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Harold Alexander McLean

Harold Alexander McLean was born at Kilmore on May 18, 1892, the son of Lachlan McLean and Edgarita Jane McLean (nee Nicholls) He worked on the family property at Glenaroua before enlisting at Kilmore on November 2, 1914.

Harold was single, aged 22 years 5 months, 5 ft 6 ins, weight 133 lbs, with a fair complexion, fair hair and blue eyes. Distinctive Marks were recorded as a scar on the tip of his nose and a small scar on his upper lip. His occupation was listed as farmer, his religion as Presbyterian, and his father, Lachlan McLean, was listed as his next of kin.

Harold's rank on enlistment was Private, and he enlisted in the 8th Light Horse, 1st Reinforcements, No 629, and joined C Squadron.

Prior to his enlistment, Harold had served in A Squadron of 15th LHR, Militia, at Seymour (No 649)

Harold embarked from Melbourne on February 25, 1915, on HMAT Runic, arriving in Egypt on April 4, 1915, and embarked for Gallipoli with the 8th Light Horse from Alexandria on HMAT Menominee on May 16, 1915. Harold served at Gallipoli (Lone Pine & The Nek) until September 1915.

His remaining war service was in Egypt, Palestine and the Sinai, where he was wounded twice. He took part in the 2nd Battle of Gaza, in Palestine, and was wounded on April 19, 1917. He became a machine gunman in August 1917 and took part in the action at El Burj in Palestine, being wounded on December 1, 1917.

During his war service, Harold suffered several bouts of sickness, such as dysentery and malaria, including a stint in hospital from August 25, 1917 to November 1917 13, at Abbassia. His father was advised in September 1917 that he was seriously ill.

Whenever he had the opportunity, Harold took part in various training courses. He was appointed Driver on January 5, 1916 and reverted to

Trooper on his own request on November 18, 1916. In May 1918 he attained the rank of Lance Corporal and on June 10, 1919 was appointed Corporal.

Like many soldiers of the time, Harold wrote letters home to friends and family, including his mother Edgarita, and his friend Bob. It was reported in the Kilmore Advertiser in November 1915 that Harold had written to his mother from Egypt. In this letter he explains that he has been in the hospital at Heliopolis “having been completely run down”. He details “four long hard months” at Gallipoli and the “awful loss of life” including the death of a friend not far from him during a charge (The Nek). Harold says, “Our regiment was very unlucky, only 60 being left out of 700, over 200 being sick.”

Another letter was written in January 1916 to his friend Bob in Glenaroua. He wrote “ Wasn’t it hard having to withdraw from Gallipoli after losing so many men but it was the best thing to do. We could never have driven the Turks back. We don’t know when we’ll be going into action again but one good thing - the next time we go into action we will be mounted.”

Harold returned to Australia on HMAT Malta on July 3, 1919, disembarking the ship on 7th August 1919, and was discharged on 6th October 1919.

Harold was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The Kilmore Free Press reported that Corporal HA McLean, Private LE McLean (Harold’s brother) and Private Jas E Smith were welcomed home at a function in the Glenaroua Hall on August 11, 1919, where each was presented with a cheque for £25, a large sum at that time. The Chairman paid particular tribute to Harold McLean for his long war service and his involvement at Lone Pine.

It was also reported that on the unveiling of the Roll of Honour at Glenaroua State School, containing the names of 24 former pupils, Corporal HA McLean gave a speech accepting the Roll and thanking residents for the “tangible proof of their appreciation of the services of the men at the front.”

Harold was listed on the Honour Roll of Glenaroua State School and the Honour Roll of Glenaroua Presbyterian Church.

His younger brother Lachlan, who served in the 4th Light Horse, also returned to Australia safely but a cousin, Richard Nicholls, the son of his mother's brother, was killed in France and is buried at Villers Brettoneux.

Harold McLean married Ellen Sawers on April 2, 1925 at her parents' home "Kyarra" in Thornton. They had 6 children and lived at the family farm in Glenaroua, "Lanner Moor", until they retired to live in Kilmore. Harold died in Kilmore on May 29, 1974 and is buried at Kilmore General Cemetery.

Contributed by the Kilmore Historical Society