



Frederick Slade de¹ Castilla (1896 – 1975)

Frederick Slade Castilla, known as “Baun”, was born on 29th December 1896 to Henry Couper and Violet May (nee Bussell) Castilla at Aberdeen Street Perth Western Australia. He was a grandson of Alfred Pickmore



Bussell.

Frederick Slade de Castilla (service number 3057) enlisted at Black Boy Hill on 21st September 1914 while still a high school student, although his Attestation papers designated him as a university student. (Living at Bay View Terrace Claremont with his family at the time).

He was appointed to the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade (FAB) Divisional Ammunition Column as a Driver. He embarked at Fremantle per A7 *Medic* on 2nd November 1914, the same ship that he recalled his uncle Jack (John Stephen de Castilla DSO) left on for the Boer War in 1899. His service dossier has some gaps from here until he leaves Gallipoli, although there are entries when he was transferred sick to hospital on Mudros on 18th September 1915 and rejoining his unit on Gallipoli 7th November 1915.

He disembarked *Ulysses* from the Gallipoli Peninsula at Alexandria on 22nd December 1915 and subsequently arrived in Marsellaise France on 29th March 1916. “Baun” Castilla only recorded injury was when he was thrown from his horse and kicked in the face while in a “line of march” near Watten in France on 18th October 1916.

He embarked at Havre France on the *Prince George* on 12th October 1918 on “Special 1914 leave” to Southampton before embarking for Australia on the D30 *Port Lyttelton (Lydelton)* on 23 October 1918, disembarking at Fremantle on 12 December 1918. “Baun” Castilla was discharged on 9 March 1919. He farmed at Bakers Hill before retiring to Rockingham where he died in 1975 aged 78 years.

According to the reference *Australia's Fighting Sons of the Empire*, prior to enlistment he was the first school boy to enlist in WA. His age at enlistment indicates that he was 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ years at the time of enlistment, although his Attestation Paper records “18 years (29/9/1896)” a fudge to get him over the line. He was 5 foot 4 inches (165cm) tall and 112 pounds (51Kg) in weight.

The story of how such a young man enlisted is drawn from notes made by his own hand, written many decades later. While at Perth Modern School “Baun” Castilla became a senior army cadet and in 1914 became a member of the Citizen Forces.

¹ De originally part of the surname but is not always used.

When war broke out and it was decided to send an artillery battery (8th Bat) from WA, volunteers were called for from the Citizen Force one night at the drill hall. Nearly all volunteered, but “Baun” was told to ‘step back’ as none from class of ’96 were being taken. He was very disappointed. He recalls: *“The battery was in camp at Blackboy Hill and I slipped off up there whenever I could, waiting and watching. I bought a pair of long pants and asked Col. Hobbs for an interview. Col. Hobbs told me I would have to wait a couple of years. However I continued to visit Blackboy Hill and one day I had a break. Two new Lieutenants joined the battery, Vowles and Clowes; Vowles was a Claremont boy. I told Vowles my troubles and he was amused but sympathetic. He told me to come to up to camp in uniform (presumably his CF uniform) in the morning. I was caught by the Major (Bessell-Browne)”* who scolded “Baun” for turning up despite being reject when volunteers had been called for that night at the drill hall. Bessell-Browne, I think a little exasperated, told “Baun” to go to the Orderly Room and wait. When the Major arrived he filled in a set of Attestation papers and sent “Baun” for medical examination. He had expected the M.O. to fail him or that his father would not give his consent. Bessell-Browne was to be proven wrong on both counts! The M.O. McGregor said *“it was a mounted unit and my weight wouldn’t hurt any horse”*. His father Henry Couper Castilla very distressed signed the papers and gave me 30 shillings (\$5). And so the diminutive school boy Frederick Slade de Castilla started his journey from Black Boy Hill to war.

Frederick Slade de Castilla pedigree

