

William Harold Simcock

Charli Medlow

William Harold Simcock was born on 9th of September 1885 in Callington South Australia. William's Grandparents were originally from Cornwall in the United Kingdom who, in 1842, moved to Hobart, Tasmania. Then in 1844, the Simcock family moved to Adelaide, and ultimately to Callington where William was born and eventually started a family of his own. William married Rosey May Dodd on the 8th of November 1911. Not long after they had their first child, Bertha May Simcock, on the 10th of October 1912. In 1915 their second child Robert Edward Andrew Simcock, arrived on the 2nd of February. William used to be a stock driver, requiring him to travel to Wellington and pick up cattle or sheep and take them to the Strathalbyn market. This trip would take three days. William did this until he enlisted for World War One.



William Harold

From family collection

William enlisted on the 25th of January 1916 in Adelaide and left Australia on the ship Seang Bea on the 13th July 1916 leaving his wife, daughter and new born son behind. William then arrived in England on the 9th of September. William did military training in both England and Australia. During his training he was promoted to Lance Corporal, but this promotion was temporary and he reverted to Private when he joined the 5th Pioneers in France. After just over a month of service William was sent to hospital with gastritis. Unfortunately, he did not recover quickly and was sent to Rouen on the 6th of January 1917. William spent some time there before being sent to hospital at Mapsbury in England on the 17th of January. Eventually he recovered and was allowed some time for leave on the 8th of February 1917, returning to training at Perham Downs on the 23rd of February. He continued training there until early April when he returned to the 5th Pioneers on the 16th of April. On the 27th of August he was promoted once again to Lance Corporal. Then on the 16th of October he was wounded during the Battle of Passchendaele.

The role of the 5th Pioneers during World War 1 was basically one of light military engineers. They were used to develop protection and mobility for the troops. Specifically, the 5th Pioneers were building a tramline to get supplies to the front line. Consequently, William worked behind the front line during the Battle of Passchendaele.

The Battle of Passchendaele was also known as the Third Ypres, or to the soldiers who fought in it, 'The Battle of Mud.' The battle began in July 1917 and finished in November 1917. The attack of Passchendaele was Sir Douglas Haig's attempt to break through the German Lines in Flanders. Haig had thought of doing this in 1916 and his main objective was to reach the coast of Belgium so that the British could destroy the German submarine pens. His plan was not supported by the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, however, as the Allies had no other plan, he agreed for Haig's plan to go ahead.

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On the 18th of July 1917 a heavy artillery barrage was launched towards the German lines. Three thousand artillery guns fired over four million shells in an offensive that lasted around ten days. This attack was no surprise to the Germans so as the British launched across the front line they only made small gains. In early August the area had some of the heaviest rains the region had seen in thirty years, transforming it into a swamp. All the tanks that were sent over the front line simply got stuck, and general movement for the soldiers was very difficult. In addition, all the drainage systems had been destroyed from the frequent artillery attacks which simply made the problem a lot worse. This resulted in many of the areas the men should have moved through becoming impassable.

Between October 9th and October 12th two battles were fought The battle of Poelcappelle and the First Battle of Passchendaele. In late October there were three more allied attacks on Passchendaele Ridge and on November the 6th 1917 Passchendaele was taken, and Haig used this success as the reason to call off the attack.

However, the battle of Passchendaele was a very costly considering the allies only gained a few kilometres. The British lost 310,000 men and the Germans lost 260,000 men. 50% of the casualties were from artillery and not just the people fighting on the front line were affected by this.

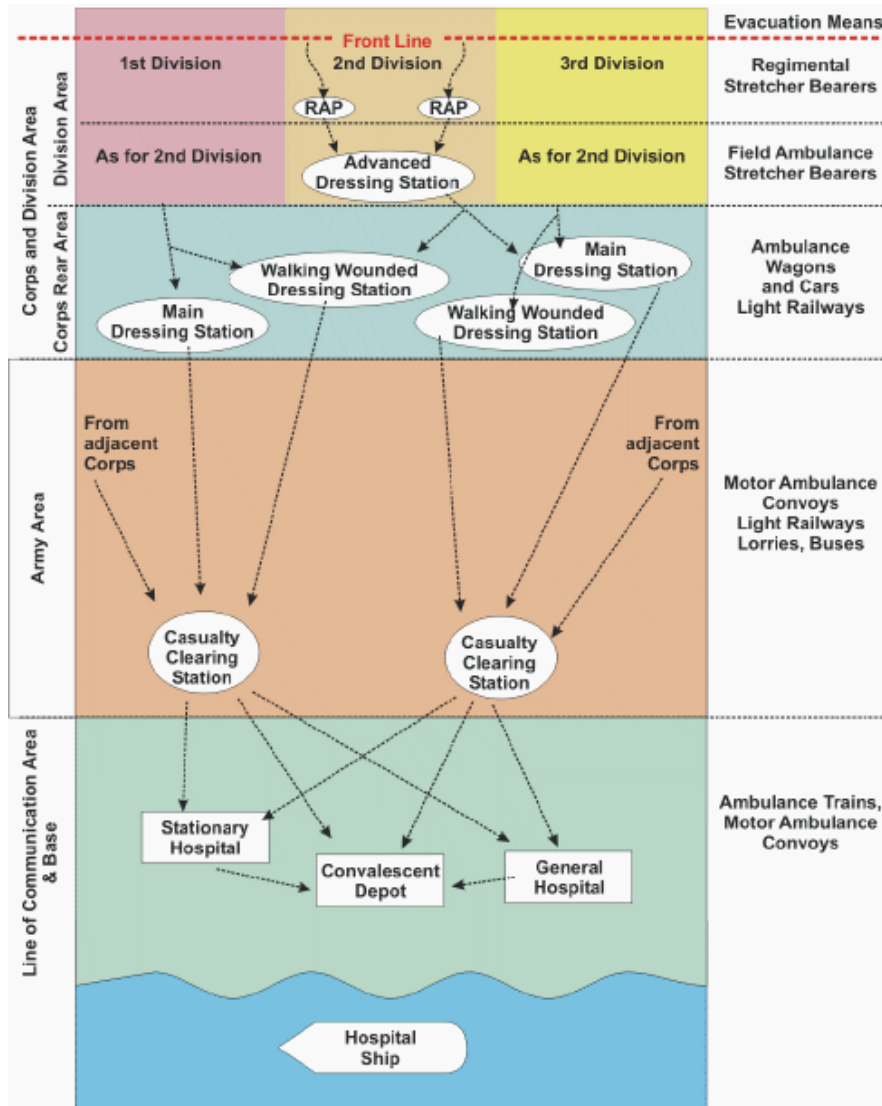
On the 16th of October 1917 William was wounded by shrapnel, with a fracture to his femur and he was also gassed. From the Unit Diary, I found that the 5th Pioneers were working at J.3.D.3.8. on the 16th of October, as seen on map 2. William may have been first taken by Strecker to a Regimental Aid Post RAP or an advanced dressing station depending on which was closer to him. Due to his injuries he might have been bandaged quickly to stop blood flow and then sent straight back to the Main Dressing Station by wagon or ambulance which would have probably been in Leper and from there on to the Casualty Clearing Station. William was moved to the 2nd Canadian Casualty Station according to *the Canadian archives* 2012-2015 it was at Remy Siding and was there from August 1916 to September 1918. Unfortunately, William died the following day I am assuming that they would have made him as comfortable as possible and left him at the casualty clearing station because they did not think that he had any chance of living. But if they did think he could live they would have moved him to a hospital. He may have gone on light rail to casualty clearing station. He was then moved to and buried at Lijssenthoek military cemetery in section XXI, row E grave 15A. Williams head stone was engraved with words from his wife Rosey "Your name liveth forever in sunny Australia." On the 7th of November 1917 his wife also inserted a notice into The Advertiser "Died on Active Service" section that read, "In ever- loving memory of my dear husband, Lance Corporal Harold Simcock died of wounds in France, October 17, 3/5th Pioneers. Aged 32 years late of Woodchester. Lord, take his soul into thy keeping, he freely offered life for all, in answer to his country's call. He helped to show Australia's might; Now peacefully sleeps in a hero's grave. One of Gods bravest and best."

Words = 1085

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Diagram showing what happens when someone gets injured.



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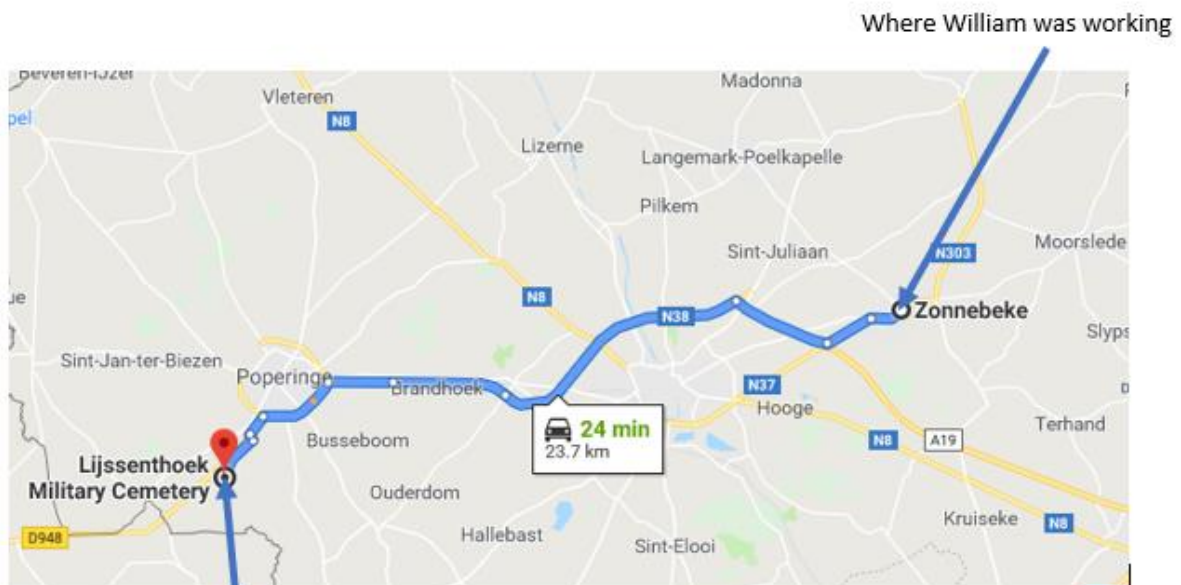
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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What it would have looked like when William was getting stretched when he was wounded.

<<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C954183>>

Map 1



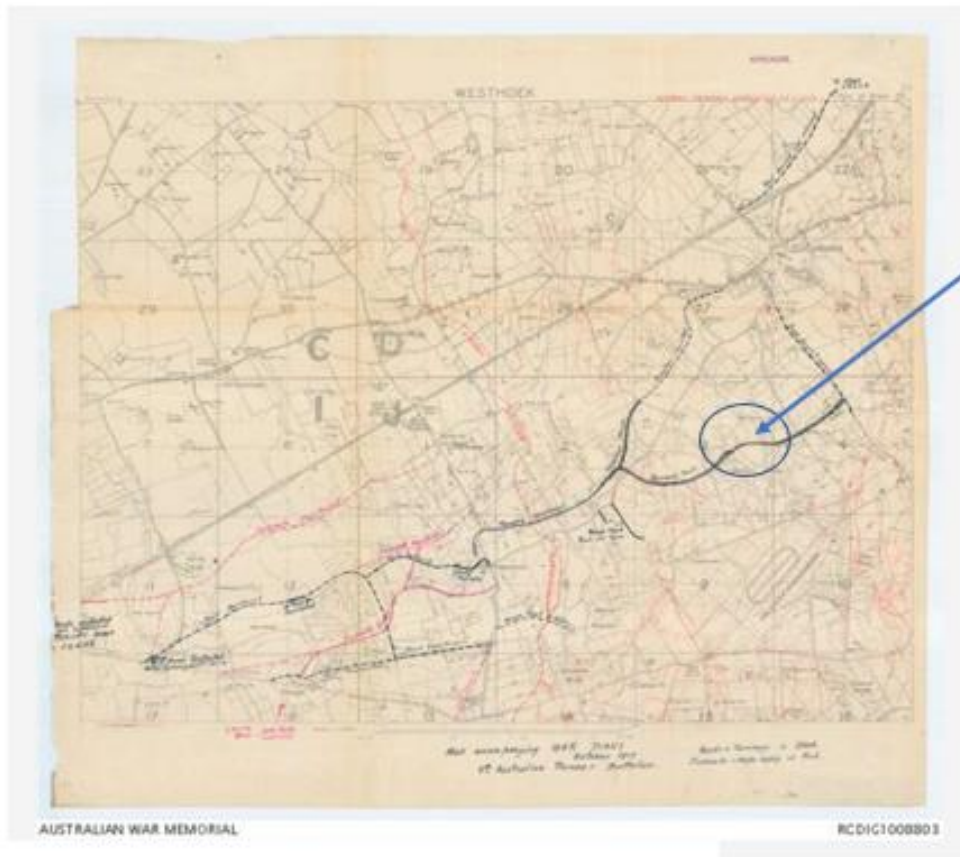
Where William was sent to hospital but during the war it was called Remy Sidings. William was buried there as well.

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Map 2

Where the 5th pioneers were working and what the area looked like during the World War one



Where the 5th pioneers were working on 16th October, 1917

From the 5th Pioneer Battalion Unit Diary, October 1917
<<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1347381>>

DOMESTIC ANNOUNCEMENTS.

IN MEMORIAM.

SIMCOCK.—In loving memory of our dear husband and daddy, Lance-Corporal W. H. Simcock, who died of wounds, October 17, 1917.

In our home you are fondly remembered;

Sweet memories cling round your name;

True hearts that loved in life, dear **Harold,**

Still love you in death just the same.

—Inserted by his loving wife and children, Strathalbyn.

The Southern Argus

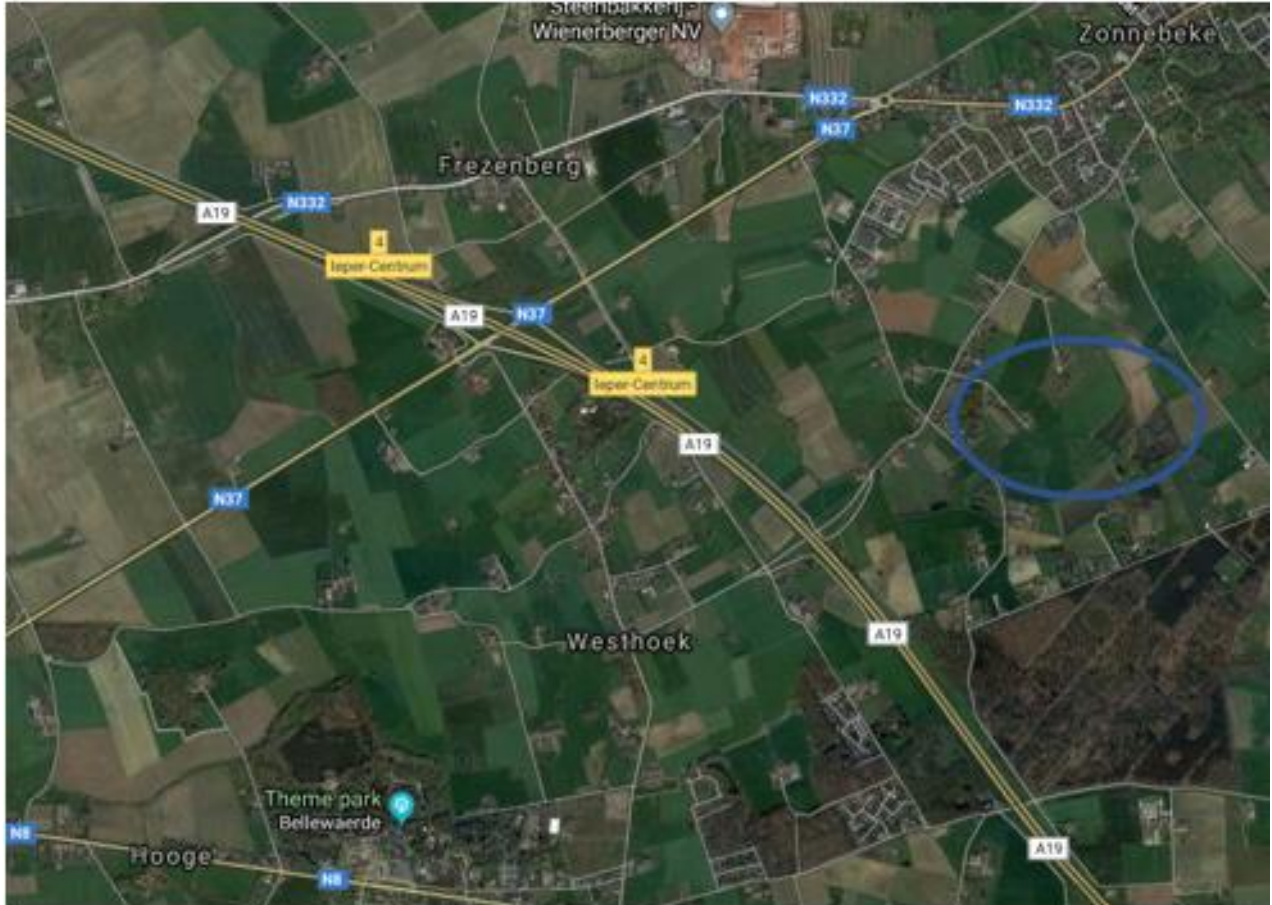
Notice inserted to The Southern Argus.
<<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/73219213/7264926>>

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Map 3

What the area looks like now.



SIMCOCK.—In ever-loving memory of my dear husband, Lance-Corporal Harold Simcock, died of wounds in France, October 17, 3/8th Pioneers, aged 32 years, late of Woodchester.
Lord, take his soul into Thy keeping.
He freely offered life for all
In answer to his country's call.
He helped to show Australia's might;
Now peacefully sleeps in a hero's grave,
One of God's bravest and best.
—Inserted by his loving wife and children.

Notice inserted to The Advertiser on the 7th November 1917.

<<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/73219213/7264926>>

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William Harold Simcock in uniform

From family collection



William's grave



William riding a horse from family collection



William's wife Rosey and two kids

From family collection

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Part B – ANZAC Spirit

The ANZAC spirit is described in four words; courage, perseverance, mateship and resourcefulness. I believe that William demonstrated great courage during his time in World War One. I believe this because I think it would have taken great courage to first of all sign up for the war when he did which was well into the war and not at the start because signing up at this time he would have known that war was not just a chance of adventure around the world and that it was not a fun place and many people were getting wounded and dying including his own brother. It would have also taken courage just to leave his wife and two kids at home especially with one of his kids only just being born. William might not have any amazing stories of being the bravest but I think that it still would have taken courage to just sign up and fight for his country and then to go out and build a tram line in terrible weather conditions and work in water filled trenches with duck boards in between trenches and fields full of mud. The Battle of Passchendaele is famous for being one of the muddiest battles of war, with many soldiers, tanks and war horses drowning in the liquid mud. (telegraph.co.uk, 2017). Many men would have suffered from trench foot and would have never dried out so they were always wet and muddy. Also, just going out on the field every day without any military weapons to protect himself, I think showed some courage just to do that.

I also believe that William demonstrated mateship with his brother Private David John Simcock. David was only a few years older than William, and although he had moved to Western Australia as an adult, they would have shared their childhood together, forming a strong bond of brotherly love. David was one of the earliest Australians to enlist in August 1914, and as a member of the 11th Battalion he would have been one of the first to land at Gallipoli on the 25th April 1915. He died just a week later on the 2nd of May 1915, and I believe that one reason William signed up for war was because when he found out the news about his brother dying he felt that he had to go sign up and fight just like his brother had, and finish what his brother started. I think he felt that he had to do it not just for himself but also for his brother and family.

Words = 429

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