

Theodor Milton Pflaum

On the 24th of September 1916 Theodor Milton Pflaum was sent out with 50 other men to begin setting up the machine guns in Belgium. He had to supervise and bring materials to the site. On the way back from getting materials the young man was shot in the thigh, causing a compound fracture. Soon after he was shot, he was rushed to 6th Australian Field Ambulance. However, they were not able to help him and sent him onto the 10th Casualty Clearing Station Polygon Wood, Belgium. On his way there he passed away. South Australia had lost a dedicated ANZAC who was a friend and a leader to all. A loving son and a caring brother. Theodor was buried Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery.

2nd Lieutenant Theodor (Theo) Milton Pflaum was happy but serious man. He consistently showed the ANZAC Spirit values of perseverance and mateship while fighting for his country. Pflaum had to show great commitment to get appointed 2nd Lieutenant, it wasn't an easy path to get there either. Theodor Pflaum was 19 years and 10 months of age when he enlisted. He had done previous training in the 79th Infantry battalion as a senior cadet. After two years he was transferred to the Machine Gun Department of the 79th Infantry, Citizen Military Forces. According to the Military Officer training him, Theodor was a "trusted and dedicated young man." Like most men, he was first sent to Egypt to begin training. Theodor was quickly removed from the training and brought into a new battalion, the 8th Machine Gun Company. At this stage Theodor's job was to set up the large machine guns on the edge of the trenches and fire them when alerted to. Doing this job made them fully at risk of gun fire. And in Pflaum's case that was exactly what happened.

According to the National Archive of Australia website, on the 20th of September 1895 Theodor Milton Pflaum was born. He was the middle child of three. Along with his older brother, Elliot Frederick Pflaum, and his younger brother, Raymond Holstein Pflaum they all fought in World War 1. All his siblings were born from the same parents, Mary Jane Pflaum and Heinrich Adam Theodor Pflaum. Theodor was born in Blumberg, South Australia which is now known as Birdwood. Prior to World War 1 Theodor was involved in the senior cadets. This taught him many things about machine guns, trenches, and leadership. He brought all his knowledge into the war with him showing great perseverance. He never had the chance to get married or find a lover of his own, he had dark hair and hazel eyes, a medium complexion and was baptised. A medical exam was taken on Theodor prior to the war. Results are shown on the Virtual War Memorial Australia website. His results showed that he was fit and healthy ready for war.

On the Virtual War Memorial site, Theodor Pflaum was a successful clerk at a local bank he was quick moving and resourceful, up until the day he enlisted. Theodor Pflaum and his younger brother both enlisted for the war on 29th July 1915. Theodor was of age when he enlisted



Figure 1: 2nd Lieutenant Theodor Milton Pflaum, aged 19

therefore, he did not need a parent to sign him off. However, Raymond Pflaum was only 17 years old when he enlisted meaning he was underage. Even though Theodor was overage his father signed him and his brother off to attend the war. About a month after, Theodor's older brother enlisted as well. Theodor and Raymond were both assigned to the 32nd Battalion. The three boys showed great courage and amazing bravery when going into the World War. Their unified bond, demonstrating great mateship.

Mentioned by the Virtual War Memorial website timeline, on the 18th of November 1915 together the two boys embarked from Outer Harbour, Port Adelaide. The boys both disembarked in Egypt to begin basic training. Although as mentioned earlier Theodor had to finish his training early. This meant he had to leave his younger brother behind. On the 1st of June 1916 he was promoted to Corporal. This was his first official rank. Theodor embarked Alexandria and joined the British Expeditionary Force. After a 17 day sail the boat departed at Marseilles, France. Where him and his battalion were fighting for their country. On the 1st of September 1916 Theodor was appointed Sergeant. Soon after he was appointed Sergeant things got extremely hectic and stressful for him, he was being swapped around between Battalions. Although through it all he showed the ANZAC Spirit Values of perseverance and respect. On the 10th of February 1917 he was transferred twice! First, he transferred to AIF Training Depot, England and then he was transferred to the 25th Machine Gun Company. Later that month Theodor was promoted again, he was now the 2nd Lieutenant. This job was quite often given to a soldier who is friendly, easy to talk to and stays on the job. As a 2nd Lieutenant his job was to make sure his battalion was safe, rifles were clean, everyone was fed and to encourage people to leave the trenches. On 27th of May he had to join the 3rd Training Battalion from Perham Downs for further bombing instructions. After the training course Theo was lucky enough to qualify to be an Instructor at a Revolver School in England. He officially qualified on the 14th of July 1917. At this point Theo would have felt proud and thankful that he would be able to show he ANZAC Spirit further and teach newcomers how to control revolvers. In early September Theodor embarked overseas to France.

Although Theodor Pflaum did not have much spare time, when he did, he chose to write in his diary, write letters or read letters from home. Some entries in Theo's diary were quite sad. One entry is about Theodor finding his younger brother. He wrote *"While the men were getting their wind, my attention was drawn to a wounded man alongside of me just along a dugout. It was Ray ... He was quite conscious and by his appearance didn't seem to be hit too badly ... I managed to get him a flask of whisky ... and a mouthful of that seemed to make his spirits go up ... I asked a 32nd fellow ... to do his best for Ray while he could. I then made my way down to find a position for my gun..."*. Raymond passed later that night due to blood loss and wound impact. His body was not found until 2010. This entry was tear jerking, but it also showed both the Pflaum boys' dedication to their country. As well as them keeping up the ANZAC Value of mateship.

Like many men in the war Theodor had to watch his friends, family and supporting officers die from horrible injuries and diseases. In one case Theodor had to choose between staying with his brother or continuing the task he was set. If he left his brother by himself, his brother would

have died. However, if he didn't finish the job as he was told multiple lives could have been lost. By leaving his brother he showed commitment to his nation and strength.

Pflaum served in multiple battles while he was in the war. One of the most memorable battles he fought in, was the battle of Fromelles. This was the most devastating battle for Australia and the British. The Germans annihilated the British Empire causing them to retreat within the 24 hours. It was considered "the worst 24 hours of Australia's history," quote from John Howells. The battle was stressful and fast battle. The battle was quickly over, by the end many Australians were left dead and unidentified.

Theodor was involved in the Battle of Pozières, this battle was a dangerous and fierce. Private J.A.C. Stuart wrote "Corpse Avenue, it was a very appropriate name.....". People were dead on the ground everywhere. As stated by the Australian War Memorial, the battle resulted in over 20,000 casualties and over exhausted all men involved. The battle caused 12,133 casualties stated by the Australian War Memorial.

Theo was also a part of the Third Ypres Battle this battle went for 30 July – 5 November. He jumped in and out of this battle depending on his calling. The final battle Theodor took part in was Polygon Wood. "Slowly we advance, keeping behind the creeping barrage, which churns up the whole country," wrote Private A.V. Barber. This was Theodor's final battle which caused his death. The enemy was shooting at any opportunity.

Theodor's older brother Elliot was the only Pflaum to survive the war. After serving he returned to Loxton, South Australia. As specified from the book '*Street Names Tell Stories of Loxton*' There is now a road in Loxton called Pflaum Terrace that is dedicated to him and his family.

Part B:

I decided to research Theodor Milton Pflaum, after seeing his name on a memorial in Loxton, South Australia. The first step I took was researching his name on the naa.gov.au website. This gave me over 75 pages of information on his medical records, letters from his mother and battalion. I then used many governments approved websites to find out his life prior to the war and how lived his life. Using the Virtual War Memorial website, I found his timeline and his diary. I also used the Australian War Memorial website to figure out his cause of death, gravestone, his memorial records, and his medallions. After this I visited the school library and searched for books that may link to Theodor. I read a book about the street names of Loxton which included street named after his brother. I emailed the RSL to see if they had any further information on him or his older brother who returned. I read through two of the diaries Theo wrote while in war. I read through old newspaper clippings to see if there were any extra details about him or the battles, he fought in. I searched for direct quotes from him or that were said to him. I evaluated maps from where he was fighting to find out where he had travelled and been. I researched trenches and what it means to look after and live in one. I have researched what each rank means and how you are expected to act at each rank. I investigated his ancestry to see if he had relatives in the present. I researched each battle that he fought in to deeply find out what he went through. I visited the Loxton Public Library and borrowed a few

recommend books about WW1. These held information about the battles and trenches. I have read through multiple previous entries using the ANZAC Prize website to find out the format of my submission. I researched his battalions and the other men in his battalions. I have looked through photos of him and battalion together to find out about the mateship between them. I did some digging into other soldiers who originated from Birdwood. I have also read through his brother's files as well. I have found objects and images that relate to Theodor and analysed them. I have watched YouTube videos on the events that have happened and to find out more general knowledge in an easy-to-understand way.

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Figure 2: Battle for Pozières 1916, Photograph, Virtual War Memorial, viewed 21 May 2021, <<https://vwma.org.au/explore/campaigns/5>>.

Figure 3: Smyth, N 1916, Battle of Pozières. Illustration, Virtual War Memorial, viewed 21 May 2021, <<https://vwma.org.au/explore/campaigns/5>>.

Figure 4: Diary of Theodor Milton PFLAUM, 1916 1916. Photograph, Australian War Memorial, viewed 21 May 2021, <<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/RCDIG0001104>>.

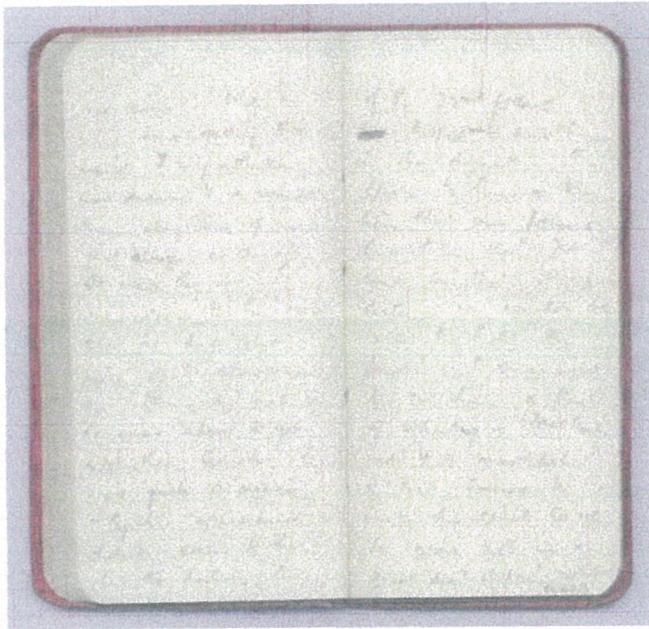


Figure 4: Entry of Theodor Milton Pflaum's diary in 1916.

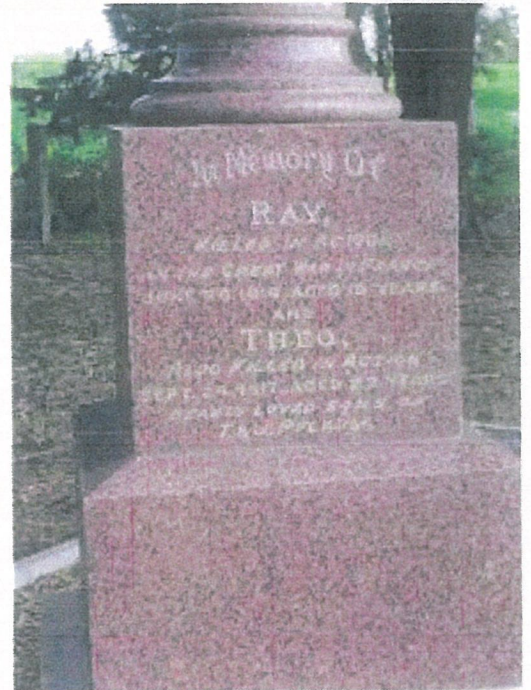


Figure 3: Memorial gravestone for Theodor and his brother Raymond.



Figure 2: Men marching prior to the battle for Pozières.

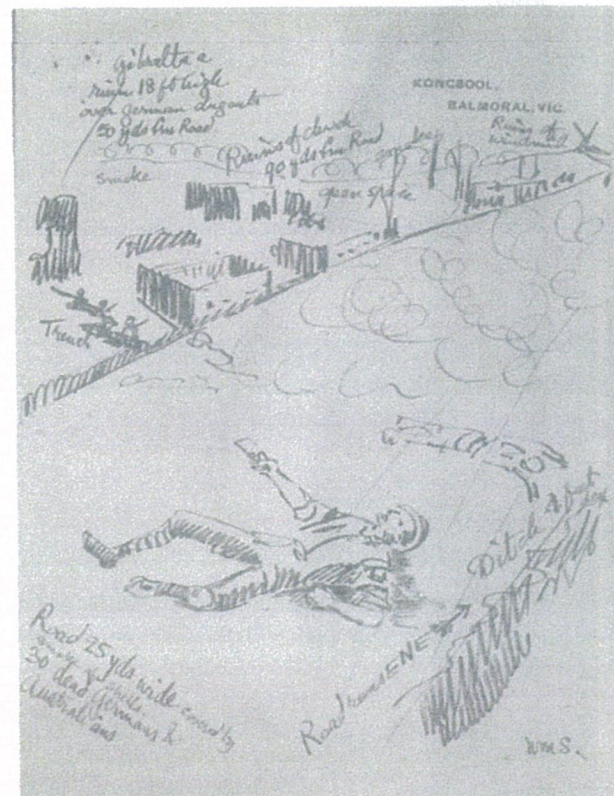


Figure 1: a picture drawn by lowest ranked soldier during the battle for Pozières.