 at Royal Park Melbourne. He trained in both Mt Martha and Seymour before departing from Sydney for Singapore on 3 October 1941 with the rank Sapper in the 2/10th Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers. In February 1942 Jack was "wounded shell shocked" and on 26 February he was listed as a Prisoner of War. He had been captured by the Japanese and sent to work on the Thai Burma Railway. During the construction of the railway more than 16,000 prisoners died of sickness, malnutrition and exhaustion.

Jack worked in the poor conditions until he succumbed to dysentery 24 April 1943. Tragically several months after Jack's death his parents received an "All's well" postcard from Jack that he was in Japanese hands. His parents were relieved because the last news they had received was that he had been wounded just prior to the fall of Singapore.

Jack's death notification to his parents was not confirmed until 1945. In a Dandenong Journal newspaper article, the journalist wrote the following:

"Jack was a fine lad, who will be deeply mourned, not only by his parents and sisters (Beryl and Rena) but by a wide circle of friends who had learnt to appreciate his worth. In giving up his life for his country he only lived up to the traditions that were part of his make-up"

His parents finally placed their sad and poignant death notice on the 25 April 1945, exactly 80 years ago this ANZAC day.

"A tribute of love and affection to our dear son and brother John, and to his gallant comrades of 2/10th field Company, Royal Australia Engineers".

"Loved in life, missed in death, beautiful memories are all we have left"

Jack is forever immortalised here on our Beaconsfield War Memorial.

Rest in peace, Jack.

Lest We Forget.