

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 Cordonrie 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 Dickebusch 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 Hooze, 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.

ALF 100-500,000-4-15-C & G. Form B. 103/1. Army Form B. 103.

Casualty Form - Active Service.

Service a
F. Regiment or Corps 25 Pioneer Name Harding 2 1877

Unit No. 1877 Rank Pte

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.Os. _____

(Extended) _____ Re-engaged _____ Qualification (b) _____

Report	Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The report to be quoted in each case.	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents.
1	Dem Roll Disembarked ex AENEAS	SUEZ	16.5.16.	AP 8037.
2	Emb.R-11 Embd. N.T. Ivernia to ex	Alexandria	21/3/16.	A.C.1793.
3	Disemb. N.T. Ivernia to ex	France.	29/3/16.	AK 1958
4	76.8.16 5 A.O.B.O. To active service	Staples	24.8.16	AK 243/27 AK 3655 B-13
5	76.8.16 CO Bn Taken on strength 5th Pioneer Bn.	In the Field	25-8-16	B-13 AK 3802 D.O. 24/3/16
6	16.12.16 " LicA to Hospital	"	8-12-16	B-13 AK 12869 D.O. 24/3/16
7	9-12-16 5 F.Amb Bronchitis admitted and transferred to CRS	In the Field	8-12-16	AK 647/17
8	16.12.16 A.C.R.S Admitted Bronchitis	"	8-12-16	AK 773/1
9	23-12-16 " Disch to duty	"	22-12-16	AK 773/3

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.

P.T.O.

National Archives of Australia 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, casualties, 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.
Date	From whom received				
13 19-1-17	5 Cent	Admissions Post admt	Rouen	18-1-17	AK773/19
14 20-1-17	Co Bn	Left to Hospital in the field		15-1-17	E2/3 Do 4/163
20-1-17	38 CCS	admt. Adms Post		15-1-17	AK773/22
		Trans to Amb Train		17-1-17	
15 29-1-17	2 Condep	admitted	Rouen	29-1-17	AK903/6
14 30-1-17	5 Cent	disch to Con depot		29-1-17	AK903/10
10 22-2-17	Co 5 R	Returned from Hosp	Field	23-12-16	137/554/6 Do 9/1078
17 24-2-17	5 ADDB	Joined Depot ex Hospital	Staples	22-2-17	E 58/8 Do 9/1252
16 20-2-17	2 Con D	Discharged to Base Rep Class A.	Rouen	20-2-17	AK 103/3
10 13-3-17	Co Bn	Joined Bn's Hospital base	Field	11-3-17	802/1159 E 7/10
15 6 MAR 1917	Co 5 ADDB	Marched out to Unit	Staples	6 MAR 1917	5/10
19 13-3-17	Co 5 R	Rejoined Unit From Hospital	Field	7-3-17	E 2/10 Do 7/1159
20 25-9-17	do	Wounded in action		20-9-17	BT 57/1 (1313, 28-9-17, 21/10) Do 4/1007 V. 4/10
21 25-9-17	6.7. Amb adn	950 R Ean top to 7 CCS		15-9-17	AK 114/1

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Excerpt of Casualty and Service Record

Army Form B. 103. **Casualty Form - Active Service.** Regimental Number 1877

Rank Pte Surname Harding Christian Name T. A.

Religion _____ Age on Enlistment _____ years _____ months.

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, 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 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 CCS	admt. 1st R Ean	Embarked	20-9-17	AK 114/37
23 20-9-17	16 CCS	admt. 1st R Ean	Disembarked	25-9-17	AK 114/10
24 2-10-17	16 CCS	admt. 1st R Ean	Le Depot	2-10-17	AK 114/10
25 2-10-17	16 CCS	admt. 1st R Ean	Le Depot	2-10-17	AK 114/10
26 13-10-17	do	admt. 1st R Ean	do	13-10-17	1/15
27 14-10-17	5 ADDB	Improm Hosp	Le Depot	14-10-17	AV 1943
28 15-11-17	do	no to unit		15-11-17	44/1262
29 15-11-17	5 ADDB	Returned from Hosp	Field	20-11-17	E 7/10

177 1918

(b) 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.
(c) Signaller, Signalling-Squad, etc.

(M) 911 W/103/1000 2/16 433 G & S Form B. 103/4. E. 354. [P.T.O.]

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Report		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 113, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place of Casualty	Date of Casualty	Remarks Taken from Army Form B. 113, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents.
Date	From whom received				
24/11/20	S. Duroy	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	7.10.11	6213
31		Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	23.10.11	6213
23.11.11	C. D. R.	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	27.10.11	6213
27/11/11	Bl. Amb.	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	27/11/11	6213
33		Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	27/11/11	6213
27.10.11	3rd A.G. Co.	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	27.10.11	6213
28.10.11	3rd A.G. Co.	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	28.10.11	6213
29.10.11	3rd A.G. Co.	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	29.10.11	6213
3.12.11	do	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	3.12.11	6213
37		Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	37	6213
6.12.11	S. B. D.	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	6.12.11	6213
13.12.11	do	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	13.12.11	6213
20.12.11	do	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	20.12.11	6213
24.12.11	do	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	24.12.11	6213
42		Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	42	6213
17.4.19	A.G. F.I.	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	17.4.19	6213
2.5.19	C. D. R.	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	2.5.19	6213
2/6/19	Emb. Roll	Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	2/6/19	6213
45		Prod on leave, U.K.	24/11/20	45	6213

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Excerpt of Casualty and Service Record

