

## **Private Thomas Simmonds Harvey<sup>©</sup>**

**Regimental number: 5/271**

**2nd Battalion, Canterbury Regiment, New Zealand Expeditionary Force**

**born: probably 24 September 1896–died: 27 May 1916**

Private Thomas Simmonds Harvey was born in 1896<sup>1</sup> in Eskdale, New Zealand.<sup>2</sup> His military service file indicates that he was born on 24 September 1894, which would have made him 20 when he enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in February 1915.<sup>3</sup> However, his birth registration was in 1896 and he had an older brother, John William Douglas, born on 21 March 1894. A man had to be 20 years old to enlist<sup>4</sup> so, without exaggerating his age, Thomas could not have enlisted.

When he enlisted on 15 February 1915, he was a shepherd, working for James Nichol on the Rukomoana Station in Te Pohue, 40 kilometres northwest of Napier, New Zealand. He was 5' 10½" tall and had a fresh complexion, blue eyes and brown hair.

He initially joined the Army Service Corps (ASC) and, on 15 September 1915, he was a driver with the 4th Company of the ASC. The ASC was the supply and transport branch of the army, providing food, equipment and ammunition, and helping evacuate the wounded.<sup>5</sup> The 4th Company was attached to the New Zealand and Australian Divisional Train and fought in Gallipoli from April 1915 to March 1916. However, Thomas did not go overseas until later—possibly as late as January 1916, when he transferred to the Canterbury Mounted Rifle (CMF) Regiment in Zeitoun, in what is now Gaza.

The CMF Regiment was formed in August 1914 and, like the ASC, had served in Gallipoli, but, by early 1916, the regiment was stationed in Egypt.<sup>6</sup> In late January, the CMF Regiment marched from Zeitoun to the Suez Canal: a march that took about a week. Once settled in camp, the troops began training. "Rifle shooting, machine gun training, tactical exercises, boxing matches, swimming in the Canal, filled up the day, and the hardships and strain of Gallipoli faded away into the dim past."<sup>7</sup> On 5 March, Thomas' battalion received orders to move to Ferry Post—a camp and stopping point for Australian troops moving to and from the Front<sup>8</sup>—to participate in the defence of the Suez Canal.

About this time, Thomas developed cystitis and was hospitalized at the Pont de Koubbeh in Cairo. On 4 March, his condition was described as "improving." He was discharged on 13 March.

During this period the New Zealand Division was being formed at Moascar, Egypt, in preparation for its move to France, and a new infantry brigade was formed. Many men were transferred from the CMF Regiment and Thomas was one of these. On 20 March—the day before His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales visited the troops<sup>9</sup>—Thomas transferred to the 2nd Battalion of the Canterbury Regiment.

On 7 April 1916, the 2nd Battalion entrained at Ismailia. A few days later, it set sail on three ships for Marseilles, arriving 14–16 April. The battalion moved north to Steenbecque, three miles southwest of Hazebrouck, near the French–Belgian border. On 1 May, the battalion marched to billets at Neuf Berquin, where it continued its training. From there, on 14 May, it moved to billets in Armentières and then the next day it moved to the front line to relieve the 9th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers.



**2nd Division Canterbury Infantry Regiment, 26 May 1916**

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About this time, Thomas was charged with “[w]hilst on Active Service, neglect of gov property in losing 1 pr goggles” and was required to pay the (as yet undetermined) replacement cost.

Many New Zealand soldiers had never been under fire and had not experienced trench warfare. Even those who had served in Gallipoli were not used to trenches on the very flat land of the Plain of Flanders that were filled with water almost all year long. In addition, their trenches had not been well-maintained for a long time—they had to be reinforced and the wire in front of the trenches had to be repaired.<sup>10</sup>

The 2nd Battalion remained in the trenches until relieved on 23/24 May by the New Zealand Rifle Brigade. The day the battalion was relieved Thomas was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with pneumonia, where he died three days later.<sup>11</sup> He was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot I, Row A, Grave 28).<sup>12</sup> Bailleul was occupied in October 1914 and became an important hospital centre for not just No. 1 CCCS but also No. 1 Australian and five British Army casualty clearing stations.<sup>13</sup>

The CCCS chaplain sent a message to his father, John Thomas Harvey, in Petane, Napier, Hawkes Bay to notify the family of the death of their son and brother.<sup>14</sup> Thomas’ mother was the former Annie Isobel Elliott and she had married Thomas’ father in 1884 in New Zealand.<sup>15</sup> His father was probably born in Cornwall, England, in 1862<sup>16</sup> and came to New Zealand with his parents—both of whom died in New Zealand.<sup>17</sup>

Thomas had at least eight siblings:

- Albert James Elliott (born in 1887),<sup>18</sup>

- Bertha Elizabeth Winifred (born in 1890),<sup>19</sup>
- Linian Isabella Philliss (born in 1891, but died at the age of 15 in 1906),<sup>20</sup>
- John William Douglas (born on 21 March 1894),<sup>21</sup>
- Ethel Marjory Ann (born in 1899),<sup>22</sup>
- Mabel Frances (born in 1901),<sup>23</sup>
- Frank Edmund Hilton (born on 11 January 1906)<sup>24</sup> and
- Phyllis Emily Margaret (born in 1907)<sup>25</sup>

Thomas' brother John also served in the Great War. He enlisted nine months after the death of his brother Thomas.<sup>26</sup> At the time he was an assistant manager for a motor company in Napier. At his medical examination in Napier in February 1917, he was deemed to be fit for service, although the report noted convergent strabismus and poor vision in his left eye. He embarked in Wellington, New Zealand, in July 1917 and arrived in Plymouth, England, two months later. From there he was posted to the New Zealand Rifle Brigade and went to the Brocton Military Training Camp. Just two months later, a medical board determined that he was permanently unfit for service because of insufficient vision in his left eye. In addition to the convergent strabismus that he had had since childhood, he had suffered a skull fracture and a cerebral concussion in 1914 when a horse fell on him. In March 1918, he set sail to return to New Zealand and was discharged in June 1918. He had been in the military for 15 months but saw no action. He died in New Zealand in 1954.<sup>27</sup>

There is no evidence that Thomas' older brother Albert served in the Great War. He died in 1959.<sup>28</sup>

Thomas' father died in 1932<sup>29</sup> and his mother in 1944.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>; accessed 31 January 2019), entry for Thomas Simmonds Harvey, Registration number: 1896/8643

<sup>2</sup> "New Zealand army service records," *DigitalNZ* (<http://www.digitalnz.org/>; accessed 27 January 2019), entry for Thomas Simmonds Harvey

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Unless otherwise stated, all information about Thomas' military service comes from this source.

<sup>4</sup> "Recruiting and conscription," *New Zealand History* (<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/war/recruiting-and-conscription>; accessed 6 February 2019)

<sup>5</sup> "Supply and Administrative Units," *New Zealand History* (<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/war/recruiting-and-conscription>; accessed 4 February 2019)

<sup>6</sup> "The History of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles 1914–1919," *Victoria University of Wellington* (<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH1CMRi.html>; accessed 4 February 2019), pp. 83–86. Unless otherwise noted, all other information about this military unit comes from this source.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 84

<sup>8</sup> "Buildings and port at Ferry Post on the Suez Canal, Egypt. Ferry Post was a camp and stopping . . .," *Australian War Memorial* (<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P11220.002/>; accessed 27 February 2019)

<sup>9</sup> "The History of the Canterbury Regiment, N.Z.E.F. 1914–1919," *Victoria University of Wellington* (<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH1-Cant.html>; accessed 4 February 2019). Unless otherwise noted, all other information about this military unit comes from this source.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85–86

<sup>11</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca); accessed 1 March 2019), entry for Harvey, T. S.

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- <sup>12</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 3 December 2019), entry for Harvey, Thomas Simmonds, Service No: 5/271
- <sup>13</sup> "Bailleul Community Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 17 January 2017)
- <sup>14</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 1 March 2019), entry for Harvey, T. S.
- <sup>15</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for Annie Isabella Elliott, Registration number: 1884/365
- <sup>16</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 January 2019), entry for John Thomas Harvey, Registration district: Redruth, Inferred county: Cornwall, Volume: 5c
- <sup>17</sup> "New Zealand, Cemetery Records, 1800-2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 30 January 2019), entry for Thomas Harvey
- <sup>18</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for Albert James Elliott Harvey, Registration number: 1887/13554
- <sup>19</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for Bertha Elizabeth Winifred Harvey, Registration number: 1890/2693
- <sup>20</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for Linian Isabella Phillis Harvey, Registration number: 1891/14560; "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for Linian Isabella Phillis Harvey, Registration number: 1901/7472
- <sup>21</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for John William Douglas Harvey, Registration number: 1894/2761
- <sup>22</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for Ethel Marjory Ann Harvey, Registration number: 1899/15570
- <sup>23</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for Mabel Frances Harvey, Registration number: 1901/7472
- <sup>24</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for Frank Edmund Hilton Harvey, Registration number: 1989/32730
- <sup>25</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for Phyllis Emily Margaret Harvey, Registration number: 1907/20926
- <sup>26</sup> "New Zealand army service records," *DigitalNZ* (<http://www.digitalnz.org/>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for John William Douglas Harvey. Unless otherwise noted, all information about John's military career comes from this source.
- <sup>27</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for John William Harvey, Registration number: 1951/30729
- <sup>28</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for Albert James Elliott Harvey, Registration number: 1959/29569

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<sup>29</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 30 January 2019), entry for John Thomas Harvey, Registration number: 1932/5132

<sup>30</sup> "Births, Deaths & Marriages Historical Records," *Births, Deaths & Marriages Online* (<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home>: accessed 31 January 2019), entry for Annie Isabelle Harvey, Registration number: 1944/16143