

Lance Corporal Henry Bert HART 122 – 1st Tunnelling Company

Born: 11 Dec 1885, Molong, NSW.

Parents: Thomas Bond & Julia Hart.

Occupation: Labourer

District Connection: Molong, Cumnock

Enlistment Date: 26 Oct 1915

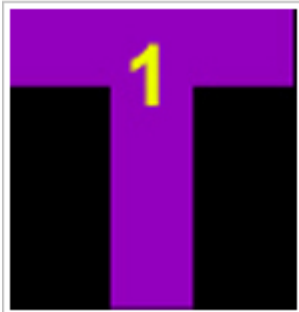
Enlistment Age: 29yrs

Embarkation: 20 Feb 1916, Sydney, Ulysses A38

Served: France

Fate: RTA 26 Mar 1919

Honour Boards: Molong & District Soldiers Memorial;
Cumnock War Memorial Gates.



Biography

Christened Thomas Henry Bert Hart, "Bertie or Bert" was the youngest child of Thomas Bond Hart and Julia Adams. He was born on 11 Dec 1885 in Molong, NSW, but not registered until Jan 1886 on the Australian Birth Index. His siblings were Rachael, Ernest, Arthur, Julia Anne (Annie), Lavinia, Matilda (Till) and Frederick William.

His father Thomas came to Australia from Bedford, England and married Julia Adams on 23 May 1870. Thomas Bond Hart began farming at "The Gap", near Molong, in 1876. He died of pneumonia on 6 Nov 1886 when Bert was just 11 months old. His mother stayed on at the farm with the assistance of her brother, Edward Watson Adams. She set up shop by the roadside and sold farm produce and grocery items to the teamsters etc. as they passed by. Julia married Fred Toole in 1889 and they had two children, Violet Ada and Richard Toole. Julia also died of pneumonia at her residence "Walwayne", Anson Street, Orange, in 1911. She was buried in the Millthorpe Cemetery alongside her parents. Her sons, Fred and Bert Hart were then residing at the Gap, Molong. (*Molong Argus* – 18 Aug 1911, p9 Death of Mrs Toole)

Henry Bert Hart enlisted in the AIF on 26 Oct 1915, in Rockhampton, QLD, aged 29yrs & 10 mths, single and a labourer. He gave his NOK as his sister, Mrs Annie (Juliaanne) Woods, Molong, NSW. His medical examination states that he was 5 feet 10 inches tall, fair complexion, grey eyes, black curly hair and of Church of England religious denomination.

The Molong Argus – 10 Dec 1915, p4, Country Chatter, Amaroo –

"Private Bert Hart, who has been on active service (and who has been on duty at Thursday Island), paid a visit to his sister, Mrs Alex Wood, of Belgrove, Amaroo, last Thursday. He is on final leave, and Mr and Mrs Wood took advantage of his presence to have a social evening at their residence. A goodly number of Amaroo friends assembled to do honor to the departing soldier, and a very pleasant time was spent by the guests ...

Private Hart was made the recipient of several useful articles by a few of his friends, after which dancing was indulged in until 2 am, when the party broke up, after having had a most enjoyable evening.

On Friday evening Private Hart was presented with a sheepskin vest by Miss Williams on behalf of the Amaroo public. The function took place at the Public School. Short addresses were given by Messes Ford, McNamara and Williams, who wished the departing soldier God speed and good luck. A Balaclava cap and knitted socks were also give to Pte Hart by the school girls, after which he left by the mail train for Liverpool."

Bert embarked from Australia on 20 Feb 1916 from Sydney on HMAT *Ulysses* A38. The *Ulysses* departed Fremantle on 1 Apr 1916 with a total of 1303 soldiers on board, made up of men from No 1, 2 & 3 Companies and 1st Reinforcements. The *Ulysses* sailed to Suez, Egypt, arriving 22 Apr and departing 23 Apr; Port Said, Egypt 24 Apr and departing the same day; arriving in Alexandria Egypt 25 Apr and departing on 27 Apr;

Major T.W. Edgeworth David recalls:

'On the arrival of our troop ship in Alexandria in April 16, a party of some 120 out of our 1200 miners, with the wanderlust strong upon them, broke loose suddenly from our troop ship (Ulysses) as she lay at the wharf, rushed the sentries, and went careering like a lot of released school boys up the main street of Alexandria, making for the heart of the city.

Some bad sport, perhaps one should rather say, one sound disciplinarian, telephoned to the military police. And in due course the sappers were met by some charabancs driven by genial gentlemen, who offered them a lift.

The offer was of course accepted, and presently the vehicle swung into a courtyard, the gates of which were promptly closed, and the sappers then realised that they were prisoners. One hundred and twenty of them were locked up in a building designed for a maximum of 60. The sappers called it the 'boob'.

The night was very hot and the "boob" threatened to become a veritable Black Hole of Calcutta.

In the early dawn, an agonized SOS came from the military police to our ship to say that the sappers were tunnelling under the walls of the boob, and that it was tottering to its foundations, and would we send up a strong-armed party at once to hold and remove the prisoners.'

The *Ulysses* continued onto Valetta, Malta arriving 30 Apr and departing 2 May; arrived and disembarked at Marseilles, France 5 May; detained to Hazebrouck, France 8 May 1916.

Shortly after arrival in France, attached to No 1 Company Mining Corps in Armentieres, Bert was charged with the offence of 'disobedience of orders' – being out of bounds on 26 May 1916, and had to forfeit 2 days pay. On 7 Jun 1916 he reported to a Field Hospital with Mumps and on 10 Jun transferred to the 3rd NZ Field Ambulance. He was discharged back to duty on 9 July.

Bert was transferred to 1st Australian Tunnelling Coy on 24 Dec 1916. On 9 Mar 1917 he was admitted to the 47 DRS with scabies and rejoined his unit on 13 March. He was appointed Lance Corporal on the 12 May, and on 17 July attended the 50th Field Ambulance with dental problems but returned the same day to his unit

On 22 Oct 1917 Bert was wounded in action with a gunshot wound to his left leg and on 24 Oct was admitted to the 14th General Hospital. On the same day he was transferred by the Hospital Ship, *Princess Elizabeth* to England. He was admitted to the Chatham Military Hospital on 25 Oct. On 2 Nov he was transferred to 3rd Auxillary Hospital at Dartford.

The Molong Argus – 1 Mar 1918, P1, Soldiers' Letters: *England*, 25.12.17

"Mrs A Wood of Amaroo, is in receipt of the following letter from her brother, Private Bert Hart, who is 'doing his bit' at the front –

Dear Annie, Just a few lines hoping to find you all well as this leaves me OK, and you will see by the menu inside what kind of a dinner we had in this camp (Xmas Day). It is like being in a new world being on this side of the Channel. I have had the time of my life these last few weeks and I will not like going back to Belgium again. I am marked active, so I will to the mark once more, and long before you get this letter, I will be back in the trenches once more. I will drop you a field card when I get on the other side. I see where the Referendum was beaten in Australia. I am glad it was – for there are thousands of fit Australians on the staff in England who have never seen a shell blast yet, and never will, and yet there are a lot of men in the trenches who are not fit to be there. It is a disgrace the way things are run over here. There are very few of the boys who go to the line that voted 'Yes'.

Do you ever hear from Fred? I have not heard from him for a long time and what has become of Victor and Jack Puddlestone? I have not heard of their whereabouts for a long time. I have had no mail for about three months – I can't make it out. I have written to the base, but can't get a reply. It may turn up altogether when I get back to my unit.

Well, dear Annie, I hope you all had a merry Xmas. Remember me to all enquiring friends. Goodbye until we meet again.

[Bert's brother, Pte 3323 Frederick William Hart, had been captured by the German Army on 20 Jul 1916 and was a Prisoner of War at Munster, Germany, when Bert wrote this letter. A letter from Fred dated Nov 1917 from his POW camp in Munster was also included in the same newspaper report.

Bert's nephew, Pte 2341 Alfred Victor Hart, was also a Prisoner of War and had been captured on 26 Sep 1917. Both later returned to Australia.]

Burt had four months recovery time until proceeding back to France on 1 Feb 1918, and rejoining 1 ATC on 8 Feb 1918. He returned to Australia on *Boonah*, leaving London on 20 Apr 1919. He was discharged 2 MD TPE 26 Jul 1919.

On Fri 14 Nov 1919, Bert was one of thirteen local lads 'Welcomed Home' at Leary's Hall, Cumnock, NSW, for "doing their bit for the Empire". They were all presented with an inscribed gold medal. Medals were also provided for Ptes AV & F W Hart, who were not present. (The *Molong Argus* – 21 Nov 1919, P4, Cumnock News)

Bert married Catherine Agnes Dwyer in Glebe in 1920 and they had one son, Wallace John Hart, born in 1923. Henry Bert Hart & Katherine Agnes Hart are recorded in the Australian Electoral Rolls (ER) for St Mary's, MacQuarie for 1936, 1937 & 1943 as living at Orchard Hills, via Penrith with Bert's occupation listed as a farmer.

The family were involved in a car accident on the Western Road near Prospect on 20 Nov 1938 and Wallace, aged 16yrs, died the same day from injuries received in the accident. His parents and four other occupants of the other car received minor injuries. He was buried at the Kingswood Cemetery in Penrith on 22 Nov 1938. (*Nepean Times* - 24 Nov 1938, p8)

On the 1949 ER for Penrith, MacArthur, Henry & Katherine are listed as living at Adelaide Street and that Bert's occupation was that of a Peace Officer. On the 1954, 1956, 1958 & 1963 ERs, Henry & Catherine are listed as living at Bellevue Road with Henry's occupation a Peace Officer.

[Peace Officers were the early form of Australian Federal Police, created through the Peace Officers Act 1925. In 1945 the Peace Officer Guard had 1745 men and women deployed across Australia to provide a security presence at a range of critical infrastructure sites. New legislation saw a revised Commonwealth Police Act in 1957 and in 1960, Peace Officers became Commonwealth Police Officers. www.afp.gov.au/~media/afp/pdf/2/28-31-the-body-snatchers.ashx]

Catherine died in 1971 at Penrith, aged 81yrs. Henry Bert Hart died, aged 86 yrs, on 14 Feb 1972 at Penrith.

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ARTHUR, ERNEST, BERT
TILL & JULIA (ANNIE) HART, VIOLET TOOLE

The profile of Lance Corporal Henry HART also appears in the Nominal Roll section of the tunnellers Research Website: <http://www.tunnellers.net>

Photo of the Hart family from the book, FAMILIES OF MOLONG AND DISTRICT by Aileen Roberson, 1993 - Pages 93 & 94.

