

Harding, Vernon Alfred (1877 AIF)



Image 1 © Robyn AKMANS family collection 2016
Circa 1916

Name	Harding, Vernon Alfred Sapper AIF
Service Number	1877
Date of Birth	3rd September 1895
Died	2nd November 1967
Place of Birth	Port Elliot SA
Resident	Victor Harbor SA
Cemetery	Victor Harbor Cemetery

Vernon Alfred Harding, the fourth child of Walter James Harding and Emily Harding (nee Parsons), was born in Port Elliot on 3 September 1895. Using his farm labouring experience, he displayed strength and skill in sheaf tossing at Port Elliot's 1915 annual sports. He enlisted in the AIF in Adelaide on 13 March 1916 and was posted to the 2nd Reinforcements Unit of the 5th Pioneer Battalion, despite having nearly three years of experience with the Militia Light Horse.

Less than a month later, after minimal training, his party of reinforcements sailed on 11 April 1916 from Adelaide, aboard HMAT Aeneas, reaching Egypt on 15 May. Six days later he was on his way to France, landing at Marseilles on 29 May.

Vernon then remained at the Australian Base Depot at Etaples for three months before joining the 5th Pioneer Battalion on 28 August 1916. The Battalion, located near Fauquissart and Cordonnrie in northern France, was busy digging drainage channels and burying signal cables to protect them from shell-fire.

After spending most of December 1916 in hospital recovering from bronchitis, Vernon was admitted to hospital again on 18 January 1917, with foot abrasions and did not return to duty until 7 March. During September 1917, the Battalion was near Dickebush in Flanders, giving valuable support to the Australian Infantry Divisions during the Battle of Menin Road. Historian Charles Bean wrote "The most vital part of the effort at this stage, as before and after every stage of this battle, was the intense work put in by pioneers, engineers, tunnellers, and transport drivers in extending the plank roads and railways".

The Battalion was building a track and a road near the village of Hooge, Belgium, when Vernon was wounded in his right ear on 24 September. After initial treatment he was evacuated to the American 16th General Hospital at Le Treport in France. Convalescence followed, with Vernon

rejoining the Battalion on 20 November 1917. His name was among the list of wounded in the 344th Casualty List published in Australian newspapers around 24 October.

Thereafter, the Battalion continued their important work of building and maintaining roads and tramways, digging communication trenches and light engineering tasks. One notable achievement in April 1918 was burying 4.1 km of signal cable to one metre deep in a single day.

Vernon was granted leave in England from 7 to 23 October 1918 but, soon after returning, was sent to hospital and did not rejoin his Battalion until 17 December after the Armistice.

Men were returned to Australia as quickly as shipping permitted, with Vernon travelling to England on 16 April 1919 before sailing for home on the Transport Beltana on 2 June.

Vernon was discharged from the Australian Imperial Force at Adelaide on 29 August 1919. Later he received the British War Medal and Victory Medal.

During the early 1920s he played both cricket and football for Port Elliot, becoming captain of both teams. On 3 September 1923 he married Marguerite Jessie Abbot at Middleton and there were two children of the marriage. Vernon Alfred Harding died in Adelaide on 2 November 1967; he and his wife are interred in the Victor Harbor Cemetery.

His older brother, Leslie Elliot Harding, enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force on 3 September 1914 and was later commissioned and awarded a Military Cross while serving with the 50th Infantry Battalion in France.

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Compiled by the Victor Harbor RSL History Research Team, February 2016. Updated by T. Young 30/07/2025

Appendix



Image 2 © Robyn AKMANS family collection 2016
Vernon shown in militia uniform riding his horse in Port Elliot



Image 3 © Robyn AKMANS family collection 2016
Photograph of Vernon Harding's grave in the Victor Harbor Cemetery 5 February 2012.

A.I.F. WITH 140B-500/00-5-15—O. & G. Forms B. 103/1.

Army Form B1.

Casualty Form—Active Service.

Army Form B. 103.

Service a F Regiment or Corps 25 Pioneers 2 1877

Instrument No. 1877 Rank Pte Name Harding J.J.

Enlisted (a) 13/3/16 Terms of Service (a) Service reckons from (a) 13/3/16

Date of promotion to present rank Date of appointment to lance rank Numerical position on roll of N.C.O.s

Extended Re-engaged Qualification (b)

Report	Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, commissons, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents.
1	Nom Roll Disembarked ex AENEAS	SUEZ	15.5.16 AP 8037.	
2	Emb'd. H.T. Ivernia to ex 21/6/16 A.C.1793.			
3	Join B.E.F. Alexandria			
4	Disemb'd. Marseilles			
5	ex H.T. "Ivernia". France. 29/5/16 AK 218/27 102655			
6	8/16 5 A.O.S. To active service Staples 26/8/16 B23 40 218/27 102655			
7	16.8.16 CO Bn Taken on Strength 5th Pion. Bn. In the Field 25.8.16 B23 40 218/27 102655			
8	16.12.16 Lieft to Hospital		8.12.16 B23 40 218/27 102655	
9	9-12-16 5 F.Amb Bronchitis admitted and transferred to CRS In the Field 8-12-16 AK 647/17			
10	16.12.16 A.C. R.S Admitted Bronchitis		8.12.16 AK 778/1	
11	16.12.16 Disch to Hospital		22.12.16 AK 778/3	

In the case of a man who has re-engaged for, or enlisted into Section D, Army Reserve, particulars of such re-engagement or enlistment will be entered.

(b) I.e., Signaller, Shoeing Smith, etc., etc., also special qualifications in technical Corps duties.

I.P.T.O.

NAA: B2455:HARDING V.A.

Image 4 © naa.gov.au 2025
Excerpt of Casualty and Service Record

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Report		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, dismissals, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in such case.	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents.
Date	From whom received				
13 19-1-17	5 Gun H	Abrasions feet admitted	Rouen	18-1-17	AK 773/19
14 20-1-17	Co 13n	Evac to Hospital in the Field	"	18-1-17	E 2/3 Do 4/163
15 20-1-17	58 CCS	adult Abras Feet Trans to Amb Train	"	18-1-17 17-1-17	AK 773/22
16 29-1-17	2 Gun Lys	admitted	Rouen	29-1-17	AK 903/6
17 30-1-17	5 Gun H	disch to Conv Depot	"	29-1-17	AK 903/10
18 22-2-17	Co 52 Ptn	Rejoining from Host	Nice	23-2-16	37/584/6 D 9/278
19 24-2-17	5 ADBD	Jaibed Depot ex Hospital	Staples	22-2-17	E 58/8 Do 9/1251
20 20-3-17	2 Gun D	Discharge to Base Dep Class A.	Rouen	20-3-17	AK 103/3
21 10-3-17	Co Bn	Joined Br 2nd Hospital base	Field	10-3-17	80 2/1759 E 7/102
22 6 MAR 1917	Co. B ADBD	Marched out to Unit	Staples	6 MAR 1917	7/10
23 10-3-17	70-5th B	Rejoined Unit From Hospital Field G	"	7-3-17	E 2/10-80 2/1759
24 20-8-17	do	Wounded in action	"	20-8-17	AT 18115 (B23 284-17 E 114) D 24/277
25 25-8-17	16. 7. Amb adu gsw R Gun 168 7/28	"	"	25-8-17	AK 103/1

National Archives of Australia

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Excerpt of Casualty and Service Record

Army Form B. 103.

Casualty Form—Active Service. Regimental Number 1877

Rank Pte Regiment or Corps 3d Honour Art. Christian Name Fa

Religion

Enlisted (a) Terms of Service (a) Service reckons from (a)

Date of promotion to present rank

Date of appointment to lance rank

Extended { Re-engaged { Qualification (b) or Corps Trade and Rate

Signature of Officer.

Report		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, &c., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in such case.	Place of Casualty	Date of Casualty	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents.
Date	From whom received				
22 20-9-17	17 CC Str.	Adm 1st R Gun Embarked to Amb 7/6	Field	20-9-17	AK 1819/37
23 20-9-17	16 USA Gun	Adm 1st R Gun	by Report	20-9-17	AK 103/10
24 2-10-17	16 USA Gun	1st R Gun to 3 Gun D	by Report	2-10-17	AK 103/10
25 2-10-17	3 Gun D	do adm	do	2-10-17	185
26 3-10-17	do	do to 1st Depot	do	3-10-17	185
27 4-10-17	5 ADBD	In poor hosp	Stavre	4-10-17	AK 103/2
28 15-11-17	do	M. O to unit	"	15-11-17	AK 103/2
29 15-11-17	5 Gun R	Rejoined from Wnoy	Field	20-11-17	E 7/102
	B 3/3	(Pto)			80 2/1759 D 24/277
		WITH UNIT	55/5118/13		
			17-7-1918		

(a) In the case of a man who has re-engaged for, or enlisted into Section D, Army Reserve, particulars of such re-engagement or enlistment will be entered.
(b) Signaller, Shoeing-Smith, etc.

(M101) WADL/M76s 1000m 3/710 823 G & S Form B.103/4 E.354. [P.T.O.]

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Report		Record of promotion, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 21a, Army Form A. 26, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.		
Date	From whom received	Place of Casualty	Date of Casualty	Remarks
29/10/18 30	5 Dr Pv	Proc on Leave, U.K.	29/10/18	From Army Form B. 21a, Army Form A. 26, or in other official documents.
31		From 100th Battalion, Lancs	29/10/18	
23/11/18 32	C Dr Pv	Re 2d Nopel Shch	29/10/18	
29/11/18 31	87th Batt. Lancs	Convochoca	29/10/18	
33		26 gen A.G.H.	29/10/18	
29/10/18 34	37th A.G.H. (2)	Adm D.G.	29/10/18	N 18/3356/18 80 1918 (1918)
29/10/18 35	"	29/10/18 to 39th Gen. Adm	29/10/18	do
29/10/18 36	39th Gen. Adm	Adm N.Y.D.	29/10/18	N 18/3356/18
5/12/18	- do	Re Deck to Base	5/12/18	N 18/18
37		Depot	5/12/18	
6/12/18 38	1. I. B. D.	Re Major 37th Gen. 248	5/12/18	18/1949
19/12/18 39	do	Re Nort to West	19/12/18	18/1949
20/12/18 40	C Drath	Re Ryman Unit	19/12/18	18/1949
12/4/19 41		W/O for R.T. AUSTRALIA	12/4/19	18/1949
17/4/19 42	A.G.P.I.	W/OUT to England	17/4/19	18/1949
17/4/19 43	44 cap.	1/1N ex France	17/4/19	18/1949
2/5/19	- C. O. Adm	Re 6th Div to Paris	2/5/19	18/1949
2/6/19		Arrived to Paris	2/6/19	18/1949
2/6/19	Emb. Hall	Re "Emb. Bellana"	2/6/19	18/1949
45	DD24 QTS	RETURN TO AUSTRALIA		
		Per "Bellana"		
		England		

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Excerpt of Casualty and Service Record

