**SAPPER BENJAMIN MARTIN**

**5776 – Tunnelling Details / 1st Tunnelling Company**

Benjamin Martin was born on 6 July, 1877 at Moonta Mines, South Australia the son of John Daw and Elizabeth Ann (nee Bartle) Martin. The family moved to Broken Hill, New South Wales.

He stated he served with the Driscoll’s Scouts in South Africa for one year until the Corps was disbanded.

There are no records to show how he got to South Africa from Broken Hill and only mentions this unit he served with. Newspapers reported extensively on the Boer War and the following is an advertisement reprinted from the *Cape Times* on active recruitment there to join various units in South Africa.

*Brisbane Courier* Tuesday February 19, 1901:

RECRUITING IN SOUTH AFRICA

A late number of the “Cape Times” show pretty clearly the extent of the new movement in South Africa for strengthening the mobile forces in the field again the Boers. The advertisement of recruiting officers occupy almost the whole of a page of the paper named.

Recruits for Kitchener’s Horse, Kimberley Light Horse, Roberts’s Horse, Driscoll’s Scouts and the Commander-in-Chief’s Bodyguard, were invited, all at 5s per day and found. *Article abridged*

His name appears in the Register of the Driscoll’s Scouts enlisting on 25 May, 1901 as Trooper B. Martin No 248.

This Corps was raised under Capt. Driscoll, an Irishman, who had been a resident of Burma for ten years and Captain of the Burmah Volunteer Rifles who went to the South African front. Said to be the eyes and ears of Sir Leslie Rundle’s Army and had the courage of ten men. Requirements for service with the Scouts were covered in the:

*Port Augusta and Stirling Illustrated News* Thursday August 15, 1901:

WITH DRISCOLL’S SCOUTS

By R.M.

This famous body of men were raised by the gallant officer whose name they bear, and are in every respect picked men. Fearless riders, good shots, well versed in bushcraft and veldt lore, bolder than the Boers and just as “slim” these men have fully earned their highest praise of Sir Leslie Rundle and other generals in South Africa. Major Driscoll, D.S.O., is a fire-eating Irishman as ever left Cork. *Article abridged*

Martin’s service was during the second phase of the Boer War and at the time of his enlistment in May, 1901 the strength of the Driscoll Scouts was recorded as 422 men with 489 horses and were at Orange River Colony. They spent considerable time in the column with Colonel Western in the Vaal and in August, 1901 were taken to Cape Colony by Colonel Western for short operations at Myburg and Jamestown. During September served in the South East of Orange River Colony operating under General Knox, Colonel Rochfort and Colonel Western. On completion of his six month’s service was discharged on 30 November, 1901. An entry on the Boer War database states there is a soldier No. 385 Benjamin Martin, aged 29, leaving Capetown on the *Moravian* for Australia. Arrival was reported in the:

*Register* (Adelaide) Tuesday January 7, 1902:

RETURNING AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS

MELBOURNE, January 6.

The steamer Moravian, which arrived to-day from London via the Cape, brought 131 officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, who are returning from service in South Africa. Lieut.-Col Airey and Mjr. Murray, of New South Wales, were the only officers on board. The following seven were booked for Adelaide—Tprs. James P. Buchan, Willian Clark, W.H. Chapman, F. Hall, **B. Martin**, F.W. Strawick and W. Airey.

For his service he received the Queen’s South Africa Medal and three clasps.

He married on 21 March, 1903 at Broken Hill to Violet Maria Ide.

He was a witness in the Inquest to the death of a miner at the Proprietary Mine and reported in the:

*Barrier Miner* Thursday September 19, 1912:

THE PROPRIETARY FATALITY – INQUEST ON THE BODY OF THE VICTIM – VERDICT OF ACCIDENTAL DEATH

An inquest on the body of Edward D. Sukling, who was killed by a fall of ground at the 400ft level (Block 12), of the Proprietary min at about 11 o’clock yesterday morning, was opened at the Court House this morning by Mr T. Hall, the coroner.

Benjamin Martin, miner, stated he was working near the scene of the accident, he was working on the floor above deceased and his mate, witness saw the stope deceased was working in early in the morning, and took notice of the face, which he considered safe, the men were working the stope in a safe manner.

The jury, after retirement for several minutes, returned a verdict of accidental death. *Article abridged*

At the recruiting depot in Broken Hill on 6 May, 1916 the married thirty-eight-year-old miner applied to enlist for active service abroad and passed the medical examination. Attestation forms describe him as 158cms (5ft 2ins) tall, weighing 61.8kgs (136lbs) with a chest measurement of 92cms (36ins) and a fresh complexion and brown hair and his brown eyes tested to poor eyesight in the left eye and very poor vision in the right one. Distinctive marks were one vaccination scar on each arm and a mole on the right arm. Next-of-kin nominated was his wife Mrs Violet Martin of Cornish Street, off Harris Street, Railway Town, Broken Hill and allotted three-fifths of his pay in support of her and their child. The Oath of Enlistment was signed and taken on 18 May, 1916.

Acknowledgement to the departing volunteers was published in the:

*Barrier Miner* Friday May 19, 1916:

IN BROKEN HILL

Eight recruits for the A.I.F. left Broken Hill by the express last night for Adelaide, where they will enter into training. They were accorded the usual street march, and send-off by the members of the Barrier Empire League, the Baden-Powell Scouts, and the Broken Hill Band. At the railway station there was a large crowd present to give them a final cheer. The Broken Hill Band played suitable music as the train steamed out. The recruits were:

H. Carse, V.A. Richardson, **B. Martin**, A.J. Wright, W.Q. O’Connor, D. Gould, M. Channing, A.H. Taylor.

Basic training commenced with A Coy, 2nd Depot Battalion from 19 May at the Exhibition camp moving to the 4th Reinforcements to the 5th Pioneers at Mitcham camp on June 16 then allotted to the Base Miners on July 1. Was transferred on 13 July to the training camp at Seymour, Victoria and joined the October, 1916 Reinforcements to the Tunnelling Companies. His rank was Sapper with the regimental number 5776.

The 516 Reinforcements departed Melbourne, Victoria on October 25, 1916 at 1.30pm aboard the transport HMAT A38 *Ulysses.* The Australian coastline disappeared from view on October 30, 1916 with the port of Durban reached at 11.30am on November 13, 1916. Windy weather was experienced going around the Cape and arrived at Cape Town at 7am on November 19. Sierra Leone was the next port of call but their departure was delayed until December 14, 1916 as it was not safe to proceed further. Arrived at Plymouth, England on December 28, 1916 after 65 days at sea, with the troops disembarking at 1.30pm and detrained to the station at Tidworth and marched in to Perham Downs the following day for further training for the front at the Aust. Details Camp. Meanwhile, Sapper was admitted to the military hospital at Devonport with fractured ribs, noted as slightly sick, and spent 27 days a patient with rest for his recovery.

He was discharged to Perham Downs on 23 January, 1917.

The Reinforcements left Folkstone for France on the troopship S.S. *Onward* and he remained until transferred on 4 April, 1917 to the No. 1 Command Depot. On April 10 marched out to Camp Headquarters.

Proceeded from Nos 4 & 5 Camps overseas from Folkstone on 9 May, 1917 arriving a day later at the Aust General Base Depot. On 17 May went for permanent base duties to the II Anzac Headquarters at Etaples arriving two days later.

Military discipline was issued for the following:

Offence: While on active service (1) absent from his billet at 9.30 p.m.

contrary to G.R.O. no: 1599 27/5/17

(2) not reporting himself on returning to camp

Award: forfeits 2 day’s pay

Went sick on 6 July, 1917 to the 15th Casualty Clearing Station suffering nephritis (inflammation of kidneys) and four days later admitted to the 53rd General Hospital in Boulogne. Was invalided to England on July 23 on the hospital ship *St Patrick* entering the 1st Eastern General Hospital in Cambridge.

Base Records regretfully advised his wife on 7 August, 1917 that her husband had been reported admitted to the 1st Eastern Military Hospital, Cambridge on 23/7/17 suffering from nephritis. His address for correspondence

On 27 August was transferred to the 1st Aust Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield remaining a patient there. He appeared before the Medical Board on 4 September and his Statement of Case reads:

Disability: Nephritis

Origin of disability: 10 weeks ago

Place of disability: In France and B.E.F.

Essential facts: Patient’s history. Began with pains in lumbar region then

swelling from knees to ankles, in back, on face. Vomited

everything, was very short of breath – had some bronchitis,

frequently of micturition but quantity was lessened. Constant

headaches. No previous illness.

Causation: Active service – exposure

Present condition: slight oedema of face and back, still pains in back & lower

Abdomen. Appetite poor some vomiting still.

Headaches (frontal) constant. Sleeps poorly & sometimes

has feeling of dyspnoea at night.

Heart A.B. almost in W.L. Sounds clear, 1st mitral soft.

Vessel wall not thickened 172+. Lungs rales at bases

Urine Sp Er 1059 ack. Alb. 1½ gms per like. No Sugar

Many hal? and a few granular casts some R.B.C. many pus cells.

Recommendation: Discharge permanently unfit – yes

Change to Australia – no

Approved: 27/9/17

Board findings: By active service – exposure

Labour market: Total

Finding: Discharge permanently unfit for General Service & Home Service

Sapper remained at the hospital until 29 September then was transferred to the No. 2 Command Depot in Weymouth.

Sapper Martin was invalided to Australia for discharge due to nephritis on 31 October, 1917 on the H.T. *Berrima.* His berth for the voyage was a hammock. Base Records advised his wife on 28 November he was returning home.

Medical notes during the voyage were:

Condition fair. Headaches at times. Pyorthora?. Urine contains trace of albumin. Class A.

His name was among those listed as returning published in the:

*Barrier Miner* Monday December 24, 1917:

RETURNING SOLDIERS – EXPECTED IN ADELAIDE

The South Australian military authorities notify that the following men, comprising list “B”, have been listed for return to Australia, and are actually en route from abroad.

Sapper B. Martin, 1st Tunnelling Company *Article abridged*

The transport docked in Adelaide (4th Military District) on 27 December, 1917. News of their arrival was published in the:

*Daily Herald* (Adelaide) Monday December 31, 1917:

SOLDIERS RETURNED

Another batch of 84 sick and wounded South Australian soldiers arrived home yesterday afternoon from the front. They were welcomed on reaching the North terrace station by Hon. R.P Blundell (Minister of Repatriation and Industry) and the mayor of Adelaide (Mr C.R.J. Glover). The men were dismissed immediately after the speeches to gather with their friends and relatives. *Article abridged*

He became a patient at No. 15 Australian General Hospital, North Adelaide from 14 January to 18 February, 1918 for further treatment of nephritis. On 16 February his Case Notes were given as:

Feels quite well except tired on much walking. Urine still ½ % albumin. Was ? 10 years ago and 5 occasions since. P 90 & high tension. Heart √ Lungs √. Referred to P.M.B. by authority of Major Horne. Incapacitated ½ for 6 months.

He appeared before the Medical Board on 18 February and his medical notes state:

Still has ½ % Albumin in urine. High tension pulse. Easily tired.

He was sent to the Staff Officer for Invalid and Returned Soldiers the same day. Military Discharge was issued in Adelaide (4th M.D.) on 4 March, 1918 as medically unfit – disability Nephritis.

He was granted a military pension to his Cornish Street address for the following:

Self Benjamin Martin £1 10 shillings per fortnight from 5/3/18

Dau. Hazel Winifred £1 per fortnight from 5/3/18 - Trustee her mother

Wife Violet Maria £1 10 shillings per fortnight from 5/3/18

The 4th Military District wrote to Base Records forwarding his medical and service documents and advising that discharge has been made as medically unfit and not due to misconduct after serving 1 year and 291 days of which 1 year and 64 days were spent abroad.

For serving his country Sapper 5776 Benjamin Martin, 1st Tunnelling Company was issued with the British War Medal (17980) and the Victory Medal (17784).

A telegram was sent to Base Records on 7 September, 1921 from the Repatriation Commission, Sydney asking to kindly forward Army Form B for Sapper B. Martin. These were forwarded on 9 September, 1921.

Benjamin Martin passed away on 18 May, 1922 aged 45 years. Family notices and arrangements were placed in the:

*Barrier Miner* Friday May 19, 1922:

FUNERAL NOTICES

MARTIN. —The FRIENDS of Mrs V. MARTIN and Miss HAZEL MARTIN are respectfully informed that the Funeral of their late beloved HUSBAND and FATHER (Benjamin) will leave his brothers’ (Mr Fred Martin) residence, 81 Wolfram-street, TO-MORROW (Saturday), at 11 a.m., for the Methodist Cemetery.

D.B. MANGELSDORF, Undertaker

*Continues:*

MARTIN. —The FRIENDS of Mr and Mrs J. MARTIN (of West Australia), Mr and Mrs P. MARTIN (of Adelaide), Mr and Mrs WOODS (of South Africa), Mr and Mrs J. HAMILTON, Mr and Mrs F. MARTIN, Mr and Mrs W.J. LOWE (of Adelaide), and Mr and Mrs N. RIGGS and FAMILIES are respectfully informed that the Funeral of their late beloved BROTHER, BROTHER-IN-LAW and UNCLE (Benjamin Martin) will leave 81 Wolfram-street TO-MORROW (Saturday), at 11 a.m., for the Methodist Cemetery.

D.B. MANGELSDORF, Undertaker

A.N.A.

MEMBERS of the above are requested to attend the Funeral of our late MEMBER, BENJAMIN MARTIN, to leave 81 Wolfram-street, at 11 a.m., for the Methodist Cemetery. Cab leaves Exchange Buildings 10.30 a.m.

C. BROCKHILL, Secretary

W.C.T.U.—The MEMBERS of the above are requested to attend the Funeral of their late President’s and District Vice-president’s HUSBAND, Benjamin Martin, LEAVING HIS BROTHER’S RESIDENCE, 81 Wolfram-street, TO-MORROW, at 11 a.m. Cab leaves Blende-street Church at 1.45 a.m.

A. DAVIES, Hon. Secretary

RETURNED SAILORS AND SOLDIERS’ IMPEERIAL LEAGUE BROKEN HILL SUB-BRANCH

(RSL BADGE IMAGE)

MEMBERS of the above are respectfully requested to attend the Funeral of our late COMRADE, BEN. MARTIN, leaving his late residence 81 Wolfram-street, at 11 a.m. TO-MORROW (Saturday).

G.F. BARSON, Secretary

Interment took place in the Methodist portion 4 of Broken Hill Cemetery within row Y7 in grave no. 6.

There is no headstone.

On 17 July, 1922 the Public Trustee wrote to Base Records in regards to the Will of the late soldier which was made while at Seymour camp, Vic on 20 October, 1916 and witnessed by A.G. Anderson and T.R. Jones. The agent was desirous to contact one of these witnesses to obtain an affidavit as to the execution of the Will. Mrs Martin said that these witnesses were soldiers in camp with the deceased and has no idea of their whereabouts. The writer would be glad if they could supply the addresses of both or either witness in order that he could communicate with them on the subject mentioned. Base Records replied on July 22, 1922 furnishing the last known addresses of these witnesses.

A year later his family placed the following memorial notice in the:

*Barrier Miner* Friday May 18, 1923:

IN MEMORIAM

MARTIN. —In loving memory of our beloved husband and father, Benjamin Martin, who passed away in the Broken Hill Hospital on May 18, 1922.

Not forgotten

Inserted by his wife and daughter (V. and H. Martin).

On the twentieth anniversary of Anzac Day in 1935 the following took place at the War Memorial and reported in the:

*Barrier Miner* Thursday April 25, 1935:

BROKEN HILL’S TRIBUTE TO ANZACS

To-day, the twentieth anniversary of that ill-fated but glorious landing at Gallipoli, Broken Hill paid a solemn tribute to its dead.

At 11 a.m. a little world around the War Memorial stood still, and in the imaginations of those to whom the day was of poignant significance, arose a vision of a ghostly army that hovered over the city for two silent moments, and then faded into the shadows whence it came.

At the Memorial were sad-eyed, sombrely clad mothers and widows, children to whom the war was but a name, sons and daughters, who retained but a dim memory of fathers who sleep in far-off battlefields.

*Cont’d*

*Continues:*

LIST OF WREATHS

The follow wreaths, were placed on the memorial: *abridged to Tunnellers*

In memory of Jasper Lord, 2nd Tunnelling Company; in memory of Sapper E.J. Flowers; in memory of Sapper **Ben Martin**; in memory of Sapper Simon C. Harris; *Article abridged*

His name is inscribed on the Broken Hill War Memorial.



Broken Hill War Memorial and bronze plaque bearing his name

Photos sourced from Images of Broken Hill War Memorial

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www.tunnellers.net

BOER WAR MEMORIAL website - www.bwm.org.au

Driscoll's Scouts was raised, on a modest basis as regards numbers, about the time Lord Roberts landed at Cape Town. Their leader, Captain Driscoll, was a British resident in Burma, who made his way to the front, and whether his motives were love to do something for the mother country, ambition, or mere love of adventure, he most certainly did work of the highest value throughout more than two years' hard campaigning. The unit took part in General Brabant's operations in February and March 1900 for clearing the north-eastern portion of Cape Colony; and when Colonel Dalgety occupied and defended Wepener, 3 officers and 52 men of Driscoll's Scouts were with him. During the siege Lieutenant Weiner and about a dozen non-commissioned officers and men were wounded. After Wepener was relieved the unit was attached to the Colonial Division under General Brabant, and were in the advance through the east of the Orange River Colony to the line Senekal to Hammonia; the right or eastern end of that line being largely left to the keeping of the Colonial Division during June and July 1900, when the operations for surrounding the enemy were in progress. The unit was present at the severe engagement fought by General Rundle at Biddulphsberg on 29th May. They had several casualties in this action and in the fighting during June and July before Prinsloo's force was surrounded. In a telegram dated 12 July the 'Daily Telegraph' correspondent said: "Captain Driscoll, leader of the Scouts bearing his name, captured four armed Boers single-handed and brought them prisoners into camp. This was a splendidly plucky feat. Driscoll's Scouts are rendering General Rundle most valuable service". Another correspondent mentioned that at the time Captain Driscoll was quite alone. He had been taking coffee at the door of a store, when he saw four armed Boers go round the house. In a second he had 'covered' them, and they agreed to hand over their arms. He then marched them to his men some miles away. Sir Archibald Hunter, in his despatch of 4 August 1900 regarding the surrender of Prinsloo, said, para 26: "The following day, the 26th, I entered Fouriesburg with my mounted troops, and found that the town had already been occupied by a portion of Sir Leslie Bundle's Division, headed by Driscoll's Scouts, after a forced march from Commando Nek of fourty kilometres". The unit was very highly thought of by Sir Leslie Bundle, and he kept them as scouts for his division when the bulk of the Colonials were taken north to the Transvaal on the trail of De Wet. The unit was for a time under Major General Hector MacDonald in the Bethlehem district, and in October they were attached to a column based on Harrismith under Brigadier General Campbell. Under these leaders they did a great deal of marching and skirmishing. In November and December they were with Bruce Hamilton, under whom they had constant hard work, which they performed to the general's satisfaction. He frequently complimented them. In the second phase of the war the unit was greatly augmented in numbers; having done well and made a name, it got recruits. The despatch of 8th July 1901 shows that the strength in May was 422 men and 489 horses. At that time, and for some months previous, they had been operating in the Orange River Colony both east and west of the railway, along the Vaal river, and in the south of the Transvaal. Early in February they were engaged near Ladybrand, and had some casualties. On the 24th they lost 2 killed and 6 wounded, and on the 26th had further losses in the Winburg district. On 4 March Lieutenant Moss was severely wounded near Jagersfonteiii in the south of the Orange River Colony. On the 2nd a party of 50 had been sent to join a column. They were surrounded by 300 Boers, but about 35 got into a kraal, which they held for twenty-four hours until relieved. On 16 March Lieutenant MacMinn and several men were wounded. Driscoll's Scouts were for a considerable time in the column of Colonel Western, who was frequently credited in the despatches with useful captures made chiefly in the neighbourhood of the Vaal. Near Parys, on 19 April 1901, Lieutenant Norman Breslin was severely wounded. In August Western's column was taken to Cape Colony, and operated for a short time against Myburg about Jamestown. In September the unit was taken to the south-east of the Orange River Colony, where for about four months they operated under General Knox, Colonel Rochfort, and Colonel Western. In the despatch of 8th January 1902 Lord Kitchener remarked that Colonel Rochfort's troops, under Lieutenant Colonel Western and De Moulin and Major Driscoll, were moved to the west of the railway in pursuit of straggling bands of the enemy. In the despatch of 8 February 1902 Lord Kitchener said: “On the 26 January Major Driscoll, whose column had called at Petrusburg to obtain supplies there, learned that on the previous evening Nieuwhoudt's commando had been seen in the vicinity of Makaw's Drift on the Modder. He at once started in pursuit, and crossing at the drift, came up with the Boer force, which was in movement on the Boshof road about eight miles to the north of the river. A short engagement ensued, in which Major Driscoll was successful in capturing 17 prisoners, including 2 field-cornets, 12 waggons, 69 riding-horses". Driscoll was then sent to the extreme south-west of the Orange River Colony. The despatch of 8 March 1902 mentions that in February Western and Driscoll's troops moved north towards Boshof; Driscoll's Scouts had an engagement on the way at Simon's Valley, capturing 6 prisoners, 180 horses, mules, some cattle, waggons, and ammunition. The enemy having been very aggressive in the south-west of the Transvaal in February and the first half of March, Driscoll's Scouts, acting as one of Colonel Rochfort's columns, were taken to the valley of the Vaal. About 11 April they crossed the river, and paid some surprise visits to various likely resorts of the enemy. A forced march on the 15th resulted in a successful surprise near Schweizer Reneke, when 57 prisoners were taken, including two of De Wet's staff. Other efforts also met with success. After this Driscoll's Scouts took part in the final great drives in the Western Transvaal under General Ian Hamilton, which Lord Kitchener said were extremely successful.