

## **Address to Launceston Historical Society Inc, Commander Stephen Cornish RAN, 16 April 23 at 1400, QV Museum at Inveresk**

### **Introduction**

Thank you for the warm welcome and invitation to share my journey today.

I'm going to share what in Tasmania is a story common to many families. The reason I'm sharing it is that we have a rich military history from ordinary men and women doing extraordinary things, invariably in far places. And from those histories we can glean something of what it must have been like for the families at home.

A couple of years ago I did a project for the Wynyard RSL Sub Branch. My task was to put a story behind all the names on our Cenotaph for its centenary



The Wynyard Cenotaph

commemoration. I was asked to do it because the skills I developed in my family research enabled me to do the same for our community and to add some more meaning to our memorial. What my research revealed was that my family's story was mirrored in many other families – but few knew their stories and furthermore few knew how to find out. My findings I hope inspired some others to do some homework of their own. But what it brought home to

me was the enormous sacrifice made by and anguish faced by so many families at the time back home here in Tasmania.

One of the perks of being a serving military officer is that from time to time you get invitations to participate in commemorations all around Australia. It's particularly good in Tasmania in that we have such a rich military history and that it's not unusual to find some connection with the place of the commemoration. For example, I participated in an ANZAC Day service at Waratah in 2021. The first place I look to is the cenotaph and the names on it – in Waratah I found one of the men remembered there was a school mate of my great uncles Cyril and Athol.



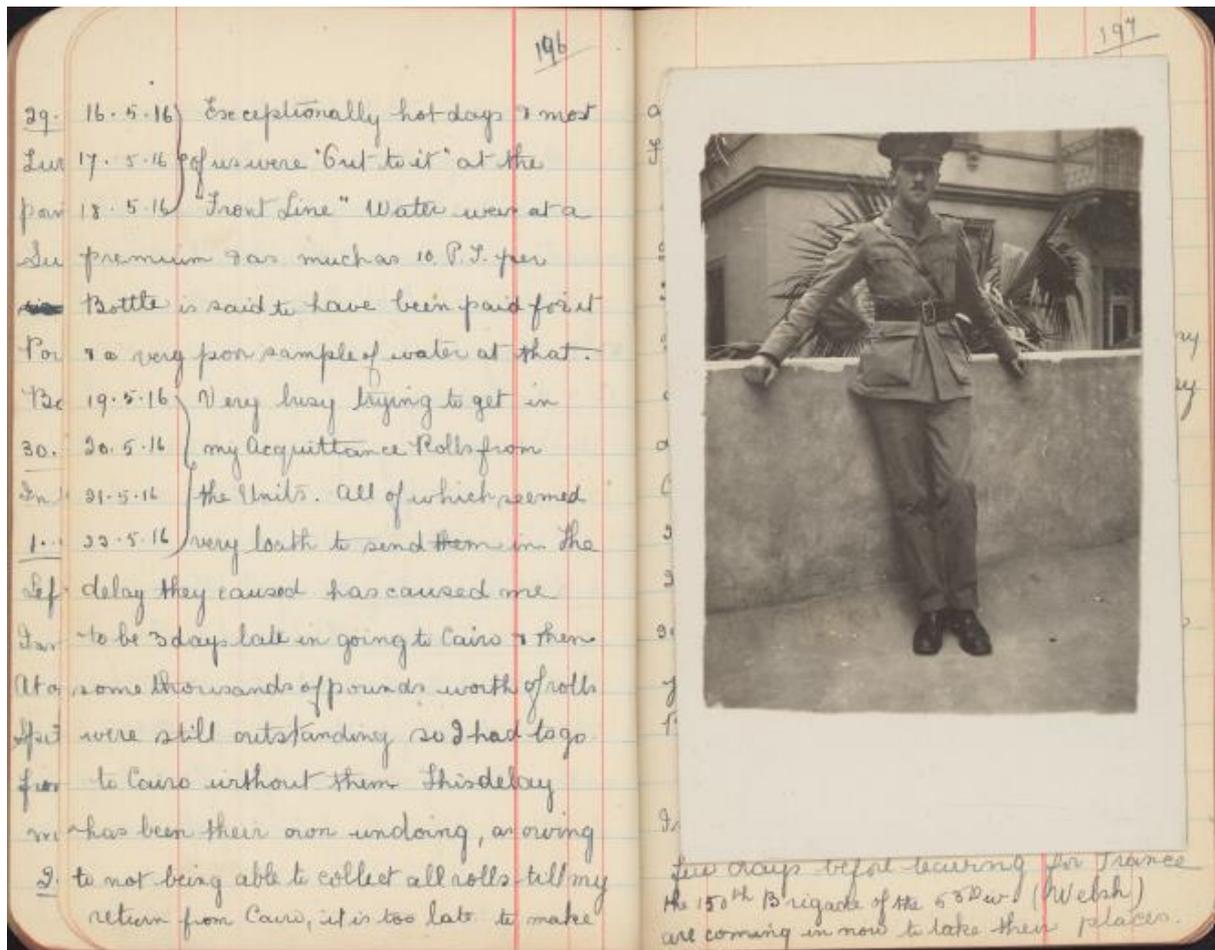
The Parry home – 60 Duke St Sandy Bay

My journey begins here – 60 Duke Street in Sandy Bay. My Grandfather, Thomas Edwin Parry was a state civil servant. At the beginning of the 1930s he received a promotion and moved from Launceston to Hobart with my Grandmother Ivy Parry and bought 60 Duke Street.



Tom and Ivy Parry, 1949

60 Duke Street was a happy home. Nanna and Pop had four daughters – my mother Betty was their third daughter. I have fond memories as a child going to town from the country and staying there. In the hallway there were two large, framed photographs. Both were taken by Pop's eldest brother Cyril who was in the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF. When he went overseas, Cyril took a camera and kept a diary – both of which were frowned upon by the authorities, but luckily for us, he did. Better still, Cyril kept a partial record of his photos in his diary.



Diary entry with photo of Cyril Parry, May 1916, probably in Ismailia (AWM)

Fortunately for me, I had custody of the diary when it was handed down from my grandfather, but I thought it was better with Cyril's family, so I passed it back, and they in turn gave it to the Australian War Memorial where it has been digitised and is now on the public record on the AWM web site for all to see.

But before I gave it back, I scanned it, but I must admit the War Memorial did a much better job! Cyril's handwriting is quite good and he tells a good yarn – as well as the odd snippet on his paymaster duties he provides a pretty interesting travelogue on the sights and sounds in around Cairo, as you will see! And you can probably see from this page that during May 1916 the entries were pretty short or absent altogether – that usually meant Divisional Pay Sheet time! At the time he was the Field Cashier of the 5th Division posted to Ismailia.



Athol (L) and Cyril Parry (R)

Cyril and his younger brother Athol both left Tasmania in October 1914 as part of the first Australian Imperial Force convoy. You might recall Uncle Athol; my friend Lieutenant Colonel Mark Cameron introduced him to you in his address last year. While I'm doing introductions, this is probably a good time to introduce their Mum and my great grandmother, Betha Parry (nee Briggs) born 1863.



Bertha Parry (Briggs)

I'm grateful to Great Grandma for her contribution to the record. And my Mum once told me that she was as formidable as she looks!

Great Grandma was the third of Isaiah and Maria (nee Mann) Briggs' twelve children.



The Briggs' house and Saddlery, Wellington St Longford

Here is the house and saddlery; it was located where Midland Tractors' front yard is now in Wellington St, Longford. When war loomed and volunteers were called for, two of Great Grandma's younger brothers, Frederick Isaiah Briggs (b 1871) and Alfred Briggs (b 1867) put their hands up.

As well as Great Grandma's two eldest sons (Cyril and Athol), her elder sister Fanny Cooper's (b 1858) son Louis, her younger sister Amy Lee's (b 1865) son Charles, her brother Frederick's son Frederick Roy, and brother Alfred's sons Guy, Leonard, Edgar and Ivan all volunteered at various times.

Back to 60 Duke Street and the photos.



1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division on parade at Mena, March 1915

One of the Duke Street photos is now on my hallway wall at home. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the diary until towards the end to say what or where it is, but he did say that he posted them on 24 November 1915 to his Dad, Thomas Stanton Parry who was at the time, Station Master at Deloraine. All the photo has on it is the framer's label (S Holder, Launceston) and an indistinct signature dated Cairo 1915 on the photo itself.

I'm pretty sure now that it was the 29 March 1915 review of the light horse and the gunners at Mena by General Sir Ian Hamilton. On 12 March 1915 General Hamilton was given Command of the expeditionary force intended to seize control of the Dardanelles Strait and to capture Constantinople.

Surprisingly, it was not easy to find out what the parade might have been. There is no record of it in the infantry records, because by then the battalions had already left bound for Lemnos. But in the 9th Battery record the Battery Commander, Major Burgess wrote:

*'March 29 1915, Mena. Inspection of 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division by General Sir Ian Hamilton in the morning and the Australian and New Zealand Division in the afternoon at Zeitoun.'* The 9<sup>th</sup> Battery left for Lemnos a week later on the 5<sup>th</sup> April.

The second photo alas has vanished, but I'll put this one up to give you an idea of what Mena Camp looked like.



Mena Camp 1915

But I'll read Uncle Cyril's diary note as his description is just as I remember it! He said:

*'6<sup>th</sup> March (Saturday) Staff Sergeant Lloyd and I went out to Mena and had a good look around the Sphinx and the Pyramids. Then we started to go up the summit of the Great Pyramid .... Half way up we rested and I took a picture of Mena Village at the foot (photo 92) showing the shadow of the Great Pyramid over it.'*

Later he expressed surprise when he reached the top as there was an enterprising Arab chap up there selling hot coffees! The top of the pyramid has quite a sizable flat spot where he'd set up shop! Now of course climbing is banned and there's a big fine if you are caught – despite the odd mad venture to be found on YouTube.

Apart from the photos and knowing that Uncle Athol had been killed at Gallipoli, we had no idea of the family story and, like with many families, it was never spoken about.

But we did know about some other more interesting history related to 60 Duke Street.



Errol Flynn, albeit a little older!

You can imagine four young ladies' excitement knowing that a dashing young chap who was full of romance, swashbuckling adventures and tales of derring-do used to live there – Pop bought the house from one Professor T T Flynn, whose son at the time, was just a very naughty boy! 60 Duke Street is now known as '*Flynn Cottage*' with a little plaque to say so near the front door!

### The passage to England (or so they thought)



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P50368



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

H11011

Ready to depart for England (or so they thought); HMAT Orvieto (L) and HMAT Geelong (R)

Departure day finally came. On 20 October 1914 His Majesty's Australian Troopship (HMAT) A2 *Geelong* departed Hobart with elements of 12<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion, Artillery, Light Horse, Engineers and medical troops embarked (39 Officers and 996 Other Ranks). Athol was among them, as were cousins Charles (Charlie) Lee and Guy Briggs of the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion. HMAT *Orvieto* (209 officers, 1425 other ranks and 22 horses), the flagship of the First Convoy, departed Melbourne the next day at about 3 pm. Cyril was

aboard with his Pay Corps mates (Three officers, one warrant officer, ten staff sergeants and eleven sergeants, total 25 men). HMAT *Orvieta* arrived in King George Sound at Albany on the morning of 26 October 1914 with the *Geelong* arriving two days later.

I can imagine the excitement on board when entering King George Sound. I certainly recall my entry into the Sound on the previous HMAS *Stuart* in the early morning, and a few days later at the ANZAC dawn service at the Light Horse memorial watching the sun rise over it. It is quite a remarkable sight. And that was before the current roads and paths were made – we had to scramble in the dark through the scrub in our full dress whites to get there.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P02085.002

#### The 1<sup>st</sup> convoy leaving King George Sound

The convoy of 36 ships sailed out of King George Sound on 1 November 1914 with the '*Orvieta*' leading. Cyril described the passage in detail – I won't go into it except to mention a couple of things, starting with the Sydney / Emden engagement at Cocos Island. Here is Cyril's eyewitness account of the action.



SMS Emden, Captains Von Muller and Glossop RN, HMAS Sydney

*'November 9<sup>th</sup> (Monday). A day I shall never forget. ... at 6.30 am the Orvieta picks up a strange wireless message which could not be understood, this afternoon turns out to be a message from the German Cruiser Emden to her collier. The Orvieta sent the news to the Melbourne some little way ahead of us. A few minutes later a message 'SOS \_\_\_ SOS a strange warship at Entrance of Harbour' was received from Cocos Islands nearby. HMAS Sydney was*

*immediately dispatched at full speed and very soon signalled 'enemy in sight' and a little later sent 'am in action and steaming north.' ....*

*The Sydney was giving her such a bad time of it that she could only get as far as North Keeling Islands 15 miles north of Cocos. Then the Sydney signalled 'Enemy beached herself to save from sinking' and later 'Emden beached and done for'. ...*

*The sound of the heavy guns was loud and deafening.....'*

The official account tells us that Sydney's Commanding Officer, CAPT Glossop RN then broke off the engagement in pursuit of the collier, but she was scuttled before it could be attacked. On returning to North Keeling Island Glossop observed that *Emden* had not struck its ensign to indicate capitulation. Confused signals were exchanged between the two ships, but the ensign remained flying until after Sydney fired a further two salvos at the wreck. Captain Glossop wrote a letter to CAPT von Muller which is now on display in the Chief of Navy's conference room in Canberra. It's an inspiring example of how the laws of war and just common decency and humanity can prevail even in the most dire circumstances. He said:

*'I have the honour to request in the name of humanity that you now surrender your ship to me. To show how much I respect your gallantry, I will recapitulate the position. You are ashore, three funnels and one mast down and most guns disabled. You cannot leave this island and my ship is intact. In the event of you surrendering, in which I venture to remind you is no disgrace but rather your misfortune, I will endeavour to do all I can for your sick and wounded and take them to a hospital.'*

*Emden's ensign was consequently struck heralding the end of Australia's first and decisive naval engagement. Captain Glossop honoured his promises.*

Cyril continued with details of the aftermath of the battle including the taking of *Emden's* survivors on board. A few days (13<sup>th</sup> November) later he and his shipmates had to vacate their cabins to make room for German wounded who were transferred from the Sydney. More *Emden* survivors were taken on board in Colombo when they arrived on 16 November.



Colombo (L) and Aden (R)

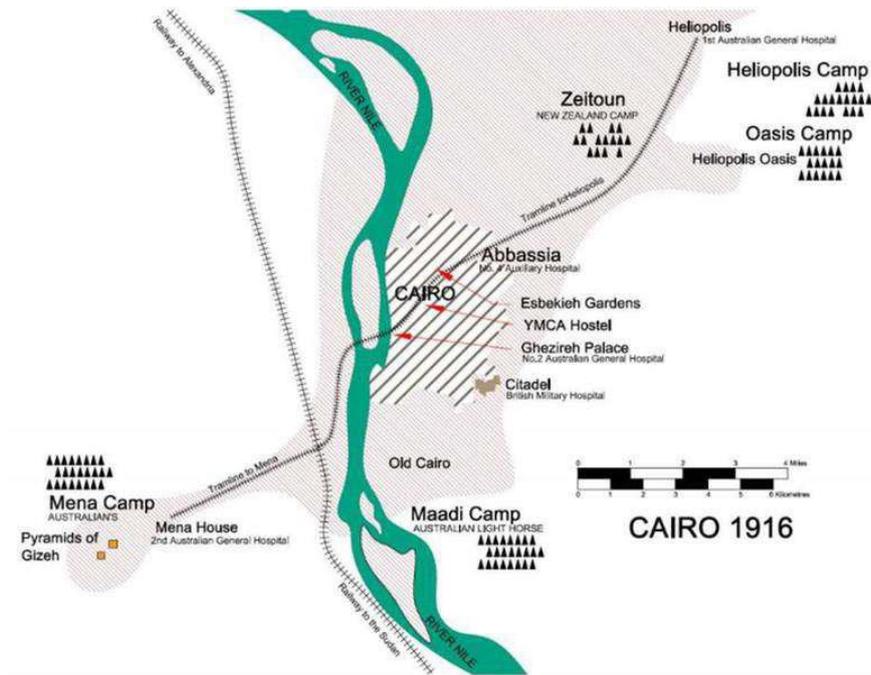
On 28 November Cyril's diary records that they were told that they were not going any further than Egypt. On 3 December the Orvieto arrived in Alexandria and disembarked at the railway pier.



HMAT Orvieto alongside at Alexandria

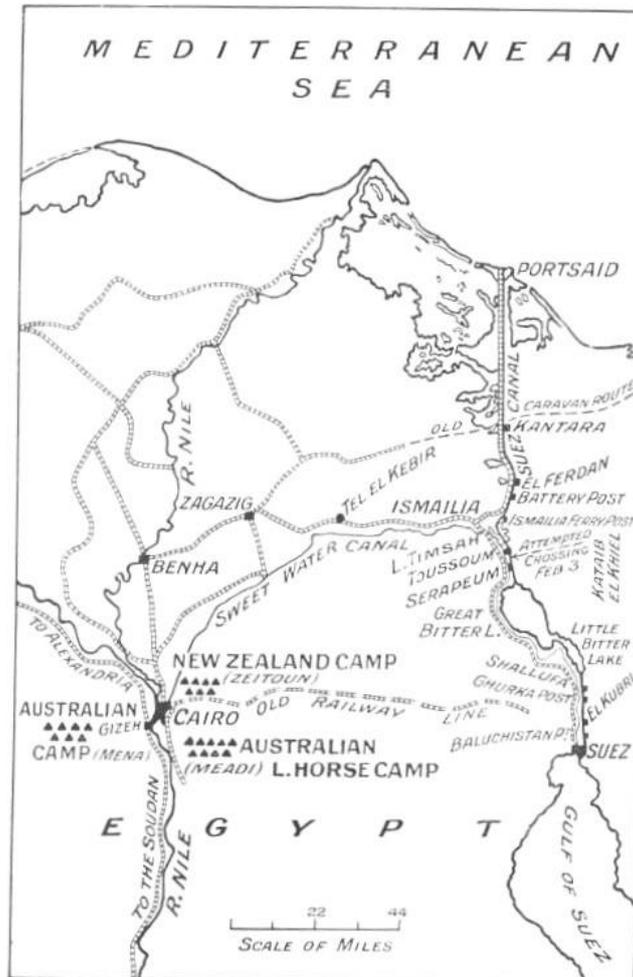
Soon after he arrived in Alexandria Cyril was sent to Mena. Athol and his cousins on the *Geelong* disembarked a week later.

Just so you can get a picture of where things were, this slide shows where the Australian camps were located.



Cairo 1914

There were a number of camps established and used by the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF in Egypt. It is fair to say that every one of them were dry and dusty, and water was always short.

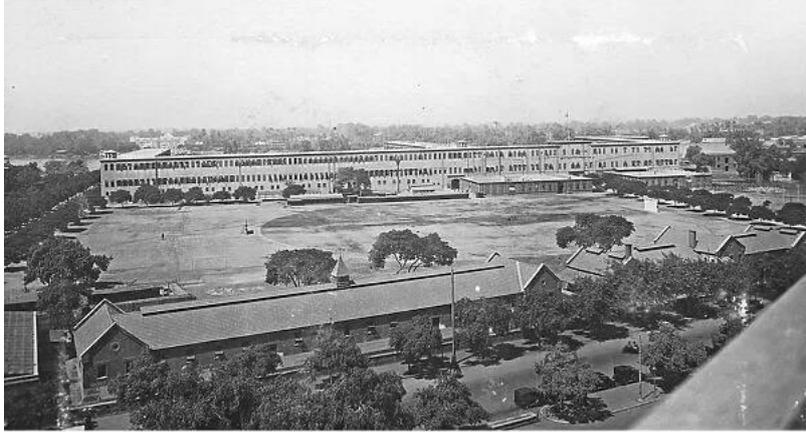


Northern Egypt in 1914

- Heliopolis Aerodrome, Cairo - requisitioned by the Royal Flying Corps, a base for the Australian Flying Corps (modern-day Almaza Air Force Base Airport)



- Kasr el-Nil barracks, Cairo - on the central street of Cairo's Ismailiya district (modern-day Nile Ritz-Carlton site)



Kasr-El-Nil Barracks

- Maadi Camp, in Cairo here the Australian Light Horse brigades and Remount units camped with their horses (modern-day suburb of al-Ma'adi)



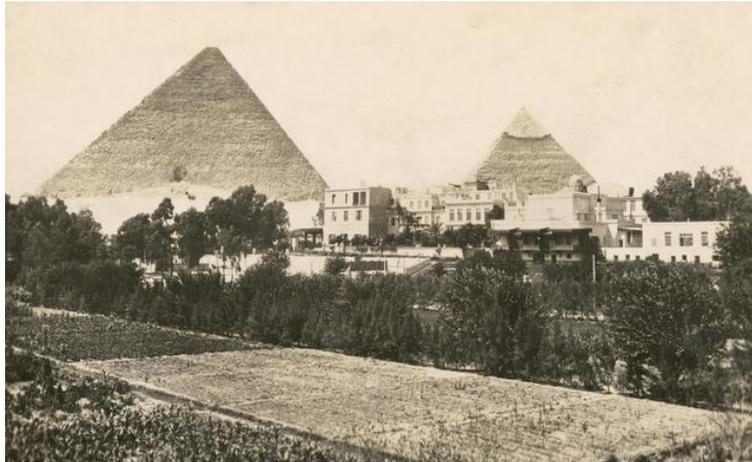
- Mena Camp - the main AIF camp in Egypt, near Cairo, where Australian troops camped from the early months of 1915



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00152.021

- Mena House, near Cairo - an old hotel near the Giza pyramids requisitioned by the AIF in 1915; it later became the 2nd Australian General Hospital. It's now the flashy Mena House Marriott Hotel.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P11456.002

- Fort Mex , Alexandria - a transport and holding facility on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, an important base for desert operations



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

A00454

- The Citadel, Cairo - Egyptian Army Barracks requisitioned by British Forces during the war



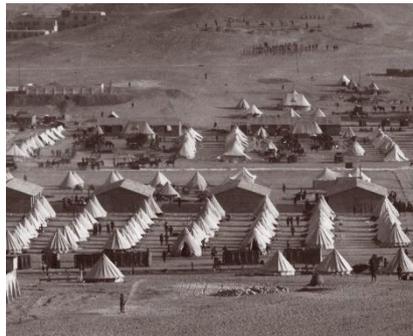
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

J0253

- Zahariah Camp, Alexandria where Field Artillery brigades trained near lake Maryout (Mariout) before Gallipoli



- Zeitoun Camp, Cairo



- Tel El Kebir



**The first few days.** On arrival in Cairo, Uncle Cyril went straight to Mena camp (about 230 km away) – to find – well ..... nothing. He says:

*'December 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday. ....During the morning we unloaded our kits and baggage & after lunch we put them into trucks ready to go to Cairo. As there was no room provided for us in the carriages we had to get into the trucks as best we could. We left Alexandria about 3 pm and very soon were into the*

*country passing through rice, maize cotton fields also date plantations etc. We arrived at Cairo at 8 pm and were provided with a cup of hot cocoa and bread and cheese. We then had to load our baggage on to tram cars that had been prepared for carrying stores. We then went through Cairo (on top of the baggage) and arrived at Mena, 9 miles from Cairo and at the foot of the Pyramids and had to turn to and load our stores onto carts and take them to the camp ground. There we found no tentage was supplied for us so we had to sleep on the desert and mighty cold it was with only 2 blankets.’ He did not say what time they knocked off but I think it would be fair to say it would have been a pretty long hard day.*

On 10 December he moved into quarters at Kasr El Nil barracks, with a native cook, waiters and washermen to look after them. These barracks had been used by the British Army for decades so it was well established.

Athol’s 9<sup>th</sup> Battery arrived on 10 December. The Headquarters 3rd Artillery Brigade diary shows that they disembarked in Alexandria and immediately proceeded to Mena camp. The 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion record shows the cousins would have done the same.

Uncle Cyril was a pay master so he was required to visit all of the camps in which Australian troops were located. His diary records many trips away which was terrific for him as it enabled him to catch up with his relatives as often as he could. His diary doesn’t say how busy he was, but you can imagine he was under a bit of pressure. As a paymaster he was responsible for considerable amounts of cash – he mentions one instance when he had £40,000 in his possession. The Reserve Bank has a useful present value calculator which tells us that today that would be about \$4.5M. And sometimes it was not easy to provide a service – from time to time he was required to scramble up and



A Jacobs ladder

down troop ships' Jacobs ladders which was no fun and entailed a bit of risk. As it happens, I arranged a visit of the USS Carl Vinson to Hobart in the 90s – and like Uncle Cyril, but 80 years later, I had to get to the ship. But getting on board was a bit different to the old days. We flew out to the ship in Bass Strait; and I had two Westpac people to do the financial work, but we only had \$3.5M with us.



Boarding a ship – 80 years later

Cyril's job entailed quite a few visits to the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF units, so he had plenty of chances to catch up with his relatives. His frequent diary entries reveal that he really cherished having family members around, and it seems that he spent as much time with them as their duties allowed.

Luckily Cyril had a camera and most of the time he recorded the taking of his photos in the diary. But sadly, many have not survived.

On 28 February 1915 Cyril wrote

*'Visited Mena Camp on Sunday afternoon and saw Athol, Guy Briggs and Charlie Lee and also many old friends from the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Battalions. This afternoon about 5 pm the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Battalions moved out of Mena Camp and entrained for Alexandria and thence by transports to a destination not at present known, presumably Asia Minor. I managed to get some snapshots of we 'four cousins' before we all parted.'*



L - R Guy Briggs, Athol Parry, Cyril Parry, Charles Lee

Cyril and Athol managed to meet and dine together on a few more occasions before the Battery left for Lemnos. Cyril went down to Mena on 7 March and managed to chat with Athol even though he was on guard duty. That was the last mention of spending time with Athol before 9 Australian Field Battery left on 5 April. At about that time the second and third reinforcements were arriving, and the diary entries sometimes had large gaps which suggests Cyril was pretty busy on duty with the new arrivals.

## In Gallipoli

I don't intend to go into the detail of the landing and the campaign – that's another story. What I'm covering here is a personal account.

9 Battery sailed for Lemnos on 8 April and arrived three days later. While the battery arrived at Gallipoli on the dawn of the 25<sup>th</sup> they did not disembark until 30 April. The battery was not complete until the 7 May when all the guns, horses and drivers came ashore.

On 11 May the battery record shows that Bravo and Delta subsections relieved two 8 Battery guns on Razor Back Ridge and fired 30 rounds.



A 9 Battery 18 pdr gun in action, May 1915

Athol was part of that relief. Here is a photo of a B sub section gun taken a few days after Athol was killed to give you an idea of what it might have been like on the gun line. The gunner in the middle is Charles (Harry) Briggs but I'm not sure that he's related. A note in the *remarks* column of the battery record for 11 May 1915 just says '*Gunner Parry shot*'.

The 12th Battalion left Mena Camp on 1 March 1915 and arrived off Lemnos Island three days later.

On 21 April 1915 the Battalion received orders to land on Gallipoli on the 25<sup>th</sup>. At midnight on the 24<sup>th</sup> the Battalion transferred to destroyers and landed at

ANZAC cove at 0400 on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Guy Briggs was killed at Quinn's Post on the 28<sup>th</sup> but was never found.

Charlie Lee survived until he was wounded in action on 7 August 1915 at Lone Pine but died from his wounds on 12 August 1915 on the hospital ship HMHS *Sicilia*. He was buried at sea.

Cyril's 27th April entry talks of news of heavy casualties at Gallipoli. On 24<sup>th</sup> May he was excited to receive two postcards from Athol both saying that he was in action against the Turks but was alright. But on 29 May he had two visitors from Athol's Battery who said that he had been wounded, but he found out later that day he had in fact been killed on the 11<sup>th</sup>. He wrote that Athol was sitting in the No3 (Gun layer) seat and was hit in the chest by a Turkish sniper, killing him instantly. Cyril cabled home to Deloraine on hearing the news.

He spoke to two of his Pay Corps mates who had been on Gallipoli and who had returned to Cairo. They said that they had been under fire the whole time. In an undated diary note (possibly early August) he had managed to find Len Briggs at Heliopolis. He said that he heard that Guy Briggs was killed in April and had heard nothing nor seen any reports about Charlie Lee.

On 16 August he wrote that things were not going well in the Dardanelles with very heavy casualties and mooted a pulling out before the winter set in. On 28 September he wrote that he had heard Charlie Lee had died of a wound to the leg on 12 August. On 10 October he received a letter from Athol's gun sergeant which enclosed his effects, including his pay book with a bullet hole in the corner. He sent them home to their father in Deloraine.

In late November he mentions being unable to find Roy Briggs. On 24<sup>th</sup> November he mentions sending some photographs home including one of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division taken near Mena Camp just before they left. I suspect that's the photo on my wall at home I mentioned earlier. He also sent a pack of photos home with a friend as he did not think they would get past the censor at the Post Office!

On Christmas Day Cyril learned that his Uncle Fred (Briggs) and Uncle Alf (Briggs) were at 1st Remount Unit so on Boxing Day he went to Maadi Camp to find them. He met up with Fred who was pleased to be told how to find his nephew Len and son Roy. The highlight of the day was that Cyril had a big piece of Christmas cake from Great Grandma which clearly went down well. He also managed to wrangle a bit of leave for Fred and Alf so he could take

them for a sightseeing tour of Cairo and entertaining them at lunch and dinner at his accommodation at the time at York House.

Cyril again went out to Maadi Camp on 2 January and saw Fred and Alf. The diary entries then get very brief – he must have been busy as such brief notes generally meant some demanding work! But he did say that he saw Fred and Alf occasionally in the period 3 – 16 January 1916.

On 17 January he went out to Tel El Kebir which he described as ‘... a very big camp containing a couple of Divisions of Australians and is about 3 miles long.’ Other reports on Tel El Kebir were not nearly as kind – in fact it sounded like a pretty awful place. He described the conditions as being very poor with men sleeping on the ground in the open. He missed seeing Len and Roy Briggs (they were in 26 Battalion) as they were out of camp at the time.

On 23 January he went back to Maadi Camp – with more cake from Great Grandma to share with Fred and Alf.

On 26 January Fred was in Cairo and had lunch with Cyril and came back for tea later on. In the meantime, cousin Len also called in with a few of his mates as he was up on duty from the Canal. Cyril invited Len and his mates to tea to meet Alf, which was the first time Alf and Len had seen each other in Egypt. On the 31<sup>st</sup> Cyril took Alf to the pyramids for some more sightseeing!

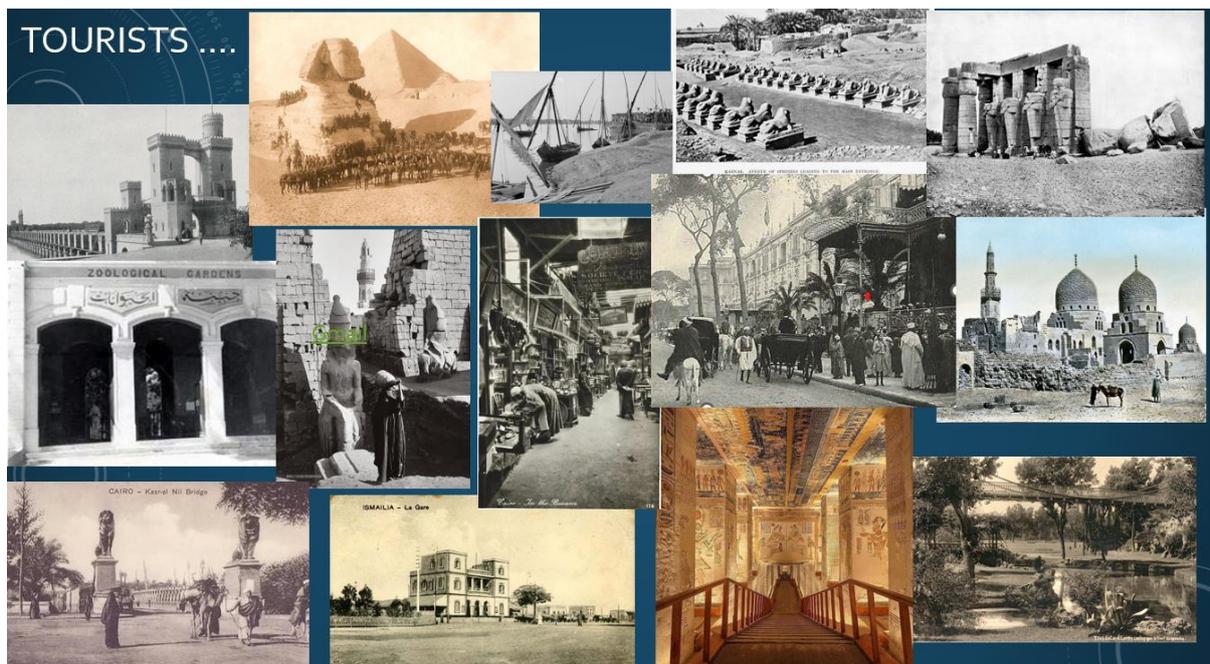
The following day Cyril received a letter from Athol’s gun sergeant with a photo of his grave at Browns Dip cemetery.



Athol Parry’s grave, December 1915

The diary records that '*... the cross had only been put up two days previously and I learn that it was made by the Engineers and the Sergt who made it refused money in payment so all the boys gave him their day's issue of rum ... Previous to this there was a much simple cross made of biscuit box tied with wire and the name written with indelible pencil.*'

On February 15<sup>th</sup> Cyril met up with Alf and Fred once more for a day's sightseeing at the Nile Barrage, where the Nile Delta commences. I've selected these images as they are an example of the many places mentioned in the diary which Cyril took his visitors to.



Where Cyril took his guests

And where possible, I've chosen images from the time. They include the Cairo Zoological Gardens, the Pyramids and Sphinx of course, the City of the Dead, the Cairo Bazaar, the tombs of the Khalifa, Memphis, Luxor, Thebes, the Sakkara (stepped) pyramids, the tombs of the Kings, Medinet Tabu temple in the Valley of the Queens, and for good measure, Shepheard's Hotel and the Ismailia railway station!

Cyril then spent some time away from Cairo at Tel El Kebir and on the Canal but returned on 7 April to find Uncle Fred there to meet him. He dined with Uncle Alf two days later. He returned to the Canal at Ismailia on the 10<sup>th</sup>. There seemed to be a pattern in which Cyril caught up with one or both of his uncles each time he returned to Cairo. And Great Grandma's cakes received more mentions! They certainly made an impact!

On the 24 April 1916, the Turks attacked the Canal with about 4000 troops supplemented by German and Austrian troops with artillery. They were repelled.

The next day was the first commemoration of ANZAC day which entailed church services in the morning and sports in the afternoon.

May 1916 was a particularly busy month for Cyril and it seemed he had little time for writing up his diary. Between action by the Turks and traveling to and from Cairo and paying the troops he was flat out. Remember in those days the troops were paid in cash, so there was lots of it to secure, account for and to pay out. He mentions cash of up to £50,000, or present value, about \$5.8M. So it's no wonder he had a second guard on his tent ...

Then at the end of his diary he records the troops starting to leave for France in late May 2016 and that was it – no more entries ...

Cyril went on to serve in England and France and in 1918, returned to Egypt and Palestine.

### **After the War**

The Australian War Memorial web site includes a Roll of Honour which records the names of those who died while serving with Australian forces during wartime. Roll of Honour entries list the person's date of death and the unit they were serving with at the time. In most cases the entries also include the place of death, cause of death, and the cemetery or memorial where they are buried or commemorated. If someone is listed on a memorial it generally means their body was never recovered and there is no known grave for that person.

In the early 1920s a two-page Roll of Honour Circular form was sent to the deceased's next of kin asking for information about them. The completed forms are now published on the War Memorial web site. The experience from my research is that many of the forms sent out were not completed, or if they were, they contained very little detail.

Three of the four cousins had circulars completed by their mothers. Guy Briggs' mother Ada completed one, as did Louis Cooper's mother Fannie and Great Grandma did one for Athol.

One of the questions in the circular related to any other family members who served. As you can imagine this was a good source of information and provided good cross references.

Ada Briggs' two-page form mentioned Leonard Briggs and his award of the Military Medal for bravery in France, and Edgar who was promoted to

Lieutenant. She also mentioned her husband Alfred and that he was a saddler in Egypt.

Fannie Cooper's two-page form about her son Louis referred to Leonard and the award of his MM, Guy Briggs, Athol Parry and Charles Lee. She cited the dates on which Guy and Athol were killed, and the dates on which Charlie was wounded and when he died of his wounds.

Charlie Lee's next of kin (Mother Amy or Father James) did not complete the circular.

Great Grandma completed the form for Athol – but it was more of a *magnum opus* than a mere form! Not only did she complete the form, but she also wrote a letter containing more information.

**Particulars Required for the Roll of Honour of Australia in the Memorial War Museum.**

- Name (in full) of Fallen Soldier: *Athol Wynne Parry*
- Unit and Number (if known): *2627 3rd Field Artillery Brigade*
- With what Town or District in Australia was he chiefly connected (under which his name ought to come on the Memorial):  
Town (if any): *Deloraine, Queensland, Tasmania*
- What was his birthplace: *Strahan West Coast, Sep 24<sup>th</sup> 1895*
- Date of Death: *11-5-15*
- Place where Killed or Wounded: *Gallipoli*

**Particulars Required for the Nation's Histories.**

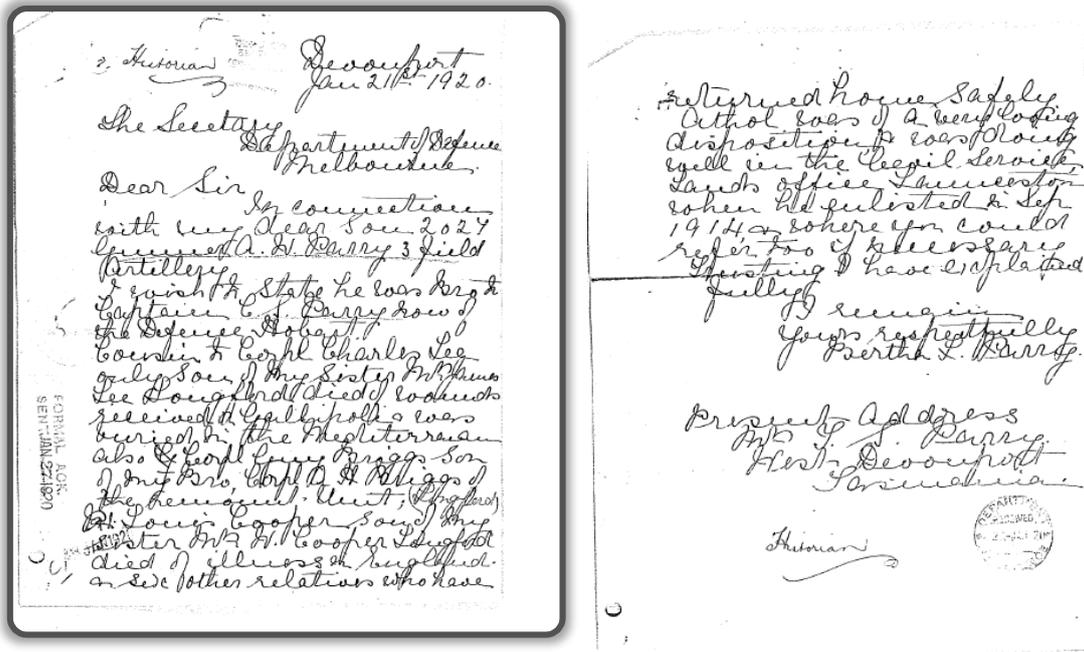
- What was his Calling: *Clerk in Law's office Liverpool*
- Age at time of Death: *19 years, 8 months, 12 days*
- What was his School: *State Schools, Wesley College, Church*
- What was his other Training: *Robert Williamson's*
- If been in Britain or Abroad, at what age did he come to Australia: *12 years*
- Had he ever served in any Military or Naval Force before Enlisting in the A.I.F. (Please state particulars): *Cadet*
- Any other biographical details likely to be of interest to the Historian of the A.I.F., or of his Regiment—(He can say here on being a soldier and discharge duty with the Regt. also a Christian & gave his young wife a noble, tender, greater love than that of an ordinary man): *He was connected with many other Members of the A.I.F. who died or who distinguished himself. Also to Capt. Briggs, Lt. Parry, Captain & paymaster Charles Lee both of whom he met in the A.I.F. He gave their names & addresses to his mother & father & brother & sister & brother-in-law.*

9. Name and Address of the Parent or other person giving this information—  
Name: *Mother L. Parry*  
Relationship to Soldier: *mother*  
Address: *West Devonport Tasmania*

10. Names and Addresses of any other persons to whom reference could be made by the Historian for further information—  
Name: *Mr James Lee & A. H. Briggs*  
Address: *Longford Tasmania*

NOTE.—This folder is addressed to the Secretary, Department of Defence, Melbourne. Please fold in four, and stick down carefully so that the addressed portion is outside. The information is required urgently.

Great Grandma's Circular



And her letter ...

But Great Grandma's writing was a challenge .... Sadly I have inherited the same trait - my writing is like hers – b... awful!

Great Grandma's was the first circular that I found. After a bit of struggle I managed to determine who was who which of course led to the research into the rest of the family. Unfortunately, she did not mention her brother Frederick Isaiah Briggs nor his son Frederick Roy Briggs, so I had to find them for myself. But deciphering the form was a breakthrough providing many more leads.

As well as the family records, one of my primary references was Mr Broinowski's book 'Tasmania's War Record 1914 – 1918'. And of course, the Australian War Memorial and the National Archives digitised First World War records are easily accessed and readily searchable once you work out how to look for material. There is also a valuable resource in Tasmania with the Library and other government history sites. And there's Google, a very helpful aid to find the increasing volume of private research work that people are willing to share.

I found Captain LM Newton's book 'The Story of the Twelfth' which was originally my grandmother's and the recent book 'The Artillery at ANZAC' by Major General Paul Stevens and Brigadier Chris Roberts, both of whom I have served with, particularly helpful.

One thing I have found is that reliance on early analyses such as Broinowski's work must be treated with a bit of caution. I found during my research for the

Wynyard Cenotaph project there were a number of omissions; names that should have been there but weren't and in one case, a person whose name appeared but should not have been there!

This is not in any way meant as a criticism of Mr Broinowski's work – he was faced with an enormous task without the benefit of Google and digitised records – I can attest to the challenge of working with paper records as in the early 1980s I was part of a team looking for information at the War Memorial relating to the Vietnam war. This was before the time of digitised documents and what took us many months with a high degree of risk of error could now be accomplished in a relatively short space of time using a computer with a reasonable degree of accuracy! And even then we could not have been sure that we had gone through all the documents.

### The sequel

My venture into the family military history revealed quite a few surprises. But there's more ....

A couple of years ago I helped my brother-in-law in Western Australia find out about his grandfather's service in 11th Battalion (the West Australian Battalion). My late sister-in-law must have told her mates about it while working in a Swanbourne nursery in Perth because not long after, one of them asked if I'd mind doing some research into her father's service for her. For those who don't know Perth, Swanbourne is one of the nice leafy coastal suburbs not far north of Fremantle.

She duly provided a name and the fact he spent some time in Brighton Camp. She also mentioned her father escaped from the Japanese from Rabaul and eventually got back to Australia.



(L) Praed Point Battery (R) MV Lakatoi (AWM)

So, I went into the War Memorial and National Archives web sites and found details of his service which led to discovering that he was in the Rabaul Heavy Battery as part of Lark Force. Rabaul and was initially attacked on 4 January

1942 and the Japanese conducted an amphibious landing on 23 January 1942 and quickly overwhelmed the Rabaul defences. The total strength of the force was about 1400. Of those some 400 escaped back to Australia. The rest fell into the hands of the Japanese.

As I was going through the documents my level of interest rose ... remember Charlie Lee?

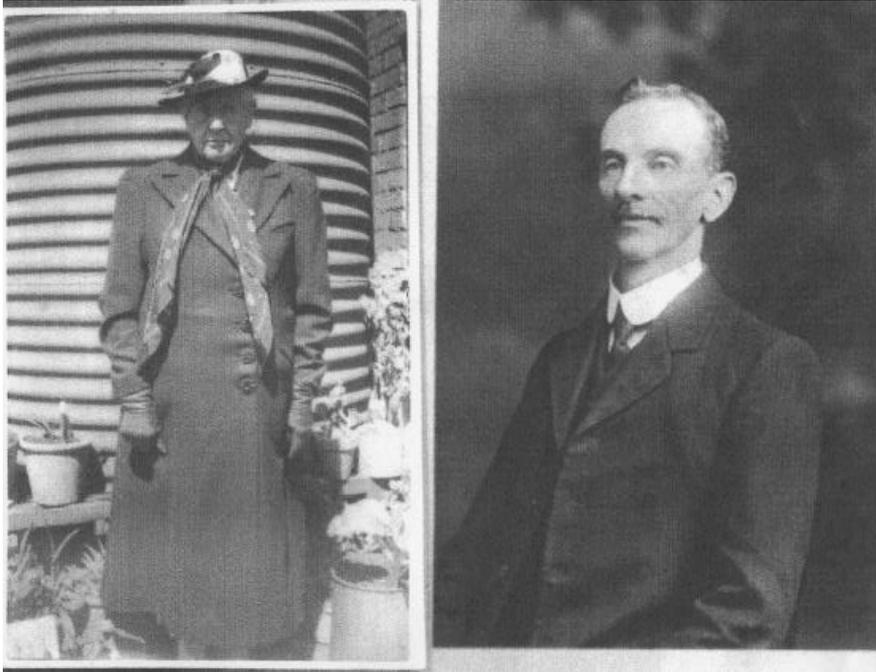


(L) Charles Lee (R) Lindsay Lee

Well, my subject was TX 11359 Sergeant Lindsay Charles Lee, born Longford 17 March 1915, whose father was one Walter Lee, brother of James Lee, husband of Great Aunt Amy and Charlie's father! So, another unexpected cousin emerged! And you might recall learning about Sir Walter in your 'Our History No 199' on 19 September 2021.

### **Conclusion**

Finally, back to Great Grandma.



Bertha and Thomas Parry

Great Grandma was widowed in 1931. She moved to Westbury and at the time she died on 31 December 1943 she was living with her youngest daughter Lilian Davis, whom I remember fondly.

You thought there would be no more surprises perhaps? Well, some years ago in my last job in the Permanent Navy, my Chief Petty Officer came up to me one day and asked for leave to go to a wedding in Tasmania. We had a chat about it, and he said the wedding was at St Mary's at Hagley.



St Marys, Hagley

My interest was aroused once again, and I asked if he had a family connection to Hagley – and he did. My Great Great Grandfather David Parry was one of the founding fathers of Hagley and my Great Grandfather, Thomas Stanton Parry was born there in 1858 and was laid to rest there in January 1931.

It transpired that my Chief Petty Officer's grandfather was the Anglican Minister at St Mary's from 1940 to 1955. So back into the records... Great Grandma's funeral notice in the *Mercury* on 3 January 1944 said there was a service at her home conducted by Rev. Lechte, assisted by Rev. Orton of Longford and that the graveside service was conducted by Rev. B S Hammond, my Chief Petty Officer's grandfather.

### **Conclusion**

I started this journey wanting to find out about Athol's service in Gallipoli and the circumstances of his death. I was lucky to be the custodian of Cyril's diary at the time. That sparked my interest, which was fuelled when I discovered the digitised World War 1 records on the War Memorial and National Archives web sites. And those records are being added to so it's worth checking back from time to time. And since the centenary of ANZAC there has been a body of new literature and private research published.

This journey is a bit like my day job inquiries – it is not unusual for a line of inquiry to suddenly expand into many more lines to follow up. Thanks to Great Grandma and her sisters' Circulars and Cyril's diary, among other things, that's just what happened.

And of course, we must be ready for surprises!

Finally, we will remember them...



Guy Briggs  
KIA 28 Apr 15



Athol Parry  
KIA 11 May 15



Charles Lee  
DOW 14 Aug 15



Louis Cooper  
DOI 24 Jul 18



Alfred Briggs



Cyril Parry



Edgar Briggs



Leonard Briggs MM



Frederick Roy Briggs



Frederick Roy and  
Frederick Isaiah Briggs



Stanley Lawrence

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.*

## **LEST WE FORGET**

### **Postscript**

After delivering the presentation I was given a copy of a Briggs family history, which included information on another cousin of whom I was unaware. He was not mentioned in Cyril's diary.

11969 T/SGT Stanley Lawrence, son of Walter and Ada (Briggs) Lawrence of Wynyard enlisted on 9 August 1915 and was allocated to 14th Field Artillery Brigade. He embarked on HMAT *Themistocles A32* on 28 January 1916. He served in Egypt and France and returned to Australia on HMAT *Beltana* from England in June 1919 and was discharged on 10 September 1919.