

Durrington War Graves



Lest we Forget

World War I



477 PRIVATE

J. H. HARPER

39TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

13th SEPTEMBER, 1916 Age 39

*Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte J. H. Harper is located in Grave Plot # 105
of Durrington War Graves Cemetery*

James Henry Harper

James Henry Harper was born around 1876 at Stawell, Victoria to parents Henry John & Jemima Harper (nee Mathie). James Henry Harper married Hannah Homfray in 1903 in Victoria.

James Henry Harper was a 39 year old, married Butcher from Horsham, Victoria when he enlisted on 3rd April, 1916 with the 10th Infantry Brigade, 39th Infantry Battalion "B" Company of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 477 & his religion was Methodist. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Hannah N. Harper of Dimboola Road, Horsham, Victoria. James had served 3 years with the Victorian Rangers – it was eventually disbanded in his district).

Pte James Henry Harper embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Ascanius* (119) on 27th May, 1916 & disembarked at Devonport, England on 18th July, 1916.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Pte James Henry Harper was written up for being Absent without Leave from Tattoo Roll Call at Larkhill, Wiltshire on 23rd July, 1916. This was admonished.

Pte James Henry Harper was admitted to Military Hospital at Tidworth, Wiltshire seriously ill on 28th August, 1916.

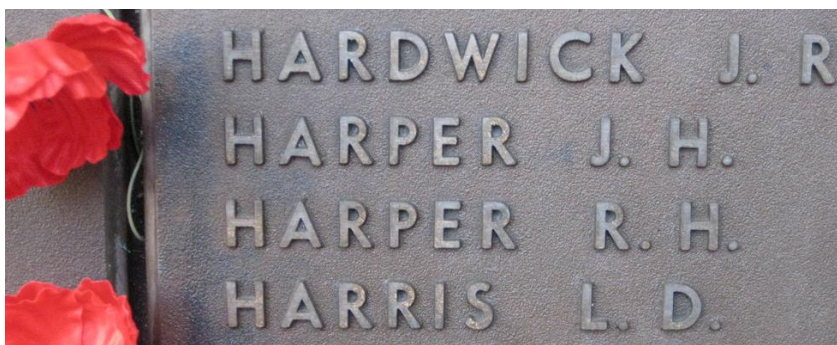
A telegram was sent to Mrs H. N. Harper on 8th September, 1916 advising that her husband Pte James H. Harper was seriously ill with pneumonia.

Pte James Henry Harper died on 13th September, 1916 from Empyaema*. (*some reports held in the Service record file state cause of death as pneumonia).

A death for John H. Harper, aged 40, was registered in the September quarter, 1916 in the district of Amesbury, Wiltshire.

Pte James Henry Harper was buried on 16th September, 1916 in Durrington Cemetery, Wiltshire – plot number 105 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Headstone.

Private J. H. Harper is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 131.



(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

Pte J. H. Harper was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Harper's widow – Mrs H. N. Harper (February, 1922 & July, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private James Henry Harper – service number 477 as being 39 years old & served with 39th Battalion Australian Infantry. No family details are listed.

A War Pension was granted to Hannah Norah Harper, widow of the late Pte James Henry Harper, in the sum of £2 per fortnight from 26th November, 1916. War Pensions were granted for the children of Pte James Harper:

- Jemima Ann Harper - £1 per fortnight from 26th November, 1916
- Henry James Harper – 15/- per fortnight from 26th November, 1916
- William John Harper – 10/- per fortnight from 26th November, 1916
- Lily Margerita Harper – 10/- per fortnight from 26th November, 1916
- Lawrence Hugh Harper – 10/- per fortnight from 26th November, 1916
- Arthur Stanley Harper – 10/- per fortnight from 26th November, 1916
- Cecilia May Harper – 10/- per fortnight from 26th November, 1916
- James Waters Harper – 10/- per fortnight from 26th November, 1916

(42 pages of Pte James Henry Harper's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll) & National Archives

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Newspaper Reports

AUSTRALIANS IN WAR

ILL

Pte J. H. Harper, Horsham (seriously).

(Hamilton Spectator, Victoria – Tuesday 19 September, 1916)

OUR SOLDIERS

News was received by Mr J. J. Gibson yesterday that his nephew Private James H. Harper had died of illness somewhere in France. Private Harper who enlisted from Horsham was a native of Rupanyup and leaves a widow and young family of eight.

(Rupanyup Spectator and Lubeck, Banyena, Rich Avon and Lallat Advertiser, Victoria – Thursday 28 September, 1916)

NEWS AND NOTES - DIED ON SERVICE

Word was received in Horsham on Wednesday to the effect that Private James Henry Harper, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Harper, of Horsham, had died of illness in England. Death occurred on September 13, the cause being pneumonia. The deceased, who was a strong, healthy man, had worked in his father's business up to the time of his enlistment, and left with reinforcements on May 28. He was 40 years of age, and married. He leaves a widow and eight young children, the youngest two months old, for whom, with the parents, the deepest sympathy is felt.

(The Horsham Times, Victoria – Friday 29 September, 1916)

IN MEMORIAM

HARPER - In loving memory of my dear husband and our dear father, No. 477, Private J. H. Harper, who died of illness in England on the 13th September, 1916, while on active service.

Dearly loved, sadly missed.

Could I, his wife, have clasped his hand,

The husband I loved so well,

To kiss his brow when death was near,

And whisper, "Dear Jim, farewell."

If we could run to meet you, daddy,

And climb upon your knee

But let this little token tell

Mother always tells us of thee.

Our dear soldier daddy.

-Inserted by his loving wife and children.

(The Horsham Times, Victoria – Tuesday 16 September, 1919)

IN MEMORIAM

HARPER - In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Pte J. H. Harper, who died of illness in the Tidworth Military Hospital, England, 13th September, 1916.

His memory liveth, and is enshrined

In the hearts of those who loved him.

-Inserted by his loving parents, sisters and brothers.

(The Horsham Times, Victoria – Tuesday 13 September, 1921)

IN MEMORIAM

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

HARPER - In loving memory of our dear father. Private J. H. Harper, who died of illness in Tidworth Military Hospital, England, on September 13th, 1916.

Deep in our hearts there's a picture

Of our dear Dad gone to rest.

In memory's frame we will keep it,

For he was one of the world's best.

-Inserted by his loving family.

(The Horsham Times, Victoria – Tuesday 16 September, 1924)

IN MEMORIAM

HARPER - In loving memory of our dear father, Private J. H. Harper, 477, who died of illness in Tidworth Military Hospital, England, September 13, 1916.

Too far away thy grave to see,

But not too far to think of thee;

For memory is as fresh to-day

As in the hour you passed away.

-Inserted by his loving family.

(The Horsham Times, Victoria – Tuesday 15 September, 1925)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone at Durrington War Graves Cemetery. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)

A letter from Base Records, dated 15th July, 1921, to Mrs H. N. Harper advises that a letter from the Defence Dept. concerning an inscription of the late Pte J. H. Harper's headstone had not been answered & non-receipt of a reply within 21 days would have to be accepted as indicating that no further action was to be taken.

Pte J. H. Harper does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Photo of Pte J. H. Harper's Headstone at Durrington War Graves Cemetery, Wiltshire.



(Photo © Ian King - with permission)