

*Editor: The following article was submitted by Nancy French (Kokoda Hostel). Nancy is the wife of Brian French referred to in Patti Page's Visitation Report. The story that follows is of Brian's father Harry and Harry's brother Albert.
Thank you, Nancy.*

HARRY FRENCH'S WAR RECORD

Harry was born in Sydney on 2nd April 1894. He lived in Mosman with his parents and seven brothers and sisters. When the First World War started, he was 21 years old and was an apprentice plumber. He had been a Senior Cadet for twelve months and belonged to the Garrison Artillery for three years. Harry, 21, enlisted on the 12th April 1915. His brother Albert, who was two years older, enlisted in October of the same year. Harry was placed in the 5th Australian Machine Gun Company, 20th Battalion.

Both Harry and Albert were sent to the Army Camp at Liverpool in Sydney to be trained as soldiers before being sent overseas. After two months training Harry left Sydney in the troopship 'BURMA' in June 1915. Albert, who spent three months training left Sydney on a troopship on 3rd January 1916.

Both brothers were taken to Egypt where they did further training in the desert areas, probably not enjoying the sand and heat and flies. Harry told the family after the war that he remembers a fruit seller in Cairo, spitting on the fruit to make it look moist and fresh. He did not buy that fruit.

The Australian soldiers were under the direction of the English Army and had to do and go where they were sent. They would have preferred to have had Australian leaders. An objectionable Officer "accidentally" got shot in the foot to have him removed.

Both Harry and Albert, at different times, were sent to Gallipoli, and somehow managed to survive the harsh mountainous terrain and the mismanaged assault against the Turks, where so many men died.

On 11th October 1915, Harry was promoted to Corporal, in the field at Gallipoli, then on the 4th November 1915, he was promoted, this time to Sergeant. On the 10th March 1916 he was again promoted, this time to 2nd Lieutenant, and then to First Lieutenant.

In January 1916, Harry was taken back to Egypt, then went to fight in France. Somehow, he again survived the mud and cold, being injured a couple of times and being taken to hospital. When he was well enough, he was sent back to the front to fight again.

Sometimes he would have leave in other parts of France, one time being billeted in a brothel, which, apparently was quite an experience.

Looking at Harry's records, from March 1916 to October 1918, he seemed to fight in France, then be given leave in England or France to recuperate, then go back to the fighting in France.

Near the end of the war, Harry was sent to England

continued next column >>>

>>continued from previous column

to learn to become a pilot, which meant flying very small and flimsy planes.

Flying in these planes was so dangerous that pilots only lasted three weeks before they were killed.

After an Armistice was signed, and the fighting ended, Harry was sent back home to Australia on the ship 'KARAGOLA' arriving on the first of May 1919, I'm sure, very glad to have survived the war and to be home again. Unfortunately, Harry's brother Albert did not survive, being killed in the fighting in France.

WHEELER HEIGHT PUBLIC SCHOOL

Acting Deputy Principal Alex Bennett from the WHPS called our Secretary, John, requesting that his school children would like to write to ex-servicemen with good wishes. A list of service member names (no addresses) was supplied. Several ex-servicemen have indicated they have received letters, some two.

Alex's indication was for years 5 and 6, but it would appear some have come from more junior students.

John has encouraged all to write back – hopefully to leave them at our office for delivery back to the school students in bulk – he is hoping to do so this week.

Several replies, for WHPS, have been received and amongst them was one from Norm Ziegler. Guess what was included! He sent two blocks of our special chocolate. Well done Norm.

It was a student/school initiative – we are the lucky recipients.

Editor: Below is the card received by me and my reply card.



Dear Doug Smyth,
I am from WHPS
and would
just like to
say HAPPY EASTER!
Maddie C
☆♡
↓



Hello Maddie

Thank You SO Much
for your Happy Easter wishes
We didn't eat too much chocolate!

Hope you had a nice Easter
with your family.

From Doug Smyth
V.P. & District Officer
Wau Vets Village Sub-Branch