

= Ernest Albert Corey =

Ernest Albert Corey MM & Three Bars (20 December 1891 ? 25 August 1972) was a distinguished Australian soldier who served as a stretcher bearer during the First World War . He enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force on 13 January 1916 , and was allocated to the 55th Battalion , where he was initially posted to a grenade section before volunteering for stretcher bearing duties . In 1917 he was twice awarded the Military Medal for his devotion to duty in aiding wounded soldiers , and twice again in 1918 ; becoming the only person to be awarded the Military Medal four times .

Born in New South Wales , Corey was employed as a blacksmith 's striker upon leaving school . In January 1916 , he became a member of the " Men from Snowy River " recruiting march , enlisting in Goulburn . Returning to Australia after the Armistice , he was discharged on medical grounds in 1919 and was employed in a number of jobs before re @-@ enlisting in a militia battalion for service in the Second World War . He died in 1972 and was buried with full military honours in the Ex @-@ Servicemen 's section of Woden Cemetery , Australian Capital Territory .

= = Early life = =

Corey was born on 20 December 1891 in Numeralla , New South Wales , the eighth child of Thomas Corey and his wife Ellen , née Burke . He was educated at Thubergal Lake Public School , before leaving to become a blacksmith 's striker at Martin 's Smithy in Cooma . In January 1916 , Corey marched from Cooma to Goulburn as a member of the " Men from Snowy River " recruiting march , and enlisted on 13 January . Along with the majority of other members of the march , he was allotted to the 55th Battalion .

= = First World War = =

Following training at Goulburn camp , he embarked for overseas on 4 September aboard HMAT Port Sydney with the 4th Reinforcements for the 55th Battalion . Arriving in England , he spent three months with the 14th Training Battalion at Hurdcott Camp near Fovant in Wiltshire , before joining the 55th Battalion on 8 February 1917 at Montauban , France . Posted to the grenade section of " C " Company , he took part in the capture of Doignies in April .

On 15 May , Corey 's brigade was in action near Quéant . Suffering heavy losses , the Commanding Officer of the 55th called for volunteers to assist the stretcher bearers ; Corey was one of thirty men who volunteered . For seventeen hours , he assisted in carrying the wounded approximately 2 kilometres (1 @.@ 2 mi) back to the dressing station ; he was awarded the Military Medal for this action .

Following engagements at Bullecourt , the 5th Division ? of which the 55th Battalion was part ? spent four months in reserve , before moving into the Ypres sector in Belgium . Made a regular stretcher bearer , Corey was decorated with a bar to his Military Medal for his actions on 26 September during the Battle of Polygon Wood . While subject to heavy artillery and machine gun fire , he frequently ventured out into no @-@ man 's @-@ land to tend to the wounded .

During the winter of 1917 ? 1918 , the 55th Battalion was posted to the Messines sector , where Corey was granted leave to the United Kingdom in February 1918 . While on leave , he became ill and spent ninety days in hospital before rejoining his battalion in July . Shortly after , the Allies launched an offensive against the Germans in August along the Somme , where the 55th Battalion became involved in the capture of Péronne in September . It was here where Corey received the second bar to his Military Medal ; between 1 ? 2 September , while subject to heavy machine gun and artillery fire , he continually assisted the wounded with first aid .

Promoted to corporal on 21 September , he was placed in charge of the battalion 's stretcher bearers , whom he led during the battle north of Bullecourt on 30 September . Corey attended to the wounded while exposed to fire , and continued to direct other bearer parties throughout the action until wounded himself , receiving wounds in the right groin and thigh . It was during this engagement that he was awarded a third bar to his Military Medal . Evacuated to a casualty station , Corey was

operated on before receiving a transfer to a general hospital at Le Havre . Operated on again , he was sent to a hospital in Bristol , England . Repatriated to Australia on 30 April 1919 , he was medically discharged in June .

= = Later life = =

Returning to Cooma , Corey was employed as a contract rabbitier before moving to Canberra in 1922 , where he was employed as a camp caretaker . On 23 September 1924 , at St Gregory 's Catholic Church , Queanbeyan , he married Sarah Jane Fisher ; the pair later had a daughter , Patricia , before the marriage was dissolved in 1935 . Between 1927 and 1940 , Corey worked for the Department of the Interior as an office cleaner . He re @-@ enlisted for service in the Second World War with the Australian Military Forces on 23 September 1941 , and was posted to the 2nd Garrison Battalion for two years before he was medically discharged as a private on 11 October 1943 .

He then went through a series of jobs , including employment as a caretaker , a cook for a departmental survey party and as a leading hand at the Canberra incinerator . By 1951 he was almost crippled with osteoarthritis , and soon after was admitted to the Queanbeyan Private Nursing Home , where he died on 25 August 1972 ; he was buried with full military honours in the Ex @-@ Servicemen 's section of Woden Cemetery .

His medals are displayed in the Hall of Valour at the Australian War Memorial , and replicas of his medals and copies of the citations for the Military Medal and three bars can be viewed in the Canberra Services Club , of which he was a member for many years .

= = Memorial = =

Following several donations by the people of Cooma and the Monaro District , a Memorial Plaque to Corey was erected in Centennial Park , Cooma in 1979 . In 1995 , the plaque was moved to the Cooma Memorial and the committee involved with the relocation decided to erect a diorama based on a painting in the Australian War Memorial depicting stretcher bearers bringing in wounded soldiers under heavy shell fire at Mont St Quentin during the First World War . A local artist and sculptor , Chris Graham , was commissioned to undertake the project which was constructed from steel and concrete . It was erected in the Cooma War Memorial area on 23 April 1996 .

The inscription on the memorial reads :