

FARRIER SARGEANT HAROLD ARTHUR MERTIN – EDEN VALLEY

First World War

Harold Arthur Mertin was born in Mount Pleasant on 13 September 1894. He was the local farrier in Eden Valley and his time in the blacksmith shop gave him unique skills where he worked the forge, shod the horses and fitted rims to wagon wheels. Harold joined the 9th Australian Light Horse Regiment in 1914, aged 20 years. His ability on horseback allowed him to sail through training.

Harold met Jessie Kendrick who was working in a photographer's shop in Adelaide. It was love at first sight and before he left, Harold went Absent Without Leave in order to visit Jessie, he was reprimanded with a detention as a result. By 12 February 1915 Harold was on his way to the Middle East aboard HMAT Armadale.

With fellow members of the 9th Light Horse Regiment, they formed the 3rd Light Horse Brigade with a regiment from Western Australia and another from Victoria. The Brigade was sent to defend Egypt from the Turks and Germans, along with the 1st and 2nd Light Horse Brigades and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles. They became the Anzac Mounted Division. Over the next few years, Harold fought in many battles, the first being Romani.

"In August 1915 a massive Turkish force was preparing for a second attack on the Suez Canal," Ron wrote. "Intelligence reports indicated that a strong body of Turks was to make an attempt on the Allied forces at the Canal and that they were assembled near Bir El Abd.

"It was necessary for the British forces to head out into the Sinai desert to block the Turks from Romani - a crucial group of oases and cisterns in a great waste of sand dunes.

"Orders were issued for the 3rd Brigade to march out in one hour's time and be prepared to travel as light as possible. At the stated time the regiment was on parade with a strength of 21 officers and 415 other ranks plus 459 horses. All wheeled transport was left behind.

"The Turks, who had 20,000 men and heavy guns, attacked and tried to seize the railhead at Romani. Between 19 July and 12 August the brunt of the battle fell on the Australian Light Horse and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles.

"The 3rd Light Horse were forced back by sheer numbers. Near Bir Nagid the enemy opened up heavy fire on A Squadron of the 9th Regiment which was then joined by B Squadron and between them they were able to push forward. By the end of the day they had taken over 400 prisoners."(1)

When Harold returned home in June 1919, he was one of only 38 of the original 400 men who left with the 9th Light Horse Regiment. He soon became engaged to Jessie. The couple were out in a buggy when a double barrel shotgun resting between the seats, discharged with Harold receiving the full blast to his chest. Having survived all the fighting in the Middle East with nothing more than some shrapnel wounds to his hands and severe malaria, Harold lost two or three of his ribs and recovered to marry Jessie a few months later.

Harold died on 26 March 1970, aged 75 and is buried in Centennial Park Cemetery, Pasadena.

Lest We Forget.



FARRIER SGT HAROLD MERTIN
Eden Valley
FIRST WORLD WAR

Image and information provided by Virginia Arnold – Eden Valley History Society

Information referenced from "Farrier Sgt Mertin - the 9th Light Horse Regiment in the Middle East", Ron Mertin (1) DVA (Department of Veterans' Affairs) (2022), Farriers played important role with Australian Light Horse, DVA Anzac Portal, accessed 12 April 2026.

<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/stories/australians-wartime/farriers-played-important-role-australian-light-horse>