



Private Bertrium (Bertram) Harcourt LEE 6752 - 4th Battalion, 22nd Reinforcements

Born: 31 Oct 1889, Woollahra, NSW

Next of Kin: Mother, Mrs Sarah Stein, Wetherill Park.

Occupation: Farm Labourer

District Connection: Bournewood,

Enlistment Date: 18 Jul 1916,

Enlistment Age: 26 years 8 months

Embarkation: 8 Nov 1916 - Sydney SS *Port Nicholson*

Served: Western Front

Fate: RTA 10 Jan 1918

Honour Board: Wetherill Park Memorial Plaque

Unit colour
patch



Biography:

Bertram (Bert) Harcourt Lee was born on 31 Oct 1889, in Woollahra, NSW. He was the son of William and Sarah Rosanna Lee. Sarah (nee Smith) had been previously married in 1876 to Thomas Torrance and they had one child, Elizabeth Torrance. Sarah married William Lee in Sydney on 19 Apr 1876 and they had three children: William (Jnr), Gertrude and Bertram. William Lee senior died in 1889, and Sarah married for the third time on 15 Oct 1891 in Liverpool to John Stein and they had one child, Edith May Stein.

Bert Lee was working as a labourer in Bournewood according to the 1913 Australian Macquarie/Burnwood (Bournewood) electoral Rolls.

The *Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* - 31 Jul 1915, p10, Cumnock Comments - *"During the week three localites went to Sydney to enlist—Bert Lee, William Curno [Curnow] and Cecil Neville. Curno failed to pass the medical examination, and has returned."*

William Curnow did successfully reenlist on 31 Oct 1916. Pte William Curnow - 4522, 30th Btn, was killed in action in France on 28 Aug 1918, aged 24 years. There is no Cecil Neville listed as being in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) or on Cumnock's WW1 honour plaque. Bert must have also failed his first medical examination because he reenlisted again in the AIF on 18 Jul 1916 at Sydney and his name was spelt Bertrium Harcourt Lee. In this application he stated that he had previously been rejected by the AIF due to "eyesight."

His medical examination on 3 Jul 1916 at Victoria Barracks stated that he was 5 feet 9½ inches tall, had brown eyes, black hair, a dark complexion and was of the Church of England religious denomination. His mother, Sarah, was named as his next of kin.

Pte Bert Lee embarked at Sydney on *SS Port Nicholson* on 8 Nov 1916, disembarking at Devonport on 10 Jan 1917.

Photo: *Troops on the SS Port Nicholson watch a sack race, 7 Dec 1916.*

Previously known as *SS Makarini*, the ship was renamed *SS Port Nicholson* in 1914. Just a few days after disembarking 1000 troops in Devonport, the *SS Port Nicholson* was sunk on 15 Jan 1917 when she hit a mine in the English Channel near Dunkirk.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Pte Bert Lee trained in England at the 1st Training Btn and embarked at Folkestone on 10 Apr 1917 for France. He marched into the 1st Australian Division Base Camp at Étaples on 11 April and joined the 4th Btn on 2 May, just in time for the battalion to take part in the Second Bullecourt battle which began on 3 May and ended on 17 May. The 4th Btn's strength was 21 Officers and 860 Other Ranks.

The 4th Btn Unit commander's diary on 6 May stated: "On the morning of the 6th at 7 am the 4th Btn reinforced the 1st Bn with two coys; these had to go over the top and got there in ten minutes but were called back to the embankment. The enemy again shelled this position very heavily and inflicted severe casualties on the Bn. At 2 pm the 4th Bn relieved the 1st Bn in the Hindenburg Line..."

Just 4 days after joining the 4th Btn, Pte Lee was wounded in action on 6 May 1917. He received multiple gunshot wounds to the head and right arm. He was admitted to the 9th General Hospital at Rouen before being transferred to England to be admitted to the 2nd Southern General Hospital, Bristol, on 21 May. His right arm was amputated below the elbow.

Pte Lee was transferred to the 3rd Auxiliary Hospital, Dartford, on 9 Oct. He embarked per HMAT *Corinthic* on 10 Jan 1918 and arrived in Melbourne on 3 Mar 1918. He was then transferred to HMT *Port Darwin* on 4 March and arrived in Sydney on 7 Mar 1918. He was discharged from the AIF on 5 Sep 1918. He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The *Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* - 20 Apr 1918, p19, reported:

"Bournewood. A welcome home was tendered to Pte. Bert Lee at the residence of Mr J Pickford on the 8th inst. There was a very large attendance of district residents. During the evening Mr Jeff Morris presented Pte Lee with a cheque for over £80 and a handsome gold medal (inscribed), on behalf of the residents of Bournewood..."

The *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate* - 27 Apr 1918, p11, reported:

"The Smithfield Protestant Alliance Lodge welcomed privates Bert Lee, W Bennett, Clem Carroll and W Weedon home from the front."

Bertram Lee married Florence May Kannavan at St. James' Church, Croydon on 15 Aug 1929.

From 1930-1935 Bert and Florence lived in Guildford. Bert worked as a lift attendant. The couple had no children.

Bertram Harcourt Lee died on 27 June 1935, aged 45 years, at Parramatta Hospital after being an inpatient for many months.

Insert: The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate - 4 July 1935, p4.

Florence May Lee died at Katoomba on 13 Nov 1944. She was also interred at Rookwood Crematorium.

6752 Pte Bertrium LEE is featured on p140 of the book, "Wellington's Finest" by Trevor Munro and Graeme Hosken, published 2005.

**Dianne Strahan & Val McKenzie, August 2022,
www.cumnocknswmemorials.com**

Photo:
Wetherill Park bushrock with WW1 Honour Roll. This memorial contains the names of soldiers listed on the Honour Roll from the Wetherill Park Public School and the original Memorial tablet that was located in Wetherill Park, but was damaged in 1999. Pte BH LEE is listed on the plaque.

