

= Harry Murray =

Henry William " Harry " Murray , VC , CMG , DSO & Bar , DCM ( 1 December 1880 ? 7 January 1966 ) was an Australian recipient of the Victoria Cross , the highest decoration for gallantry " in the face of the enemy " that can be awarded to members of the British and Commonwealth armed forces . Decorated several times throughout his service in the First World War , Murray rose from the rank of private to lieutenant colonel in three and a half years . He is often described as the most highly decorated infantry soldier of the British Empire during the First World War .

Born in Tasmania , Murray worked as a farmer , courier and timber cutter before enlisting in September 1914 . Assigned to a machine gun crew , he served during the Gallipoli Campaign , where he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal before the withdrawal from the peninsula . He was later transferred along with the rest of his battalion to France for service on the Western Front , where he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order during the Battle of the Somme . In February 1917 , Murray commanded a company during the battalion 's attack on the German position of Stormy Trench . During the engagement , the company was able to capture the position and repulse three fierce counter @-@ attacks , with Murray often leading bayonet and bombing charges himself . For his actions during the battle , Murray was awarded the Victoria Cross . Soon after his Victoria Cross action , he was promoted to major and earned a Bar to his Distinguished Service Order during an attack on the Hindenburg Line near Bullecourt . Promoted to lieutenant colonel in early 1918 , he assumed command of the 4th Machine Gun Battalion , where he would remain until the end of the war .

Returning to Australia in 1920 , Murray eventually settled in Queensland , where he purchased the grazing farm that would be his home for the remainder of his life . Re @-@ enlisting for service in the Second World War , he was appointed as commanding officer of the 26th ( Militia ) Battalion . Taking his discharge in 1944 , Murray returned to his farm and died in 1966 at the age of 85 .

= = Early life = =

Murray was born at Clairville , near Evandale , Tasmania , on 1 December 1880 , the eighth of nine children of Edward Kennedy Murray , a farmer , and his wife Clarissa , née Littler . Descended from convicts on his father 's side , Murray was baptised on 23 November 1885 , and attended Evandale State School . When he was fourteen years of age , his parents withdrew him from school to work on the family farm . However , his mother continued his education , placing emphasis on English . The family later moved to Northcote , near St. Leonards , where Edward Murray died in 1904 . Harry Murray joined the Launceston Volunteer Artillery Corps in 1902 , serving until 1908 , when he migrated to Western Australia where his two older brothers had previously settled .

Murray initially worked on his brother 's wheat farm , before becoming a courier for a mining company at Kookynie , transporting gold and mail by either bicycle or on horseback . He travelled the same track on a fortnightly basis , gaining a reputation for being a crack shot with a .32 carbine that he carried . At the time of his enlistment in 1914 , Murray was working near Manjimup , in the south west of Western Australia , employing timber cutters for the railways .

= = First World War = =

= = = Enlistment and training = = =

Murray enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force ( AIF ) in Perth on 30 September 1914 . He declined the offer of a commission , and was posted as a private to A Company of the newly formed 16th Battalion , 4th Brigade . Appointed to one of the unit 's two machine gun crews , he was sent to Blackboy Hill Camp for training , where he became the gun No. 2 , whose job it was to feed ammunition belts through the gun ; Percy Black was No. 1 and the pair soon became firm friends .

On 21 November , the battalion entrained for Fremantle , boarding troopships headed for

Melbourne ; it was there that the four battalions combined to form the 4th Brigade under the command of Colonel John Monash . After completing their basic training in Victoria , the brigade left Port Melbourne aboard Troopship A40 , Ceramic on 26 December . After a brief stop at Albany , Western Australia , they arrived in Egypt in early February 1915 . The brigade marched from Alexandria to Heliopolis as part of the New Zealand and Australian Division of Major General Alexander Godley .

= = = Gallipoli = = =

The Allied commanders planned to defeat Turkey and force a supply route through to Russia via the Bosphorus and the Black Sea . As such they planned a land invasion on the Gallipoli Peninsula . On the afternoon of 25 April 1915 , Murray 's 16th Battalion landed at Ari Burnu , Gallipoli . Setting their machine gun on Pope 's Hill , Black and Murray fired their gun throughout the afternoon and into the night . The following day , the battalion 's two machine gun crews sniped at the Turkish soldiers on Russell 's Top , and Murray and his gunner continued fighting during the counterattack on 26 ? 27 April , despite being wounded .

Promoted to lance corporal on 12 May , Murray was evacuated to Egypt eighteen days later , due to a gunshot wound to his right knee . His knee soon stiffened and he was posted to a hospital ship set to return to Australia . Murray , however , had other ideas and made his way to the wharf at Alexandria where he boarded a transport bound for Gallipoli . Arriving at the peninsula on 3 July , both Murray and Black received the Distinguished Conduct Medal for their actions between 9 ? 31 May , during which time they tirelessly manned their machine gun , " inflict [ ing ] serious losses upon the enemy " . Murray was again wounded on 8 August when the machine gun section of the 4th Brigade covered the withdrawal after the attack on Hill 971 . On 13 August , he was promoted to sergeant , commissioned as a second lieutenant and transferred to the 13th Battalion .

Murray was again evacuated to Egypt on 26 September due to dysentery . After nearly six weeks in the 2nd Australian General Hospital at Ghezireh , he rejoined the 13th Battalion at Gallipoli on 7 December , before leaving for the last time in the Allied evacuation later that month .

Returning to Egypt , the AIF expanded and was reorganised ; the 13th Battalion was split and provided experienced soldiers for the 45th Battalion , while the 4th Brigade was combined with the 12th and 13th Brigades to form the 4th Australian Division . Murray was promoted to lieutenant on 20 January 1916 , and then to captain on 1 March .

= = = Western Front : June 1916 to April 1917 = = =

On 1 June 1916 , the 13th Battalion embarked at Alexandria for Marseilles , France , before being deployed to the Western Front . In mid @-@ June , the battalion moved into trenches at Bois Grenier near Armentières , and on 13 July they relocated to Bailleul , in time for the Battle of the Somme .

On 29 August , Murray commanded A Company ? which consisted of fewer than one hundred men ? in a successful attack that captured Mouquet Farm under heavy fire . His men repelled four German counterattacks before he ordered them to withdraw . He remained in command until the next morning , when he fainted from loss of blood from two wounds he had sustained during the action . Murray was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his service during the action , an event that was published in a supplement of the London Gazette dated 14 November 1916 . He was later evacuated to England aboard the hospital ship Asturias , and admitted to the 4th General Hospital , London , where he was to share a ward with Albert Jacka and Percy Black , who were recovering from wounds received at Pozières and Mouquet Farm respectively . After nearly six weeks of recuperation , he returned to the 13th Battalion in France on 19 October .

Following a period of patrols and trench raids , the 13th was relieved by the 5th Battalion on 6 December , and marched back to Ribemont , where Murray was granted leave to England . On 4 January 1917 , he was Mentioned in Despatches . The battalion returned to the front in February , relieving the 15th Battalion at Gueudecourt . On 4 February , the battalion 's commanding officer

received the order to attack Stormy Trench ; it was during this action that Murray would earn his Victoria Cross .

On the night of 4 ? 5 February 1917 , the 13th Battalion ? with Murray commanding A Company ? attacked the German position at Stormy Trench . Preceded by a heavy artillery barrage , A Company seized the right of the position after overcoming stiff resistance , consolidating their gains by setting up a makeshift barricade . The Germans counterattacked , prompting Murray to send an SOS signal to the artillery officer , calling for more support . Although repulsed , the Germans counterattacked twice more . On the third attack , Murray organised a twenty @-@ man grenade bombing party and led them in a charge against their attackers , pushing them back to their original start line . On another occasion when the company lost some ground , Murray rallied his men and retook it . Between midnight and 03 : 00 , the company maintained spasmodic bombing , repelling further assaults with the aid of artillery support . By 20 : 00 on 5 February , the 16th Battalion relieved Murray 's company , which had only 48 survivors from the 140 who had begun the attack .

The full citation for Murray 's Victoria Cross appeared in a supplement to the London Gazette on 10 March 1917 , reading :

War Office , 10th March , 1917

His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the Victoria Cross to the undermentioned Officer and Non @-@ Commissioned Officer : ?

Capt. Henry William Murray , D.S.O. , Aus. infy .

For most conspicuous bravery when in command of the right flank company in attack . He led his company to the assault with great skill and courage , and the position was quickly captured . Fighting of a very severe nature followed , and three heavy counter @-@ attacks were beaten back , these successes being due to Captain Murray 's wonderful work .

Throughout the night his company suffered heavy casualties through concentrated enemy shell fire , and on one occasion gave ground for a short way . This gallant officer rallied his command and saved the situation by sheer valour .

He made his presence felt throughout the line , encouraging his men , heading bombing parties , leading bayonet charges , and carrying wounded to places of safety .

His magnificent example inspired his men throughout .

In April 1917 , the battalion relocated to Bullecourt in preparation for an attack on the Hindenburg Line . On the night of 11 April , seven battalions of the 4th Australian Division assembled for the advance , which was launched at 04 : 30 . Murray 's company seized a section of German trench , but were quickly isolated . By 07 : 00 , ammunition was running low and casualties were high . Murray sent for artillery support , but conflicting messages meant that it was not provided , so the Australians were forced to withdraw . During the action , the 4th Division lost 2 @,@ 339 of the 3 @,@ 000 men that it had committed , with 1170 captured as prisoners of war . Among the dead was Percy Black , who had been killed while trying to find a gap in the barbwire surrounding the German trenches . Murray was awarded a Bar to his Distinguished Service Order for his efforts during the battle , and was promoted to temporary major . He was later informed by General Birdwood that had the attack at Bullecourt been successful , he would have instead been awarded a Bar to his Victoria Cross .

= = = Western Front : April 1917 to repatriation , March 1920 = = =

After Bullecourt , the 4th Brigade withdrew to Ribemont , where reinforcements brought it up to strength . During this period , Murray oversaw musketry training before being granted convalescent leave to London in May . While in the capital , he was decorated with his Victoria Cross and Distinguished Service Order by King George V in Hyde Park on 2 June 1917 . Promoted major on 12 July , he rejoined his battalion later in the month , and during the 4th Brigade 's advance to the Hindenburg Line over subsequent months , was involved in actions at Messines , Ploegstreert Wood , Menin Road , Polygon Wood , Broodseinde , Poelcappelle and Passchendaele . For his actions at Passchendaele , Murray garnered a mention in Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig 's dispatch of 7 November 1917 .

Following Passchendaele , the 4th Brigade spent three months in reserve . Murray became second in command of the 13th Battalion , frequently assuming temporary command of the unit while the commanding officer was absent . Granted leave to Paris from 12 January to 2 February 1918 , he was promoted to temporary lieutenant colonel on 15 March and assumed command of the 4th Machine Gun Battalion . Commanding the unit during the German Spring Offensive , Murray 's rank was confirmed on 24 May .

On 25 June , Murray attended a conference at 4th Divisional Headquarters to discuss a proposed attack on Hamel . Having submitted a plan for the use of machine guns in the battle , five extra sections were attached to Murray 's battalion . The battle commenced on 4 July , and over the period of two days , the 4th Machine Gun Battalion fired 373 @,@ 000 rounds of small arms ammunition , suffering 33 casualties . On 3 August , he attended another divisional conference regarding the planned attack near Amiens scheduled for 8 August . Lieutenant General John Monash 's instructions called for several of the 4th Machine Gun Battalion 's companies to be moved forward by Mark V tanks , accompanying different units during the battle . At the end of the three @-@ day action , German General Erich Ludendorff described the Allied success as " the black day of the German Army in this war " .

From 23 September to 3 October 1918 , Murray was seconded to the Headquarters of the United States II Corps as a liaison officer with the 27th Division . The 27th Division , along with the 30th Division , had been attached to Lieutenant General Monash 's Corps for the assault on the Bellicourt Tunnel of the Hindenburg Line . During his service with the Americans , Murray was recommended for the United States ' Distinguished Service Medal by the commander of the 27th , Major General John F. O 'Ryan . The Distinguished Service Medal is the highest non @-@ valorous military and civilian decoration of the United States military , and in General O 'Ryan 's recommendation he stated that Murray 's " ... knowledge , activity and fearlessness ... assisted materially in the control of the attacking forces " .

The battle alongside the Americans was Murray 's last of the war , as the Australians were placed in reserve in early October before the signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918 . On 3 January 1919 , Murray was awarded the French Croix de guerre for his service as commander of the 4th Machine Gun Battalion from 23 March to 24 April and 2 ? 7 August 1918 . On 30 May 1919 , he was awarded a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George for his command of the 4th Machine Gun Battalion , the recommendation of which particularly citing his success during attacks on the Hindenburg Line . Murray 's final honour came on 11 July 1919 , when he was Mentioned in Despatches for the fourth time , having received his third mention on 31 December 1918 .

From June to September 1919 , Murray ? along with fellow Australian Victoria Cross recipient William Donovan Joynt ? led parties of AIF members on a tour of the farming districts of Britain and Denmark to study agricultural methods under the education schemes . After touring through France and Belgium , he left England on 19 November 1919 aboard the Orient Line transport , Ormonde , along with Generals Birdwood and Monash . A month later , a large crowd celebrated the arrival of the two generals and Murray at Victoria Quay in Fremantle . Attempting to evade further fanfare , Murray quietly travelled to northern Tasmania and then to his sister 's house in Launceston . He was discharged from the AIF on 9 March 1920 .

= = Later life = =

After his discharge , Murray moved north , buying a grazing property in south @-@ eastern Queensland . On 13 October 1921 , he married estate agent Constance Sophia Cameron at Bollon . The marriage was an unhappy one , and the pair separated in 1925 when Murray went to New Zealand . On 11 November 1927 , with Constance Murray as petitioner , a decree nisi with costs against Henry Murray was granted on the grounds of desertion . Nine days later , at the Auckland Registrar 's Office , Murray married Ellen Perdon " Nell " Cameron ; Constance 's niece . The couple returned to Queensland , and in April 1928 Murray bought Glenlyon station , Richmond , a 74 @,@ 000 acre ( 29 @,@ 947 ha ) grazing property , where he lived for the rest of his life .

The Murrays had two children . Their son Douglas , born in 1930 , was named after Lieutenant

Colonel Douglas Grey Marks , the commanding officer of the 13th Battalion from 1917 to 1918 . In 1934 , Nell gave birth to their second child , a girl named Clementine . Between 1929 and 1939 , Murray wrote fifteen articles for Reveille , the magazine of the New South Wales branch of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia ( RSL ) , detailing several of his experiences during the First World War , and praising several of his comrades .

On 21 July 1939 , with the Second World War looming , Murray volunteered for military service and was appointed as commanding officer of the 26th ( Militia ) Battalion , 11th Brigade , based in Townsville ; he was mobilised for full @-@ time service on 21 October 1941 . Murray 's second @-@ in @-@ command of the unit during this time was Major Edgar Towner , who had additionally been decorated with the Victoria Cross in 1918 . The 26th became an Australian Imperial Force unit in 1942 , and in August Murray was removed from his post by General Sir Thomas Blamey , Commander in Chief Australian Military Forces , on the grounds of his advancing age . He was instead appointed to command the 23rd Queensland Regiment , Volunteer Defence Corps , which he led until his retirement from active duty on 8 February 1944 .

With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 , wool prices soared and Murray earned a large income from wool sales , allowing him to regularly travel across Australia . Taking a trip to Brisbane in 1954 , he met Queen Elizabeth II during her Royal Tour of Australia . Despite rarely attending Anzac Day services or functions for Victoria Cross recipients , Murray and his wife travelled to London in 1956 to commemorate the centenary of the Victoria Cross . Following the ceremonies , the Murrays spent five weeks on a motor tour of England and Scotland , before visiting Switzerland and France . However , Murray refused to revisit the battlefields .

On 6 January 1966 , Nell was driving the family car with Harry as a passenger ; they were going to the south coast of Queensland for a holiday . A tyre blew out and the car rolled on the Leichhardt Highway near Condamine . Murray was taken to Miles District Hospital with broken ribs . He had suffered heart trouble for some time , and the shock of the accident is believed to have caused his death the following day . Murray was interred at Mount Thompson Crematorium with full military honours after a funeral service at St. Andrew 's Presbyterian Church , Brisbane .

On 24 February 2006 in Evandale , Tasmania , Governor @-@ General Michael Jeffery unveiled a statue of Murray by sculptor Peter Corlett . This tribute was facilitated by a small group of volunteers who raised A \$ 85 @,@ 000 in two years . The Henry Murray ward at Hollywood Private Hospital has been named in his honour .