

Harvey, William, Lieut MC

William Harvey was born on 21st December 1886 in West Ham, London and was one of eleven children, seven boys and four girls to William and Martha Harvey. The third born, Harvey grew up in east London and took up an apprenticeship as a bookbinder and machine ruler, working for *The Essex Times*. He was raised in a strict environment, his father being a London policeman. His attraction towards life in the military and service in far off lands saw him join the 3rd Volunteer Battalion of the Essex Regiment, enlisting in 1906. After two years the regiment was re-numbered and called the 6th Battalion Essex Regiment (Territorials), Harvey by then a sergeant. In 1908 he deployed to India with his unit, and at some stage transferred to the Royal Horse Artillery where he met an Australian by the name of Strahan. It is believed by the Harvey family that the two men went AWL around 1911, both arriving in the port of Albany, Western Australia, with Harvey interested to see what pioneer life in Western Australia had to offer.

After meeting other Strahan family members, Harvey worked in the wheatbelt area of Wongan Hills and Goomalling, clearing land and sinking wells on contract to farmers, and in 1912-13 he worked on the rail line between Wongan and Mullewa. With the outbreak of war, Harvey joined the AIF in Perth, enlisting on 21st September 1914. He put his age down by two years and gave no details of his service with the Royal Horse Artillery on the Indian North-West Frontier, given he would be considered a deserter. He stood more than six feet tall and weighed 142 pounds. He appears to have taken his oath of enlistment at Broadmeadows in Victoria, prior to embarkation, having sailed for Melbourne from Fremantle earlier than the main body of the battalion. He was allotted regimental number 376 in 'C' Company of the original 16th Battalion and was trained as a signaller. His name is missing from the original embarkation roll, although it is clear from his letters and diary extracts that he embarked at Port Melbourne on HMAT A40 *Ceramic* on 22nd December 1914.

Harvey's previous military service saw him rapidly promoted, and in a letter to a

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friend in Western Australia dated 13th March 1915, he gave his rank as corporal. He was present at the Landing at Gallipoli on 25th April 1915 and had several of his good mates killed near him in the first few days. On 13th May, during the Quinn's Post fighting he was promoted sergeant, retaining this rank for the duration of his time at Gallipoli. He was instrumental in all the battalion's signalling duties, casualties amongst signallers being particularly high. He fought in all the 16th Battalion's engagements, including the August operations at northern Anzac. He was taken ill with dysentery and influenza on 9th September, and was taken off the peninsula to Imbros, transferring later to Lemnos. On 21st September, he was admitted to the 1st Auxiliary Hospital in Cairo where he remained for two weeks, before transferring to the New Zealand and Australian Hospital in Helouan on 5th October. He did not rejoin his unit until after the Gallipoli campaign, instead being posted to a school of instruction on 16th October, where he studied and instructed on signalling.

Harvey did not embark with the 16th Battalion on 1st June 1916, after its five months of duty in Egypt. He remained with the school of instruction where his skills in signalling were put to use. It was there he was recognised for his potential as a future officer. Harvey embarked for England aboard the HT *Franconia* on 21st August 1916, remaining with the school of instruction. During his time in England he managed to visit family and friends, having a photo taken with his four sisters to mark the occasion. On 4th October he rejoined the 16th Battalion in Belgium. After the fighting his comrades had seen on the Somme in August, it was a very different battalion he marched in to.

Harvey remained on strength of the 16th Battalion until February 1917, having served near Ypres in Belgium and then on the Somme. On 6th February 1917 he was posted to England for officer training at Cambridge, joining 'E' Company of the No5 Officer Cadet Battalion. For the next four months he underwent training, and on 2nd June, having finished third in his class, Harvey joined general infantry reinforcements as a second lieutenant. On 21st June he proceeded overseas for France and was taken on strength of the 16th Battalion in Flanders on 1st July. The battalion was in the line in the Ploegsteert sector, Harvey having missed the battalion's heroic but disastrous battle at Bullecourt in April.

He saw action over the next four months, including the operations near Polygon Wood and Zonnebeke, before detaching for duty on 3rd November to the 1st Anzac Signal School. He was promoted lieutenant on 19th December, rejoining the battalion two days later. On 1st January 1918, he marched out on leave to England where he caught up with family; meeting a young woman he had been introduced to through the family, and whom he would marry after the war.



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Harvey rejoined his unit on 18th January, the battalion having moved back into Belgium at Spoilbank. An attack of scabies saw him admitted to the 12th Field Ambulance on 8th February, later being sent to hospital for further treatment, before rejoining the battalion at De Zon Camp.

In early March he was again treated for scabies. Soon after, he marched out on leave, returning on 21st March. With the German Army mounting its spring offensive, the 16th Battalion moved south for Hebuterne in France. Harvey was involved in all the operations from this time until September 1918, acting as the battalion signalling officer. He fought at Hebuterne, Villers-Bretonneux and Hamel from late March until July, before fighting near Morcourt and Mericourt in the Battle for Amiens in August. It was in these operations and later, that he was finally recognised for his outstanding service and bravery, resulting in him being awarded the Military Cross. The recommendation reads: *"Lt William Harvey is brought to notice for his conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during the period 17 September to 31 December 1918, while carrying out the duty of Battalion Signal Officer. In the operation against the village of Le Verguier, which was carried out by this battalion, a very essential factor for the success of the operation was close liaison and communications between companies and headquarters, and it was due to the unselfish and devoted efforts and organizing ability of this officer that communications were effected and maintained, which so largely contributed to the ultimate success of the operation.*

This officer has always been extremely reliable, gallant and unselfish in his work. During the operation on 8 August 1918 at Mericourt – Morcourt (Somme), he, without thought of personal safety, followed up the foremost advancing troops almost continuously under fire, and maintained telephone communications with the rear, which enabled our gunners to bring fire on enemy strong points within a few moments of their being located. His always cheerful spirit set a fine example to those around him and he is strongly recommended for distinction."

London Gazette 31370 of 3-6-1919

Commonwealth Gazette 109 of 15-9-1919

Harvey's B2455 series service file records him on leave from 9th September to 1st October, although his recommendation for the Military Cross indicates otherwise.

After the cessation of hostilities he was attached to the 4th Brigade on 19th December 1918, and he marched out on leave to England on 16th January 1919, having been granted seventy-five days furlough. He married Margaret Emma Hartnett on 22nd March, and in April he took further leave with pay and subs for horticulture training in Hertfordshire. Harvey remained in England for the remainder of 1919, and a son, Laurence, was born that year on 24th December.

On 22nd January 1920 he returned alone to Western Australia, leaving behind his pregnant wife and infant son. Harvey disembarked at Fremantle on 28th February, and his appointment in the AIF was terminated on 14th March 1920, almost five and a half years from when he enlisted in September 1914.

Harvey decided to join the Western Australian Police Force, and with such referee's as Edmund Drake-Brockman, Harold Pope, Ross Harwood and Leslie Tilney, all who had commanded the 16th Battalion, he was ensured a relatively smooth passage in to his chosen employment. In April 1920 he became Constable (badge number 1303) William Harvey and he was stationed in the Victoria Park area of Perth, as well as Perth Central. After more than two years separated from his wife, and by then with two children, Harvey took annual leave on 3rd April 1922 and made his way to the south coast port of Albany to greet his family on their arrival.

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Harvey was then posted to a remote gold mining town called Youanmi, which was east of Geraldton and south east of Mt Magnet. This was an isolated area and after travelling by train to Geraldton and Mt Magnet, the family was taken by camel drawn wagon to the town. They endured the harsh outback environment, and after a several years' service they transferred to the southwest timber town of Manjimup in 1925. Over time the Harvey's had six children, one of whom died at birth, while another was tragically killed in a train shunting accident in Manjimup in November 1930. Harvey was much respected as the town's only policeman, where on 24th April 1932 he foiled a bank robbery, shooting dead one of the robbers, Martin Keen.

After some nine years in the town, the soon to be Sergeant Harvey took charge of the Police Academy in Perth, the local community seeing them off with a gift of 500 pounds sterling in appreciation for his service to the people of Manjimup and surrounding districts, especially throughout the Great Depression. The family moved to a house in Angelo Street, South Perth and in December 1936, Harvey was elected President of the Western Australian Police Union, where he was instrumental in securing superannuation entitlements for its members.

In February 1940, he was called up for full time duty as a Provost Marshal with Western Command in the Australian Army. With rank of lieutenant, he was in charge of maintaining law and order between the services in the busy wartime port of Fremantle. He was involved in taking charge of the prisoners from the German raider *Kormoran*, which sank HMAS *Sydney* in November 1941. By September 1942 he was a major, going on the retired list on 27th May 1944, then in his late fifties.

His first son Laurence was reported as a POW, having been captured in Singapore in February 1942 with the 2/4th Machine Gun Battalion (WX10822). He was later lost at sea, when an American submarine torpedoed and sank the *Rakuyo Maru* on 12th September 1944 in the South China Sea.

Harvey resumed his service with the WA Police and was made an inspector, working at the Fremantle Police Station until his retirement on 31st December 1949. His wife had a stroke and died on 17th May 1964, and soon after, Harvey died on 30th September the same year. They are both buried in the Roman Catholic section of the Karrakatta Cemetery in Perth.