

LEWIS, Harris Vivian (SX13816 AIF)



Image 1 © Anne BASHAM collection 2014
Studio portrait

Name	LEWIS, Harris Vivian Trooper AIF
Service Number	SX13816
Date of Birth	9th May 1904
Died	17th May 1990
Place of Birth	Brighton SA
Resident	Inman Valley SA
Cemetery	Not Listed

Harris (Viv) Vivian Lewis was born at Brighton on 9 May 1904, the eldest of three children to Harris Morgan Lewis and Evelyn Annie Lewis (nee Riddle). He was educated at Brighton Primary and undertook his secondary schooling at what was Methodist (Ladies) College, which was originally co-ed. After leaving school, he worked as a farm labourer; on 5 September 1927, he married Alice Muriel Braybrook.

The family were living at Inman Valley when Viv enlisted in the 2nd AIF on 24 July 1941, age 37. On the 8 December 1941, Viv began his training as driver mechanic at 21 Rifles, a part of 6 Division Cavalry Regiment in Puckapunyal Victoria. By the 11 February of 1942 Viv was promoted to acting Corporal, however by March of 1942 he was promoted again, this time as an acting Sergeant. From Puckapunyal he was detached to Watsonia and conducted further training. By July 1942 Viv had relocated back to Puckapunyal, then back to Watsonia, and in early August he found himself with the 9th Division and in Bendigo.

After that campaign the Regiment was re-equipped, receiving Crusader and Stuart tanks to replace the Vickers and captured French tanks that they had previously been using. This had been done as a response to the increased threat posed by German armour in the theatre. In July 1942, the 9th Division was sent to help rectify the situation at El Alamein, where German and Italian troops were attacking. The 9th Division Cavalry Regiment was involved in the defence of the Alamein line during this phase, defending the divisional headquarters and supporting the defending infantry units in small-scale raids

Viv and part of the 9th Division set sail to support the troops who were already fighting in the Middle East. He sailed to the Middle East on the 23rd August 1942, and disembarked on the 8th of October.

As Viv disembarked and underwent intensive, the 2/9th with other allied forces launched an offensive. The Regiment initially played only a minor part but later, after breakout had been achieved, the regiment came into its own and led the Allied advance along the coastal plain, pursuing the withdrawing German and Italian forces and advancing over 20 miles (32 km) on 3 November. Casualties during the Regiment's involvement in the Middle East amounted to six killed in action, six died of wounds and one died of other causes. In early 1943, the Regiment returned to Australia to assist in the defence of the homeland. Viv found himself in Sydney on the 27 February 1943. After spending months in South Australia, Viv was sent to Queensland and by May 1st 1945, he was on his way to Borneo from Townsville.

At this time the Australian Army was undergoing a period of restructuring as its strategic focus shifted towards concentrating upon fighting the war against the Japanese in the Pacific. As a part of this there was no need for divisional cavalry regiments; however, it was decided that the independent companies should be grouped together under a regimental structure, and in response the divisional cavalry regiments were broken up and their headquarters elements were used to administer the commando squadrons. Three such units were formed at this time, with the 9th Division Cavalry Regiment adopting the title of the "2/9th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment" in January 1944. The subordinate squadrons that were attached to it were the 2/4th, 2/11th and 2/12th Commando Squadrons. Following this the regiment continued to undertake training on the Atherton Tablelands in preparation for operations in the Southwest Pacific. In the end, however, it was over a year before the regiment saw action again, taking part in the landings at Tarakan, and in northern Borneo in mid-1945 in one of the final campaigns of the war.

During this campaign, the regiment's three squadrons were detached separately. The 2/4th was attached to the 26th Brigade, and saw heavy fighting on Tarakan, suffering a considerable number of casualties.

The 2/11th was attached to the 24th Brigade and landed on Labuan Island off the northwest coast of Borneo. After clearing the island, they were transferred to the mainland and helped clear the Klias Peninsula. The 2/12th, however, was initially held back in divisional reserve, and as such did not take part in the main fighting on Labuan Island. As the Japanese resistance on the island was coming to an end and the focus of Australian operations moved towards the mainland of Borneo, the squadron was finally committed to operations when it was given the task of carrying out mopping up operations on the island.

At war's end, the Regiment remained on Borneo until late December 1945. Viv was repatriated to Australia and demobilised on 9 January 1946. He farmed after the war and was president of the Victor Harbor RSL in 1957-1958.

Harris Vivian Lewis died on 17 May 1990, age 86.

References:

2/9 Cavalry Commando Squadron., 2025., awm.gov.au. [accessed 01/08/2025]
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/U54326>

Harris Vivian LEWIS., 2025., vwma.org.au. [accessed 01/08/2025]
<https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/595623>

Terrace, V., 2025., *LEWIS Harris Vivian.*, naa.gov.au.[accessed 01/08/2025]
<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=6401843>

Compiled by the Victor Harbor RSL History Research Team, February 2014. Updated by T.Young & M.Young 01/08/2025

Appendix



Image 2 © Anne BASHAM collection 2014
Christmas card 1942 sent by Lewis to his family.



Image 2 © naa.gov.au

CARO AGS/21/NVM
////// MXY 130
Ext 587
SX13816
04161

Central Army Records Office,
Albert Park Barracks,
X 3.

Dear Sir,

Your letter dated the 25th March, 1953, regarding your application for campaign awards, is acknowledged.

It is advised that your military service during the 1939/45 War qualified you for the following awards:-

Pacific	Star
Defence	Medal
War	Medal
Australia Service Medal	

These awards have been forwarded to the engravers for inscription and redirection to you as soon as possible.

A condition of the award of the 1939/45 Star is that you must have had six months operational service in specified areas which, in the Middle East, was West of Suez Canal. Service in Palestine is excluded and is qualifying service towards the award of the Defence Medal.

The Africa Star is awarded for entry into operational service on the posted strength of a unit performing an operational function in the qualifying area, which, as for the 1939/45 Star, was West of Suez Canal.

Examination of your records does not reveal sufficient service in the qualifying area to entitle you to either the 1939/45 Star or the Africa Star, the issue of which, it is regretted cannot be approved.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. H.V. Lewis,
Box 57,
VICTOR HARBOR.

S.A.
P.A.D.
Colonel,
OIC Central Army Records Office.

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Image 3 © naa.gov.au
Medals awarded to Harris V Lewis

Army No. SX 13316

Unit ²¹ Rapti & ²⁶ Dev bari

SALES TAXES

(Block Capitals)

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Southern Command (A.M.D.) Date of Enlistment		24th July, 1942 Date of Enlistment		Marital Condition		Married	
Place		WAYVILLE		Next of Kin		Alicia Mariel Lewis.	
Date of Birth		9/5/1904		Address of Next of Kin		40 Lynton Av. MILLSWOOD, S.A.	
Place of Birth		BRIGHTON S.A.		Relationship		Wife.	
Trade or Occupation		Grazier					
Religion		Methodist					
Medical Classification—Class I Chs. ft. (On Reenlistment)				Identification—Colour of Hair Brown Eyes Gray			
REPORT				Distinctive Marks Outer side Rt thigh large scar			
Date		From whom received		Date of Casualty		Place of Casualty	
25-7-41		RRD		24-7-41		4 M D	
24-8-41		RRD		26-8-41		" "	
6-8-41		RRD		6-10-41		" "	
6-8-41		RRD		6-10-41		" "	
5-11-41		MOB 3		5-11-41		" "	
5-11-41		MOB 3		5-11-41		" "	
8-11-41		2 Cars 1917		6-11-41		Ricksa 1920	
8-12-41		do		6-12-41		do	
11-2-42		do		1-2-42		do	
4-3-42		do		27-3-42		do	
23-3-42		3/4/1917		7-3-42		" "	
23-3-42		" "		14-3-42		Ricksa	
Reported for duty R.R.D. taken on STEELING. Sick leave 0000 26-8-41 to 0000 1-9-41 (by medical certificate) PRE-EMBARKATION LEAVE 6-10-41 to 14-10-41 Subs 8 Days To Be A/Group Ttr Driver Mechanic Allocated to R.H. 9 Mv bus ENTRAINED 4 M.D. FOR 3 M.D.				Signature of Officer Certifying Correctness of Entries			
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A.F. B.103.—2 (Adapted)

Continuation Sheet to A.F. B.103-1

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17/Epⁱⁱⁱ L. Meek.

REPORT		Record of all casualties regarding promotions (acting, temporary, local or substantive), appointments, transfers, movements, attachments, etc., fractures of jaw, wounds, accidents, admission to and discharge from Hospital, Casualty Clearing Station, etc.; Date of despatchment from a hospital as well as Discharge forward.	Date of Casualty	Place of Casualty	Authority W 201, B 269, C 287, D 289, E 290, F 291, G 292, H 293, I 294, J 295, K 296, L 297, M 298, N 299, O 300, P 301, Q 302, R 303, S 304, T 305, U 306, V 307, W 308, X 309, Y 310, Z 311, AA 312, AB 313, AC 314, AD 315, AE 316, AF 317, AG 318, AH 319, AI 320, AJ 321, AK 322, AL 323, AM 324, AN 325, AO 326, AP 327, AQ 328, AR 329, AS 330, AT 331, AU 332, AV 333, AW 334, AX 335, AY 336, AZ 337, BA 338, BB 339, BC 340, BD 341, BE 342, BF 343, BG 344, BH 345, BI 346, BJ 347, BK 348, BL 349, BM 350, BN 351, BO 352, BP 353, BQ 354, BR 355, BS 356, BT 357, BU 358, BV 359, BW 360, BX 361, BY 362, BZ 363, CA 364, CB 365, CC 366, CD 367, CE 368, CF 369, CG 370, CH 371, CI 372, CJ 373, CK 374, CL 375, CM 376, CN 377, CO 378, CP 379, CQ 380, CR 381, CS 382, CT 383, CU 384, CV 385, CW 386, CX 387, CY 388, CZ 389, DA 390, DB 391, DC 392, DD 393, DE 394, DF 395, DG 396, DH 397, DI 398, DJ 399, DK 400, DL 401, DM 402, DN 403, DO 404, DP 405, DQ 406, DR 407, DS 408, DT 409, DU 410, DV 411, DW 412, DX 413, DY 414, DZ 415, EA 416, EB 417, EC 418, ED 419, EE 420, EF 421, EG 422, EH 423, EI 424, EJ 425, EK 426, EL 427, EM 428, EN 429, EO 430, EP 431, EQ 432, ER 433, ES 434, ET 435, EU 436, EV 437, EW 438, EX 439, EY 440, EZ 441, FA 442, FB 443, FC 444, FD 445, FE 446, FF 447, FG 448, FH 449, FI 450, FJ 451, FK 452, FL 453, FM 454, FN 455, FO 456, FP 457, FQ 458, FR 459, FS 460, FT 461, FU 462, FV 463, FW 464, FX 465, FY 466, FZ 467, GA 468, GB 469, GC 470, GD 471, GE 472, GF 473, GG 474, GH 475, GI 476, GJ 477, GK 478, GL 479, GM 480, GN 481, GO 482, GP 483, GQ 484, GR 485, GS 486, GT 487, GU 488, GV 489, GW 490, GX 491, GY 492, GZ 493, HA 494, HB 495, HC 496, HD 497, HE 498, HF 499, HG 500, HH 501, HI 502, HJ 503, HK 504, HL 505, HM 506, HN 507, HO 508, HP 509, HQ 510, HR 511, HS 512, HT 513, HU 514, HV 515, HW 516, HX 517, HY 518, HZ 519, IA 520, IB 521, IC 522, ID 523, IE 524, IF 525, IG 526, IH 527, II 528, IJ 529, IK 530, IL 531, IM 532, IN 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908, WZ 909, XA 910, XB 911, XC 912, XD 913, XE 914, XF 915, XG 916, XH 917, XI 918, XJ 919, XK 920, XL 921, XM 922, XN 923, XO 924, XP 925, XQ 926, XR 927, XS 928, XT 929, XU 930, XV 931, XW 932, XX 933, XY 934, XZ
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