

Albert Henry (Harry) Lugg

Corporal

1st Battalion Wellington Regiment.

Number: 10/3637

Biography

Albert Henry (Harry) Lugg was born on 17 June 1888 at Springston, a small rural community, near Lincoln, in Christchurch. His parents, William John Lugg and Anne Elizabeth Lugg (nee Hoskin) were immigrants from St Keverne on the Lizard Peninsula, in Cornwall, who had arrived in New Zealand in August 1875. They had six children all born in New Zealand, 3 girls and 3 boys. Harry was the 5th child and second son. Each of the boys served in WW1.

Harry's father worked as an agricultural labourer in Cornwall, and probably did similar work when he arrived in New Zealand. He was skilled at working with horses and later he worked as a contractor for the council at Springston, where he lived.

At the time Harry enlisted for WW1, he was working as a ploughman for Mr. H.V. Hammond at Makirikiri, near Dannevirke, in the North Island. He was 5ft 5½ inches tall with a dark complexion, hazel eyes and brown hair. He was attested at Trentham on 19 October 1915 and was assigned to B Company, 9th Reinforcements. He fell ill with influenza and was admitted to hospital between 23-30th November 1915 whilst in camp at Tauhernikau. This was a smaller camp in the same area before Featherston Camp began. Trentham Camp in the Hutt Valley was overcrowded and a new site with ample space was chosen at Featherston. He embarked from Wellington on HMNZ troopship Number 17, the *S.S. Maunganui* on 8 January 1916 bound for Suez. He disembarked in Suez on 8 February 1916.

A poem was found among a collection of memorabilia that had belonged to his sister, Louisa, that appears to have been written by a close friend, probably his girlfriend, but known only by the initials L.M. In it she mentions letters written to her by Harry. She says in the poem that he wrote from Egypt that he was "down on the sick list" with an abscess on his chest, and that his mates in the 9th reinforcements had been sent away. He also told her that he had been transferred to the 17ths, and was leaving Egypt. The information in his war records doesn't have this detail, but said that he had joined the Wellington Infantry Battalion at Ismalia on 18 March 1916, and embarked for France on 6 April 1916 on board the Troopship *Arcadian* with the 1st Battalion Wellington Infantry.

The NZ reinforcements had arrived at the Somme in September with the Artillery going into action on 12 September 1916. The New Zealand infantry went over the top at 6.20 a.m. on 15 September. About 6000 of them saw action that day, and although nothing went quite to plan, by nightfall the division had secured its immediate objectives and had helped take the village of Flers. L.M wrote that Harry had written to her from the battle front that he had been wounded in the leg at the Somme. The war record notes that he was admitted to 1 New Zealand Field Ambulance with a gunshot wound in the left ankle on 13 September 1916. This must have been right at the start of the NZ action. He was treated and stayed with his unit. He fought through the Somme Campaign and on 1 April 1917 he was promoted to Lance Corporal. The harsh conditions took a toll and on 13 May 1917 he was admitted to the New Zealand Field Ambulance with conjunctivitis and discharged on 20 May 1917. His eye problems must have flared up again though as he was admitted to 83 General Hospital with conjunctivitis on 1 June 1917, and admitted to 1 Convalescent Depot at Boulogne on 5 June 1917.

When he was discharged on 8 June 1917, he was attached to the strength of NZ Infantry and General Base Depot at Etaples. He rejoined the Wellington Infantry Battalion in the field on 18 June 1917 during the aftermath of the Battle of Messines. On the 26 June 1917, Harry was killed in action just 10 days after his 29th birthday. The Wellington Regiment's history notes that on that day attempts were made to rescue two officers of the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade (the battalion on their right) who had gone up to the Sugar Refinery in daylight and were fired on at close range, one being wounded. Albert's body was not found or identified and his name is inscribed on the NZ Memorial to the Missing at Messines, Belgium (now called Mesen).

Probably his family had no knowledge of his girlfriend, and L.M. was shocked to read the news of his death in the newspaper. She must have written her poem some time later and sent it to the *Gisborne Herald* who published it. Somehow a cutting of it ended up pasted onto a piece of cardboard in his sister, Louisa's collection and Louisa's granddaughters discovered it in 2014.