

Sutton Veny War Graves



Lest we Forget

World War I



279 BOMBARDIER

R. H. DARKER

AUSTRALIAN REINFORCEMENT

24TH OCTOBER, 1918 Age 28

As Long As Life

And Memory Last

We'll Always Think Of Thee

*Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Bdr. R. H. Darker is located in
Grave Plot # 7. F. 7. of St. John the Evangelist Churchyard, Sutton Veny*

Robert Henry DARKER

Robert Henry Darker was born on 6th June, 1890 at Croydon, North Queensland to parents William Henry & Rosina Darker (nee Coyle).

Robert Henry Darker married Alice Cunningham on 5th June, 1912. A birth was registered in 1914 for Robert Lance Darker – parents Robert Henry & Alice Bianchi.

Robert Henry Darker was a 24 year old, married, Horse Breaker from Oxford Street, Rockhampton, Queensland when he enlisted at Rockhampton, Queensland on 14th October, 1914 with the 15th Infantry Battalion - Headquarters of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 279 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Alice Darker of Oxford Street, Rockhampton, Queensland.

Pte Robert Henry Darker was appointed as Driver on 16th November, 1914 & embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Ceramic (A40)* on 22nd December, 1914.

Driver Darker proceeded to join the M.E.F. (Mediterranean Expeditionary Force) Gallipoli Peninsula on 12th April, 1915.

Driver Robert Henry Darker was wounded in action at Gallipoli Peninsula on 30th May, 1915. He was admitted to "Newmarket" on 31st May, 1915 with a gunshot wound to back, neck & right hand. Driver Darker was admitted to St. Andrew's Military Hospital, Malta on 4th June, 1915 from Hospital Ship *Neuralia* with a gunshot wound to right hand & neck. He was transferred on 29th June, 1915 to 15th General Hospital at Alexandria & broke out of Hospital on 17th July, 1915. He returned to Unit on 18th July, 1915.

Driver Robert Henry Darker was shown on strength of 15th Battalion Transport at Maadi & was admitted to 2/Light Horse Field Ambulance "Bungalow" Maadi, Egypt on 17th November, 1915 with Tonsillitis.

Driver Darker was transferred to 4th Divisional Artillery as from 13th March, 1916 & taken on strength with 11th Field Artillery Brigade & posted to 42nd Battery at Tel-el-Kebir on 16th March, 1916.

Driver Darker proceeded to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) at Alexandria on 16th April, 1916. He disembarked at Marseille, France.

Driver Darker was promoted to Acting Bombardier at Serapeum on 16th May, 1916 & then confirmed Bombardier the next day on 17th May, 1916.

Bombardier Robert Henry Darker was promoted to the rank of Corporal on 19th June, 1916 – In the Field, France.

Corporal Robert Henry Darker was promoted to Temporary Sergeant from 18th April, 1917 as Sgt. J. M. Guthrie had been killed in action on 15th April, 1917 while in France.

T./Sergt. Darker was sent to Hospital sick on 25th August, 1917, from Belgium & his rank reverted back to Corporal upon being evacuated sick in France. He was admitted to 2nd Australian Casualty Clearing Station on 1st September, 1917 with Influenza. He was transferred to 16th General Hospital on 3rd September, 1917 & transferred again to 3rd Convalescent Depot at Etaples from 11th to 20th September, 1917. Cpl. Darker was marched in from Hospital on 21st September, 1917 at Havre & marched out to Div. Arty at Havre on 28th September, 1917.

Corporal Darker was transferred to 11th Field Artillery Brigade on 1st October, 1917.

Corporal Robert Henry Darker was wounded in action (2nd occasion) on 20th October, 1917.

Corporal Robert Henry Darker was sent sick to Hospital from Australian General Base on 23rd November, 1917 & rejoined A. G. B. D. on 2nd December, 1917. Cpl. Darker rejoined his Unit from being wounded on 14th December, 1917.

A Field Court Martial was held on 6th December, 1917 – “the charge being:

1. When on Active Service at Harfleur. Drunkenness 17.11.17.
2. Striking his superior Officer – on 17.11.17 struck with his fist in the face Sgt. Brown, 18th Battn, AIF & Sgt Cornfield 1st Battn, Coldstream Guards who were at the time on Police Duty.

Finding – Guilty. Sentenced 28 days imprisonment, hard labour and to be reduced to ranks.”

Gunner Darker was detached from 11th Field Artillery Brigade on 20th January, 1918, in France to attend “Corps Gas School”. Gunner Darker was promoted to Temporary Bombardier on 24th January, 1918 & rejoined his Unit from “Corps Gas School” on 29th January, 1918.

T/ Bombardier Darker was transferred from France on 8th February, 1918 in readiness to transfer to Australia for transport duty from 11th Field Artillery Brigade & was promoted to the rank of Bombardier the same day. He was marched in to No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth, England on 12th February, 1918. He proceeded to return to Australia on 15th February, 1918 on *Llanstephen Castle* from England & arrived in Australia on 16th April, 1918.

Bombardier Robert Henry Darker entrained for Sydney at 6 am from Brisbane & embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Borda* (A30) on 17th July, 1918 with 5th (Q) Reinforcements. He disembarked at London, England on 27th September, 1918.

Bombardier Robert Henry Darker was reporting back from Furlo.

Bombardier Robert Henry Darker was admitted to the Group Clearing Hospital at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire on 14th October, 1918 with Influenza & transferred to Military Hospital at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire on 18th October, 1918 seriously ill with Pneumonia & Influenza.

Bombardier Robert Henry Darker died on 24th October, 1918 at the Military Hospital, Sutton Veny of Influenza & Pneumonia.

A death for Robert H. Darker, aged 28, was registered in the December quarter, 1918 in the district of Warminster, Wiltshire.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing File for Bombardier R. H. Darker contains a letter from the Assistant Matron, The Military Hospital, Sutton Veny which reads:

“Pte Darker died of Influenza, and was buried at Sutton Veny. He was ill only a few days here, and was so ill when admitted that there was no opportunity of learning much about him. This epidemic had been so severe and so fatal that it has been a very sad time, and we very much regret that we have been unable to get more particulars. Everything was done for him that was possible, but it was not possible for him to tell about his Home.”

Bombardier Robert Henry Darker was buried at 3 p.m. on 28th October, 1918 in St. John the Evangelist Churchyard at Sutton Veny - Grave no. 7. From the burial report of Bombardier Darker - *Coffin was polished elm with Brass Mounts – Deceased was buried with full Military Honours. The funeral was preceded by a Firing Party and Band from the Reserve Brigade Australian Artillery and 3 Officers and about 100 N.C.O.'s and Men of deceased's late Unit followed the remains and were present at the graveside ceremony. Headquarters A.I.F. Depots in United Kingdom were represented at the funeral.*

Robert Henry Darker requested in his Will, dated 14th July, 1917 that all his real estate & personal estate be bequeathed to his wife – Mrs Alice Darker of Rockhampton, Queensland.

Bombardier Robert Henry Darker was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Bombardier's widow – Mrs A. Darker (sent July, 1921 & February, 1923)

Bombardier R. H. Darker is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 16.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

The CWGC lists Bombardier Robert Henry Darker, 279, of Australian Reinforcement, A.I.F., as the son of John and Rose Darker; husband of A. Darker of Brisbane St.,(off Ipswich Rd), Brisbane, Queensland. Born at Croydon, Queensland.

(85 pages of Bombardier Robert Henry Darker's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives.



Newspaper Reports

CASUALTIES

QUEENSLAND

WOUNDED

Pte R. H. Darker, 15th Batt.;

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Tuesday 22 June 1915)

MESSAGE FROM THE SEA

Our Penneshaw correspondent writes.—Mr. N. T. Simpson, of Antechamber Bay, about 12 miles from here, found a bottle last week, which had apparently been washed ashore. Thinking it might contain a message, as it was securely corked, he broke it, and found in it a slip of paper with Christmas greetings from the transport drivers of the 15th Battalion. The message was thrown into the sea in the Bight on Christmas Day, and read, "A merry Christmas to all from the transport boys of old Queensland." The finder was asked to have the message published. The following names were attached:— T. Slogan, T. McCormick, H. J. Moalder, B. C. Davis, W. E. Ramsden, W. F. P. Gamble, J. H. Adams, W. Cole, W. D. Gwynne, R. D. Bogie, A. T. Foley, R. H. Darker, T. L. Broughton and P. Reynolds.

(*The Register*, Adelaide, Sth Australia – Friday 30 July, 1915)

Driver A. T. Foley

Driver A. T. Foley, of the Fifteenth Battalion, Transport Section, returned from the front on the 30th of November and left on the following day for his home at Mount Garnet, where, prior to the outbreak of war, he followed the calling of miner.

In the course of an interview Driver Foley stated that he was a member of the additional force that was landed at Anzac on the 26th April last.....

Driver R. H. Darker, of Rockhampton, was also a member of the transport section. On the 29th of May, while bomb throwing, he was hit with three machine gun bullets through the neck, whilst another penetrated his thumb. Driver Foley said that when he left for Australia Private Darker was almost well again.

(*Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton, Qld – Tuesday 28 December, 1915)

AUSTRALIAN CASUALTIES

Casualty List No 359

WOUNDED

Gunner R. H. Darker (Rockhampton)

(*The Capricornian*, Rockhampton, Qld – Saturday 8 December, 1917)

ANZACS ON HOLIDAY

TWO MONTHS' HOME LEAVE

TWENTY-SIX MEN ALREADY ARRIVED

That steady, conscientious work should be in due time rewarded with a holiday is a principle which is fully acted up to in civilian life in the Commonwealth.

The many Industrial Court awards covering all classes of workers insure this consideration for employees, even were employers not disposed to grant the boon of their own initiative, which most of them happily do. No award governs the conditions of the steadiest (because hardest pressed) and most conscientious workers of Australia, however, the big hearted boys who gave up every civil privilege for what they esteem the greatest privilege of all—that of defending their beloved homeland and those most dear to them.

On Monday night four more "original Anzacs" arrived in Brisbane on home leave, extending for two months from the date of landing, to join the 22 "dinkums" who had previously been sent back under similar conditions, and who, it is to be hoped, will spend the holiday of their lives in the company of their kith and kin, and among

a grateful public, before returning to France to brave the dangers of the trenches once more. To one and all a welcome of welcomes is extended, for, they are "Jolly good fellows, and so say all of us." Those who returned on an earlier date are:-

.....Bomdr. R. H. Darker, A.F.A;

(*The Queenslander*, Brisbane, Qld – Saturday 22 June, 1918)

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 St. John the Evangelist Churchyard at Sutton Veny. 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*)

Bombardier Robert Henry Darker does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

As Long As Life And Memory Last We'll Always Think Of Thee



War Graves at Sutton Veny (*Photo from CWGC*)

Photo of Bombardier R. H. Darker's Headstone in St. John the Evangelist's Churchyard, Sutton Veny, Wiltshire.



(Photo courtesy of David Milborrow)



War Graves at Sutton Veny *(Photo from CWGC)*